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NOTE

Symbols of United Nations documents are composed of capital letters combined with figures. Mention of such a symbol indicates a reference to a United Nations document.

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.

The resolutions of the Security Council, numbered in accordance with a system adopted in 1964, are published in yearly volumes of *Resolutions and Decisions of the Security Council*. The new system, which has been applied retroactively to resolutions adopted before 1 January 1965, became fully operative on that date.

FIFTEEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTH MEETING

Held in New York on Tuesday, 9 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/1507)

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).

Expression of thanks to the preceding Presidents

1. The PRESIDENT (*translated from Russian*): Before taking up the adoption of the agenda, allow me, on behalf of the members of the Security Council and on my own behalf, to express appreciation to my two predecessors in the Presidency of the Council, who had to work very hard during the hot summer period when many of us were enjoying our vacation. Under their skilful leadership the Security Council took important decisions on a number of major questions of great significance for the maintenance of international peace and security.

2. Mr. DE PINIES (Spain) (*translated from Spanish*): I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for your kind comments regarding my occupancy of the post of President of the Council during the month of August. For my part, I also want to wish you every success and, at the same time, to say that in the performance of your duties you can count on the continuing co-operation of my delegation.

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 Afghani-

stan, 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)

3. The PRESIDENT (*translated from Russian*): I should like to inform the members of the Security Council that the Permanent Representatives of three States Members of the United Nations, which I name in the order of receipt of their letters—Israel, the United Arab Republic and Indonesia—have asked to be invited to participate in the Council's discussion of the item on the agenda we have just adopted.

4. If there are no objections, I shall invite the representatives of these countries, in accordance with the established practice and relevant rules of procedure, to take places at the Council table and participate in the discussion without the right to vote.

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.

5. The PRESIDENT (*translated from Russian*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item just placed on the agenda. The first speaker on my list for today's meeting is the representative of Pakistan, on whom I now call.

6. Mr. SHAHI (Pakistan): Mr. President, I am confident that there is no risk of your misunderstanding me if I reserve for a later meeting the full expression of my delegation's high esteem and profound respect for you and your most distinguished predecessor. I am obliged to defer these agreeable courtesies because of the solemnity of the present occasion. This is indeed a unique moment for the Security Council. Never before in its history has the Security Council been confronted with a single event which has caused such anguish to hundreds of millions of human beings all around the globe. Never before has the Council considered an issue which so transcends the conflict of national interests and the satisfaction of national egos. Never before has the Council been witness to an occurrence which marks such a set-back for civilization itself.

7. If the Council sympathetically approaches the issue placed before it today, as I am sure it will, it cannot but view it in the perspective of civilization. International peace and security, which is the prime concern of the Security

Council, presupposes and is built upon a substratum of civilization. If civilization disintegrates, there will not even be quicksand to support the frail fabric of peace.

8. We all know that in our stormy age peace is exposed to constant dangers. Until now the twentieth century has reaped a whirlwind of strife. It has witnessed the most sanguinary conflicts in human history. It has provided the setting for the birth of weapons and technologies which threaten to depopulate the earth. All our knowledge and science have not yet taught us how to choose equality and flee greed. Colonialism is still entrenched in Africa. The great Powers have not even yet evolved a stable mode of coexistence and co-operation. The smaller States, especially those in Asia, Africa and Latin America, have still to regain their full inheritance. Poverty is still rampant. Tyranny has not been abolished everywhere. Many a people is still denied its sovereign right to independence. Hundreds of human beings are killed every day only because they seek their national freedom.

9. Yet, despite the persistence of all these problems, there was one thing in the historic evolution of human culture of which mankind could well be proud. This was the steady development of a certain tolerance, the strengthening of certain restraints, which guaranteed an immunity from attack for the monuments of the human spirit. It was a basic confidence of our times that, whatever be our passions and our prejudices, we could never bear that evil hands should touch those objects which draw the love and devotion of millions of human beings. War apart, vandalism against one people by another had become unthinkable.

10. This confidence was shattered on 21 August 1969, when, under the military occupation of Israel, the holy Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem was damaged by arson. That day will be recorded as a day of shock and shame for the whole human family. That day we witnessed an abrupt regression to barbarity. For the infinite sorrow caused by this grave event, for the collapse of the serenity which is the birthright and should be the unique gift of the Holy City of Jerusalem, we have to thank the military occupation of the City by Israel.

11. In saying this, let me make it clear that it is not my intention to prejudice the issue of criminal responsibility raised by the event. In approaching the Security Council we do not allege the actual complicity of Israeli authorities in the act which was committed on 21 August. The event certainly merits careful, impartial investigation, but such an investigation cannot be predicated on conditions of military occupation. Yet, beyond the facts which are ascertainable by inquiry, it would be futile to deny that the environment produced by the military occupation by Israel of the Holy City provided an element of encouragement to the individual or group that actually committed or abetted the committing of the most incredible and abominable act.

12. It may be, I must say in fairness, that some Israeli authorities were genuinely shocked by the crime. I grant that there must be men of goodwill in Israel who to some degree shared the outrage felt not only by Moslems but also by Christians and non-believers throughout the world. Yet, in the face of this universal reaction, can we forget that

many leadership groups in Israel have openly proclaimed the objective of rebuilding a temple on the site of Haram-Ash-Sharif, the Noble Sanctuary on which stands the Holy Al Aqsa and the Dome of the Rock.

13. The expression of regret in the official statements of Israeli authorities cannot possibly detract from the truth that an act of this nature, even without the direct complicity of the Israeli Government, is a by-product of Israel's military occupation of Jerusalem. But for the annexation of Jerusalem by Israel, carried out in total defiance of the unanimous resolutions of both the Security Council and the General Assembly, it is inconceivable that conditions would have prevailed in Jerusalem which permitted an individual or a group to seek—earlier by word and now by deed—the destruction of one of the most resplendent shrines of the Islamic faith.

14. The Security Council has considered the situation in Jerusalem before. Therefore, it is not necessary for me to reiterate the importance of the Holy City for the entire Islamic world. Since, however, inaccurate accounts continue to appear in the press, let me point out that the sanctity of Jerusalem in Moslem eyes derives from the fact that it is the unique symbol of the confluence of Islam with the sacred traditions of Abraham, Moses and Jesus, all of them prophets held in the highest reverence by Moslems. The Holy City symbolizes the ecumenicity which is inherent in Islam. That is why it was the first *Quibla* of Islam and remains to this day the third Holy City of peace and pilgrimage to the followers of that faith. The historic fact that the site of the Noble Sanctuary was encumbered with rubble, that the work of clearance was started in 638 A.D. by the second Caliph and Companion of the Holy Prophet Omar ibn Al Khattab, by his own hands, and that the sacred precinct was thus reconsecrated by Islam, has made Jerusalem a most hallowed part of the Islamic legacy. Except for one relatively brief interregnum from the First to just before the Third Crusades, Jerusalem has been a Moslem city for 1,300 years, a period far longer than those during which it was either Jewish or Christian. During that time the peoples of Islam, who held Jerusalem as a sacred trust, begrudged neither their lives nor their tears in the defence and love of the Holy City. Their philosophers and scholars, their divines and mystics, came to Jerusalem in quest of the ultimate experience of the beatific vision with which the sacred precinct of the Al Aqsa became indissolubly associated by the tradition of the ascension of the Holy Prophet.

15. The famous *status quo*, as defined and regulated by the firman or decree issued by the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid I in 1757 and as confirmed in the Edict of Toleration promulgated by Sultan Abdul Magid in 1865, demonstrated how in Moslem hands the rights of other faiths to the Holy Places in Jerusalem were scrupulously respected and securely guaranteed.

16. It was this *status quo* which settled the disputes between the different Christian rites concerning their privileges in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. It minutely fixed every detail relating to the use of each part of the

altars and of the chapels with a view to the avoidance of any sort of dispute between the various rights. This *status quo* was given international recognition in the peace settlements following the Crimean War in 1855 and the Russo-Turkish War in 1878. The universal vocation of Jerusalem was thus fully honoured under Islamic guardianship.

17. Though Jerusalem's misfortunes began when Palestine fell a prey to colonialism, the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Army in the Middle East, on his official entry into Jerusalem on 11 December 1917, issued a proclamation which stated, in part:

"Since your city is regarded with affection by the adherents of three of the great religions of mankind, and its soil has been consecrated by the prayers and pilgrimages of multitudes of devout peoples of these three religions for many centuries, therefore do I make known to you that every sacred building, monument, holy spot, shrine, traditional site, endowment, pious bequest or customary place of prayer, of whatsoever form, of the three religions will be maintained and protected according to the existing customs and beliefs of those to whose faiths they are sacred."

18. I may parenthetically mention here an important fact which brings out the historic involvement of the people of Pakistan in the fate of Jerusalem. General Allenby's proclamation was a response to an insistent demand of the Indian-Moslem community, the same community which established the sovereign State of Pakistan. One of the great leaders of this community, Maulana Mohammad Ali, lies buried within the sacred precinct.

19. Later, when the Council of the League of Nations entrusted the Mandate to the British Government on 24 July 1922, article 13 of the Mandate Agreement made it the responsibility of the Mandatory Power not only to preserve existing rights in the Holy Places and religious buildings or sites in Palestine, but also "... ensuring the requirements of public order and decorum". The article further stated: "... nothing in this Mandate shall be construed as conferring upon the mandatory authority to interfere with the fabric or management of purely Moslem sacred shrines, the immunities of which are guaranteed."¹

20. I turn now to the situation confronting us. What the Security Council has to consider, behind the most horrifying crime of 21 August, is a series of occurrences which threaten to destroy the peace and religious tolerance maintained for more than a thousand years. The Charter of the United Nations, as the Security Council has emphasized, does not countenance the acquisition of territory by force. If this principle can be invoked in the case of any territory, is it not much more applicable to Jerusalem, a territory like no other, beloved and sacred to hundreds of millions of men in all continents? Again, if this principle can be invoked against any State, is it not much more applicable against Israel, whose very establishment is founded on a United Nations resolution? Little wonder that Israel's claim to sovereignty by conquest over the

territory containing the sites of the Holy Places in Jerusalem, Hebron and Nazareth, should be regarded as intolerable. A distinguished Jewish intellectual, Professor George Steiner of Cambridge, remarked last week: "To believe that there can be normal relations, let alone real peace, between Israel and the Arab States so long as the whole of Jerusalem remains incorporated in Israel is an illusion."

21. I would only add that it is not only the Arab States that are involved here, but all States as well whose populations are predominantly Moslem. This is the issue which causes the gravest concern to my delegation and, I would venture to say, also to the other delegations that have requested this meeting of the Security Council. Our joint request in this respect is but a very limited expression of the trauma that is being experienced by all the Islamic peoples in all continents at the burning of the holy Al Aqsa Mosque. While it is only the delegations of Islamic countries that have requested the Security Council to consider the grievous situation caused by the event of 21 August, let us not forget that there are large Moslem communities in other lands that are no less affected. We have been moved by their demonstrations. We are grateful to the Governments of those countries for their sympathy, for their expression of serious concern and for their responsible affirmation that the situation in Jerusalem cannot be ameliorated except by Jerusalem's release from Israeli occupation.

22. We have no doubt in our minds that the withdrawal of Israeli control from the Old City is an imperative if the conflict in the Middle East is not to be allowed to become uncontrollable. As a conflict involving the self-determination of the people of Palestine and the territorial integrity of the Arab States, it is already grave enough. But as a conflict involving the cherished sensibilities of vast populations even outside the area of hostilities, it can become limitless in its repercussions and implacable in its nature.

23. In his statement of 31 August, His Holiness Pope Paul showed a deep awareness of the ominous implications of the situation in Jerusalem. After strongly deploring the fire in the Holy Mosque, he said that the Moslems were "shaken by the damage to a place dear to the constant and jealous veneration of millions of men". He added that he understood their bitterness. He then expressed the hope that "the situation would not degenerate into more fierce hatreds which would prejudice even more the higher and impelling cause of justice and peace".

24. Is there anyone here who would not echo the call of that great religious leader? We all dread these fierce hatreds to which the Pope has referred. Our endeavour here at the United Nations should be not to let them be awakened by such acts as the one we are considering today.

25. The signatories of the communications to the Security Council contained in documents S/9407 dated 25 August 1969 and S/9421 dated 29 August 1969 are confident that this grave aspect of the issue is fully realized by the Security Council. It has already been established in the previous debates of the General Assembly and the Security Council that the fate of Jerusalem goes beyond the matters in dispute between the parties to the Middle East conflict.

¹ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Second Session, Supplement No. 11, vol. II, Annex 20.*

The issue of Jerusalem is recognized as an issue of the universal conscience. Therefore, as I said at a previous meeting of the Security Council, it is one of transcendental importance. It is indisputable that it vitally affects the interests of many countries which are not involved in the hostilities in the Middle East.

26. Members of the Security Council will doubtless note that the signatories of the two letters cover a wide range of nations and peoples. The list includes those Moslem countries that do not recognize Israel, as well as those that do and maintain relations with it. It is but natural that the different geographical locations and historical backgrounds of these countries should cause them to pursue different foreign policies and have different external orientations. But if they are united on the proposition that Jerusalem shall not be annexed by Israel, it is because they sincerely believe that this is a question of fundamental principles—that of the inadmissibility of acquisition of territory by military conquest—and that under Israeli occupation there cannot be any preservation of the sacred character of the Holy Places or any assurance of their safety and of free access to them.

27. I feel free to confess that we, the signatories of the two communications addressed to the President of the Security Council, hesitated long before we asked for this meeting. Our hesitation was not due in the slightest to any doubt in our minds or to any anticipation of doubt in the minds of the members of the Security Council that the issue of the preservation of the Holy Places of Islam in Jerusalem, in all their sanctity, impinges directly on international peace and security. If we hesitated, we did so not only because of the immensity of our grief but also because, on an issue which arouses such deep emotions among our peoples, we did not wish to be precipitate in our actions. We held exhaustive debates on what measures would be feasible to remedy this grievous situation. We considered various alternatives. We sought realistically to measure the consequences of different types of action. In the end, we were driven to the conclusion that, while certain interim measures are conceivable, they will not assuage the sorrow of our peoples nor give them real assurance of the safety of their Holy Places as long as the Holy City remains under Israeli occupation.

28. My colleagues around this table will have doubtless noted that some interim measures were suggested in the telegraphic communication of 22 August 1969 from the representatives of twenty-five countries [S/9407]. For these measures to have any ameliorative effect on the situation in the City, they presuppose the cessation of any activity by Israel in the Old City which goes beyond its functions as a temporary occupying Power. Since the Security Council is now taking cognizance of the situation, it must concern itself with the roots of the problem. They lie in the measures of annexation carried out by Israel in excess of the rights of an occupying Power and in acts contrary to fundamental human rights. As a result, an atmosphere prevails in the Holy City which is offensive to the public order and decorum necessary for preserving the sacred character of the holy shrines.

29. In expecting the Council to discharge its responsibility in this matter, we are not seeking any new departures. The

two resolutions of the Security Council on Jerusalem—namely, resolution 252 (1968) of 21 May 1968 and resolution 267 (1969) of 3 July 1969—are unequivocal. They confirm that all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel designed to alter the status of Jerusalem are invalid. The Council has censured such measures in the strongest terms and has urgently called upon Israel to rescind them forthwith.

30. To our mind, therefore, no ground exists for any reluctance against taking the further action which was envisaged in operative paragraph 7 of resolution 267 (1969). If, however, it is felt that that stage has not yet been reached, the very minimum required at the moment is to reinforce the call embodied in previous resolutions.

31. I now return to where I began. The grave event of 21 August is unparalleled both in our age and in the history of Jerusalem for centuries prior to the disaster which befell it in 1967. It is not, I must stress, a matter of religious belief only. It is just as much a matter of fundamental human values and basic decencies. The outrage of 21 August caused a revulsion among believers and non-believers alike. Some lamented the partial destruction of a noble work of Islamic architecture, rich with history and consecrated by pilgrimages lasting for more than a millennium; others bewailed the total loss of a priceless masterpiece of religious art: the pulpit installed in the Holy Mosque by the peerless Salahuddin. Still others expressed their abhorrence of the act and the atmosphere which permitted it, because it disrupted the ecumenical spirit which is probably the most beneficent promise of the modern age. Yet others were indignant at the event because it was likely to unleash dark forces of anger and hate. The Islamic communities were the most aggrieved because it affected something which they value beyond life itself.

32. The Security Council's response to the event has to be based on this whole range of reactions, all having one element: the consciousness that the event demands urgent measures to prevent any chance of its recurrence. Such measures, I must stress, cannot in their very nature relate only to the Holy Places, because these Holy Places cannot be isolated from their physical environment and the social and political order imposed on it. The Holy Places are organically related to the City itself. Their sacred character cannot be preserved for any length of time if the City continues to suffer military occupation. Behind the wound inflicted on the Noble Sanctuary, it is Jerusalem itself which is bleeding.

33. In conclusion, I shall only say that the cause of many a people and many a land has not always been well served at the United Nations. We hope that the cause of Jerusalem will strike a more sympathetic chord. A famous Psalm asks all to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, for peace within her walls. While millions offer this prayer, the action that has to accompany it can be taken only by the Security Council. That action should be such as to release Jerusalem from its present agony.

34. The PRESIDENT (*translated from Russian*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of the United Arab Republic, on whom I now call.

35. Mr. EL-ERIAN (United Arab Republic): Mr. President, I wish to thank you and, through you, the members of the Security Council for allowing me this opportunity to express the views of the delegation of the United Arab Republic on the question before the Council.

36. The Council is convened upon the request of the representatives of twenty-five Member States to consider the serious situation resulting from the crime of arson committed on 21 August 1969 against the holy Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem under the military occupation of Israel. That crime perpetrated by the Israeli occupying authorities has caused and continues to cause shock and dismay, grief and outrage, among the peoples in the world who venerate the Al Aqsa Mosque as one of the most sacred shrines of Islam and, as such, a precious part of the spiritual and cultural heritage of humanity.

37. We have just heard the representative of Pakistan, Ambassador Agha Shahi, who has eloquently and lucidly demonstrated the eminent and venerated place the Al Aqsa Mosque holds among the monuments of the human spirit. He has placed the crime in its right context, the context of civilization and universal culture and he has underlined the character of the crime committed against the Al Aqsa Mosque; it is a case of regression to barbarity.

38. In their communication dated 22 August 1969, addressed to the President of the Security Council, the representatives of twenty-five Member States stated that:

“Since the sacred precincts in Jerusalem proclaim the spiritual brotherhood of man in God, any damage or desecration of the hallowed rites of one faith cannot but cause anguish to the devoted adherents of another” [S/9407, para. 2].

They expressed the confidence that the sorrow of their Governments and peoples “will be shared by all Governments and peoples who cherish the abiding values of the human spirit and hold the Holy City in the highest reverence”. [Ibid.] They further pointed out that “Events of this nature have had no parallel in the history of Jerusalem for centuries prior to Israeli military occupation.” [Ibid., para. 4.]

39. Underlying the symptomatic significance of the crime committed against the Al Aqsa Mosque, the representatives stated in that communication that they wished to impress upon the Security Council and the General Assembly that such events add a vast dimension of human indignation to the situation in Jerusalem, and thus further aggravate the threat to peace which that situation constitutes.

40. The sacrilege and destruction inflicted upon the Al Aqsa Mosque come as a grim reminder of the duplicity of Israeli pronouncements. The Council will recall that when it considered the question of Jerusalem at its 1482nd meeting on 30 June 1969, the representative of Israel had the audacity to inform the Council of “plans and projects for the preservation of the city’s historical monuments and religious shrines”. [1482nd meeting, para. 47.] It comes also as a sobering reminder to the Council of the pertinence of the warning voiced by the representative of Jordan,

Ambassador El-Farra, when he referred to the measures taken by the Israeli authorities against buildings in Jerusalem which included a mosque, a religious court and a Moslem school, on the ground of their being threats to public security because of cracks in their foundations, and so on. Ambassador El-Farra posed the question of whether it was not surprising that houses that had been standing for centuries—some of them since the thirteenth century—should suddenly, after two years of Israeli occupation, develop large cracks and be declared a threat to public safety. He followed the question with his warning that

“It is the same with the digging which is at present going on near the Al Aqsa Mosque. What will happen, may I ask, when cracks are discovered there too—as doubtless, if permitted, they will be? Will this unique Mosque, Al Aqsa, the third holiest in all Islam, be condemned . . . as well? Where will the line be drawn? Or will Israel be left to continue unhampered its ‘excavations’, its looting and wanton destruction, its desecration of holy places and its gross disregard for the rights of others?” [Ibid., para. 33.]

41. Israel must be held responsible for the crime of the destruction and profanation of the Al Aqsa Mosque; its responsibility is original and vicarious, direct and indirect. That responsibility extends in time to long before 21 August 1969 when fire was set to the Mosque; for, through its policy and its attitude to Arab Jerusalem and its Holy Shrines, Israel has laid down the setting for the crime and activated the motivation.

42. For a long time Israel has carried on a systematic and carefully planned wave of destruction of Arab houses of long-standing religious learning and education, such as those in the Magharba quarter. It has demolished Moslem shrines adjacent to the western wall of the Al Aqsa Mosque. Moreover, holy, venerated places which, according to the tenets of the Moslem religion, should be regarded with reverential respect have been treated as mere touristic sites, open to flocks of curious visitors with complete disregard of the minimum of decent behaviour and decorum, thus affronting the time-honoured Moslem traditions. The representative of Jordan, Ambassador El-Farra, has apprised the Security Council, in several letters addressed to the President of the Council, of the occurrence of those acts, the veracity of which the world press has reported and confirmed. I would cite one of such reports which appeared in *The New York Times* of 22 June 1969, according to which the sacred compound of Haram-Ash-Sharif has been turned into a picnicking area. The correspondent of that newspaper reported that

“The Moslems regard the entire compound as in effect a mosque, because for more than 1,300 years prayer platforms have been scattered throughout. During holidays, tens of thousands of pilgrims gather there and form prayer lines even on the pavement. To them, the Israelis’ . . . conduct in such a place” is “offensive”.

43. The carefully planned designs of Israel have not been confined to the propagation of a climate of disrespect and lack of reverence for the holy shrines. Parallel with it went a campaign of official and unofficial pronouncements

whose avowed purpose was the preparation of a climate for the clearance of the site of the Al Aqsa Mosque in order to give way to the restoration of the Temple.

44. I shall not cite the official and unofficial declarations by Israeli leaders such as "Israel is meaningless without Jerusalem, and Jerusalem is meaningless without the Temple".

45. I shall not cite the declaration by a member of the Israeli Cabinet after the aggression of June 1967 to the effect that the site of the Haram-Ash-Sharif belongs to the Jews by the right of occupation.

46. I shall not cite the declaration by another member of the Cabinet of Israel that the right of ownership of the site of Haram-Ash-Sharif was acquired by Israel's forebears 2,000 years ago. Nor shall I cite evidence like the establishment of a fund to collect money all over the world for the purpose of the reconstruction of the Temple.

47. I should, however, like to cite a report by Menahem Borsh from Jerusalem, published in the Zionist paper, *Yadihote Ahronote*, in the issue of 18 August 1969, page 35, three days before the fire was set to the Holy Al Aqsa Mosque:

"A group of Bitar members that arrived from Europe for a tour here made a pilgrimage yesterday to the Temple Mount. They made a ceremonial parade against the doors of Al Aqsa Mosque; after a mass prayer they proceeded to the Temple Mount through Bab Al Magharba. They rushed quickly to the steps leading to the Mosque and conducted the parade. They were addressed by their instructor who explained to the trainees that their feet stood on the most sacred spot of the Jewish people, a spot that strangers tried to seize, but in the future it would become the nation's centre on which the Temple would be built anew."

48. Those are the irrefutable facts which establish the role of Israel in and its responsibility for the crime against Al Aqsa Mosque—a responsibility of which Israel cannot absolve itself by first relating the cause of the fire to an electric short-circuit or by later presenting an individual whom it calls a religious fanatic.

49. By committing this offence against the spiritual and cultural heritage of mankind Israel has added one more offence to its series of offences against peace and humanity.

50. The first offence was the denial of the inalienable rights of the Arab people of Palestine, in violation of the principle of self-determination, and Israel's continued resort to force as an instrument of its racist ideology and expansionist policy, which culminated in 1948 in its driving the Arab people of Palestine by force and terror from their homeland; in 1956 in its launching of its aggression against my country; and in 1967 in the extension of the scope of aggression to comprise this time, three Member States of the United Nations.

51. That violation of the basic norm of the prohibition of the use of force against the territorial integrity of States

was followed by the continuation of Israeli military occupation of Arab territories with the avowed objective of annexation in contravention of the established principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war, a principle which was reaffirmed unanimously by the Security Council in resolution 242 (1967).

52. The annexation of Arab territories has now become an official policy. It has been reflected in a number of declarations by Israeli leaders. One of the most recent of those declarations was made by the Israeli Defence Minister, who stated:

"Golan should no longer be included among such terms as new areas or occupied areas, and should be viewed as one of the districts of Israel. The Golan will never be returned to Syria."

He added:

"Israel will hold on to Sharm Esh Sheikh and the approaches to the Gulf of Eilat . . . Jerusalem will never be divided again . . . Israel is willing to return the West Bank of Jordan within the framework of the Allon Plan."

53. It should be noted that the Allon Plan is the one which aims at ensuring Israel's continued occupation of the Jordan West Bank. A statement of policy on the annexation of occupied Arab territories was included in the platform of the ruling party in Israel.

54. Moreover, the Israeli policy of annexation is by no means confined to verbal declarations or electoral platforms. Plans have already been drawn and put into effect towards that ultimate goal, as reported by *Reuters* from Tel Aviv on 27 August 1969:

"The Israeli Government has authorized the establishment of six new settlements in Israeli-occupied areas, the Minister of Agriculture, Haim Gvati, said at a news conference here today.

"Plans for the settlements include two in the Golan Heights, captured from Syria in the six-day war of June 1967, two in the Jordan Valley in occupied Jordan territory and two in northern Sinai.

"The Minister said that since the 1967 war ten settlements had been established on the Golan Heights, four in the Jordan Valley, two in the Etzion block near Hebron and two in Sinai."

55. Israel has also committed and continues to commit gross violations of the principles and rules of the 1949 Geneva Convention relative to Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War². Its oppressive measures include the arrest, detention, torture, dispossession and expulsion of Arab civilians from their homes and the deportation of their leaders, religious and secular, Moslem and Christian.

56. I should like to turn to Israeli offences with specific reference to Jerusalem. That Holy City of peace and

² United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75 (1950), No. 973.

brotherhood for all time has had under Israeli occupation its sad and tragic share of suffering, oppression and sacrifice. Immediately following the 1967 aggression came the Israeli attempt to annex it, described at that time as administrative measures. The General Assembly and the Security Council have censured Israel in the strongest terms for those measures, considered them invalid and repeatedly called on Israel to rescind forthwith all measures likely to change or alter the status of Jerusalem.

57. Israel's response to the will of the international community as expressed in those resolutions was persistent disregard and defiance. The burning of Al Aqsa Mosque was but a manifestation of that policy and it cannot be viewed in the abstract or out of its context; it is not an individual incident or an isolated event. It is intrinsically related and inherently linked to the continued Israeli occupation of Jerusalem, to the Israelis' avowed expansionist designs and to their refusal to carry out the various General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. It has a symptomatic significance, and the remedy should be addressed not to the symptom but to the source of the evil; not to the effects but to the cause. For the Holy Places in Jerusalem, as we were pertinently reminded by the representative of Pakistan, there will be no safety as long as the Israeli occupation of Jerusalem continues.

58. As amply described by the representatives of twenty-five Member States in their communication to the President of the Council, this crime adds a vast dimension of human indignation to the situation in Jerusalem and thus further aggravates the threat to peace which that situation constitutes.

59. The primary purpose of the United Nations is to maintain international peace and security and to that end to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace and for the suppression of acts of aggression. Member States have a collective responsibility in this endeavour, for aggression against one State is aggression against the international order, and repelling the aggressor and bringing him back within the realm of international authority is the collective responsibility of all the members of the international community.

60. It is in the light of such considerations that any assistance, military or economic, to Israel should be viewed. The recent news of the beginning of the delivery of Phantom aircraft to Israel cannot but cause deep regret and grave concern. The implications of such an act are all the more serious when one considers that it is taking place at a time when Israel is persisting in its aggression against the Arab countries and in its defiance of the United Nations. It is taking place at a time following a number of resolutions adopted by the Security Council during the past few months, in which the Council condemned Israel for its premeditated armed attacks on villages and populated areas in Arab countries; it is taking place at a time when further action and more effective steps—warning of which was given by the Council in a number of its resolutions—should be taken against Israel. This is the time for the application of sanctions against Israel as the Charter envisaged against an aggressor. The provision of weapons and aircraft to Israel while Israel occupies the territories of three Member States

of the United Nations can in no way contribute to the achievement of peace in the Middle East. Any military or economic assistance provided to the aggressor is nothing but support for his aggression and an act against the victims of that aggression. As pertinently put by the representative of Lebanon, Mr. Ghorra, at the 1498th meeting of the Council, on 13 August 1969:

"Israel may receive Phantom aircraft and may seek more Phantoms, but the phantom of the injustice it has committed against the Arab world... will haunt it."
[1498th meeting, para. 37.]

61. Israel, by refusing to implement the United Nations resolutions, by adopting an aggressive policy of persistent denial of the rights of the Arab people of Palestine and continued occupation of the Arab territories, by foiling all efforts to reach a peaceful settlement of the problem, and by its declared policy of annexing the Arab occupied territories, is creating a serious situation fraught with grave dangers for international peace and security. Israel has adopted an obstructive attitude to all the efforts exerted to reach a peaceful settlement in accordance with Security Council resolution 242 (1967): the efforts carried out by Ambassador Jarring as well as those undertaken by the four Powers to achieve a peaceful settlement of the Middle East situation. By such an attitude Israel is seeking to impose its own terms and to realize its expansionist aims, in utter disregard of the dangers that threaten peace in the area.

62. The latest but certainly not the last of Israel's aggressions occurred south of Suez this morning—on the very day the Council was scheduled to convene. It is but another confirmation of Israel's persistence in continuing its policy of complete disregard and defiance of the Charter and the injunctions of the Security Council.

63. How long will Israel continue its denial of the rights of the Arab people of Palestine, its occupation of Arab territories, its oppression and repression of the inhabitants of the occupied territories? The reply to that question has been provided by Israel. It is as long as Israel is allowed to do so. How long should Israel be allowed to violate the basic norms of the Charter, to challenge the authority of the United Nations, to defy the will of the international community, to pursue its expansionist policy and reckless adventures? The reply to that question is for the Security Council, the highest authority vested with the responsibilities for repelling aggression and maintaining peace. The reply is the prompt and effective implementation of the United Nations resolutions, the restoration of the rights of the Arab people of Palestine, and the prompt and complete termination of Israeli aggression and military occupation.

64. The PRESIDENT [*translated from Russian*]: I now call on the representative of Indonesia.

65. Mr. ABDULGANI (Indonesia): Mr. President, I should like to take this opportunity to express to you and to the other members of the Security Council the gratitude of the Indonesian delegation for granting us the privilege of participating in this meeting of the Security Council.

66. When the shocking news of the fire at the Al Aqsa Mosque reached my country, the Indonesian delegation,

upon the instructions of my Government, joined with the other Moslem countries Members of the United Nations in sending by cable a telegraphic communication, dated 22 August, to the Secretary-General and to the President of the Security Council, requesting that suitable action be taken regarding the act of arson.

67. In our cable we envisaged as suitable action an impartial investigation, the prevention of the recurrence of such acts, and the enabling of representatives of the Governments of Islamic countries to assess the damage and to prepare plans for the repair of the Mosque. The Secretary-General, in replying to our cable, expressed his shock and sadness at the tragic fire which had severely damaged that historic shrine.

68. On 29 August, Indonesia again joined with the other Moslem countries in requesting an urgent meeting of the Security Council. The basis of our request was the grievous situation resulting from the extensive damage caused by arson to the Holy Al Aqsa. This situation arises from a set of conditions which are part of the larger Middle East dispute. Therefore, it is broader in scope than the immediate incident and involves the whole Middle East.

69. The occasion which has prompted our delegation to join in calling for a meeting of the Security Council is indeed a sad one, not only for Moslems but for all mankind. It is an occasion of special anguish to the millions of Moslems around the world, for whom the Al Aqsa Mosque is the first *Quibla* and the third most sacred Mosque of Islam. All Indonesians share the horror and shock of their Moslem brothers everywhere at this act of arson during the time that Jerusalem is under military occupation.

70. Since 22 August, the leaders of all Indonesian Moslem organizations have stated that the Israeli occupying authorities cannot be absolved of responsibility for this event, and that recurrence of such acts under Zionist rule should be prevented in the future.

71. Most Indonesian Islamic leaders wonder if this might not be part of a deliberate attempt to rebuild a temple structure symbolic of the Hebrew past. It is felt, therefore, that this may be a test and a challenge to Moslem determination to retain their Holy Places in Jerusalem. In that case, the Indonesian people would surely rise to this challenge, for what is at stake here is not just a mosque, holy as it is: what is at stake is the freedom of worship and the assurance that the Holy Places will be respected and recognized by everyone, including the military occupying force.

72. The Indonesian Government, through our Foreign Minister, declared immediately after the arson that it denounced strongly the burning of the Masjid Al Aqsa in Jerusalem. It considered the arson an indefensible act, the circumstances of which should not remain obscure, and an act which should not go unpunished. It is the considered view of my Government that the Israeli occupying authorities cannot be absolved from responsibility. Furthermore, my Government is ready to take an active part in joint efforts by the whole Moslem world to rebuild and save this sacred Mosque.

73. It has also been announced that the Indonesian Government has donated one million rupiahs for the restoration of the Mosque. In addition, further sums have been voluntarily contributed by citizens to joint funds with other Moslem countries for reconstruction, and more will be forthcoming. These voluntary donations, however small they may be, are a reflection of the outpouring of genuine concern among Moslems everywhere. This should also be seen as symbolic of their feeling of solidarity for the cause of the Palestinian Moslems in the Holy Land, who still live in the shadow of continued war and misery.

74. Although about 90 per cent of our 115 million people are Moslems let me make it clear that the Republic of Indonesia is definitely not an Islamic State. At the same time, however, it is not entirely a secular State. Although no express mention is made in our Constitution to make Islam the State religion, Islamic tenets are one of the corner-stones of Moslem life in Indonesia. The State is also committed to the protection of all the religions that exist in the country, and provides for each equal opportunity to practise its beliefs. This fact is reflected in the creation of a Ministry of Religious Affairs which, from the beginning of our independence, has been entrusted with this task.

75. In a statement on 27 August, the Minister of Religious Affairs elaborated on further efforts which Indonesian Moslems might make to contribute to the efforts of their Moslem brothers in all countries to restore the Holy Mosque. He also laid stress on the need for concerted action to prevent the recurrence of similar acts of profanation of the Holy Places in Jerusalem.

76. We in Indonesia, of course, are aware that this latest tragic event did not occur in a vacuum. It cannot be separated from the military occupation of Jerusalem, which has been deplored and condemned time and again by this Council, most recently by resolutions 252 (1968) and 267 (1969). We must recognize that the total environment in which this outrage took place is one of illegality and defiance, not only of recommendations and resolutions of the General Assembly, but of explicit decisions of the Security Council.

77. Furthermore, since the Israeli occupation of Jerusalem, this Council has heard repeated charges against Israel for its wanton acts of demolition and changes of character of historic and religious buildings in Jerusalem and in other occupied areas. These changes and the extent of the desecration have not been able to be adequately determined since the Israeli authorities have consistently refused to allow the Special Representative of the Secretary-General into the area to make an impartial survey of the situation. Accordingly, the Secretary-General has been unable to discharge his responsibilities under resolution 252 (1968) to report to the Council regarding measures taken by the occupying Power to change the legal status of Jerusalem.

78. In light of these facts it has become the overriding responsibility of the Security Council to implement the many resolutions pertaining to the City of Jerusalem which have already been discussed and adopted.

79. The principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by armed force cannot be repeated too often.

At the Fifth Emergency Special Session of the General Assembly in 1967 [1534th meeting], the Indonesian delegation strongly denounced the aggressive actions of Israel against the Arab States, and joined with other nations in efforts to effect an immediate cease-fire. We expressed our concern again in the Special Political Committee last year³ in the debate on the plight of the Palestine refugees. Again in the Third Committee last year⁴ we stated our continued interest in the respect for human rights in the occupied territories in the Middle East. We also participated in the debate in the Security Council on the status of Jerusalem in July of this year, scarcely two months ago. Today we cannot fail to recall that the universally accepted principles of international law require that an occupying Power respect and safeguard religious institutions and practices. These principles have been repeatedly and consistently violated. Resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council have been defied with impunity. The tragic consequences of these failures to require compliance are only too clear as a result of this latest destruction.

80. In recalling these past injustices which have contributed to the present tragedy, we have made every attempt to keep political considerations and our strong religious concern separate, and it is not our intention to make this issue one which will further aggravate an already precarious situation.

81. The sacred task of rebuilding this shrine is a religious obligation upon Moslems everywhere. Already many heads of Moslem States and other world religious leaders have offered to help in this work. It is clear, and it must be conceded by all, that the actual work required must be undertaken by Moslems, directed by Moslems and must not be hindered by anyone for whatever reason.

82. The task of the Security Council now is to facilitate this undertaking so that it can be completed as speedily as possible. This can be done only if the previous Security Council resolutions are implemented. To fail to do so now will only diminish the authority of the Council.

83. In summarizing our point of view, let me repeat from my statement of two months ago in this Council in which I said that our deep concern is twofold: first, the religious and spiritual attachment to Jerusalem and to the Holy Mosque Al Aqsa by the people of Indonesia as the largest Moslem country in South-East Asia, where the teaching of Islam is not only religious, but is also a way of life and one of the roots of our culture and civilization. Our second concern is that the crisis of confidence in the United Nations will be further aggravated unless a firm stand is made.

84. The PRESIDENT (*translated from Russian*): I call on the representative of Israel.

85. Mr. TEKOAH (Israel): Mr. President, I should like to express to you my deep respect and good wishes in your high office. I join also in paying a tribute to your predecessor, the representative of Spain.

³ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-third Session, Special Political Committee*, 619th meeting.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Third Committee, 1626th meeting.

86. This debate concerns a shrine which is sacred to millions of Moslems in the world. My Government and people profoundly respect the Islamic faith and the religious sentiments of its adherents. We share their sense of shock and sorrow at the damage caused to the Al Aqsa Mosque by the fire on 21 August. A part of the universal human legacy has been injured and its swift repair should be carried out as soon as possible.

87. At the same time, all decent opinion has been revolted at the false accounts of this tragic occurrence that have been deliberately spread and the hatred that has been whipped up in an effort to exploit religious feelings for political and even warlike purposes. It would be regrettable if the present debate were perverted to serve these unworthy purposes.

88. The United Nations should represent the ecumenical spirit and set its face firmly against religious prejudice.

89. My delegation at any rate proposes to address the Council in a spirit of mutual tolerance and goodwill among all the faiths represented around this table. We believe that a number of the Moslem Member States which have joined in requesting the Council meeting have done so only out of genuine concern for a Moslem Holy Place and without any desire to increase ill-will and tension.

90. The sanctity of the place under discussion demands that the Security Council and all its members should approach this question without attempting to politicize it and that our only thought should be to reassure sincere Moslem opinion concerning the safety of the Mosque and the need to ensure its repair.

91. It is in awe that man faces nature's storms, the catastrophes of famine and epidemic, of flood and of fire, and the ravages and sorrow they bring with them. In such hours of anxiety man's daily preoccupations, his animosities and conflicts merge in a feeling of common concern and action to overcome the havoc, to repair the damage wrought and to restore life. No matter how strong the belligerency between opponents, no matter how bitter the quarrel between neighbours, the inherent understanding of human beings for each other's distress comes to the fore and prevails. That has been so in the past. That should always be so.

92. Despite the differences arising from the Middle East conflict, despite attempts eagerly made by some to exploit the disaster for inflaming passions, there were elements of precisely such understanding in face of the fire on 21 August 1969 in the Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.

93. Within a few minutes Arab members of the fire brigade in East Jerusalem were on the scene and they were soon joined by their Jewish colleagues. As the flames were being mastered, fire-fighting equipment and Jewish crews arrived from Bet Shemesh, Ramat Gan and Bnei Brak and Arab firemen from Bethlehem, Hebron and Nablus. Jews and Arabs strove side by side to overcome the fire and after an hour succeeded in extinguishing it.

94. This joint Arab-Jewish effort to localize the fire and to extinguish it within a short time was not an isolated

instance that brought Arab and Jew together in common endeavour. It was with the assistance of the Moslem guards at the Al Aqsa Mosque, and with evidence which they furnished, that the person believed to be responsible for setting fire to the Mosque was arrested. Likewise, the official inquiry into the circumstances of the fire is being conducted by a Commission of Inquiry composed of Arab as well as Jewish personalities, and Arab and Jewish witnesses are appearing before it in a common endeavour to arrive at the truth.

95. Let us recall the essential features of the unhappy events of that day.

96. The fire broke out early in the morning at approximately 7.20 a.m. At that time the area of the Mosque is generally quiet and almost deserted. No one except Moslem worshippers is allowed to be in it. Jewish and other non-Moslem visitors may enter the Mosque only from 8 o'clock onwards, and even then they are barred during the hours of prayer. Nevertheless, a non-Moslem succeeded in purchasing an entrance ticket from the Wakf guard at the Bani Ghanim (Ghawanima) Gate and entered the compound before 7 a.m. When the fire was noticed, the guards saw the man hurriedly leaving the Mosque. The blaze started in the south-western wing, which is largely made of wood. Nine tenths of the shrine, including the dome, remained untouched by the fire. The Nur ad Din Minbar pulpit, however, was almost totally destroyed. So was the wooden roof over the southern wing. The original wooden boards decorating the ceiling of Al Aqsa had been taken down several years ago and they are carefully preserved in the Moslem Museum which adjoins the Mosque. The existing boards, damage to which was slight, date from the present century. Except for that damage, the Mosque remained unharmed. Normal prayers in it were resumed on the following day, a Friday, with the participation of some 2,000 worshippers. Services in the Mosque have continued since, without interruption.

97. As soon as the outbreak of fire became known, the Prime Minister, Mrs. Golda Meir, issued a statement declaring, *inter alia*:

"I have heard with shock and regret that this morning at 7.20 a fire broke out at the Al Aqsa Mosque. The fire brigades that were called in immediately are making every effort to extinguish the fire.

"As soon as the fire became known, the members of the Cabinet convened in session.

"In the name of the Government of Israel I express deep regret at the outbreak of fire in a site holy to Islam."

98. In the afternoon, a special meeting of the Cabinet was convened, and at its conclusion the following communiqué was issued:

"The Cabinet met in special session this afternoon to consider the fire which broke out only this morning in a part of the Al Aqsa Mosque.

"As soon as the news of the fire became known, this morning, the Prime Minister published a statement expressing deep sorrow.

"This afternoon, the Cabinet decided to establish a commission of inquiry to inquire into the circumstances of the outbreak of the fire. The findings of the Commission will be published.

"The President of the Supreme Court has been requested by the Government to appoint the presiding judge and the members of the Commission.

"The Government commends the action of the fire brigade workers and those who helped them, both Jews and Arabs, whose devoted work enabled the fire to be localized and extinguished with the result that the Mosque building was saved.

"It has thus become possible to hold prayers in the Mosque.

"The police immediately opened a vigorous investigation which is still proceeding.

"The Government of Israel is ready to give all aid and co-operation necessary for the repair and restoration of those parts of the building which were damaged. It will in this connexion make available the assistance of engineers, as well as Moslem experts from abroad.

"The Government expresses deep sorrow at the outbreak of the fire in this revered Moslem shrine.

"At various times in the past, fires have broken out in holy places . . . This, however, is the first occasion on which an attempt has been made to inflame passion and incite hatred. The Government expresses revulsion at the efforts now being made by official quarters in certain Arab States falsely to attribute to Israel culpability for causing the fire. This vicious libel, which is designed to exploit the fire for purposes of political and religious incitement, merits the unqualified condemnation of all enlightened mankind."

99. In accordance with the decision taken, the President of the Supreme Court of Israel, acting by virtue of the powers conferred upon him by law, appointed on 22 August 1969 the following Commission of Inquiry:

Chairman: Dr. Yoel Zussman, Justice of the Supreme Court;

Members: Mr. Muhamad al-Hawari, Judge of the District Court, Nazareth; Professor Michael Ardon, Professor of Chemistry at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem; Professor Arnold Winokur, Professor of Construction at the Technion, Haifa; Mr. Musa Ktily, Mayor of Nazareth.

100. On the day of the fire, 21 August, the President of the Moslem Council, Sheikh Helmi el-Muhtasib, held a press conference at which he declared that preliminary investigation by Arab engineers definitely indicated arson.

101. The correspondent of the *Christian Science Monitor* who was present at the press conference reported Sheikh el-Muhtasib's statement as follows:

"He claimed that a man of a well-known description had entered the Mosque on Thursday morning and was seen leaving just before the fire broke out. When some of the Mosque gate-keepers gave chase, the man fled.

"Although the Sheikh refused to identify the man's nationality pending an investigation by the Moslem Committee, he insisted the man was not a Palestinian. He said the man was young, fair, dressed in khaki and bare-headed, and had spoken to the gate-keeper in English. He said the gate-keeper could identify the man."

102. On the following day, a man, a visitor from Australia, was arrested by the Israel police on the basis of evidence submitted by the Moslem guards of the Mosque. According to additional information now available that same person had tried to set fire to the Mosque ten days earlier, on 11 August, at 2330 hours, but had failed. Traces of that attempt remained and had been noticed by the guards. The latter, however, did not report this to the authorities till after the fire on 21 August. In the meantime Michael Rohan, the accused, has re-enacted his deeds for the police, formal charges have been filed and preparations for his trial are continuing.

103. The Commission of Inquiry has also commenced its hearings. The hearings, like the trial of the accused person, will remain open to all irrespective of nationality or religion.

104. Those are the facts. The Israeli reaction was summed up on 24 August by Israel's Foreign Minister as follows:

"The Mosque Al Aqsa is the possession of Islam but the respect for its beauty, its antiquity and the associations which flow from it is a part of the universal culture. A civilized man is by definition one whose only reaction to the fire is one of shock and concern, undiluted by any other sentiment or motive of prejudice, of rancour or of political advantage, and indeed all civilized mankind, and, by virtue of proximity, Israel first of all, reacted in unity of spirit. A part of the human legacy has been injured. Happily the vigilance and toil of the firemen and workers, Jewish and Arab, have saved it from destruction. It is intact.

"Everything must now be set on foot to restore it as far as possible to its full splendour and of course justice must take its course."

105. It is in that spirit that the matter before the Security Council must be considered. It would be regrettable if an event which unites us all in sorrow should become a cause for further division and hostility.

106. Truth and reality must not be allowed to become overshadowed by emotion and acrimony. Facts should not be simply relegated to oblivion.

107. Thus, for instance, it is a fact that fires have occurred in Moslem and Christian Holy Places also in the past when

east Jerusalem was under Jordanian rule. In 1949 a fire broke out in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. It took over twenty-four hours—not one hour as in the case of Al Aqsa—for the authorities to extinguish the fire. In 1964 there was a fire in the Mosque compound itself, in the Dome of the Rock adjacent to Al Aqsa.

108. Similarly, it is a fact that nine tenths of the Mosque was untouched by the fire on 21 August, that normal religious services have continued in it and that repairs of the damage have already started.

109. It is also a fact that in the period of Jerusalem's division Jewry's Holy Shrine of the Western Wall was desecrated; all synagogues in the Old City were razed to the ground; tombstones of the Jewish people's most ancient and revered cemetery on the Mount of Olives were uprooted to serve as building material in Jordanian army camps.

110. Israel's attitude to the Holy Places was stated as far back as 7 June 1967 by the Prime Minister, the late Mr. Levi Eshkol. Speaking to the heads of religious communities in Jerusalem, he stated the Government's policy regarding the Holy Places to include the following:

"The arrangements concerning the Holy Places of Islam will be determined by the Moslem Council. The arrangements in the places holy to Christendom will be made by a Christian Council."

111. On 27 June 1957 he reiterated this policy before a meeting with religious dignitaries and declared:

"I want to point out our intention to place the internal administration of the Holy Places and their arrangements in the hands of the religious leaders of the communities which hold them sacred."

The Protection of Holy Places Law 5727-1967 provides:

"1. The Holy Places shall be protected from desecration and any other violation and from anything likely to violate the freedom of access of the members of the various religions to the places sacred to them or their feelings with regard to those places.

"2. (a) Whoever desecrates or otherwise violates a holy place shall be liable to imprisonment for a term of seven years.

"(b) Whoever does anything that is likely to violate the freedom of access of the members of the various religions to the places sacred to them or their feelings with regard to those places shall be liable to imprisonment for a term of five years."

112. All Moslem Holy Places, including the Al Aqsa Mosque, have since 1967 been controlled, administered and guarded by the Wakf, the appropriate Moslem religious authority. No change has taken place in that respect as compared with conditions prevailing prior to 1967. Some two years ago the Ministry of Religious Affairs offered to provide guards at its expense, but the offer was not

accepted, and the Ministry respected the wishes of the Moslem authorities. Since the recent Al Aqsa fire, those authorities have themselves taken steps to review and improve the internal security arrangements in the Haram Ash-Sharif compound and the two mosques it holds. That is a matter clearly within their own prerogative. The Israel authorities limit their security functions to safeguarding the access to Holy Places, maintaining public order in their vicinity, and assisting with security within the premises only if invited to do so by the responsible religious authorities. At the hearings of the Commission of Inquiry, official Moslem witnesses confirmed that this understanding reflects no change from that which prevailed under the Jordanian occupation and is satisfactory to them.

113. World reaction to the attempt to exploit the fire on 21 August in order to invite religious hatred and aggravate the Israel-Arab conflict has been one of shock and general condemnation. In North and South America, in Africa, Europe and Asia, disapproval, dissociation and protest have been voiced. Christians and Jews, as well as Moslems, statesmen, spiritual leaders and laymen, the press and public bodies and organizations have unequivocally denounced such incitement.

114. The reaction of the Arab population in Jerusalem is of particular interest. It was natural that the news of the outbreak of the fire in the Holy Place should arouse emotions among the local Moslem population. Yet, despite the attempt by some unruly fringe groups, whipped up by foreign radio and television broadcasts, to give violent expression to their feelings, the community as a whole remained calm.

115. Jerusalem's Moslem leaders and notables have expressed their satisfaction at the measures taken by the Israel authorities. When the Israeli Minister of Police, meeting on 22 August with representatives of the Moslem Council, conveyed to them the news about the arrest of the suspected arsonist, they declared their gratification and appreciation at the fact that such rapid progress was made in the investigation of the fire.

116. *The New York Times* correspondent spoke to Mr. Anwar Nuseibeh, a member of the Moslem Council, and reported on 23 August:

"Anwar Nuseibeh, a former Defence Minister of Jordan and now an Arab community leader in Jerusalem, said that the arrest of Mr. Rohan was a 'good thing' and that he hoped it would clarify other aspects of the fire."

117. According to other press reports, Anwar el-Khatib, also a member of the Moslem Council and the former Governor of the East Jerusalem District, declared:

"If that is in fact the man who set fire to the Mosque and if his motives are as published, this will bring about a considerable improvement in the situation obtaining today in the Arab world as a whole and in particular in Jerusalem."

118. On 23 August, leaders of the Moslem communities in Israel held a meeting, following which a statement was

issued to the effect that the arrest of the man suspected of arson explodes the rumours spread by the Arab countries.

119. On 28 August the Jerusalem Moslem Council established an Al Aqsa Repairs Committee. Its Chairman is Sheikh Helmi el-Muhtasib, the President of the Moslem Council. The Committee has announced the creation of a special fund to which contributions for repair work will be accepted. An office has been opened in the Mosque Quarter to supervise the repairs. The office will be headed by Mr. Anwar el-Khatib. The repairs are understood to require several weeks at the utmost.

120. The Moslem Council has also addressed itself to the question of security arrangements in the Mosque Quarter where Al Aqsa is situated. Realizing that the circumstances of the suspected arsonist's entry into the Mosque compound before it opens to visitors leave a number of questions unanswered, the Moslem Council invited Mr. Hazen el-Khaldi, a former senior officer in the Syrian Army, to survey the security arrangements. Mr. Khaldi is expected to present his findings within a few days. He will also make recommendations for possible improvements in the security precautions at the Al Aqsa Mosque.

121. The Israel Government has already declared its readiness to make available all assistance required, including the admission of experts from abroad. As I have also indicated, the hearings of the Commission of Inquiry as well as the trial of the suspected arsonist, will be public and open to all irrespective of nationality or faith.

122. Thus, grievous as the case of the fire at the Al Aqsa Mosque may have been, understandable as the emotions generated by it are, it is clear that all necessary measures have already been taken to ascertain the circumstances, to mete out justice and to restore the building.

123. The Government of Israel will remain steadfast in its declared policy of maintaining and respecting the control, administration and protection of all Holy Places by the religious communities which hold them sacred. The Government of Israel remains willing to continue consultations with the world's religious bodies to give further expression to the universal religious character of the Holy Places.

124. Respect for religion and for the faith of others is deeply imbedded in Jewish consciousness. The torment and bloodshed inflicted upon us on account of our religion are ever present in our minds. We understand and indeed share the pain of those hurt in their feelings of faith. We are confident that everything possible is being done to clarify the facts and repair the damage, and that the Mosque of Al Aqsa will continue in its beauty and glory to be an inspiration to those who hold it sacred and to all mankind.

125. All attempts, however, whether in the area itself or in the Security Council, to seize on the fire as a weapon for intensifying belligerency towards Israel and assailing Israel's rights and standing are unworthy and unacceptable.

126. The Middle East war is by now the longest armed conflict of this century. The points of friction between the Governments involved in it are numerous. The differences

which can be seized upon in order to deepen hostility even further are manifold. Surely this is not what responsible Governments would seek. After two decades of warfare, those concerned with the happiness of their peoples can have only one goal: to end the war, not to inflame it; to solve the conflict, not to aggravate it. It is not what separates us that Israel and the Arab States must search for, but that which unites us. No matter how complex the political controversy, no matter how grave the military confrontation, there is kinship between Jew and Arab in their civilization. If it is the vision of ultimate peace that guides us, we must nurture it with care and reverence.

127. The Mount on which Al Aqsa stands is the Temple Mount, whose holiness to the Jewish people is such that the devout amongst us would not even tread on it. This is Mount Moriah, where Abraham was minded to offer up his son Isaac in sacrifice, but at the last moment came to understand that human life is all too sacred for that. Is it too much to hope that, as our thoughts are on another

occurrence on that Mount, Arabs and Israelis will remember the truth our common ancestor Abraham bequeathed to us, that the lives of our sons are sacred?

128. The PRESIDENT (*translated from Russian*): The list of speakers who expressed a wish to make statements at today's meeting of the Security Council in the discussion on the item before it is exhausted. If no more representatives wish to speak, we shall conclude today's meeting of the Security Council.

129. With regard to the next meeting of the Security Council on this question, following consultations with the representatives of the countries which submitted this item for the consideration of the Council and with all the members of the Council, it has been agreed that the second meeting of the Council to continue the discussion of this item will take place tomorrow, 10 September, at 3 p.m.

The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.

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