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NEW YORK 21, N. Y.ISRAEL'S POLICIES IN THE MIDDLE EASTBy Moshe Sharott  
Foreign Minister of Israel

Israel's position on several of the major issues in the Middle East was expounded in the Knesset (Parliament) by Moshe Sharett, Foreign Minister of Israel, on June 17th, 1953. Following are excerpts from the Foreign Minister's statement:-

ARAB REFUGEES

Our position on this issue is well known.

We see no solution, nor a contribution to a solution, even in partial repatriation. Moreover, there is a contradiction between the slogan of repatriation and that of resettlement in the neighbouring countries. The constant reiteration of the repatriation slogan serves only to obstruct constructive counsels and to militate against any practical scheme of resettling the refugees. It creates a vicious circle which keeps postponing a solution. It entails a heavy responsibility - the responsibility for creating illusions incapable of fulfilment.

One should beware of feeding the refugees with false expectations - focussing their hopes on something which has no basis in reality and diverting their attention from the only way out of the predicament in which they now find themselves - the only prospect that they have of starting to build a new life for themselves.

BASIS FOR PEACE

The refugee problem is only a part of the wider problem of peace, and is subject to the same overriding principle as applies to the other issues: peace between Israel and the neighbouring states can be based only upon the existing situation as regards both territory and population. Peace with Israel means peace with Israel as it exists - not with an Israel as some might wish it to be.

I see no reason to enlarge on the matter of peace. Our attitude on the subject has been made abundantly clear in the past. But against the background of what has been raised here I would like to add: as long as there is no peace we shall oppose the supply of arms to the countries responsible for the absence of peace by refusing to negotiate it. Both those who are likely to supply arms and those who seek them should be aware of this. We do not know how far our voice will reach or what weight our views will carry, but, to the extent that we shall be heard and listened to, we shall do our utmost to prevent the supply of arms to Arab countries as long as they obstruct a peace settlement. For in such circumstances these arms can only be intended for use against us and for no other purpose.

JERUSALEM

The question of Jerusalem is one on which the Foreign Ministry has for years past been trying to enlighten world opinion. It is generally



realised that the new city of Jerusalem is today the effective capital of Israel - that the President, the Knesset, the Cabinet, and nearly all the Government ministries are today housed here. Many states which originally supported the principle of full territorial internationalisation and who voted in the United Nations General Assembly in favour of constituting Jerusalem a corpus separatum over which neither Israel nor Jordan should have control, have since come to realise that such an arrangement is illusory and has no basis in the realities of the situation. This does not mean that all states interested in the problem of Jerusalem regard the present state of affairs as final; and we must indeed continue our efforts to bring home the facts of the situation and stand on guard against possible complications. We must seek to make conclusively clear that there can be no change in the status of new Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

The sanctity of Jerusalem as the Holy City is deeply rooted in the consciousness of the civilised world. We ourselves share in this feeling in no less a measure than anyone else - maybe even a little more. In the days of antiquity as of recent years, the lives of our people have been sacrificed for the sake of Jerusalem, and we remain every ready to die for it. To us there is no city in the whole world like unto it. But at the same time our sense of international responsibility both obliges and enables us to realise the depth of the spiritual attachment of other peoples to the city which is our capital, in view of the presence within it and in its vicinity of places which they hold sacred. It is true that the most important of these Holy Places are concentrated within the Old City, over which we have no dominion. But inasmuch as certain of them, few though they be, are contained within the purview of our own sovereignty, we consider them as a venerable and precious trust, for which we are responsible towards the whole world.

We see no contradiction whatsoever between Israel's sovereignty in New Jerusalem and the satisfaction of international requirements concerning such Holy Places as are located within it. Insofar as there is here a practical international problem to be solved it can only be solved on the basis of a clear distinction between the status of Jerusalem as a city and a capital and the status of Holy Places.

#### Israel Assumes Responsibility

What is the position today? After the consolidation of our rule over new Jerusalem we have declared on a number of occasions, both in this House and from the rostrum of the United Nations, that we fully understand the responsibility imposed upon us by the fact that there are places holy to the Christian faith located within our area. The Government of Israel has proclaimed that it assumes full responsibility for the safety and inviolability of these Holy Places, for the assurance of free access to them under suitable security conditions and for the provision of full facilities of free and unhampered worship. We believe that we are entitled to state today that we have discharged this obligation in the fullest possible measure. If anyone has entertained misgivings or suspicions lest we treat this solemn obligation lightly or fail in its actual fulfilment, these doubts have been controverted by patent facts and, let us hope, have been completely dispelled. During the period that has elapsed since the cessation of hostilities and the full establishment of civil government within the area of Israel, no complaints have been heard from any ecclesiastical authority or foreign government on the score of the Government of Israel's performance in the matter of the Holy Places. On the contrary, several important Christian organisations, some of them world-wide in character, have expressed to us their full satisfaction with the present state of things in this regard.

The Government of Israel is concerned not only to honour to the full its obligations in regard to the Holy Places within its own area, but it also provides every facility for members of the Christian faith, whether local inhabitants or visitors from outside, to cross from the Israel part of Jerusalem into the area under Jordan control, in order to visit and worship at the Holy Places in that part of the city.



### Jewish Holy Places

In the three years 1950, 1951 and 1952 there have been registered at the Mandelbaum Gate in Jerusalem 120,000 crossings in both directions, all sanctioned by the competent Israel authorities. It will be noted that this total works out at an average of 110 crossings per day. The number includes about 4,500 pilgrims from abroad, most of whom came in organised parties, about 9,000 crossings by members of the clergy, local and foreign, and about 18,000 crossings by tourists. Included in the total are also regular crossings by the Christian residents and citizens of Israel, mostly Arab, who are permitted twice a year - at Easter and at Christmas - to the number of about 3,000 on each occasion, to cross into Jordan in order to worship in the Old City and in Bethlehem, and then return. Those among them who are Israel citizens are given special allocations of foreign currency for their expenses. Similarly, Christians in the Old City are given right of entry into the New City to visit the shrines here.

All these arrangements are determined at weekly meetings held regularly between the representatives of the civil authorities of Jordan and Israel, who in this field maintain close cooperation and full mutual understanding. It is a well established regime, functioning with complete regularity, without any hitches and to the satisfaction of all concerned. In the last four years no incident has arisen to endanger the inviolability of the Holy Places in Israel or the safety of those given access to them or crossing to the other side for the same purpose.

This is the situation as regards the Christians. It is quite different for the Jews. Within the Jordan area are comprised the Wailing Wall, Rachel's Tomb, the Cave of the Machpelah, the cemetery on the Mount of Olives and the ancient Jewish synagogues in the Old City. For several years past not a single Jew has been allowed to visit these places, which are sanctified for our people by a tradition of thousands of years and have throughout the generations served as places of pilgrimage and prayer for Jews from all the lands of the dispersion as well as from this country itself.

The clear undertaking assumed by the Jordan Government in the Armistice Agreement to allow free access to the Holy Places and to the cemetery on the Mount of Olives has been flagrantly violated. If there is a problem concerning the Holy Places which awaits solution, if there is a religious claim on the part of great numbers of people which remains entirely unsatisfied, it is that of the Jewish Holy Places and of members of the Jewish faith. No such anomaly exists with regard to any Christian sanctuary.

### Present Arrangements Satisfactory

In the conviction of the Israel Government, the arrangements now in force with regard to the Christian Holy Places are capable of meeting any legitimate claim. Should there be need for any improvement or additional facility, no change of regime would be called for; it is fully within the capacity of the existing authorities already constituted to adopt and put them into effect. Certainly the Government of Israel is ever ready to take such supplementary action.

Innumerable people, citizens, tourists, pilgrims, members of the clergy, as well as heads of churches and representatives of foreign governments, have the chance of satisfying themselves day in and day out of the effectiveness and smoothness with which the present arrangements are functioning, just as they have the opportunity of seeing with their own eyes to what extent new Jerusalem forms an organic part of Israel and how decisively it is the State's capital. Nevertheless, should the United Nations at any stage in the future find it necessary to institute international supervision of the Holy Places in Jerusalem, it can rest assured in advance of the acceptance of that supervision by Israel and of the readiness of its Government to cooperate with whomever is charged with the execution of that function. This attitude of the Government of Israel has



been repeatedly expressed in official pronouncements of its authorised representatives. It remains unchanged. It is axiomatic that such supervision, to be set up with the consent of the Government of Israel and to function with its cooperation, cannot possibly infringe upon Israel's sovereignty in new Jerusalem or prejudice the status of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. It also goes without saying that an international supervision, if established, must apply in equal measure to the Holy Places in both parts of the city and be based upon the equal right of members of all faiths to enjoy free access to the shrines which they hold sacred.

At the same time it should be clear in advance that it would be idle to expect the international supervision of the Holy Places to solve problems which completely transcend its scope. If there is at times a state of tension in Jerusalem reflected in the city's security conditions - transient phases of tension which, incidentally, have never affected the arrangements operating in connection with the Holy Places - that is the reflection of a much wider problem which is by no means confined to Jerusalem and has nothing to do with the city's special character but extends along the Israel-Jordan border and can only be effectively solved through a definitive and comprehensive settlement regulating Israel-Jordan relations.

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