



Security Council

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Statement by the Secretary-General at Security Council
consultations held on 3 December 1983

I would like to make it clear that the only issue which I have raised is the request for the flying of the United Nations flag, alongside the national flag of the ship concerned, on the ships which would evacuate the armed elements of the Palestine Liberation Organization from Tripoli. The reason for doing this would be on purely humanitarian grounds to facilitate the resolution of a situation which has already cost many innocent lives and created great destruction. The permission to use the United Nations flag would be given to the countries under whose flags the ships involved are operating.

I understand that the probable number of ships involved would be approximately five to evacuate some 3,000 armed elements with the possible addition of another 1,000 militia, carrying personal weapons only. The probable destination of the ships would be Tunis and the Yemen Arab Republic. There would be no financial implications and the only purpose would be to provide symbolic protection. The nationalities of the ships concerned and dates of departure would apparently be decided after my reply concerning the use of the flag is received.

The actual arrangements for this evacuation are obviously primarily a matter for the Lebanese Government and the parties to the agreement that has been negotiated with the help of Saudi Arabia and Syria. I spoke, yesterday afternoon, on the telephone to President Gemayel and, among other issues, mentioned this problem to him. As I understand it, the Lebanese Government has no objection to the use of the United Nations flag on the evacuation ships, provided, as is the normal practice, the Lebanese flag is also flown in Lebanese territorial waters. I shall naturally remain in consultation with the Government of Lebanon in this matter, which obviously requires its concurrence.

I need hardly add that any action I take will be in line with the overall objective of respecting the sovereignty and authority of the Government of Lebanon.

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I wish to repeat that the humanitarian factor is the one which concerns me. I have consulted the Council because I felt that this was the right thing to do on a matter of such importance.

In taking my decision therefore, I would like to have the understanding of the Council on this matter.
