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S/775
24 May 1948

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 18 MAY 1948 FROM THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR SECURITY COUNCIL AFFAIRS ADDRESSED TO THE ARAB HIGHER COMMITTEE, AND REPLY DATED 24 MAY 1948 ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL CONCERNING THE QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Sir,

I am directed by the President of the Security Council to communicate to you that the Security Council at its 295th meeting held on 18 May 1948 decided to address to the Arab Higher Committee the following questions:

(a) Is the Arab Higher Committee exercising political authority in Palestine?

(b) What governmental arrangements have been made to maintain public order and to carry on public services in sections of Palestine where Arabs are in the majority?

(c) Have the Arabs of Palestine requested assistance from governments outside of Palestine?

(d) If so, what governments, and for what purpose?

(e) Have you named representatives to deal with the Security Council Truce Commission for the purpose of effecting the truce called for by the Security Council?

(f) Have Jewish forces penetrated into the territory in which you claim to have authority?

I have the honour to inform you also that in view of the urgency of the matter, the Security Council requested to receive a reply from the Arab Higher Committee within forty-eight hours counting from noon, 19 May 1948, New York Standard time.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

A. Sobolev

Assistant Secretary General
in charge of Security Council Affairs

Mr. Issa Nakhleh
Arab Higher Committee
c/o The Permanent Syrian Delegation
to the United Nations

Room 4512,
350 Fifth Avenue,
New York 1, New York

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REPLY

THE DELEGATION OF THE ARAB HIGHER COMMITTEE FOR PALESTINE

May 24, 1948

Sir:

I beg to transmit to you, hereunder, the answers of the Arab Higher Committee to the questions addressed to them by the Security Council:

Question (A) Is the Arab Higher Committee exercising political authority in Palestine?

Answer: The Arab Higher Committee is exercising political authority over the overwhelming majority of the citizens of Palestine. The Committee is composed of members representing the different political Arab parties in the country. It thus forms a coalition, which expresses the Arab public opinion in Palestine. Whereas, Arabs are in majority in all districts and sub-districts, save that of Jaffa, in which Tel Aviv is situated, the Arab Higher Committee, therefore, speaks in the name of the majority of the whole of Palestine.

The Arab Higher Committee is represented in districts, sub-districts and villages of a size by the Local National Committees, formed also of representatives delegated by the different parties, to control their respective localities in the name of the Arab Higher Committee.

Question (B) What governmental arrangements have been made to maintain public order and to carry on public services in sections of Palestine where Arabs are in the majority?

Answer: When the Mandatory started their gradual withdrawal from Palestine, some weeks ago, the Arab Higher Committee asked all Arab Government Officials to carry on in their respective posts after the Mandatory's withdrawal. They were instructed that the senior Palestinian officer in each department is to act as temporary director of his department. These senior officers will be held responsible for the proper functioning of the departments and for the registers and documents, as well as for all their belongings. Arab officials have accepted the offer and are executing their duties in a satisfactory manner, under the present circumstances.

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The National Committee in each sub-district was advised by the Arab Higher Committee to act as an Administrative Council for the purpose of facilitating the work of the departments in their locality. The Arab Higher Committee acts as the body responsible for these administrative arrangements.

When the regular Arab armies entered Palestine, the responsibility for the control of public security and other kindred governmental responsibilities in the different areas they occupy have been placed in their hands. In the execution of these duties, both the Arab Higher Committee and the National Committees place their assistance and cooperation at the disposal of the military authorities.

Question (C) Have the Arabs of Palestine requested assistance from governments outside of Palestine?

Answer: In order to answer this pertinent and all important question, we deem it essential to explain the position of Palestine, at the termination of the Mandate, which necessitated our recourse to the Arab League for assistance in the restoration of peace and order in the Holy Land.

When the Mandate was imposed by the League of Nations on Palestine, the Arabs formed over 90% of the people. The Covenant of the League considered then, the people of Palestine as provisionally independent, subject to the rendering of Administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory, until such time as they are able to stand alone. The termination of the Mandate is, in fact, the announcement of this ability to stand alone, and it would, therefore, mean the automatic independence of the people of Palestine.

During the last thirty years, the Mandatory allowed Jewish immigration to flow into Palestine, regardless of the Arab majority's opposition and continuous resistance. Their minority of 7% have sprung up to about 33%. Yet, the total number of Jews who applied for Palestinian nationality have not exceeded 1/6 of the total population. No twisting of the law and no perverted argument would, therefore, convince the Arab owner majority of the country that the Jewish minority, under Democratic conceptions, could have the right of imposing their will on the majority. Democracy is the rule of the majority.

/All that

All that a minority could have is the safeguarding of their individual rights on an equal basis with the majority.

Before the termination of the Mandate, however, the Arab majority in Palestine found themselves confronted with a rebellious Zionist minority, who have determined to invade the country, either by swamping it with their alien immigrants or by seizing it by force of arms. The scope of immigration that was allowed by the Mandatory, even in the face of Arab resistance, was not adequate for their purpose of invasion. They started a campaign of terrorism in order to intimidate the Mandatory and the majority of the people of Palestine to submit to their will. A wave of terrorism enveloped the Holy Land since 1943, perpetrated by the Haganah force, which is the avowed army of the Jewish Agency.

This force was first heard of as early as 1921. The Mandatory, then, implicitly gave it its blessings. While Arabs were fighting the Mandatory for their freedom, this force was gaining in strength behind British bayonets. Haganah armories were allowed by the Mandatory to be established in Jewish settlements. Accidental disclosures revealed huge importation of arms and ammunition by the Haganah force. The Jewish Agency took good care to see that the greater part of immigrants allowed into the country were militarily trained young Jews, ready to enlist in the Haganah force. The Jewish educational system, left by the Mandatory in the independent hands of the Jewish Agency, made it obligatory for students of both sexes in secondary schools to have one year's military training for procuring their certificate. Arab educational system was kept in the Mandatory's grip, where national ideas were stifled, let alone any military training.

During the twenty years that preceded the last World War, the Mandatory enforced stringent ordinances against possession of arms by Arabs to the point that many Arabs were hung for the possession of a rifle or even a bullet. Meanwhile, Jews were allowed to arm themselves to the teeth. During the last war, the Mandatory stripped the Arabs of any kind of arms and heavily armed and extensively trained the Jewish community. The result was that the

/Haganah force

Haganah force of the Jewish Agency emerged out from the war as an underground army, estimated by the British to be composed of 70,000 strong. The Arabs, whose leaders were either in exile or in concentration camps and prisons in Palestine, were left in a precarious condition to defend themselves. Backed by this huge force, the Jewish Agency found it now opportune to claim a right for independence in Palestine, which, according to Zionist previous leaders, have never been a part of the Zionist program.

Under these circumstances, the Arab majority in their effort to preserve their rights and defend themselves in their own country, had no course to follow other than to seek outside help in order to resist this Jewish aggressive invasion of their country. And to whom should they address themselves for assistance, if not to the Arab State Members of the Arab League, who are linked to them by all the ties of nationality and had only been segregated from them by the imperialistic ambitions of foreign powers. Moreover, Palestine has been considered by the Arab League as provisionally independent and so it was accepted as a member in the organization. As such, the people of Palestine possess a lawful and moral claim on each and all of the members of the League for assistance in a diversity. When they found themselves facing a Jewish minority intent upon actual seizure of their country by force of arms, the Arabs of Palestine have naturally resorted to the Arab League for assistance at the dawn of their independence.

Question (D) If so, what governments and for what purpose?

Answer: The Arab Higher Committee solicited assistance of the following Arab countries: Egypt, Saudi-Arabia, Yemen, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Trans-Jordan, in order to reinstate peace and order in Palestine. Their purpose and task is one of pacification and not of invasion. It has been made clear that once peace and order are restored, the people of Palestine of all creeds will exercise freely their right of self-determination in a general plebiscite.

/Question (E)

Question (E) Have you named representatives to deal with the Security Council Truce Commission for the purpose of effecting the Truce called for by the Security Council?

Answer: Since the entrance of regular Arab troops in Palestine, this matter was taken over by the Arab League, in which the Arab Higher Committee is represented.

Question (F) Have Jewish forces penetrated into the territory in which you claim to have authority?

Answer: Arabs claim to have authority over all the area of Palestine as being the political representative of the overwhelming majority of the population. They regard Palestine as one unit. All forces that oppose this majority wherever they may be are regarded as unlawful.

Yours respectfully,

(signed) Jamal Husseini
Representative to the
United Nations of the
Arab Higher Committee

JH/jl