



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

11 June 1980

Dear Michael,

Arab/Israel: Jerusalem

You asked for a note on the status of Jerusalem. The position is as follows.

In the face of conflicting claims to Jerusalem and the special problems caused by the holy places of Islam, Judaism and Christianity, the UN General Assembly passed resolutions in 1947 and 1949 reserving an area covering virtually the whole of Jerusalem for an international regime under UN administration. These resolutions were never implemented and have no legal force. But British governments have since then adhered to their spirit and taken the view that the status of this area is undetermined pending an overall peace settlement. We therefore did not recognise Israeli sovereignty over West Jerusalem when we recognised Israel in 1950 or Jordanian sovereignty over East Jerusalem when we recognised their sovereignty over the West Bank at the same time. We did however accept Israel and Jordan de facto authority over their respective halves of the city and dealt with them on that basis without prejudice to our de jure position.

Following their occupation of East Jerusalem in 1967 the Israelis took legal steps to incorporate it into Israel and declared that Jerusalem, undivided, was the capital of Israel. We did not accept these Israeli moves and have regarded Israel only as the occupying power in East Jerusalem. This is reflected in our representation: we have an Embassy in Tel Aviv, and an entirely separate Consulate General in East Jerusalem which is technically accredited to no one and deals with the Israelis on administrative matters. Our position on Jerusalem is shared by our partners in the Nine and by the US.

We have avoided taking up a stand on the city's future other than to say that in view of our formal position we do not accept unilateral moves to incorporate it into Israel, that free access to the holy places for all must be guaranteed, and that the city's future must be negotiated between the parties themselves. In practice the problem almost certainly cannot be successfully addressed until the later stages of a peace process, since without progress on the status of the West Bank as a whole it is difficult to see how the necessary good will between Israelis and Arabs can be generated.

Yours truly

Paul

(P Lever)

M O'D B Alexander Esq
10 Downing St