

UNITED NATIONS  
SECURITY  
COUNCIL



Distr.  
GENERAL

S/4151  
27 January 1959

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

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LETTER DATED 26 JANUARY 1959 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE  
OF ISRAEL ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour, on instructions from the Government of Israel, to bring to your attention as President of the Security Council the renewal of aggression by United Arab Republic armed forces on the Israel-Syrian border, and to request you to convene a special meeting of the Security Council to consider this matter.

On 23 January 1959 at approximately 1350 hours local time two shepherds led their flocks from the village of Maaleh Habashan in Galilee to their usual grazing ground situated inside Israel territory. On their arrival automatic fire was opened on them by Syrian soldiers. One of the shepherds, Yaacov Nir, 37 years old, was killed. Machine-gun fire from a Syrian military position interfered with the search for the dead shepherd. No fire was returned from Israel territory. The border in this area is clearly marked by a stone fence about one kilometre in length, and no possible confusion in respect of its position could arise.

On 4 December 1958 I had the honour to submit to the Security Council a complaint by my Government against Syrian aggression culminating in the bombardment of Israel villages in Galilee on 3 December 1958. The incident on 3 December began as well with a Syrian attack on Israel shepherds in the Gonen-Maaleh Habashan area which resulted in the killing of one of the shepherds. The Security Council considered this complaint at its 841st and 844th meetings on 8 and 15 December. In summing up the debate at the 844th meeting on 15 December, Ambassador Jarring stated, in his capacity as President of the Council:

"We fully recognize the gravity of the action about which Israel has complained."

The bombardment of 3 December was followed by further United Arab Republic attacks, which grew in intensity in the fortnight preceding the latest assault.

1. On 9 January a shepherd was attacked by Syrian fire in the Maayan Barukh area.
2. On 12 January at approximately 1130 hours a unit of United Arab Republic (Syrian) soldiers penetrated about 200 metres into Israel and opened machine-gun fire on shepherds and their flocks near the village of Shamir. Following this attack the Syrian unit withdrew to Syrian territory. No fire was returned.
3. On 13 January Syrians opened fire on an Israel fisherman in the northeast corner of Lake Kinneret (Sea of Galilee), who came to retrieve his fishing nets. An Israel police boat which approached the spot was also subjected to Syrian fire. Fire was returned by the police boat. The entire lake, including its northeastern shore, is situated within Israel territory.
4. On the same day the Syrian military position at Massoudiya opened fire on Israel fishermen on Lake Kinneret.
5. On 13 January two young Americans on a walk from Rosh Pina to the River Jordan were attacked by Syrian soldiers who had penetrated into Israel territory north of Lake Kinneret. They were overpowered about 400 metres west of the river and forcibly transported to Syrian territory. There they were brought to a military post and interrogated by Syrian officers who examined their American identity documents. They were later released through United Nations representatives.
6. On 15 January at 1900 hours local time Syrians opened automatic fire from the direction of Kafr Aakeb on Israel fishermen on Lake Kinneret. An Israel police boat returned the fire.
7. On 15 January at 2050 hours local time machine-gun fire was again opened on Israel fishermen by Syrians from the direction of Massoudiya village. Fire was returned.

The above incidents occurred outside the Demilitarized Zone. Following each of them Israel lodged a complaint with the Mixed Armistice Commission.

The murder in cold blood of the shepherd at Maaleh Habashan and the other acts of aggression which had preceded it constitute grave violations of the United Nations Charter, threatening peace and security. They bear a particularly ominous character in view of the Security Council's recent consideration of another Israel complaint on United Arab Republic aggression.

The Government of Israel believes that it is the duty of the United Nations under the Charter to bring about an immediate cessation of these acts of aggression.

Please accept etc.

(Signed) Abba Eban

Permanent Representative of  
Israel to the United Nations

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