

UNITED NATIONS
SECURITY
COUNCIL



Distr.
GENERAL

S/3680
15 October 1956

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 15 OCTOBER 1956 FROM THE REPRESENTATIVE OF JORDAN
ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to submit to you the statement of my delegation on the subject of the Suez Canal with which the Security Council was seized. My submission is in accordance with the decision of the Security Council at its meeting of 13 October 1956, and I should be grateful if my statement is circulated to the distinguished members of the Council.

Please accept, Your Excellency, etc.

(Signed) Abdul Monem Rifa'i
Permanent Representative of
Jordan to the United Nations

Mr. President,

Allow me, Sir, to thank you and this honourable Council on behalf of the Jordan Government and my delegation for having given me the privilege of taking a seat around this table and presenting the views of my Government on the subject of the Suez Canal problem.

The Jordan Kingdom is one of seven Arab States that have asked for participation in the present deliberations of the Security Council. These seven States are the sisters of Egypt and the countries around her in the region. They are tied to Egypt with the strongest bonds of brotherhood, culture and common interest. History proved that past events have subjected Egypt and what was known as "Barr-ul-Sham" (i.e. the area which subsequently included Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan) to the same conditions, and complemented them into one sphere of action. The prosperity of Egypt is the prosperity of all the Arab countries and whatever difficulties might burden Egypt would equally affect each of them.

This fact, Mr. President, constitutes one reason for presenting ourselves at the Security Council with the request to participate in its present debates.

A second reason is that the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and Egypt, with all the other Arab States, are members of the Arab League which is a regional arrangement, as well as national, and that we together are also members of the Arab Collective Security Pact and to other bilateral defence agreements among ourselves. We, therefore, as Arab States are entrusted with a collective responsibility and common obligations in respect to any problem that might concern us individually or as a group. Thus, the problem of the Suez Canal becomes the problem of the Arab countries, all of them.

A third reason is that we, in Jordan (and I am talking now from a purely Jordanian point of view), have one and the only direct exit to the sea for our trade and shipping. This exit is the seaport of Aqaba at the northeastern tip of the Red Sea within a short distance from the southern entrance of the Suez Canal. Our own communications to the Mediterranean through Palestine were cut off since the creation of Israel; Aqaba remains our only port in the South on the Red Sea. Any blockade, therefore, which might be contemplated as a measure against Egypt, or any attempt to change the sea route will have direct effects on my country.

The fourth and final reason, Mr. President, for Jordan to participate in the present discussions, is that a friendly relation exists between her and Great Britain, the first party in conflict with Egypt over the Suez Canal. It should be known in this respect that in its international relations, my country gives primary consideration to our relations with the Arab sister States, and our obligations to them. Therefore, it is of paramount importance to my Government to see that the present relations between Egypt, on the one hand, and Great Britain and its supporters on the other, develop in such a way as to help maintain the present order and harmony in our region. To put it in a more explicit and comprehensive form, I would say that the outcome of the Suez Canal problem should not only determine the attitude of one particular Arab country towards Britain or France, but it should determine the attitude of all the Arab world towards the Western Powers in general. This fact must be given due consideration when these Powers, whether at this Council or in their capitals, come out with any proposal for the settlement of today's problem, the problem of the Suez Canal.

These are, Mr. President, the reasons, possibly some of them which brought us here, and which place my country on the side of Egypt in its present efforts. May I, therefore, turn to the issue before this Council and explain in a very brief manner, the views of my Government.

I am not going to comment on the arguments or counter-arguments that were laid by the distinguished members of this Council in respect to the Egyptian action of nationalizing the Suez Canal Company. This is, perhaps, not necessary for my delegation and probably not required. Yet, it looks to me that the theory advocated by some of the honourable members around this table for insulating the Suez Canal from the politics of any country does not stand its test by the mere fact that the authors of this theory themselves have entered the Suez Canal in the very basis of their politics. Great Britain and France with the support of their friends look upon the operation of nationalizing the Suez Canal Company as a challenge to their prestige in the Middle East and a threat to their political and economic interests. The Anglo-French attitude is becoming crystallized in a form of Western political cohesion against a small State, Egypt; or, even against one man who has succeeded in leading his country towards liberty and independence. The isolation of the Canal from the politics of any country must not be construed as

a phase of subjecting that integral part of Egypt to the politics of all nations. It should not also imply jeopardy of Egyptian sovereignty.

Mr. President, much has been said to defend the sovereign rights of Egypt in this matter of nationalizing the Suez Canal Company, and much more could be said. It might be useful to note that the Suez Canal is not a strait which was formed by the accidents of nature. It is an artificial canal constructed on Egyptian territory and soil, by Egyptian workers, and by a concession granted by the Government of Egypt to an Egyptian company. This distinction between natural straits and artificial canals gives the Suez Canal a purely Egyptian character and places it completely under Egyptian authority. This authority is recognized in various articles of the Convention; in articles VIII, IX, XII, XIII and XV.

In nationalizing the Suez Company, the Egyptian Government has exercised one of its prerogatives. The Suez Canal Company, being an Egyptian company, is liable as any other Egyptian company, to be nationalized by the State.

Moreover, the Government of Egypt has done what could have been done after twelve years, at the expiration of the Concession. Article X of the original Firman of Concession states: "At the expiration of the concession, the Egyptian government will take the place of the Company, and enjoy all its rights without reservation, the said Government will enter into full possession of the Canal of the two seas and of all the establishments connected therewith. The indemnity to be allowed to the Company for the relinquishment of its plant and movables shall be arranged by an amicable agreement or by arbitration."

In the light of this fact, how could anyone challenge Egypt today for what will be her recognized right of tomorrow?!

Besides, Mr. President, it appeared clearly from the statements and notes of the Egyptian responsible personalities that Egypt has been completely willing to discuss with the interested parties any proposal which does not encroach upon their country's sovereignty. This attitude on the part of Egypt was translated into reality when the Egyptian distinguished representative declared his Government's acceptance to the six-point resolution. It would have been strange to propose to Egypt to accept any system which might have envisaged international administration or supervision or control. To call on Egypt to acquiesce, is to call on her to disagree!!

No one would care more than the Egyptians who sacrificed generations of their people in the construction of the Canal for its prosperity and flourishing. It is they who want regularity and continuity of safe and free navigation in their Canal. The way in which they are now operating the Canal, entirely by their own efforts, amidst the crisis and under the strain of difficulties imposed on them, deserves the admiration and appreciation of all mankind. The sincerity of the Egyptians in normalizing the affairs of the Canal on a solid, fair, and permanent basis is beyond any doubt.

Mr. President, before I finish my statement I should like to make two further observations that are of major importance to my Government. In one or two statements in the Council's deliberations, reference has been made to measures which were taken by the Egyptian authorities against the passage of Israeli vessels through the Canal.

Mr. President, this is not a case to be taken as an argument against the Egyptian Government. Everybody on earth knows the story of Israel in the Arab homeland. In fact, the resolution that was taken by the Security Council concerning Israeli ships was within the context of the Discussion of the Palestine Question, not the Suez Canal Problem. It has nothing to do with the item of discussion at the present meetings of the Security Council. In this respect, I beg to invite the attention of the Security Council to its many resolutions under the Palestine Question censuring Israel for its aggressive attacks. Israel has disregarded all those resolutions and has continued its organized military warfare. The war-like attacks against my country and my people are strong evidence of what I submit. They prove that Israel plans to take advantage of the present political circumstances which involve the Arab countries and particularly the situation arising from the Suez Canal problem to engage the Arab countries in a wide-scale breach of the peace.

Mr. President, this is not the time for my delegation to get into the details of this subject. I merely wish to indicate that Israel cannot call for the implementation of any resolution while she, herself, defies all resolutions that do not suit her. If all the nations of the world claim any right against Egypt, or against any Arab State, Israel should be the last to make such claims, or it had better hide her face.

The second observation, Sir, is in regard to the concentration of troops in the neighbourhood of the Arab zone for the purpose of pressing on Egypt to accept a solution by dictation. These military preparations, Mr. President, are not only a threat to Egypt, but also to peace and stability in the Arab countries, and in all the Middle East. It is for the sake of maintaining order and security in our lands and among our peoples that we urge the Powers concerned to abandon their present methods; to follow a genuinely friendly policy in their endeavours to settle the present question with Egypt; and to co-operate with her and with all the Arab Governments for establishing peace through friendship.

15 October 1956

Abdel Monem Rifa'i
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of Jordan to the United Nations

