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THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Letter dated 8 June 1981 from the Permanent Representative of Israel  
to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On instructions, I have the honour to draw your attention to the following announcement made by the Government of Israel today, 8 June 1981:

"On Sunday, 7 June 1981, the Israel Air Force launched a raid on the atomic reactor "Ossirac", near Baghdad. Our pilots carried out their mission fully; the reactor was destroyed; all our aircraft returned safely to base.

"The Government feels dutybound to explain to enlightened public opinion why it took this decision:

"For a long time we have been watching with growing concern the construction of the atomic reactor, 'Ossirac'. From sources whose reliability is beyond any doubt we learnt that this reactor, despite its camouflage, is designed to produce atomic bombs. The target for such bombs would be Israel. This was clearly announced by the ruler of Iraq. After the Iranians had inflicted slight damage on the reactor, Saddam Hussein stressed that the Iranians had attacked the target in vain since it was being constructed against Israel alone. The atomic bombs which that reactor was capable of producing, whether from enriched uranium or from plutonium, would be of the Hiroshima size. Thus a mortal danger to the people of Israel progressively arose.

"Again, from most reliable sources we learnt of two dates when the reactor would be completed and put into operation:

- "1. The beginning of July 1981.
- "2. The beginning of September 1981.

\* A/36/50.

"In other words, within a short period of time the Iraqi reactor would have been operational and 'hot'. Under such circumstances, no Government of Israel could contemplate bombing the reactor. Such an attack would have brought about a massive, radioactive, lethal fallout over the city of Baghdad, and tens of thousands of its innocent residents would have been hurt. We would thus have been compelled to passively observe the process of the production of atomic bombs in Iraq, whose ruling tyrant would not hesitate to launch them against Israel cities, the centres of its population. Therefore, the Government of Israel decided to act without further delay to ensure our people's existence. The planning was exact. The operation was timed for Sunday on the assumption that the 100-150 foreign experts employed at the reactor would be absent on the Christian day of rest. This assumption proved to have been correct. No foreign experts were hurt.

"Two European Governments, in return for oil, have assisted the Iraqi tyrant in the construction of atomic weapons. We again call upon them to desist from this horrifying, inhuman deed. Under no circumstances will we allow an enemy to develop weapons of mass destruction against our people.

"We shall defend the citizens of Israel in time, and with all the means at our disposal."

I have the honour to request that this letter be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under item 33 on the preliminary list.

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

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