

**Middle East - Suez story No
19-24: Middle East - Suez
story No 19-24 - 3**

HS L 179:112



Dag Hammarskjöld's samt.

2-3.

Suez story - 19

(as put together by D.H.)

3 May 56

Ben-Gurion, David (Prime Minister of Israel)

- 2 letters to D.H.

THE PRIME MINISTER

S E C R E T

Jerusalem, 3 May 1956

Dear Mr. Hammarskjold,

You have received our assurance concerning full compliance with all the clauses of the General Armistice Agreement between Israel and Egypt, and our request that a similar assurance be obtained from Egypt in order to establish reciprocity. I shall be happy to hear of the response you obtain from the other party.

In the course of our discussions you stressed the significance you place on Articles VII and VIII of the Agreement. I have noted the high priority you give to full compliance with these clauses.

On our side, I have pointed out that the Armistice Agreement is to us an integrated whole, with Article I presenting the basic conditions under which the Armistice regime can function, serving as a transition towards the state of normal, peaceful relations.

You will appreciate that for that reason our assurance fully to comply with the clauses to which you have attached such special importance must depend on a conviction that the Government of Egypt is willing to comply fully with the various clauses of the Armistice Agreement and especially its first Article. I have pointed out that we consider that the Government of Egypt, in maintaining a policy of blockade by the interference with Israel shipping through the Suez Canal and the Straits of Tiran, does not comply with Article I of the Armistice Agreement. Under such circumstances you will appreciate that in the gradual approach to normal conditions, which you have tried to further, the Government of Israel does not consider that Articles VII and VIII should be given precedence over Article I, and therefore, until we are informed that the Egyptian Government has given you its assurance that at least de facto the blockade in the Suez Canal and the Straits of Tiran will be lifted, we must defer dealing with those two Articles.

I say this fully appreciating the fact that in your view, as explained in our discussion of Suez, though this policy of the Government of Egypt is incompatible with the Armistice regime, it is not in contravention of any specific clause of the Armistice Agreement. You will recall that we for our part maintain that interference with shipping in Suez is an infringement of the Armistice Agreement.

As a corollary to our general assurance of willingness to comply with all the clauses of the Armistice Agreement, I wish to give you the assurance of the Government of Israel that, without the introduction of any further conditions, Israel would, if and when the Government of Egypt ceases to interfere with Israel shipping in the Suez Canal and the Straits of Tiran, immediately proceed to comply fully with Articles VII and VIII along the lines proposed in the course of our discussions by the Chief of Staff, U.N.T.S.O.

What I have stated here as the stand of the Government of Israel represents no attempt to make compliance with Articles VII and VIII conditional on compliance by the other side with certain Security Council decisions, but is in response to your repeated question about what, in our view, would be the natural time sequence between various steps in the direct implementation of the Armistice Agreement and the establishment of normal peaceful conditions.

I wish to repeat that, although we would appreciate an official declaration by the Egyptian Government of the change of policy, we will consider that as soon as you have a definite assurance from the Egyptian Government that it is ceasing to interfere with Israel shipping and inform us of the fact, the situation will be established in which you have our unconditional assurance immediately to proceed to comply with Articles VII and VIII in the manner cited above.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) David Ben-Gurion

Mr. Dag Hammarskjöld
Secretary-General of the United Nations
c/o United Nations Truce Supervision Organization
Jerusalem

ראש הממשלה
THE PRIME MINISTER

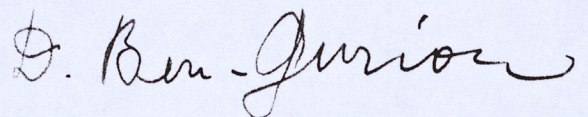
May 3, 1956

STRICTLY PERSONAL

Dear Mr. Hammerskjold:

I wish to confirm that in agreeing not to insist upon a public declaration by the Egyptian Government of the change of policy as regards Israel shipping in the Suez Canal and the Straits of Tiran we bore in mind what you told us during our discussions, namely: that should Egypt resume its interferences with Israel shipping in the Suez Canal or the Straits of Tiran and Israel military forces then return to the Nitzana area, you will support our position.

Yours sincerely,



David Ben-Gurion