

UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE

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Letter dated 22 June 1949 from the Secretary-General of the International Association of Geneva Zones to the Conciliation Commission, circulated by the Secretariat for the information of the Committee on Jerusalem.

Gentlemen;

Our Association, inspired by the noble ideas of the French Chief Surgeon G. Saint-Paul, eminent philanthropist and man of letters, has as its aim the establishment, in agreement with the interested Governments, of neutralised zones, zones of refuge, known as "GENEVA ZONES" (art. 1 of our Statute).

With this aim in view, the Association drew up a Draft Convention on security zones, reproduced on pages 61-67 of our publication "Modern war and the protection of civilians", issued in 1947, and forwarded to you under separate cover.*

Firmly convinced that "open cities" represent security zones set up on the territory of urban centres, we considered that it was opportune to introduce into our Draft Convention a provision concerning "open cities" (art.26) which stipulates the following:

A signatory State of the present Convention may, after agreement with the other contracting Powers, declare as open cities, already in time of peace, one or several cities on its territory which are particularly rich in monuments of great historical interest. These open cities, previously demilitarised and undefended in all circumstances, shall enjoy in time of war absolute inviolability and shall at the same time serve as a refuge for the entirely peaceful categories of the civil population (young children, their mothers, disabled persons, sick persons, old people, pregnant women).

* This book has been placed in the archives of the Commission.

At the moment when your noble efforts are directed towards the establishment of a lasting peace between the Arab and Jewish populations, we take the liberty, moved by humanitarian sentiments and free from any political considerations, of suggesting the incorporation in the future peace treaty between the interested parties of an article proclaiming Jerusalem an open city in perpetuity, whose territory shall always be considered inviolable. If you admit this great principle, the stipulations provided under art. 26 of our Draft Convention could constitute an appropriate basis for discussion of the matter.

The proclamation of Jerusalem as an open city in perpetuity would greatly lessen the anxiety felt by the population of Palestine and would constitute a shining example in a world tormented by so much misery. Numbers of governments and peoples would then earnestly wish to see applied to their own towns and cities the regime of open cities to which we wholeheartedly look forward for the greater good of our fellow men.

In the earnest hope that our suggestion will meet with a favourable reply from the President and the Members of the Commission, and that it can usefully serve a noble purpose, I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

HENRY GEORGE
Secretary-General