

## The Arson of *al-Aqsa* Mosque in 1969 and its Impact on the Muslim World As Reflected in the British Documents

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### ABSTRACT

This article is the result of an examination of 154 of the British document, recently released on the burning down of al-Aqsa Mosque and its immediate effects, besides studying other relevant literature.

A temporary sweeping anger spread across the Muslim world and calls for *Jihad* to liberate *al-Aqsa* were heard everywhere. In addition, Muslim regimes held summits and coordinated, for a while, their political and media campaigns. The arson of *al-Aqsa* motivated the Muslims to establish the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), which, thus far, is the largest official political platform for cooperation among Muslim Countries. Furthermore, Jordan, in collaboration with Arab and Muslim countries, achieved some success in the United Nations (U.N), by persuading the Security Council to issue a more evenhanded resolution condemning Israel.

**Keywords:** Arson, al-Aqsa, 1969, British Documents, Arab, Muslims.

### INTRODUCTION

British documents, only recently released, provide useful information and insight into the arson of *al-Aqsa* and its immediate repercussions. The article will examine 154 of these documents - telegrams, letters and reports – that were exchanged between the Foreign Office and various British embassies in the weeks following the arson. British intelligence and communication are important because of the long presence of the British in the Muslim World as colonizers and as an ex-colonial power. Moreover, the British have maintained strong ties with Muslim countries, which have enabled them to stay well-informed about the current situation in these countries. Nevertheless, these documents will not be taken on face value, but will be evaluated and assessed by the writer. The focus of this article is the immediate impact of the arson on the attitude of the Muslim masses and their governments. Besides this archival data, the article consults other relevant literature, including “The Annual Book of the Palestinian Issue for the Year 1969”,

and “Palestinian Arab Documents for 1969” which may be considered as the most important Arabic source. This would be of a great value in comparing and contrasting the British documents. Also, the official website of the United Nations was referred to, with regard to its resolutions and discussions.

### Background

Jerusalem encompasses the *al-Aqsa* Mosque, the first *Qiblah* of the Muslims, and the third most sacred mosque in Islam whose visitation is an authentic *Sunnah*, and a prayer in it tantamounts five hundred prayers in other mosques. Prophet Muhammed peace be upon him (p.b.u.h.) said: Visitation is to three mosques only: the Sacred Mosque, the Prophet’s Mosque and *al-Aqsa* Mosque”<sup>1</sup>. In another *Hadith*, the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) said” “A prayer in the Sacred Mosque is equivalent to hundred thousand prayers, in the Prophet’s Mosque one thousand prayers, and in the *al-Aqsa* five hundred prayers”<sup>2</sup>. Most Muslim historians attributed the construction of *al-Aqsa* to *Abd al-Malik bin Marwan* in 72 AH/695 CE, while some others attributed it to his son *al-Walid*, almost by 90 AH/709 CE <sup>3</sup>. The southern building of *al-Aqsa* and the Dom of the Rock, in its courtyard, are considered among

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the most artistic and magnificent monuments in the Islamic history and civilisation, in particular, and world civilisations at large.

After 1948 war, which resulted in the loss of 77% of mandatory Palestine, the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) continued to be under the protection of the Jordanian army. It was officially united with Jordan in April 1950. On 5 June 1967, the Israeli forces initiated the "Six Days War" and occupied the West Bank of Jordan, Gaza Strip, Egyptian Sinai and the Syrian Golan Heights. Since then, the position and future of Jerusalem have become one of the most sensitive and complicated issues within the whole Palestinian issue. Jerusalem holds great religious and spiritual significance for Muslims, Christians and Jews. The area of *al-Aqsa* mosque; the so called "Temple Mount" for Jews in East Jerusalem has become a major focus for Muslims and Jews, as it is their most sacred place in Palestine.

Based on international Law and the covenants of the United Nations (U.N.), East Jerusalem is illegally occupied by Israel. The occupying forces should not have infringed upon the liberty civil rights of the Palestinians of East Jerusalem. However, on 11 June 1967, the Israeli authorities, destroyed the *al-Magharibah* quarter, an Islamic *Waqf* (endowment) beside the southwestern side of *al-Aqsa* and was converted to be a courtyard for Jews, gathering to visit the western wall of *al-Aqsa* mosque known as the Wailing Wall. The Israeli regime, unlitary, unified both East and West Jerusalem under their civil administration on 27<sup>th</sup> June 1967. An extensive, yet quiet-running program of excavations immediately started south and southwest *al-Aqsa*. Confiscation and destruction of Muslim houses and Islamic endowments, many of great historical value, continued regardless of all local and international protests and condemnation<sup>4</sup>. Grave concern was created everywhere, especially in the Muslim World, about the ultimate goals of the Israelis. The Security Council (S.C.) of the U.N. issued its resolution no. 252 on 21<sup>st</sup> May, 1968 declaring that "All legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel, including the expropriation of land and properties thereon, which tend to change the legal status of Jerusalem, are invalid and cannot change that status"<sup>5</sup>.

However, the systematic program of Israel to Judaize Jerusalem went on unabated despite all opposition and remonstrations of the International Community. Such flagrant disregard of Israeli policies darkened the horizon of the future and paved the way for uncertainty and

conflict. In such circumstances, the arson of *al-Aqsa* took place.

### The Arson

On 21<sup>st</sup> August 1969, the Muslim World was shocked by the news of the burning of *al-Aqsa* mosque, sparking a wave of wrath and discontent. The Israelis were accused of a deliberate attempt to destroy *al-Aqsa* to pave the way for the establishment of a Third Jewish Temple. Feelings were running high and calls for *Jihad* to liberate *al-Aqsa*, Jerusalem and Palestine were heard everywhere.

The fire destroyed the Southern and the southeastern part of the Mosque. An Arab technical team set up to examine the affected area concluded in its initial report that there were two separate fires, one in the *Mihrab* area (prayer niche) and the second in the ceiling of the South Eastern part of the Mosque. Tragically, the magnificent and invaluable pulpit constructed by Nur al-Din Mahmud in the mid twelfth century, in preparation for the liberation of Jerusalem from the crusaders which was installed later by Salah al-Din, was destroyed<sup>6</sup>. Another 400 m<sup>2</sup> of the Southeastern ceiling was badly burnt and the dome of *al-Aqsa* with its mosaic and ornamental works were also damaged, along with two marble pillars between the dome and the *Mihrab*. Electrical engineers working along side *Al-Quds* Electricity Company confirmed after thorough investigation that the fire was not caused by an electrical fault<sup>7</sup>.

As a result of information provided by the Muslim religious authority, on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1969 the Israeli police arrested, Denis Michael Rohan, a 28 year old farmer from Sydney, Australia, who admitted having committed the arson of *al-Aqsa*. Rohan was affiliated with a small and obscure fundamentalist Christian group called Church of God which is not associated with any recognized Christian Church<sup>8</sup>.

The Australian High Commissioner in London informed the Foreign Office that Rohan had run away from home when he was 15 years old. He added that Rohan had been in a psychiatric hospital at Orange, two years before the attack and upon discharge from hospital had become very religious. He left Australia for England about a year later. Rohan's father said that he was not inclined to make any arrangements for his legal defence nor to help him in any way," as the family had cut him off. However, this had not prevented him from visiting them<sup>9</sup>.

The Israeli version of the arson of *al-Aqsa*

emphasized that Rohan had acted alone and was the only offender. The criminal file submitted to the district court of Jerusalem on 31<sup>st</sup> August 1969 by the Israeli Attorney General Meir Shamgar gave a detailed report on Rohan's attempts to burn *al-Aqsa*. He mentioned that Rohan had arrived in Israel as a tourist in March 1969 and stayed in Jerusalem from 20<sup>th</sup> July to 21<sup>st</sup> August 1969.

The file states that whilst in Jerusalem, Rohan frequently visited the area of the dome of the rock and the Mosque of *al-Aqsa*. He became friendly with the guides and guards employed by the Muslim *Waqf*<sup>10</sup>. The file added that in the afternoon of August 11, 1969, Rohan entered the city of Jerusalem, hiding himself in a tree in the vicinity of *al-Aqsa*. He remained there until 8:00 pm., after which he began to walk about the area to find out whether it was guarded or not. At approximately 11:30 pm, he approached the south-east gate of the Mosque of *al-Aqsa*. Rohan tried to set fire to the mosque by pouring kerosene through the keyhole of the gate-door. He inserted a cord soaked with kerosene into the keyhole, and set light to the end. Seeing that the cord had caught fire, he left the old part of the city and returned to the Revoli Hotel, where he was staying<sup>11</sup>.

When it became clear to Rohan that his act had not been successful, he decided to set fire to the mosque in another manner. The file shows that on 21<sup>st</sup> August 1969, close to 6.00 am the accused arrived at St Stephen's gate or (Lions Gate). After waiting there for a while, he entered the old city of Jerusalem through that gate, continued to the gate of Bani *Ghanim* (*Bab al-Ghawanima*), bought a ticket there from the guard employed by the Muslim *Waqf* and entered the area of *al-Aqsa* carrying with him a haversack containing two containers and water flask filled with benzene and kerosene. The accused entered the mosque of *al-Aqsa* through the main entrance at about 7.00 pm, after obtaining permission to do so from the guard. Inside the mosque, he placed the containers of benzene and kerosene below the steps of the pulpit, soaked a woolen scarf with kerosene placing one end of it upon the steps and the other end on the petrol containers. He then set alight the scarf. Thereafter, he left by the main entrance of the mosque, running through the remission gate (*Bab Hatta*) and went out of the old city of Jerusalem by St. Stephen's Gate (Lions Gate)<sup>12</sup>.

An examination the criminal file prepared by the Israeli Attorney General, shows that Rohan was clearly an intelligent, adept and well-organized man, which

prompted many Muslims to question the claim to his insanity, which was the reason for his release later on by Israeli authorities. Till today, many Muslims point out that his release is tacit evidence of Israeli sympathy and approval of his action.

The Israeli reports did not convince skeptical Muslim masses. They believed that a crime of such proportion could not be committed without the involvement of "others" in directing and inspiring Rohan. The Israeli prosecutor avoided revealing Rohan's whereabouts between March to July 1969 and the relations he developed during that period. The financial status of this young tourist, who spent five months in Israel, shed more doubts on his case. How could he support himself and cover the expenses of the Revoli hotel in East Jerusalem for almost one month? This is even more suspicious if we bear in mind, as said by the above mentioned report that his family had cut him off and he was suffering from psychiatric problems. Indeed, there is no evidence that he had a regular job or a salary of any kind.

*Mohammad al-Farra*, the Ambassador of Jordan to the U.N. made a statement on 28<sup>th</sup> August 1969 to the Security Council in which he stated that according to Israeli sources, the Australian suspect was a 'friend' of Israel who was brought to work for Israel by a Jewish agency. This Agency arranged for him to work in a Kibbutz for several months, so that he could learn the Hebrew language and acquire more about Zionist teaching. According to an article in *The Times* of London dated 12<sup>th</sup> September 1969; on his way out of the mosque, Rohan offered the guards 110 pounds sterling each, but they declined. One of them thought there must be something wrong, then he entered the Mosque and rushed out crying. The Israeli newspaper *Jerusalem Post* on 25<sup>th</sup> August 1969, stated that Rohan's foster-parents in the kibbutz had said: "He never appeared to be short of money to us"<sup>13</sup>.

### **The Israeli Attitude**

Aware of potential catastrophic consequences of this arson, Golda Meir, the Israeli Prime Minister, at that time, issued an immediate statement, as work on extinguishing the fire was still in progress, saying that she was shocked. She expressed deep sorrow on behalf of the Israeli government for the burning of this holy place for Muslims, saying that a curfew had been imposed on the area to prevent interference with the work of putting out the fire. Furthermore, she declared that the government

would appoint a committee to investigate the cause of the fire and that its findings would be publicized openly, adding that another committee consisting of engineers would be formed to assess the damage and maintenance requirements for the restoration of the mosque<sup>14</sup>. The Israeli government declared that it was prepared to assist in the repair of the damages, which included making available Muslim engineers and experts from abroad<sup>15</sup>. This was a tactical move aimed at absorbing and containing the anger which was sweeping over the Muslim World.

The Israeli government gave the president of the Supreme Court the authority to appoint a committee to investigate the matter. Accordingly, in the morning of the next day, 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1969, he appointed a committee of five members:

1. Dr. Yoel Zussman  
A judge in the Supreme Court
2. Moh'd Nimr Al-Hawari  
A judge in *Al-Nasirah* (Nazareth)
3. Prof. Michael Ardon  
Chemist – Hebrew University
4. Prof. Arnold Winokur  
Prof. in Construction – Technion
5. Musa Kitly  
Mayer of Nazareth

Three members of this committee were Jews (no. 1, 3 and 4) while the other two were Arabs with Israeli citizenship (occupied Palestinian land 1948). Al-Hawari was the only Muslim in this committee and Kitly was the only Christian<sup>16</sup>. It was, therefore, highly unlikely that this committee would be of any value to Palestinian, Arab or Muslim countries, since they neither recognized the committee, nor would accept its findings. For many observers, the formation of this committee was a political maneuver to block the road for any attempt by Muslims or the international community to establish an independent committee. Something which the Israelis feared, as no country in the world gave recognition to the Israeli rule over East Jerusalem, and the Israelis, vehemently rejected any country interfering or confronting their authority over the area.

The report of this Israeli backed inquest was submitted to the Israeli Prime Minister on 19<sup>th</sup> September 1969 and was published in October 1969. The commission committed itself to determining the circumstances of the fire, but refrained from finding the agent responsible for the arson or the possible motives

behind it. Palestinian Muslim leaders refused to recognize the authenticity of the commission or to cooperate with it by giving evidence. However, Muslim staff who were directly involved gave their evidence<sup>17</sup>. Three Jerusalemite Muslim leaders were invited by the commission to testify; Sheikh Hilmi al-Muhtasib President of the Muslim Council and Hasan Tahboub: the Director of the *Waqf* for Jerusalem. However, they declined on the grounds that they did not recognize the legitimacy of the court. Anwar Nusaybah on the other hand claimed that all his information had been derived from the press and that his own thoughts on the fire were not such as could be detailed to the court<sup>18</sup>.

The Israeli Commission detailed in its findings that the fire had been caused by arson. It claimed that it could not establish through which gate the suspect had entered the area of *al-Aqsa* on the said day, but that he did not enter through the Moors' Gate (controlled by the Israelis), after it had been opened on the said morning. It claimed that at the said hour, the gate of the Mosque had been open, and that there had been no guard posted, either at the gate or within the Mosque. The Israeli Commission also argued that the *Waqf* Administration had been negligent in failing to instruct any of its employees in the use of fire-extinguishing equipment, so that when the need arose, none of them knew how to handle the equipment. It claimed that the fire brigades from both parts of the city had functioned properly and had done their best to extinguish the fire<sup>19</sup>.

The general tenor of the Israeli commission's report rests the failure to protect *al-Aqsa* wholly upon the inefficiency of the Muslim authorities, not the Israeli authorities. This made it very dubious to Muslim public opinion, who gave little credibility to the findings of the commission. Strachan from the British embassy in Amman informed the Foreign Office that the general belief for the cause of the fire is neither an electrical fault nor the story of Rohan<sup>20</sup>.

The Palestinians give a different account of how the Israelis dealt with the fire. There was no doubt among the inhabitants of Jerusalem and eyewitness reports that the arrival of the Israeli fire brigades, nearby the scene, was slow and unsatisfactory. That very afternoon, the commander of the fire brigade told journalists that the pumping of water went ahead swiftly, in an orderly manner in the beginning, but that after eight minutes the water was interrupted and pumping could not be resumed. After the Israeli occupation, the water system had been

connected to the western part of the city so that the Israelis could be in full control of the water system<sup>21</sup>. The Supreme Muslim Council of Jerusalem declared that the Israeli authorities were not only slow, but even tried to prevent the Muslim population from helping to extinguish the fire<sup>22</sup>.

Israeli authorities tried to undermine the significance of the fire by mentioning that there were fires in *al-Aqsa* in 1949 and 1964 under Jordanian rule<sup>23</sup>. However, the Jordanians, categorically, denied the occurrence of an alleged fire in 1964<sup>24</sup>.

The Israelis sought support from Muslim trustees of *Waqf* property in Jafa, Haifa, Ramla and Lydda who held Israeli citizenship, and many of whom were collaborators with Israel strongly influenced by them. The trustees issued a statement congratulating the Israeli authorities on the arrest of Rohan, paying tribute to the Israeli cooperation in safeguarding Muslim holy places in Israel and criticizing the Head of the *Waqf* in Jerusalem, i.e., Al- Muhtasib, for blaming Israeli authorities for the fire<sup>25</sup>.

### **The Palestinian Attitude**

The British Consulate in Jerusalem, immediately, reported the burning of *al-Aqsa* to London on 21<sup>st</sup> August 1969, mentioning that the Muslim population was perturbed and that businesses were closing in the old city<sup>26</sup>. Later, it sent another telegram stating that Muslim leaders were talking about an "Israeli Sabotage". The Consulate confirmed that feelings were running high at the Friday congregational prayer and disturbances were expected to be stirred up<sup>27</sup>. There were Arab demonstrations in East Jerusalem on the Thursday of the fire (21 August) and the following day. A complete strike in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, was observed on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> August and minor clashes occurred with the police<sup>28</sup>.

On 25<sup>th</sup> August 1969, Sa'ad al-Din al-'Alami, the *Mufti* of Jerusalem informed a British delegation, who came to officially convey the British Government's regret for the incident, that Muslims did not trust Israel's ability to protect Muslim holy places. Furthermore, he called upon Britain to exert all its influence to convince Israel to relinquish East Jerusalem. Al-'Alami emphasized that the Muslims were willing and able to protect their holy places, but the Israeli authorities were gradually eroding the 1967 agreement, which gave Muslims responsibility over the *al-Aqsa* area. He informed the British delegation that the Israeli's held the key to the Moors gate, (*Bab al-*

*Magharibah*) and that they had demolished some buildings which had previously offered some protection to the area and that they were excavating near *al-Aqsa*. He added that Muslim authorities were handicapped in their efforts to protect the Mosque and that this divided authority over the gates which had led to more confusion and ambiguity among Muslims, since Israeli guards let people pass freely<sup>29</sup>.

The *Mufti* listed a series of occasions when Jews had hurt Muslim sensibilities without the Israeli authorities being able to give a satisfactory response to their protests. These Israeli violations included a Rabbi who prayed twice in *al-Aqsa* Mosque, a young Israeli man and women who danced in the courtyard of *al-Aqsa* and a group of Jews who paraded in front of the Dome of the Rock<sup>30</sup>.

At a meeting immediately after the fire, the Muslim Council (in the West Bank) passed 13 resolutions most of which emphasized Muslim responsibility over the area of *al-Aqsa*, and Muslim responsibility for inquiring into the cause of the fire, for cleaning the debris and for repairing the damage. The council also decided to form an Arab committee of enquiry. Four judges were nominated:

1. 'Abd al- Maqsud al-Khayri
2. Husni al-Jayusi
3. Hassan Abu Meizar
4. Wadi'ah Salah

The first three were Muslims, while the fourth was a Christian, but the committee took time getting off the ground. It was supposed to start work on 26<sup>th</sup> August 1969, but this meeting never materialized<sup>31</sup>. In fact, the committee faced difficulties from the very beginning. The committee members found that the case had two main problems: on the legal side they would have no way of interrogating Rohan, nor did they have access to police findings. Secondly, they did not wish to become embroiled in a political debate which would be better addressed in a political forum. It was for this reason that Woodrow, of the British consulate in Jerusalem, concluded on 4<sup>th</sup> September 1969 that the committee "seems to have been effectually buried"<sup>32</sup>.

The Palestinians formed another committee to coordinate the repair of *al-Aqsa*. This committee consisted of the *Mufti* of Jerusalem, Sheikh Hilmi al-Muhtasib (President of the Muslim Council), Shaykh Sa'id abri (the judge of the *Shari'ah* Court), Anwar al-Khatib, the former Jordanian mayor of Jerusalem, and Anwar Nusaybah (the ex-Jordanian Minister). This

committee focused on practical matters that were within its competence and, therefore, did not experience the same difficulties faced by the first committee of enquiry<sup>33</sup>.

The rapid arrest of Rohan helped in calming the situation, but Muslim feelings remained high. The British Consulate-General in Jerusalem commented that although the Muslims appeared to accept the fact that Israel had no direct responsibility, for the attacks they seemed to feel that she must have had a hand in it somewhere<sup>34</sup>.

### The Jordanian Attitude

The British ambassador to Amman, J.A. Shephard, observed that amid the widespread anguish over the fire, "the mood in Jordan had become uglier"<sup>35</sup>. It seems that Shephard did not rightly perceive the genuine feelings of Jordanians towards *al-Aqsa* and *al-Quds*. Besides, that, the official stand of Jordan was in dealing with the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) as occupied Jordanian lands (officially united with Jordan since 1950), supported by the fact that a large number of Jordanians are, in fact, of Palestinian origin. Moreover, *al-Aqsa* and other holy Muslim sites in Palestine were still administered using Jordanian financial support. Another factor is that Jordanian sentiments were greatly affected by the strong presence and influence of Palestinian paramilitary groups.

The Jordanian authorities endeavoured to absorb the wave of anger about the fire, by allowing demonstrations and media campaigns. It took the initiative in calling for Arab and Islamic Summits to be convened and to mobilize forces for the liberation of *al-Aqsa*<sup>36</sup>. Bahjat al-Talhuni, the Jordanian Prime Minister, stated that the Arabs, who protected the holy places and freedom of worship there were deeply grieved by the plight of the holy places, at the hands of the oppressive forces of occupation. He submitted that the Arabs would unify in an effort to rescue their lands and sacred places. Al-Talhuni deemed Israel fully responsible for the burning of *al-Aqsa* and considering it a "criminal act" and the most serious aggression committed against the Arabs and Muslims. So far, the Jordanian government sent a telegram to U Thant, Secretary General of the U.N., demanding appropriate action<sup>37</sup>.

Many demonstrations were held in Jordan on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1969. Strachan of the British Embassy in Amman noted that, all these activities were being organized by P.L.O. in an attempt to show the Jordanian regime its

control over the people of Amman. The British Embassy noted that the demonstrations were angry, yet peaceful, being well-controlled by the *feda'yeen*, i.e., the Palestinian fighters<sup>38</sup>. A "great rally" was convened in Amman followed by a demonstration. The Palestinians and most of the *feda'yeen* appeared to be making every effort to prevent any internal disturbances from taking place<sup>39</sup>.

Shepard was of the opinion that the fever could die down, yet the only people to benefit from the current mood would be the *feda'yeen*. Palestinian operations against the Israelis increased and this gave new momentum to the *feda'yeen* movement. Shepard concluded that it was possible that King Hussain felt that the *feda'yeen* movement has gained so much inertia that he could no longer restrain it and had, therefore, resigned himself to preparing to fight a battle which the *feda'yeen* would sooner or later inevitably provoke<sup>40</sup>.

It seems that the different Palestinian factions in Jordan seized the opportunity to serve their own agendas. An interesting example of this is the People's Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), a Marxist-Leninist group that participated extensively in a demonstration held on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1969, which marched towards the American Embassy in Amman. In addition to religious incitement, the slogans called the government to support the Palestinians in their legitimate religious demands<sup>41</sup>. It looked as if the PFLP had found a platform for directing hatred against Americans rather than serving the religious cause.

### Reaction in other Arab and Muslim Countries

If we look at the response of certain specific Muslim countries to the burning of *al-Aqsa*, we notice that the general reaction was the similar. People were outraged and accused the Israelis of being directly or indirectly involved, demanding that their governments take stern action and join forces to liberate Jerusalem and Palestine. On the other hand, Muslim regimes, realizing their weakness, tended to try to absorb these waves of anger and to cooperate in political and public relation campaigns rather than risk military or financial intervention.

The Egyptian regime was yet to recover from its humiliating defeat in the 1967 war with Israel and had been involved in a war of attrition ever since. So the Egyptian president, Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir, took the opportunity to gain Arab and Muslim support and

solidarity. The government considered the burning of *al-Aqsa* as "a historical, Israeli crime", a turning point in the crisis of the Middle East, and that the enmity of Israel was not only against Arabs but against Muslims everywhere<sup>42</sup>.

President Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir, though known for his secular nationalist approach and his obsessive enmity towards Islamists, did not fail to put a religious flavor into his message to the Egyptian Army on 23<sup>rd</sup> August. He announced that the coming battle would not merely be for the liberation of Palestine but also the "purging of the holy land of God's enemy". He emphasized that the burning of *al-Aqsa* was a confirmation that there was no other alternative but to gain victory by force. He added that it was useless to blame and condemn Israel, or to resort to seeking an investigation or justice from any organisation<sup>43</sup>. However, in reality, Nasir did nothing more than to initiate a political campaign including Arab and Islamic Summits and a Security Council resolution!

The authorities, in Saudi Arabia, had traditionally shown more concern for Islamic holy places. King Faysal issued a statement on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1969 about the fire at *al-Aqsa*. In it, he appealed to "Muslim leaders and peoples throughout the World to hasten to the Liberation of the Islamic shrines in beloved Jerusalem". He repeated his call (originally made during the Pilgrimage) to "declare a holy war, now, that all methods for settlement by peaceful means had been exhausted"<sup>44</sup>.

The Saudi press assumed that Israel was responsible for the fire<sup>45</sup>. A.J. Craig of the British Embassy in Jeddah noticed that almost all people believed that Israel was responsible, including the so-called sophisticated Saudis' from the cocktail party set. For instance, Ali Reza who prided himself on his subtlety of understanding, also, saw the affair as a Zionist conspiracy. Craig commented on King's Faysal attitude saying that he reacted precisely as expected; "His passions on Jerusalem are ungovernable and even if they were not, opinion here and elsewhere would have accepted no less". For Craig, Faysal call for an Islamic Summit evaded, at least in the time being, an Arab Summit<sup>46</sup>. But, Craig did not explain why Faysal was trying to evade such a summit. An attitude which can only be understood in light of the internal quarrels of Arab countries and differences, especially between Saudi Arabia and Egypt; not to mention the financial burdens that would be placed on Saudi shoulders by Arab states bordering Israel.

In Kuwait, there was a widespread feeling of Muslim

Unity and an upsurge of anti-Jewish sentiment opposed to anti-Zionist feeling. In 24 August 1969, the Council of Ministers issued a statement accusing the Zionist authorities for the "heinous crime" of arson. The council called for firm action in which all Muslims should participate<sup>47</sup>. On the same day, when Alan Goodison (of the British embassy) offered his sympathy to Sayyed Rashed, the Kuwaiti Under Secretary for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Rashed informed him that one could never convince the Arabs that Rohan, who had lived in Israel for several months, was not an agent of the Israeli Government, employed to create hostility between Christians and Muslims. To the British embassy, Rashed appeared a level-headed and realistic man, yet the embassy observed that the private reactions of others had been more hysterical. A friend of the British diplomats there said that Kuwaitis could regard with equanimity the destruction of a whole battalion of Egyptians, but were incensed by the fire at *al-Aqsa*<sup>48</sup>.

The Tunisian regime provides an interesting example of a token political reaction. President Bourguiba was known to be extremely secular and more "liberal" in suggesting a peaceful solution to the Palestinian Issue in the mid-1960s. However, Bourguiba ordered his Foreign Minister to gather the ambassadors of the four great powers (U.S.A., Soviet Union, Britain and France), and then expressed Tunisia's deep concern about the prospect of an explosion of emotions from Indonesia to Rabat over this odious affront to the Muslim World. The Tunisian Government called the ambassadors to take urgent action "if an explosion to be averted"<sup>49</sup>. Interestingly, the British Embassy observed that only four days later, after the first flush of enthusiasm for united Arab front against Zionists, the Tunisian press had already reverted to its habitual criticism of other Arab leaders. In addition, it condemned the calls for Holy War as clumsy and inopportune, considering them as playing into the hands of the Israelis<sup>50</sup>!

The Moroccan Foreign Minister, similarly, invited the ambassadors of the four great powers and informed them that due to the feelings which the burning of *al-Aqsa* has incited the King (al-Hasan II) feared that the Middle East problem which had, hitherto, been a political one, might escalate into a confrontational plan. He also called the great powers to take action to prevent the deterioration of the situation<sup>51</sup>. Unlike the Tunisian regime, the Moroccan regime gave more importance to Muslim holy shrines, as the Moroccan ruling family was descended from the

Prophet Muhammad's family and the King claimed the religio-political position as *Amir Al-Mu'mineen* (Prince of Believers). Rabat hosted both an Islamic Summit in September 1969 and an Arab Summit in December 1969, as an official Islamic response to the calls to liberate *al-Aqsa*.

The Shah of Iran, who at that time had maintained political relations with Israel, took the opportunity of gathering all Muslim ambassadors and delivering a speech about Muslim unity and solidarity. The British Embassy in Tehran commented "we do not believe that this has any real political significance...."<sup>52</sup>.

The reaction of Pakistan to the arson of *al-Aqsa* was among the strongest in the Muslim World. On 23<sup>rd</sup> August, President Yahya issued a strongly worded condemnation of the arson, calling for the Security Council to compel Israel to comply with the UN's resolutions and for Muslims to unite. He promised that Pakistan would take action, in concert with other Muslim Countries, to safeguard the Muslim's holy places and the restoration of Jerusalem<sup>53</sup>. The British High Commission in Rawal Pindi noted that the reaction in editorial comment "has been hysterical". The headline of the Pakistan Times on 23<sup>rd</sup> August was read: "The New Huns" and described the incident as "the worst blow Israel has dealt yet to civilized humanity". Editorials were, also, critical of the lack of Arab unity and Arab involvement in disputes, rather than directing their efforts against Israel. The papers were full of messages from religious and political bodies deploring the arson of *al-Aqsa*<sup>54</sup>.

Friday, 29<sup>th</sup> August 1969, was declared a "Black Day" by religious and political organisations in Pakistan. The British Commission in Rawal Pindi drew attention to the impact of the fire on political life in Pakistan. It mentioned that the fire had given ammunition to the rightists and traditionalists, particularly the religious elements. It, also, observed the haste with which all political parties sought to climb onto the band-wagon, and the tendency amongst certain politicians, such as Mr. Bhutto, to equate Israel with India, both being "enemies of Islam"<sup>55</sup>. The British Commission observed a difference in the level of reactions between West and East Pakistan. It claimed that Friday's demonstrations in Dacca on 29<sup>th</sup> August were not as conspicuous as those in the West Wing of Pakistan. This was explained by the fact that West Pakistan looked more towards the Middle East, while the people of East Pakistan were more

concerned with events in East Asia<sup>56</sup>. This may not be fully accurate as it was at this time that East Pakistan was engrossed in the internal turmoil of separating from West Pakistan. Furthermore, such an explanation does not justify the reason for the vehement reaction shown by Indonesians (in the far east of the Muslim World) who reacted even more strongly than the people in some Arab Countries, let alone East Pakistan.

In Jakarta a "mass rally for the liberation of *al-Aqsa* Mosque" on 19<sup>th</sup> September 1969 was organized by several Muslim NGOs and attended by representatives of the Indonesian Government. The strong Islamic spirit and calls for *Jihad* were clearly evident. These organisations formed an organisation called "The Jihad for the Protection of *al-Aqsa* Mosque" and elected Asmawi Heryana as its Chairman and M.D. Hasbullah as the Secretary General. The mass rally demanded that the Indonesian Government open its doors to the Palestinian fighters (namely *Fatah*) to open their office in Indonesia and to permit Indonesian Muslims to send volunteers for liberating *al-Aqsa*. They called upon foreign Governments to cut off all relations with Israel to force them to "stop their savage and inhuman actions"<sup>57</sup>.

#### Arab and Islamic Summits

After the fourth Arab Summit of 29<sup>th</sup> August 1967, all calls for a new Arab Summit failed due to deep differences between the Arab countries. On 21<sup>st</sup> August, King Hussein of Jordan sent a telegraph to King Faisal of Saudi Arabia calling for another Arab Summit, issuing an urgent appeal to Muslim Leaders and their nations to participate for the sake of Jerusalem<sup>58</sup>. King Faysal replied to King Hussein supporting the convening of an Islamic Summit, but ignored calls for an Arab Summit. President Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir responded to the call of King Faysal to arrange an Islamic Summit. He also replied to King Hussein's message and suggested a four point plan for the following:

1. Full Arab mobilization for the battle with Israel.
2. Coordination between Arab countries bordering the occupied territories and those having contingents on the front.
3. The holding of an Arab Summit meeting.
4. Arrangements for an Islamic Summit as proposed by King Faysal<sup>59</sup>.

The Arab Foreign Ministers at their meeting in Cairo on 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> August 1969 adopted the call for an Islamic summit and entrusted Saudi Arabia and Morocco

with the task of making the necessary arrangements. However, they ceased to make any further call for an Arab Summit, recommending the convening of a Joint Arab Defense Council in the first week of November 1969. The Arab League Council was to study the results of the meeting of the Arab Defense Council and only then decide whether or not to hold an Arab Summit meeting<sup>60</sup>!

The British Embassy in Jordan reported that on 29<sup>th</sup> August, an attempt to convene a summit conference, to discuss the *al-Aqsa* Mosque fire and to use the fire as an excuse to try to organize more effective joint Arab action against Israel was a disappointment to most Jordanians; due to widespread skepticism about the possibility of such a conference producing any useful results in terms of military or financial assistance<sup>61</sup>. Shephard noticed that the slow-moving timetable was “beyond the belief of many people whom he had spoken to”. He concluded that the reason for such sluggishness could be “merely to demonstrate the impotence of politicians to influence the situation in the Middle East any further and to give added impetus to thoughts of rejoining battle with the Israelis”<sup>62</sup>.

Only five Arab countries held a partial Summit during 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> September 1969 in Cairo, comprising of Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Iraq and then, in the last day, Sudan. The Summit called for full utilization of Arab resources and know-how. Such a Summit was, in itself, a sign of the failure of Arab countries to respond collectively to the immediate challenges. The Arabs had to wait till 21<sup>st</sup> December 1969 for the fifth Arab Summit, which was convened in Rabat, with full Arab participation. Though the Palestinian issue was the core of the agenda, the burning of *al-Aqsa* was not the core of the discussion, as it had already lost its appeal for urgent action. In fact, the Summit was a near failure, as it did not succeed in even issuing an official statement after three days of stormy discussions<sup>63</sup>.

Conversely, the arrangements for the convening of an Islamic Summit in Rabat from 22<sup>nd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> September 1969 were a success. 25 Muslim countries participated, including Muslim representatives from India. The arson of *al-Aqsa* and the role of the Muslims in facing such challenges was the heart of discussion. The Summit called for another meeting in March 1970 in Jeddah, to arrange for the foundation of a permanent Secretariat to coordinate cooperation among Muslim countries. This could later lead to the establishment of: The Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) which became the

largest official platform for cooperation among Muslim Countries in the world. Interestingly, Iraq boycotted this conference, while ‘Abd al-Nasir, claiming sickness, sent his deputy: Anwar al-Sadat. The Egyptians undermined the outcome of the Summit and *al-Ahram* newspaper claimed that the conference started without an agenda and ended without resolutions. It further stated that the Egyptian delegation had cut the way on adding a paragraph that stated that the goal of the Summit was to establish an “Islamic Alliance”<sup>64</sup>. Iraq and Egypt were doubtful about the ultimate goals of the Summit and were hesitant of emphasizing the Islamic dimension of the conflict with Israel, on the account of Arab nationalism.

### Discussions in the United Nations

Muslim delegations to the U.N. held an urgent meeting in the afternoon of 21<sup>st</sup> August, upon receiving news of the burning of *al-Aqsa*. The Pakistani delegation issued a statement on behalf of Muslim countries, unanimously accusing Israel of being responsible for the horrendous damage inflicted upon *al-Aqsa*. Muslim delegations expressed their shock and deep regret and decided to continue their discussions towards reaching a joint action<sup>65</sup>. The next day, 25 Muslim countries sent a telegram to the President of the Security Council and the Secretary General of the U.N. proposing:

- a) An impartial investigation into the grave events of 21<sup>st</sup> August.
- b) Prevention of the recurrence of any act of vandalism against, or profanation of, the Holy Places in Jerusalem.
- c) Enabling the representatives of Islamic countries to assess the damage to the Mosque and to prepare and execute plans for its repair<sup>66</sup>.

Astonishingly, Muslim countries did not call for an urgent meeting of the Security Council until 29<sup>th</sup> August and, ironically, the Council did not start its discussion on the fire of *al-Aqsa* until 9<sup>th</sup> September 1969. This reflects the disunity and misunderstanding among Muslim countries, not to mention the lack of urgency or the ability to take immediate action or draw up tough resolutions. It, also, shows the conflict of interests and lack of priorities among Muslim countries, as well as the extent of international influence on their decision making.

In the beginning, there was uncertainty among Muslim delegates about whether to call for a Security Council meeting. Jordan, that considered Jerusalem and the West bank as occupied Jordanian land, continued

“studying” the call for a meeting for several days, and was therefore hardly taking it as an urgent matter, with Moh’d Al-Farra, the Jordanian Permanent Representative, returning from his holiday to New York on 2<sup>nd</sup> September<sup>67</sup>. At the same time, there were signs of hidden American and British pressure on Muslim countries to avoid such a meeting<sup>68</sup>. C.Yost, the American ambassador to the U.N., hoped that Muslims could continue their discussion outside the council. If there was a council meeting, he anticipated a “tremendous outburst of indiscriminate Muslim fury”. Lord Caradon, the British ambassador to the U.N., agreed with him that a council meeting would be expected to do little “Except intensify bad temper”. Caradon was doubtful whether much could be done to influence the Muslims..., but he was hopeful that they may have some opportunities to advise, discreetly, against calling for the council”<sup>69</sup>.

However, on 29<sup>th</sup> August, De Pinies, the Spanish President of the S.C. received a request from Roslan ‘Abdul Gani, the ambassador of Indonesia, dated 28<sup>th</sup> August, where he called for an urgent meeting of the Security Council on behalf of 25 Muslim countries. The British delegation expected the debate to be “a long and tough one,” their stance would be guided by “the need to avoid any action that would make a peaceful settlement in the Middle East more difficult”. In other words, they would not support any practical resolution that might lead to real changes on the ground, vis-à-vis Israel<sup>70</sup>.

The British delegation observed that until 2<sup>nd</sup> September, when Moh’d Al-Farra, the Jordanian Permanent representative returned from his holiday, the inclination of the majority of Muslim countries was to focus on the harm done to the Shrine and to follow the lines of their abovementioned telegram of 22<sup>nd</sup> August. However, after 2<sup>nd</sup> September, Arab countries desired to have a debate on the grounds of Israeli non-compliance with earlier resolutions on the status of Jerusalem and aimed at linking this with the fire of *al-Aqsa*; As well as demanding a condemnation of the failure of Israel to comply with earlier resolutions. The British delegation reported that this had led to considerable dissension among the Muslims. A drafting group of four Arab countries, led by Egypt and Jordan, and four non-Arab countries, represented by Pakistan and Indonesia, radically revised the first “moderate” draft and put together a tougher draft, after a five day discussion from 4<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> September<sup>71</sup>. This illustrates the difficulty of

bringing Muslim countries to a common understanding, even on very clear and serious issues. The British memorandum on the Security Council debate commented by saying that this was a lesson to Arabs who should not be too hasty to call in Muslim assistance, when trying to issue “extreme” resolutions on Middle East questions. It added: “Twenty five signatories to a document are likely to be the cause of twenty five headaches, rather than an early agreement”<sup>72</sup>.

Discussions continued for six days from 9<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> September. The British remarked that the first day was notable for the moderate tone and high quality of the speeches by Shahi (Pakistan) on behalf of the non-Arab sponsors at the meeting, whereas Egypt, talking on behalf of the Arab sponsors, took a stronger approach. Other Arabs, Muslims and quite interestingly: India (seeing the Chance to outdo its rival in the face of Pakistani moderation) spoke in a more “extreme” vein. Most Muslim countries, the Soviet Union, Hungary, Spain and Zambia recognized a causal link between Israeli occupation and the fire<sup>73</sup>.

On 15<sup>th</sup> September, the Security Council voted on a resolution, with 11 countries voting in favour, none voting against and four abstaining (U.S.A., Finland, Colombia and Paraguay). The French, however, requested a separate vote for paragraph 4, which cited the Geneva Convention of 1954. For this, ten voted in favour, while France joined the above mentioned four to make five abstentions<sup>74</sup>.

The Security Council resolution 271 of (1969), expressed regret for the extensive damage caused by the arson to *al-Aqsa* Mosque, recording the universal outrage caused by this act of sacrilege. It recognized that any such act could seriously endanger international peace and security and emphasized the need for Israel to desist from acting in violation of the aforesaid resolutions immediately, and to rescind forthwith all measures and actions taken to alter the status of Jerusalem. Paragraph no.4 called upon Israel to observe, scrupulously, the provisions of the Geneva Convention and international law governing military occupation and to refrain from hindering the Supreme Muslim Council of Jerusalem in its functions and responsibilities, including the request for co-operation from outside countries with predominantly Muslim populations or from Muslim communities, if it wished for the maintenance and repair of the Islamic Holy Places in Jerusalem. Furthermore, the Security Council resolution condemned the failure of Israel to comply with

the aforementioned resolutions and demanded that it implements, forthwith, the provisions of the resolutions. It reiterated that the Security Council would convene, without delay to consider what further action should be taken in this matter<sup>75</sup>.

The British memorandum quipped that “though the extreme Arabs will be pleased to have another resolution on Jerusalem to add to their collection...., the result of their labours is a patchy and poorly drafted thing, which the sponsors had to explain [that it] did not really mean what it said”<sup>76</sup>.

British documents report the anger of the Israelis over British support for the Security Council Resolution. The Israeli Foreign Ministry sent for the British ambassador. Rafael, the Israeli General Manager of the Foreign Ministry, told the British ambassador that the resolution was “a hoax and a fraud and that the British vote had caused dismay and deep disappointment in Israel....”<sup>77</sup>. It seems that the Israelis planned to show their anger, as a diplomatic move, even though the resolution had no practical value and was likely to be shelved along side the many other resolutions of the UN on the Palestinian problem.

## CONCLUSION

The arson of *al-Aqsa* shows the typical response of the Muslim masses and their political leadership in such incidents; a temporary, sweeping wave of wrath and discontent with feelings running high and calls for *Jihad* to liberate *al-Aqsa*, Jerusalem all over the Muslim world. On the other hand, Muslim regimes, realizing their weakness, tended to absorb the waves of anger, held meetings, cooperated for some time, in political and public relations, rather than military or financial fields.

However, it can be said that the arson of *al-Aqsa* motivated the Muslims to establish the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), which is still considered the largest official platform for cooperation among Muslim Countries, and it also succeeded in driving quarreling Arab Countries to hold their fifth summit. The Arab and Muslim countries managed to score a few more points in the forums of the UN and the Security Council, though the resulting resolutions lacked the political weight and power needed to ensure their implementation on the ground.











NOTE

- (1) Narrated by al-Bukhari, Muslim, see: *Sahih al-Bukhari*, 1987, Beirut: *Dar Ibn Kathir*, vol. 1, p. 398 and *Sahih Muslim*, 1985, Beirut: *Dar Ihyaa al-Turath al-Arabi*, vol. 2, p. 1014.
- (2) Al-Tabarani, 1983, *Al-Mu'jam al-Kabir*, Mosul (Iraq), *Maktabat Al-ulum wal-Hikam*, vol. 2, p. 243.
- (3) See: Ismail bin Kathir, 1985, *Al-Bidayah wa al-Nihaya*, Beirut: *Dar al-Ma'arif*, vol. 8, p. 280. See also, 'Abdul Hadi Hashim (chief editor), 1984, *Al-Mawsu'ah al-Filistiniyyah* (The Palestinian Encyclopedia), Damascus: Hay'at *Al-Mawsu'ah al-Filistiniyyah*, vol. 4, p204.
- (4) See: Ruhi al-Khatib, 1979, *Tahwid Madinat al-Quds* (The Judization of the City of Jerusalem), Amman : Ministry of Endowments, pp. 11-45 and George Khuri Nasr Allah (compiler), 1971, *Al-Watha'iq al-Filistiniyyah al-'Arabiyyah Li' am 1969* (Palestinian Arab Documents for 1969), Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies and Lebanon University, p. 328, *Al-Mawsu'ah al-Filistiniyyah*, vol. 3, pp522-523.
- (5) See: [http:// domino. un. org/unispal. nsf/ 0/ 46f2803d78a0488e852560c3006023a8](http://domino.un.org/unispal.nsf/0/46f2803d78a0488e852560c3006023a8).
- (6) See: Al-Maqdisi, 1997, *al-Rawdatain fi Akhbar al-Dawlatain al-Nuriyyah wa al-Salahiyya*, Beirut, al-Risalah, vol. 3, pp. 393-394.
- (7) The press published this report on 30 August 1969. The committee consisted of engineers Rizq Aspair Khuri (Christian), Mohamad Nusaybah and Ibrahim al-Daqqaq. See: *Al-Watha'iq al-Filistiniyyah al-'Arabiyyah Li' Am 1969*, p. 356.
- (8) Telegram (Tel) no. 114, British Consulate, Jerusalem to Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), London, 23 August 1969, Immediate, Confidential, Public Record Office, London FCO 17/978.,
- (9) Tel. 324, FCO to, British Embassy (B. E.), Tel Aviv, 23 August 1969, Immediate and Confidential, FCO17/978.
- (10) Ibid.
- (11) Ibid.
- (12) Ibid.
- (13) See: [http://www. jerusalemities. org/crimes/ crimes\\_ against\\_ islam/9. htm](http://www.jerusalemities.org/crimes/crimes_against_islam/9.htm)
- (14) Tel. 545, British Embassy (B. E.), Tel Aviv to Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), London, 21 August 1969, Public Record Office, London, FCO 17/978.
- (15) Letter,, Yosef Tekoah, Israeli Representative to the United Nations (U. N.), to U Thant, Secretary General of the U. N., 22 August 1969, FCO 17/978.
- (16) Ibid, see also: Tel. 550, B. E., Tel Aviv to FCO, 25 August 1969, FCO 17/978.
- (17) Tel. 144, British Consulate, Jerusalem to FCO, 26 September 1969, FCO 17/979.
- (18) Tel. 122, British Consulate, Jerusalem to FCO, 4 September 1969, Restricted, FCO 17/978
- (19) Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Circumstances of the Fire at the Aqsa Mosque, submitted to the Prime Minister, in Jerusalem on 19<sup>th</sup> September 1969 (Jerusalem: Israel Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Information Division, October 1969), p. 11.
- (20) Tel. 401, B. E., Amman to FCO, 25 August 1969, Priority and Confidential, FCO 17/978.
- (21) See: [http://www. jerusalemities. org/crimes/ crimes\\_ against\\_ islam/9. htm](http://www.jerusalemities.org/crimes/crimes_against_islam/9.htm)
- (22) Letter, Chargé de Affairs (in the U. NÉ.), Jordan to Uthant, 29 August 1969, see: [http://domino. un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/2aa9c8845de74ebb05256562005c2813](http://domino.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/2aa9c8845de74ebb05256562005c2813).
- (23) Tel. 549, B. E., Tel Aviv to FCO, 25 August 1969, FCO 17/978.
- (24) <http://domino.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/2aa9c8845de74ebb05256562005c2813>.
- (25) Tel. 549, B. E., Tel Aviv to FCO, 25 August 1969, FCO 17/978.
- (26) Tel. 111, British Consulate, Jerusalem to FCO, 21 August 1969, FCO 17/978.
- (27) Tel. 113, British Consulate, Jerusalem to FCO, 21 August 1969, Confidential, FCO 17/978.
- (28) Letter, entitled al-Aqsa Mosque, B.C.G., Jerusalem to FCO, 23 August 1969, Confidential, FCO 17/978. See also: Tel. 114, British Consulate, Jerusalem to FCO, 23 August 1969, Immediate, Confidential, FCO 17/978.
- (29) Tel. 115, British Consulate, Jerusalem to FCO, 25 August 1969, FCO 17/978, and Letter entitled: Al-Aqsa Mosque, British Consulate-General, Jerusalem (G. W. Woodrow) to R.M. Evans, FCO, 28 August 1969, Confidential, FCO 17/978
- (30) Letter, entitled :Enquires into the al-Aqsa Fire, B. C.G., Jerusalem to FCO, 23 August 1969, Confidential, FCO 17/978.
- (31) Letter, entitled al-Aqsa Mosque, British Consulate-General, Jerusalem to FCO, 28 August 1969, Confidential, FCO 17/978, and letter, al-Aqsa fire, British Consulate General, Jerusalem to FCO, 28 August 1969, Confidential, FCO 17/978.
- (32) Tel. 122, British Consulate General, Jerusalem to FCO, 4 September 1969, Restricted, FCO 17/978.
- (33) Letter, entitled: Enquires into the al-Aqsa fire, B. C. G., Jerusalem to FCO, 23 August 1969,

- Confidential, FCO 17/978.
- (34) Letter, entitled al-Aqsa Mosque, British Consulate-General, Jerusalem to FCO, 28 August 1969, Confidential, FCO 17/978
- (35) Letter, J. A. Shepard, B. E., Amman to FCO, 29 August 1969, Confidential, FCO 17/978.
- (36) *Al-Watha'iq al-Filistiniyyah al-'Arabiyyah Li' Am 1969*, pp. 327-328.
- (37) Reuter, 21 August 1969, FCO 17/978.
- (38) Tel. 394, B. E., Amman to FCO, 22 August 1969, FCO 17/978.
- (39) Letter, Shephard, B. E., Amman to FCO, 29 August 1969, Confidential, FCO 17/978.
- (40) Ibid.
- (41) Tel. 394, B. E., Amman to FCO, 22 August 1969, FCO 17/978.
- (42) Tel. 850, B. E., Cairo to FCO, 22 August 1969, Restricted, FCO 17/978.
- (43) Tel. 856, B. E., Cairo to FCO, 24 August 1969, Priority, FCO 17/978.
- (44) Tel. 412, B. E., Jeddah to FCO, 23 August 1969, Priority, FCO 17/978.
- (45) Ibid.
- (46) Tel. (unnumbered), B. E., Jeddah to FCO, 28 August 1969, FCO 17/978
- (47) Letter, D. Blatherwick, B. E., Kuwait to A. Ibott, FCO, 27 August 1969, Confidential, FCO 17/978.
- (48) Ibid.
- (49) Tel. 212, B. E., Tunis to FCO, 22 August 1969, FCO 17/978.
- (50) <sup>1</sup> Tel. 212, B. E., Tunis to FCO, 26 August 1969, Confidential, FCO 17/978.
- (51) Tel. 245, B. E., Rabat to FCO, 22 August 1969, Confidential, Immediate, FCO 17/978.
- (52) Letter, J.S. Champion, B.E., Tehran to D.J. Makinson, FCO, 26 August 1969, Priority, FCO 17/978.
- (53) Letter, R.F. Skilbek, B.E., Rawal Pindi to J.M. Walker, FCO, 26 August 1969, Confidential, FCO 17/978.
- (54) Ibid.
- (55) Letter, R. F. Skilbek, B. E., Rawal Pindi to J. M. Walker, FCO, 2 September 1969, Confidential, FCO17/978.
- (56) Ibid.
- (57) See: Resolution of Mass Rally for Liberation of al-Aqsa Mosque, attached to a covering letter from P. B. Cormack, B.E., Jakarta to D.F. Le Breton, 30 September 1969, Restricted, FCO 17/978.
- (58) *Al-Watha'iq al-Filistiniyyah al-'Arabiyyah Li' Am 1969*, pp. 327-328.
- (59) Tel. 866, B. E., Cairo to FCO, 26 August 1969, Priority, FCO 17/978.
- (60) See: Letter, Shephard, B. E., Amman to FCO, 29 August 1969, Confidential, FCO 17/978 and Burhan al-Dajani (editor), 1972, *Al-Kitab al-Sanawi Li al-Qadiyyah al-Filistiniyyah Li'Am 1969* (The Annual Book of the Palestinian Issue for the Year 1969), Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, p. 6.
- (61) Letter, Shephard, B. E., Amman to FCO, 29 August 1969, Confidential, FCO 17/978.
- (62) Ibid.
- (63) See: *Al-Kitab al-Sanawi Li al-Qadiyyah al-Filistiniyyah Li'Am 1969*, pp. 7-15.
- (64) Ibid, p. 7 and *Al-Watha'iq al-Filistiniyyah al-'Arabiyyah Li' Am 1969*, pp. 396-397 and 399-405.
- (65) Tel. 1650, U.K. Mission to U.N., New York to FCO, 22 August 1969, FCO 17/978.
- (66) Tel. 1658, U. K. Mission to U. N., New York to FCO, 22 August 1969, FCO 17/978 and Memorandum: Security Council Meeting on Jerusalem, prepared by U. K. Mission to the U. N., 16 September 1969.
- (67) Tel. 402, B. E., Amman to FCO, 25 August 1969, Priority, Confidential, FCO 17/978 and Tel. 1676, U. K Mission, New York to FCO, 26 August 1969, Priority, FCO 17/978.
- (68) Tel. 1649, U. K. Mission, New York to FCO, 25 August 1969, FCO 17/978 and Tel. 402, B. E., Amman to FCO, 25 August 1969, Priority, Confidential, FCO 17/978.
- (69) Tel. 1676, U. K. Mission, New York to FCO, 26 August 1969, Priority, FCO 17/978.
- (70) Tel. 1695, U. K. Mission, New York to FCO, 29 August 1969, Confidential, Priority, FCO 17/978.
- (71) Memorandum: Security Council Meeting on Jerusalem, U. K. Mission, 16 September 1969, Confidential, FCO 17/978.
- (72) Ibid.
- (73) Ibid.
- (74) Ibid.
- (75) <http://domino.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/35941b603b4459b8852560c50061dc5e>
- (76) Ibid.
- (77) Tel. 606, B. E., Tel Aviv to FCO, 16 September 1969, Immediate, Confidential, FCO 17/979, and Letter, Barnes, B. E., Tel Aviv to Greenhil, FCO, 18 September 1969, FCO 17/979.

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