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1 April 57

Meir, Golda (Israeli Foreign Minister)

- 1 letter from D. H.

1 April 1957

Excellency,

According to the report on the United Nations Emergency Force, 6 November 1956 (A/3302), the functions of the Force "when a cease-fire is being established", would be to "enter Egyptian territory with the consent of the Egyptian Government, in order to help maintain quiet during and after the withdrawal of non-Egyptian troops". It is further said that "the Force obviously should have no rights other than those necessary for the execution of its functions in cooperation with local authorities". The Force "would be more than an observers' corps, but in no way a military force temporarily controlling the territory in which it is stationed; nor, moreover, should the Force have military functions exceeding those necessary to secure peaceful conditions on the assumption that the parties to the conflict take all necessary steps for compliance with the recommendations of the General Assembly".

The definition of the functions was approved by the General Assembly (A/RES/395 paragraph 2). Later, in considering the situation "upon Israel's complete withdrawal" the General Assembly, in a resolution of 2 February 1957 called again upon the Governments of Egypt and Israel "scrupulously to observe the provisions of the General Armistice Agreement" and considered that such "scrupulous maintenance of the agreement requires the placing of UNEF on the Egyptian-Israeli armistice demarcation line."

It is clear that the phrase "on the armistice demarcation line" has to be understood as meaning on both sides of the Armistice Demarcation Line. This stand of the General Assembly also follows logically from the approach of the Assembly when, in its basic resolution on the matter, of 2 November 1956, it urged that the parties to the Armistice Agreement "desist from raids across the Armistice Demarcation Lines into neighbouring territory" and "observe scrupulously the provisions of the Armistice Agreement".

Her Excellency  
Mrs. Golda Meir  
Minister for Foreign Affairs  
Jerusalem, Israel

The Advisory Committee of the General Assembly, set up in order "to undertake the development of those aspects of the planning for the United Nations Emergency Force and its operations not already dealt with by the General Assembly", has been currently informed about the deployment of the Force and has in that connexion considered what appropriate measures should be taken, within the framework of the General Assembly resolutions, for rendering the Force fully effective for its purpose. In the last mentioned respect great importance attaches to the deployment of the Force on both sides of the Armistice Demarcation Line as stipulated by the General Assembly. It is considered that such a deployment alone would provide the Force with the means necessary effectively to prevent incursions and disturbances along the Armistice Demarcation Line.

Arrangements are being made on the Egyptian side of the Armistice Demarcation Line which should render the Force effective for its purpose to all the extent possible with deployment only on one side of the line. The time, therefore, has come for deployment also on the Israeli side of the line, short of which the activities of the Force necessarily would suffer from a restriction which might seriously reduce its value for the reestablishment of peaceful conditions.

In view of the stand of the General Assembly as confirmed by the Advisory Committee, in view further of the fact that under the Charter the stationing of the Force requires the consent of the Government concerned, and in order to achieve for the Force rights and possibilities enabling it successfully to fulfill its mission, I now, with the full concurrence of the Committee, have the honour to invite the acceptance of your Government of the stationing of units of the United Nations Emergency Force on the Israeli side of the Armistice Demarcation Line. It is understood that the practical arrangements necessary for the proper functioning of the Force would have to be discussed between your representative and the Commander of the Force. In this connexion information would be provided also concerning those technical arrangements which are being made for the functioning of the Force on the Egyptian side of the Line. The rules defining the status of the United Nations Emergency Force in Egypt are to be found in the report to the General Assembly of 20 November 1956 (A/3375) and in the report to the General Assembly of 8 February 1957 (A/3526).

I have in this context to draw attention to another problem. In order to make the Force fully effective on the Armistice Demarcation Line, as a deterrent to incursions, the Force may have to be given authority, within zones established along the Armistice Demarcation Line, and at least during the hours of darkness, to fire at infiltrators coming from either direction, who refuse to halt when challenged. The possibility of establishing such right therefore requires special attention. Obviously it would have to be recognized by both the Governments the citizens of which may be involved. I would appreciate a clarification of the Israeli stand on this issue.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Dag Hammarskjöld  
Secretary-General