

Awqaf Council Press Release

Clarifying the reconfiguration of the [expanded] Jerusalem Awqaf Council and why Bab Al-Rahmah is on the agenda of the first session?

The Jerusalem Awqaf Councils in Islamic History:

1. The Islamic Awqaf Council in Jerusalem is considered a historical continuum of the existence of a council and general management for Jerusalem Awqaf since the beginning of the Islamic period. This institution was crystallized and took its shape more clearly during Ayyubid, Mamluk, and Ottoman periods. The affairs of "Jerusalem Awqaf", "Al-Aqsa Mosque" and the "Sharia' Court" were common denominators for the work of all councils.
2. When the Ottoman Caliphate in Palestine ended in 1924, the Jerusalem Awqaf Council, named the Higher Islamic Council under the leadership of Hajj Amin Al-Husseini, hastened with an appeal to Sharif King Hussein bin Ali to fill the vacuum as a custodian and protector of the holy places (The pledge of allegiance in 1924). They requested (written text) from his son Prince Abdullah to directly oversee the renovation of the Holy Al-Aqsa Mosque. Since then, the Hashemite King, as Custodian of the Holy Places in Jerusalem, oversees and implements as much as possible the recommendations of the Jerusalem Awqaf Councils without interruption, neither before nor after the occupation in 1967. Then, Muslim scholars and other personalities in Palestine established the Higher Islamic Association. Its work enjoyed the patronage of HM King Hussein bin Talal, which was translated into practical support through the Ministry for Awqaf, Islamic Affairs and Holy Places in Amman. This is the Custodianship that has been also confirmed when the Jerusalem Awqaf were excluded from the decision of disengagement in 1988. It was reconfirmed again in the agreement of the Hashemite Custodianship with HE Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in 2013.

Restructuring the new Jerusalem Awqaf Council on Feb. 14, 2019

1. After the end of term of the previous council, a new council was formed by a decision of the Jordanian Council of Ministers, following the directives of HM King Abdullah II Ibn Al-Hussein, Custodian of the Muslim and Christian Holy Sites in Jerusalem. This decision was to strengthen the resolve of Jerusalemites and their commitment toward the Holy Al-Aqsa Mosque. The new directives included the increase of the number of the Awqaf Council members from 11 to 18.
2. The new Awqaf Council is discussing and developing a preliminary strategic plan for the work of the Council that faces extraordinary conditions. The challenges that the council confronts include the surging frequency of the occupation's violations against Al-Aqsa Mosque, the Islamic Awqaf, and the Arab-Islamic cultural identity of the city of Jerusalem, in an unprecedented way.
3. Members of the Council held part of its first session at Bab Al-Rahmah and performed the congregational noon prayer there. They made on-site assessment and listened to Hashemite Restorations experts' evaluation of the state of the

building, and its urgent need for restoration because the occupation authorities obstructed its maintenance and prevented performing prayers in it.

It should be noted that the occupation authorities ignored several official and unofficial Jordanian letters issued by the Foreign Ministry, and ignored several UNESCO resolutions that demand annulling all arbitrary and unjustified Israeli measures. They demanded rescinding the unjustified military order to close Bab Al-Rahmah, which was upheld by the Israeli court in 2017. This act reflects colonial extremist schemes to takeover Bab Al-Rahmah, or to permit Jewish extremists to pray in its courtyards. This is especially the case because the Israeli police permitted the extremist Jews to pray and congregate inside Al-Aqsa Mosque near Bab Al-Rahmah almost daily, since the beginning of the year 2016. They also permitted groups of extremist Jews and Zionist Christian tourists to perform religious rituals [in the Muslim cemetery] just outside Bab Al-Rahmah, on top of Muslim graves, at the end of 2018.

Jordan and the Awqaf Council in Jerusalem have a clear demand; annul the Israeli police and Israeli court orders that ban the General Directorate of the Awqaf in Jerusalem from opening, using and restoring the building of Bab Al-Rahmah, similar to the right of the Awqaf in managing, using and restoring Al-Marwani prayer hall, Al-Ashrafiyyah school, Al-Aqsa library, and Al-Buraq Mosque. Furthermore, there should be no infringement on the right of the Awqaf to keep the iron-railing at the top of the stairs at the entrance leading to Bab Al-Rahmah. Only the Awqaf has the right to lock it in order to protect this place, similar to all other parts and prayer halls at Al-Aqsa Mosque. The Awqaf Council demands that Israeli occupation authorities to prevent the incursions of the extremists and to stop them from praying near Bab Al-Rahmah, which in effect the demand of Awqaf Council to stop all types of incursions into all parts of Al-Aqsa Mosque.

4. As to the expansion of the new Awqaf Council, it aims at consolidating the effort of the most distinguished Muslim institutions and personalities in Jerusalem, in order to serve Al-Aqsa Mosque. The rallying of Jerusalemites concerning Al-Aqsa Mosque should motivate the Islamic world to be reoriented towards the protection of the first Qiblah which suffers from unlimited violations. It should be mentioned that members of the new Awqaf Council are Jerusalemites carrying Jerusalem ID, and that most of them are employees of the Jerusalem Awqaf, the Shari`ah Court, or former or current members of Awqaf Councils.

Council for Awqaf, Islamic Affairs and Muslim Holy Sites in Jerusalem
Jerusalem

15 Jumada Al-Akhirah 1440 AH/Feb. 18th, 2019