

The Zionist authorities were well aware that no illegal construction was going on in Al Aqsa's premises. A spokesman for the Jerusalem city government had refuted the reports to this effect. The Zionists were moreover aware of the inflammatory effects of their transgressions. Still, MKs made further 'visits' to the Temple Mount. Groups from the ultra-right Zionist party, Tehiya, and others tried on several occasions to hoist the Israeli flag on the Mount. The head of the Knesset's Interior Committee insisted that the 'visits' must continue, despite the turmoil caused, for «All Arabs should know who the head of the household is.»

Voices were raised in a Knesset session demanding that Jews take control of Al Aqsa and begin construction of the so-called third temple. One Zionist group put up posters on the outer wall of Jerusalem's old city, that read: «It's time we threw out these foreigners.» On January 19th, the terrorist Kach group stormed Al Aqsa, raising placards saying, «The Temple Mount is ours» and «Kick the Arabs out!» Even more outrageous, MK Haim Druckman, leader of Morasha religious party, demanded that the prayer leader at Al Aqsa be arrested and tried by a military court, because «he was inciting people to kill the parliamentarians»!

### The real issue

Zionist and western media try to project the issue of Al Aqsa as intermittent incidents of violence where fanatic Moslem Palestinians overreact to the normal desire of the Jews to pray at this holy shrine. Yet after the 1967 occupation, Shlomo Ghoren, the rabbi of the

Israeli occupying army, promptly declared that the Israelis intended to demolish Al Aqsa. From that day, the Zionist military authorities began a campaign against the mosque, as part of their more comprehensive plan for Judaizing Jerusalem and all the occupied Palestinian land.

Fanatic religious groups and Zionist terror gangs were nurtured by the authorities and unleashed against Palestinian citizens. Among them is the Temple Mount Faithful whose leader submitted a proposal on how to speed up the process of destroying Al Aqsa and building the «third temple». One day a week, he gives 'religious' lectures near Al Aqsa under heavy police protection.

On June 12, 1967, the Zionist authorities issued a number of military decrees stipulating that the Israeli government has the right to implement Israeli law on any area under the jurisdiction of its occupation army. As a result, Israeli law is implemented in Jerusalem and its suburbs. Included is regulation number 10 which gives the right to the followers of any religion to pray in the holy places in Jerusalem. The main object is to impose a situation which allows the Zionists freedom of movement, especially on the premises of Al Aqsa, so as to eventually destroy it and construct the 'third temple'.

The campaign of destruction and provocation has been launched against Christian and Moslem holy places alike, in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and 1948 occupied Palestine. For example, the Ibrahimi mosque in Hebron has been attacked repeatedly by Zionist settlers. Shamaa mosque in Gaza was stormed by settlers, and the pulpit from which the

sheikh leads prayers was destroyed and thrown outside. Zionists have also taken to desecrating cemeteries, as in Gaza where they entered Sheikh Shaaban cemetery and broke several tombstones. Recently a church in Jerusalem was converted into a night club.

Al Aqsa itself has been subjected to fifteen separate attacks. The most criminal of these were: (1) The attempt to burn it down on August 21, 1969. (2) On May 11, 1980, large quantities of explosives were discovered hidden near the mosque, which the Kach terrorists were intending to use to blow it up. (3) On April 11, 1982, a Zionist entered the mosque, spraying those gathered for prayer with machine gun fire.

In addition to the obvious attacks, the Department of Archaeology, which is part of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, has been carrying out an even more destructive plan. Under the pretext of searching for the first and second temples, excavations are being carried out around the Temple Mount. At points these diggings extend 14 meters below Al Aqsa mosque. Such excavations have been going on since 1967, and so far the Zionists have found no evidence that the temples ever existed. The excavations do, however, endanger the ancient walls and foundations of the mosque. They could eventually crumble because the excavations loosen the earth on which the structures stand. This only emphasizes that the main goal is destruction.

Moreover, plans for constructing the 'third temple' have already been drawn up and building material provided. For years, a Zionist settler in Jerusalem has been operating a factory which specializes in weaving silk robes and other items to be worn by Jewish rabbis who will pray in the 'third temple'. Only Israelis are allowed to work in this factory. Many fund-raising campaigns have been launched in the US to help the Zionists finance the building of the 'third temple'.

All Arab, Islamic and friendly countries should take a more serious stand and put a halt to Zionist transgressions and plans for Judaizing the occupied territories. It is no longer sufficient to make indignant gestures at meetings of the Jerusalem Committee, or appealing to 'Israel' to abide by UN resolutions. Our Palestinian masses have taken the initiative to protect Al Aqsa. The Arab reactionary regimes should do something less humiliating than issuing sterile communiques of professed concern. ●

