THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST*

Letter dated 27 August 1969 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of Syria to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to enclose the text of a communication addressed by the Foreign Minister of Syria, Dr. Mustafa El-Sayed, to Your Excellency regarding the latest Israeli crime of arson perpetrated against the Al-Aqsa Mosque in occupied eastern Jerusalem. I wish to request that the enclosed communication be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly.**

(Signed) Rafic JOUEJATI
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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* Item 27 of the provisional agenda.

** An identical letter, addressed to the President of the Security Council, has been issued under the symbol S/9415.
Excellency:

The Government and people of Syria have learned with profound concern and indignation of the arson of Al-Aqsa Mosque, one of the holiest places of Islam and an outstanding contribution to world culture and civilization. The destruction by fire of Al-Aqsa Mosque is but a new deliberate and calculated Israeli crime conforming with the declared policy of the Israeli occupying authorities, aiming at the total Zionization of the whole city of Jerusalem by the systematic obliteration of every trace of Islamic and Arab life, culture and civilization.

This additional ominous step to consolidate further the unlawful Israeli annexation of the Holy City constitutes an affront to the United Nations and its many resolutions, namely, resolutions 2253 (ES-V) and 2254 (ES-V) of 4 and 14 July 1967 of the General Assembly and 252 (1963) of 21 May 1968 and 267 (1969) of 3 July 1969 of the Security Council. All these resolutions have urgently called upon Israel to rescind forthwith all measures taken by it which tend to change the status of Jerusalem and have deplored Israeli actions aimed at altering the status of the Holy City. Resolution 267 (1968) unanimously adopted by the Security Council, reflects the shock and deep concern of world public opinion and members of the Security Council arising from Israel's ominous design to destroy entire Arab quarters in the Old City of Jerusalem. This resolution, while reaffirming resolution 252 (1968), emphatically deplores "the failure of Israel to show any regard for the General Assembly and Security Council resolutions ..." It also censures in the strongest terms all measures taken to change the status of the City of Jerusalem and declares - as the two above-mentioned resolutions of the General Assembly do - invalid "... all legislative and administrative measures and actions by Israel which purport to alter the status of Jerusalem...".

His Excellency U Thant
Secretary-General
United Nations
New York
Despite all these demands, censures and condemnations emanating from the highest organs of the United Nations, the Israeli occupying authorities have arrogantly pursued their calculated expansionist and annexationist design unhampered by the decisions of the world organization or by world public opinion. The burning of the Al-Aqsa Mosque comes now to crown the Israeli uncivilized and inhuman practices in occupied Arab territories.

In illustrating Israeli defiance of the world organization, it suffices to refer to His Excellency U Thant's report (S/9149), submitted under Security Council resolution 252 (1968) of 21 May 1968. The report contains a request by the Secretary-General to the Government of Israel to provide him with the "information necessary in the discharge of the reporting responsibilities" on Jerusalem under that resolution. The Israeli reply to the Secretary-General was a stubborn refusal to provide him with any information except that Israel was determined to carry out the annexation of Arab Jerusalem, officially stating that Jerusalem is non-negotiable. Confronted with this new Israeli affront, the Secretary-General had no choice but to publish in annexes I and II of his report the text of two Israeli laws, namely, the "Legal and Administrative Matters (Regulation) Law, 5728-1968" published in Sefer Ha'Chukkim, No. 542 of 23 August 1968 and the "Administrative Matters (Regulation) Law, 5728-1968" published in Hatza'ot Chok, No. 787 of 14 July 1968 (pp. 358-362). The direct effect of these two laws and their subsequent amendment was the extension of the control of the occupying Israeli forces over all walks of Arab business and civilian activities in Arab Jerusalem.

I wish to stress that the responsibility of the Israeli occupying authorities for the arson of the Al-Aqsa Mosque has been established on firm grounds. Despite the distortion and the falsification that the Israeli propaganda machine is desperately spreading around the world, the fact remains that Arab citizens from East Jerusalem were cynically prevented by the occupying authorities from taking part in quelling the fire, while it was still possible to intervene and minimize the damage.

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The "Commission of Inquiry" set up by Israeli occupying authorities can in no way delude world public opinion. It is indeed an aberration of the precept of justice that the conqueror should arrogate to himself the right to establish and judge his own guilt. Moreover, by using the names of one or two Arabs among the members of the Israeli "Commission of Inquiry", Israel has only introduced a new gimmick to the record of Israeli "justice". The trial of the Israeli perpetrators of the Massacre of Kafer Kasem in October 1956, and their subsequent reward and promotion sheds ample light on the nature of this "justice".

In view of the grave situation resulting from the Israeli deliberate and calculated act of vandalism against one of the holiest shrines of the Arab and Moslem peoples, we strongly urge the Security Council to perform fully the duty incumbent upon it in order to preserve the integrity and the character of the Islamic Holy Places, to protect Arab life, property and heritage in occupied Jerusalem, to thwart any attempt by the illegal Israeli occupying authorities to inflict similar harm or destruction on the Christian Holy Places as well and to put an end to the ruthless and inhuman occupation of the Holy City. Unless the United Nations organs discharge their responsibility under the Charter to bring about the withdrawal of the armed forces of the conqueror from occupied Jerusalem and from all occupied Arab territories, the situation prevailing in the whole area will fatally jeopardize international peace and security.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

(Signed) Mustafa EL-SAYED
Minister of Foreign Affairs