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NOTE BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

On 24 August 1967 the Secretary-General addressed a note to the Permanent Representative of Israel 1/ requesting the Government of Israel to extend the deadline for the return to the west bank of the Jordan of those inhabitants who had fled the areas since the outbreak of hostilities in June 1967 beyond the date of 31 August 1967 which had been set by the Government of Israel. The following note dated 11 September 1967 is the reply of the Government of Israel:

"The Permanent Representative of Israel presents his compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and with reference to the Secretary-General's note of 24 August 1967 has the honour to communicate the following.

"As it will be recalled, the Government of Israel announced on 2 July 1967 a plan concerning the return of west bank residents to their former homes. The announcement provided that west bank inhabitants who had left for the east bank since 7 June 1967, with the exception of those who might endanger public safety, would be permitted to return during a period of five weeks ending on 10 August 1967.

"This programme was motivated by humanitarian considerations in the spirit of the Security Council resolution 237 (1967) of 14 June 1967 and General Assembly resolution 2252 (ES-V) of 4 July 1967. It was to be expected that the Government of Jordan would co-operate in the implementation of the plan in the same spirit.

"Unfortunately, from the outset the Government of Jordan created artificial obstacles by insisting on specious formalities. It was only after a series of direct conversations between Israel and Jordanian representatives in the presence of the representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross that formal agreement on the modalities of the return was signed on 6 August 1967 by the two Governments and the representative of the ICRC.

"In the course of these conversations Israel responded to an appeal made by the Government of Jordan and agreed to postpone the deadline for the return until 31 August 1967. Both the Jordanian representative and the representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross expressed their appreciation. The Government of Israel took immediately all the necessary administrative and technical steps for the execution of the agreement. Two bridges were opened across the Jordan River to receive returnees at the rate of 3,000 a day. The forms submitted for approval were rapidly processed and the approvals were transmitted without delay to the Government of Jordan.

"However, for reasons never satisfactorily explained by the Government of Jordan, the Jordanian authorities did not make full use of the permits issued, and only 60 per cent of the displaced persons who had been authorized to return did actually show up at the crossing points.

"While the return was under way, Jordan started a violent campaign of incitement of the Arab population in the west bank against the Israel authorities. Members of the Jordanian Government as well as the State-controlled Jordanian radio were actively engaged in this campaign. Special emissaries were secretly sent to the west bank in order to provoke disorder, and funds were lavishly distributed to this end. The attention of the Secretary-General to this campaign of incitement was directed in the letter of the Permanent Representative of Israel of 16 August 1967,2/ as stated:

'While the Government of Israel is directing its efforts to alleviating the consequences of the hostilities, to bring back normalcy and to restore peaceful conditions, including the return of refugees to their former homes, the Government of Jordan is conducting a campaign of increasing violence, vituperation, and direct incitement both of the prospective returnees and of the Arabs in Israel-controlled territory.'

"At the same time the Jordanian authorities applied pressure on those former residents of the west

bank who had decided to stay, in order to compel them to return to the west bank against their own will.

"The attitude of the Government of Jordan has caused serious concern to the Government of Israel which takes a grave view of this attempt by Jordan to use human plight in the pursuance of its hostile political objectives. Nevertheless, responding to the appeal of the Secretary-General, and having in mind the humanitarian considerations involved, the Government of Israel has decided:

(a) To allow former west bank residents, holders of previously issued permits, who were unable to make use of them before 31 August 1967, to return to their former homes within a fixed period of time. Arrangements to this effect are being made.

(b) To authorize the Israel authorities to accept applications from residents of the west bank for the reunion of their families. Such applications will be reviewed in each case by the Israel authorities with sympathetic consideration.

(c) To study individual applications based on conditions of special hardship.

(d) To discuss with UNRWA representatives in Israel ways by which Israel might contribute to a solution of the urgent problem arising from the adverse physical conditions in the camps now occupied by those who were previously UNRWA refugees, particularly in the Jericho camps.

"The Permanent Representative of Israel avails himself of this opportunity to reiterate to the Secretary-General the assurances of his highest consideration.

"New York,
11 September 1967"

* Also issued under the symbol A/6795.

1/ A/6789, S/8133.

2/ A/6786, S/8123.