

Protecting Al-Aqsa Mosque (also known as Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa or Al-Haram Al-Sharif)

by Dr. Wasfi Kailani

STAKEHOLDERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The direct stakeholders in managing Al-Aqsa Mosque (Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa) are the Hashemite Custodian of the Muslim and Christian Holy Sites in Jerusalem, His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al-Hussein, and His Excellency the President of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas. The stakeholders also include the Jordanian Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Endowments, the Hashemite Fund for the Restoration of Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock, the General Directorate of the Jerusalem Awqaf and Al-Aqsa Mosque Affairs, together with its board, the Council of the Islamic Jerusalem Awqaf, in addition to other competent Islamic Palestinian authorities and entities. These include the Islamic-Christian Committee in Support of Jerusalem and its Sanctuaries; the Supreme Muslim Council; the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and Palestine, the Supreme Judge of Palestine, in addition to hundreds of entities and Muslim and Christian scholars in Palestine and Jordan.

All these direct stakeholders maintain the firm position that Al-Aqsa Mosque is the entirety of the Al-Haram Al-Qudsi Al-Sharif which is a holy place of worship solely for Muslims and brooks no division or partnership or sharing whether tangibly or intangibly. This position has been stated repeatedly by the Custodian of the Muslim and Christian Holy Sites in Jerusalem, H.M. King Abdullah II ibn Al-Hussein:

We will persist in undertaking our religious and historical responsibilities towards the entirety of Al-Aqsa Mosque / Al-Haram Al-Qudsi Al-Sharif which suffers repeated incursion attempts by extremists. As Custodian of the Muslim and Christian Holy Sites in Jerusalem, I will continue my efforts to protect these Holy Sites and to confront any attempt to violate them or their sanctity and any attempts to divide Al-Aqsa Mosque / Al-Haram Al-Qudsi Al-Sharif temporally or spatially.

Our responsibility towards the Islamic Holy Sites in Jerusalem is foremost among our priorities on the international scene. We will use all our capabilities

to defend the entirety of *Al-Aqsa Mosque / Al-Haram Al-Qudsi Al-Sharif* which brooks no partnership or sharing or division. We have successfully pushed to get this definition adopted repeatedly before the United Nations and UNESCO. We retain all the political and legal options to confront any violations and to protect the Holy Sites

THE SITE OF AL-AQSA MOSQUE (AL-MASJID AL-AQSA)

The Caliph Omar chose to build on the site of Al-Aqsa Mosque for the following reasons:

- Because it is stated categorically and explicitly in the Qur'an and Sunnah that Al-Aqsa Mosque is a mosque (masjid).
- Glory be to Him Who carried His servant by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque (Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa); the environs of which "We have blessed, that We might show him some of Our signs. Indeed He is the Hearing, the Seeing" (Al-Isra', 17:1).
- Because Al-Aqsa Mosque was the Muslims' first qiblah (direction of prayer).
- Because Al-Aqsa Mosque is the place where the Prophet Muhammad's miraculous Night Journey (*al-Isra' wal Mi'raj*) occurred and where he led all God's Prophets and Messengers ﷺ in prayer.
- The site was not occupied by any other religious group when the Caliph Omar entered Jerusalem.

It should further be noted that when it comes to the issue of control over holy sites, Islam always respected continuity. This means that Muslims never took control of a holy site if another religious group, whether Christian or Jewish or indeed any other religion, had continuous presence or custodianship over that site. This is seen very clearly from the fact that the Muslims never had any intention of turning the Church of the Nativity into a mosque despite the fact that it was one of the three stations that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ alighted during his Night Journey (*al-Isra' wal Mi'raj*).

Affirming this Muslim position towards holy places, the Caliph Omar refused the invitation to pray

in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and instead chose to pray just outside the Church. And indeed, the Mosque of Omar still stands on that spot till this very day. When he was asked why he did not pray inside the Church, the Caliph Omar said: "I fear that if I prayed in it, later Muslims would prevail over you in its affair [the Church] and say: 'Here prayed the Commander of the Faithful.'"

Had the Jews had a presence in Al-Aqsa Mosque, the Caliph Omar would not have built a mosque there. If this indicates anything, it indicates that Muslims—whose faith is incomplete until they believe in all the Prophets and Messengers ﷺ—consider themselves to be the people with the best claim to honouring them. This is because they have always respected the continuity of the worship of the People of the Scripture (*Ahl al-Kitab*) in their houses of worship. Muslims would never expel Christians, who have continuously, and without interruption, cared for the sites of Jesus' ﷺ birth, crucifixion and ascension, for generations.

It stands to reason that since Islam enjoins kindness to "the people of hermitages" in extenuating circumstances such as war, then this injunction must *de jure* apply in times of stability.

Muslims would not have built a mosque in place of a synagogue or church had either been standing on the land of the Al-Aqsa Mosque at the time of the Islamic conquest of the land of Palestine.

THE DEFINITION OF AL-AQSA MOSQUE (AL-MASJID AL-AQSA)

Al-Aqsa Mosque is the name of the holy Muslim place and land inside the walled Old City of Jerusalem of 144 dunums (each dunum = 1000m²) (including all its constructions and buildings) surrounded on all four sides by walls. From the western side it is 491m long, from the east 462m, from the north 310m, and from the south 281m. Al-Aqsa Mosque includes the Dome of the Rock; the Qibli Mosque; Al-Jami' Al-Aqsa; the Marwani Mosque; the Underground Aqsa; Al-Rahmah Gate; and all the Gates, plazas and courtyards; prayer places; hallways; and historic buildings and constructions within the Haram. It also includes all the mastabas; cisterns; aqueducts; and aquifers and all that is above and below the ground and all the pathways; entryways; and ramps outside that lead to its Gates, including the Gates themselves. It also includes the Buraq (Western) Wall and the pavements in front of the Walls. Al-Aqsa Mosque includes tens of waqf properties, real estate and buildings inside the walled Old City of Jerusalem that are waqf endowments tied to Al-Aqsa Mosque.

Al-Aqsa Mosque (aka Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa or Al-Haram Al-Sharif) from the walls of Jerusalem, 1862
Photography by Francis Firt (US Library of Congress)





*Jerusalem before World War Two
Photography by American Colony (Jerusalem), (US Library of Congress)*

THE STATUS QUO OF AL-AQSA MOSQUE (AL-MASJID AL-AQSA)

Al-Aqsa Mosque is an exclusively Islamic Holy Site. Muslims began reconstruction of the Masjid on the land of Al-Aqsa Mosque in 138 CE. This means that this Holy Site has been used as—and declared—an exclusively Islamic Holy Site for almost 1400 years (except the 88 years when the Crusaders held it 1099-1187)

Thus, regarding the Status Quo; non-Muslim prayer is forbidden in Al-Aqsa Mosque, and the entry of non-Muslims to it is conditional upon the approval of the Custodian of the Holy Sites and those who represent him on the ground, i.e., the Jordanian Islamic Awqaf Department in Jerusalem.

Exclusivity; not partnership or sharing, is the Status Quo of places of worship in Jerusalem. The current status of the Holy Places in Jerusalem is rooted in the Status Quo which was established over consecutive Islamic Ages when the governing principle of tolerance and coexistence regarding organization of worship was separating the places of worship. The Jews were permitted to worship by the Wailing Wall (which is part of the Buraq Wall) of Al-Aqsa Mosque, and until 1967 CE, the perimeters of their place of worship were 22m long and 3m wide. Permission was granted to the Jews to visit the area of the Wailing Wall, but it should be noted that under a League of Nations Commission in 1931 CE, the Wall and the plaza belong solely to Muslims. It is also important to note that Jordan did not object to these arrangements during the 1949 CE Armistice Agreement.

Following is a brief description of the historic and legal Status Quo since 1852 CE:

1852 CE

The recognized arrangement known as ‘The Status Quo in the Holy Places’ was adopted in 1852 CE when the Ottoman Sultan Abdul-Majid issued an edict (firman) freezing all claims of possession of Christian Holy Places in Jerusalem and Bethlehem by religious communities, thereby forbidding any construction or alterations to occur to their existing status.

1856-1878 CE

This arrangement was internationally recognized at the 1856 CE Conference of Paris (at the end of the Crimean War) and in the 1878 CE Treaty of Berlin (between European Powers and the Ottomans). Article 62 of the Treaty of Berlin states that: “It is well understood that no alterations can be made to the status quo in the Holy Places.” Article 62 extended that arrangement to include all—not only Christian—Holy Places.

1920 CE

Following the defeat of the Ottomans and the partitioning of their Empire after World War I, the British Mandate Authorities in Palestine (1920-1947 CE) upheld the Status Quo arrangement and included Al-Buraq (Western) Wall at Al-Aqsa Mosque and Rachel’s Tomb on the outskirts of Bethlehem.

1928 CE

The first major violation of the Status Quo Arrangement occurred in September 1928 CE, when a group of Jewish worshippers set up chairs at Al-Buraq (Western) Wall to separate men and women performing Yom Kippur prayers, triggering one of the

first periods of significant unrest in Jerusalem. A subsequent White Paper, submitted to the British government in November 1928 CE, reiterated the rights of Muslims to Al-Buraq (Western) Wall. Although unsuccessful in their search for documentary evidence of Jewish rights to Al-Buraq (Western) Wall, the Zionist movement continued to demand its expropriation for the Jews.

1929-1930 CE

Disputes over prayer arrangements at Al-Buraq (Western) Wall escalated. In August 1929 CE, protests turned violent and resulted in dozens of both Jewish and Arab deaths, as well as hundreds of injuries. The conclusions of the subsequent British Inquiry Commission, presented in December 1930 CE, included the following:

To the Moslems belong the sole ownership of, and the sole proprietary right to, the Western Wall, seeing that it forms an integral part of the Haram-esh-Sherif area, which is a Waqf property.

To the Moslems there also belongs the ownership of the Pavement in front of the Wall and of the adjacent so-called Moghrabi (Moroccan) Quarter opposite the Wall, inasmuch as the last-mentioned property was made Waqf under Moslem Sharia Law, it being dedicated to charitable purposes.

King Faisal I of Iraq and King Abdullah I of Jordan meet in Jerusalem 1933

Photography by American Colony (Jerusalem), (US Library of Congress)



1967 CE

Despite the aforementioned, during the 1967 War, Israel forcibly seized control of Al-Buraq (Western) Wall, confiscated the key to Al-Aqsa Mosque's Al-Magharbeh Gate and destroyed Al-Magharbeh Quarter which was located in front of Al-Buraq (Western) Wall. In place of Al-Magharbeh Quarter, a large prayer plaza for Jewish worshippers was created which was gradually extended from an area of 66m² (22m x 3m) to an area of some 6300m² (90m x 70m) and these measures have recently been extended much wider. The Israeli authorities and settlers have also constructed a huge building of Beit Hali-ba while their unilateral covert excavations erased many Byzantine and Islamic remains without proper documentation.

Immediately after the 1967 War, Israel nominally recognized the historical status and religious significance for Al-Aqsa Mosque for Muslims, as well as Jordan's Custodianship of it. Despite this nominal recognition, however, the Israeli authorities have controlled entry into Al-Aqsa Mosque through its Gates ever since and can enter it at will and can allow others to enter it as it pleases. They respected the authority of Jerusalem Awqaf in permitting non-Muslims entry into al-Aqsa until 2000. Moreover, all successive Israeli governments and their police and military forces have attempted to undermine the internationally recognized Status Quo.

1981 CE

International efforts were made to protect the status and integrity of Al-Aqsa Mosque, including through the United Nations Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organization (UNESCO). In 1981, the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site upon the request of the Government of Jordan. In 1982, UNESCO's World Heritage Committee decided to inscribe the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls on the List of World Heritage in Danger, thereby highlighting the threats and risks to the cultural heritage of the Old City of Jerusalem and its sites. Since then, the World Heritage Committee, its Executive Board and the UNESCO General Conference have taken tens of decisions that call on Israel, as the Occupying Power, to stop its continuous violations against the heritage of the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls. Israel, however, continues its efforts to change Jerusalem's pre-1967 Status Quo.

1994 CE

Until the Oslo Accords in the early 1990s of the 20th Century, the Jordanian Awqaf Administration's management of Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Waqf properties attached to it was relatively respected and stable. Article 9 of the Jordan-Israel Peace Treaty of 26th October 1994 CE stipulates that: "Israel respects the present special role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in Muslim holy shrines in Jerusalem" and that "when negotiations on the permanent status will take place, Israel will give high priority to the Jordanian historic role in these shrines."

2000 CE

Over the past few decades extremist Jewish elements have become increasingly more vocal, more powerful and more mainstream. Since the second Palestinian Intifada—which erupted in September 2000 CE after the provocative visit of then Likud opposition leader Ariel Sharon to Al-Aqsa Mosque—and against the wider backdrop of the failure of the Oslo Accords—thousands of Israeli police and soldiers have been deployed in and around the Old City of Jerusalem and its environs (including inside Al-Aqsa Mosque).

2003-2004 CE

During the course of the Second Intifada, Israel constructed a wall in and around East Jerusalem on the pretext that it was necessary for security purposes. On December 8th, 2003, the General Assembly of the United Nations requested the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to give an Advisory Opinion on the question of the legal consequences of the construction of that wall by Israel as an Occupying Power. On July 9th, 2004, the International Court of Justice delivered its Advisory Opinion that Israel's construction of the wall is contrary to international law as it impeded the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and further constituted a breach of Israel's obligations under international humanitarian law and human rights instruments. Israel continues to fail to comply with the ICJ's findings which it is obliged to respect.

2013 CE

In furtherance of the ongoing and ceaseless efforts to maintain the status and integrity of Al-Aqsa Mosque, His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan and His Excellency Dr. Mahmoud Abbas of Palestine signed an *Agreement on the Holy Places in Jerusalem*, on March 31st, 2013, that recalled Al-Aq-

sa Mosque's "unique religious importance, to all Muslims."

As for the claims of Jewish extremists and the many Israeli officials in Israel who attempt to describe the Status Quo in Jerusalem as changeable and fluid according to the Occupying Power in the Holy City; this is an occupation theory that subscribes to the law of the jungle and that survival and rule belong to the party that is the more powerful and not the party that has the legal and moral claim. This is in contravention of dozens of international law decisions issued by the UN Security Council, the UN General Assembly, and UNESCO which state that every single change committed by Israel, the Occupying Power, is null and void and must be revoked. The Occupying Power, Israel, maintained the Status Quo in Al-Aqsa Mosque until the year 2000 CE when Ariel Sharon violently violated the Mosque with force of arms and under the protection of the Israeli police and army. That violation and trespass on the Holy Site became a course of action followed by extremist Jews who continue to violate Al-Aqsa Mosque through force and violence till this very day.

VIOLATIONS OF THE STATUS QUO BY THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION AUTHORITIES

Incursions into Al-Aqsa Mosque by non-Muslims (Jews and others) without the Jordanian Awqaf Authority's approval of, or supervision of the entry permits or the behaviours of the 'visitors'. The number of extremist intruders into al-Aqsa has been increased more than ten times during the last twelve years.

- Enabling hundreds of Jewish extremists to practice Jewish rituals, dance, raise flags, politicize the holy site, shouting insulting and hatred phrases against Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) / Muslims / Palestinians inside al-Aqsa.
- Knesset members and political activists were enabled to lead the above-mentioned incitement activities.
- Obstructing the Awqaf Authority's renovation and restoration projects in Al-Aqsa Mosque; interfering in the affairs of reconstruction in the Haram; and the interrogation of experts, employees and officials responsible for reconstruction and renovation.
- Obstructing the entry of Muslims to Al-Aq-

sa Mosque and attempting to prevent them from praying in it; or repeatedly limiting the number of worshippers over the days of the year.

- Covert and overt tunnelling around the perimeters of Al-Aqsa Mosque, particularly on the sides of the western and southern walls of the Mosque.
- Imposing by force building projects that Judaize the perimeters of Al-Aqsa Mosque in the areas of the Umayyad Palaces; the Magharbeh Pathway; the Tel Al-Magharbeh; the Buraq Plaza; Ribat Al-Kurd; and by the southern and western walls of Al-Aqsa Mosque. The Israeli Occupation Authorities do this without the Awqaf's permission or coordination with them.
- Converting a number of rooms and tunnels surrounding Al-Aqsa Mosque into Jewish places of worship despite their demonstrably Islamic history; history that was uncovered by Jewish scholars and archaeologists. Examples of this are the Shari'ah Court building, the Tankaz Baths and Khan, and the Umayyad Palaces.
- Repeated violations against employees of the Jerusalem Awqaf by preventing them from undertaking their duties at the Mosque, such as reconstruction; and renovation; serving worshippers and keeping check of the behaviours of non-Muslims who enter it. The violations have extended to the point of hundreds of cases of physical assault and arrest and preventing employees from reaching their place of work and even preventing some employees from beginning their employment.
- Continued daily obstruction of Muslims from reaching and entering Al-Aqsa Mosque through the following measures:
 - ▶ Since Jerusalem fell under Israeli occupation in 1967 CE, most Muslims from around the globe have been deprived of reaching Al-Aqsa Mosque. This deprivation continues for Muslims who perform Hajj and Umrah who have—for centuries—finished their Hajj or Umrah to the Meccan Haram and Medinan Haram by visiting the third Haram in Jerusalem: Al-Aqsa Mosque / Al-Haram Al-Qudsi Al-Sharif.
 - ▶ Depriving most of the inhabitants of Palestine from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip from reaching Al-Aqsa Mosque, particularly

since the year 2000 CE. The right of access is lacking, particularly for Jerusalemites and Arab Israelis who carry blue identification cards. Indeed, hundreds of men and women have been put on blacklists and denied entry to Al-Aqsa Mosque indefinitely.

- ▶ Israeli Occupation Authorities harass Muslim worshippers (most of whom are women and elderly men) accustomed to attending morning religious instruction sessions held in the plazas of Al-Aqsa Mosque. Israeli Occupation Authorities confiscate their IDs and deny them their rights (and their families rights) to medical care. They also use the tactic of physical intimidation and attacks, in addition to imprisonment. Indeed, the situation has reached the point of not only disrupting Qur'anic recitation sessions but of forbidding them from continuing because they inconvenience the Jewish extremists during their incursions of the Al-Aqsa Mosque.
- ▶ Confiscating parts of Al-Aqsa Mosque beginning with the Tankaziyyah School and the Omariyyah School since 1967 CE. Muslims have been denied the right of access to them and performing rites there. More recently, Israeli Occupation Authorities have tried to confiscate waqf properties in Bab Al-Ghawanmeh and have confiscated the Ribat Al-Kurd Plaza and turned it into what is termed Al-Buraq Al-Sagheer (Mini Wall). It is one of the Gates of Al-Aqsa Mosque. Israeli Occupation Authorities also attempted to annex Bab Al-Rahmah through keeping it closed between the years 2003-2019 CE. This very nibbling away itself is a spatial division of the Mosque and a Judaization of parts of it.

NON-MUSLIM VISITORS TO AL-AQSA MOSQUE (AL-MASJID AL-AQSA)

Before 1967 CE and until 2000 CE, the Jordanian Awqaf Administration in Jerusalem used to arrange the entry of non-Muslims—including Jews—to Al-Aqsa Mosque. It used to do so smoothly and without incident. However, in the year 2000 CE; visiting Al-Aqsa Mosque was closed to non-Muslims by the Occupation Police after Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's incursion. In 2003 CE Israeli Occupation Authorities reintroduced non-Muslim visitation to

the Mosque and then controlled the procedures organizing entry into it. They allowed non-Muslims to enter without purchasing a ticket of entry from the Islamic Awqaf and without its involvement, approval, or supervision.

The Awqaf reject Jewish incursions into Al-Aqsa Mosque even more vehemently now after calls for recognition of a Jewish right to perform religious rituals and Talmudic prayer in Al-Aqsa Mosque and calls for establishing a temple on it. These voices have found support and momentum from Israeli society and the Israeli government through greater election of the extremist Israeli right to the Knesset and the Israeli government.

Indeed, covert and overt prayers have begun to be practiced inside Al-Aqsa Mosque under the cover and protection of the Israeli police and border patrol. It reached its peak in September 2021 and September / October 2022 CE when hundreds of cases of religious rituals were practiced in a short period of time never before seen at Al-Aqsa Mosque. For these reasons Muslims term these 'visits' as violations, incursions, and desecrations of the sanctity of the Mosque and are rejected by Islamic and Christian entities in Jerusalem.

The Jerusalem Awqaf Authorities Refuse to Coordinate with the Israeli Occupation Authorities Because it is Coercion

Israeli soldiers threaten Muslim worshippers at Al-Aqsa Mosque (aka Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa or Al-Haram Al-Sharif), 2022

The Islamic Awqaf reject calling coerced and imposed interference from the Occupation Authorities coordination because it does not respect the Awqaf's exclusive and independent right to administer Al-Aqsa Mosque. Furthermore, the Awqaf Authorities refuse to coordinate with the Israeli Occupation Authorities for the following reasons:

- Coordination in matters related to Al-Aqsa Mosque is in contravention of the Status Quo as it was pre 1967 CE and constitutes an illegal recognition of the Israeli occupation of East Jerusalem.
- The Jerusalem Awqaf Authority leaves diplomatic efforts to official Jordanian channels by virtue of the relationship between Jordan and Israel as two states with institutionalized relations since the signing of the 1994 CE Peace Treaty. This is so the Jerusalem Awqaf Authorities can avoid turning into just another Jerusalemite civil society organization under the thumb of the Occupation Authorities. It should be borne in mind that the Jerusalem Awqaf Authorities have repeatedly declared that Al-Aqsa Mosque submits to no one other than God ﷻ and that the institution of the Awqaf is part of the Hashemite Custodianship of the Muslim and Christian Holy Sites in Jerusalem.



- The State of Israel has undertaken legal, religious, and official steps to undermine the Status Quo in a manner that both implicitly and explicitly supports the building of a Jewish Temple in place of Al-Aqsa Mosque.

Following are some examples of the steps adopted and executed by the Israeli Authorities in their attempts to make Al-Aqsa Mosque subject to the laws of the Occupation:

- In July 2012 CE Yehuda Weinstein, the Israeli Attorney General, informed the Israeli Antiquities Authority's (IAA) legal advisors, the Jerusalem Municipality, and the Israeli Police that the Al-Aqsa Mosque constitutes a part of the land of Israel and therefore the law of Israel, and by extension the Antiquities Law, and the Planning and Construction Law, apply to the Mosque.
- In March 2015 CE, the Israeli Supreme Court recognized the right of Jews to pray in Al-Aqsa Mosque.
- In June 2016 CE, David Lau, the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel said he would like to see the Jewish Temple rebuilt on the Temple Mount (Al-Aqsa Mosque).
- On 14th August 2016 CE, Israeli Deputy Defence Minister, Eli Ben-Dahan, spoke to Jewish crowds gathered for the Temple Mount March and said: "We aren't embarrassed to say it: we want to rebuild the Temple on the Temple Mount."
- When Danny Ayalon was Deputy Foreign Minister of Israel, he posted a short video on

his YouTube channel entitled: "The Magic of Jerusalem" which showed the Dome of the Rock magically disappearing and being replaced by a Jewish temple.

- The subject of Jewish prayer in Al-Aqsa Mosque was raised six times in the Israeli Knesset in 2014 CE alone. Arab Knesset members foiled those debates. However, Benjamin Netanyahu's government, for all intents and purposes, allowed Jews to perform prayers and religious rituals in Al-Aqsa Mosque, particularly near Bab Al-Rahmah since early 2017 CE.
- In November 2014 CE, the Israeli Foreign Minister gave out a paper to ambassadors to Tel Aviv in which Al-Aqsa Mosque is incorrectly described as part of the so-called Temple Mount. According to this paper, the Temple Mount contains the Al-Aqsa Mosque; the "third-holiest site in Islam" and the Dome of the Rock; "the fourth-holiest site in Islam (and is not a mosque) and many other structures." The paper went on to claim that the "Aqsa Mosque with the bronze dome is on the southern edge of the Temple Mount and covers a relatively small part of its area."
- Over the last three decades Israel has directly financed various "Temple Movements" which aim to increase awareness regarding the importance of the "Temple Mount" and rebuilding it tangibly after completing rebuilding the Temple emotionally in place of the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

Netanyahu and Trump announce the "Deal of the Century"



WHY JORDAN AND PALESTINE INSIST ON NOT USING “TEMPLE MOUNT” NEXT TO “AL-AQSA MOSQUE”

Israel claims that Jordan and Palestine are leading a worldwide campaign to deny the history of the Jewish people by refusing to use the term “Temple Mount” next to the term “Al-Haram Al-Sharif / Al-Aqsa Mosque”, as has been done in UN and UNESCO decisions over the last ten years. Jews lived in Palestine and the Islamic World in peace and harmony for centuries without any denial of their history or rights to secure living and worship. The Zionist Project in the early 20th Century committed consecutive *nakbahs* (catastrophes) against the people, land, and Holy Sites of Palestine. It was then that the balance of power shifted and the demands to recognize the religious and historic rights of Jews were paired with the demand for depriving Palestinians of their rights to land, a state, and Holy Sites that had been preserved for them for centuries. The most important reasons for the rejection of the nomenclature of “The Temple Mount” are:

- The Israeli demand to use the term “Temple Mount” synonymously with “Al-Haram Al-Sharif / Al-Aqsa Mosque” is intended to be a step forward in recognizing a Jewish right to the entirety of Al-Haram Al-Sharif / Al-Aqsa Mosque or to divide it or Judaize it as has been declared in tens of Jewish religious, official, popular, and juridical statements. Jordan and Palestine are certain that the Occupying Power will be able to use its power to Judaize the Holy Site and divide it if Muslims and the world agree to the principle of partnership or sharing whether in terms of nomenclature or in terms of concept. As historian Nazmi Al-Jubeih, Professor of history at the University of Birzeit, asked: “Would anyone in the world accept that the term ‘Temple of Jupiter’ be used next to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre because some archaeologists and historians say that the Church was built in place of the pagan Temple of Jupiter?”
- Using the term “Temple Mount” for “Al-Haram Al-Sharif / Al-Aqsa Mosque” is contrary to the historic, religious, political, and legal Status Quo of this Holy Site.
- Using the term “Temple Mount” in United Nations and UNESCO documents has legal implications on the ground. It would be a de

facto recognition of a Jewish right to worship in Al-Aqsa Mosque. This ultimately means undermining the Status Quo even more and putting Al-Aqsa Mosque and the security of the region and the entire world in real danger because of the religious conflict and chaos which would ensue.

- Al-Masjid-Al-Aqsa / Al-Haram Al-Sharif is land under occupation. The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and United Nations Security Council (UNSC) have declared any, and all measures taken by Israel, as the Occupying Power, to change the Status Quo of occupied Jerusalem as invalid.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that the legitimacy of the claim that Al Masjid Al-Aqsa / Al-Haram Al-Sharif is an exclusively Muslim Holy Site is founded upon solid and irrefutable religious, political, and legal evidence. Muslims will continue to believe, as they always have, that Al-Aqsa Mosque is a part of their creed and that it is their first qiblah (direction of prayer). Al-Aqsa Mosque holds a place in Muslim hearts equal to that of the Blessed Ka’aba. Muslims are certain that Al-Aqsa Mosque is in Jerusalem. Muslims are certain that it is their right to access Al-Aqsa Mosque and pray in it; and that it is Palestine’s beating heart, and the centre of its cause and the cause for which thousands of Companions and Companions of the Companions were martyred, in addition to those who fought alongside Salahuddin Al-Ayyoubi. It was for the sake of the liberation of Al-Aqsa Mosque that the battles of Mu’tah, Yarmouk, Ajnadayn, Hattin, and Ain Jalut were fought. In addition to battles fought in the modern era, starting with the Great Arab Revolt in 1916 CE and the 1936 CE Revolution and the battles fought for the liberation of Jerusalem and Bab el-Wad. Palestinians and Muslims will continue to struggle in defence of Al-Aqsa Mosque until it is honoured and dignified once again.

Any change to the historic status, character or function of Al-Aqsa Mosque will be met with public and popular rejection and opposition on the level of the Islamic World; 1.9 billion souls. Any change to the character or function of Al-Aqsa Mosque according to the whims and desires of extremist Jews will lead to a religious war between Muslims and Jews that will most certainly spread beyond the borders of Palestine and will threaten the peace and security of the entire world.