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GENERAL ASSEMBLY
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Item 55 of the preliminary list*
REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO
INVESTIGATE ISRAELI PRACTICES
AFFECTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE
POPULATION OF THE OCCUPIED
TERRITORIES

SECURITY COUNCIL
Thirty-third year

Letter dated 17 July 1978 from the Permanent Representative of
Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to refer to the frivolous letter of 19 June 1978 sent to you by the Permanent Representative of Qatar on behalf of the Arab Group at the United Nations which, at his request, was circulated as a document both of the General Assembly and the Security Council (A/33/153-S/12752). As you will recall, the representative of Qatar considered that the phrase "the Judea and Samaria districts of the West Bank" implies Israeli "annexation". He claimed that the United Nations had never recognized these geographical terms, and anxiously requested you and the United Nations Secretariat to prevent "such misuse by the Israeli representative of United Nations documents".

The somewhat hysterical reaction of the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the terms "Judea and Samaria" is understandable, given that he comes from a group of countries which are engaged in a struggle to arabicize the name of the gulf on which they are situated. But to understand is not to condone, for petty vindictiveness when compounded with sheer ignorance is inexcusable.

One fundamental misunderstanding must be put aside at the outset. The term "West Bank" has only been given currency in English since about 1950 when the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan illegally annexed the districts of Judea and Samaria which it had acquired by force in the war of 1948. This annexation, incidentally, was challenged by the Arab League at the time, and was never recognized internationally, except by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Pakistan. Under the British Mandate, historical Palestine was divided into two parts: Transjordan and Cisjordan. If the term "West Bank" means anything,

* A/33/50/Rev.1.

it must refer to the whole of the area to the west of the River Jordan, i.e. Cisjordan. Consequently, in referring to the limited areas administered by Israel since 1967, it is necessary to define them precisely and call them what they have been called for thousands of years, namely Judea and Samaria.

Indeed, as late as 1947, the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine, when referring in its report 1/ to the East Bank or what is today known as Jordan, called the area "the territories lying between the Jordan and the eastern boundary of Palestine". This description of the area is used also in volume II, article 25, of the report of the Special Committee on Palestine.

It is incredible that a letter circulated as an official United Nations document should reveal such a degree of ignorance as does the communication of the Permanent Representative of Qatar. The area of the Jewish Kingdom of Judah was subsequently called Judea by the Romans. Judea was primarily a political geographical term, defining one of the three districts into which Roman Palestine was divided. The other two were Samaria in the centre and Galilee in the north.

These names have been retained over the ages. A principal author of Security Council resolution 242 (1967), Lord Caradon, served at one time in the British Mandatory Government as the District Commissioner of the District of Samaria. Resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947, adopted by the General Assembly on the report of the Special Committee on Palestine, when discussing boundaries, in part III.A, states "the boundary of the hill country of Samaria and Judea starts on the Jordan River at the Wadi Malih south-east of Beisan ...".

Yet in the letter addressed to you and circulated as a United Nations document, we are advised that "the United Nations never recognized ... the names given to them by the occupation authorities" and that the Arab Group "takes a very serious view to the misuse of official United Nations document by the Israeli representative in giving Israeli names to Arab territories against the terminology recognized and used by the United Nations and its organs". The abysmal ignorance of history and of United Nations documents as reflected in the Arab Group letter only highlights the frivolous nature of the document circulated in their name.

I have the honour to request that this letter be distributed as a document of the General Assembly, under item 55 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Chaim HERZOG
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of
Israel to the
United Nations

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Second Session, Supplement No. 11, vol. I, para. 7a.