

## **The Statement Made by Chief Rabbi Nissim Regarding the Territorial Integrity of the Land of Israel**

MK R. Arzi asked the Prime Minister on 7 November 1967:

A religious judgement issued by Chief Rabbi Nissim states: "The Land of Israel is the heritage of every single Jew, and no individual or group, including the Government of Israel, may relinquish a single inch of it." I would like to ask the Prime Minister...:

1. Is a Chief Rabbi of Israel, who fulfills an official position in the State of Israel, entitled to determine what the Government may or may not do?

2. What does the Prime Minister intend to do to prevent further statements of this kind?

**The Prime Minister, L. Eshkol:**

To question 1: The answer is negative, and in any event the Government is responsible only to the Knesset, and acts in accordance with its laws.

To question 2: The reply to question 1 answers this.

## **The Approval of a Budget for Demolishing the Road Built on Graves on the Mount of Olives**

MK D. Levy asked the Prime Minister on 19 December 1967:

It was decided in the past that the road which crosses the Mount of Olives and which was built on the graves would be demolished. The Jerusalem Municipality asked the Prime Minister for a budget for this purpose and has not received an answer to date. I would like to ask:

1. Did the aforementioned Municipality ask the Prime Minister's Office for this budget?

2. If so, why has it not yet been approved, and when will it be?

**The Prime Minister, L. Eshkol:**

To question 1: The answer is positive.

To question 2: The requested budget has been approved.

## **Municipal Services in East Jerusalem**

### **Introduction**

The reunification of Jerusalem gave rise not only to legal questions, addressed in a solemn sitting cited above, but also to a multitude of humdrum, daily problems. The Mayor of Jerusalem complained about the shortcomings of governmental machinery in tackling them. His criticism is reflected in the following debate on two motions for the agenda.

### **Sitting 261 of the Sixth Knesset**

4 March 1968 (4 Adar 5728)

**V. Shemtov (Mapam):** Mr. Speaker, Knesset Members, after twenty years of separation, we have once more come into contact with east Jerusalem....The Six Day War wrought vast changes in every sphere of our life, but I think that the most dramatic one was in Jerusalem on the day it was decided to open the city, tear down dividing walls, clear minefields, remove barbed wire fences and unite the city.

We all remember that morning, when we found thousands of Arabs, entire families, men, women and children, walking around the streets of Jerusalem, looking at the city. That was a stirring moment in the history of Jerusalem. It symbolized the start of a period of coexistence between Jews and Arabs in one city....We hoped that we would be able to prove that this unique experiment could succeed....During the past eight months there has been no violent clash between the Jewish and Arab inhabitants of the city....The Municipality, which was the first Jewish institution to enter eastern Jerusalem, acted humanely and responsibly, providing milk for children after the fighting had died down, food for the entire city, and a regular supply of water and electricity....But as the number of institutions dealing with eastern Jerusalem multiplied, the lack of coordination grew, bureaucracy increased and the situation deteriorated....

Although the overall picture is positive, there have been several negative incidents....Arabs who, for whatever reason, were not included in the population census have been unable to obtain identity cards and are therefore ineligible for membership in the Federation of Labor and for the allocation of work....The process of registering children in parents' identity cards has been made unnecessarily long and laborious....Arabs who applied for passes to enable them to go to Jordan were forced to stand in line for hours on end without being informed that

the Ministry of the Interior would not be opening its doors that day....To date the Ministry of the Interior has given employment to hardly any Arabs, it apparently being difficult to find Arabs who belong to the National Religious Party....Although the Municipality employs hundreds of Arab workers, none of them have tenure...and they have no social benefits....The Ministry of Posts has done nothing towards publishing an Arabic phone directory...and hundreds of the phones in east Jerusalem which were cut off eight months ago, during the war, have not yet been repaired....Post offices have not been reopened, making daily life very difficult for the local inhabitants....

I appeal to the Government to put an end to the problems caused in eastern Jerusalem by the bureaucratic machinery....One institution should be established...to undertake and supervise all the various activities....

**S.Z. Abramov (Gahal):** Mr. Speaker, distinguished Knesset...by virtue of the two laws it passed on 27 June 1967, the Knesset extended the jurisdiction, law and administration of the state to east Jerusalem and its environs, and the Minister of the Interior annexed east Jerusalem to the Jerusalem Municipality's area of jurisdiction....Consequently, the administration of east Jerusalem is in the hands of the various Ministries and the Municipality....

Anyone who visits eastern Jerusalem cannot help praise the speedy and efficient action of the Municipality in providing all the municipal services...incorporating east Jerusalem's official institutions within the system...and doing all this in a spirit of friendship and cooperation. When we unified the two Municipalities we took upon ourselves the responsibility for a new population of many thousands....The same does not apply, regrettably, to the way the various Ministries have acted....It is not sufficient to announce that certain laws apply to a specific population....Steps have to be taken to apply them...while causing the minimum of friction....The proclamation of the unification of Jerusalem was a unique event, but bringing many thousands of people under Israeli jurisdiction is a lengthy and complicated process and should be undertaken with great care....

The eyes of the whole world are on united and Israeli Jerusalem....Its treatment of the city will serve as a test of our ability to make good use of the historic opportunity which has been granted us....Reports which have appeared in the press indicate that there was no planning or coordination in the imposition of Israeli law on east Jerusalem, and that the gradual method was not implemented....This was the result of inefficiency rather than ill-will....During the twenty years of our independence we have grown accustomed to living with a cumbersome bureaucracy and tend to regard it as a *force majeure*...but one cannot expect others to get used to it overnight....

On this point permit me to quote an interview with the Mayor of Jerusalem which appeared in *Davar* on 26 February 1968: "The Government's policy is also to...accustom the new inhabitants to the laws of the state gradually, taking their traditional habits into account. But there are strata of Government officials which are trying to impose Israeli rule on the Arab inhabitants all at once and in a hostile way."...It is the Government's duty to tackle this problem. If the Jerusalem Municipality and the Military Government in Samaria, Judea and Gaza have been praised both in Israel and abroad for the way they have dealt with the situation...there is no reason why the civil administration should not attain similar achievements in east Jerusalem. What is needed is proper planning and responsible implementation, with the minimum of bureaucracy and the maximum of efficiency.

There have also been complaints about the administration of the holy places...apparently arising from disputes between the various Ministries as to who is responsible for this....The Western Wall is sacred to the entire Jewish nation, in both religious and national terms, and it is intolerable that its upkeep should be neglected as a result of internal squabbles....As the symbol of our national unity, it cannot be run as if it were simply some Orthodox synagogue....The decision on this weighty issue must be the outcome of a responsible and democratic process, not of improvisation and struggles for power and prestige....

**The Prime Minister, L. Eshkol:** Mr. Speaker, distinguished Knesset, I have listened with great interest to what the two previous speakers had to say....MK Shemtov would have us believe that he can arrange matters in Ministries within 24 hours....I have a feeling that we tend to put too much blame on bureaucrats....Even kibbutzim have offices, management procedures, rules and regulations....Bureaucrats are human beings, Jews, just like you and me....The various Ministries maintain that the complaints against them are on the whole greatly exaggerated....One cannot deny that each side tends to see things from its own point of view....

I do not know whether the Knesset is aware of the fact that for the past five months a Ministerial Committee for Jerusalem has existed...in order to discuss and deal with the various problems....Because of the complexity and delicacy of the situation, the decisions which have to be made by each individual Ministry are first discussed by this Committee....The Committee, which comprises ten Ministers, meets frequently and is often attended by the Mayor....The Committee's task is to coordinate between the various authorities and settle disputes which may arise....It surprises me that the Mayor saw fit to publish his complaints in the press rather than bringing them before the Committee, to which he has free access....

During the past few months a momentous change has occurred. The two parts of Jerusalem have been united, with all that this implies in po-

litical, historical, security and cultural terms. We have reached a situation in which we are free from fear in Jerusalem. There is no shooting or sniping and the walls and divisions have been removed, though the memory of them is still fresh in our minds....Buildings which have been neglected or destroyed are being repaired....Roads are being built....Cheap water is provided daily—and not twice a week as was formerly the case—to the inhabitants of east Jerusalem....A much-needed modern sewage system is being installed....The streets are being kept clean, despite the influx of tourists....All the schools are functioning normally...and transport is running as it should...although there were attempts to organize strikes....There is no doubt that the Mayor deserves a pat on the back for everything he has managed to do, but Ministries have also been involved in the successes....

Arab youth clubs in the Old City are being supported....The hospitals are functioning once again...and health services have been established....The state has accepted responsibility for anyone wishing to work...and persons unable to work receive unemployment benefits....Salaries have been put on a par with those in west Jerusalem.... And all this has been done by officials, bureaucrats....All the former Municipal employees have been reemployed...as have many policemen from east Jerusalem....Courses have been established to enable professionals to learn Hebrew and to retrain, during which time they are paid a salary....

Free access to the holy places is guaranteed...and each religion controls the administration of its own sites....An end has been put to the desecration of holy places and prevention of access to them which was rife under the previous regime....Despite the bitterness of the past and the fact that the two parts of the city were cut off from one another for twenty years, life is going on more or less normally....Neighborly relations are being established, and there has been no violence or clashes between the two communities. We hope to establish relations of respect and openness with the new inhabitants of Jerusalem, just as we have with the Arabs of Israel. Assertions that the Arabs of Jerusalem are treated as second-class citizens are unfounded....Certain problems—primarily economic ones—have not yet been resolved....There is no precedent in the whole wide world for what has happened here, for this encounter between two populations which have been totally separated from one another for twenty years, and matters are being resolved, not by themselves, but by people...by officials and bureaucrats....

Any complaint the Mayor has he can bring before the Ministerial Committee....If he requests it, it will be convened....I propose that the subject be transferred to the Committee for Internal Affairs...or to any other committee which the Knesset shall find appropriate.

**The Speaker, K. Luz:** The House Committee will decide on the committee. Do the proposers of the motions for the agenda agree to transfer their motions to the House Committee?

(From the floor: Yes.)

(The proposal to transfer the subject to a committee, which will be decided by the House Committee, is adopted.)

**U. Avneri (Ha'Olam Hazeh-Ko'ah Hadash):** Distinguished Speaker and Knesset, I abstained from voting because I disagreed with both the motions put forward by the proposers and the Prime Minister's reply....We have entered into a period of competition between Ministers for prestige and publicity. What is happening in Jerusalem is only part of the phenomenon. I am one of the few Knesset Members who has taken up residence in east Jerusalem, and I know that what the Mayor said is by no means exaggerated....We are missing a very important opportunity in Jerusalem....Over the last nine months the atmosphere there has not developed in a positive direction, quite the contrary....The bureaucratic issues raised by MK Shemtov have played their part in this. That is only a secondary problem, however....

A certain decision was made by the Knesset as regards Jerusalem, and I voted for it. Nine months after that decision the inhabitants of Jerusalem have not been granted citizenship and have no status whatsoever. Under the law of the state, all the property of the Arabs of Jerusalem is absentee property.