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LETTER DATED 9 SEPTEMBER 1950 FROM THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF EGYPT ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
CONCERNING THE PALESTINE QUESTION

I am instructed by my Government to bring officially to your notice the following events, the great seriousness of which will not escape anybody, and certainly not the authorities and organs of the United Nations.

As long ago as 20 August last, the Israeli authorities undertook a large-scale military operation, using troops, automatic weapons and armoured vehicles, in order to drive out of the El Auja area of Palestine all the Bedouins settled in this demilitarized zone and its surrounding areas. After being driven as far as the Egyptian frontier by the Israeli forces, which were guided by an Israeli reconnaissance aeroplane, these Bedouins were compelled to cross the Egypt-Palestine frontier on 2 September at a point not far from the locality known as Ain Cadeirat, in order to seek refuge in the Egyptian territory of Sinai, where they are now concentrated at El Quasima, Sabha, Dahra and Eind Gadees.

On being notified of these acts of violence, the United Nations observers in Palestine proceeded to the spot and found that at least 13 of these fresh victims of Jewish terrorism had died in the course of this tragic manhunt, two of them being women and two children. The bodies of some of these victims were found crushed by the armoured vehicles of their inhuman pursuers.

Not satisfied with this mass expulsion and the cold-blooded manner in which it was carried out, the Jews vindictively set fire to the shelter-tents, crops and personal belongings of their victims.

By 3 September, the number of Bedouins so expelled had reached 4,071. It is also an established fact that the persons concerned were genuine Palestinians; during the period of the British mandate most of them had lived in the Be'er-sheba area. Driven from their homes by the Jews for the first time when the Jews occupied this important area, they went to settle in the El Auja area - since demilitarized - where they had been living for more than two years when these fresh and deplorable incidents occurred.

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It transpires from the report of the United Nations observers, and in particular from the report of the acting chairman of the Joint Commission responsible for supervising the execution of the Egyptian-Israeli armistice, that these Bedouins ask no more than to return to El Auja, if they have the assurance of United Nations protection; and that even in the absence of such protection they are determined to recover this area by force - which would be bound to lead to disturbances for which only the Jews could be blamed, since it was they who caused this state of affairs to arise.

The Egyptian authorities had no choice but to take in these fresh victims for the time being, since they would have run the risk of massacre, internment and torture.

In carrying out this mass expulsion of Arabs from the Negeb, the Israeli forces shrank neither from violating Egypt's political frontier, nor from violating the status of the demilitarized zone of El Auja - actually the headquarters of the Joint Armistice Commission - where the presence of Israeli forces was reported more than once, towards the end of August and on 5 September.

It should be pointed out that this is not the first attempt at mass expulsion of the Arabs from Palestine made by the Israeli authorities since the signing of the still valid armistice agreement and the efforts exerted, unfortunately in vain, by the competent organs of the United Nations with a view to guaranteeing decent, peaceful and humane treatment for the Arabs living in areas now under Jewish control in Palestine.

Between 26 June 1949 and 4 September 1950 more than a thousand Arab men, women and children living in the areas of Haifa, Acre, Galilee, Jerusalem, Ramleh and El-Magdal, and in other districts under Jewish control, were forcibly removed from their homes and constrained to take refuge in the narrow Egyptian-occupied Gaza-Rafah sector in southern Palestine.

In spite of the repeated protests of the Egyptian delegation to the Joint Armistice Commission, these expulsions have been proceeding at an increasingly rapid rate and on an ever larger scale.

It emerges from the documents in the possession of the Egyptian Government, which include reports by the United Nations observers in Palestine, that:

These refugees, having been forcibly directed towards Gaza-Rafah, where they had neither contacts nor interests, were required to sign certificates to the effect that they had of their own free will asked
/to leave

to leave Israel without any intention of returning there, "voluntarily" renouncing any rights to their property or interests in Israel;

Some of them had substantial properties and interests (in the form of agricultural land, houses, orange groves and the like) in the places from which they were driven, and have thus been deprived of these properties and interests;

They had previously been expelled from their dwellings to make way for Jewish families, and had been compelled to spend two or three nights in the open before being transferred to the Egyptian zone of Gaza-Rafah.

As will be seen, the most recent expulsion of more than 4,000 Arabs from the El Auja area in the Negeb in the circumstances set forth above is but the sequel of an uninterrupted series of similar actions, all carried out with one and the same objective. Accordingly, it would be rash to regard the mass expulsion of the Arabs from the Negeb as marking the end of Jewish action of this nature.

The expulsions recently reported from so many places near the Egyptian-occupied area and the political frontiers of Egypt, and also near the frontiers of the other Arab countries bordering on Palestine, constitute evidence and confirmation of the determined intention of the Israeli authorities to rid themselves entirely of all the Arab population of the territories now under their control, so as to create space for the new Jewish immigrants. In this way the already large number of Arab refugees from Palestine, whose condition is still precarious, is being swelled to alarming proportions and without the slightest regard or compunction.

This action on the part of the Israeli authorities is not only a violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of the letter and spirit of the armistice in force, including the general Egyptian-Israeli Armistice Agreement signed at Rhodes on 24 February 1949, but also constitutes a challenge to paragraph 11 of the General Assembly resolution of 11 December 1948, in which it is recognized that refugees who so desire should be entitled to return to their homes at the earliest practicable date and to live at peace with their neighbours. This action is, moreover, flagrantly inconsistent with the statements made by the Israeli delegation to the Conciliation Commission on 3 August 1949, when it was said that the Israeli Government would be prepared, subject to certain conditions, to take in 100,000 Arabs, bringing the Arab population in the territories now under /Jewish control

Jewish control in Palestine up to a total of 250,000.

Yet the Israeli authorities, far from facilitating the return of the refugees now being cared for by the United Nations to their homes, are creating new refugees by driving out of their homes by the thousand the Arabs who have hitherto been left in relative peace.

The Egyptian Government protests vigorously against these fresh violations of the United Nations resolutions by the Israeli authorities, and expresses the view that:

1. It is a matter of extreme urgency that the United Nations should intervene and investigate the events reported above and, while there is yet time, stop the expulsion of the remnants of the Arab population in Palestinian territory now under Jewish control;
2. The new refugees who have been expelled in the manner described should receive effective aid and assistance from the United Nations to enable them to return to their homes and recover or receive compensation for their lost or damaged property;
3. Meanwhile, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, established by resolution 302 (IV) of the General Assembly, should at once accept responsibility for these new refugees. The Egyptian Government, which is determined to raise this question in the competent organs of the United Nations, has also instructed me to request you to bring the foregoing promptly to the attention of all the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) Ibrahim FARAG

Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs