



Security Council

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12 August 1948

CABLEGRAM* DATED 12 AUGUST 1948 FROM THE UNITED NATIONS MEDIATOR
TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL CONCERNING THE OBSERVANCE OF THE
TRUCE IN JERUSALEM

For President of Security Council:

In my telegram M221 (document S/955), I express anxiety about non-observance of the "unconditional" cease-fire in Jerusalem. The arrival of additional contingents of observers now permits me to take more effective supervisory measures. I visited Jerusalem from 9 to 11 August. After conferring with the Truce Commission and United Nations observers on the spot, I delivered 10 August to Commander-in-Chief Arab forces in Jerusalem and to the Military Governor of the Jewish part of Jerusalem identical notes reading as follows:

"The Arab and Jewish military authorities in Jerusalem are aware of the fact that in disregard of the truce ordered by the Security Council, sporadic firing by rifles, automatic weapons, mortars and guns has not ceased.

"It is impossible to believe that all this military activity is entirely attributable to irregulars. It is also impossible to consider that the command of regular forces is not in a position to put an end to such activities if it so desires.

"As Mediator entrusted with the supervision of the execution of the truce, must remind all Arab and Jewish authorities that they are responsible for applying in their respective areas the truce accepted by the Governments and authorities and which implies the suppression of sniping and other activities whether of regular or irregular forces.

"Up to now the observers put at my disposal for the supervision of the truce in Palestine and in neighbouring countries were too few to allow me to allocate a sufficient number of observers to the Jerusalem area.

"The arrival this week of additional contingents of American and French observers permits me to assign as from today to the Jerusalem area some fifty observers, which number, if necessary, may be increased.

"They have been instructed to observe all activities contrary to the truce, to assist the local commanders in terminating such activities and, if necessary, to report to the Chief of the Military Staff of the Mediator with a view to investigation calculated to assess responsibilities.

"If the situation in Jerusalem does not improve it will be necessary to bring it to the attention of the Security Council which is empowered to take effective action with regard to violations of the truce."

On 11 August after a night on which firing has been particularly heavy, I forwarded to the same Arab and Jewish military authorities a note reading as follows:

"Pursuant to the note I delivered to you yesterday and to the exchange of views which followed at your headquarters, I have the honour to address to you the following communication, which is also sent to the other party:

"1. No party can expect to profit by the sporadic firing by rifles, automatic weapons, mortars and guns which has been continuing in disregard of the truce. There are status quo lines known to United Nations observers which no sporadic fighting can alter. Such fighting can only be explained by nervousness and by the present unsatisfactory fact that firing by one side is answered by the other whether this is necessary or not.

"2. An end must be put to this unreasonable state of affairs. Orders given at whatever level automatically to return self-defence must be limited to real self-defence and not extended to unnecessary exchange of shots.

"3. As a demonstration of the good-will of both parties to co-operate in putting an end to sporadic and indiscriminate firing, I request that the Command of the Israeli Army and the Command of the Arab Legion in Jerusalem should agree to the following order:

"Firing of any kind even in answer to firing by the other party shall be forbidden as from Friday, 13 August, at 4 a.m. Arab time (6 a.m. Jewish time). (The above date has been chosen in order to give time to dispose the fifty observers assigned to the Jerusalem area.)

"4. United Nations observers shall supervise the execution of the orders given by both parties. In a case of emergency they may also relieve an attacked party from the obligation to continue to comply with such orders.

"5. The orders given in accordance with 3 above shall be valid for an indefinite period. Should one of the parties consider that it is not in a position to comply any further with the above request of the Mediator, it shall inform the representative of the Mediator in Jerusalem, who, if he does not succeed in persuading the parties to prolong the agreement, shall report to the Mediator.

"6. Both parties are invited to notify to the representative of the Mediator in Jerusalem, General W.E. Riley, before Thursday, 5 p.m. Arab time (7 p.m. Jewish time) whether they agree to give the orders envisaged under 3 above. If the agreement of both parties is secured, the representative of the Mediator shall take all necessary measures for supervision by United Nations observers."

I attach the greatest importance to the request contained in this note, which has now been accepted by the Arabs. The Jewish reply is expected tomorrow. Should the request not be complied with by one party after it has been accepted, responsibilities will be easier to assess. It results from impartial reports that the Jews have generally speaking though not on all occasions been the more aggressive party since the renewal of the truce. Reports received from United Nations observers concerning last night's firing support this appreciation, since firing began from the Jewish side.

In the question of the supply of water for Jerusalem I have decided that repair work should start immediately in the presence of United Nations observers at the pumping station of Latrun, which is now in United Nations hands. Such repair is expected to take two days; and after I visited it this morning, I made the following decisions which I strongly expect will be accepted by the Provisional Government of Israel, to which it has been communicated:

"I have today visited this area in order to reach a final decision regarding the above question.

"My observers have given me sufficient proof that the Jewish positions by Ajanjul and on the ridges northwest of this village commanding the road from Beit Siaa over Seit Nuba towards Latrun were occupied by Jewish forces after the beginning of the truce and that these positions have since then been fortified. As a result of the occupation the Arab inhabitants of the villages Ajanjul and Bujeiriya have fled and are now stationed in Beit Nuba.

"Consequently my decision is as follows:

"1. As from Thursday, 12 August 1948, the Jewish lines should be withdrawn to the line Al Burj Kh Dir at Tawil Kh Umm as Sur Salbit and the forward position executed. In consequence of this, the area east of the line to the Latrun Ramallah road will become a no-man's land.

"2. The Arab inhabitants of the villages Ajanjul and Buweiriya will then return to their homes unarmed.

"3. If necessary detailed arrangements shall be made in collaboration between representatives of the Israeli Army and United Nations observers."

I have as yet nothing further to report on demilitarization of Jerusalem except the fact that the Arabs have submitted suggestions accepting demilitarization in principle. No suggestions have as yet been received from the Jews, but negotiations will continue.

I must inform the Security Council that I am leaving on 12 August for Stockholm for one or two weeks to attend the International Red Cross Conference. A few officials of the United Nations Secretariat will remain at Rhodes in contact with both me and with my headquarters for the supervision of the truce at Haifa.

I shall be daily informed of developments and I am ready at any time, if necessary, to fly back to the Near East.

Count Folke Bernadotte

*Note: This cablegram was received in a garbled form.
in a corrigendum.

Corrections have been requested which will be issued