

## **HOLY CITY AND UNHOLY PRACTICES**

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*“Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. The world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its labourers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children...This is not a way of life at all, in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron”. A Cross-of Iron Dwight D. Eisenhower*

Definitely it is not a way of life at all. It is Bethlehem humanity hanging from the New Berlin Wall of Bethlehem. Few days ago, we woke up on a military seizure order issued by the Israeli occupation forces on Feb 16, 2003, which States that 14 dunams (3.5 acres) are being taken for three years. According to Palestinian sources, such a policy clearly shows that there is a plan to strangle the city and confiscate its northern entrance and annexing it to Israel. Furthermore, the Israeli authority aims to separate Rachel Tomb area from the rest of Bethlehem.

*According to Bethlehem Mayor Hanna Nasser 4000 dunams (1,000) acres will be cut off from the rest of Bethlehem by security Wall.*

*3000 Palestinians' are living under a nightmare of confiscating land, destroying homes and businesses. Insecurity, insafety, vulgarity and poignancy are the remarks of this ambiguous cloudy situation we live under. An eight-meter wall will be erected to separate families from each other, isolate pieces of land here and there and create unhealthy atmosphere in terms of resuming regular life specially after the 30 months of siege to the city of Bethlehem, frequent military incursions coupled with lengthy days of curfew.*

*Jamal became agitated by such equivocal measures by saying that this military order will deprive Bethlehem from very vital breathing outlet and choke one of city's main healthy breathing lung. Another citizen mentioned that Walls all over the world have been dismantled?? Why do we need such uncivilized Walls to be built in the city of peace?*

*Yes, Israeli Authority will confiscate 25% of Bethlehem initial Town planning. The main North entrance of Bethlehem has been stifled by the new recent methods. Tourism has been given a harsh blow... Palestinian Moslems can't bury their dead in the cemetery surrounding Rachel's Tomb. The Armenian Church, and the Islamic Waqf have losst lots of property in addition to people's private property. Dunums of agricultural land has been expropriated...*

*Rachel's Tomb has become an observation post and the whole area is heavy military area.*

*The words of the Christmas Carol “ I heard the Bells” of Henry W. Longfellow (1807-1882) sounds relevant to our situation:*

*“I heard the bells on Christmas Day  
Their old familiar carols play  
And wild and sweet the words repeat,  
"Peace on earth, good will to all."”*

*But in despair I bowed my head.  
"There is no peace on earth," I said.*

*"For hate is strong and mocks the song.  
Of peace on earth, good will to all."*

*The issue is how to preserve the holiness of the site, while at the same time challenging all the unholy practices.*

*Would you be so kind as to help restoring holiness to the land, dignity to the people, render justice to the marginalized, healing to the inflicted and peace among nations. If Christ is to be reborn, he will find desolate cold Nativity.*

*Let us prepare our hearts and work harder before it is too late to regain the warmth of the grotto.*

*My vision is a practical world where justice is the backbone.... Justice of all kinds economic, social, Political environmental and restorative Justice.*

*We want to live with hope... hope that comes from the fact that God is our infinite source.... hope that we all belong to the land....*

*" From dust to dust" Hope to see the colors in the flowers and not as a source of racism, segregation or biases... Hope that energize us, keep our sanity in believing that tomorrow is not the same...*

*Hope for our youth that life is not equal death.. Hope to enhance the walk of social transformation.... to reinforce the arms of dialogue and not dialogue of arms. Hope to strengthen the cross-cultural dialogue, and interfaith relationship based on the fact*

*That God created us in his image and not the trend that we create God in our image. Hope through our vision is to live on the earthly kingdom where peace, nonviolence, fair trade, cultural mutual respects are the pillars.*

*Hope that we will not be misunderstood and labeled as terrorist, fundamentalist or extremist if we state our position against merciless capitalism, class hatred , war and violence .....Hope that not only refuse to bear arms..... but to deepen the roads of incisive community against vulgarity, labyrinth and work for a community that transcends sex, religion, color, nationality.....a community that creates a masterpiece of vivid interactions of different colors, shapes and sizes to be baptized in the ocean of humanity .*

*Hope to live the principle of pluralism in unity and not uniformity .....*

***Will you help us achieve this dream...!!!***