



The draft resolution on the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls in the World Heritage Committee

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Palestine emphasizes that the draft resolution, on the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls, put forward by the Arab Group to the World Heritage Committee of UNESCO, is in line with the unanimous international and legal positions and reflects the warranted concern by all states regarding the situation in Jerusalem due to the illegal actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, which harm the multi-faith character of the Old City, threaten the historic *status quo*, undermine Palestinian rights, and provoke religious tensions.

In this regard, the Ministry underlines that prolonged Israeli occupation, in all its forms and manifestations, including colonization, aggression, provocations and incitement, is the root cause of the conflict. Israel, the occupying Power, is attempting, systematically and unrelentingly, to create a new reality at the expense of the Palestinians, their religious rights, sites and historical identity and is violating the sanctity of religious sites without consequence. The dangers of such continuous provocations and incitement, particularly in or near Al Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif, will only further inflame tensions and provoke religious fervor, with dangerous ramifications. Additionally, it is important to remind all that the structure that physically exists now without a doubt is the Al Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif. Contesting this fact, under any pretext, will only add to religious tensions, especially given the dramatic increase in statements and involvement of high-ranking Israeli officials about building a temple in the place of Al Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif as well as other similar rejected and provocative statements and actions.

Hence, the Ministry will continue its efforts to ensure that the Old City of Jerusalem's status as a unique and special city that has played an important role in the development of human heritage, including the development of the three monolithic religions, is preserved. Additionally, the Ministry will continue efforts, consistent with international law, to put an end to any action purporting to alter the demographic composition, legal status or physical character of occupied East Jerusalem in violation of international law. We will oppose any attempts to alter ownership of or title to any location in Jerusalem or elsewhere in Palestine with the intention of changing the historic *status quo*. These efforts are in line with the mandate of the World Heritage Committee and the spirit of the 1981 inscription decision of the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls and on the List of World Heritage in Danger (1982) and related recommendations, resolutions and decisions of UNESCO.

Finally, the Ministry reiterates the undeniable fact that the Israeli occupation is the root cause of conflict and the main instigator of violence and intolerance. Any attempt to deny this fact or normalize the effects of the occupation is offensive and counterproductive. Further, we reiterate that attempts to sideline the discussion by intimidation and/or false accusations must be rejected. In this regard, we reject attempts to delegitimize and oppose our rightful and legal attempts to address these issues at international fora, including UNESCO. The Ministry believes that the international Community, and UNESCO, including its Director General, should focus on the core issues, namely the detrimental impact of deplorable, illegal actions by Israel, the occupying Power, and ways of safeguarding the spirit and mandate of relevant international organizations in relation to the protection of Jerusalem. It is imperative that actions are taken to ensure that the status of the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls is protected in line with international law and adopted resolutions, and by ensuring cooperation with the Reactive Monitoring Mission and allowing experts to visit all sites of excavations and diggings above and under the ground in Jerusalem. Supporting the draft resolution before the World Heritage Committee of UNESCO concerning this subject is the necessary first step.

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