

Official Statements Confirming Our Sentiments Expressed Last Week

Letter dated 21 November 1966 addressed to His Excellency Mr. Arthur J. Goldberg, President of the Security Council of the United Nations by His Excellency Mr. Michael Comay, Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations.

"Excellency,

I have the honour to refer to the "Report by the Secretary-General concerning the incident which took place on 13 November 1966 in Jordan" dated 18 November 1966 (S/7593), and, on instructions from my Government, to make certain factual observations on the Report by the Chief-of-Staff of UNTSO, attached to the Secretary-General's Report.

It appears from General Bull's Report that the account of the Israel action given in it is based on hearsay--namely, statements made after the event to the U.N. Military Observers, by Jordanian witnesses. These statements are for the most part exaggerated and inaccurate, either deliberately so or because of the confusion and embellishment which is natural under the circumstances. In order to dispel inflated and unreliable accounts regarding the nature and scope of the Israel action, my Government has authorized me to put the following facts on record:

(a) The sole objective of the Israel action was to demolish a limited number of empty houses, after their occupants had been evacuated. This was done as a warning against aiding and harbouring saboteur and terrorist groups that had been carrying out a number of raids into Israel in that sector of the border. The number of houses demolished was far less than the number stated in the Report.

(b) The Israel troops were given strict instructions to take every precaution for the avoidance of casualties. The total civilian casualties, as confirmed by the Chief-of-Staff's corrected Report, were three killed and seventeen injured. Of the latter ten suffered minor injuries, requiring only first-aid, and returned home the same day. (Unfortunately, in the U.N. Report as first distributed, the civilian casualty figure was given as three killed and 97 injured, owing to an error in transmission. This erroneous figure gained wide publicity). It is not stated how or at what stage of the incident these casualties were caused, and at least part of them may have resulted from the military clash. Their number confirms that empty houses were demolished after their occupants had first been evacuated. It may be noted that according to the Report the village had a population of 5000, and 1200 houses.

The main casualties occurred in an unexpected clash between the Israel task force and a Jordanian unit which rushed to the scene in fifteen to twenty trucks, and launched an attack. The Israel force disengaged itself and withdrew as soon as possible. The military casualties were 15 killed and 37 wounded (29 lightly) on the Jordan side, and 1 killed and 10 wounded on the Israel side.

My Government deeply regrets all loss of life and injury that may have been caused either to military personnel or to civilians.

(c) The number of Israel tanks used in the area of the incident was ten. None of them were Patton tanks.

(d) The total number of personnel involved was under 400. Most of these men were needed to ensure evacuation of houses and prevention of casualties.

(e) There was no bombardment or strafing from the air. The sole intervention by Israel aircraft was by four planes that intercepted four Jordanian planes attempting to attack the Israel ground force. One of the Jordanian planes was shot down. No Israel planes fired at any ground target.

(f) There was no artillery shelling.

It is essential for the Security Council to have a correct factual appreciation of the 13 November action.

My Government earnestly hopes that there may now be an end to violence and bloodshed of any kind. It appears to the governments of neighbouring States to co-operate to this end in order to ensure a peaceful and undisturbed existence for the population on both sides of the border. I would request that this letter be circulated as a Security Council document.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

STATEMENT OF THE AMERICAN ZIONIST COUNCIL
The American Zionist Council, spokesman for the entire Zionist Movement in the United States, expresses its dismay at reports that the Security Council is considering a one-sided resolution condemning Israel, without any mention of the repeated Arab provocations which are responsible for the present dangerous situation in the Middle East. It is these acts of terrorism and sabotage directed against the population of Israel, as well as the Arab self-declared war against Israel, which are the root-cause of the problem.

During the past many months the citizens and government of Israel have shown great restraint in the face of daily incursions to which they have been subjected at a cost in lives and property.

A one-sided condemnation against the victims of these repeated acts of aggression in violation of the UN Charter and the Armistice Agreements, without reference to those who are responsible for the present situation, will not contribute to the easing of tensions and may even encourage the aggressors to continue along the path they have chosen.

We call upon the international community to judge the situation in its true and total perspective.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM STATEMENT BY PRIME MINISTER ESHKOL IN KNESSET (ISRAEL'S PARLIAMENT) IN HERUSALEM ON NOVEMBER 14, 1966

Syria encourages, maintains, organizes and trains saboteurs for operation in Israel territory, whether they come directly from Syria or are introduced from Syria into Israel via other countries....She has raised the banner of provocation and war across the frontier and presents herself as the champion of aggression against Israel....She may possibly imagine that she is safe in the shelter of a great power....

Jordan has not yet found the strength to prevent the penetration into Israel of bands of saboteurs who are inhabitants of Jordan and are known to the local population which gives them shelter and encouragement....

The regrettable inability of the UN Security Council to adopt an express decision encourages the aggressors to feel that they can get away with anything....

Our policy is founded upon two concepts; striving for peace and deterrent defense....Israel sincerely desires peace, but she is absolutely determined not to sit idly by while aggression is perpetrated against her citizens....

We have not reached separately to each acts of violence... We adopted defensive measures only after an intolerable accumulation of attacks on our territory....

HIGHLIGHTS FROM STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR COMAY BEFORE UN SECURITY COUNCIL ON NOVEMBER 16, 1966

It is our wish to be permitted to live and work in conditions of peace, friendship and cooperation with our neighbors; till now, that wish has been denied us....

Contrary to the UN Charter, and contrary to the Armistice Agreements, Arab governments proclaim that they do not accept the political independence or the territorial integrity of Israel, and that our statehood must be eliminated and our people dispersed by force of arms....

To ensure the national security is the primary duty of any government in the world....For many months, the Israel Government has acted with great self-restraint as outrage after outrage took place from across the border.... This limited local action was undertaken most reluctantly, and only as a last resort, after a long period of forbearance....

The roots of the tension and violence....lie in the Arab doctrines and practices of belligerence against the State of Israel....

HIGHLIGHTS OF PRIME MINISTER LEVI ESHKOL'S STATEMENT AT ISREAL CABINET MEETING SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 1966

There is a lack of balance in the criticism voiced in various circles against Israel's action...the fundamental principle in this problem is that Israel wishes with all her heart to achieve peace; she advocates reciprocity in her relations (with the Arabs); but the Arabs seem to advocate that while gangs of murderers should be allowed to make incursions into Israel's territory, the Government of Israel must be denied the right to defend itself and to act to end the violence.

Israel desires peace with all her might, and she does not delight in military action. The (latest) action was designed to make clear to the population in the area the imperative need to stop cooperating with, encouraging, and sheltering the saboteurs. The raid by the Israel Defense Forces was aimed at this limited objective; definitive orders were issued to the Israel forces to avoid causing casualties, and to complete the restricted action and return to base. Our soldiers meticulously carried out their orders to evacuate homes in the village before blowing them up....

In the circumstances which developed during the action, its scope widened as a result of the need for self-defensive measures, and there were casualties, including soldiers, on both sides. The Government of Israel expresses its deep regret at the loss of human life on both sides....

We refute the exaggerations published about the size of the Israel force and the number of casualties and the extent of the damage in the recent action...The Israel combat team was only a small percentage of the figures published. No Israel plane bombed ground targets. The allegation about the use of Israel artillery is totally unfounded....

Once again, I wish to express the hope that there will be an end to this trail of blood....To the Arab rulers, I say: Live and let live, in peace and tranquillity, within your own borders....

To peace-loving nations in the world, I appeal: Act to end hostile actions and to reduce tensions.

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