



Economic and Social Council

Distr.  
LIMITED

E/CONF.74/L.118  
6 September 1982

ENGLISH ONLY

---

Fourth United Nations Conference on the  
Standardization of Geographical Names  
Geneva, 24 August to 14 September 1982

Letter dated 1 September 1982 from the Head of the Delegation of Israel  
addressed to the President of the  
Fourth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names

During the course of the scientific discussions at the present Conference, remarks of a purely political nature have repeatedly been directed against Israel by the distinguished delegates of Libya and Iraq. In order not to confuse scientific matters with irrelevant political issues - which should, where relevant, be discussed outside this Conference - Israel has not reacted verbally at the sessions. However, Mr. President, the delegation of Israel requests that the accompanying brief paper, together with this letter, be issued as an official document of the Conference and be distributed to all delegates.

(Signed) Dr. N. Kadmon

within the area of Israel as recognized by the United Nations, names which are different from those printed, e.g., in Syrian maps of the same area and for the same geographical features.

5. Israel, with its expertise in computerization, has, at the present Conference, pointed out to the Arab countries possible solutions to some of their toponomic problems. Israel would welcome joint discussions with her neighbour countries on any toponomastic problem in order to achieve regional standardization of names, as recommended by the Conference and in the spirit of its proceedings.

APPENDIX

Mr. President,

In response to certain remarks concerning the standardization of geographical names in Israel made by the distinguished delegates of Libya and Iraq, the Government of Israel wishes to state as follows:

1. Resolution No. 13 of the Third United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, Athens, 1977 (document E/CONF.69/4) states: "a standardized name is a name that has the official sanction of a legally constituted entity" and further on, "... any changes made by other authorities in the names standardized by the competent national geographical names authority should not be recognized by the United Nations".

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 sanctioned by this authority, therefore, are the only valid and legal standard forms.

2. Many existing place names in Israel were changed after the Arab invasion of Palestine in the 7th century from former names - mostly Hebrew ones, found already in the Old and New Testament and in the Madaba Map, the oldest map of the area extant (ca. 565 A.D.) - into Arabic names. Some examples are Lake of Tiberias ( **بحر طبرية** ) instead of Sea of Kirnereth or Genezareth, El-Khalil ( **الخليل** ) instead of Hebron as it is known the world over, or Beit el-Magdas and later El-Quds ( **القدس** ) instead of Yerushalayim or Jerusalem which had been in use already for 2,000 years and appears thus in the Old and New Testaments of the Bible.

3. Through its official and legal Governmental names authority, Israel has re-instituted the old traditional names but this in no way affects Arabic names of purely Arab towns, such as Et-Tayiba, Abū Ghōsh, Deir Hannah, etc. In the case where old Hebrew names existed, both names are generally used, i.e., Yerushalayim (Jerusalem), the biblical name found in all ancient Hebrew and European biblical literature, together with the name El-Quds; the Hebrew Gat-Rimmon with the Arabic Jatt, Gush Halav with Gīsh, etc. Israel thus recognizes the Arabic names, a fact which is reflected in official maps. Moreover, in Arab towns the Arabic name always appears first, with the Hebrew name generally following in brackets.

4. This is more than what Israel's neighbouring countries do. There is, in fact, no agreement between Arab authorities concerning this area, neither as regards standardization nor exonyms. Thus, maps printed by the PLO 1/ show,

---

1/ Illegally copied photo-lithographically from copyrighted topographic maps prepared by the Government of Israel, with names replaced by the copying organization.