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Israel - Syria border

31 March - 8 April 58

- a.) Kidron, M. R. (Acting Perm. Represent. of  
Israel to the U.N.)  
- 1 letter to Secco.
- b.) U.N.'s press release
- c.) Note from UAR: Govt. to D.M.

UNITED NATIONS  
SECURITY  
COUNCIL



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GENERAL

S/3983  
31 March 1958

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

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LETTER DATED 30 MARCH 1958 FROM THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE  
UNITED ARAB REPUBLIC ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I am instructed by the Government of the United Arab Republic to transmit to Your Excellency the following note dated the 29th instant regarding Israeli aggression on the borders of Syria - the Northern region of the United Arab Republic - during the period between 24 and 27 March 1958.

I will be grateful if you will kindly circulate this statement to the President of the Security Council and to all Member States of the United Nations.

Please accept, Excellency, etc.

(Signed) Zaki Kenawi  
Chargé d'Affaires  
Permanent Mission of the United Arab  
Republic to the United Nations

NOTE

On 24 March armed Israeli formations, accompanied by agricultural machinery and surveying equipment, penetrated into and commenced work on Arab land of village of Galbinieh, east of Huleh and within the demilitarized zone. Subsequently local inhabitants engaged Israeli elements for three hours after which the Israelis retreated.

The Arab side had officially warned the truce observer in the zone that all Israeli activities in Arab territories should be stopped, but the United Nations observer failed to do his duty. The Arab side then summoned the chief observer and warned him that the situation would greatly deteriorate.

Then on the morning of 25 March, Israelis resumed work east of Huleh in the Demilitarized Zone under cover of elements from Israeli land and air forces. After looking up survey department maps and statutes of land ownership, it became clear that the land where work was underway lies in zone 13YT part one, in which Arab percentage of land ownership is 70 per cent.

Three complaints requesting that work be stopped so that no clashes with inhabitants of zone occur were submitted. Consequently the truce chief observer asked the Israeli side to have all work stopped, but the Israelis refused to comply with his request.

At dawn on 26 March, Israeli elements twice recommenced work in the area referred to, whereupon they were engaged by the inhabitants of Galbinieh for a quarter of an hour, after which the Israelis withdrew.

During the afternoon of the same day, between 1600 hours and 2030 hours, the Israelis directed heavy fire from the direction of the Israeli settlement of Dan on inhabitants and shepherds of the demilitarized area.

During the night of 26 and 27 March, the Israeli launch approached the eastern shores of Lake Tiberias and began firing on Arab land by Elzaky Gulf.

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UNITED NATIONS  
SECURITY  
COUNCIL



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2 April 1958

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LETTER DATED 2 APRIL 1958 FROM THE REPRESENTATIVE OF ISRAEL  
ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour, on instructions from my Government, to draw your attention to the serious situation which has arisen on the border between Israel and Syria as a consequence of a series of aggressive acts committed by Syrian armed forces against Israeli labourers engaged in digging a drainage canal in the Lake Huleh area, and against life and property in neighbouring villages.

The Lake Huleh drainage scheme, which calls for the drainage of Lake Huleh and the surrounding swamps and their reclamation for agricultural use, is no stranger to the Security Council. On three separate occasions, in 1951, 1953 and 1957, has the Government of Syria seized the Security Council with its complaints against this peaceful and constructive Israeli project. An infinite variety of spurious allegations have been presented to the Security Council by Syrian representatives in a patent attempt to frustrate Israel's economic development in this area. The Security Council and successive Chiefs of Staff of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization have found the Lake Huleh drainage scheme to be a legitimate civilian development project and have consistently rejected the Syrian complaints and argumentation against it; yet the arguments reappear, and some of them have been pressed into service once more in the present instance. Moreover Syria has, throughout the past seven-year period, sought to back up her verbal argumentation by applying armed force in a vain attempt to intimidate Israel into abandoning the project. Thus a full-scale armed aggression into Israel took place in 1951, and was repeated in 1953

and 1957. The latest series of attacks is therefore merely a repetition of a familiar pattern of Syrian aggression to which Israel has not submitted in the past nor will submit in the future.

The present works are an integral part of the Huleh reclamation project and are designed in fact to hasten its completion. They are being conducted, and have throughout been conducted, with the full knowledge of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization and in the presence of United Nations observers stationed in the immediate area. The works comprise the digging of six drainage canals, the purpose of which is to prevent the flooding of the reclaimed portions of Lake Huleh and adjacent areas during the rainy season. Five of these drainage canals have already been dug - without interference from Syria. Some of them are in the Demilitarized Zone, some outside it. The point is not material, as the Security Council and the Chiefs of Staff have long established that civilian development work may proceed in the Demilitarized Zone so long as Arab owned land is not encroached upon. None of the work has been done on Arab owned land. In this particular instance the canal which is the objective of the present Syrian attacks, the sixth and last of the group, happens to be situated wholly outside the Demilitarized Zone in the reclaimed area of Lake Huleh, between MR20954/27210 and MR20927/27181.

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On 21 March the Israel delegate to the Mixed Armistice Commission informed the United Nations Chairman that it was proposed to survey the precise location of the border of the Demilitarized Zone as it was intended to dig the last canal outside the Zone in order to avoid possible encroachment on land in the vicinity partly owned by Arabs. The survey took place on 23 March in the presence of a United Nations observer. It established that the proposed canal was situated on an area of ground newly reclaimed from the Lake and thus outside the Demilitarized Zone, and excavation work was accordingly begun on the morning of 24 March. During the course of the morning the Syrian military commander gave United Nations observers 10 minutes to transmit an ultimatum to the Israel side to the effect that fire would be opened unless the work was stopped forthwith. Firing commenced a minute or so later and was returned by Israel guards.

At midnight of 24/25 March, the Chairman of the Mixed Armistice Commission requested the Israel delegate to postpone continuation of the work so as to enable United Nations observers to re-survey the area in order to establish the exact location of the canal. Israel agreed to suspend the work and the survey was undertaken on 25 March by a United Nations observer. The new survey confirmed that the canal was outside the Demilitarized Zone. On the same day Syrian forces directed rifle fire on Israeli labourers on the work site.

On 26 March Syrian army positions again opened fire, which was returned by Israel forces protecting the labourers. Work on the canal continued. On the night of the 26th, the Chief of Staff informed the Israel Foreign Office that Syria contested the findings of the United Nations observer's survey and he accordingly requested a further suspension to permit of further investigation. Work was accordingly suspended once again from 27 March to 30 March. The second United Nations investigation was completed on 29 March. On the night of the 29/30 March the Chairman of the Mixed Armistice Commission requested Israel to extend the suspension of work for another half day, until noon on 30 March. Israel complied with this request as well.

Work was accordingly resumed at 12.30 p.m. on 30 March. Fifteen minutes later Syrian army positions opened fire on the labourers, but were silenced for some time by return fire from the Israeli side. At a later stage machine gun and heavy mortar fire was directed from Syrian army positions on a number of civilian targets on the Israeli side. With the help of United Nations observers a cease-fire was finally attained at 1430 hours. Work was taken up again at 1700 hours and continued without disturbance until nightfall.

On 31 March at 1620 hours the Syrian armed forces renewed their aggression by lobbing a mortar shell at the workmen, who had restarted work two hours before. Immediately following this a barrage of 120 mm mortar fire, supported by tanks, was directed against the men. At this point Israel tanks returned fire against Syrian military positions. An exchange of artillery fire followed during which one farmer was killed and damage done at Gadot and two men and one woman wounded at Hulata. Gadot and Hulata are farming communities situated 3 km and 2 1/2 km respectively from the place where the canal is being dug.

During this engagement it was observed that Syrian fire was directed at clearly marked United Nations observation posts, so that United Nations observers were forced to abandon them and seek cover elsewhere.

United Nations observers requested both sides to cease fire at 1645 hours. The Israel commander agreed on condition that the Syrians also stopped shooting. The Syrian military commander asked to postpone the cease-fire until 1700 hours, but continued firing after that. A cease-fire was eventually put into effect at 1750 hours.

During the course of the same day, the Israel Ministry for Foreign Affairs informed the Chief of Staff that Israel would agree to a further survey by United Nations observers in order to dispose of any points which might still give grounds for uncertainty. On the same evening the Chief of Staff informed the Ministry for Foreign Affairs that a party of United Nations surveyors was prepared to go out to the area on the morning of 1 April and requested that the work be temporarily suspended at the work site and surrounding areas in order to make it possible for the surveyors to complete their task without delay. Israel agreed to this further request for suspension, and the survey is proceeding with the full co-operation of the Israel authorities.

It will be apparent from the above chronicle that Israel has throughout demonstrated her willingness to co-operate with United Nations authorities in order to clear up any doubts that may have arisen concerning the location of the proposed drainage canal. The work has been suspended at United Nations request on four occasions. Syria, on the other hand, has utterly disregarded all United Nations attempts to settle the matter by way of a factual examination of her claims, and has instead used armed force with increasing intensity in a desperate effort to achieve her objectives by violence.

I have the honour to request that this letter be circulated to all members of the Security Council.

Please accept, Sir, etc.

(Signed) M.R. Kidron  
Acting Permanent Representative  
of Israel to the United Nations

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UNITED NATIONS  
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CAUTION: ADVANCE RELEASE

Not to be made public  
Before 2:30 PM (EST)  
Tuesday, 8 April 1958\*

Press Release PAL/824  
8 April 1958

ISRAEL AND UNITED ARAB REPUBLIC ACCEPT FINDINGS  
OF UN CHIEF OF STAFF FOLLOWING SURVEY IN LAKE HULEH AREA

The Chief of Staff of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization, Major General Carl Carlsson von Horn, yesterday informed UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold of the acceptance by the Governments of Israel and the United Arab Republic of his findings as based on the survey conducted by United Nations surveyors in the area of Lake Huleh on 1 - 2 April 1958.

Copies of the survey report were communicated to both parties to the General Armistice Agreement under cover of a letter from General von Horn dated 5 April embodying his findings. The covering letter addressed to both governments was identical in content.

In his letter General von Horn stated, inter alia, that the United Nations survey found that in connection with the ditch which Israel began to dig on 24 March there were certain encroachments on land in which Arabs had property rights in the Demilitarized Zone.

"Such encroachments," General von Horn stated, "should be corrected according to the United Nations surveyors' findings. After they have been corrected, the ditch may be completed, provided no further encroachments upon parcel 1 of block 13365 take place. United Nations observers will be available for such checking as may be necessary."

General von Horn concluded by expressing his "firm hope that the two parties to the General Armistice Agreement will accept the above findings, inform their nationals, and see to it that no further incident troubles tranquillity in the area."

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\* For simultaneous release  
in Jerusalem.

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