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THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Letter dated 19 June 1980 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Yet again, I wish to draw your attention to the ongoing attempts by PLO terrorists based in Lebanon to conduct acts of indiscriminate terror against the civilian population of Israel.

Early in the morning of 16 June 1980, an Israel Navy patrol spotted and intercepted a rubber dinghy off the Mediterranean coast west of Achziv, a village some three miles south of the border with Lebanon. Aboard the craft, which had entered Israel's coastal waters from the north, were three PLO criminals dispatched to carry out acts of terror in Israel. In an exchange of fire, the dinghy was sunk and the three terrorists were killed.

Within hours a PLO spokesman in Damascus took responsibility for this terrorist attempt (as reported on 16 June on Radio Monte Carlo). The following day, 17 June, the "General Command" of al-Assifa, the military arm of the al-Fatah murder organization, bragged of its responsibility for the incident on the PLO's radio in Lebanon.

This admission of responsibility by al-Fatah must be seen against the background of the Fourth Congress of al-Fatah, which was held in Damascus at the end of May. As I reported to you in my letter of 6 June 1980 (A/35/282), al-Fatah adopted a "political programme" which declared that its aim was "to liquidate the Zionist entity politically, economically, militarily, culturally and ideologically". The "resolutions" adopted at that Congress (annex II to my letter of 6 June) included decisions to escalate acts of terror across all frontiers with Israel and to maintain al-Fatah's activities in Lebanon.

\* A/35/50.

This latest incident must also be seen against the background of two other terrorist attempts which both occurred last week, on 10 June 1980.

In the first incident, two explosive devices went off in the centre of the town of Petah Tikvah, without causing damage or injury.

In the second, an Israel policeman was shot and wounded by a terrorist shooting from the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem.

The PLO took responsibility for both incidents in broadcasts on its radio in Lebanon.

Moreover, this latest sea-borne attempt against Israel, which could have had grave consequences, was by no means the first of its kind.

As will be recalled, a design of this kind took its tragic toll on 22 April 1979. On that occasion, as reported to you at the time (A/34/207-S/13264), four PLO terrorists landed by means of a rubber dinghy at Nahariya, some six miles from the Lebanese border. In the course of the ensuing outrage, four Israel civilians, including a man and his two little daughters, died and two other civilians were wounded.

It will also be recalled that the Israel Navy providentially foiled similar sea-borne attempts by the PLO from Lebanon in April, June, August and November of last year (see my letters of 22 April (A/34/207-S/13264), 5 June (A/34/298-S/13376), 20 August (A/34/429-S/13508) and 20 November 1979 (A/34/705-S/13635)). The last of those incidents was, like that of 16 June, also foiled in the waters opposite the village of Achziv.

I have the honour to request that this letter be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under item 26 on the preliminary list.

(Signed) Yehuda Z. BLUM  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative of Israel  
to the United Nations