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LETTER DATED 24 JANUARY 1967 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to submit to you herewith a letter addressed to Your Excellency by H.E. Dr. Ibrahim Makhos, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic, in reply to Your Excellency's appeal of 15 January 1967.

As Your Excellency will note, the letter is written in Arabic, but, for your convenience, an unofficial translation into English is enclosed.

I shall be grateful if this letter could be circulated as an official Security Council document.

Please accept, etc.

(Signed) George J. TOMEH
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Translation from Arabic supplied by Syria

Damascus, 23 January 1967

Your Excellency,

We have received your letter dated 15 January 1967, which contains the following points:

1st: An appeal to both Syria and Israel to restrain military forces and refrain from any action that may lead to an armed clash.

2nd: An appeal to both parties to hold an emergency or extraordinary meeting of the Syrian-Israeli Mixed Armistice Commission on an agreed agenda, which is to take practical arrangements for the solution of the problem of cultivation and assure the works of civilians in the proximity of the Armistice Line. And this without preconditions that may obstruct the meeting.

3rd: An advice to strengthen the United Nations posts of supervision near the Armistice Line.

We have replied to Your Excellency's letter through our Permanent Representative to the United Nations and through General Odd Bull, Chief of Staff of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization, to the following effect:

1. We undertake not to initiate the opening of fire.
2. We shall not enter the disputed areas, provided the other party does not enter any of the areas under dispute.
3. We accept to attend the meeting of the Syrian-Israeli Mixed Armistice Commission on the above-mentioned agenda.
4. We accept the establishment of United Nations supervision posts at a site we had defined in a communication addressed to General Odd Bull, provided a similar post is established on the opposite side in the territories occupied by Israel.

On 19 January 1967 we have received a letter from General Odd Bull informing us that Israel has accepted to attend the meeting of the Mixed Armistice Commission on the above-mentioned agenda.

But, prior to this, a number of official Israeli statements had been made, as follows:

- 1 - A part of a statement made by Mr. Abba Eban and broadcast by the Israeli radio station on 17 January 1967, which said that "the question of cultivation in the Demilitarized Zone has no connection with recent Syrian aggressions". It also said that "Israel requires as conditions for holding such a meeting the fixing of an agreed agenda and, further, that the Chairman of the Commission should not have the authority to finalize any decision".
- 2 - A part of a statement made by the Israeli Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, broadcast by the Israeli radio station on 17 January 1967, saying that the tension of the situation on the borders is not only due to cultivation of areas in the Demilitarized Zone.
- 3 - A part of a statement made by Mr. Michael Comay, broadcast by the Israeli radio station on 17 January 1967, saying that the acceptance by Israel of the meeting of the Mixed Armistice Commission cannot in any case be considered as a legal precedent, as the Demilitarized Zone is subject to the sovereignty of Israel and does not fall under the jurisdiction of the Mixed Armistice Commission.
- 4 - A part of a statement made by Mr. Ebbba Eban, broadcast from the Israeli radio station on 17 January 1967, in which he expressed Israeli readiness to accept Mr. U Thant's proposal regarding discussion between the two parties, Syria and Israel, in connexion with cultivation in the Demilitarized Zone, but conditioning this acceptance on the cessation of Syrian provocations, whether they be military acts or acts of sabotage, such as mine-laying or assaults against the lives of citizens.
- 5 - A part of the statement of Mr. Sasson, Director of Armistice Affairs in the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, broadcast from the Israeli radio station on 18 January 1967, that the General Armistice Agreement states that the Chairman of the Commission is the one responsible for the regulation of

activities and the restoration of normal conditions in the Demilitarized Zones, together with all other topics relating to these Zones. Mr. Sasson added that Israel refused to see Syria as a party in the discussion of the affairs of the Demilitarized Zone and that this refusal applies every time Syria attempts to raise this topic for discussion in the Mixed Armistice Commission. Syria, said Mr. Sasson, is always the first to attempt to raise this topic, and we constantly reject the invitation of Syria to this discussion and refuse considering her a party to the issue.

It becomes abundantly clear, through all these statements, that Israel aims at:

- 1 - Covering up its aggression on the Demilitarized Zone in contravention of Article V (paragraph 5) of the General Armistice Agreement.
- 2 - Continuing with impunity to defy the United Nations and to violate the clauses of the General Armistice Agreement itself by imposing its sovereignty on the Demilitarized Zone, committing its aggression in it and not recognizing the responsibility of the Mixed Armistice Commission in supervising the Demilitarized Zone as provided in Article VII (paragraph 1).
- 3 - Insisting on attributing to Syria responsibility for the incidents which occur in Occupied Palestine, even when such incidents occur in proximity of the Demarcation Lines of another Arab State, thus purporting to create the pretexts for a planned act of aggression.

It can be argued in this connexion that, since the Demilitarized Zone, victim of Israeli aggression, is situated east of the cease-fire line, area that was occupied by the Syrian Army on 20 July 1949, date of the signing of the General Armistice Agreement, the Syrian military forces would be first entitled to enter the Demilitarized Zone, if it were permissible for any armed forces to effect such entry in contravention of the General Armistice Agreement.

In view of the above, and by virtue of the General Armistice Agreement, we would like, Sir, to make clear to Your Excellency and to all Member States of the United Nations our following peaceful stand in this matter, now that all these Israeli statements have been made:

1. We reject Israeli sovereignty over the Demilitarized Zone and oppose its aggression against it, as it has, in fact stationed therein regular and irregular forces, erected fortifications, and gone even as far as expelling its Arab inhabitants, evicting them from their homes to other regions. This is, as you know, a violation of the very General Armistice Agreement behind which Israel tries to take cover (please see articles I, III, IV (paragraph 2) and article V (paragraphs 4 and 5) and the relevant Security Council resolutions).

2. The Mixed Armistice Commission and its Chairman are the only responsible authority in the Demilitarized Zone, according to the General Armistice Agreement. Yourself, Your Excellency, have referred to this point in your report No. S/7572 dated 1/11/66. The meeting of this Commission, which we have agreed to attend, is for taking practical and temporary arrangements within the Demilitarized Zone in order to alleviate the tension and remove the spectre of aggression which we believe Israel intends to undertake against our people and our country.

3. We do not accept to be guardians of Israel for the protection of its security.

4. As we have informed General Bull, Chief of the Supervision Organization, we continue to accept attending the meeting of the Syrian-Israeli Mixed Armistice Commission to make practical arrangements to assure cultivation and other civilian works along the Armistice Line, provided that such arrangements do not in any way prejudice our rights provided for in the General Armistice Agreement or on the final solution of the question of Palestine.

Please accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

(Signed) Dr. Ibrahim Makhos
Deputy Prime Minister
Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Syrian Arab Republic