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**ORGANISATION DE L'UNITE  
AFRICAINNE**

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أحمد أبابا

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

Twenty-fifth Ordinary Session

Kampala, July 1975

CM/660

THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST



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1. In its resolution CM/Res.393(XXIV) the Council of Ministers reaffirmed once more its established position that the total withdrawal of Israel from all occupied Arab territories and the recognition of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people are basic prerequisites for any just and lasting peace in the Middle East. It condemned Israel for its occupation of the Arab territories, its denial of the existence and the rights of the Palestinian peoples as well as for its policy of procrastination which has hindered all efforts aiming at achieving a just and durable peace in the Middle East.
  
2. The Addis Ababa Declaration on the problem of Palestine and the Middle East, expressed the view that if the Council has devoted so much care and concern to the discussion of the Middle East question, it was because of its conviction that this cause is an Afro-Arab cause not different from that of Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa. The declaration stressed the importance of including a separate item entitled the "Palestine Problem" in the agenda of the 12th session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government on the understanding that Mr. Yasser Arafat could be invited as the chairman of PLO-the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people - to address the African leaders at the Summit. The Council stressed also the need for some form of dialogue between the P.L.O. and the O.A.U. in order to draw up a common strategy for the liberation of Palestine similar to the Accra and Dar-Es-Salam strategies for the liberation of Africa.
  
3. The Council of Ministers requested the O.A.U. Administrative Secretary-General to closely follow up developments in the Middle East and report to the 25th Session of the Council of Ministers and decided to keep the situation in the Middle East as one of the important items on the agenda of the next session of the O.A.U. Council of Ministers.

4. In conformity with these directives and after consultations with the government of the Arab Republic of Egypt the Administrative Secretary-General presents this report to the Council.
5. The Council will recall that during the month of March 1975, the U.S. Secretary of State undertook after preliminary contacts with the parties concerned - extensive talks with the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Government of Israel in order to achieve a new military disengagement agreement between the Egyptian and Israeli forces as an extension of the previous agreement concluded last year on disengagement on the Egyptian and Syrian fronts respectively. If such a new disengagement agreement between Egyptian and Israeli forces could have been concluded, a similar agreement would have followed between Syrian and Israeli forces.
6. During these extensive talks, Egypt maintained that the minimum Israeli withdrawal which could achieve immediate reduction of tension in the area is a disengagement which covers the passes in Sinai and the oil fields in Abou Rodies and Balaim. Such a withdrawal of forces in Egypt's view would be a practical test for Israel's readiness to pave the way for peace within a comprehensive settlement in the Geneva conference.
7. Unfortunately, Israel once more proved to be intransigent in hindering any sort of agreement aiming at reducing tension in the area.

In spite of the fact that the U.S. Secretary of State has undertaken these talks after being assured by Israel of its acceptance of certain basic principles, Israel was so adamant in rejecting any constructive proposals during these talks that no other conclusion could be drawn from its attitudes except that it does not want to respond seriously and significantly to the desire to maintain the momentum for peace.

8. From the early stages of these talks, Egypt was confronted with an Israeli demand that Egypt terminates the state of belligerency in return for a limited withdrawal which leaves most of Sinai under Israeli occupation and ignores at the same time the Palestinian question and all the other elements involved in this problem. It even went as far as demanding that Egypt should establish relations with her which go beyond the normal state of peace.

Moreover, Israel demanded that Egypt should refrain from any Anti-Israeli activities in International Forums and organizations, and in particular in the Organization of African Unity.

The Council will note from all these Israeli stands that they constitute political demands while the talks were conducted solely for reaching a military disengagement agreement. These Israeli tactics during the talks continued for 15 days and finally led to the collapse of those talks.

9. Faced with Egypt's determination to safeguard its own national interests, the national interests of other Arab states and the national rights of the Palestinian people, Israel accepted that talks would focus only on military aspects, but again insisted that it would not withdraw except from scattered points which would keep her in the middle of the passes. Again Egypt was compelled to reject this new manoeuvre since by accepting such a proposal, the whole concept of disengagement would have been negated. It would have led to the intermingling of forces and increased the probabilities of military confrontation, contrary to the very concept of disengagement.
- 10.. Due to the intransigence of Israel it became impossible to reach an agreement and the talks were interrupted.

11. In the aftermath of these talks, Egypt continued to give the prospects of peace every conceivable chance:-
  - A. It requested both the Soviet Union and the U.S. as Co-Chairmen of the Peace Conference on the Middle East, to reconvene the Geneva Conference .
  - B. It accepted the extension of the Mandate of the U.N. emergency forces for three more months, a period which is deemed appropriate for further action for peace under the present circumstances.
  - C. Egypt decided to reopen the Suez Canal for international navigation as of the 5th of June 1975 in the interest of all friendly peoples.
12. While taking these constructive steps for peace, the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt informed his brothers the Heads of State and Government of the O.A.U. of the present situation, at the same time the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt informed all the African envoys in Cairo of the situation.
13. The Administrative Secretary-General wishes, in this respect, to draw attention to the fact that Israel has demanded that Egypt refrain from presenting the problem to the O.A.U. which indicates its worries from the support Africa is giving to this Afro-Arab cause.
14. These developments led the Administrative Secretary-General to believe that the situation in the Middle East continues to be most serious and deteriorating. At the time of writing this report, intensive diplomatic activities by Egypt in the Arab World and with the two super powers are being undertaken to defuse the explosive situation in that area and to pave the way to the reconvening of the Geneva conference.

15. The question of the representation of the P.L.O. in the Geneva Conference has not been settled yet, inspite of the fact that the P.L.O. has been recognized by the U.N. General Assembly as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

The Government of Israel refuses to recognize the P.L.O. and it is not also clear whether the U.S.A. Government has changed its position in this respect.

In any event, Israel should understand that it has no other alternative but to recognize the P.L.O, and if the Geneva Conference is to reach a final settlement to the Middle East problem, the presence of the P.L.O under any reasonable and acceptable formula, is a prerequisite in view of the fact that the Palestinian problem is the central issue in the whole question of the Middle East.

16. The only solution therefore is a solution that provides for the total withdrawal of the Israeli forces from the Arab territories occupied since 1967 and the restoration of the Palestenian People's rights.



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COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

Twenty-Fifty Ordinary Session

Uganda, Kampala, 18 - 25 July 1975.

CM/660 Add 1

THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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1. In the aftermath of the failure of the Aswan talks on a second military disengagement between Israeli and Egyptian forces in the Sinai Peninsula, the Government of Arab Republic of Egypt decided, in an attempt to keep all peace channels opened, to extend the mandate of UNEF for 3 more months, and as explained in paragraph 11 - B of document CM/660, that period was deemed appropriate for further action for peace.

2. Since then certain significant developments have taken place. On the one hand Egyptian offensive for peace continued and the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt met with the President of the U.S. in a bid to explore the final stand of the U.S. on the vital issue of peace in the Middle East. Once again it appeared that the Israeli Government continued the same policy of obstructing the path of peace by presenting unacceptable proposals and also by following a procrastinating attitude during the month which followed.

3. Due to these manoeuvres it was not possible for the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt to let the situation of no-war no-peace to prevail once more. In his press Conference of July 16th, 1975, the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Egypt Mr. Ismail Fahmy said that Egypt has decided not to renew the mandate of the UN emergency force because of the attitude of Israel in current efforts aiming at a new military disengagement agreement.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt also said that his country believes that Israel is taking advantage of the present situation - where the UNEF is helping to keep an uneasy peace-by using this force to

consolidate the Israeli occupation. He added that it is the view of Egypt that the Security Council may meet, to consider the situation.

4. The Secretary-General of the UN has described the present situation as "very serious and dangerous". He also expressed his hope that the Security Council's efforts would succeed in "getting us out of this dilemma".

5. The Administrative Secretary General shares the opinion of the Secretary General of the UN and believes that the Middle East Situation has reached once more an explosive point.

It is evident that the responsibility for the present deterioration falls squarely on Israel, and that unless it changes its intransigent and arrogant attitude, the prospect of diffusing the present explosive situation will remain remote. Consequently the hopes for achieving a just and durable peace will be even further remote.



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