

Letter to the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine

On July 9, 1947, Shoghi Effendi received a letter from the chairman of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine requesting a statement on the relationship, which the Baha'i Faith has to Palestine and the Baha'i-attitude toward any future changes in the status of the country. From Shoghi Effendi's reply, the following paragraphs are quoted in The Baha'i World, Volume 11 (1946-1950), pp.43-44.1

HAIFA, ISRAEL—15 July 1947

"The position of the Baha'is in this country is in a certain measure unique: Whereas Jerusalem is the spiritual center of Christendom it is not the administrative center of either the Church of Rome or any other Christian denomination. Likewise although it is regarded as the second most sacred shrine of Islam, the most Holy site of the Muhammadan Faith, and the center of its pilgrimages, are to be found in Arabia, not in Palestine. The Jews alone offer somewhat of a parallel to the attachment which the Baha'is have for this country, inasmuch as Jerusalem holds the remains of their Holy Temple and was the seat of both the religious and political institutions associated with their past history. But even their case differs in one respect from that of the Baha'is for it is in the soil of Palestine that the three central Figures of our Religion are buried and it is not only the center of Baha'i pilgrimages from all over the world but also the permanent seat of our Administrative Order, of which I have the honor to be the Head."

"The Baha'i Faith is entirely nonpolitical and we neither take sides in the present tragic dispute going on over the future of the Holy Land and its people nor have we any statement to make or advice to give as to what the nature of the political future of this country should be. Our aim is the establishment of universal peace in this world and our desire to see justice prevail in every domain of human society, including the domain of politics. As many of the adherents of our Faith are of both Jewish and Moslem extraction, we have no prejudice towards either of these groups and are most anxious to reconcile them for their mutual good and for the good of the country."

"What does concern us, however, in any decisions made affecting the future of Palestine, is that the fact be recognized by whoever exercises sovereignty over Haifa and Acre, that within this area exists the spiritual and administrative world center of a world Faith, and that the independence of that Faith, its right to manage its affairs from this source, the right of Baha'is from any and every country of the globe to visit it as pilgrims (enjoying the same privilege in this respect as Jews, Moslems and Christians do in regard to visiting Jerusalem), be acknowledged and permanently safeguarded."

Notes

1. National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States and Canada (1981). *The Baha'i World: A Biennial International Record*, Volume 11: 1946-1950 (Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust).

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