



Ref: A 55/107/9/
Date: February 15th 2005

Mr. Edward Hazboun
President
The Bethlehem Association
Pennsylvania - U.S.A.

Dear Dr. Hazboun,

Referring to my previous correspondence regarding the Israeli expansionist project at Rachel's Tomb area in Bethlehem, I would like to bring to your information that the Israeli High Court rejected on February 3rd 2005 the petition filed by Bethlehem Municipality and others against this project. This means green light to the Israeli military to finalize the works they have started to seize Palestinian land, construct a road and a wall to wrap the Tomb with its surroundings in order to annex them and to include them under permanent Israeli sovereignty.

Regretfully the Court has surrendered to pressures from different Israeli religious and political extremist groups. The decision is oppressive. It contradicts with all conventions and concluded agreements in particular TABA agreement that guaranteed free movement of Palestinians on the main road from Jerusalem to the Tomb.

I would like to convey my grave concern over the catastrophic effects of this decision on Bethlehem and its future. Consequently, Bethlehem will be suffocated, its historic and main entrance closed, its northern lands isolated behind the wall and a dear and vital part of it will be stripped off from its natural environment. But above all the decision is liable to seriously affect incoming tourism and pilgrimage to our Holy Town which constitutes the main source for our economy.

I believe such practices materialize the policy of occupation and the policy of might rather than dedicating justice and respect of others rights. They certainly do not help in building bridges of trust especially during this new era our region is witnessing to revive the stalemate peace process.

Drawing painful dividing lines in the Town of Nativity, one of the most historic, revered and holiest places on earth is certainly not accepted nor justified under any pretext and should be confronted by people of good will and all peace loving people in the world.

Sincerely yours,


Hanna J. Nasser
Mayor of Bethlehem