



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
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THE MIDDLE EAST

GAZA - THE FUNCTIONS OF UNEF

Statement by Mr. L.B. Pearson, Secretary of State for External Affairs, in the House of Commons, March 22, 1957.

The legal rights of Egypt in the administration of the Gaza strip derive from the Armistice Agreement between Egypt and Israel signed in 1949 and confirmed by the United Nations. If these legal rights are ignored or rejected, then the Armistice Agreement is violated. But the United Nations Assembly has affirmed by more than one resolution, including that of February 2 which was carried unanimously that the armistice provisions, all of them, should be scrupulously observed.

The responsibilities and functions of the United Nations in the Gaza strip come from Assembly resolutions and are reinforced by the practical necessities of the situation. These responsibilities and functions in our opinion should be accepted by Egypt, which should fully co-operate with the United Nations in their discharge. If Egypt is unwilling to co-operate in this way, then the United Nations' task in Gaza becomes impossible and the matter in our opinion should be referred at once to the United Nations Assembly.

Our position, Mr. Speaker, which has been stated more than once in New York and in this House, is that the United Nations should be associated to the maximum possible extent in the administration of the Gaza strip. I regret that this was not made clear and definite in a resolution of the United Nations Assembly which would have specified the arrangements to follow the withdrawal of Israeli forces. Why that was not done, Mr. Speaker, I attempted to explain a week ago today. It should be recalled also that the United Nations already accepts full responsibility for more than 200,000 Arab refugees in Gaza.

The problem then, as I see it, is to find an acceptable balance in the administration of Gaza between the practical position which the United Nations must take and