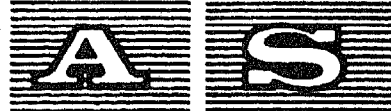


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Letter dated 7 November 1973 from the Permanent Representative of  
Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On instructions of my Government I have the honour to refer to a letter from the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic addressed to you on 31 October 1973 (A/9271-S/11066) and to state the following:

As stated in my letter to you of 19 October 1973 (S/11034), the Government of Israel, on 8 October 1973, officially informed the representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Israel that "being a party to the four Geneva Conventions Israel will strictly observe their provisions in the current hostilities".

The Israel Government demands that Syria should comply with its unconditional obligation under the Third Geneva Convention concerning the transmission of the names of the Israeli prisoners of war in its power, as well as concerning visits to these prisoners by representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

In their efforts to cover up their violation of this elementary obligation the Syrians spread disgusting atrocity stories, such as contained in their letter of 31 October 1973.

Israel did not purposely attack any civilian objectives in Syria and its attacks were directed exclusively against objectives which may be attacked in accordance with the rules of international public law, such as military installations, military camps and bases, the headquarters of the Syrian Air Force and the Syrian Defence Ministry in Damascus, airfields and industrial plants and installations which are operating for the Syrian war effort.

In this connexion I would refer to article 47 of the draft Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions, 1949, prepared by the International Committee of the Red Cross, reading as follows:

"1. Attacks shall be strictly limited to military objectives, namely, to those objectives which are, by their nature, purpose or use, recognized to be of military interest and whose total or partial destruction, in the circumstances ruling at the time, offers a distinct and substantial military advantage.

"2. Consequently, objects designed for civilian use, such as houses, dwellings, installations and means of transport, and all objects which are not military objectives, shall not be made the object of attack, except if they are used mainly in support of the military effort."

It is also stressed that in the aforesaid attacks no time bombs were used, as maliciously alleged by the Syrians. It is further stressed that, if a State places missile and gun batteries or other military installations in inhabited localities, that State is responsible for all the results ensuing from attacks on such military objectives.

On the other hand, from the very outset of their aggression against Israel on 6 October 1973, the Syrians have premeditatedly and purposely attacked and hit civilian objectives in Israel and the administered areas, as was set out in my letter to you of 19 October 1973 (A/9245-S/11035).

In those attacks Jewish and Druze men, women and children were killed and wounded.

Israel has not harmed the inhabitants in any Syrian locality, has not expelled them and has not encouraged them to leave their homes.

If any of the inhabitants left the battle zone, then this occurred, as it does in the case of all wars, because of their desire to escape from the dangers of war, which had been caused by the Syrian aggression.

Thousands of local inhabitants have remained in their places of residence, continue their daily pursuits and receive all the necessary services.

Everything is being done in order to deal with their problems and to extend to them such help as may be necessary.

These facts constitute further and conclusive proof of the mendacity of the Syrian accusations of the alleged expulsion of the local inhabitants.

It is also a complete lie that Syrian prisoners of war have allegedly been forced to walk through minefields.

As a matter of fact, after the positions on Mount Hermon had been recaptured by Israel, Syrian prisoners of war pointed out places where they had previously laid booby traps.

The Syrian prisoners of war pointed out the location of these traps in order to enable Israeli bomb disposal squads to reach and remove Israeli and Syrian dead from that area.

Israel has transmitted without any delay to the International Committee of the Red Cross all the lists of Syrian prisoners of war, and the Syrian accusations that some names had been listed twice on purpose is simply ridiculous.

Another blatant lie is the Syrian allegation concerning maltreatment and other malpractices in respect of prisoners of war.

The representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross visit the Syrian prisoners of war regularly in their place of detention and can testify to their correct treatment.

Israel scrupulously complies with the provisions of the Third Geneva Convention.

In terrible contrast to the correct treatment accorded by Israel to the Syrian prisoners of war, stand the persistent outrages and atrocities committed by Syria against Israeli prisoners of war:

Near Houshniya 12 hidden bodies of Israeli soldiers were discovered. They had been murdered after being taken prisoner, bound hand and foot and their eyes covered.

Bodies of Israeli prisoners of war, murdered by the Syrians, have also been discovered in another place.

It has also been ascertained that Israeli soldiers had been shot to death by the Syrians after having been wounded.

In one case a wounded Israeli officer, who had been taken prisoner, was shot and killed by the Syrians because he could only walk with difficulty.

As stated before, all the allegations and accusations made in the aforesaid Syrian letter are nothing but contemptuous efforts by Syria to cover up for its brutal violations of the Geneva Conventions and its other horrible misdeeds.

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

(Signed) Yosef TEKOAH  
Permanent Representative of Israel  
to the United Nations

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