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LETTER DATED 17 OCTOBER 1956 FROM THE REPRESENTATIVE OF LIBYA  
ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to refer to the proposal adopted by the Security Council at its 742nd meeting, which states that representatives of the Arab States, who asked to be heard on the Suez Canal discussion, to present their Governments' views to the Security Council in written statements, to be circulated by the president to the members of the Council.

It is my pleasure to submit, herewith, the views of my Government on the Suez Canal situation, and to express to Your Excellency and to the distinguished members of the Council our appreciation for this opportunity which has been given to us to clarify our opinion about this very important question.

Accept, Excellency, etc.

(Signed) Fathi Abidia

Representative of the  
United Kingdom of Libya

THE VIEW OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF LIBYA ON  
THE SUEZ CANAL SITUATION

(1)

The Government of Libya believes that the nationalized Suez Canal Company was an Egyptian Company, which had been granted its concession by the Egyptian Government for a period of ninety-nine years, during which period it was subject to the Egyptian laws and customs in accordance with the provisions of article 15 of the concession concluded between the Egyptian Government and the company in 1866.

The Egyptian Government, in its capacity as the territorial sovereign State which granted this concession, nationalized, on 26 July 1956, the Suez Canal Company and expressed in the meantime its readiness to give the shareholders full and equitable compensation. The Egyptian Government exercised in that act one of its recognized prerogatives as a sovereign and independent State. The Libyan Government, therefore, believes that nationalization of the said company is entirely legal.

(2)

As Libya is a member of the Arab League, and has in particular a strong friendly relationship with Egypt, and at the same time is allied with the United Kingdom in a treaty and has an agreement with France, Libya watched very anxiously and carefully the reaction which took form after the nationalization. The Libyan Government is also fully satisfied with the many offers made by the Egyptian Government in pursuit of a peaceful settlement to the dispute of the Suez Canal, and especially its willingness to sponsor, with the other Governments signatories to the Constantinople Convention of 1888, a conference to which would be invited the other Governments whose ships passed through the Canal, for the purpose of reviewing the Constantinople Convention and considering the conclusion of an agreement between all these Governments reaffirming and guaranteeing the freedom of navigation in the Suez Canal. The Government of Libya, therefore, watched with deep regret the economic measures taken by France and the United Kingdom against Egypt, and the movements of certain navy, army and airforce units of the French and British armed forces to the Eastern Mediterranean

Sea, as well as the possibilities of military action taken by France and the United Kingdom against Egypt, which are opposed to the Charter of the United Nations (particularly paragraphs 3 and 4 of Article II), and which may endanger to a far extent the peace in the Middle East and in the whole world.

There is no doubt that colonialism, which is responsible to a large measure for poverty in the Middle East and for the bloodshed and daily loss of life in Algeria, as well as Zionism which created the problem of Palestine, put the Arab States in a very difficult situation which requires justice and wisdom to be overcome. Any measures which may be taken and which neglect this fact and fail to respect the dignity and sovereignty of Egypt or any of the Arab States, may be the cause of many unseen troubles.

The Libyan Government, therefore, deplores the economic measures taken against Egypt as well as other military movements to the Eastern Mediterranean area. It strongly opposes this resort to military or economic warfare by the United Kingdom and France for forcing a settlement on Egypt.

(3)

The Government of the United Kingdom of Libya supports the resolution adopted unanimously by the Security Council at its 743rd meeting stating the six basic principles on which Egypt, Britain and France, through their respective foreign ministers, agreed. It feels that thereby an important stage has been passed.

It is the view of the Libyan Government that in accordance with the United Nations Charter the Suez Canal dispute must be settled by peaceful means through negotiations which will respect the sovereignty of Egypt and the interests of the users of the Canal.

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