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LETTER DATED 14 JANUARY 1979 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF ISRAEL TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF
THE SECURITY COUNCIL

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to draw your urgent attention to an attack perpetrated by terrorists belonging to the organization known as the PLO, operating from Lebanon against a guest-house in the town of Ma'alot near the border with Lebanon.

On Saturday, 13 January 1979, at approximately 0700 (Israel time), an attempt was made by three terrorists to commandeer the guest-house and hold hostage its visitors for the purpose of terroristic blackmail. Having penetrated the building, they were engaged by a unit of the Israel Defence Forces and, in the exchange of fire which ensued, the three terrorists were killed.

There were 230 men, women and children in the guest-house at the time. Some of them tried to flee by leaping out of the windows. In so doing, one woman fell to her death and two others were wounded. A soldier was also injured.

On the bodies of the terrorists were found Kalachnikov automatic rifles, a carbine pistol, explosives, hand-grenades, a loud speaker and leaflets identifying them as members of a group calling itself the "Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine" (PDFLP), which is a constituent of the so-called PLO.

On the same day, radio stations in the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq broadcast a statement from PDFLP openly taking responsibility for the action. According to the Arab Press Agency, a leader of the group held a press conference in Baghdad on 13 January, in which he described this terrorist act as part of a campaign to escalate armed attacks on Israel and as being connected with the meeting of the so-called "Palestinian National Council", opening in Damascus on Monday, 15 January. He particularly noted that Yassir Arafat and all the constituents of PLO applauded this act.

This fact reveals the true character of the terrorist leaders, whose aim is to disrupt any movement towards peace in the Middle East and to endanger indiscriminately the lives and safety of innocent human beings, while at the same time masquerading under the banner of a national liberation movement.

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This is the second time that PLO terrorists operating from Lebanon have chosen to attack a civilian target in the town of Ma'alot in the full knowledge that it was occupied by large numbers of unarmed civilians. On 15 May 1974, a school building was the object of a terrorist outrage in which 21 school boys and girls were murdered and another 70 wounded (S/11290 and S/11295). 1/ This latest incident, as well as the recent shelling of the town of Kiryat Shmona on 21 December 1978 (S/12979), are indicative of the concerted efforts in recent months to increase the infiltration into southern Lebanon of armed PLO terrorists with a view to using the area as a base for operations against civilian targets in Israel, as it had been for several years in the past.

This development underlines the fact that UNIFIL's task of restoring international peace and security, as set out in Security Council resolution 425 (1978) of 19 March 1978, not only remains unfulfilled but is also directly challenged by the same subversive elements which have consistently endeavoured to use Lebanese territory for the purpose of launching attacks on Israel, thus undermining international peace and security throughout the region. This situation flows from the conditions prevailing not only in the south of Lebanon but also in the country as a whole, which have been exacerbated by the massive presence and machinations of the PLO.

In these circumstances, the Government of Israel is duty-bound to take all measures necessary to protect the lives and safety of its citizens.

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

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

1/ For the printed text, see Official Records of the Security Council, Twenty-ninth Year, Supplement for April, May and June 1974, pp. 125 and 140, respectively.