



Jerusalem must be capital of both Israel and Palestine, Ban says



Jerusalem's Harem Al Sharif/ Temple Mount compound

28 October 2009 – Jerusalem must be the capital of two States – Israel and Palestine – living side-by-side in peace and security, with arrangements for the holy sites acceptable to all, if peace in the Middle East is to be achieved, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon warned today.

“This is the road to the fulfilment of both the vision of [United Nations] Security Council resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, and the yearning for peace of people from all over the world,” he said in a message to the Jerusalem International Forum in Rabat, Morocco, in which he stressed that the international community does not recognize Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem.

He cited as obstacles to peace continued Israeli evictions and house demolitions in East Jerusalem, the latest occurring yesterday, closure of Palestinian institutions there, and the expansion of settlements contrary to international law and the Roadmap peace plan espoused by the Quartet – UN, the European Union, Russia and the United States – that seeks a two-State solution to the conflict.

“These actions exacerbate tensions, prejudice final status issues, and often have tragic human consequences,” he added in the **message**, delivered by Robert H. Serry, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Mr. Ban's Personal Representative to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority.

“I reiterate the repeated calls of the Quartet and the wider international community for Israel to freeze settlement activity, cease provocative and unilateral actions, and reopen Palestinian institutions in Jerusalem.”

Mr. Ban voiced concern at recent episodes of tension at the Haram Ash-Sharif/Temple Mount compound in East Jerusalem, sacred to both Muslims and Jews, and the potential for further clashes, also citing the “sensitive excavations” by Israel in reconstructing a ramp to the site.

"We all share a responsibility to promote calm," he declared. "Today, access into East Jerusalem remains severely restricted by checkpoints, permits and the [Israeli] barrier, whose route is contrary to the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice.

"These measures separate families, limit Palestinian economic development and make it difficult for residents of the West Bank to access specialized medical facilities," he added, urging Israel to respect the "organic relationship" between East Jerusalem and the remainder of the West Bank.

"Only with the achievement of a two-State solution, and a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace, will Jerusalem be fully restored to its rightful place as a symbol of sanctity, brotherhood and peace for the entire world," he concluded.

At a **news conference** in New York, Mr. Ban reiterated his warning that disturbances at the Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount compound and other events in Jerusalem can undermine trust throughout the region. "I call upon all to avoid provocative acts," he said.

He also called on Israel to re-open its borders with Gaza to allow in reconstruction material 10 months after the end of its three-week assault on Hamas there, noting that a donors' conference in Egypt raised \$4.5 billion in financial aid for the purpose.

"Little if any of that money has been delivered," he said. "Families have not been able to rebuild their homes. Clinics and schools are still in ruins. I urge Israel to accept the UN reconstruction proposals as set forth, recognizing that the only true guarantee of peace is people's well-being and security."

He called on both Israel and the Palestinians to carry out "full, independent and credible investigations" in accordance with the recommendations of a UN commission led by Justice Richard Goldstone, a former prosecutor at the UN war crimes tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, which found evidence that both sides committed serious war crimes in the Gaza war.

He said he was aware both were now going to have their own investigations. "I have not received any further details, but that is positive, I would say," he added. "I have been repeatedly urging the Israeli Government to institute a credible domestic investigation process."

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