

THE QUESTION OF HOSTAGE-TAKING AND ABDUCTION

Decision

At its 2872nd meeting, on 31 July 1989, the Council discussed the item entitled "The question of hostage-taking and abduction".

At the same meeting, as agreed in the Council's prior consultations, the President made the following statement prior to the adoption of resolution 638 (1989):¹⁰²

"As we consider the adoption of the draft resolution on hostage-taking and abduction,¹⁰³ we meet under the shadow of recent events and the cruel reports that Lieutenant-Colonel Higgins, who served the United Nations on a peace-keeping mission in Lebanon, may have been murdered today. I wish to express the full support of the Security Council for the statement made by the Secretary-General yesterday, 30 July, in this connection.

"The Council will seek further facts on the developments of today, and urges those involved to act with reason, restraint and a proper respect for human life and dignity. The Council feels that it should proceed without delay to the adoption of the draft resolution that we have been discussing in private on the subject of hostage-taking and abduction.

"There is a most tragic irony that our efforts to adopt a text on this matter should have coincided with the grave events of recent days.

"This illustrates, with utmost clarity, that we need to underline the necessity for effective international action on the subject of hostage-taking and abduction. Indeed, the expression of the unanimous view of the Security Council will, I am sure, serve to defer such unlawful, criminal and cruel acts in the future."

Resolution 638 (1989)

of 31 July 1989

The Security Council,

Deeply disturbed by the prevalence of incidents of hostage-taking and abduction, and the continued protracted incarceration of many of those held hostage,

Considering that the taking of hostages and abductions are offences of grave concern to all States and serious violations of international humanitarian law, having severe adverse consequences for the human rights of the victims and their families and for the

¹⁰² See *Official Records of the Security Council, Forty-fourth Year*, 2872nd meeting, para. 3.

¹⁰³ S/20757.

promotion of friendly relations and co-operation among States,

Recalling its resolutions 579 (1985) of 18 December 1985 and 618 (1988) of 29 July 1988 condemning all acts of hostage-taking and abduction,

Bearing in mind the International Convention against the Taking of Hostages, adopted on 17 December 1979,¹⁰⁴ the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Internationally Protected Persons, including Diplomatic Agents, adopted on 14 December 1973,¹⁰⁵ the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Civil Aviation, signed on 23 September 1971,¹⁰⁶ the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft, signed on 16 December 1970,¹⁰⁷ and other relevant conventions,

1. *Condemns unequivocally* all acts of hostage-taking and abduction;

2. *Demands* the immediate safe release of all hostages and abducted persons, wherever and by whomsoever they are being held;

3. *Calls upon* all States to use their political influence in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law to secure the safe release of all hostages and abducted persons and to prevent the commission of acts of hostage-taking and abduction;

4. *Expresses appreciation* for the efforts of the Secretary-General in seeking the release of all hostages and abducted persons and invites him to continue such efforts whenever so requested by a State;

5. *Appeals* to all States that have not yet done so to consider becoming parties to the International Convention against the Taking of Hostages, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Internationally Protected Persons, including Diplomatic Agents, the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Civil Aviation, the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft and other relevant conventions;

6. *Urges* the further development of international co-operation among States in devising and adopting effective measures which are in accordance with the rules of international law to facilitate the prevention, prosecution and punishment of all acts of hostage-taking and abduction as manifestations of terrorism.

Adopted unanimously at the 2872nd meeting.

¹⁰⁴ General Assembly resolution 34/146, annex.

¹⁰⁵ General Assembly resolution 3166 (XXVIII), annex.

¹⁰⁶ United Nations. *Treaty Series*, vol. 974, No. 14118.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 860, No. 12325.