



LETTER DATED 16 OCTOBER 1953 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF SYRIA TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to request you to be good enough to transmit the present communication to the members of the Security Council.

On 2 September 1953 the Israel authorities started works to change the bed of the River Jordan in the central sector of the Demilitarized Zone. The purpose of these works is to divert the river into a new channel, in order to make it flow through territory controlled by the Israel authorities. These acts were accompanied by military operations, also in the central sector of the Demilitarized Zone. Partial mobilization has been carried out behind the sector in question.

By acting in this manner the Israel authorities have violated the provisions of the Syria-Israel Armistice Agreement, in particular article V. According to the very clear and explicit text of that Agreement, no military force may be stationed in the Demilitarized Zone. In addition, the administration of the Zone is made the responsibility of the local authorities under the Chairman of the Mixed Armistice Commission; the Zone is not subject to the authority of either of the parties. Consequently the Israel authorities were not entitled to undertake any works in any sector of the Demilitarized Zone.

The effect of the works is to deprive the riparian inhabitants along the Jordan of the water they need to irrigate their land. Article V of the General Armistice Agreement explicitly provides for the exercise of normal activities by the population of the Demilitarized Zone. To deprive them of water, a vital necessity, is to prevent them from carrying on their normal daily occupations in peace.

The Jordan separates Syria from Palestine. It also provides water for the irrigation of land on Syrian territory. The rights of Syrian riparian landowner to the Jordan water are of long standing and have never been disrupted. These landowners have unhappily also been affected by Israel's arbitrary action; their land has been deprived of the water to which they are legally entitled.

Article II of the General Armistice Agreement provides that neither of the Parties shall gain any military advantage. By attempting to change the course of the Jordan, the Israel authorities have gained a military advantage in contravention of article II.

Thus the Israel authorities have violated the provisions of the Syria-Israel General Armistice Agreement by:

1. infringing the rights of the inhabitants of the Demilitarized Zone;
2. preventing the Syrian riparian population from irrigating their land with water from the Jordan;
3. militarily occupying a sector of the Demilitarized Zone.

The Syrian Government brought the above facts to the attention of General Vagn Bennike, United Nations Chief of Staff of the Truce Supervision Organization for Palestine. As Chairman of the Syria-Israel Armistice Commission, General Vagn Bennike, acting in accordance with the provisions of the Armistice Agreement requested the Israel authorities to call a halt to the operations begun in the Demilitarized Zone on 2 September 1953. Despite the explicit terms of this request, the Israel authorities have refused to comply with it. Such an attitude is both arbitrary and illegal, and is proof that the Israel authorities do not mean to respect the agreement which they agreed to sign on 20 July 1949.

May I therefore request you to be good enough to convene the Security Council so that this question may be placed on its agenda and a prompt decision may be taken.

I have the honour to be etc.

(Signed) Rafik Asha

Permanent Representative of Syria
to the United Nations

