



What's New in Bethlehem

March 6th, 2003

Memorandum

RE: RACHEL'S TOMB AREA IN BETHLEHEM

1. Throughout history, Rachel's Tomb has always been a part of the town of Bethlehem. It lies within the northern municipal borders of Bethlehem and is considered one of its famous religious and historical places.
2. Following the beginning of the peace process in Madrid in 1993, the Israeli government and our Palestinian leadership signed the famous Oslo II agreement in 1995 in which both parties agreed on the arrangements regarding Rachel's Tomb, annex 1 – article V, section 7 clearly states:
 - a. *While the Tomb, as well as the main road leading from Jerusalem to the Tomb, as indicated, will be under the security responsibility of Israel, **the free movement of Palestinians on the main road will continue.***
 - b. *For the purpose of protecting the Tomb, three Israeli guard posts may be located in the Tomb, the roof of the Waqf building and the parking lot.*
 - c. *The present situation and existing practices in the Tomb shall be preserved.*
3. In contradiction with the Oslo agreement and disregarding all international conventions, the Israeli authorities constructed on March 1996 a concrete wall in front of the Tomb closing the western side of the road and forcing the traffic at the main entrance of Bethlehem to a narrow lane less than 6 metres. Even this bottle-neck was later on closed by the Israeli forces.

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