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LETTER DATED 28 FEBRUARY 1971 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE  
OF THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

Would you please arrange for the attached statement of the Soviet Government on  
the Middle East to be circulated as an official document of the Security Council and  
the General Assembly.

(Signed) Y. MALIK  
Permanent Representative of the USSR  
to the United Nations

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\* Also issued under the symbol A/8288.

The liquidation of the aftermaths of the Israeli aggression against Arab countries and the attainment of a political settlement of the Middle East conflict continues to be one of the most important and urgent international problems, on which the general state of the international situation depends. New efforts were undertaken lately in the interests of reaching a political settlement in the Middle East. But now the situation is again aggravating and the entire political settlement may find itself pushed back. The ruling circles of Israel are obviously aiming at this.

On 21 February this year the Government of Israel published an official statement that it refuses to withdraw Israeli troops from the occupied territories of Arab States, in particular from the territory of the United Arab Republic, and that Israel "will not withdraw to the 4 June 1967 cease-fire line".

The Israeli extremists have never concealed their plans of conquest and intention to retain the Arab territories occupied as a result of the 1967 aggression. But the circumstances in which the Israeli Government made this statement lend special meaning and significance to it.

A more favourable situation than ever before has been taking shape in the past several weeks for reaching agreement on a political settlement on the basis of fulfilment in full volume of the known 22 November 1967 resolution of the Security Council by all the interested sides. The decisive role in the creation of this situation was played by the United Arab Republic's consistent line at a solution of the Middle East problem by political means.

As a result of efforts by the United Arab Republic and a number of other Arab States, supported by the huge majority of States in the world, contacts by the special envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ambassador Gunnar Jarring, with the sides in the conflict were resumed a month and a half ago. From the very outset these contacts, the first ever, acquired the nature of a discussion of concrete undertakings which are a part of the set of measures for political settlement. Wishing to create a favourable atmosphere in the interests of successful talks, the Arab countries expressed consent to continue the observance of the cease-fire despite the fact that a part of their territory is being occupied by Israel for the fourth year now. The United Arab Republic Government proposed a resumption of international shipping through the Suez Canal in the event of a commencement of the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Sinai Peninsula.

All this facilitated the development of contacts. On 8 February, noting the shaping possibilities for progress in the cause of the political settlement, the special envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General approached both sides with a proposal to inform him of their readiness to assume concrete commitments on two key questions of the settlement - the withdrawal of troops from occupied territories and the terms of the peace which is to be established in the Middle East.

The stand of the United Arab Republic on these questions is clear and positive. As it follows from statements by United Arab Republic representatives and, in particular, in connexion with the message by the special envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General, the United Arab Republic is ready to conclude an agreement on peace with Israel, if Israel undertakes a commitment to withdraw its troops from all occupied territories and fulfils United Nations decisions on the Palestine refugees. The United Arab Republic is prepared for the agreement on peace to envisage commitments by the sides on ending the state of war, on respect of each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence, on recognition and respect of the right of each side to live in peace within secure and recognized borders, on non-interference in each other's internal affairs. Within the framework of the political settlement the United Arab Republic agrees to ensure the freedom of shipping through the Suez Canal in accordance with the Constantinople Convention of 1888 and freedom of shipping in the Strait of Tiran in accordance with principles of international law. The United Arab Republic also expressed agreement with the idea of creating demilitarized zones along both sides of the border and the stationing in some areas of a United Nations peace-keeping force.

The constructive position of the United Arab Republic Government was met with much satisfaction by all who sincerely strive for peace in the Middle East. Even those circles which far from sympathize with the national liberation struggle of the Arabs, the United Arab Republic and other Arab States that have embarked on the road of progressive development, could not but admit that the position of the United Arab Republic both as a whole and in details accords with the programme of political settlement drawn up by the Security Council. The United Arab Republic's bold and realistic position contributed to a strengthening of the international prestige of the United Arab Republic. It fully exposed the slanderous allegations by enemies

of the Arab national liberation movement that the United Arab Republic is not prepared to accept terms of a peace in the Middle East that would be fair for all, including Israel.

It became obvious that the talks had approached the decisive stage. It was enough for the Israeli Government to announce its readiness to assume a part of the commitments concerning the political settlement, including the commitment to withdraw troops from all occupied territories, and a genuine turn to peace would have finally taken place in the Middle East.

But this did not happen. In its 21 February statement, replying to the special envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General, Israel actually gave a negative reply to the main question without which there can be no peace in the Middle East - the question of the withdrawal of Israeli troops from all occupied Arab territories. Israel thereby openly came out as an aggressor and again showed the whole world that it does not want to give up its plunderous habits and is not stopping short of challenging the United Nations Organization and the peoples of the whole world.

It is an open secret on what the Israeli Government counts when promoting a line at frustrating the political settlement and at further aggravating the situation in the Middle East. It counts on support by the United States of America, which invariably encourages Israel's aggressive policy against the Arab countries, gives the Israeli occupationists extensive patronage and supplies them with the latest types of weapons.

American representatives have announced more than once the interest of the United States Government in achieving a political settlement in the Middle East. But there is a big gap between words and deeds in American policy. The United States pays lip service to peace in the Middle East and to a settlement of the Middle East conflict by political means. But in deeds Israel has been and continues to be the shock tool of American imperialism in frustrating the political settlement, in creating new dangerous complications in the Middle East. In words, the United States Government recognizes the lawful interests of Arab States. In deeds, it supports Israel's aggressive course.

In view of all this, the United States shares with Israel the entire responsibility for the situation that is now shaping in the Middle East. It also

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shapes responsibility for Israel's latest obstructionist step - its announced refusal to withdraw troops from Arab territories - and for all possible consequences of this.

The question arises - in what direction will events further develop in the Middle East. Every government, every responsible politician must realize that the alternative in the Middle East is such: political settlement or a military clash. That is why the Soviet Government believes that vigorous actions by all States interested in peace are now especially necessary in a direction to prevent Israel and its patrons from frustrating the cause of political settlement. If the peace-loving States unite their efforts in the struggle for such a settlement in the Middle East, it will be possible to achieve this task.

If, however, the ruling circles of Israel think that by promoting a policy of sabotage they will be able to achieve their main aim for which the aggression against Arab countries in 1967 was unleashed - to break the Arab national liberation movement, to overthrow the progressive régimes that have asserted themselves in the United Arab Republic and other Arab countries, they should better remember that such plans are doomed to failure. The Soviet Union is a friend of the Arab peoples and gives them the necessary assistance, political and material, in the struggle for the liberation of lands captured by the Israeli aggressors. This aid will be given further.

The Soviet Government firmly comes out for a settlement of the Middle East conflict by political means. It will further do everything for the policy of peace to score victory in the struggle between forces of peace and forces of aggression in the Middle East.

28 February 1971