

Concerning the Gulf of Aqaba and the straits of Tiran, I suggested that there should be no interference with innocent passage through those waters, nor the assertion of any claim to belligerent rights there. I was not suggesting, and I am not now, that legal rights in those waters should be determined by this Assembly in any particular way, or that this determination which should be made by a legal body should be prejudiced by us. I do not conceive it to be the function of this Assembly to decide legal questions. What I do suggest, however, is that in order to maintain a situation of peace and quiet, in order to minimize the chance of a new outbreak of fighting, the Assembly should recommend, and the parties should agree, as a political and not a legal act, that there should be no interference with the innocent passage of ships through the waters concerned. And that would be one way to bring about an improved situation in the area. Does any member of this Assembly believe that interference with such innocent passage will not provoke conflict and, thereby threaten the peace of the area? Is it not, then, our duty to do what we can to avoid such a result? If so, we do not, in my view, discharge that duty merely by coming to certain conclusions regarding the international legal aspects of the question which remain to be determined.

So far as the use of the United Nations Emergency Force in the Gulf of Aqaba area is concerned, I believe it is common ground in this Assembly that UNEF should, immediately after the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces, move into the area to secure and supervise the cease-fire and withdrawal. This does not mean that in our view UNEF would occupy Sharm-el-Shaikh indefinitely, nor even until there had been some formal agreement or decision about navigation in the Gulf and in the Straits. But it does mean as we see it that upon the withdrawal of Israeli forces, there would be such arrangements for the deployment of UNEF at that point and for the time being as may be necessary to maintain the cease-fire situation. We also agree that before any withdrawal of UNEF from this position, the question should be referred to the Advisory Committee on UNEF which after all is an agent of the Assembly. What I am talking about is again the maintenance of peaceful conditions, not the solution of controversial questions, legal or political.

And there are similar considerations which govern our own attitude toward the situation in the Gaza strip. We agree that arrangements for the withdrawal of Israel should be made between the Commander of UNEF and the Chief of Staff of the Israeli armed forces. And for that purpose, we welcome the announcement that a meeting between these officers has already been held. We also agree with the Secretary-General, and with other delegations, that in view of the special problems and complexities of the Gaza area and of the long-standing major responsibilities of the U N there for the assistance of Arab refugees, that special and helpful arrangements could be made, involving the U N and some of its subsidiary bodies, to facilitate an effective replacement of the present administration in the