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LETTER DATED 16 JULY 1968 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ISRAEL  
ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

On instructions from my Government I have the honour to refer to the letter of 10 July 1968 addressed to you by the United Arab Republic Chargé d'Affaires a.i. (s/8677) concerning the incident of 8 July 1968 at the Suez Canal.

Distorting the nature and origin of this incident initiated by the Egyptian forces, the letter disregards completely the findings by United Nations Military Observers contained in the report published on 9 July 1968 (s/7930/Add.73).

A study of the report leaves no doubt in respect of Egypt's responsibility for the incident and its escalation. The report indicates also that the Israel Defence Forces acted in self-defence with considerable restraint. It will be noted, for instance, that they opened fire to silence attacking Egyptian artillery positions located in the city of Suez only forty minutes after the beginning of the Egyptian artillery barrage.

Previous United Nations reports record other acts of aggression initiated by the Egyptian forces (s/7930/Add.69; s/7930/Add.71; s/7930/Add.72). Such acts, including mining raids in the north-western sector of Sinai, have increased in intensity since mid-June.

It is also by no means the first time that Egyptian aggression has caused suffering and casualties to the civilian population of this area. Israel and the International Red Cross Committee have had occasion in the past to draw attention to and deplore the Egyptian practice of opening fire from artillery positions established in residential areas, and in particular in the vicinity of public institutions such as hospitals and schools (s/8145). This practice is directly responsible for the civilian casualties, Israel forces acting under strict instructions to respect the civilian population.

It is significant that the Egyptian attack followed shortly upon a visit by President Nasser to United Arab Republic forces stationed in the Suez Canal sector. This visit was interpreted by the Cairo daily "Al Akhbar" on 19 June as "clearly signifying the determination of the Arabs to prepare for the next round". It should also be recalled that while Egyptian guns roared on 8 July in Suez, Egypt's President was reiterating his intransigent belligerency toward Israel in Moscow.

As long as it pursues its policy of belligerency and its acts of warfare against Israel, Egypt must be held responsible for undermining the cease-fire and endangering the lives of citizens on both sides of the line. Israel will continue to observe scrupulously its obligations under the cease-fire. This, however, must be done on a basis of complete reciprocity. Only if Egypt abandons, in word as well as in deed, the Khartoum decision rejecting peace, negotiations and recognition of Israel, can the cause of peace be advanced in the Middle East.

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

Please accept, etc.

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

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