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Letter dated 6 February 1984 from the Acting Chairman of the
Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the
Palestinian People to the Secretary-General

It is my obligation as Acting Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to draw your attention to a recent attempt to desecrate, if not indeed totally destroy, the holiest Moslem shrine in Jerusalem. I refer to the Dome of the Rock and El-Aqsa Mosque which, as you know, is considered the third most sacred place in Islam, after Mecca and Medina.

It has been borne out by police reports that the attempted destruction occurred on Friday, 27 January, but was fortunately foiled by Arab guards. Before dawn, shortly before thousands of Moslems were to gather for prayer, two men carrying explosives escalated the eastern wall of the Old City of Jerusalem. According to the accounts of both the police and Moslem leaders, a Moslem guard, being aware of the intrusion, appealed for help. As policemen arrived, the two intruders fled leaving behind 22 pounds of explosives and 18 hand grenades purportedly issued by the Israeli army.

In the view of the Mufti of Jerusalem. Sheik Saad-el-Din el-Alami, there were more than two assailants. The Mufti said that there were many bags of explosives at the foot of the wall that forms the Temple Mount. It is of interest that the Commander of Israel Southern East District. Yehoshua Caspi. was quoted by Israeli radio as saying that the presence of explosives and grenades pointed to Jews as the perpetrators. Initially, the police refused to confirm Moslem leaders' assertions about the scope of the assault.

Over recent months, many such instances have been reported of grenades and explosives placed at entrances to churches and mosques, their pins having been removed and their handles held down by rocks so that if the latter were disturbed an explosion would inevitably occur. To date, it is known that a Greek Orthodox nun, an Imam and a Moslem worshipper have been wounded.

Although these attacks have been followed by anonymous telephone calls to news organizations claiming responsibility by a group called "Terror against Terror", the police have declared they do not know whether or not such a group exists.

It is salutary, however, that the Mayor of Jerusalem expressed his disappointment that little condemnation of the attacks had come earlier from Israeli religious and political leaders. In fact, he went so far as to visit the Temple Mount to express regret to Moslem leaders.

Such a monstrous attempt to desecrate a holy shrine has come at a time when the former Israeli Assistant Attorney-General, Judith Karp, has been said to have reported on the failure of the occupying authorities to investigate and prosecute Jewish settlers who committed crimes against West Bank Arabs. The New York Times of 6 February 1984 said that her report was kept secret by the Ministry of Justice for more than a year. Mrs. Karp has since resigned, presumably in frustration that no action had yet been taken to curb the settlers' vigilantism.

I believe, Sir, you will concur that a new sense of urgency surrounds the issue, and I am bound to request on the part of the Committee that you draw the attention of members of the General Assembly and the Security Council to these recent despicable and deplorable events which have even raised the concern of Israeli leaders.

The members of the Committee believe strongly that the strictest respect for the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council should be ensured, as well as the principles of the Charter of the United Nations itself.

In consequence, I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under the item entitled "Question of Palestine", and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Raul ROA-KOURI
Acting Chairman of the Committee
on the Exercise of the Inalienable
Rights of the Palestinian People