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LETTER DATED 25 AUGUST 1967 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ISRAEL  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to refer to the letter addressed to you by the Permanent Representative of Syria on 18 August 1967 (S/8125, A/6788) and to state as follows:

1. In my letter of 14 July 1967 (S/8058, A/6758) I gave you information concerning the archaeological site at Banias. Contrary to the irresponsible statements of the Permanent Representative of Syria, I wish now to inform you that this site is well preserved, no excavations whatsoever are taking place there, and the suggestion that archaeological finds are being looted is patently ridiculous.

Dr. Avraham Biran, Director of the Department of Antiquities and Museums of the Government of Israel, who has recently again visited the site, has established that the foundations of the Crusader Fort were damaged by the Syrian army when it blew up the bridge over the Banias on its withdrawal therefrom during the fighting. The following is Dr. Biran's description of the damage:

(a) In connexion with the hostilities, the Syrians blew up the bridge of Wadi Husheibeh near Banias village in order to cut the road to Kuneitra. By this action they destroyed the south-western tower of the Crusader Fort, which is undoubtedly an historic site.

(b) The Syrians dug a bunker at Al Hamma exactly on the Tell on which an ancient Synagogue was built. By digging this bunker, they destroyed the north-eastern corner of the Synagogue enclosure.

It is obvious that this Syrian campaign of vilification with regard to the historic sites at Banias has no other purpose than to divert attention from their own acts of vandalism in that area.

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2. It is reliably estimated that the total population of the Syrian heights prior to June 1967 was approximately 90,000 souls of whom 20,000 lived in Kuneitra. The great majority of these withdrew ahead of the Syrian armed forces, and according to the census taken in recent days, the remaining population in this area is 6,404 souls of whom 208 are living in Kuneitra.

3. No known case of typhoid or any other plague or contagious disease has been reported since the cease-fire entered into force.

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

Please accept, etc.

(Signed) Gideon RAFAEL  
Permanent Representative of Israel  
to the United Nations

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