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LETTER DATED 22 MARCH 1968 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE  
UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF  
THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I should be grateful if you would take the necessary steps to publish, as  
an official document of the Security Council, the attached statement by the  
Soviet Government dated 22 March 1968 on the question of the situation in the  
Middle East.

(Signed) Y. MALIK  
Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the USSR  
Permanent Representative of the USSR  
to the United Nations

STATEMENT BY THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT

The situation in the Middle East continues to attract the close attention of the peoples. The tension of the crisis brought about last summer by Israel's adventuristic policy is not subsiding. Israel, an imperialist State, is continuing its aggression against neighbouring Arab States, thereby increasing the scale of the crisis and its dangerous international consequences.

Again and again the Government of Israel has been organizing military provocations against Arab States. This is confirmed by reports that, in violation of the Security Council's decision calling for the cessation of military actions, Israel troops committed a new bandit attack on Jordan on 21 March 1968, using large ground and air forces.

In the occupied territories Israel militarists are perpetrating arbitrary acts and crimes, and are conducting large-scale punitive operations against the local population.

Definite steps are being taken with the aim of integrating indigenous Arab territories, which were captured as a result of the aggression, into the State of Israel. The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Israel officially announced on 29 February 1968 that the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza area, the territory to the west of the River Jordan captured from Jordan, and the Golan Heights in Syria will from now on "not be regarded as enemy territory". By this unlawful act Israel is attempting to turn the cease-fire line into its State frontier.

Even earlier the Israel authorities had begun to grant permission to numerous groups of Israel settlers to establish themselves on occupied Arab lands, including the West Bank of the River Jordan. Military settlements of so-called "farmer-soldiers" are being set up. The native Arab population is being driven away from the lands taken over by Israel settlers and its property is being seized or destroyed.

The number of Arab refugees is growing from day to day. Israel is deliberately pursuing this policy of driving the Arab population out of Israel-occupied territories in order to prepare conditions for the annexation and colonization of this land by Israel.

In defiance of the unanimous decision of the United Nations General Assembly Israel is continuing its acts of conquest against the Arab part of Jerusalem.

The aim of the present actions of Israel, which is supported by the United States Government and international Zionism, is to delay as long as possible a political settlement in the Middle East, to impose Israel's imperialist terms on the Arabs and to force them to surrender and renounce the territories belonging to them. In this the Israel leaders are taking advantage of the fact that their patron, the United States of America, is itself playing the role of an aggressor in Viet-Nam, as a State grossly flouting the principles of the United Nations Charter and of international agreements. What exists both in the Middle East and in Viet-Nam is an attempt by aggressive imperialist forces to strike a blow at the national liberation movement and its advanced detachments.

The colonialist policy of Israel, and of the forces of world reaction which are supporting it, is a serious cause of the present dangerous international tension. As a result of this policy the Suez Canal, a major international waterway, has been out of action for more than nine months, causing considerable economic damage to States whose ships use the Canal and to international trade in general.

As a demonstration of goodwill, the Government of the United Arab Republic expressed its readiness to remove from the Canal zone the ships that were trapped there as a result of Israel's aggression, and to start preparatory work for clearing the Suez Canal so that it can be used for navigation again as soon as possible. The Israel authorities, however, prevented this by resorting to armed provocations.

Israel's continuing aggressive line cannot remain without consequences. By adopting its resolution on the Middle East on 22 November 1967, the Security Council set States a clear task - to achieve the withdrawal of Israel troops from all captured Arab territories and to take other measures necessary to bring about the speediest political settlement of the problems of this area. The principle of the "inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by means of war" and the demand for the "withdrawal of Israel armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict" are given prominence in the resolution and are the main and indispensable conditions for the restoration of peace in the Middle East. It is only on this basis that secure and recognized frontiers of States in this area can be ensured.

The Security Council resolution on the Middle East is not a recommendation or an opinion that Governments are free to follow or to ignore. In joining the United Nations, every State has undertaken to fulfil unconditionally the decisions of the Security Council adopted in accordance with the United Nations Charter. Not to fulfil these obligations means to oppose the United Nations, and to challenge the Organization responsible for maintaining international peace.

The United Nations has been officially informed that the Arab States which suffered most from Israel's aggression are ready to comply with the Security Council resolution of 22 November 1967 and to co-operate with the Secretary-General's Representative in the Middle East who has been empowered to facilitate the implementation of this resolution.

Israel, on the contrary, has from the start pursued and is still pursuing a line aimed at obstructing the Security Council and General Assembly decisions on the Middle East. Israel's adventurism is such that, in response to the appeals of States Members of the United Nations to respect the Organization's principles and the Security Council's decision, it puts forward arrogant territorial claims to Arab States, threatening them with further acts of aggression and resorting to the use of armed force.

The Israel Government has hindered in every way and is hindering the activities of Mr. Jarring, the Secretary-General's Special Representative in the Middle East, whose task it is to find the shortest ways to a political settlement of the conflict on the basis of the Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and the United Nations Charter. Israel would like to use Jarring's mission to distort the meaning of the Security Council resolution. Giving no hint of its readiness to withdraw its troops from all the Arab territories occupied during the recent conflict - that is, to withdraw them behind the line existing prior to 5 June 1967 - Israel and those who support it are trying to impose negotiations on Arab countries on conditions which are incompatible with their lawful national interests and with their sovereignty, and are attempting to delude world public opinion.

Israel is following in the footsteps of the Hitlerite criminals. As is known, fascist Germany also captured foreign territories and then tried to dictate

its own terms of "settlement" to the victim of the aggression. But such actions were branded by the peoples as banditry, and those who engaged in them were condemned after the rout of Hitler's Reich as international criminals. Those who today covet the lands of others and like to interfere in the domestic affairs of States would do well to remember this.

The Soviet Union states with the utmost firmness that it is determined, together with other peace-loving States, to strive for the cessation of Israel aggression and for the liquidation of all its aftermaths, for the return to their rightful owners of the territories captured from Arab States as a result of the aggression of 1967, and for the achievement of the necessary political settlement in the Middle East on the basis of respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in this area.

The Israel Government must strictly comply with the provisions of the Security Council resolution of 22 November 1967, and must first withdraw its troops from all occupied Arab territories. It must know that its challenge to the interests of international peace and security and its sabotaging of a political settlement in the Middle East cannot go unpunished.

So long as Israel's leaders, with support from outside, adhere to the position of annexing Arab territories the Soviet Union and other countries which are friends of Arab States and advocate a stable peace in the Middle East, will help the victims of aggression, for in so doing they are fulfilling their duty in accordance with the United Nations Charter and the interests of maintaining peace. This must be clear to everybody.

22 March 1968

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