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LETTER DATED 9 APRIL 1956 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF EGYPT ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Further to my letter of 5 April, I have the honour to inform Your Excellency of the following facts:

At the very moment that Mr. Dag Hammarskjold, Secretary-General of the United Nations, was preparing to leave for the Middle East and that Egypt and the Arab States had expressed their entire readiness to co-operate with him in his mission of peace, Israel was planning an attack on peaceful civilians at Gaza, Khan Yunis and Deir el Balah, which caused the death of fifty-nine people, including twenty-seven women and four children, and in which ninety-three people, including thirty-two women and eight children, were wounded.

Israel has thus proved once again that its policy is based on aggression and that it does not hesitate to massacre civilians, women and children, regardless of laws and customs and of its own responsibilities, and that it refuses to co-operate with the United Nations or with the Arab countries to restore peace to the area of the demarcation lines.

I regret to have to point out that the General Armistice Agreement concluded between Egypt and Israel is now applied by one side only, namely, by Egypt. For throughout the past year Israel has constantly violated this Agreement and it is clear that its primary aim was to inflict heavy losses on Arab civilian and military personnel.

Thus, on 28 February 1955, although there had long been peace in the area of the demarcation lines, Israel launched a surprise attack on the town of Gaza, killing thirty-eight people and wounding thirty-one. The most surprising fact was that the then Israeli Minister of Defence, who is now Prime Minister, congratulated the aggressors and stated that the attack had been launched with the approval of the Israeli Council of Ministers. Egypt lodged a complaint with the Security

Council, which on 29 March 1955 unanimously condemned Israel, noting that the Egyptian-Israeli Mixed Armistice Commission had determined, on 6 March 1955, that the attack by Israeli forces against the Egyptian forces in the Gaza Strip on 28 February 1955 had been prearranged and ordered by Israeli authorities. In addition, the Council called upon Israel to take all necessary measures to prevent such actions. On 30 March 1955, the Council requested the Chief of Staff of the Truce Supervision Organization to continue his consultations with the two Governments, with a view to the introduction of fresh measures to preserve security in this area, within the framework of the General Armistice Agreement between Egypt and Israel. It was hoped that there would be no further Israeli aggression, but Israel went on with its attacks.

The Head of the Egyptian Government proposed to General Burns that Egypt should withdraw its forces from the demarcation line to a depth of half a kilometre, provided that Israel did the same; there would then be a neutral zone one kilometre in breadth between the two parties, which would contribute to the reduction of tension and of friction between the forces of the two parties. Israel did not, however, accept that proposal and continued to launch assaults against Egyptian positions.

On the night of 30 to 31 August 1955, Israeli forces crossed the demarcation line with half-track armed cars in the direction of Khan Yunis, where they blew up the police station, causing the death of forty people and wounding nineteen others.

On 20 September 1955, the situation was very tense along all the Armistice Lines, as a result of the Israeli attack. In response to the request of General Burns, the Egyptian Government ordered the Egyptian troops to withdraw half a kilometre from the Armistice Line, so as to lessen tension. Instead of adopting the same attitude as Egypt with a view to reducing tension and maintaining calm in the Gaza Strip, Israel proceeded to occupy the demilitarized zone of El Auja, launching yet another attack against Egyptian soldiers who were in the zone co-operating with the Truce Supervision Organization; this resulted in a further increase in tension.

Pursuing its premeditated policy of aggression, Israel suddenly, on 28 October 1955, launched an attack on Kontella, which is in Egyptian territory not far from the Gulf of Aqaba; its objective was the Egyptian frontier post. The Israelis on that occasion caused the tragic death of eleven soldiers, while another twelve were wounded.

On the night of 2 to 3 November 1955, Israeli troops attacked a forward post at El Sabha, in Egyptian territory.

Finally, on 11 December 1955, Israeli troops attacked Syrian positions on Lake Tiberias and on 19 January 1956 the Security Council unanimously condemned that outrageous act of aggression by Israel.

It is clear that in all these attacks it was Israel's intention to inflict heavy losses on Arab civilians and military forces.

I should like to point out that the proposals made by the Secretary-General of the United Nations for the lessening of tension in the demilitarized zone of El Auja were at first approved by Israel. Yet after Mr. Hammarskjold's visit to Cairo and Egypt's approval of those proposals, Israel withdrew its consent. This fact proves beyond doubt Israel's intention not to co-operate in measures to relieve tension but to pursue its policy of aggression.

Whereas Egypt and the Arab States responded favourably to the Security Council's latest appeal with a view to reducing tension on the demarcation lines, Israel did not hesitate, on 5 April 1956, to bomb Gaza, Deir el Balah and Khan Yunis, although it knew that there are numbers of Palestine refugees living in these cities. This attack caused the death of a great number of people, including many women and children, and many more were wounded. On the following day, 6 April 1956, Deir el Balah was fired on by Israeli artillery; that brought the number of Israeli attacks since 1 January 1955 to 377, 276 of which were committed during the last year.

The Egyptian Government thought it necessary at this time to explain the situation to the States members of the Security Council, which recently had before it the question of the tension between the Arab States and Israel, so as to apprise them of the course of events and of the fact that Israel, despite its declaration in the Security Council of its peaceful intentions, has nevertheless committed one of

the most flagrant acts of aggression ever recorded, at the very time that the Secretary-General of the United Nations was on his way to the Middle East.

I would ask Your Excellency kindly to communicate this letter to all the members of the Security Council and I reserve my delegation's right to pursue this matter further.

I have the honour to be, etc.

(Signed) Omar Loutfi
Permanent Representative
of Egypt to the United Nations

