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QUESTION OF PALESTINE

THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Letter dated 24 October 1980 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of  
the Permanent Mission of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations  
addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to refer to excerpts, in the Secretariat News of 16 October 1980, published by the Staff Activities and Housing Unit of the Office of Personnel Services, reproduced from a purported study by Mr. Seymour Maxwell Finger and Ms. Nina Hanan of the Ralph Bunche Institute under the title "The UN Secretariat Revisited". I am well aware that the Secretariat News is a useful vehicle for discussing the conditions of service of the Secretariat staff and airing their grievances regarding such conditions. I am certain, however, that this publication of the Office of Personnel Services was never intended to be used for political purposes or for attacking decisions of the General Assembly, particularly when those are not related to the conditions of service of the Secretariat staff.

I have no quarrel with the gist of the excerpts published in the Secretariat News and I leave its evaluation entirely to the Secretary-General and to his aides who are responsible for the administration of the Secretariat. However, I find the reference in the last paragraph relating to the establishment of a Special Unit on Palestinian Rights totally impertinent and tendentious. It seems more a reflection of the Israeli Government's views on the subject than an earnest and objective study of the Secretariat. It, in fact, constitutes an attack on the General Assembly's resolution to establish an office within the Secretariat which by no stretch of imagination could affect the administrative entitlements or obligations of the Secretariat staff. The utilization of political arguments to condemn the legitimate resolutions and actions of the United Nations has become a notorious pattern of Israeli and Zionist policy. However, the audacity of Mr. Finger, a well-known Zionist, to attack specifically the establishment by the General Assembly within the Secretariat of a Special Unit on Palestinian Rights, and to describe this as hurting the Secretariat's morale,

and the reproduction of his biased and distorted views in the Secretariat News is the height of impropriety, to say nothing of his clearly prejudiced and unwarranted attack against the members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 3376 (XXX), whom he characterizes as biased.

The reproduced study of Mr. Finger and Ms. Hanan included a foot-note on page 12 of the Secretariat News which suggested that the reader see "Julius Stone, Israel, the United Nations and International Law for a critique of the four studies published under the auspices of the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People", which was annexed to a letter dated 27 June 1980 from the Permanent Representative of Israel and circulated as document A/35/316 dated 3 July 1980. This "critique" has adopted the theory that General Assembly resolutions have no law-binding effect particularly those "targeted against much of the Western world and even more particularly against Israel". Mr. Stone would not dispute the legal significance of General Assembly resolution 181 (II) for the partition of Palestine and the establishment of a Jewish state. The foot-note also refers to a paper prepared by Mr. Finger himself on "The PLO at the UN".

It is evident from the aforesaid that the excerpts reproduced in the Secretariat News have indirectly included a vehement attack against the General Assembly's resolutions with regard to the question of Palestine, the legality of such resolutions and the integrity of members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. These excerpts were published under the title "Staff Union News and Views" and a note was inserted under this title stating that "the views expressed are those of the Staff Union".

I find it most difficult to believe that the Staff Union, which represents the whole Secretariat of diversified nationalities and political convictions, would take a partisan position on a highly sensitive political issue which has been dealt with by the General Assembly and its subsidiary organs for the past 32 years. Any "news and views" published by the Staff Union should be limited to the conditions of service and should not extend to controversial and sensitive political issues which properly fall within the competence of the General Assembly and which in no way affect the conditions of employment of the staff.

I request that the attention of those responsible for the publication of the Secretariat News be drawn to the error of allowing that publication to become a vehicle for propagating the political views of Israel or any other Member State, and that an appropriate note be included in the next or following issue of the Secretariat News explaining the error in reproducing the aforesaid contentious paragraph and foot-note in the issue of 16 October 1980.

I have the honour to request that this letter be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under agenda items 24 and 26.

(Signed) Gaafar M. ALLAGANY  
Chargé d'affaires

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