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THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Letter dated 2 September 1976 from the Permanent Representative of
Yemen to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter dated 1 September 1976 from Mr. Farouk Kaddoumi, member of the Executive Committee and Head of the Political Department of the Palestine Liberation Organization, addressed to Your Excellency and request that it be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under item 29 of the provisional agenda.

(Signed) Mohamed A. SALLAM
Ambassador Extraordinary
and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative of the Yemen Arab Republic
to the United Nations

* A/31/150.

ANNEX

Letter dated 1 September 1976 from the Head of the Political Department
of the Palestine Liberation Organization to the Secretary-General

I refer to the letter circulated at the request of the Permanent Mission of Lebanon (A/31/179). In answer to the allegations and accusations contained therein, I would like to make the following observations:

1. The presence of the Palestinians in Lebanon is not a voluntary act, not an act of their own choice. In order to create an exclusive racist homeland of their own, the Zionists forcibly expelled and evicted the Palestinian people from their country 28 years ago. A part of them was driven by the force of arms across the Palestine-Lebanese frontiers to become reduced to the status of refugees in Lebanon, living in appalling misery and wretchedness. They were, and continue to be, denied many of their basic human rights, including the right to work, the right to any form of social security and the right to move freely in and out of the country.

2. The struggle of the Palestinian people to regain their homeland and to liberate it from the racist, Zionist yoke - a struggle recognized as legitimate by the United Nations and an ever increasing majority of States - was opposed by the Israelis with massive attacks on Palestinian refugee camps and Lebanese villages. Their avowed purpose was the physical liquidation and massive destruction of the Palestinians. To achieve that, incessant attacks - by air, land and sea - were launched in addition to assassinations by the mining of private cars and by the dispatching of letter and parcel bombs. The several complaints lodged by the Lebanese Government before the United Nations are sufficient evidence of this.

3. The severe and unceasing attacks of the Israelis were no deterrent to the Palestinians. The struggle continued unabated. To ward off the dangers of indiscriminate and systematic killings and in an effort aimed at self-protection and self-defence against Israeli raids, the Palestinians had to arm themselves, particularly in view of the proven inadequacy of the Lebanese defences. This was done within the framework of Lebanese sovereignty and with the knowledge and consent of the Lebanese authorities. To that effect, the PLO in November 1969 concluded with the Lebanese authorities an accord, known as the Cairo Agreement, to which a number of annexes were appended.

4. When their policy of direct confrontation failed, the Israelis, aided and abetted by imperialist circles, adopted a policy of instigating and fomenting trouble inside Lebanon. Instead of directly achieving its aims, Israel resorted to indirect means - to implementing its plans by proxy - a practice revealed by the recent statements of Israeli leaders. The PLO firmly believes that this is the crux and the main cause of the Lebanese crisis. The Lebanese Government itself foresaw and predicted the situation since 1970. In an official statement dated 18 March 1970 transmitted by the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the

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Security Council (S/9713) and to the Secretary-General (A/7964), the Lebanese Government stated:

"Through its threats and aggression Israel intends to compel Lebanon to force its 300,000 Palestinian refugees, through the use of armed force, to resign themselves indefinitely to the miseries of their exodus, under penalty of itself suffering further aggression by Israel. Thus Israel's aim is none other than to destroy Lebanon either from inside or from outside, by confronting it with the alternatives of undergoing Israeli raids against its own territory and its population or practising towards its own brothers who are resident in its territory a permanent policy of violence and civil war."

5. It is futile to deny that the Lebanese crisis has its own internal causes also, that lie in the political structure and the socio-economic set-up of the Lebanese society. Throughout the crisis several attempts were made to reform Lebanon's political and socio-economic structure. One such attempt was the constitutional document, proposed by the President of the Republic, which aimed at introducing a number of basic constitutional changes in the system and which was refused as inadequate. These attempts at reform and the over two-thirds majority vote of the Lebanese parliament asking the immediate resignation of the President indicate the reality of the internal causes in the Lebanese civil war.

6. Whether caused by Israeli designs or internal Lebanese dynamics, the Lebanese crisis is not the responsibility of the Palestinians in Lebanon. The Palestinians and the Lebanese people together are its direct victims. The PLO and the Palestinians in Lebanon are greatly affected by, and hence concerned with, the Lebanese crisis. Our position is quite clear: we keep our arms in self-defence against any attack, for our survival and for the continuation of our struggle for liberation and for regaining our homeland, in accordance with the agreements concluded with the Lebanese authorities.

7. In addition to that, the PLO has been guided throughout the Lebanese crisis by the following principles:

(a) The PLO supports the security, stability, sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity of Lebanon and the unity of its people.

(b) The PLO continues its struggle for liberation of its homeland Palestine and does not accept any substitute. Hence the PLO considers the presence of the Palestinians in Lebanon as transitory.

(c) The PLO adheres to the strict application of the agreements concluded with the Lebanese authorities and considers them an adequate basis for the regulation of their relationship.

(d) At present the PLO is sustaining sacrifices to alleviate the hardships and suffering inflicted by the present fighting on both the Palestinian and the Lebanese people. It shall continue its efforts for restoration of security, peace and stability in Lebanon and shall spare no effort to that effect.

(Signed) Farouk KADDOUMI
Member of the Executive Committee
Head of the Political Department
