



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 57/9

PROBLEMS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Statement made in the United Nations General Assembly January 29, by Mr. L. B. Pearson, Chairman of the Canadian Delegation.

I would like to say a few brief words on the problem that we have been discussing and at the same time to reserve the right to speak again when perhaps we will have some resolutions, or at least one resolution before us which deals with this subject. The problem, Mr. President, with which we have been dealing is coming to a head with consequences of vital importance to us all and perhaps even for international peace. As I see it, it is a problem not only of the completion of the withdrawal of the Israeli forces, though that is first in order of priority. It is a problem not only of making arrangements for security in the unsettled areas concerned or for free navigation but of making, I hope, constructive arrangements here which will be agreed on in this Assembly, but which would take effect only after Israel had accepted the decision of the United Nations to withdraw.

If Mr. President, we take the position that the United Nations cannot even discuss these related questions at this time - these questions of arrangements along the lines that I have just indicated - then we cannot begin to consider these questions until after withdrawal plans have been completed. If we cannot consider them or take a decision on them now, or immediately after the time we have taken a decision here on withdrawal, even if that decision is not to be implemented until after withdrawal itself, then I believe certain delegations will have great difficulty in accepting that position in regard to the relationship, or if you like the non-relationship, between these two problems.

If, on the other hand, Israel does not agree to complete an immediate withdrawal, or to proposals for a reasonable solution of the related problems, proposals which would be acceptable to this Assembly, then there will be no peaceful settlement of these problems, and Israel would be in a position of having taken the responsibility of rejecting decisions of the United Nations and remaining where she is without any international support and indeed in the face of an international decision. I suggest, Mr. President, we must do our best to avoid

both these negative results by rejecting both these extreme positions. I believe we should take this middle position not in the interest of any one state and certainly not to reward or approve any action taken by any state which we have already condemned, but I suggest we should follow this course in the interest of peace and security.

Certainly Israel has no right to attach her conditions to withdrawal of her forces, but as delegations to the United Nations Assembly we have, I think, the right and indeed perhaps even the duty to relate these two positions in a way which will make impossible in the future the kind of situation which we have been facing in the last two or three months. I believe as delegations we have, at least my delegation thinks it has, the right to feel that our attitude towards the one problem must be influenced by the attitude of the Assembly towards the other problem. Failure to agree on a middle course of this type would mean perhaps, indeed, probably, failure to agree on any course. That would mean deadlock and the return not only to the unhappy conditions but to conditions that might be even worse and even more dangerous to international peace and security. It would have also consequences for this organization which might be far reaching. I know that you will agree that it is our responsibility to avoid this disastrous result, which surely no one wants.

The Secretary-General's report which we have before us, and which we have been considering, shows the way out of this deadlock. He has given his views, sane and reasonable, I think, on the steps which should be taken after withdrawal but which perhaps we can approve now. These steps must be taken within the limits fixed by previous resolutions and decisions of the United Nations which until we alter them remain in effect. His report emphasizes, rightly I think, that action through the recommendations of this Assembly should be contrasted with decisions of the Security Council under Chapter VII of the Charter; Assembly recommendations require for their implementation the consent of the parties concerned.

The main argument of the Secretary-General's report is that we must return to useful implementation of the Armistice Agreement of 1949, but that this should be joined with United Nations action to secure and supervise such implementation, something which has been absent in recent years. This requires that we take action for ensuring implementation. The mere injunction on the parties concerned to observe the Armistice Agreement in its entirety may not prove to be very effective. The Secretary-General said on page 5 of his report:

"...There is universal recognition that the condition of affairs, of which this deterioration formed part, should not be permitted to return. Renewed full implementation of the clauses of the Armistice Agreement obviously presumes such an attitude on the part of the governments concerned, and such supporting measures as

would guarantee a return to the state of affairs envisaged in the Armistice Agreement, and avoidance of the state of affairs into which conditions, due to a lack of compliance with the Agreement, had progressively deteriorated."

Compliance with the Armistice Agreement is in our view as important as compliance with the recent resolutions on withdrawal and with other types of resolutions we have adopted, though any effort to bring about that larger compliance, I repeat, should be consequent to our decision on withdrawal. But that compliance, I repeat, should be in accordance with all the provisions of the Armistice Agreement, Article I as well as Articles VI, VII, and VIII. Such full implementation, supervised and secured by the United Nations, would, the Secretary-General tells us, have an important and positive bearing on other problems in the region, and I certainly agree with that.

Therefore, Mr. President, I venture to suggest that we might consider proceeding as follows. First, the withdrawal of Israeli forces should be discussed and decided; then immediately we should discuss and decide on a resolution which would include as its basic principle that the withdrawal of Israeli forces must be followed immediately by action which would represent real progress towards the creation of peaceful conditions in the region, action which in our view, is necessary to accomplish that essential result.

I suggest, Mr. President, for consideration by the Assembly that certain ideas might be worthy of inclusion in any resolution which we may be discussing. I think that the two parties concerned, Egypt and Israel, should be called upon by this Assembly to observe all the provisions of the 1949 Armistice Agreement and to refrain from all acts of hostility, including the exercise by either party of any claim to belligerent rights. I think that the Secretary-General might be instructed to make arrangements, after consultation with the parties concerned, for the deployment of the United Nations Emergency Force on both sides of the demarcation line and in the Gaza strip, in order that this force, which is our own creation and which is effectively functioning in the area in the interests of peace and security, might assume the supervisory duties of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization; prevent incursions and raids across the demarcation line, and maintain peaceful conditions along the line. I believe that Egypt and Israel, to assist in this essential work of the UNEF, should be requested to remove from, or limit their military forces in, these areas of deployment which would be defined. I think that the United Nations should be associated with steps to replace the present civilian administration of the Gaza strip and to ensure that that area will not in the future be used as a base or as a target for raids or retaliations. I believe that it would be wise to take appropriate steps to determine legal positions in the Gulf of Aqaba and the Straits of Tiran but that, pending this determination, the parties should be called upon to give

assurances that they will not assert or exercise any belligerent rights in these waters or interfere with navigation in them. And then I think that the Secretary-General, on whom we seem to be placing great burdens of responsibility these days, should be authorized to arrange for a unit or units of the United Nations Emergency Force, after the withdrawal of Israeli forces, to be stationed at some point in the Gulf of Tiran to assist in the establishment and maintenance of peaceful conditions in that area. In this connection, Mr. President, may I quote, because I think that this paragraph is important and I agree with it, what Mr. Lodge said yesterday:

"We believe that it is essential that units of the United Nations Emergency Force be stationed at the Straits of Tiran in order to achieve there the separation of Egyptian and Israeli land and sea forces. This separation is essential until it is clear that the non-exercise of any claimed belligerent rights has established in practice the peaceful conditions which must govern navigation in waters having such an international interest. All of this would, of course, be without prejudice to any ultimate determination which may be made of any legal questions concerning the Gulf of Aqaba."

I hope, Mr. President, that the agreed solution can be reached along these lines. The alternative to non-agreement is so threatening to peace and security that we are bound to put forward every effort with sincerity and determination and goodwill to reach an honourable, peaceful and agreed settlement.

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