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THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Communication dated 25 August 1976 from the President of the
Council of Ministers of Lebanon to the Secretary-General

Since Mr. Camille Chamoun, Minister of the Interior in my Government, has requested of you through the Permanent Mission of Lebanon the circulation of his letter addressed to the President of the Conference of Non-Aligned Countries in Colombo as an official document of the United Nations ^{1/} which he signed as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, I find it necessary to reaffirm my telegrams sent to you on 20 June, 2 and 5 July and 21 August 1976, in which I brought to your attention that the appointment of Mr. Chamoun as Minister of Foreign Affairs is null and void because such an appointment constitutes a violation of the practice of the Constitution, the principle of participation in governing and the spirit of the national pact in Lebanon.

Regarding the substance of the letter I would like to make the following observations:

1. To say that the Palestinian people did not lose anything in Lebanon, that there were no attempts to liquidate them, and that Lebanon alone was a victim of a vicious conspiracy which destroyed its economy, caused the loss of tens of thousands of its citizens and destroyed its institutions, etc.; to say that Lebanon alone was the victim is simply looking at the problem with one eye and does not express the true aspect of the situation.

The Palestinian people have been subjected to considerable losses in human life, in their interests, and in their potential capacity to achieve their legitimate struggle, which is recognized by the United Nations and

* A/31/150.

^{1/} A/31/179.

endorsed by its resolutions. Perhaps Mr. Chamoun would recall with me that historic session of the General Assembly in 1974 when both Mr. Suleiman Franjeh, President of Lebanon, and Mr. Yasser Arafat, Head of the Palestine Liberation Organization, addressed the world community and thus crowned the international recognition of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and their legitimate struggle.

The truth of the matter is that what is taking place in Lebanon is directed against both Lebanon and the Palestinian people, and the harm inflicted on our country is also inflicted on the Palestinians.

For this reason the support given by the Lebanese to the Palestinian people in their struggle to achieve their national aspirations is one of the basic elements of Lebanon's national policy and at the same time is a necessity which serves the interest of both the Lebanese and the Palestinian peoples.

2. To say that the Palestinian revolution is the main party carrying out a conspiracy against Lebanon is a matter of personal interpretation. We believe that several parties play a principal role in the conflict. If we assume for the sake of argument that the Palestinians bear responsibility, it cannot be theirs alone. Perhaps our responsibility as Lebanese is far greater because Lebanon, which is being destroyed, is ours.

3. It is true that Palestinians came to Lebanon after being evicted by Israel in 1948 and they settled in camps. But since then they have been exposed to all kinds of fear, misery and aggression by Israel. The wanton attacks by the Israelis against the refugee camps caused thousands of victims, and the numerous complaints of Lebanon against Israel to the Security Council are probably still fresh in the minds of Members of the United Nations. As a result of these attacks the Palestinians, in self-defence, felt the need to arm and this led to the conclusion of agreements between them and the Lebanese authority.

4. The Agreement between the Lebanese authority and the Palestine Liberation Organization in 1969 regulates the Palestinian armed presence on Lebanese soil which was also approved by the Lebanese Parliament. However, certain Lebanese parties which criticize excesses by some Palestinians regarding the Agreement do not recognize it themselves. It is noted that some excesses take place every now and then because the concept of revolution differs from the concept of a State. At any rate the solution of this problem cannot be reached by violence and fighting which is destructive to all, as this crisis has shown, but rather through dialogue and mutual confidence.

5. The differences between the Lebanese and the presence of various conflicting parties in the Lebanese arena are known to all and are due to political, economic, social and intellectual reasons and are certainly not of Palestinian making alone, as some claim.

6. The responsibility for the Lebanese crisis which undermined the basis of the State and its institutions lies with all the conflicting parties in the Lebanese arena, and if they were to come to an agreement the crisis would end and then it would become possible to achieve an understanding with the Palestinians to implement the Agreement concluded with them. For this reason it is in the interest of peace in Lebanon that all parties concert their efforts to eliminate their differences through dialogue.

7. We do not believe the allegation that the Palestinians contemplate making Lebanon their home instead of Palestine. The Palestinian people have made great sacrifices in order to achieve their noble and just cause and to return to their homeland. Their revolution has found its way to the conscience of all free peoples of the world and has received their full support. The Palestinians will never replace Palestine by any other home and no one except Israel, of course, could entertain such an idea.

8. I am still convinced that the consideration of the Lebanese problem by the United Nations would result in escalating the differences between the Lebanese and would foil Arab peace efforts, especially at a time when the Special Envoy of the Arab League endeavours to achieve a cease-fire and preparations are under way to convene the Arab summit conference whose aim is to find a lasting peace in Lebanon. The interest of peace in Lebanon requires the creation of a proper atmosphere to ensure the success of these efforts.

We conclude by saying that it is not in the interest of anyone in the world to further complicate the Lebanese crisis.

I request that this letter be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Rachid KARAMI
President of the Council of Ministers
Minister of Foreign Affairs, a.i.
