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THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

SECURITY COUNCIL  
Forty-second year

Letter dated 11 August 1987 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of  
the Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations addressed  
to the Secretary-General

In a letter dated 31 July 1987 (A/42/439-S/19013) the Permanent Representative of Jordan claims that Israeli excavations near Jerusalem's Wailing Wall have damaged the Tankiziyah Madrasah, a nearby Islamic landmark. In this regard, I would like to make the following points:

1. The Jordanian claim that "persistent" Israeli excavations are the "underlying cause" of damage to the Madrasah is misleading and inaccurate. Excavations around the area in question were completed in 1984 and thus could not cause any damage to surrounding buildings. This was confirmed by a special representative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in his report dated 21 August 1986.
2. A group of senior Wakf officials, accompanied by Jerusalem's Inspector of Antiquities, recently visited the Madrasah. It was determined that the damage to the floor of the room in question was due to water seepage, which, over the years, had shrunk and eroded the soft soil beneath the floor, causing it to sink.
3. The Ministry of Religious Affairs has undertaken to effect the necessary repairs.

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\* A/42/150.

In these circumstances it is astonishing how structural defects in a building nearly 700 years old, can be said to constitute, in the Jordanian view, the "Judaization" of Jerusalem and the obliteration of Islamic landmarks.

This imaginative language, however, is entirely consistent with the selective manner in which certain States choose to voice their concern over the sanctity of Islamic sites and holy places. In numerous incidents in which mosques and other Islamic sites outside of Israel are destroyed or are the scene of violent activities, those that would otherwise readily condemn Israel for any reason remain conspicuous by their silence.

This selective course of action in the United Nations is once again emphasized and underlined by the above Jordanian letter. On the very day this letter was sent, over 400 pilgrims were killed in front of Mecca's Grand Mosque, Islam's holiest site, and yet the Permanent Representative of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan chose to draw the "urgent attention [of the Secretary-General] to a new act of aggression" purportedly carried out by Israel, in relation to needed repairs to an ancient building. The lack of balance and proportion is self-evident, and requires no further elaboration.

I have the honour to request that this letter be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under item 39 of the provisional agenda, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Johanan BEIN  
Ambassador  
Acting Permanent Representative