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THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

SECURITY COUNCIL
Thirty-first year

Letter dated 29 April 1976 from the Permanent Representative of
the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the United Nations
addressed to the Secretary-General

I would request you to have the text of the attached statement of 28 April 1976 by the Soviet Government on the Middle East distributed as an official document of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

(Signed) Y. MALIK
Permanent Representative of the
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
to the United Nations

* A/31/50.

Annex

STATEMENT BY THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT

The Soviet Government finds it necessary to draw the attention of the Governments of all States once again to the situation in the Middle East, and the events taking place there. It has been led to take this action by its concern over the prolonged delay in reaching a settlement of the Middle East conflict, by the Soviet Union's awareness of its international responsibility as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and by its desire to contribute to a further relaxation of international tension and the consolidation of universal peace.

1. For many years Israel's armed forces have been occupying vast areas of the territories of independent Arab States. A policy of racial discrimination against and oppression of the Arab population is being pursued in these territories. The indigenous inhabitants of the occupied territories are being driven from their homes and their homes are being razed in order to provide space for the establishment of settlements for citizens of a foreign State - Israel. Those who resist the cruel occupation policy are subjected to arrest, deportation and other forms of repression. Step by step, the captured territories are being incorporated into the State of Israel. All of this is creating a protracted and dangerous crisis in the Middle East.

The ruling circles in Israel are impeding the exercise by the Arab people of Palestine of their inalienable right to establish their own State. The 3 million Palestinian Arabs, who have the same right as any other people in the Middle East and any other people in the world, to their own State continue to be in the position of an exiled people. And all this despite the fact that their right to establish their own State in the territory of Palestine has been confirmed by the United Nations and that the Palestine Liberation Organization is widely recognized as the lawful representative of the Palestinian people and has the support of the popular masses in the territories occupied by Israel.

The build-up of Israel's armaments is continuing on a huge scale. The United States of America is sending a range of modern weapons to Israel, including rockets capable of carrying both conventional and nuclear warheads. In this connexion, there are alarming reports that Israel is making or has already made its own nuclear weapons. It is not difficult to see what a potential danger this poses to peace.

While last year's separate arrangements concerning some minor segments of the Israeli-occupied territories did create in some quarters the illusion of a lessening of tension in the Middle East, it is obvious to all now that these arrangements, which sidestepped the key questions in any Middle East settlement, not only failed to alleviate the situation but have even further aggravated it.

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Nothing demonstrates this so convincingly as the tragic and bloody events in and around Lebanon. These events have confirmed once again that unless resolute efforts are made towards a comprehensive political settlement in the Middle East, the situation there may become even worse, and every day brings new evidence of this.

2. A situation in which the Middle East conflict remains unresolved carries in it the seeds of a new military explosion. This situation means that the aggressor continues with impunity to reap the fruits of its criminal policy while the legitimate interests and rights of the victims of aggression are being flouted. It is clear that there can be neither stability nor tranquillity in the Middle East on such a basis. Failure to settle the conflict has already led four times to military clashes between Israel and the Arab States within comparatively short intervals of time. It would be naive to proceed on the assumption that this could not happen a fifth time. Meanwhile the possible consequences of a new war in the Middle East, including the consequences for the international situation as a whole, are obvious to all.

There are even more grounds for alarm in that some States are continuously seeking to postpone any solution to the major issues of a Middle East settlement and justifying their stand by utterly artificial arguments. They say it is necessary to wait until the Presidential elections in the United States are over, or else, that the necessary conditions for a Middle East settlement do not yet exist.

The real aims of those who would like to put off a solution to the problem of a Middle East settlement indefinitely should be clear to any objectively-minded observer. The preservation of the existing situation in the Middle East fully accords with their long-term plans of establishing their control over the Middle East region and its enormous oil resources and important strategic positions. It is for this very reason that those who are pursuing aims that have nothing in common with the genuine interests of the peoples of the Middle East are anxious to weaken the Arab States to the maximum possible extent to block their way to progressive social development, to set them against one another and to force them to act in disunity in their actions.

Who does not know that until recently the arsenal of imperialist policy in the Middle East included one main weapon - Israel's Zionist ruling circles that are pursuing a policy of territorial expansion at the expense of the Arabs. Now however the aggressors and their patrons hope to rely in their policy also on some Arab States. But it can confidently be affirmed that in the final count the peoples of the Arab East will frustrate this plan that is hostile to the cause for which the Arabs are struggling, the cause of their independence and freedom.

Obvious attempts are being made to strike a blow at the forces of the Palestine resistance movement and draw Arabs into a fratricidal war. This is the real meaning of the events in Lebanon. This is even more emphasized by such provocative acts as the concentration of Israeli troops on Lebanon's southern borders and the sending of United States naval ships to Lebanese shores, though they have no business there.

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Such is imperialism's policy in the Middle East, a policy of encouraging and supporting aggression, of weakening the position of national progressive forces, of undermining their unity and asserting its domination in that area.

3. The Soviet Union is pursuing a fundamentally different policy in questions related to the Middle East. It proceeds from the premise that the peoples of that area should be complete masters of their destiny, should receive an opportunity to live in conditions of independence, freedom and peace. That is precisely why the Soviet Union firmly supports a radical political settlement of the Middle East conflict and believes that this is attainable. The discussion in recent years of questions relating to the situation in the Middle East and the relevant decisions of the United Nations Security Council and General Assembly have determined the basis on which such a settlement can and must be achieved. This basis consists of three organically interconnected elements:

First, the withdrawal of Israeli troops from all Arab territories occupied as a result of Israel's aggression in 1967.

Second, satisfaction of the legitimate national demands of the Arab people of Palestine, including their inalienable right to establish their own State.

Third, international guarantees for the security and inviolability of the frontiers of all Middle-Eastern States, and their right to independent existence and development.

These basic and interconnected problems of a Middle East settlement take due account of the legitimate rights of all parties directly concerned and create a just and realistic basis for settlement.

Such a basis is just for the Arab States, the victims of Israel's aggression: it provides for the restoration of the territories belonging to them, restoration of their sovereignty over these territories and removes the danger of a new aggression. The peoples of the Arab countries will be given the opportunity to concentrate their energies and resources on the solution of the problems of economic and social development, and to eliminate the backwardness they inherited from colonialism. The Arab States will be also able to play a more important role in international affairs.

This basis for a settlement is a just one for the Palestinian Arab people because it stems from their right to establish their own independent State. The Arab people of Palestine will leave the refugee camps, free themselves from oppression by the invaders and build their own State in their homeland.

This basis for a political settlement is also just for Israel because it ensures for it the conditions of peace and security within recognized frontiers. Its young people will no longer be sacrificed on the altar of war. The Israeli working people, the entire people of the State of Israel will be able to live

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in conditions of confidence in the morrow. The State of Israel will be able to normalize its position among the States of the world.

An over-all and radical political settlement in the Middle East will bring a peaceful life and an opportunity for prosperity to all the peoples of the area. It will create a firm foundation of peace for the future, particularly considering the fact that within the framework of such a settlement it will be possible to find a solution to the problem of arresting the arms race in the Middle East, as the Soviet Union advocates.

Only those circles which cannot abandon the dangerous policy of brinkmanship in the Middle East can object to this basis for a political settlement.

4. Not only is there a just and realistic basis for a settlement of the Middle East conflict. There is also an international mechanism for working out appropriate accords. This is the Geneva Peace Conference on the Middle East.

No one denies that, if the appropriate States so desired, the Geneva Peace Conference could lead to agreement on all aspects of settlement. Nor is this denied by the United States. What is more, an identity of views on this matter several years ago formed the basis for agreement on the convening of the Geneva Conference. What is lacking now is the will to take that step. This and this alone accounts for the fact that changing attitudes to the Geneva Conference, clearly based on circumstances of the moment, have in recent years prevailed. This applies particularly to the position of the United States of America and Israel with regard to the role of this Conference.

Hence, the matter is not that the Geneva Peace Conference is not a suitable mechanism for a settlement of the conflict but that some are unwilling to put this mechanism into operation. That is how matters stand if the entire question of the Geneva Conference and its role is shown in its true light.

The Soviet Union is in favour of the resumption of the Geneva Peace Conference with the participation of all the parties directly concerned, including the Palestine Liberation Organization as the representative of the Arab people of Palestine.

True, this calls for certain preparatory work. The Soviet Government understands this. It believes that the work of the Conference could be arranged in two stages. In the initial stage, it could solve all the organizational questions that may arise, including the procedure for examining the concrete aspects of a settlement, and the possibility of establishing appropriate working bodies. This stage would evidently not be a long one, and after it the Conference could take up its basic task, that of finding substantive solutions to the problems of the settlement. It goes without saying that representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organization should take part in the work of both stages of the Conference.

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The Soviet Union is prepared without delay to appoint its representatives to attend the preparatory and the main phases of the Geneva Conference. The Soviet Government hopes that all the other parties concerned will adopt a similar position. If, however, some Governments continue to obstruct the resumption of the Geneva Conference they will naturally bear a serious responsibility for the consequences of such a policy.

5. In setting forth its considerations on the need for more active efforts towards a settlement of the Middle East conflict, the Soviet Government deems it necessary to stress that the Soviet Union does not seek any advantages for itself in the Middle East. Neither in the Middle East nor in any other area of the world is it endeavouring to gain military bases, any rights to develop local natural resources, or any opportunities to influence the internal development of the States concerned. The Soviet Union, loyal as it is to the ideal of solidarity with the peoples fighting for freedom and social progress, invariably supports and intends to continue its firm support of the just position of the Arab States and peoples.

Peace and tranquillity in the Middle East are the goal of Soviet policy in the area. The Soviet Union is also interested in creating conditions for the development of relations with all States of the Middle East. It has not and cannot have any prejudices against any of these States, including Israel, if the latter gives up its policy of aggression and takes the road of peace and good-neighbourly relations with the Arabs.

Elimination of the dangerous source of tension that remains in the Middle East is one of the top-priority tasks in the efforts to strengthen international peace and security. It is the duty of all States to contribute to the solution of this task. The Soviet Government appeals to the Governments of all States of the world to fulfil this duty and to facilitate efforts to achieve a just and lasting political settlement in the Middle East.

28 April 1976
