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THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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Letter dated 2 August 1985 from the Permanent Representative of
Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Government of Israel categorically rejects recent Arab allegations that the closure of the Hospice hospital, located in the Old City of Jerusalem, is the result of a political decision.

After a thorough examination of all medical facilities in Israel, the Ministry of Health decided for purely medical reasons that the hospital in the Hospice building should be closed.

These reasons were twofold:

1. The medical equipment in the hospital is out-of-date, resulting in inadequate medical care. Recently two women died in the maternity ward because of poor medical treatment.
2. The structure of the building does not allow room for a suitable elevator. Patients are carried to and from the operating room by hand-held stretchers.

The decision to close the Hospice hospital is in line with the policy of the Ministry of Health of closing small hospitals and hospitals with one category of patient (such as women) anywhere in the country. Thus the Misgav Ladach hospital in Jerusalem and other small maternity hospitals in Israel will also be shut down.

The residents of the Old City who received medical attention at the Hospice will now receive medical care at the Sheikh Jarrah Health Center and at Jerusalem's other hospitals, with health insurance arranged by the Ministry of Health.

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A first-aid station will continue to operate at the Hospice building and the doctors and qualified staff of the Hospice will be offered alternate employment.

Recent assertions that the closure of the Hospice will deprive the residents of the Old City of proper medical care are therefore totally unfounded. In fact, the number of mother-and-child health care stations in the Arab section of Jerusalem and in villages within the city limits has been steadily rising in recent years. Wide-ranging medical supervision has also been instituted in Arab schools. Municipal assistance has been extended to Red Crescent stations in the city. These services, along with health insurance and hospitalization, enable Arab residents of Jerusalem to receive medical care on a par with that of the rest of Israel (and, incidentally, far superior to that found elsewhere in the Middle East).

I have the honour to request that this letter be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under item 38 of the provisional agenda, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Benjamin NETANYAHU
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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