

UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE

COMMITTEE ON JERUSALEM

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Notes on the tour of Galilee made by the
Committee on Jerusalem on 12 April 1949.

The Committee on Jerusalem left Haifa at 8.15 a.m. on 12 April 1949. The following members participated in the tour: Mr. Benoist (Chairman), Mr. de la Tour du Pin, Mr. Eralp and Dr. Serup. The Committee was accompanied by an Israeli Liaison Officer.

Visit to Nazareth:

The Committee first went to Nazareth, where it called on the Military Governor. The Chairman explained that the general purpose of the Committee's visit to Galilee was to visit religious sites and buildings and to make contact with the clergy in charge of them. The Military Governor assured the Committee that it was at liberty to visit any place it wished and that it was for the Committee to decide whether it desired to be accompanied or unaccompanied on these visits.

The Committee visited the following Holy Places in Nazareth:

the Ancient Synagogue
the Church of the Annunciation
the Church and Workshop of St. Joseph
the Virgin's Well.

The Committee met Father Joseph Cortés, Superior of the Convent of Terra Sainte and of the Catholic clergy in Galilee.

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From Father Cortés's observations, the Commission received the general impression that the Holy Places of Galilee had on the whole been protected and respected, but that in the heat of the battle there had been instances of profanation of Christian churches and Holy Places, notably in Haifa. The situation of the clergy, however, left much to be desired, particularly as regards difficulties of communications. Permission to move from village to village had to be requested from the authorities and was difficult to obtain. The clergy had no car and no petrol at their disposal and their only means of transport were a few bicycles which they could not use for lack of tyres. These difficulties and other formalities severely hampered them in the exercise of their mission.

Visit to Degania.

The Committee visited the Degania settlement in the Jordan Valley, one of the oldest Jewish collective settlements (founded in 197) and the Agricultural Institute (Gordon House), attached to it. The Committee was received by one of the founder members of the settlement who gave them many particulars on its organisation and activities.

Visit to Capernaum.

The Committee drove along the shores of the sea of Galilee from Tiberias to Capernaum, where it visited the site of the ancient Synagogue and called on the priest in charge of this Holy Place, who in general confirmed the statements made to the Committee by Father Cortés.

The Committee returned to Haifa by Safad and Acre.