



**Statement by Robert H. Serry,
United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process,
following the Israeli heritage sites decision and tensions in Hebron**

For immediate release

Jerusalem, 22 February 2010. I am concerned at the announcement of the Israeli government regarding holy sites in Hebron and Bethlehem and the heightened tensions that have resulted. These sites are in occupied Palestinian territory and are of historical and religious significance not only to Judaism but also to Islam, and to Christianity as well. I urge Israel not to take any steps on the ground which undermine trust or could prejudice negotiations, the resumption of which should be the highest shared priority of all who seek peace. I also call for restraint and calm. As I underscored in my visit to Hebron last week, I would like to see more positive steps by Israel to enable Palestinian development and state-building in the area and throughout the West Bank, reflecting a genuine commitment to the two State solution.

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