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THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

SECURITY COUNCIL
Thirty-third year

Letter dated 13 March 1978 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the
Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations addressed to
the Secretary-General

On instructions of my Government, I have the honour to communicate to you the following:

On Saturday, 11 March 1978, a barbaric outrage was committed against innocent Israeli civilians on the Haifa-Tel Aviv highway. The murder squad, whose victims now number 37 dead and 76 wounded, some of them critically, was dispatched by the so-called "PLO", which has taken full responsibility for the incident.

The 11 assassins infiltrated the Israeli coastline on Saturday afternoon, having received their orders from Halil al-Wazir ("Abu Jihad"), one of the principal aides of Yasser Arafat, who is the head of Fatah, the largest constituent terror group within the PLO. The weapons which they were carrying were mainly Soviet-made and Soviet-supplied. Their instructions were to take hostages with a view to securing the release of Arab and other terrorists convicted of such atrocities as the Ben Gurion Airport massacre. The murder squad was to kill all hostages if the Government of Israel did not surrender to its demands.

Having summarily killed a woman after stopping her on the beach near Caesarea, they commandeered a taxi and killed its passengers. They then seized a bus, carrying Israeli civilians, one half of them children, on a day's outing, and ordered the driver to proceed in the direction of Tel Aviv. En route, they overtook a second bus, opened fire on it, and killed and wounded other civilians. The survivors were then herded onto the first bus, which continued southwards towards Tel Aviv, while the terrorists shot indiscriminately at passing traffic, leaving more carnage in their wake.

* A/33/50.

At the "Country Club" intersection, the bus was stopped by a roadblock, with machine-gun and rocket fire blazing from its windows. The terrorists had already bound the hostages to their seats to prevent their escape and had placed explosive charges throughout the bus. In an effort to take cover, the terrorists fled the bus and, in the course of the battle which ensued, they blew up the bus, mercilessly killing many of the hostages who were still trapped inside.

This latest outrage is but one in a long line of similar atrocities, beginning with the killing of nine children and three teachers, and the wounding of 19 others on a school bus near Avivim in 1970. Since then, scores of innocent civilians in Israel have been killed in brutal PLO attacks at Ma'alot, Qiryat Shemonah, Kfar Yuval, Beit Shean, Nahariyah, the Zion Square and the Mahane Yehuda Market in Jerusalem, not to speak of the massacre of Puerto Rican pilgrims at Ben Gurion Airport and the heinous attack on the Savoy Hotel in Tel Aviv in March 1975. "Abu Jihad" has been involved in the planning and execution of many of these atrocities and others, including the murder of the Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics in September 1972 and the attack on the Israeli Embassy in Bangkok in December of that year.

In the last three months, Palestinian terror groups connected with the PLO have carried out several vicious attacks, including placing bombs in buses in Jerusalem, the Hebrew University and in other public places in Israel. The same terrorist groups have also assassinated prominent Arabs in Judea and Samaria and, in a similar way, Youssef Seba'i, the Chairman-Editor of the Cairo newspaper al-Ahram, was killed in Cyprus in February 1978. The PLO acts in close co-ordination with other terrorist groups in Europe, Asia, Latin America and elsewhere.

As the Prime Minister of Israel, Mr. Menachem Begin, stated in his press conference on 12 March 1978:

"The P.L.O. is a Nazi movement ... the basest ever to arise ... whose sole aim is to kill Jews.

"They never attack military installations. They come to kill civilians .●. And these were the people who wrote the 'Palestinian Covenant' and whom the Arab world at Rabat (in 1973) appointed the sole representative of the Palestinian people.

"... We shall not forget. And I can only call upon other nations not to forget that Nazi atrocity that was perpetrated upon our people yesterday."

The Prime Minister went on to note that the PLO enjoys observer status at the United Nations and that its leader, Yasser Arafat, was received enthusiastically by the General Assembly in 1975. This, despite the fact that the PLO is committed by its "Covenant" to the destruction of Israel, a State Member of the Organization.

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The Prime Minister observed that the Secretary-General and other world leaders have condemned this barbarous outrage in unequivocal and forthright terms.

I have the honour to request that this letter be distributed as a document of the General Assembly, under item 30 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Pinhas ELIAV
Acting Permanent Representative of Israel
to the United Nations
