

**Middle East - Suez story No
27-32: Middle East - Suez
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Middle East / Suez story - 30

19 April - 17 May 57

Ben-Gurion, David (Prime Minister of Israel)

- 3 letters from D.H.
- 2 letter to D.H. (sent via M.R. Kidron)
- 1 oral message from D.H.

19 April 1957

P E R S O N A L

Dear Mr. Ben-Gurion,

Agree seem to have passed since I last had the privilege of hearing from you personally. The long time of silence has been one of grave disappointments on both sides. I firmly believe that some things might have looked different had we managed to maintain a direct personal contact.

I fear that in our never-abandoned efforts to get nearer to the target we have in common - in your case peace for Israel, in my case perhaps just simply peace - we may have reached a dead point. Israel's reaction to those measures which the General Assembly has asked me to negotiate, does not give me the impression of any immediate opening. Such a situation requires some boldness. Indeed, it seems to me to be a situation where we must individually try to transcend our immediate duty in order to fulfill the higher duty of creative action. You know that my great personal confidence in your ability in this respect has never flagged.

My reason for writing to you is that a week from now I am going to Geneva and that after my visit to Geneva, around 8 May, it might be possible for me to come over to Jerusalem.

I am under the obligation in relation to the General Assembly to do all I possibly can for the implementation of the Armistice Agreement and for a deployment of the UNEF on the Armistice Demarcation Line. Having an opportunity to do so, it would, therefore, be my duty to discuss personally with you these matters which I have already raised in letters to the Foreign Minister of 29 March and 1 April. It is, however, obviously for you to decide

H.E. Mr. David Ben-Gurion
Prime Minister and Minister of Defence
Jerusalem, Israel

whether you consider a visit for that purpose at the present time useful. If that would be the case, I would readily come for talks about the subjects mentioned. If not, neither Israel nor the UN would gain anything by a visit to Jerusalem which public opinion would come to regard as a failure.

Were you to consider the approach to which I thus am professionally obligated, as of little or doubtful value in the present circumstances, there still remains the broader question between you and me which I referred to above. If it were to be discussed, the new talks would be directly linked up with our meetings last July. From neither side the renewal of such talks, in order to bring us over the dead point, would be an easy step, but if we have any faith in the possibility of progress, we cannot afford not to take our chance. Regarding a visit for this second reason, I depend on your personal reaction. If you believe in it, I would be happy to come. If you do not, I trust that you will tell me.

I hope that your Mission in New York has sent you a copy of an address I made about a week ago in the American Jewish Committee. I asked them to do so, because, when writing it, I thought of you as my main audience.

Would you please remember me to Mrs. Ben-Gurion.

DRAFT

2 May 1957

My dear Mr. Ben Gurion,

By cable I have already thanked you for your reply to my letter of 19 April and expressed my appreciation of its spirit. Permit me now to revert to the question of my visit to Jerusalem.

In your letter I note, to my regret, that you maintain and emphasize again your view that the United Nations is applying different standards to Israel and to Egypt. I will not here and now go into this matter which we discussed so fully last year. The best general comments are given by yourself in your reference to the principle taught by your Sages.

With a frankness for which you set an example I must express my concern about what you say concerning the two requests of the General Assembly when stating, in what may be interpreted as a definitive way, that "our discussions will not touch upon the two questions of detail" mentioned in my letter. The first of these questions is nothing less than the continued validity and implementation of the Armistice Agreement, and the other one is basic to the future of the United Nations Emergency Force as conceived by the General Assembly and the contributing Governments.

As a reason for your stand you refer especially to the 1951 decision of the Security Council. Certainly, you recognize that the 1951 decision was based on the armistice regime as established by the Armistice Agreement and that, therefore, the recognition and implementation of the Armistice Agreement by Israel itself is the very basis on which it is possible for you to request implementation of the 1951 decision.

The arrangements for the UNEF, on the other hand, must be considered as in principle unrelated to the wider problem you raise in this context, as the deployment of the UNEF on both sides of the Demarcation Line is just a practical measure which would help us to approach the other issues without being under the threat of local unrest. In this case, it is not the priority in time of various decisions, but the priority of measures in the natural development of a practical policy which should decide when and under what conditions the matter should be settled.

As I said in my letter to you of 19 April, it is for you to decide whether you consider my visit at the present time helpful for a discussion of the two issues mentioned. It is obvious from what you write that you do not find that to be the case. If I am entitled to read what you say as indicating nothing more than this, your stand would leave the door ~~open~~ to the broader discussion which I suggested and which I understand you would welcome. If, however, I should regard your observations on the two issues as implying a considered refusal to meet the requests of the General Assembly, the situation would be different. Were I to go to Jerusalem, after your having notified me that you are thus on your side closing the discussion of these questions, my visit would have the implication that I accept your negative reply, trying to find other avenues to progress. You will fully realise that, as Secretary-General, I would have no right to do so. I hope that you will also see that as somebody deeply interested in peaceful progress, irrespective of my professional obligations, I could not find a discussion "whether there is a chance of peace in the Middle East" promising if it had to start out from the assumptions that the armistice regime, as based on the Agreement, is no longer valid and that cooperation in support of the UNEF is refused.

It follows that I find it difficult to decide on the basis solely of your letter whether a visit to Jerusalem now, for the wider purpose you yourself indicate in line with my suggestion, would be in the common interest, as your comments on the two issues raised by the General Assembly have to be further clarified. Do you mean only that you do not believe that we are likely to get anywhere on those two issues during my visit and that we, for that reason, should not waste time on them, while, on the other hand, you recognise their continued validity as requests from the General Assembly which require further consideration by you and for the implementation of which I have to work? Or should I understand your attitude to be that I would be welcome to visit Jerusalem on the understanding that the two requests are not on the agenda, as being turned down by Israel? In the first case, as I have ~~stated~~ stated above and in the penultimate paragraph of my letter of 19 April, I would be happy to engage in that broader discussion we both have in mind. In the second case, I am afraid that I would have to conclude that an attempt at such a broader discussion now might prejudice the stand of the General Assembly while being unlikely to prove fruitful.

17 May 1957

Dear Mr. Ben Gurion,

A week ago I left your country with the best memories of your reception and of the frank and friendly talks, covering a wide range of important subjects, which we had together. On behalf of my colleagues and myself I want to send you and your Government our best thanks for your hospitality and for all the time that you devoted to discussions of problems which we share.

However, I wish to address myself privately to Mrs. Ben Gurion and to you with very special thanks for the human contact with you which I have always had the privilege of enjoying and which on this occasion was revived and confirmed in a way for which I am most happy. I took careful note of Mrs. Ben Gurion's nice suggestion that on another occasion I might visit your country home.

We have difficult times back of us and, certainly, we have difficult times also ahead of us. In the light of this renewed experience I am sure that we shall, on the human level, be able to preserve an atmosphere of trust even under the strain of events and of possible divergencies of opinion. The goal we have in common is a link which should cement a relationship which to me personally is precious.

The next step must be one of consolidation of the improved conditions which we have recently experienced. I hope we shall be successful, but I look eagerly beyond the limits of this first modest, although difficult task. Under the smoke-screens of continued difficulties progress has, in spite of all, somehow been made. Its results may not yet be visible, but I do not feel unduly optimistic in saying that I firmly believe that they may soon be brought to light - to be used as stepping stones to further improvements. I feel that in its modest way the visit to Jerusalem helped in the right direction, thanks to the way in which you received my initiative.

Please, would you give my regards to Mrs. Ben Gurion and Mrs. Meir.

With all good wishes and warm regards,

Dag Hammarskjöld,
Secretary-General.

His Excellency
Mr. David Ben Gurion,
Prime Minister of Israel,
Jerusalem, Israel.

OUTGOING CODE CABLE

URGENT

TO: LEARY JERUSALEM (REPEAT TO NEWYORK FOR INFORMATION)
FROM: SECGEN GENEVA (CORDIER N/NEWYORK)
DATE: 3 May 1957
NUMBER:

PLEASE TRANSMIT FOLLOWING LETTER URGENTLY TO MR BEN GURION. PLEASE NOTE CONTENT FOR NECESSARY PLANNING ON YOUR SIDE. LETTER BEGINS QUOTE

My dear Mr. Ben Gurion,

By cable I have already thanked you for your reply to my letter of 19 April and expressed my appreciation of its spirit. In also warmly thanking you and Mrs. Ben Gurion for the kind welcome to your home, permit me now to revert to the question of my visit to Jerusalem.

In your letter I note, with regret, that you maintain and emphasize your view that the United Nations is applying "different standards" to Israel and to Egypt. This is not the place to go into this matter which, you will recall, we discussed quite fully last year. Your own reference to the principle taught by your Sages is, in my view, probably the best general comment, in any case.

You state that "our discussions will not touch upon the two questions of detail" mentioned in my letter, which is wording that appears to be quite definitive. However, the first of these questions is the continued validity and implementation of the Armistice Agreement, and the other one is basic to the United Nations effort in the area and, in particular, to the effectiveness of the United Nations Emergency Force as conceived by the General Assembly and the contributing Governments. Both of the two questions are covered by requests from the General Assembly, for the implementation of which I have "to do all I possibly can".

As suggested in my letter to you of 19 April, it was for you to decide whether you would consider a visit by me at the present time likely to prove useful for a discussion of the two issues mentioned. It seems obvious from your reply that you do not find that to be the case. I can reach no other conclusion from what you have said. Even so, however, I agree with you that a visit might prove helpful.

On the other hand, your observations on the two issues may be read as implying a considered refusal to meet the requests of the General Assembly. If that would be correct, a visit by me now might carry the implication that I accept from you a negative reply, which, in turn, could be interpreted as closing the matter. You will fully realise that, as Secretary-General, I would have no right to do this. I hope that you will also see that as one deeply interested in peaceful progress, irrespective of my professional obligations, I could not find very

~~promising a discussion on whether there is~~

promising a discussion on "whether there is a chance of peace in the Middle East" if it had to rest on the assumptions that the armistice regime, as based on the Agreement, is no longer valid and that cooperation in support of the UNEF is rejected.

Interpreting your letter and my obligations as I do here, I will be glad to visit Jerusalem for the wider purpose you have indicated, which is in line with my own suggestion. If it must be assumed that during this visit we are not likely to get very far on the two General Assembly requests, I agree with you that there would still be scope for a joint exploration of the issue of peace in the Middle East. In my view, however, this could be fruitful only provided the requests of the General Assembly are recognized as having undiminished validity and as aiming at measures which require further consideration by you and for the implementation of which I must continue to work.

Hoping that you agree with me on the assumptions on which I now would go to Jerusalem, I am looking forward to seeing you again and to having a chance for an exchange of views with you on matters which to both of us have become part of our very being. I can promise that you will again find in me a very careful listener, animated by a strong desire to assist in achieving for Israel the life of peace its people deserve. I trust that you, on your side, will listen to my problems with a full understanding that the differences of approach reflect differing responsibilities rather than divergence in views as to the ultimate goal. I hope that you rest convinced of what I tried to express in my handwritten note to you after my visit in July.

I hope to leave for Jerusalem Wednesday night together with Ralph Bunche, Mr. Claude de Kemoullaria, a personal assistant of French nationality, and my personal aide Mr. William Ranallo, whom you know from previous visits. This would bring me to Jerusalem in the morning of the 9th of May. I would be able to stay until Saturday morning. Should you wish to communicate with me further concerning this letter or to offer any suggestions on the time table, I can be most easily reached by cable to Geneva through Colonel Leary in Jerusalem.

With warm regards,

Yours sincerely,

Dag Hammarskjöld. UNQUOTE END

OUTGOING CODE CABLE

TO: LEARY JERUSALEM; REPEAT CORDIER NEWYORK FOR INFORMATION

FROM: SECGEN GENEVA

DATE: 7 May 1957

NUMBER:

REUR 95. THANKS ARRANGEMENTS. PREFER LANDING LYDDA. APPRECIATE YOUR CONCERN ABOUT SECURITY ISSUE BUT ANXIOUS THAT YOU AVOID PLANNING IT IN SUCH A WAY THAT, IF PRESS GETS HOLD OF IT, THERE COULD BE ANY WORDS ABOUT OUR BEING CONCERNED ETC. I DO NOT WANT GIVE IMPRESSION THAT WE ARE IN ANY WAY IMPRESSED BY NOISES IN PRESS AND PUBLIC DEBATE.

PARA. PLEASE TRANSMIT FOLLOWING ORAL MESSAGE FOR MR BENGURION THROUGH THE FOREIGN OFFICE COLON QUOTE I GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT OF YOUR LETTER OF FOUR MAY. IN THE LIGHT OF YOUR REPLY I WISH TO CONFIRM OUR TRAVEL PLANS AS TENTATIVELY INDICATED IN MY OWN LAST LETTER TO YOU . COLONEL LEARY WILL INFORM YOU OF THE DETAILS. PARA. I NOTE WHAT YOU SAY IN YOUR LETTER CONCERNING THE TWO REQUESTS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY. HOWEVER, AS YOU DO NOT COMMENT ON THE ASSUMPTIONS ON WHICH I GO TO JERUSALEM, I CONCLUDE THAT THESE ASSUMPTIONS ARE FULLY UNDERSTOOD AND NOTED. UNQUOTE //

ראש הממשלה
THE PRIME MINISTER

Jerusalem, April 29, 1957

Dear Mr. Hammarskjold,

I was glad to have your letter of 19 April. As you indicate, quite a time has passed since we were in direct touch with one another. The intervening period has not been without its severe disappointments for us.

In my last letter to you before the Sinai campaign, I sought to convey my strong conviction that the United Nations was applying different standards to Israel on the one hand and to Egypt on the other. To my profound regret, this trend has, if anything, been even more in evidence during recent months. I will not, however, take it upon myself to be a judge of others. Our Sages taught us a great principle: "Do not judge your fellow until you find yourself in his place." I can understand the motives of certain Afro-Asian countries in their attitude towards us, but I am certain that if they had been in our place they would have acted as we did.

I shall of course be happy to see you here after your stay in Geneva. But frankness to you personally and in your capacity as representative of the U.N. obliges me to tell you quite clearly that our discussions will not touch upon the two questions of detail mentioned in your letter. I am of course aware of the recommendations of the Assembly in recent months, but these were preceded by the Security

Council decision of 1951, which was directed against Egypt's interference with Israel's shipping in the Canal. Prior to and above even that decision is the Charter of the United Nations, which binds all its members to settle their disputes by peaceful means. For nine years Egypt has in its relations with Israel violated the United Nations Charter, defying the Security Council, and playing the leading part in the Arab boycott and blockade of Israel. Hence the essential, basic and inescapable issue remains whether Egypt will put an end to the state of war which it continues to maintain against us, and particularly to terminate its blockade of Israel shipping and commerce, and to abandon the dispatch of "fedayun" gangs into our country.

Now that I have told you all this with complete frankness, I hope that you will come here, for I am certain that there are things that you have to tell and explain to me, and perhaps I too may have something to tell you. I do not agree that public opinion would consider your visit to Jerusalem a failure unless the two specific subjects mentioned in your letter were discussed. Your visit might well be justified even if its sole purpose is to discuss whether there is a chance of peace in the Middle East and if so, by what means. Every friendly contact holds out prospects of positive results, even if these may not be immediately discernible.

I have read your address to the American-Jewish Committee, and am grateful to you for your arranging to have it sent to me.

Mrs. Ben-Gurion sends her best wishes and looks forward to
seeing you in our home in Jerusalem.

Yours sincerely,

D. Ben-Gurion
David Ben-Gurion

New York
30/4/57

UNATIONS GENEVA

868 Secretary-General (to be delivered upon arrival in Geneva)
from Cordier

1. I transmit herewith letter from Ben Gourion: "Cabled text of message from the Prime Minister of Israel to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Jerusalem, 28 April 1957

Dear Mr. Hammarskjolk,

I was glad to have your letter of 19 April. As you indicate, quite a time has passed since we were in direct touch with one another. The intervening period has not been without its severe disappointments for us.

In my last letter to you before the Sinai campaign, I sought to convey my strong conviction that the United Nations was applying different standards to Israel on the one hand and to Egypt on the other. To my profound regret, this trend has, if anything, been even more in evidence during recent months. I will not, however, take it upon myself to be the judge of others. Our Sages have taught us one great principle: "Do not judge your fellow until you find yourself in his place". I can understand the motives of certain Afro-Asian countries in their attitude towards us, but I am certain that if they had been in our place they would have acted as we did.

I shall of course be happy to see you here after your stay in Geneva. But frankness to you personally and in your capacity as Representative of the United Nations obliges me to tell you quite clearly that our discussions will not touch upon the^{two}/questions of detail mentioned in your letter. I am, of course, aware of the Recommendations of the General Assembly in recent months, but these were preceded by the Security Council decision of 1951, which was directed against Egypt's interference with Israel's shipping in the Suez Canal. Prior to and above even that decision is the Charter of the United Nations, which binds all its members to settle their disputes by peaceful means. For nine years Egypt has in its relations

../...

with Israel violated the United Nations Charter, defying the Security Council, and playing the leading part in the Arab boycott and blockade of Israel. Hence the essential, basic and inescapable issue remains whether Egypt will put an end to the state of war which it continues to maintain against us, and particularly terminate its blockade of Israel shipping and commerce, and abandon the dispatch of "fedayin" gangs into our country.

Now that I told you all this with complete frankness, I hope that you will come here, for I am certain that there are things that you have to tell and explain to me, and perhaps I too may have something to tell you. I do not agree that public opinion would consider your visit to Jerusalem a failure unless the two specific subjects mentioned in your letter were discussed. Your visit might well be justified even if its sole purpose is to discuss whether there is ~~any~~^a chance of peace in the Middle East and if so, by what means. Every friendly contact holds out prospects of positive results, even if they may not be immediately discernible.

I have read your address to the American Jewish Committee, and am grateful to you for your arranging to have it sent to me. Mrs. Ben Gourion sends her best wishes and looks forward to seeing you in our home in Jerusalem.

Yours sincerely,

David Ben Gourion "

2. Immediately upon reading it I indicated to Kidron that should the Secretary-General's decision be positive, it would have to be clearly understood that his visit could not in any sense be regarded as reflecting upon the validity or the urgency of the two questions. Kidron agreed and added that in any case how could the questions be avoided - they would certainly come up very early in the conversation. I agreed with Kidron that discussion of the two items is inescapable.

3. Ralph and I feel that some formula should be found for the written record, perhaps in the form of a further exchange with Israel, which would not leave the questions aside with the seeming implication that

.../...

they were no longer relevant.

4. I gave a copy of the letter to Lodge who will give me his comments tomorrow.

CONFIDENTIAL (code)

No 54

JERUSALEM

4/5/57

UNATIONS GENEVA
(INFO UNATIONS NEW YORK)

SECRETARY GENERAL (AND INFO CORDIER) FROM LEARY.
FOLLOWING REPLY TO YOUR LETTER 4 MAY RECEIVED THROUGH DEPUTY DIRECTOR
GENERAL ISRAEL FOREIGN OFFICE :

"Jerusalem 4 May 1957.

Dear Mr. Hammarskjold,

I wish to thank you for your letter of four May and I look forward to seeing you here. I must however, again make it quite clear that I shall not, repeat not, be prepared to discuss either verbally or in writing the two questions raised in your previous letter. By doing so I would be countenancing the double standard to which I have already referred and which has in the past been adopted in regard to Israel and Egypt respectively. Before entering into any such discussion I would first have to know from you and the relevant UN Bodies that the implementation by Egypt of her obligations under the Charter of the United Nations and the decisions of the Security Council was assured. These obligations have priority both in time and relative weight to the recommendations of the recent General Assembly and in my view are of more vital importance to peace in the Middle-East.

I have of course no right to lay down the procedure which you should adopt in talks with myself or anyone else and I do not presume to do so. At the same time I am sure that you would not claim to prescribe what procedure should be adopted by me. It follows that in your visit here we can discuss only those matters the discussion of which is agreed upon by both of us. The two items referred to in your first letter do not, repeat not, fall within this category and can under no circumstances come within the ambit of our conversations.

I am glad to know that Mr. Bunche will accompany you and I await your arrival.

Yours sincerely,

David Ben Gurion "

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מדינת ישראל
ISRAEL

נציגות ישראל
באומות המאוחדות
DELEGATION OF ISRAEL
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

11 EAST 70TH STREET
NEW YORK 21, NEW YORK
TRAFALGAR 9-7600

24 May 1957

Dear Dag,

This is for your records. It was sent to Washington by mistake and took a long time to find its way back here.

*Yours
Reffie*
M.R. Kidron

Mr. Dag Hammarskjold
Secretary-General
United Nations
New York, N.Y.