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SECCO affairs 1953

18 April

Letter to the President of the Security Council  
from Delegation of Israel

COPY

Delegation of Israel  
to the United Nations

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The Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations presents his compliments to the President of the Security Council and has the honour to refer to a letter dated 31 March 1953 addressed to the President of the Security Council by the Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations, a copy of which was transmitted to the Permanent Representative of Israel under cover of a note from the Secretary-General of the United Nations dated 10 April 1953.

In view of the circumstances of the case there would appear to be no justification for the submission to the President of the Security Council of the material contained in the letter from the Permanent Representative of Egypt. In deference, however, to the President of the Security Council and for the record, the Permanent Representative of Israel desires to state the following:

1. On 29 December 1952, the Egyptian vessel "Samir" entered Israel territorial waters. The "Samir" was thereupon apprehended by an Israel police boat and detained in the port of Jaffa. The Egyptian authorities were informed of these facts and that an investigation was being conducted.
2. On 12 January 1953, representatives of the Government of Israel informed the United Nations representatives in Jerusalem that the Government of Israel was ready to release immediately the cargo on board the "Samir" and furthermore to release the vessel itself subject to a reciprocal agreement on the part of the Government of Egypt to release Israel merchant vessels which might in future be apprehended in Egyptian territorial waters in like circumstances.

The President of the Security Council  
United Nations  
New York, New York

Similar agreements have been entered into and subsist between Israel and Syria and Israel and Lebanon respectively with reference to merchant vessels, belonging to either party and carrying non-military cargo, which have been forced by engine trouble, storm or other reasons beyond the control of the crew, to enter the territorial waters of the other party. Such vessels, together with crew and passengers are thereupon allowed, in terms of these agreements, to proceed freely at the earliest possible time.

3. On 30 January 1953, the Egyptian Government indicated that it was not ready to enter into such an agreement. Despite this refusal of the Egyptian Government, the Government of Israel decided to release the cargo on board the "Samir" in view of the fact that it was intended for relief purposes in the Gaza area. On 14 February 1953, the said cargo was in fact transmitted overland and handed over to the Egyptian authorities in the Gaza area.

4. On 25 March 1953, at an informal talk between the heads of the Egyptian and Israeli Delegations to the Mixed Armistice Commission, the Israel representative repeated the readiness of his Government to return the vessel on condition that the Egyptians would enter into an agreement along the lines above indicated; and on the assumption that such an agreement would be completed, the Government of Israel further declared its readiness to return the "Samir" on April 2, 1953.

5. Despite the statement contained in the letter from the Permanent Representative of Egypt, no official complaint has in fact been submitted by the Egyptian representative to the Mixed Armistice Commission nor indeed, under the terms of the Egyptian - Israeli General Armistice Agreement, does the matter fall within the jurisdiction of the Mixed Armistice Commission.

6. The Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations desires to reiterate his Government's readiness to release the "Samir" on the basis of reciprocal arrangements to be entered into between the Government of Egypt and Israel.

New York, 18 April 1953.