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THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Letter dated 16 August 1971 from the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister
for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Republic addressed to the
Secretary-General

I have the honour to draw your urgent attention to the increasingly deteriorating situation in occupied Gaza as a result of Israel's systematic campaigns to terrorize and coerce its lawful inhabitants.

The Israeli occupation forces are now resorting to callous acts of forcible expulsion of the Palestinian inhabitants of Gaza, by daily destruction of their houses to render them homeless, thus expediting the process of depopulating the area; these brutal and inhuman acts are only one manifestation of Israel's long established aggressive designs aimed at changing the demographic structure of the occupied Arab territories, with a view to annexing them. Hence, the ultimate motive behind this campaign of terror is to bring home to the Palestinians that they should resign themselves to continued Israeli rule.

The increasing pace of these Israeli practices has created a menacing state of unrest among the people of Gaza. This state has been aptly depicted in the Economist of 24 July 1971, in the following words: "Right now Gaza is a concentration of human misery hard to equal".

The people of Gaza, together with all the Arabs under Israeli military occupation, have been courageously withstanding the onslaught of the Israeli terror. The only assistance extended to them in their ordeal has been confined to newspaper reporting, which proved inadequate in checking the Israeli designs. Only yesterday

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the Israeli Communication Minister, Mr. Perez, was quoted by Agence France Press as having stated that "10,000 have been already transferred from Gaza and 20,000 will soon follow suit". These words are a glaring example of Israel's disrespect of the basic norms of international law and morality, and its defiance of world public opinion.

These grave violations which Israel is perpetrating with complete impunity have been explicitly prohibited by the civilized international community, since they constitute serious crimes against humanity. Article 49 of the 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, to which Israel is a party provided that:

"Individual or mass forcible transfers, as well as deportations of protected persons from occupied territory to the territory of the Occupying Power or to that of any other country, occupied or not, are prohibited, regardless of their motive.

...

"The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies."

In view of the gravity of the Israeli aggressive measures, it is expected that the United Nations will immediately undertake the necessary steps to uphold the purposes and principles of the Charter by putting an end to Israel's breaches of law, morality and international peace and security.

I have the honour to request that this letter be circulated as a document of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

(Signed) Mahmoud RIAD
Deputy Prime Minister
and Minister for Foreign Affairs
