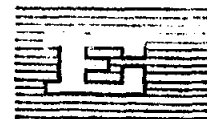


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THIRD UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE  
STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES  
Athens, Greece  
17 August - 7 September 1977

Letter dated 5 September 1977 from the Counsellor of the  
Représentation Diplomatique d'Israël at Athens  
to the Executive Secretary of the Third  
United Nations Conference on the  
Standardization of Geographical Names

Referring to the Soviet Union Delegation's expressions about Israel in the debate on the draft resolution submitted by Guatemala (E/CONF.69/C.I/L.5), I have the honour to enclose herewith the text of the statement which was made by the Israel Delegation to the Conference, on 5 September 1977.

I hereby request that you kindly circulate this letter, together with its enclosure, as an official document of the Conference.

(Signed): Zohar Raz  
Counsellor

ATH.77-389

ANNEX

Statement made by the Israel Delegation

Mr. President,

"Israel is not affected by the draft resolution submitted by the distinguished delegate from Guatemala. No official or national names authority was ever set up in the area under consideration before the Geographical Names Commission of the Government of Israel was established in 1951. Names given by this authority thus are valid standard forms.

Moreover, many existing place names were changed after the Arab invasion of Palestine from former names, mostly Hebrew ones, found already in the Old and New Testament, and in the Madaba mosaic, the oldest map of Israel existing (565 a.d.), into arabic names. Some examples are: Sea of Tiberias (بحر طبرية) instead of Sea of Kinnereth or Genezaret. El-Khalil (الخليل) instead of Hebron, as it is known the world over. Jenin (جنين) instead of Ir Ganim, or Beit el Maqdas and later El-Quds (القدس) instead of Yerushalayim or Jerusalem which had been in use already 2,000 years and appears thus in the Bible, Old and New Testament.

Through its official and legal Governmental Names Authority, Israel has re-instituted the old traditional names but has in no way affected arabic names of purely arab towns, such as Ramallah, Tul-Karm, Khan Yunis, etc. In the case where Hebrew names existed, both names are generally used, i.e. Shechem, the biblical name found in all Hebrew and European biblical literature, together with the arabic name Nablus, or Eshtemoa together with Samnuu. Israel thus recognizes the use of arabic names or those given by the former British Mandatory Administration, such as Gaza, Jericho etc, side-by-side with the Hebrew names, a fact which is reflected in official maps.

However, Israel would welcome joint discussions with her neighbour countries on any onomastic problem raised, in order to reach regional standardization of names, as recommended by this Conference and in the spirit of its proceedings".