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LETTER DATED 17 AUGUST 1970 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ISRAEL TO
THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to refer to the letter addressed to you by the Permanent Representative of Jordan on 3 August 1970 (S/9897) and to place the following on record:

The Jordanian letter is, as usual, political propaganda unrelated to the facts.

Since 1968 Christian monasteries in the area of the Baptism Site, on the Jordan river, on the Israeli side of the cease-fire line, have been threatened, attacked and harassed by firing from across the river and by saboteurs infiltrating from Jordanian territory, several hundreds yards away.

Thus, for instance, the gate of the Greek Orthodox Monastery of St. John the Baptist was torn out on 26 December 1968 by an explosive charge laid by saboteurs from Jordan who also planted mines in the monastery's courtyard. As a result, the monks had to leave the place temporarily. On 6 January 1969 the same monastery was again the target of a similar act of sabotage.

The convent mentioned in the Jordanian letter, better known as the Ethiopian Monastery at Qasr-el-Yahud, was the target of an attack on 24 May 1969 when fire was opened on it from across the river. As reported by me to the President of the Security Council on 25 May 1969 (S/9221) the attack took place while the funeral of an Ethiopian monk was being held at the monastery.

This monastery was again attacked and damaged by explosive charges laid by saboteurs from Jordan, on 4 August 1969 and 11 December 1969.

In view of such threats and harassment, and in the knowledge that the Jordanian Government has given the terrorist forces a free hand to pursue their attacks across the cease-fire line, the monks finally reached the decision to leave the monastery.

During the night of 1/2 August 1970 a terror squad crossed the river and occupied the deserted monastery. At dawn of 2 August 1970 they were engaged by Israeli forces. In the ensuing exchange of fire, some parts of the building were damaged. The marauders then fled across the river.

This is borne out by a boastful communique put out by the terrorist organization concerned and published through the Middle East News Agency on 2 August 1970.

Further comment on the misleading political propaganda contained in the Jordanian letter is superfluous. The letter's disregard for facts is matched by the complete lack of sensitivity displayed in it for the feelings and rights of other religious communities.

I have the honour to request that this letter be circulated as an official document of the Security Council.

Please accept, etc.

(Signed) Yosef TEKOAH
Permanent Representative of Israel
to the United Nations
