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Letter dated 12 February 1980 from the Permanent Representative of
Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to refer to the letter of 5 February 1980 addressed to you by the representative of Jordan (A/35/87-S/13782).

It should be borne in mind that Jordan regards itself as being in a state of war with Israel. It has repeatedly attempted to play upon religious sentiments in order to fan the flames of incitement, both religious and political, against Israel. In recent weeks it has stepped up the frequency and intensity of the campaign by the distribution of misleading and inflammatory material through the agency of the United Nations.

It is an affront to history that Jordan should complain with regard to Jerusalem. From 1948 to 1967 it illegally occupied parts of the Holy City and systematically engaged in the destruction of over 50 historic synagogues in the Jewish Quarter of the Walled City, in the violation of the ancient Jewish cemetery on the Mount of Olives and in the desecration of many other properties and institutions which were part of the rich cultural and religious heritage of the Jewish people in the City.

Moreover, in flagrant violation of its international undertakings, Jordan during those years barred Jews from all Holy Places in Jerusalem and in Judaea and Samaria. It also denied Israeli Christians and Muslims free access to their Holy Places in the areas under Jordanian occupation.

It is preposterous therefore to suggest, as the representative of Jordan has the audacity to do, that before 1967 the Holy City "enjoyed the serenity, the veneration and the tolerance which are characteristics of Jerusalem as the City of God and Peace".

Unlike Jordan, the Government of Israel respect all places held sacred by members of the different religions and also their sentiments with regard to the Holy Places are to uphold and guarantee by law access and complete freedom of worship by members of all faiths without discrimination, and to ensure the protection and maintenance of these places with due respect and proper decorum.

Despite Israel's efforts, there have been some unfortunate incidents of vandalism, as there are in other countries, against religious institutions and properties of several denominations. These incidents have been taken very seriously by the Government of Israel and, on 4 February 1980, the Prime Minister issued the following statement:

"The authorities will not tolerate acts of this kind. By the laws of Israel, all faiths enjoy absolute freedom of worship, protection of their Properties and freedom of access to their shrines.

"The Government of Israel upholds these principles in the fullest measure, just as it has always done in the past in the spirit of respect for all the faiths represented in Jerusalem.

"Indeed, we take pride that, since the reunification of our capital city, Jerusalem has enjoyed the harmony of co-existence and mutual tolerance.

"The authorities, therefore, will do the utmost to prevent the recurrence of such intolerable criminal acts."

This statement was greeted with approval and satisfaction by the representatives of the Christian churches in Jerusalem, in their statement of 6 February 1980, in which they declared, inter alia:

We therefore trust and hope that the consistent implementation of This commitment [by the Prime Minister of Israel] 'in a spirit of respect For all the faiths represented in Jerusalem', will create and sustain an Atmosphere of mutual comprehension and good will. Such an atmosphere will make possible a continuing dialogue which dialogue is naturally to include The means to guarantee strengthen and extend in a permanent way, acceptable to all concerned, that 'absolute freedom' of religion, which Prime Minister forthrightly affirms".

This statement was signed by the Reverend R. Kreider, Convenor, Liaison Committee of the United Christian Council in Israel, Fr. Ignazio Mancini, O.F.M., Director of the Christian information Centre, and Fr. Bargil Pixner, O.S.B., in the name of the Dormition Abbey.

It is thus obvious that the letter under reference from the representative of the Palestinian Arab State of Jordan is yet another transparent attempt to manipulate the means and machinery of the United Nations in its relentless and unrestrained campaign of political warfare against Israel. It is also an extraordinary illustration of how Jordan is prepared to exploit every occasion as a pretext for unbridled political and religious incitement.

I have the honour to request that this letter be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under the item entitled "The situation in the Middle East", and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Yehuda Z. BLUM

Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Israel
to the United Nations
