

UNITED NATIONS

GENERAL ASSEMBLY



SECURITY COUNCIL



Distr.
GENERAL

A/8995
S/10851
20 December 1972

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Twenty-eighth session
THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

SECURITY COUNCIL
Twenty-seventh year

Letter dated 20 December 1972 from the Permanent Representative of
Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions of my Government I have the honour to refer to the letter addressed to you on 14 December 1972 by the Permanent Representative of Jordan (A/8975-S/10848).

The Jordanian letter is one of the usual sorties into propaganda by falsehood and distortion; this time on the question of freedom of worship and the protection of holy sites. Jordan's record in those matters, during its 19 years' occupation of areas on the West Bank, including part of Jerusalem, is notorious. It is a matter of general knowledge that the Jordanian authorities desecrated and permitted in those areas the desecration of numerous sites holy to Judaism. Thus Jordan destroyed 39 synagogues in the Old City of Jerusalem and prevented the access of Jews to their holy places, in flagrant violation of its international obligations.

The aforesaid letter deliberately ignores the fact that the Hebron site to which it refers is holy also to Judaism, as the Machpela Cave contains the tombs of the Patriarchs of the Jewish people. It is the most ancient holy site of Judaism, to which for thousands of years Jewish pilgrims had gone to pray. During the Jordanian occupation Jews were deprived of this right just as they were barred from all other Jewish holy sites under Jordanian control, including the Western Wall.

It is typical of the method of defamation adopted by Jordan that the Jordanian representative's letter should raise again, by devious innuendo, the slanderous lie concerning the fire in El-Aqsa Mosque, an act committed by a mentally disturbed non-Jewish foreigner. In fact the Mosque was saved by the joint efforts of Israeli and Arab firemen.

The Government of Israel rejects with repugnance the Jordanian habit of introducing religious matters into political issues in order to stir up passions for political ends. Israel's liberal and tolerant policy has brought about the present situation of coexistence and mutual accommodation between the various communities and religious denominations, and has been widely acclaimed by informed public opinion throughout the world. This situation may be displeasing to the Jordanian Government, but the latter could hardly expect the Israel Government to continue the Jordanian policies of discrimination and disregard for the rights of religious groups.

The Government of Israel will pursue its policy of ensuring freedom of access to and worship at holy sites in areas under its administration to all the communities and all the religious denominations in order to make peaceful coexistence possible for all believers. This is also the case in the area of the Cave of the Machpela.

I have the honour to request that this letter be circulated as a document of the General Assembly and the Security Council and forwarded to the Commission on Human Rights.

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