

CONFIDENTIAL
UK/102
12 April 1948

UNITED NATIONS PALESTINE COMMISSION

**Communication from the United Kingdom Delegation
Concerning Repair Work of Holy Places in Palestine.**

The following communication, concerning the question of the maintenance of and repairs to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem and the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem has been received from Mr. J. Fletcher-Cooke of the United Kingdom Delegation.

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UNITED KINGDOM DELEGATION TO THE UNITED NATIONS
 Empire State Building
 New York 1, N. Y.

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12th April, 1948.

My dear Bunche,

I have been asked to bring to the notice of the Commission the question of the maintenance of and repairs to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem and the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem. At the same time I have been asked to emphasize the importance of early attention being given to this question by a successor administration as soon as circumstances permit.

2. Up to the 15th May the responsibility for this work will remain with the Government of Palestine. After that date it will presumably pass to the Commission. It is not, however, practicable to cease work on a given date and resume it later; the repairs and maintenance required in respect of the fabric of these two churches are a continuing demand varying in nature from day to day but ever present and of such a kind that they will be necessary, at any rate until such time as permanent reconstruction is effected.

3. Owing to conditions arising from the circumstances of withdrawal of the administration, the Public Works Department, which has hitherto been responsible for the service in question, will shortly become unable to discharge it. The Government of Palestine feel that everything possible should be done to ensure that this work continues. The only body which appears to be capable of undertaking the work during the forthcoming and possibly difficult period after the termination of the Mandate, is the Jerusalem Municipal Commission. This body which will, it is hoped, continue to function after the termination of the Mandate, has a competent engineering department and it is therefore proposed to hand over forthwith to the Municipal Commission responsibility for repairs and maintenance of the two churches in question.

Dr. Ralph J. Bunche,
 Principal Secretary to the United Nations
 Commission on Palestine,
 United Nations,
 Lake Success, N. Y.

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4. At the present time the funds of the Municipal Commission are low as a result of the almost complete cessation of the mainsource of revenue during the recent weeks and the Municipal Commission itself has no funds therefore to cover this work, which is estimated to cost about £1100 during the next eight months or so. The Government of Palestine has therefore proposed, and His Majesty's Government have approved, that a sum not exceeding £1500 should be advanced to the Municipal Commission for this purpose, to be accounted for in due course.

Yours sincerely,

(signed) JOHN FLETCHER-COOK
(J. Fletcher-Cooke)