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M. Letter dated 23 June 1949,
addressed by Dr. Walter Eytan, Head of the
Delegation of Israel, to the Principal
Secretary of the Conciliation Commission

Dear Dr. Azcarate,

I have before me the verbatim copy of a statement issued to the Press last Friday, June 17th, by Mr. Fouad Ammoun, the Head of the Lebanese Delegation.

This statement, of which a copy is doubtless in the hands of the Commission's Press Officer, can only be described as intemperate and abusive. In the most violent language it makes charges against "the Jews" of a kind which come oddly from the responsible head of a delegation that has presumably come to Lausanne for the purpose of achieving some sort of agreement with Israel on matters of urgent common concern. At a time when restraint and a constructive approach are called for, Mr. Ammoun has seen fit to launch in public a most unseemly and venomous attack upon my Government and delegation. My delegation is astonished that a man occupying so distinguished and influential position in the official life of his country is seemingly unable to express his views on the Lausanne conversations except in terms that border on the vulgar.

Quite apart, however, from the lack of taste and judgment which Mr. Ammoun shows in his choice of words, my delegation would be glad to know whether the Commission considers heads of delegations entitled to issue polemical statements to the Press. I have understood from my conversations with the Commission that a procedure of this kind is regarded as most undesirable. It can only have the effect of poisoning the atmosphere of a conference in which the parties should be sincerely concerned to do and say nothing that would aggravate the difficulties facing them all. Mr. Ammoun's statement can only be regarded as an insult to my delegation, if not as a deliberate attempt to provoke it to a reply that could only make matters worse.

A particularly disturbing feature of Mr. Ammoun's statement is its detailed reference to the Protocol signed on May 12th. You will recall that in signing this Protocol I did so on the understanding, clearly stated and recorded at the time, that no detailed information about it should be given to the Press. I agreed that the Commission's Press officer might publish the fact that agreement on a basic working document had been reached; but added that if more detailed information reached the Press from other sources, I reserved the right of my delegation to state its own position (cf. SR/LM/8 of 12th May 1949).

Mr. Ammoun's revelations to the Press were made without my consent and, I presume, without consent of the Commission. My delegation regards this as a most serious matter and considers that Mr. Ammoun has thereby gone far to undermining the respect in which the Protocol had previously been held by all parties and to destroying its value as a basis for discussions. His irresponsible action in communicating details of the Protocol to the Press raises the gravest misgivings about his attitude and the attitude of his delegation to the basis of mutual confidence upon which we have met together here.

It would be easy for me to issue a statement to the Press in reply to that of Mr. Ammoun and in refutation of Mr. Ammoun's accusations. As I am most anxious, however, to add no further fuel to the fire, I shall not do this, but content myself with recording hereby my delegation's vigorous protest at Mr. Ammoun's action and my hope that the Commission will succeed in preventing the publication in future of such damaging and inflammatory statements.

Yours sincerely,

(s) Walter Eytan

Head of Israeli Delegation.