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NOTE

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Documents of the Security Council (symbol S/. . .) are normally published in quarterly *Supplements of the Official Records of the Security Council*. The date of the document indicates the supplement in which it appears or in which information about it is given.

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FIFTEEN HUNDRED AND EIGHTH MEETING

Held in New York on Wednesday, 10 September 1969, at 3 p.m.

President : Mr. Y. A. MALIK
(Union of Soviet Socialist Republics).

Present : The representatives of the following States: Algeria, China, Colombia, Finland, France, Hungary, Nepal, Pakistan, Paraguay, Senegal, Spain, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Zambia.

Provisional agenda (S/Agenda/1508)

1. Adoption of the agenda.

2. The situation in the Middle East:

Letter dated 28 August 1969 addressed to the President of the Security Council by the representatives of Afghanistan, Algeria, Guinea, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, the Niger, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Southern Yemen, the Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Arab Republic and Yemen (S/9421 and Add.1 and 2).

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 28 August 1969 addressed to the President of the Security Council by the representatives of Afghanistan, Algeria, Guinea, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, the Niger, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Southern Yemen, the Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Arab Republic and Yemen (S/9421 and Add.1 and 2)

1. The PRESIDENT (*translated from Russian*): Yesterday the Security Council invited the representatives of Israel, the United Arab Republic and Indonesia, at their request, to participate in the discussion of the item before it, without the right to vote. I invite those representatives to take their places at the Security Council table.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Y. Tekoah (Israel), Mr. A. El-Erian (United Arab Republic) and Mr. H. R. Abdulgani (Indonesia) took places at the Council table.

2. The PRESIDENT (*translated from Russian*): Since yesterday's meeting the President of the Security Council has received letters from the representatives of India and

Somalia, in which they ask to be invited to participate in the current discussion. In accordance with the usual practice of the Security Council and with the consent of the Council, I propose to invite the representatives of those countries, namely, India and Somalia, to participate in the discussion of this question, without the right to vote.

3. If there are no objections, we shall consider the proposal accepted.

4. Unfortunately, in view of the limited number of places at the Security Council table, we shall have to ask the representatives of India and Somalia to take the places reserved for them at the sides of the Council chamber, on the understanding that when it is their turn to address the Council they will be invited to take a place at the Council table.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. S. Sen (India) and Mr. A. A. Farah (Somalia) took the places reserved for them.

5. The PRESIDENT (*translated from Russian*): The Security Council will now continue its consideration of the item before it. The first speaker on my list is the representative of Algeria, on whom I now call.

6. Mr. AZZOUT (Algeria) (*translated from French*): Mr. President, on behalf of my delegation, I should like to express our pleasure at seeing you preside over our work. We are convinced that, under the leadership of a diplomat of your stature and one so rich in experience, our debates will be successful.

7. I should also like to pay tribute to your predecessor. During our long debates, Ambassador de Piniés, with great style and effectiveness, managed to bring our deliberations to a successful conclusion.

8. The date 21 August 1969 is one of the most painful moments for the Moslem community in the world. On that date the Al Aqsa Mosque, a sanctuary revered by hundreds of millions of Moslems, was damaged by flames. The announcement of the destruction of that holy place has aroused intense emotion and a wave of indignation throughout the world. Although the world conscience is reluctant to believe in this further sacrilege, the fact remains that it is becoming increasingly aware that the military occupation is at the source of that crime. There can be no doubt whatever that, following the destruction of many dwellings, this is one more episode, but not the last. For the burning of the Al Aqsa Mosque once again raises the question of the

occupation and the urgent need for dealing with the Palestinian conflict in its true context. It is no use deploring or regretting this new crime if the international community lacks the political courage to embark resolutely on the search for a peace based on justice.

9. The 'sacrilege perpetrated in the Holy Land attests to the resurgence of a fanaticism which international Zionism keeps constantly alive and to which it gives such increasing force as to make all mankind shrink in horror.

10. This abominable crime against human civilization, its virtues and spiritual values casts shame on those who have inspired it, as well as on those who have carried it out.

11. The Zionist dialectic, which is essentially colonial and which first managed to appropriate a country and extend its domination there at the expense of two million of the legitimate inhabitants, today seeks openly to exploit its Messianic and theological sentiments, the presumptuousness of which cannot stand up to historical analysis. But if the Zionist venture knows that its mystical and biblical claims are open to question, it nevertheless tries to assert itself by acts which bear the stamp of the most brutal type of colonialist practice and ideology.

12. After the totalitarian and massive dispossession of the Palestinian people and the attempt to destroy their culture, political personality and their very name, Israel is entering a new stage in the execution of its programme, namely, the removal of all traces of Arab-Islamic civilization. At present an attempt is being made, through press campaigns, since the issue is too serious and extends beyond the framework of the Middle East, to deny Israel's responsibility for the crime or, at least, to attenuate it.

13. After the crime had been committed, the Tel Aviv authorities rashly hastened to accredit the hypotheses, first that the fire was caused by the friction of old beams, and then by a short circuit. Since these hypotheses were immediately invalidated by the true guardians of the Holy Places, that is to say, by the indigenous population itself, Israel then revised its position in the face of the evidence of the facts and under the pressure of international public opinion. It was, in fact, the vigilance and the vigorous reaction of the indigenous population, supported by world opinion, that led Israel to arrest the person responsible for the crime.

14. As we see it, Israel's responsibility is clear. First of all, as an occupying Power, the policy of destruction pursued by Israel for over 20 years has not been confined only to the dwellings of the legitimate population of Palestine. World Zionism has clearly revealed its mystical dimension, based on the theory of the chosen people. In the eyes of the Zionists, Israel is the fulfilment of the biblical promise made to Abraham. Israel continues to cultivate a Messianic and theological state of mind in a century when political morality is becoming increasingly removed from religious motivations. We need only read the statements of Zionist personalities to realize the psychological preparation that preceded the Al Aqsa fire.

15. In the Israeli daily newspaper *Hayom* of 7 June 1968, the chief Rabbi of Israel, Nessim, declared:

"The frontiers of the land of Israel were established under divine guidance. The order of God is irrevocable. No force on earth can change what God has created. Here no law or logic is involved."

16. According to a dispatch dated 17 August 1967 from *Agence France-Presse*, on 16 August 1967, the Rabbi of the Israeli army, Shlomo Goren, expressed a desire to see the Jewish Temple reconstructed in the place of the Holy Mosque of Al Aqsa.

17. Thus, the process that was to lead to the destruction of the Holy Mosque was initiated with the support, or at least with the approval, of the Tel Aviv authorities and Israel could not be unaware of the fact that it would end in the crime which is being considered by the Security Council today.

18. Israeli propaganda has found in religious fanaticism a means of recruiting persons willing to carry out such a sinister mission. As chance would have it, the person responsible for the fire belongs to a sect whose programme was not unknown to the Zionist authorities. The following passage appears in the journal *The Church of God*, dated 1 September 1969:

"The Church of God went back to Jerusalem in 1966 and held the first General Assembly since the days of the Apostles, declaring the fullness of the Gentiles had come in, and the time for the rebuilding of the Tabernacle of David was upon us. In 1967 the Church went back there and restored the Throne of David. A King like David had come forth of the Gentiles and the time for the moving of the veil from his eyes and restoring the Kingdom of God to Israel had come."¹

19. It is hardly surprising that people who profess such fanaticism should hold their general assembly in territory occupied by the Zionists, since they pursue the same aim. The same mystique of the redemption of the universe inspires both movements. What no honest man can deny is that the followers of such a doctrine provide excellent recruits, psychologically prepared for any action under remote control. The use of fanatics for such missions as the desecration of the Al Aqsa Mosque is part of long-established methods.

20. Be that as it may, the burning of that great spiritual centre is but the tragic outcome of the passivity of the international community, which believes that it has found a way of appeasing its conscience by merely adopting resolutions which Israel has been quick to disregard. Assured of the unreserved support and, we would even say, the direct encouragement of its Western allies, in particular the United States of America, Israel defies the rest of humanity. Reprisals are established as a political doctrine. The systematic destruction of whole villages, of buildings that were the glory of Jerusalem, and the oppression of the Palestinian population are daily events under the Zionist occupation.

¹ Quoted by the speaker in English.

21. Thus the fire of 21 August is in fact only the culmination of the contempt shown by the invader towards those who he has conquered. History abounds in such situations.

22. Refusing the fate their enemies have reserved for them, the Palestinian people have decided to take the only course left to them; namely armed struggle, in which free men find the most appropriate way to express their stubborn will against a racist usurper. Thus, although mourning the burning of the Al Aqsa Mosque, the Palestinian people, without any discrimination based on religion, will find in this painful event a source of renewed energy in their struggle against Zionist fanaticism. For many centuries the Palestinian people have been able to protect all the Holy Places, for they are the true heir of all the cultural and religious wealth the Palestinian land has bequeathed to world civilization. In less than two years of foreign occupation, two sanctuaries revered by over one thousand million people have been the victims of odious sacrilege.

23. While the burning of the Mosque has aroused the emotion which we have witnessed throughout the world, it also serves to remind the international community that no military occupation can be prolonged without constantly endangering international peace and security.

24. Our Organization, it is true, has adopted—and always unanimously—resolutions condemning the measures taken by the Zionist occupier in Jerusalem and refusing to recognize that those measures have any validity. But what is the use of these resolutions if they are destined to remain a dead letter because no effort is made to put them into effect? Do we really think that the problem can be settled by inertia, and that in the last resort oblivion will be the only remedy?

25. In view of the gravity of the new situation created as a result of the fire at the Al Aqsa Mosque and its disastrous consequences, both for the region and for the world, a large number of African and Asian countries which are Members of our Organization have brought the matter before the Security Council. Such a step must remind the Council of its basic obligations, which are to enforce respect for its resolutions and to ensure their scrupulous implementation.

26. Yet, so far, the Council has been content to pronounce condemnations and to issue warnings to Israel, without following up its decisions in any positive way. This is due mainly to the negative attitude of the United States of America which, while associating itself with the decisions of the Security Council and expressing its regrets, continues to arm the aggressor by supplying him with the most modern weapons which are designed to crush the will to resist of the Palestinian liberation movement and the Arab peoples.

27. Assured of such unconditional support, the pampered child of imperialism mocks the decisions of our Council and calmly pursues its policy of the total "Israelization" of Palestine.

28. But those who think they can continue to use Israel to halt the political and social movement of the Arab world

and to prevent it from taking its fate in its own hands are greatly mistaken. On the contrary, the aggressiveness of that imperialist policeman, Israel, can only strengthen the will of the Middle Eastern countries to resist. As for the Palestinians, despite all adversities, they will continue their fight for liberation. And in this legitimate undertaking they will find at their side all countries which cherish justice. The fact that today a large number of countries have asked the Security Council to consider the problem of the Middle East is evidence of this.

29. Thus the Security Council, which assumes a grave responsibility in the eyes of history, must recommend the measures necessary to put an end to a situation which already threatens world peace and security.

30. The PRESIDENT (*translated from Russian*): The next speaker on the list is the representative of India. I invite him to take a place at the Council table, and call on him to make his statement.

31. Mr. SEN (India): Mr. President, normally non-members of the Council are not expected to comment on the Council's office-bearers, but this rule has been laxly observed. We should like to offer our congratulations to you on your Presidency of the Council this month and record our appreciation of the work done by the outgoing President, the Ambassador of Spain, Mr. de Piniés. We are confident that under your wise guidance this Council will discharge its responsibilities with speed and fairness. I also thank the members of the Council for permitting me to participate, without vote, in this debate.

32. On 21 August, a renowned and revered place of worship in the Islamic world, the Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, was severely damaged by fire. This act of vandalism has been rightly condemned throughout the world, including my country. The Government and the people of India have expressed their shock and indignation at this sacrilege. In a statement in the Indian Parliament on 26 August, the Foreign Minister of India expressed strong condemnation of this act of desecration. The statement of the Foreign Minister has already been circulated to the members of the Council.² Similar sentiments have been expressed by the major political parties both within and without the Indian Parliament.

33. Only yesterday the Prime Minister of India said at a public meeting in Delhi that this was an act which was condemned by people all over the world belonging to all religions. She added that the burning of a holy place belonging to any religion was a deplorable act. She commented that this act had increased tension in that area, which could have world-wide repercussions.

34. The outrage against the holy shrine is a matter that goes beyond the spiritual injury to the followers of Islam alone. It concerns the cherished values of mankind and its cultural heritage. We in India, with our firm belief in secularism and the separation of the religious from the temporal, have felt especially grieved at the desecration of a

² See *Official Records of the Security Council, Twenty-fourth Year, Supplement for July, August and September 1969*, document S/9447, p. 176;

place of worship. Numerous civic and religious leaders of many faiths have expressed their profound shock at this incident and have extended their sympathy to their Moslem brethren in this moment of common agony. Public meetings, demonstrations, even riots, have taken place in different parts of India, including many principal cities, to condemn the incident and to call for prompt action to prevent its recurrence.

35. While we must continue to express our profound shock and dismay at this sacrilege, we must not be diverted into believing that this is a religious issue. Indeed, any attempt to create such a diversion will do incalculable harm and present fresh difficulties in solving the west Asian problem. It is understandable therefore that in certain quarters this incident is being treated as if it were nothing more than an unfortunate and regrettable accident and that all measures had been taken to repair the losses, punish the guilty, to prevent any repetition, and so on. It is of the utmost importance that the consideration of this question should take place in its proper perspective; that is to say, the political implications of the circumstances in which the incident took place and could recur.

36. To us, the incident represents a much wider malaise and is a direct consequence of the illegal occupation by Israel of the Holy City of Jerusalem and many other Arab areas. The injustice which the Arabs have suffered in the hands of the Israelis offers the only explanation for the widespread reaction that the burning of the Al Aqsa Mosque has brought about in many countries and continents. To minimize the importance of this reaction is to be blind to the realities of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Of course, those who wish to benefit from armed action would like nothing better than that the central issue should be lost sight of and that the world should quietly acquiesce in the occupying Power keeping its territorial gain.

37. It is ironical that a State which is a creation of the United Nations should be the one consistently to flout the resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council and bring, in the train of such defiance, incidents like the burning of this holy mosque. Looking at it from this aspect, we cannot escape the conclusion that what happened in Jerusalem on 21 August is the direct consequence of the Israeli occupation of that city and its wanton neglect of the protection of Arab rights there. Israel thus cannot be absolved of responsibility for this outrage.

38. Even though this meeting of the Security Council has been called on a specific complaint, I submit that the issue before us has wider and deeper implications. The city of Jerusalem is sacred to the followers of three religions and the status of its places of worship has been of special concern to the United Nations for a number of years. The safety and sanctity of these religious places is related to the maintenance of the unique character of Jerusalem. It is for that reason that the United Nations has on many occasions expressed itself against any change in the juridical status of the city. I need only to refer to the two resolutions of the General Assembly in 1967, 2253 (ES-V) and 2254 (ES-V); and the unanimously adopted resolutions of the Security Council, 252 (1968), of 21 May 1968, and 267 (1969), of 3 July 1969. Those resolutions call upon Israel to desist

from taking actions that would tend to change the status of Jerusalem. Those and other resolutions also reaffirm the principle of international law that territory cannot be acquired by military conquest. My delegation believes that the sanctity and security of places of worship in the Holy City can be assured through the implementation by Israel of the relevant provisions of the Security Council's unanimously adopted resolutions on Jerusalem.

39. The recent aggravation of tension and the recrudescence of large-scale violence are symptoms of the underlying problem in the west Asian region. For more than a generation peace in this area and the life and liberty of its inhabitants have had a precarious existence between incessant tension and some rare spells of calm. The long chain of conflict has complicated the task of finding just and lasting solutions. The conflict of June 1967 has significantly added to these problems. At the heart of current tensions is the fundamental issue of foreign occupation. When this matter was first debated in the Security Council more than two years ago, the delegation of India stated its basic position on the larger issues. Speaking at the 1357th meeting of the Security Council, my predecessor said:

“... we shall have to take more far-reaching steps, the most important of which would be to order an immediate withdrawal of all forces to the positions they occupied on 4 June 1967. Unless we take that step immediately, we shall be faced every day with situations like the ones we have had to deal with in the last few days.” [1357th meeting, para. 172.]

Since then, two years have passed during which the Council has barely moved from one cease-fire to another. Vast Arab territories remain under Israeli military occupation. There are frequent incidents involving loss of life and property, often on an enormous scale and affecting territory far from the cease-fire lines. As if to emphasize its attitude towards the United Nations, Israel launched fresh attacks into the territory of the United Arab Republic at the same time as the Security Council took up the question of the desecration of the mosque at Jerusalem.

40. We have said this many times before, and I do not hesitate to repeat again, that it is unrealistic to expect any peace in the region without the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from occupied Arab territories. The Security Council must face this reality which contradicts the ideals of our Organization. The principle of non-acquisition of territory by military conquest is a part of the larger principle of the non-use of force in inter-State relations and is specifically written into the Security Council's resolution 242 (1967) of 22 November 1967. This and other elements of that resolution have the support of the overwhelming majority of Member States of the United Nations. And yet we must regretfully admit that a just and lasting peace is as elusive as ever. I shall not go into the causes of our absence of progress so far. These are well known. But let me say this: that with every passing day when hopes recede and frustrations rise, it is incumbent on our Organization to support by every means the fragile structure of a peaceful settlement in the area. We earnestly urge the Security Council, especially its permanent members, to exert their utmost in securing the implementation of the resolution of

22 November in all its aspects. This would not prove an impossible task if all parties were to show sufficient will and purpose. Let me quote from what the Prime Minister of India said last year. Speaking in the General Assembly on 14 October 1968 she said:

“... the west Asian crisis also needs to be resolved by political means. There is every opportunity for doing so, if it is recognized that the security, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the States in this part of the world cannot be based on the redrawing of State frontiers by force or on the basis of permanent hostility.”³

41. The incident at Jerusalem on 21 August and all that has happened both before and after that date show the emptiness of the Israeli claim that its occupation of Arab territories has not increased the tension in that area. In our view, so long as Israel continues its present policy of defiance and refuses to withdraw, it will be absurd to pretend that all can be well between the Israelis and the Arabs, or that in the field of internal law and order in the occupied territories the situation will remain peaceful; for, far from there being a satisfactory situation, the tension in west Asia continues to increase and continues to upset the peace in the area and also to extend that threat to peace far beyond Israeli-Arab borders. It should be the duty of all of us, and above all of the Security Council, to ensure that peace returns to the Middle East. The few days of reflection which we have had since the despicable burning of the Al Aqsa Mosque have convinced us more than ever before that peace can return to west Asia only if Israel will carry out, or can be made to carry out, fully and faithfully various resolutions of the United Nations, and particularly of this Council. Israeli intransigence is no longer a matter of the prestige and authority of the United Nations; it is a signal for far worse things to come. We must stop it.

42. The PRESIDENT (*translated from Russian*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of Somalia. I invite him to take a place at the Council table and to address the Council.

43. Mr. FARAH (Somalia): Mr. President, my delegation would like to thank you and, through you, the members of the Security Council for responding to the request by 25 Member States of this Organization that a meeting of this Council be called to consider the grave situation resulting from the extensive damage caused by arson to the holy Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. My delegation, which was among the signatories of that request, would also like to thank the Council for allowing it the privilege of speaking in the debate.

44. This grave incident has affected not only the Arab inhabitants of Jerusalem but also Moslem peoples throughout the world. The Council has already been told by previous speakers of the importance which Moslems throughout the world attach to that holy, revered and historic shrine. It is sufficient for me to say here that the Al Aqsa Mosque is the third most holy shrine in the Moslem world, since only the shrines at Mecca and Medina have

greater religious significance. Those who understand the strong spiritual and emotional ties which Moslems attach to this sacred Mosque will also understand the violent reactions which took place in Moslem countries when news of the burning of the shrine became known. In every Moslem country there were widespread demonstrations to protest this sacrilegious act. It is important that the Security Council should take careful note of these protests and this widespread indignation, because they show that the problem of Jerusalem is not one that concerns only the immediate parties to the Middle East conflict. The problem of Jerusalem is one that transcends national frontiers and is of vital concern to Moslem nations spread throughout the world whose populations total over 600 million people.

45. My delegation considers it important to view the burning of the Al Aqsa Mosque first of all within the context of other events that have taken place in the Holy City of Jerusalem over the past two years and then to consider it as a part of the question of the status of Jerusalem—and indeed, as part of the Middle East situation that arises from Israel's illegal and continued occupation of Arab lands following its aggressive war in June 1967.

46. First, I should like the members of the Security Council to consider the burning of the Mosque against the background of Israeli attitudes and actions. There have been well substantiated reports that in their policies and actions, the Israeli authorities, including their officials, soldiers and tourists, have been particularly offensive to Moslem sensibilities at the Holy Al Aqsa Mosque and the surrounding Haram Ash-Sharif from the time this sacred area came under Israeli military control. In these two years the Israeli authorities have proceeded with a plan of action which has resulted in the demolition of places of worship, several buildings and religious foundations in Old Jerusalem and many private Arab dwellings, in order to clear the area for a square in front of Al Buraq, called by the Jews the “Wailing Wall”. The World Moslem Congress called the attention of the international community to this action in August 1968.

47. Some time earlier, 14 Moslem and Christian leaders of Jerusalem submitted a memorandum to the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations protesting the desecration of Moslem and Christian Holy Places. Last year the Israelis commenced excavation work in the area of the Mosque with the declared object of uncovering the remains of the first Jewish Temple of Solomon. One can understand excavation for archaeological reasons, but when it involves desecration of the holy shrine of another faith, then the situation takes on a more ominous dimension. The situation assumed a menacing and provocative character when a prominent group of Israelis declared their intention to restore the second Temple of Judaism on the site of the Mosque.

48. The representative of Jordan whose Government is the *de jure* authority for the Old City of Jerusalem, has lodged many complaints in this Council over the past two years against the offensive and provocative behaviour of Israeli authorities and Israeli nationals towards Moslem Holy Places and buildings in the City.

³ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-third Session, Plenary meetings*, 1693rd meeting, para. 158.

49. Those, then, are some of the considerations which must be taken into account on the question of the burning of the Al Aqsa Mosque. Moslem peoples throughout the world cannot ignore the fact that a climate conducive to acts of vandalism against Moslem holy shrines has been produced by the callous and aggressive actions of the Israeli authorities and Israeli people.

50. Before I proceed to the next stage of my statement, permit me to refer to the statement made yesterday in this Council by the representative of Israel on the question of the burning of the Mosque. Yesterday, for the first time we heard a statement from him which was relatively free from vituperation and threat. He endeavoured to give the Council his Government's version of the fire. But an examination of his statement raises many doubts, particularly in view of contrasting accounts from elsewhere, and if his statement is to be taken seriously, perhaps he would give the Council more information on some of the following points.

51. For example, the Israeli representative stated that only one ninth of the Mosque had been damaged. Yet press agencies whose correspondents reported from the spot have described the damage as extensive. The heart of the Mosque—the pulpit—and the entire roof on one side were completely destroyed.

52. The Israeli representative claimed that the fire had been extinguished within one hour. Yet according to international press reports the fire raged for a much longer period. Indeed, the blaze, according to those reports, required the assistance of fire brigades from the surrounding towns of Jerusalem. Despite this assistance, we are told, the fire raged for several hours.

53. The representative of Israel read out from an Israeli law, No. 5727 of 1967, relating to the protection of Holy Places. Surely, Israel's responsibility as an occupying Power is not discharged by pointing to the law on the statute book, but by ensuring that it discharges its responsibilities in accordance with the law.

54. All of these questions have in fact been answered by Sheikh Hilmi Al Muhtasib, Chairman of the Supreme Moslem Council in Jerusalem. The Israeli representative found it convenient to cite from the statements which that distinguished leader has made on the subject, but has conveniently overlooked the entire content of his statement. Since the Israeli delegation attaches importance and credibility to the statement of that eminent religious leader, allow me to read from two statements which that distinguished Sheikh made soon after the fire. The first statement was made on the evening of 21 August 1969, a few hours after the arson had been committed. At that time some Israeli officials tried to relate the fire to an electrical contact. Sheikh Muhtasib described this as follows:

“The Supreme Moslem Council is convinced that the fire was a premeditated act caused deliberately by one or several persons. The guards of the Mosque had seen a blond young man entering and leaving the Mosque a few minutes before the burning; and the Committee of the Arab Architects established by the Moslem Council immediately after the arson proved the impossibility of electrical contact as a reason for the incident.

“It was remarked clearly the ineffectiveness and the slowness of the Israeli firemen in extinguishing the fire which was finally extinguished by the Arab firemen who came from Ramallah and Al Khalil. The Israeli police had prevented the population from helping in quelling the fire. It was a tragic shock for Islam. The Al Aqsa Mosque area should be cleared and the key of the Magharbah gate must be delivered immediately to the Waqf Committee. The Supreme Moslem Council of Jerusalem and Moslem leaders will never co-operate with any Israeli Committee to investigate the arson, and they will not recognize the results of its investigation. The Israelis are violating the international law in unpermitted excavations beside Al Aqsa Mosque and in the Moslem properties. They have desecrated our Holy Places many times, most recently when a group of Israeli youth had led what was called a military parade inside the Mosque zone.”

55. The second statement made by the Supreme Muslim Council was issued on 30 August 1969 and it reads as follows:

“The Supreme Muslim Council and some of the Mayors and Chairmen of Municipalities in the West Bank of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan have convened to discuss the situation resulting from the arson of Al Aqsa Mosque, and at the present situation they decided:

“1. To establish an Arab Committee to investigate the arson thoroughly and submit its reports to the Muslim Council as soon as possible.

“2. To establish a committee from architects, members of the Arab Architects syndicate, to prepare a report on the damage and to assess the possibilities for its repair.

“3. The participants in the meeting consider the whole area of Al Haram As-Sharif, a closed precinct for everyone except Muslim prayers at the times of prayers only, until further notice.

“4. The participants strongly demand the closure of the Magharbah gate and the delivery of its key to the Waqf Committee immediately.

“5. The participants strongly demand the stop of the excavations practised by the Israeli occupiers around the precinct of Al Haram As-Sharif and further demand a permission for the above-mentioned Arab Architects committee to investigate the excavations being carried now beneath the Silsileh gate.

“... .”

“8. To invite the diplomatic corps to visit Al Aqsa Mosque and to view the extensive damage caused by the arson.

“9. The Muslim Council neither recognizes any commission appointed by the occupying Israeli authorities nor accepts any reports issued by it concerning the arson; however, at the same time the Muslim Council welcomes any investigation commission representing all Arab and Muslim States.

"10. The participants have observed, after the preliminary reports, regarding the arson, that the Municipality had not discharged its duties adequately and effectively in extinguishing the fire."

56. This leads to what should be our next consideration: the position of these Holy Places vis-à-vis the status of Jerusalem. It is a fact that Israel's seizure of the Holy City in the war of June 1967 and its declared intention of annexing it to Israel caused grave anxiety to Moslems and Christians throughout the world. In resolutions 2253 (ES-V) and 2254 (ES-V) of the fifth emergency session of the General Assembly, Israel was called upon to rescind all measures taken to change the status of Jerusalem. When Israel failed to comply with the terms of those resolutions, the Security Council adopted resolution 252 (1968), which stated that it:

"Considers that all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel, including expropriation of land and properties thereon, which tend to change the legal status of Jerusalem are invalid and cannot change that status."

Israel responded characteristically by refusing to rescind those measures and, as a further mark of its contempt for the Security Council, enacted legislation designed to consolidate its annexation of the Old City. The Security Council is all too familiar with the measures taken by the Israeli authorities to strengthen their grip on the area. Arab families have been evicted from their homes, their houses demolished and properties seized, and Israeli settlers established in their place. These acts have given substance to the charge that Israel is in fact embarked on a plan to change the historic character of the Old City and to increase further the displaced Arab population of Palestine.

57. Although the Security Council, regrettably, has not taken any effective counter-steps to put a halt to these measures, the one redeeming feature of this distressing situation is the fact that, on the basic question of the illegality of Israel's actions in Jerusalem, all members of the Security Council, including the four permanent members, consider that the Israeli authorities have grossly exceeded their powers under international law governing military occupation and that many of their actions contravene the provisions of the Charter and of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

58. Neither the future of Jerusalem nor the status of the Old City—nor the protection of the holy shrines of Islam and Christianity—can be considered in isolation from the general situation prevailing in the Middle East following the 1967 Israeli aggression. As my delegation has stated in the past, a peaceful settlement of the Middle East problem must be approached within the framework laid down by the Security Council resolution of November 1967. There can be no hope of peace in the Middle East so long as Israel is allowed to continue its occupation of Arab territory. No State, whether it be Israel or any other, should have the right to dictate conditions to or claim anything from the victim of its aggression. If these principles are not upheld by the world community, then, I submit, the United Nations will help to ensure that bitterness, distrust and

open conflict will be endemic in the Middle East and in other parts of the world.

59. The present unsatisfactory state of affairs, culminating in the latest outrage by Israel against the United Arab Republic yesterday, underlines what we must expect in that critical area of the world if aggression is allowed to go unchecked. The latest incident prompted the Summit Conference of the Organization of African Unity, meeting in Addis Ababa, to adopt a resolution, supported by 41 African Heads of State and Government, condemning that provocative and unwarranted attack on an African sister State.

60. The late President Eisenhower in his book *Waging Peace* wrote, with reference to Israeli aggression in 1956:

"Should a nation which attacks and occupies foreign territory in the face of United Nations disapproval be allowed to impose conditions on its own withdrawal? If we agree that armed attack can properly achieve the purposes of the assailant I fear we will have turned back the clock of international order."⁴

That judgement is as true and relevant today as it was in 1956.

61. There remains to be stated the kind of action that my delegation considers should be taken to deal with this entirely disturbing and distressing situation.

62. On the question of the Holy City, in particular the burning of the Al Aqsa Mosque, my delegation would like to see the United Nations conduct an impartial investigation into the grave events of 21 August 1969 and other measures taken by the Israeli occupation forces against the Arab inhabitants and their property and against property belonging to religious foundations. My delegation would like the Security Council to recognize that any acts of destruction or desecration of holy places, religious buildings and sites are likely to endanger international peace and security. Furthermore, I should like the Security Council to acknowledge that there should be unimpeded access to the Holy Shrine of Al Aqsa by representatives of Governments of Islamic countries to assess the damage and to prepare and execute plans for its repair.

63. On the question of the status of Jerusalem, my delegation is convinced that, unless the Security Council takes meaningful action to enforce its resolutions on this matter, not only will the Council embolden Israel to take further unilateral steps for the complete annexation of the Holy City, but it will create within the United Nations a lack of confidence in the efficacy and seriousness of the Security Council with regard to its own decisions. Israel has been censured time and again for its aggressive acts and for its defiance of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. The Security Council should not preclude action under Article 41 of the Charter should its decisions continue to be flouted.

⁴ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The White House Years: Waging Peace*, Doubleday; New York, 1965, p. 188.

64. On the question of the general Middle East situation, my delegation would like to see the four permanent members, in concert with Ambassador Jarring, activate—they have been in a lengthy recess for the last few months—their role in persuading both Israel and the Arab States to bring about a peaceful settlement of the crisis by full acceptance and implementation of the provisions of Security Council resolution 242 (1967) of 22 November.

65. In conclusion, I would say that the incident of the burning of the Al Aqsa Mosque is symptomatic of the general situation in the Middle East, and it underlines the necessity of attacking at its roots this problem which remains as a continuing threat to world peace.

66. The PRESIDENT (*translated from Russian*): I call on the representative of Israel to speak in exercise of his right of reply.

67. Mr. TEKOA (Israel): It had not been my intention to speak today; I shall therefore confine myself to two factual observations, particularly on the statement we have just heard.

68. The representative of Somalia referred to statements made by Sheikh Hilmi Al Muhtasib, the President of the Jerusalem Moslem Council. Had the Somalia representative taken the trouble to read the verbatim record of yesterday's meeting, he would have found that my speech reported the principal points from the Sheikh's statements precisely as the representative of Somalia did today himself.

69. He also referred to alleged excavations affecting the sacredness of Al Aqsa, and the Mosque compound in general. I should like to say that the only extraordinary activity on that site since 1967 has been the repair work carried out by the Waqf, the Moslem religious authority, on the dome of the Al Aqsa Mosque, damaged when the Jordanian army used it for machine-gun emplacements in the June 1967 hostilities. Those repairs were executed under the supervision of an Egyptian architect, an expert on the Mosque, whose presence was approved by Israel at the request of the Moslem authorities. No archaeological excavations whatsoever have taken place in the Mosque compound; the only excavations in the vicinity are the archaeological works proceeding to the south of the area, in accordance with projects basically approved by the Jordanian authorities and commenced before 1967. To suggest that those excavations affect or endanger the Al Aqsa Mosque is sheer falsehood.

70. Professor H. J. Reinink, the Special Representative of UNESCO entrusted with reporting on the compliance with The Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in Armed Conflict, was quoted in the Director-General's report of May 1968 to the seventy-eighth session of the Executive Board of UNESCO as follows:

"I satisfied myself on the spot that the excavations being carried out by Professor Masare near the South Wall do not threaten the Mosque quarter of Jerusalem, which is unique in the world."

71. I have listened with care to the statements made in the course of today's meeting; Israel's position was amply described yesterday. Today I should like to bring to the Council's attention the following declaration issued in Jerusalem on 8 September:

"The Israel Interfaith Committee—Jews, Moslems and Christians—wish to express publicly the sorrow and grief which they share with their Moslem brethren, in the country and beyond, at the damage done by the fire at one of Jerusalem's most valuable and beautiful historical and cultural monuments, and at the desecration of what is to millions of the children of Abraham one of their most venerated sanctuaries. We are gravely concerned over the atmosphere of suspicion and hostility that has developed as a result of the fire at the Al Aqsa Mosque, and over the eagerness with which slanders and accusations, including the most objectionable forms of group denunciation, have been voiced and deliberately spread in certain quarters—religious and secular—before there was even a possibility of ascertaining the relevant facts. We greatly deplore the abuse of the calamity that befell the Holy Place, for the purpose of fomenting hatred and inciting to violence.

"We appeal to all children of Abraham—Jews, Christians and Moslems—and to all that seek the peace of Jerusalem, for prayer that God pour out upon us some of his boundless compassion and love, and help us to look to one another with understanding, patience and hope."

72. The declaration was signed by Professor R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, Chairman; Sheikh Tawfik Mahamud Al Asaliya, Kadi of Jaffo; Rabbi Dr. Israel Goldstein; and Joseph M. Raya, Archbishop of St. Jean D'Acre, Haifa, Nazareth and all Galilee.

73. It is in that spirit, not in acrimony, that we prefer to approach the question on the agenda. It is in that spirit that I should like to declare today that it is perfectly natural and legitimate that Moslem States or communities should feel they have a special interest in this matter and should wish to take responsibility for the necessary restoration work at Al Aqsa. As far as the Israel authorities are concerned, no problem need arise in the Waqf's enlisting such co-operation.

74. The PRESIDENT (*translated from Russian*): There are no more speakers on my list for today. If no other representatives wish to speak, we shall adjourn today's meeting.

75. With regard to the next meeting of the Security Council, consultations have been held with the members of the Council and with the representatives of the countries on whose initiative this item has been brought before the Council for consideration. On the basis of these consultations, the consensus is that the next meeting of the Security Council on this matter should be convened tomorrow, 11 September, at 3 p.m.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.

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