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THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Letter dated 14 December 1972 from the Permanent Representative of
Jordan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to bring to your attention an urgent and serious matter concerning new Israeli violations of the sanctity of religious sites and holy places in the occupied West Bank of Jordan. After the crime of arson in El-Aqsa Mosque, and having demolished mosques and other religious property in the areas surrounding El-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, Israel has now extended its blatant violations to the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron, one of the most prominent holy places of Islam.

The Israeli Military Governor of Hebron, the West Bank, has recently called the religious leaders of Hebron and informed them that the occupation authorities had decided to open up further the inner yard of the Mosque and increase the number of seats already allocated by the occupation authorities to Jews inside the Mosque. He also told them that the place now allocated for the Jews was no longer big enough, that it should be enlarged, that dividers would be installed to separate the various Jewish communities, that the part of the Mosque known as El-Yaacoubeyan would be taken over and reserved exclusively for Jews and that Jewish visiting hours would be further extended. The Muslim leaders rejected categorically all attempts to tamper with the holiness of the sacred Ibrahimi Mosque, and asked for a meeting with the higher Israeli occupation authorities but their request was rejected.

The new Israeli measures are designed to turn this prominent Islamic shrine, the Ibrahimi Mosque, into a synagogue by gradually obliterating its Islamic character and excluding Muslims from worshipping in it. Muslims throughout the world condemn these encroachments and violations against the Ibrahimi Mosque which has been since time immemorial an Islamic holy shrine.

My Government is extremely concerned at these new Israeli violations of the Islamic holy places in the occupied West Bank and Israel's utter disregard for the principles of international law governing the rights, welfare and status of people and areas under military occupation.

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I request Your Excellency to bring this letter to the attention of the Commission on Human Rights and the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories.

I should be grateful if you would circulate the text of this letter as an official document of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

(Signed) Abdul Hamid SHARAF
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

