

**Security Council**Distr.
GENERALS/16228
21 December 1983

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL IN PURSUANCE OF
SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 542 (1983)

1. The present report is submitted in pursuance of paragraph 7 of Security Council resolution 542 (1983) of 23 November 1983, by which the Council requested the Secretary-General to follow the situation in northern Lebanon, to consult with the Government of Lebanon and to report to the Council.
2. On 26 November 1983, a cease-fire agreement was reached by the parties involved in recent fighting in the Tripoli area. On 1 December, the Permanent Observer of the Palestine Liberation Organization to the United Nations, referring to the agreement of 26 November which he said provided for the departure of all Palestinian armed elements from Tripoli and its vicinity, conveyed to the Secretary-General a request of Mr. Arafat, the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the PLO, for permission to use the United Nations flag to facilitate the departure of the PLO forces from Tripoli.
3. In a statement made on 3 December (S/16194) during consultations of the Security Council, the Secretary-General indicated that he had decided to authorize the flying of the United Nations flag alongside the national flag of the ship concerned, on the ships which would evacuate the armed elements of PLO from Tripoli. This decision was taken on purely humanitarian grounds to facilitate the resolution of a situation which had already cost many innocent lives and caused great destruction. The permission to use the United Nations flag would be given to the countries under whose flags the ships involved were operating. The evacuation would involve some 4,000 men carrying personal weapons only. The Lebanese Government, which was fully consulted by the Secretary-General, had no objection to the use of the United Nations flag on the evacuation ships provided, as was normal practice, the Lebanese flag was also flown in Lebanese territorial waters. In his statement, the Secretary-General made clear that any action he took would be in line with the overall objective of respecting the sovereignty and authority of the Government of Lebanon. After consultations with the members of the Security Council, the President of the Council confirmed that the Secretary-General's statement had the support of the members of the Council (S/16195).
4. In a letter to the Secretary-General dated 8 December (A/38/717-S/16209), the Prime Minister of Israel, after mentioning that "on Tuesday 6 December the terrorist organization known as the PLO which is headed by Yasser Arafat, assumed

responsibility for the explosion on a bus in Jerusalem" stated that in light of the crime perpetrated by the "PLO terrorists" it was inconceivable that the United Nations, which was dedicated to the preservation of human life and the enhancement of peace, should provide them with any assistance or facilities whatsoever and requested the Secretary-General to cancel the arrangements that had been made "to give them safe conduct under the UN flag". The Secretary-General gave careful consideration to the Prime Minister's request but did not feel that he could accede to it since the humanitarian reasons on which his decision was based remained entirely valid. In this connection, it is relevant to recall that on 7 December, upon learning of the bomb incident in Jerusalem, the Secretary-General, in a public statement, expressed his shock and concern over the incident and deplored criminal acts of violence in which civilians including children were the innocent victims. He was subsequently informed by the Permanent Observer of the PLO that on 8 December, Mr. Arafat had publicly stated that the PLO adamantly opposed and strongly condemned any action carried out against civilians.

5. On 14 December, the Permanent Representative of Greece, who had been in touch with the Secretary-General for the past several days, confirmed that five Greek merchant ships would sail from Piraeus to Tripoli shortly to evacuate Mr. Arafat and his PLO forces. The ships would fly both the Greek and United Nations flags and also the Lebanese flag while in the territorial waters of Lebanon.

6. In a letter dated 17 December, the Permanent Representative of France informed the Secretary-General that following a consensus arrived at on 3 December 1983 in the Security Council and by agreement with the Greek Government, the French Government had decided to assist in the evacuation of Palestinian fighters from Tripoli to northern Yemen and Tunisia by providing vessels of the French navy to escort the five Greek merchant ships. The escort would be provided from the coastal waters of Tripoli to the territorial waters of the final destinations. The French Government indicated in this connection that the Palestinians had undertaken not to embark heavy weapons on board the five Greek vessels flying the United Nations flag. A similar letter was addressed by the Permanent Representative of France to the President of the Security Council (S/16224).

7. On 20 December, Mr. Iqbal Akhund, the United Nations Co-ordinator of Assistance for Reconstruction and Development in Lebanon and Special Representative of the Secretary-General, reported that he had received confirmation that Mr. Arafat and his PLO forces with their personal weapons had sailed from Tripoli at 1400 hours GMT, on the same day, in five Greek ships escorted by French naval units. The Greek ships flew the Greek and United Nations flags and, in the territorial waters of Lebanon, the Lebanese flag. The evacuation proceeded without incident or impediment. Mr. Akhund also reported that on 17 December, 94 seriously wounded PLO armed elements had left for Larnaca on an Italian ship under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross.
