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Unofficial translation from French

VATICAN AIDE MEMOIRE CONCERNING  
JERUSALEM AND THE HOLY PLACES

1. Recent events in the Middle East have again raised in all its acuteness the problem of the Holy Places in Palestine - a problem which the Holy See has always followed with the keenest attention.
2. In view of the threats which the conflict represented to the Holy City of Jerusalem, His Holiness Pope Paul VI, as early as 5 June 1967, sent a message to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and at the same time through the Pontifical Representatives in the United Arab Republic, at Jerusalem, in Lebanon and in Syria, to the respective Governments of those countries, with a view to the immediate cessation of hostilities (Annex 1).
3. Unfortunately, on that very day, fighting spread to the City of Jerusalem. Material damage to the sacred buildings, thanks to God, was not too serious; the main damage was to the Church of the Dormition, on Mount Zion, and to the Church of St. Anne, near which is the residence of the great Melkite Seminary.
4. The Holy See, still with the purpose of preserving the area in which most of the Holy places are grouped, then took a further step. It intervened with a number of Governments with a view to having the members of UNTSO (United Nations Truce Commission) and the Consuls at Jerusalem assume control, on behalf of the United Nations and pending later measures of at least the old city of Jerusalem. However, this plan was soon overtaken by events.
5. The Holy Father, when receiving a large number of pilgrims in the Vatican Basilica at the general audience on 7 June, expressed himself on the subject of the Holy places in the following terms: "And We would say one word more, to reiterate our very keen desire that the Holy places may be safeguarded."

It is of the highest importance for all the descendants of the spiritual race of Abraham, Jews, Mos<sup>l</sup>ims and Christians, that Jerusalem should be declared an open city and that, freed from any military operations, it should be spared the actions of war, which are already stri<sup>k</sup>ing it and are threatening it even more. On behalf of the whole of anxious Christianity, and indeed speaking for the whole of civilized humanity, we implore and appeal to the governments of the nations in conflict and to the military leaders of the fighting armies, that Jerusalem should be spared the rule of war, and that the Holy City should remain refuge for the defenceless and wounded a symbol for all of hope and peace". (Annex 2).

6. In the mean time, the Sovereign Pontiff, as soon as he learned of the unhappy conditions of the people sorely tried by the conflict, sent to the scene the President and Vice-President of Caritas Internationalis and arranged for the dispatch of several aircraft loaded with emergency food and medical supplies.

7. With the approach of the debates in the United Nations General Assembly on the Middle East crisis, the Observer for the Holy See to the United Nations was active on behalf of the Holy Places, in accordance with his instructions. It was in part thanks to him that the question of Jerusalem was taken into consideration in the so-called Latin American resolution, which did not, however, receive sufficient votes in the Assembly to be adopted.

8. The Holy Father reverted to the question of Jerusalem in his statement to the Secret Consistory of 26 June 1967. He expressed himself in the following terms: "The Holy City of Jerusalem must remain forever what it represents: the City of God, a free oasis of peace and prayer, a place of meeting, elevation, and concord for all, with a status of its own, internationally guaranteed. (Annex 3).

9. In this spirit the Holy See sent to the scene, as soon as this was possible, a prelate of the Secretariat of State, Monsignor Angelo Felici, then Under-Secretary of the Sacred Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs, for the purpose of ascertaining on the spot the exact situation and the intentions of the local authorities.

The observations made by the envoy of the Holy See gave him a better understanding of the complexity of the problems relating to the Holy Places in the present situation and the great difficulty of adopting a solution which can reconcile and satisfy all points of view.

10. The Holy See, as it deems to be its right and its duty, will continue to take an active interest in the Holy Places, which are sacred not only for the Christian world, but for the whole great family of man. In particular, it will not fail to intervene with a view to providing the Holy Places with a special status, accompanied by guarantees calculated to spare them from, inter alia, the vicissitudes of the political situation.

3 January 1969

Monsignor,

I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of your letter of 30 December 1968 in which you bring to my attention a communication from the Cardinal Secretary of State concerning the attack by Israel Armed Forces on the Beirut International Airport.

I note that the Holy See has called to the attention of the Ambassador of Israel to Italy the seriousness with which it views these events, and I further note that His Holiness has sent an open telegram to the President of Lebanon deploring the gravity of what has taken place.

I would be grateful if you would convey to His Holiness my appreciation of his interest in this matter and the support which, by his actions, he has given to the unanimous resolution adopted by the Security Council on 31 December 1968 condemning the attack on the Beirut International Airport. In particular I share with His Holiness the apprehension that such events not only violate the security of the populations concerned, but exacerbate peaceful settlement of the conflict. I also concur in the concern of His Holiness over the grave and unforeseeable consequences of further threats of force and violence.

I take this opportunity to request you to transmit to His Holiness my warm good wishes for the new year.

Accept, Monsignor, the assurances of my highest consideration.

U Thant

The Right Reverend  
Monsignor Alberto Giovannetti, J.C.D., D.D.  
Permanent Observer of the Holy See  
to the United Nations  
323 East 47th Street  
New York, N.Y. 10017



30 December 1968

*Ralph*  
*2/1/69*

Your Excellency,

With reference to the terrorist acts committed by Palestinian commandos at the Athens airport and the grave seriousness of the reprisals executed by Israeli armed forces at the Beirut airport, I have the honor to bring to Your Excellency's attention the following communicated to this Office via telegram from the Cardinal Secretary of State who requested me to so inform Your Excellency:

1) The Holy See has called to the attention of the Israeli ambassador to Italy the seriousness with which it views these events in a note which unconditionally deplores terrorist methods and expresses profound grief over the reprisals undertaken by Israeli armed forces. The Holy See had received official assurances that Lebanon was not responsible for the crime committed in Athens, that there is no training camp for guerrillas on Lebanese territory and that the Lebanese authorities do not permit terrorist activity.

2) The Holy Father has sent an open telegram to the President of Lebanon deploring the gravity of what has taken place.

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His Excellency U Thant  
Secretary General  
United Nations  
New York, New York



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3) The Holy Father wishes to communicate to the Secretary-General his lively apprehension that all this exacerbates the precarious situation in the Middle East, prejudices the peaceful settlement of the conflict and threatens the security of the populations concerned. The Holy See has urged both Israel and Lebanon to avoid threats of force and violence that could have unforeable consequences.

With all good wishes,

Sincerely,

*Alberto Giovannetti*

Rt.Rev.Msgr. Alberto Giovannetti  
Permanent Observer  
Holy See to the United Nations

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Translated from Spanish

VAATICAN SPOKESMAN ON REPORT TERMED "FASCIST" BY ISRAEL

Vatican City, 25 March.

"The position adopted by the Vatican newspaper L'Osservatore Romano on the question of Israel is the same as that of the Church," stated the Director of the Vatican Press, Federico Alessandrini, at the press conference he held today (Thursday).

The article in question deplored Israeli policy on the Middle East problem and was termed "fascist journalism out of keeping with the objective line which should characterize the Vatican publication" by Israeli observers.

"The paper," said Alessandrini, who is also subeditor of L'Osservatore Romano, "will, if it sees fit, reply to these protests in a note or in a forthcoming article. The position taken by the Vatican newspaper is, moreover, the one upheld by the United Nations Security Council in its resolution of 22 November 1967, namely, that there should be no alteration of the 'status quo' of Jerusalem."

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