

CALL BY ARAB LEAGUE DELEGATION ON MR HURD:
7.00 p.m. on 8 JULY 1982:

ISRAEL/LEBANON

Present:

Minister of State

Sheikh Muhammad bin Mubarak
(Foreign Minister of Bahrain)

Sir John Leahy

Farouq Qaddumi (PLO)

Mr P.J. Goulden

Ali Mahrous (PUS, Bahrain MFA)

Mr J Q Greenstock

Nasif Hitti (Arab League)

Omar al Hassan (Arab League)

1. Mr Hurd welcomed the delegation as representatives of the Arab League. Sheikh Muhammad thanked him for receiving them, particularly as Mr Qaddumi was included. The PLO had to be involved. Following the decision of the Arab League meeting at Taif to approach the five Permanent Members of the Security Council, they wished to explain their views on the difficult situation in Lebanon. An Israeli attack on Beirut was an imminent catastrophe: it would affect the whole region. The only fair basis for peace and stability was the UN Charter. If Security Council resolutions could not be implemented, why did the UN exist? As a Permanent Member, the UK had a special responsibility. It must repeat its stand against aggression on the Falklands. A solution had to come through the legal institution of the UN: a state in the area had no right to impose its will. What was needed first was a ceasefire and disengagement of forces; then the position of the PLO in Lebanon could be discussed. Time was running out. The longer the Israelis stayed, the harder it would be to get them out. They wanted humiliation of the PLO and the Arabs. This was no solution: it lead only to increased hatred and resentment.

2. Mr Hurd said people in Britain had been horrified at the
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suffering of Lebanese and Palestinians alike. We had done our best to help alleviate it. HMG shared much of the Arab League's analysis. We considered the Israeli invasion as wholly unjustified; we supported SCRs 508 and 509; we agreed any action on the ground by the UK and other governments should be within their framework. The European Council communiqué underlined the link between the Lebanese and Palestinian problems: we had drawn attention to it with the Americans. The communiqué also reaffirmed the two main principles of Venice and repeated the need for the PLO to be associated with negotiations. In Beirut the situation was confused: we were not involved, but hoped current negotiations would succeed. It was important to find a dignified solution for all the parties. So we and our partners agreed that forces should be separated before 509 was implemented; then the main aim must be an effective and representative Lebanese Government throughout Lebanese territory, free from illegitimate pressure. Mr Hurd asked what the latest news was from Beirut.

3. Mr Qaddumi said the shelling of civilians was continuing. The PLO had presented many prospects for a settlement, but the Israelis had always started the firing again, presenting fresh demands and preventing an agreement. All they wanted was for the PLO to lay down arms. This was impossible. The Lebanese Prime Minister had suggested a plan and Arafat had been prepared to go to President Sarkis's residence to discuss it. But the shelling went on. What was needed was a mechanism for a solution. The UN Secretary-General could not provide one. A proposal for Observers had been vetoed. Now there was an 'initiative' from the US to send marines to help remove 'foreign' forces. This could not work. Both Lebanese and Palestinians would consider it a provocation. The problem in Lebanon was not the Palestinians. Two thirds of the population were Muslim: the National Forces did not agree to Habib's terms. The UN and its Permanent Members must be active in providing a

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mechanism. The PLO had presented a plan to the Arab League for a Palestinian/Lebanese arrangement. But the Lebanese Government had not agreed to let Muslim representatives come to Taif to discuss it.

4. Mr Qaddumi said France had done its best, with her draft resolution and close contacts with the parties. But the situation was deteriorating. A ceasefire was vital to provide a calm atmosphere for negotiation. The Israelis were attempting the annihilation of Lebanese and Palestinians alike. The US must press Israel at least to give an opportunity for discussions. The PLO were prepared to be flexible; but when they had won the agreement of the National Forces to their plan, Habib had rejected it. The UK and other Europeans must now urge American pressure on Israel to disengage.

5. Mr Hurd said we agreed the need for a durable ceasefire. What did the PLO regard as a dignified exit? UK policy differed from the Americans', but we considered Habib was genuinely trying to achieve a ceasefire and then a solution for Lebanon. It was not realistic to replace the US with the UN Secretary-General or anyone else. It would be wise for everyone to seek a dignified agreement through Habib. We sympathised with the French proposals, but doubted they could be a substitute. So what did the PLO regard as a reasonable definition of their own future?

6. Shaikh Muhammad said Habib had from the beginning merely delivered the message that the PLO must pull out. Recently he had been dealing only with Israeli officials inside Lebanon. There could be no faith in such a negotiator. The point was not that Habib should disappear, but that other parties must join in to produce an atmosphere of confidence. Mr Qaddumi said the Palestinians would exit to their homeland, from which Israel should withdraw. Israeli security did not entitle them to invade others. It was they who had complicated the

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situation: the PLO had an agreement with the Lebanese.

5. Mr Hurd said we believed in the right to self-determination as part of a settlement. The underlying problem could not be solved without it. The PLO should be associated with negotiations. In recent years they had made progress and gained friends, even within the US, through using political means and having a just cause. Their handicap had been their use of arms and the threat of annihilation of Israel. This had not helped us in dealing with others. We had said it before, but conditional recognition was still the best step forward. The advice of those who had long experience of the problem and wanted a just settlement should be heeded. As a Permanent Member we accepted we had a duty to be active. We were in daily touch with the US, who understood our concern at all levels. Israel knew our views. Mr Pym had pointed to the comparison between the Falklands and Arab-Israel. We would help as best we could, working closely with France and with Arab League states. But there could be too many cooks.

6. Shaikh Muhammad said he wished to speak with all frankness about the Palestinian presence in Beirut. What the Lebanese Government wanted should now take place - the withdrawal of the Palestinian military presence. The PLO were willing. But how to implement it? A UN framework was essential. Israeli aggression must not be allowed to pay. It must be done the right way, not with American ships, not through a third party. It was very dangerous for the US to come in, under Israeli pressure. The Israelis must be stopped by the legal methods. It was a fundamental point that the PLO would not submit to the Israeli gun. Let them get away with it and they would do it again. The UK must act. Mr Qaddumi said the UK had done it with Argentina, where 1500 people had been involved. The Palestinians were 4 million. The UN Charter gave them the right to use all means at their disposal: this was called violence, but destroying refugee camps was not. The Palestinians wanted good relations with the West. Stop the

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Israelis and the rift between the Arabs and the West would end. Habib was one-sided: a dignified solution needed a UN multilateral force. The PLO heavy weapons were for defensive use against Begin and the other Hitler, Sharon. They could not destroy the Palestinian cause. The UK's roots were deep in the Middle East and Palestine. She must play a more active role: the US was too biased to achieve anything alone. The PLO would otherwise be pushed into the arms of the Soviet Union, into violence and terrorism, even though it had been doing its best to stop fringe group terrorism. The Palestinians had the right to live and the UK must act.

7. Mr Hurd said that after three years of close observation he understood the problem. He felt the PLO's methods were not always appropriate. But he was very grateful to have heard the delegation's strongly held views. He would discuss them with the Prime Minister and Mr Pym and they would be given due weight. We wished to keep the understanding of Arab League countries. We accepted a responsibility, with others, and would work to achieve the objectives our policy statements had set out. Shaikh Muhammad said the question was how to break the vicious circle, how to implement the SC resolutions. He asked whether Israel would ever face the full strength of UN measures. Mr Hurd said a sanctions resolution would not carry without unanimity among Permanent Members. But a step-by-step implementation was possible - and we must all work for it. The US had the means of persuasion, but not through the Security Council.

8. The meeting ended after sixty-five minutes.

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