

Coalition for Jerusalem

الإئتلاف من أجل القدس

An Appeal to Madam Condoleezza Rice And the United States Government

To

Intercede to Stop the Destruction of the Mughrabi Quarter Pathway in the Old City of Jerusalem

This is the most critical moment in the history of the conflict. The choices we make today may either open the door to a new era of peace and prosperity, or condemn generations more of Palestinians and Israelis to needless conflict.

The Israeli Wall and settlement activities, especially in and around Occupied East Jerusalem, is passing a critical threshold: Soon, no viable Palestinian State will be possible. This activity is exacerbated by the current “excavations” unilaterally done by Israel in the Old City itself.

The members of the Coalition for Jerusalem consider the unilateral decision by the Israeli government and the Israeli archeological authorities to destroy an Islamic historical site, which comprises part of the Al Aqsa Mosque compound, a deliberate act to deface the Arab and Islamic character of the Old City.

The Mughrabi Gate pathway which was the target of the Israeli bulldozers recently, is the only remnant left from the Mughrabi Quarter, which embraces the Al Aqsa Mosque compound from the south west area. The Mughrabi Quarter, almost exclusively Islamic Waqf (endowment) property, was razed to the ground two days after the Israeli army occupied East Jerusalem in 1967. The quarter consisted of 135 Palestinian homes, two mosques and two Sufi zawyia: some of which date back to the 14th century.

The pathway which leads from the Quarter to the Mughrabi Gate, which is one of the Al Aqsa Mosque gates, was spared then. But, has been since slowly battered by Israeli diggings to expose the Herodian blocks in the Western Wall on the northern side and diggings on the southern flank in search of the Jewish Temple ruins. The latter excavations revealed Ummayyad remains only. Consequently, the ground level access from the Moroccan quarter to the Al Aqsa Mosque became a suspended “ramp”, and inevitably became susceptible. Repeated appeals by the Waqf Administration in Jerusalem and Jordan to reinforce the “ramp”, which constitutes part of the Al Aqsa Mosque compound, were turned down by the Israeli authorities.

The Coalition for Jerusalem therefore unequivocally calls on the United States Government and all the High Contracting Parties to assume their duties toward the protection of the Islamic historic and religious sites and heritage in the Old

Members of the Coalition:

Sheikh Tayseer Tamimi
Reverend Atallah Hana
Faisal Hussein Foundation
Miftah
Hind Khoury
Palestinian Counseling
Center
Welfare Association
Agricultural Relief
Committees
ARIJ
JCHR
Arab Engineer's Union
Al Haq
Burj El Laqlaq
Nidal Center
Assaraya Center
YMCA
YWCA
Al-Mirsat
Sabeel
ECRC
Women Center for Legal Aid
and Counseling
Palestinian Women Union
Arab Hotel Association
Arab Thought Forum
Yabous
Edward Said Music
Conservatory
Land Research Center
Dar El Tifel
Rawdet Al Zuhur
UPMRC
UHWC
UAWC
Old City Youth Association
Jerusalem Center for Social
and Economic Rights
Arab Working Women Society
Al_Maqased Society
PASSIA
Hydrology Group
Education Coalition for
Jerusalem
Addameer
Ensan Center for Human
Rights
Jerusalem Hospitals
Committee

Individuals from East
Jerusalem (list is on record)

City. It strongly appeals to all, including the Israeli government, to fulfill their obligations under the International Conventions and Agreements:

- International legal opinion holds that Israel, as the occupying power of East Jerusalem, is obliged to respect the international agreements enshrined in the Hague and Geneva Conventions. Jordan and Israel had signed and ratified the 1954 Hague convention for the protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict. This convention covers both religious buildings and Waqf land and property.
- Similarly, Article 53 of the 1977 Geneva Protocol I (protection of cultural objects and places of worship) and article 16 of 1977 Geneva Protocol II (which has the same title) prohibits any act of hostility against cultural properties. Jordan had signed and ratified both protocols. Israel declined to do so.
- The Mughrabi Gate pathway is protected by the Convention concerning the Protection of World Cultural Heritage and Natural Heritage (1972). By virtue of which, the site is inscribed on the World Heritage List and on the List of World Heritage in Danger.
- Article 9 of the Jordan Israel Peace Treaty which stipulates that:
 - Each Party will provide freedom of access to places of religious and historical significance.
 - In this regard, in accordance with the Washington Declaration, Israel respects the present special role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in Muslim Holy shrines in Jerusalem. When negotiations on the permanent status will take place, Israel will give high priority to the Jordanian historic role in these shrines.
 - The Parties will act together to promote interfaith relations among the three monotheistic religions, with the aim of working towards religious understanding, moral commitment, freedom of religious worship, and tolerance and peace.

The Coalition for Jerusalem calls on the Government of the United States and the International Community at large to immediately and strongly:

- Urge the Israeli Government to stop the “excavations works” which aim at demolishing the historic pathway.
- To enable the Islamic Waqf authorities to assume its rights and responsibilities to consolidate the pathway.
- Convene a team of International professional experts to examine the pathway and provide expert advice on ways to consolidate it.