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Agenda item 66QUESTION CONSIDERED BY THE FIRST EMERGENCY SPECIAL SESSION
OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FROM 1 TO 10 NOVEMBER 1956Report of the Secretary-General in pursuance of the resolution
of the General Assembly of 2 February 1957. (A/RES/461)

I

1. The General Assembly on 2 February 1957, adopted two resolutions, resolutions I and II (A/RES/460 and A/RES/461), concerning the Middle Eastern question. In resolution I the General Assembly, deploring "the non-compliance of Israel to complete its withdrawal behind the armistice demarcation line", called upon Israel to complete this withdrawal without further delay. In resolution II the General Assembly, recognizing that withdrawal by Israel must be followed by action which would assure progress towards the creation of peaceful conditions, noted with appreciation the Secretary-General's report and the measures therein "to be carried out upon Israel's complete withdrawal", called upon the Governments concerned scrupulously to observe the Armistice Agreement, and stated that it considered that, after full withdrawal of Israel from the Sharm el-Sheikh and Gaza areas, various measures, as proposed in the Secretary-General's report, would be required for the scrupulous maintenance of the Armistice Agreement. The General Assembly requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with the parties concerned, to take steps to carry out the measures envisaged and to report, as appropriate, to the General Assembly.

2. The Secretary-General on 3 February transmitted the two resolutions to the representatives of Egypt and Israel. He asked the representative of Israel to meet with him on 4 February, at which time he hoped to learn the position of the Government of Israel, particularly, as a matter of special urgency, on resolution I concerning withdrawal. On 4 February the representative of Israel, in reply to this request, presented an aide-mémoire, which is annexed to this report (Annex I).

3. In the aide-mémoire the Government of Israel "request the Secretary-General to ask the Government of Egypt whether Egypt agrees to a mutual and full abstention from belligerent acts, by land, air and sea, on withdrawal of Israel troops". In another point in the aide-mémoire clarification is sought by Israel as to whether, "immediately on the withdrawal of Israel forces from the Sharm el-Sheikh area, units of the United Nations Emergency Force will be stationed along the western shore of the Gulf of Aqaba in order to act as a restraint against hostile acts, and will remain so deployed until another effective means is agreed upon between the parties concerned for ensuring permanent freedom of navigation and the absence of belligerent acts in the Straits of Tiran and the Gulf of Aqaba".

4. The first of these two points in the Israel aide-mémoire must be understood as a request for action in implementation of resolution II, while the wording of the request leaves open the question whether it involves a willingness to comply with the demand for withdrawal in resolution I, even given a positive response by Egypt. The Secretary-General, at the meeting with the representative of Israel, asked whether, with regard to Gaza, it is understood by the Government of Israel that the withdrawal must cover elements of administration as well as military troops, forces and units. A clarification on this point appeared to be a prerequisite to further consideration of the Israel aide-mémoire. This point and the following one are related, as there is an unavoidable connexion between Israel's willingness to comply fully with resolution I as concerns the Gaza Strip and what may be done toward maintaining quiet in the Sharm el-Sheikh area. It is unrealistic to assume that the latter question could be solved while Israel remains in Gaza.

5. The second of the points in the Israel aide-mémoire requests a "clarification" which, in view of the position of the General Assembly, could go beyond what was stated in the last report only after negotiation with Egypt. This follows from the statements in the debate in the General Assembly, and the report on which it was based, which made it clear that the stationing of the Force at Sharm el-Sheikh, under such terms as those mentioned in the question posed by Israel, would require Egyptian consent. In the light of this implication of Israel's question, the Secretary-General considered it important, as a basis for his consideration of the aide-mémoire, to learn whether Israel itself, in principle, consents to a stationing of UNEF units on its territory in implementation of the functions established for the Force in the basic decisions and noted in resolution II of the General Assembly of 4 February, where it was indicated that the Force should be placed "on the Egyptian-Israeli armistice demarcation line".

6. Concerning his two questions, the Secretary-General received on 5 February a letter from the Permanent Representative of Israel. The letter is annexed to this report (Annex II). The answer of the Secretary-General to this communication was transmitted by his letter of 6 February (Annex III).

7. A further meeting with the representative of Israel was held, on the invitation of the Secretary-General, on 10 February. Following the meeting, the representative of Israel sent the Secretary-General an additional letter, received on 11 February. This letter is likewise annexed to the report (Annex IV).

8. This latest communication received from the representative of Israel does not add any new information. Thus it is still an open question whether Israel, under any circumstances, accepts full implementation of resolution I, which, as pointed out above, requires withdrawal from the Gaza strip of Israel's civil administration and police as well as of its armed forces. Further, it is still an open question whether Israel accepts the stationing of units of the United Nations Emergency Force on its side of the armistice demarcation line under resolution II, concerning which, in a similar respect, Israel has raised a question which requires

clarification of the Egyptian stand. In case Israel were to receive the assurance from Egypt, which it has requested the Secretary-General to ask for as an action in implementation of resolution II, the representative of Israel in his latest communication has stated only that his Government "would formulate its position on all outstanding questions in the light of Egypt's response".

9. The fact that the Government of Israel has not found it possible to clarify elements decisive for the consideration of their requests, has complicated the efforts to achieve implementation of the resolutions of the General Assembly. If this development has "adversely affected the time-schedule for the withdrawal" of Israel forces, about which the Secretary-General had not been informed, an ultimate reason is that Israel's request for an assurance from Egypt concerning the cessation of all belligerent acts has been put forward while Israel itself, by continued occupation, maintains a state of belligerency which, in the case of Gaza, it has not indicated its intention fully to liquidate.

10. The Secretary-General shares the view of the Government of Israel that the office of the Secretary-General may serve as a means for an interchange between Member states of "proposals and ideas", but wishes to draw attention to the fact that the action which the Government of Israel has requested cannot be regarded as properly described in such terms, as it would be an action within the scope of resolution II and in implementation of this resolution which, although closely related to resolution I, has, at least, full and unconditional acceptance of the demand in resolution I as its prerequisite.

11. The Secretary-General does not consider it necessary here to discuss other points in the latest Israel communication, to which he will have to revert in forthcoming discussions with the representative of Israel.

II

12. The General Assembly, in adopting resolutions I and II (A/RES/460 and A/RES/461), was guided by the need to "assure progress towards the creation of peaceful conditions" in the area. It was recognized that this objective - which was also the theme of the Secretary-General's report on which the debate in the General Assembly was based - required, as an initial step, withdrawal of Israel

behind the armistice demarcation line, to be followed by various measures within the framework of the Armistice Agreement. These measures aimed at "a return to the state of affairs envisaged in the Armistice Agreement, and avoidance of the state of affairs into which conditions due to lack of compliance with the Agreement had progressively deteriorated." With this in view, resolution II in its operative paragraph 2 called for scrupulous observance of the Armistice Agreement, which, in its first article, establishes the right of each party to "its security and freedom from fear of attack by the armed forces of the other".

13. The position of the Secretary-General, in his efforts to secure implementation of the two resolutions, has been based on the following considerations. First, agreement was widespread in the General Assembly, as reflected in the sequence of the two resolutions, that "like the cease-fire, withdrawal is a preliminary and essential phase in a development through which a stable basis may be laid for peaceful conditions in the area". Second, the principle which must guide the United Nations after a change in the status juris through military action contrary to the Charter, as stated in the last report of the Secretary-General (A/3512, paragraph 5 (a)), is recognized as expressing a basic rule of the Charter, thus giving a high priority to requests based on that principle. The key significance of resolution I, as indicated by these two considerations, is confirmed by the fact that resolution II explicitly states that the measures to which it refers are to be carried out "after full withdrawal of Israel" behind the armistice demarcation line.

14. The Secretary-General has understood the General Assembly to see in resolution II a formal undertaking with respect to measures to be effected upon withdrawal, in the light of which resolution I should be implemented without delay. This is particularly so, since the United Nations Force is deployed in the region with an assurance from the Government of Egypt that the Government, when exercising its sovereign rights on any matter concerning the presence and functioning of UNEF, will be guided in good faith by its acceptance of the basic General Assembly resolution of 5 November 1956 concerning the Force and its functions.

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15. Beginning with its initial resolution of 2 November 1956 (Resolution 997 (ESI)) concerning this question, and culminating in its resolution II of 2 February 1957 (A/RES/461), the General Assembly has stressed the key importance it attaches to scrupulous observance by both parties of the terms of the Armistice Agreement between Egypt and Israel. In this regard, the Secretary-General is able to report that the Government of Egypt reaffirms its intent to observe fully the provisions of the Armistice Agreement to which it is a party, as indicated earlier in its acceptance (A/3266) of the 2 November resolution of the General Assembly, on the assumption, of course, that observance will be reciprocal. Attention should be drawn, in this context, to the statement in paragraph 22 of the last report of the Secretary-General (A/3512) reporting the desire of the Government of Egypt to see an end to all raids and incursions across the armistice line, in both directions, with effective assistance from United Nations auxiliary organs to that effect.

16. The position of the Government of Israel on the Armistice Agreement, as reaffirmed by the representative of Israel in response to a question on the matter during his meeting with the Secretary-General on 10 February, was set forth in the letter of 25 January 1957 from the representative of Israel to the Secretary-General (Annex V).

17. The relationship between the two resolutions on withdrawal and on measures to be carried out after withdrawal, affords the possibility of informal explorations of the whole field covered by the resolutions, preparatory to negotiations. Later, the results of such explorations may be used in negotiations through a constructive combination of measures, representing for the two countries concerned parallel progress toward the peaceful conditions sought. However, such explorations cannot be permitted to invert the sequence between withdrawal and other measures, nor to disrupt the evolution of negotiations toward their goal. Progress toward peaceful conditions, following the general policy suggested in the last report to the General Assembly, on which its resolution II is based, has to be achieved gradually. To disregard this would render the process more difficult and might seriously jeopardize the possibility of achieving desired results. In explorations and negotiations,

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which in this sense necessarily have to proceed step by step, the parties involved must time and again show willingness to accept some risks as a condition for progress.

18. Peaceful conditions in the Middle East must be created in the interest of all countries in the region and of the world community. The basic principles of the Charter must be asserted and respected, in the very same interest. Neither one of these imperative demands can be met at the expense of the other. The fulfilment of one will make it easier to meet the other, but to have peace with justice, adherence to principle and law must be given priority and cannot be conditioned. In the present case, efforts to meet the two requirements just stated have so far been frustrated. The United Nations must maintain its position on these requirements and, in doing so, should be entitled to count on the assistance, in the complex process of gradual and sensitive approach to the objectives, in particular of the two Member States directly concerned. If such assistance is not forthcoming, the efforts of the United Nations will be caused to fail, to the detriment of all. In an organization based on voluntary co-operation and respect for the general opinion to which the organization gives expression, the responsibility for such a failure would fall, not on the organization, but on those who had denied it the necessary co-operation. This responsibility extends beyond the immediate issue. It may also, in this case, well have to cover difficulties, flowing from possible failure, for the United Nations to fulfill its vital functions under the Armistice Agreements and for the parties to come to grips with the wider problems which call for such urgent attention.

19. The Charter has given to the Security Council means of enforcement and the right to take decisions with mandatory effect. No such authority is given to the General Assembly, which can only recommend action to Member Governments, which, in turn, may follow the recommendations or disregard them. This is also true of recommendations adopted by the General Assembly within the framework of the "Uniting for Peace" resolution. However, under that resolution the General Assembly has certain rights otherwise reserved to the Security Council. Thus, it can, under that resolution, recommend collective measures. In this case, also, the recommendation is not compulsory.

20. It seems, in this context, appropriate to distinguish between recommendations which implement a Charter principle, which in itself is binding on Member States, and recommendations which, although adopted under the Charter, do not implement any such basic provision. A recommendation of the first kind would have behind it the force of the Charter, to which collective measures recommended by the General Assembly could add emphasis, without, however, changing the legal character of the recommendation. A decision on collective measures referring to a recommendation of the second kind, although likewise formally retaining its legal character, would mean that the recommendation is recognized by the General Assembly as being of such significance to the efforts of the United Nations as to assimilate it to a recommendation expressing an obligation established by the Charter. If, in some case, collective measures under the "Uniting for Peace" resolution were to be considered, these and other important questions of principle would require attention; this may also be said of the effect of such steps which, while supporting efforts to achieve peaceful solutions, may perhaps, on the other hand, be introducing new elements of conflict.

III

21. In the situation now facing the United Nations the General Assembly, as a matter of priority, may wish to indicate how it desires the Secretary-General to proceed with further steps to carry out the relevant decisions of the General Assembly.

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ANNEX I

Aide-mémoire dated 4 February 1957, transmitted to the Secretary-General by the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations

The Government of Israel takes note of the adoption by the General Assembly of two inter-related resolutions (A/3517 (I) and A/3518 (II)).

Israel will co-operate with any United Nations effort designed to establish peace in the area, based on the principles of the United Nations Charter.

I am instructed urgently to request the Secretary-General to ask the Government of Egypt whether Egypt agrees to the mutual and full abstention from belligerent acts, by land, air and sea, on the withdrawal of Israel troops. This matter is of central importance to all the questions at issue.

In considering the withdrawal schedule, I am instructed to refer to the Sharm el-Sheikh area, and the related question of measures designed to prevent hostile acts, such as interference with free navigation in the Straits of Tiran and in the Gulf of Aqaba. The General Assembly in its resolution II has recognized "that withdrawal by Israel must be followed by action which would assure progress towards the creation of peaceful conditions".

A renewal of interference with shipping bound to and from Elath would clearly lead to hostilities and thus prejudice the declared objective of United Nations resolutions. Accordingly, I am instructed to obtain clarification without delay, whether immediately on the withdrawal of Israel forces from the Sharm el-Sheikh area, units of the United Nations Emergency Force will be stationed along the western shore of the Gulf of Aqaba in order to act as a restraint against hostile acts; and will remain so deployed until another effective means is agreed upon between the parties concerned for ensuring permanent freedom of navigation and the absence of belligerent acts in the Straits of Tiran and the Gulf of Aqaba.

A positive response to the above questions from all concerned would greatly facilitate the early fulfilment of United Nations objectives as set forth in the United Nations resolutions taken as a whole.

4 February 1957.

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ANNEX II

Letter dated 5 February 1957 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations, addressed to the Secretary-General

New York, 5 February 1957

I have been in touch with my Government on the subject of our conversation yesterday.

The Government of Israel attaches primary importance to the elucidation of the two questions which I presented to you in my side-mémoire.

An affirmative response from Egypt to the first question, on belligerent acts, would affect my Government's policies on outstanding issues. A positive response to the second would greatly assist us to understand the potential role of UNEF in the creation and maintenance of peaceful conditions.

Accordingly, on the clarification of these basic matters, a position would be created in which the other questions which you raised at yesterday's meeting could be considered in a more practical way.

(Signed) Abba EBAN

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ANNEX III

Letter dated 6 February 1957 from the Secretary-General, addressed to the
Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations

New York, 6 February 1957

In our meeting of 4 February, as you will recall, I drew attention to two points on which you agreed to seek clarification from your Government "immediately". The two points were (1) whether with regard to Gaza it is understood by the Government of Israel that the withdrawal must cover elements of administration as well as military troops, forces and units; and (2) whether, as a question of principle, the Government of Israel agrees to the stationing of units of the UNEF on the Israel side of the Armistice Demarcation Line.

Although undertaking to seek clarification from your Government, you indicated in our discussion and in response to an inquiry on the same matter made of you by Dr. Bunche on 5 February, that the attitude of your Government on these two points is as set forth in your previous aide-mémoire (A/3511) and in your address to the General Assembly of 28 January. In these two documents, the answer to the first question concerning Gaza is that Israel does not intend to withdraw its civil administration from that territory, while there is no reference at all to the second question concerning stationing of UNEF on the Israel side of the line.

May I also point out that your communication to me of 5 February, although informing me that you have been in touch with your Government on the subject of our conversation on the previous days, has to say about the questions I raised only that if "affirmative" and "positive" responses to the questions put by Israel were first obtained, then "a position would be created" in which my questions "could be considered in a more practical way".

In the circumstances, I must assume, at least for the present, that the reply of your Government to my two questions is specifically negative in one instance and essentially so in the other.

(Signed) Dag HAMMARSKJOLD
Secretary-General

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ANNEX IV

Letter dated 10 February 1957 from the Permanent
Representative of Israel to the United Nations,
addressed to the Secretary-General

New York, 10 February 1957

I refer to your letter of 6 February 1957.

My Government's position on the withdrawal of forces from the western coast of the Gulf of Aqaba and from Gaza has been set out in my aide-mémoire of 4 February and in my letter to you of 5 February.

The latter communication refers to the request which you made to me on 4 February for the clarification of two points bearing on matters other than the withdrawal of armed forces from the Gulf of Aqaba and Gaza. On learning from the Egyptian Government whether or not it will exercise belligerency by land, sea and air after the withdrawal of Israel forces my Government would formulate its position on all outstanding questions in the light of the Egyptian Government's response.

A Government which anticipates that its neighbours will claim and exercise belligerency against it must clearly adopt a different view of its security problems than it might take if it could confidently assume full and mutual abstention from all belligerent acts. If the proposed affirmation of abstention from belligerent acts were made, Egypt and Israel could move forward to the establishment of agreed relations in the security and other spheres. I cannot predict what arrangements they might or might not then concert with respect to the disposition of their forces on each side of their frontier. The fact that I have not obtained assistance in receiving an official expression of Egypt's intentions on belligerency deprives my Government of an essential element for the consideration of a great variety of dependent problems.

I have similarly informed my Government that I have not been able to obtain clarification whether, immediately on the withdrawal of Israel forces from the Sharm el-Sheikh area, units of the UNEF will be stationed along the western shore of the Gulf of Aqaba in order to act as a restraint against hostile acts, and will remain so deployed until another effective means is agreed upon between

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the parties concerned for ensuring permanent freedom of navigation and absence of belligerent acts in the Straits of Tiran and in the Gulf of Aqaba.

I have accordingly reported to Jerusalem that our conversations have thrown no light on the question whether, on the withdrawal of Israel forces from the Sharm el-Sheikh area, there will be any effective guarantee for continued freedom of navigation in the waters of the Gulf of Aqaba. This freedom is a vital and legitimate national interest for Israel, and is also of international significance. The fact that we have not obtained a positive answer on this point has adversely affected the time-schedule for the withdrawal of forces.

I wish to explain why Israel attaches crucial importance to the questions set out in the aide-mémoire of 4 February.

In the light of past experience, and of recent Egyptian declarations, my Government must in all prudence hold the following assumptions unless evidence to the contrary becomes available:

First, that Egypt claims the withdrawal of Israel troops from her territory, while herself reserving belligerent rights to remain in effect after such withdrawal;

Second, that Egypt has not agreed that free navigation in the Gulf of Aqaba will be ensured after Israel's withdrawal, or that effective measures such as the stationing of units of UNEF should be instituted to ensure such continued freedom of navigation;

Third, that when the Suez Canal becomes physically opened for navigation Egypt will, as in the past, obstruct Israel's exercise of her rights in the Canal under the 1888 Convention;

Fourth, that the doctrine and practice of continuing belligerency will govern Egypt's relations towards Israel in such matters as frontier raids and the non-recognition of Israel's rights under the Charter.

These are sombre and disquieting assumptions. But nothing has yet happened to justify any contrary assumption on our part. I note, in particular, that you did not feelable to state today that Egypt's declaration of adherence to the 1949 Armistice Agreement includes the acceptance by her of an obligation to abstain from the claim and exercise of belligerent rights in the Suez Canal, the Gulf of Aqaba or elsewhere.

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Against this background, it has become clear to the Government of Israel that the withdrawal of troops, without simultaneous action to prevent the renewal of hostilities by land and sea, would in fact lead to the resumption of such conflict. It is noteworthy that in adopting resolutions calling respectively for the withdrawal of troops and for measures to ensure progress towards peaceful conditions, the General Assembly declined to separate its action under these two headings. It voted on the explicit assumption that action in one field without action in the other would jeopardize the prospects of peace.

In that spirit, my Government made an effort on 4 February to solve the deadlock by the clarification of the two points referred to in its aide-mémoire.

In the first place we sought a declaration by Egypt and Israel pledging themselves to full and mutual abstention from belligerent acts. Such an affirmation would set up an accepted principle for relations between the two countries, and bring those relations, for the first time, within the régime of the United Nations Charter. Abstention from belligerency would, of course, include the annulment of such practices as the restrictions on Israel-bound shipping in the Suez Canal and the Gulf of Aqaba, and of activities such as those of the Fedayeen which are incompatible with any policy of non-belligerency. On the basis of a mutual abstention from belligerent acts Egypt and Israel could construct a coherent system of security relationships. The implementation of a non-belligerent agreement would still require certain measures and guarantees, but the conditions for progress in all fields would be automatically and radically transformed.

My Government feels that it is not equitable to ask it to discuss its attitude on any concrete question affecting its security unless it knows whether its answer must be based on the assumption of war, or on the assumption of progress to peace. Other Member States discussing this problem might reach more precise conclusions if they understood clearly whether or not Egypt, on securing the withdrawal of Israel forces, would renew its policy of blockade and raids.

A similar situation prevails with respect to my second request. I have enquired what arrangements for continued freedom of navigation on the Gulf of Aqaba and the Straits of Tiran would prevail on the withdrawal of Israel's forces from the Sharm el-Sheikh area. It is regrettable and puzzling that information

so vital to our schedule for the withdrawal of troops should still be withheld from us. So long as this information is denied it, my Government must apprehend that the withdrawal of its forces would be followed by an immediate or early resumption of the illicit restricts which effectively denied Israel the free use of its southern port, and cut our country off from normal trading relations with a great part of the world, during a period when the Suez Canal, too, has been effectively closed to essential Israel-bound commerce.

The priority of the Sharm el-Sheikh area in any discussion on the withdrawal of forces is justified by many considerations. The areas adjoining Sharm el-Sheikh have recently been evacuated. An important international interest is widely recognized in the adjoining waters. A wide consensus of opinion exists on the need to prevent blockades and maritime warfare. Withdrawal from this area would complete the evacuation of the territory of Egypt. In these circumstances my Government has felt justified in proposing that this problem be solved before others of greater complexity are broached. The solution which we seek is one that reconciles the withdrawal of forces with the maintenance of continued freedom of navigation.

My Government has studied your letter of 6 February and a published statement on that date. It does not agree that the solution of two other questions, not dealing directly with the withdrawal of forces, can justifiably be described as "prerequisite" to the solution of the two basic problems of belligerency and withdrawal from the remaining area of Sinai. We hold that the two basic problems raised in the aide-mémoire of 4 February are objectively and intrinsically the most urgent of those still outstanding. My Government's position on this matter is set out in this letter, and it therefore does not agree that the formulation of the last paragraph of your letter of 6 February is an adequate description of its stand.

In the light of these considerations, and of my letter of 5 February, I am instructed to reiterate the request made through you in my aide-mémoire of 4 February for clarification by the Egyptian Government of its attitude to an affirmation of full and mutual abstention from belligerent acts; on the withdrawal of Israel troops; and for clarification of the guarantees to be established for continued freedom of navigation on the withdrawal of Israel forces from the Sharm el-Sheikh area.

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My Government holds that it is one of the central functions of the high office of Secretary-General to serve as a means for the interchange of proposals and ideas between Member States, especially when normal methods of inter-State contact are not available. It hopes that in that spirit you will assist it to elucidate the two problems referred to in the 4 February aid-mémoire, in order that progress may be made in fulfilling the objectives of the General Assembly's recent resolutions.

(Signed) Abba EBAN

Permanent Representative of
Israel to the United Nations

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ANNEX V

Letter dated 25 January 1957 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations, addressed to the Secretary-General

New York, 25 January 1957

In your letter of 6 December 1956, you asked me to ascertain the position of the Israel Government on the General Armistice Agreement between Israel and Egypt.

This question has also arisen on a number of occasions in our conversations and, as you are no doubt aware, has formed the subject of public statements by the Prime Minister, and by other official Israeli spokesmen.

Israel's view as outlined in these statements is, briefly, that the General Armistice Agreement has been consistently violated by Egypt both in letter and in spirit ever since it was signed on 24 February 1949. Its central purpose of non-belligerency and its character as a transition to a peaceful settlement have been constantly repudiated by Egypt. Egypt has even held, most incongruously, that the Agreement could coexist with a "state of war" against Israel. This policy of Egypt and the actions flowing therefrom have brought the Agreement to nought, with the result that a new system of relationships must now be constructed.

On the other hand, Israel does not consider that the relations between Israel and Egypt are those of a state of war: our mutual obligations are still defined by the Charter of the United Nations which rules out any concept of a "state of war". This was made clear by the Prime Minister of Israel in a speech in the Knesset on 23 January 1957. The relevant extract of this speech follows:

"As for the Armistice Agreement with Egypt, which was signed eight years ago (on 24 February 1949), as a transitional stage to permanent peace, the Egyptian dictator has violated its principles and purposes and by his repeated declarations that there is a state of war between Israel and Egypt, he has distorted the essence and the aims of the Agreement. He exploited it as a smoke screen to cover up his murderous attacks against the people of Israel and his implacable blockade of Israel on land, at sea and in the air.

"It was from the Gaza strip that fedayeen units were dispatched to Israel and bands of murderers and saboteurs were organized in other Arab countries as well. Thus the Agreement was transformed into harmful and dangerous fiction which only assisted the Egyptian ruling junta in its malevolent designs.

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"Any return to this agreement means return to murder and sabotage. Israel does not claim that the absence of an armistice agreement means the existence of a state of war with Egypt even though Egypt insisted on the existence of a state of war even when the Agreement was in existence. Israel is prepared to confirm its position on this by signing immediately with Egypt an agreement of non-belligerency and mutual non-aggression, but the Armistice Agreement, violated and broken, is beyond repair."

(Signed) Abba EBAN
