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QUESTION OF PALESTINE

Letter dated 8 November 1976 from the Permanent Representative
of the Libyan Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to
the Secretary-General

I have the honour to refer to the letter dated 9 August 1976 addressed to you by the General Secretary of the New Settlers' Federation of Australia, concerning the depriving of the Palestinian people of their right to return to their homeland, Palestine, by the Zionist entity.

I should like to request that the above-mentioned letter be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under agenda item 27.

(Signed) Mansur R. KIKHIA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

ANNEX

Letter dated 9 August 1976 from the New Settlers' Federation of
Australia, the largest Australian organization of immigrants,
to the Secretary-General

This is to advise you that the New Settlers' Federation of Australia has received a complaint from Mrs. Fatima Amro, presently residing at 61 Ardent Street, Clovelly, New South Wales, in regard to the renewal of her laissez-passer, issued by the State of Israel.

Mrs. Amro was born at Dura-Hebron on 10 February 1957. This territory has been occupied by the Israeli State since June 1967. On 15 December 1975, she was issued a laissez-passer. She was also issued a visa to travel to Australia as a migrant. Approximately more than two months ago I was approached by Mrs. Amro and was told by her that the Israeli authorities had refused to renew the laissez-passer without satisfactory explanation.

I have now ascertained that this is not an exceptional case, but indeed a number of persons who have come from occupied territories have complained that, when they approached the Israeli Consulate authorities here, the laissez-passers were delayed for renewal and, when they expired, those persons were told that the laissez-passers could not be renewed because they had expired.

I was further informed that in Canada the Israeli authorities there told applicants straight out that they will not renew any laissez-passer. A number of laissez-passer holders have been forced to travel back to Israeli-occupied territories so they can renew their laissez-passers. This, of course, is at tremendous cost because many of these people are now residing in Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia.

When I received the complaint from Mrs. Amro, I rang the Israeli Consulate in Sydney and spoke to Mr. Brahim and at that time arranged an appointment to see him.

I saw him personally a few days later and explained to him the allegation which had been received from Mrs. Amro. He denied any knowledge and said that in order to renew a laissez-passer, he must be authorized by Jerusalem. I told Mr. Brahim that I did not wish to put this on an official basis as I know how sensitive the whole affair is and I did not wish this Federation or myself to be accused of anti-semitism, but I also informed him that, if they did not renew the laissez-passer within one month from the date of my representations, I would be forced to take the matter up with you and the Arab League and also to inform the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Arab States.

I have further told Mr. Brahim that the situation was extremely serious and that this Federation considered the whole scheme as a very effective and undemocratic way of not allowing Arabs, once they had left their homeland, to return.

/...

On 27 July 1976, at about 11.10 a.m. Sydney time, I rang Mr. Brahim and this conversation was recorded by my secretary, Mrs. Power. I told Mr. Brahim that I had already given them two months' time and, since last month, I had rung several times to inquire about the renewal of this laissez-passer. I also said that I was not prepared to wait further and I would bring the matter to your attention and would further take the matter up with the press of this country.

Mr. Brahim again told me that it was not up to him - it was up to the authorities in Jerusalem. He suggested that Mrs. Amro write to relatives in Israel to approach the military authorities so that they might issue instructions to him. I said that it was not necessary as this was his function and we were not going to advise members to engage in a game of letter-writing. Mr. Brahim stated that he had communicated with the Israeli Government and he had also sent a reminder. He further told me that, if he did not receive any instructions to renew the laissez-passer, he would have to issue a new laissez-passer because the Australian authorities insisted that a visa which was issued to Mrs. Amro should be on a valid document.

I then asked him if she would have the right to travel back to her homeland and he said: "No. She has to get a visa."

I said: "To go to her own home she has to have a visa?"

He said: "Yes."

I then told Mr. Brahim that I was surprised at the way the Israeli State was behaving because I would have thought that they would have been more democratic as they had been the victims of similar inhumane actions by the Nazis.

Mr. Brahim then made the astounding allegation that I "hated the Jews".

As far as this Federation was concerned, this was the last straw. Mr. Brahim has now descended to personalities in a most unbecoming way and no doubt seeks by such an accusation to cover the grossly inequitable method by which his Government is dealing with their minorities.

Our reputation for non-racism is second to none and it is precisely because we are untainted that this ploy has been instantly unmasked.

I would appreciate, my dear Secretary-General, if you could take this matter to the appropriate /authority/ within the United Nations. A copy of this letter for their reference has been sent to the following organizations and States:

The President of the State of Israel
Palestine Liberation Organization
Mr. Mahmoud Riad, Secretary-General, League of Arab States
Mr. Brahim, Israeli Consulate, Sydney.

Solon BALTINOS
General Secretary