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LETTER DATED 6 MARCH 1956 FROM THE REPRESENTATIVE OF ISRAEL ADDRESSED  
TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

On instructions from the Government of Israel, I have the honour to bring to the notice of the Security Council the following information concerning two wanton acts of aggression perpetrated by the armed forces of Syria against citizens of Israel pursuing their lawful activities inside Israel territory.

1. At about 2 O'clock in the morning of 4 March an Israel police patrol vessel escorting a party of fishermen off the north-eastern shore of Lake Tiberias ran aground on a rocky reef in shallow water. During this season of the year fishermen on the Lake are in the habit, and have been for many years past, of fishing at night with the aid of bright lights towards which the schools of fish are attracted. The stranded patrol boat came under heavy automatic fire from Syrian positions on the shore, as did other craft which attempted during the night to tow it off the reef. The police crew were, however, extricated without loss and the boat left where it was.

At about 0730 that morning the Senior Israel Delegate to the Israel-Syrian Mixed Armistice Commission informed the United Nations Chairman of the Commission of the incident and requested an investigation in accordance with the usual procedure. At 0845 the Israel Ministry for Foreign Affairs informed the Headquarters of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation in Jerusalem that a police rescue launch would be sent to tow the stranded vessel away. The Truce Supervision Organisation was requested to inform the Syrians of this in order to avoid unnecessary incident. At 0905 the Truce Supervision Organisation informed the Ministry that a message to that effect had been transmitted to the Syrian authorities in Damascus.

At about 1015 the rescue launch arrived on the scene and came under heavy rifle and automatic fire from Syrian positions near the shore. The four policemen who comprised the crew of the launch were soon disabled by the Syrian fire. At 1115 the Ministry again communicated with the Headquarters of the Truce Supervision Organisation and informed them that unless Syria ceased interfering with the rescue operation and permitted the orderly extrication of the wounded and the boats, Israel would be compelled to take measures to put a stop to the Syrian fire. A similar message was transmitted at about 12 noon to the Mixed Armistice Commission by the Israel delegation to that body. At 1220 the United Nations Chairman of the Commission informed the Senior Israel Delegate that he had been in contact with the Syrian local commander who had undertaken not to interfere with the rescue operations. The Chairman accordingly requested Israel to refrain from drastic measures. This was done.

However, at about the same time as these discussions were going on between the Chairman of the Mixed Armistice Commission and the Senior Israel Delegate a party of Syrians crossed the demarcation line into Israel, seized the rescue launch with its wounded crew and dragged it ashore. The Chairman of the Mixed Armistice Commission was informed of this by Israel at 1250.

At about 2.30 that afternoon the bodies of two policemen were handed over to the Senior Israel Delegate by the Syrians in the presence of United Nations Observers. The two police boats were also returned. The Syrians disclaimed all knowledge of the other two policemen. Nevertheless, the body of a third was handed over to the Israel authorities on the following day. The fourth man is still missing.

2. On 5 March, the day following the Lake Tiberias attack, a further act of Syrian aggression took place in the Huleh area, to the north. An Israel aircraft, flying low inside Israel territory was hit by Syrian anti-aircraft fire and forced to land near Dafne. One of the two members of the crew was wounded. The Mixed Armistice Commission has been officially informed of the incident.

In requesting you to circulate this letter to the members of the Security Council, I have been instructed to stress the very grave view which the Government of Israel takes of these flagrant acts of aggression which must inevitably exacerbate the tense situation in the Middle East.

Please accept, Sir, etc.

(Signed)

M.R. KIDRON

For Permanent Representative of  
Israel to the United Nations

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