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THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Note verbale dated 21 August 1968 from the Permanent Mission of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

With reference to letter No. EC113/52/5 from the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization, the Permanent Mission of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the United Nations has the honour to state the following:

The Soviet Union's position on the matter referred to by you and by the Director-General of FAO is well known. It was set out, inter alia, in the letter of 24 July 1967 from the Permanent Representative of the USSR to the United Nations (A/6772).

The Soviet Union is providing extensive assistance to the population of the Arab countries which have suffered from Israel's aggression. This assistance is extended by the Government of the USSR on a bilateral basis and also by Soviet public organizations.

We recognize that the peoples of the world are troubled by the plight of the Arab refugees and other victims of Israel's aggression. For that reason, the steps taken by various Governments and international organizations to ease that plight are, of course, deserving of every encouragement.

It must be pointed out, however, that the main consideration is to put an end to Israel's aggression against the Arab peoples and to eliminate the consequences of that aggression.

It is common knowledge that the very problem of the Middle Eastern refugees was created and, what is more, continues to be made more complicated by Israel's unceasing aggressive acts against the Arab countries. The present aggravation of that problem is a direct result of Israel's most recent aggression against the Arab countries in June 1967.

Under these circumstances, it goes without saying that solving the refugee problem can in no sense be reduced to a mere question of international charity. Reparation to the Arab refugees and other victims of aggression must be made, in accordance with the principles of justice, the rules of international law and the interests of peace in that region, by the aggressor himself - that is to say, by Israel. It is also essential that the substantive aspects of this question should be resolved in conformity with the decisions taken by the United Nations and that the legitimate aspirations of hundreds of thousands of people should be satisfied.

However, the Israel authorities have for many years disregarded the relevant United Nations decisions, including, in particular, operative paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948, under which Israel is required to permit the Arab refugees to return to their homes and is further required to return the refugees' property to them and to pay compensation to those choosing not to return. Israel is also continuing to disregard all the subsequent decisions adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council with regard to the Middle East, including the Security Council resolution of 22 November 1967, which calls for a Middle Eastern settlement based on the withdrawal of Israel's forces from the Arab territories occupied by them.

It is Israel's unwillingness to implement the decisions of the United Nations that is preventing a solution of the problem of the Middle Eastern refugees.

The Permanent Mission of the USSR to the United Nations requests that this note should be circulated as an official General Assembly document.
