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25 Feb. 60

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Israel to the U.N.)

- 1 letter to Secco

UNITED NATIONS
SECURITY
COUNCIL



Distr.
GENERAL

S/4271
25 February 1960

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 25 FEBRUARY 1960 FROM THE ACTING
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ISRAEL ADDRESSED
TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

On instruction from my Government, I have the honour, further to my letter of 3 February 1960 (S/4264), to refer again to the policy of aggression pursued by the United Arab Republic against Israel.

Certain communications submitted to the Security Council might tend to blur the fundamental issues of this dangerous situation. Past experience in Israel-Arab relations has demonstrated the perils inherent in the disregard for the basic attitudes of the Parties. Diversion of attention, instead, to technical details of secondary importance, frequently leaves the real maladies unattended. The Government of Israel deems it, therefore, necessary to draw the attention of the Security Council to the following facts.

1. Syrian armed forces invaded Israel on 15 May 1948, within twenty-four hours of her establishment, in an attempt to thwart Israel's independence which had been endorsed by the General Assembly of the United Nations.
2. On 20 July 1949 Israel and Syria signed a General Armistice Agreement which provided in its First Article for the establishment of peace and declared that "no aggressive action by the armed forces - land, sea or air - of either Party shall be undertaken, planned, or threatened against the people or the armed forces of the other."

Despite these clear obligations Syria has persistently refused to conclude a peace settlement and has continued to pursue a policy of active hostility towards Israel. By means of this policy Syria has dangerously undermined the Armistice structure and deprived the Armistice Agreement of much of its meaning and effectiveness.

3. The invading Syrian armies that crossed the international frontier in 1948 occupied and ravaged certain areas inside Israel. They were still in occupation of these areas when Israel repelled the invading forces of other Arab states, signed Armistice Agreements with them, and was ready to dislodge also the Syrian aggressor. At the urging of United Nations representatives Israel agreed not to occupy these areas militarily if the Syrian armies withdrew by themselves from Israel soil. There were to be no other restrictions on Israel in her territories thus regained. In order to ensure that Syria would have no grounds to claim any rights in these areas on the strength of their previous occupation by Syrian forces, it was agreed that other Israel areas which had not come under Syrian occupation be added to them so as to constitute together a Demilitarized Zone on the Israel side of the international boundary. Similarly, a small Demilitarized Zone was established on the Syrian side of the border.

4. Nevertheless, ever since the signing of the General Armistice Agreement, Syria strove to interfere in the Demilitarized Zone on the Israel side of the frontier, and to prevent the economic development of the area by Israel.

Thus, in 1951, Syria launched an armed assault against the drainage of the Huleh marshes. The Security Council rejected Syrian claims and drainage work was resumed. It was completed in 1957.

In 1953, Syria started a campaign against the utilization by Israel of the Jordan waters for the generation of hydroelectric power. The Security Council voted on a resolution which would have given approval to the undertaking. The resolution was supported by seven members with two abstentions. It was not adopted, however, because of the negative vote of a Permanent Member of the Council.

In 1955, persistent Syrian attacks on Israeli fishermen on Lake Kinneret (Tiberias), situated entirely inside Israel territory, reached a climax, compelling Israel to take action in self-defence.

In 1957, Syrian forces carried out repeated attacks on Israel farmers and workers pursuing their peaceful activities near the border.

In December 1958 and January 1959, Syrian artillery positions in the hills bombarded Israeli villages in the Huleh Valley. In summarizing the debate on an Israel complaint about these acts of aggression the President of the Security Council declared: "We fully recognize the gravity of the action about which Israel has complained."

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5. Throughout this period Israel sought to put an end to Syria's continuous acts of hostility.

On 11 July 1957 Israel requested the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization to establish United Nations observation posts along the Israel-Syrian border. It was hoped that they might deter the Syrian authorities from pursuing their acts of aggression. These posts still exist, but Syrian attacks across the border and penetrations into Israel territory continue. Syrian military positions still encroach on Israel territory, for instance at Darbashiya, at Tel-Azaziat, and at the mouth of the Jordan on the northern shore of Lake Kinneret. The continuation of Syrian violations of the Armistice Agreement in these areas as well as in the areas of Nuqeib and EL-Hamma creates a constant threat to peace.

On 12 August 1957 the Secretary-General of the United Nations transmitted to the Government of Syria Israel's inquiry whether Syria "considers itself bound by all the provisions of Article I of the General Armistice Agreement and if it is prepared, in compliance with that Article, to confirm that it regards the Armistice as an indispensable step towards the restoration of peace between Israel and Syria, and to renounce all acts of belligerency, including the planning of armed action and the utterance of threats against the security and integrity of Israel". The Syrian Government did not reply.

During his last visit to Jerusalem in January 1959 the Secretary-General proposed the marking of the boundary between Israel and Syria. Israel agreed. Syrian objections have so far prevented the marking from being carried out.

6. The recrudescence of Syrian attacks along the border in recent weeks was described in detail in my letter of 3 February 1960 to the President of the Security Council (S/4264).

More Syrian acts of aggression have taken place since then; the most serious of them on 12 February when two Israelis were killed and one wounded in the Huleh region.

In the Tawfiq area Syrian military positions are still maintained inside the Demilitarized Zone despite United Nations Truce Supervision requests to remove them. There are no Israeli army forces in the Zone.

In order to deal constructively with this tense situation, Israel proposed on 7 February 1960, that a meeting be convened between representatives of the Israel village of Beth Katzir and the Arab village of Tawfiq to settle the differences between them concerning land cultivation. In making the proposal Israel reiterated that "we recognize the rights of certain Arabs to cultivate their land in the (demilitarized) Zone and will enable them to do so, provided that, in respect of such cultivation as in every other respect within the Zone, there is no entry or intervention on the part of the Syrian authorities."

Israel, moreover, suggested to the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization on 4 February 1960 to call a meeting between Israel and Syrian representatives "within the procedures of the Mixed Armistice Commission or otherwise, to discuss peace, complete peace, or if not that, to discuss means to preserve quiet and tranquility along the International Boundary, as long as nothing pertaining to the Demilitarized Zone west of that Boundary is raised."

The above two proposals still stand.

It would appear that in this situation "decisions" such as those quoted in the letter (S/4268 of 19 February 1960) from the Acting Permanent Representative of the United Arab Republic to the President of the Security Council are of dubious value. They were adopted at a meeting of the Israel-Syrian Mixed Armistice Commission at which the Commission was lacking its essential quality - the participation of the two Parties to the Armistice Agreement. Furthermore, in the absence of one of the Parties, only complaints submitted by the other Party were discussed. In this connexion it is to be observed that the Report dated 4 February 1960 of an investigation carried out by a United Nations Military Observer on the basis of the Syrian complaint discussed at the above meeting, stated, inter alia:

"The main part of the village was circled by a continuous trench about 1 - 1 1/2 metres deep, of irregular course, but generally forming the perimeter of the village. The trench was formed by building up a wall with stones to form a parapet and parados. The bottom of the trench had a straight wall and appeared to have been made or repaired not more than two weeks earlier. At intervals of 15 metres, firing slots, suitable for riflemen, had been made in the stone parapet of the trench. At the eastern side the trench ran out of the village for

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a distance of 150 metres until it entered the cover of the wadi at MR 2097 2342. The village was entirely surrounded by barbed wire entanglement placed about 40 metres from the trench. A second wire entanglement, in the form of a half circle beginning and ending at the first wire enclosed the second part of the village ... There were no signs that the buildings had been used for human occupancy for several months ... None of the buildings had windows or doors."

The following military equipment was found in the above Syrian army positions at Tawfiq, within the Demilitarized Zone, in the course of the Israel action on 1 February 1960 aimed at dislodging this illegal military post:

One Czech anti-tank recoilless gun 82 mm.

20 rounds for the above gun

One Soviet anti-tank gun 82 mm.

10 rounds of shells for the above gun

2 Soviet medium machine guns 7.62 mm.

5000 bullets for the above machine guns

6 Soviet automatic carbines 7.62 mm.

100 bullets for the above carbines

One field telephone

Military personal equipment

The Chief of Staff of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization was informed of the above.

7. Syria, as a province of the United Arab Republic, has identified herself with Egypt's continued acts of warfare against Israel on land and on sea. The Security Council is aware of the fact that the United Arab Republic has been intensifying her policy of hostility against Israel and that her campaign of open incitement to war has reached dangerous dimensions.

The latest in a series of aggressive declarations were made by President Nasser in the course of a tour in Syria, where he repeatedly proclaimed his country's policy of war, blockade and boycott against Israel, threatening her with destruction in a "sacred march".

These warlike threats are accompanied by extensive military preparations, in both provinces of the United Arab Republic, directed against Israel.

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In these circumstances, if tranquility is to be ensured in the area, the United Arab Republic must abandon her policy of hostility. It must cease its campaign of incitement to war and desist from acts of aggression. Only renunciation of this policy, which is contrary to all international obligations, could make it possible effectively to bolster United Nations authority and to secure compliance with the provisions of the United Nations Charter. It is therefore essential to direct all efforts towards terminating this illegal and dangerous policy.

The Government of Israel wishes to reiterate that as an immediate step toward the elimination of tension, Israel is ready to meet with Syrian representatives to discuss measures for ensuring peace on the border, and with the villagers of Tawfiq in order to settle differences regarding land cultivation.

I have the honour to request that this letter be circulated among all Members of the United Nations.

Please accept, etc.

(Signed) Yosef Tekoah
Acting Permanent Representative
of Israel to the United Nations
