



Prime Minister.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

15 June 1981

cannot go
I have been
absolutely
firm about
not meeting the
PLO

The awkward problem of PLO participation
in this dinner was always likely to give
trouble - tho' one might have hoped the Arab Ambassadors would have been
more tactful than to appoint Mr Ramlawi as their Dean a few weeks beforehand.
The FCO seem to have done their best: would you be willing to accept the line
at 'A' overleaf? would you like a further effort made to
persuade Mr Ramlawi to develop a diplomatic career?
It would be a pity to cancel the dinner - tho' not, in
Arab Ambassador's Dinner my view, impossible to do so.

Dear Michael,

You asked whether the recent decision by Arab
Ambassadors to regard Mr Ramlawi, the PLO representative,
as their Dean could cause embarrassment at the dinner
which the Arab Ambassadors are giving for the Prime
Minister on 2 July, and said that if possible things
should be so arranged that Mr Ramlawi would not be there.

15/6

I understand that the Arab League representative in
London, who has been making the arrangements for the
dinner, wrote to No 10 giving a list of those who would
be present, which included Mr Ramlawi's name, before it
was confirmed that the Prime Minister would accept the
invitation.

Unfortunately I
did not see this until
a month after it had
been received. But I
doubt whether it would
have removed the
problem if I had seen
it earlier.

(List attached.)

Mr Ramlawi has discussed press comment on his appointment
as 'Dean' with officials at the FCO. He volunteered that
it was not the intention to cause any embarrassment to
HMG, and he would not do so. Referring to the dinner for
the Prime Minister, he said that it was not intended that
he should act as Dean, make a speech, or take the lead in
any way on that occasion, though he would if possible like
to shake hands with the Prime Minister. He said, however,
that it would be embarrassing both for his own people
and for the other Ambassadors if he were left out of the
party.

Officials subsequently discussed this problem privately
with the Jordanian Ambassador. He confirmed that
Mr Ramlawi would not have any role as 'Dean' at the dinner.
We said that there was a political difficulty about
Mr Ramlawi's presence. We argued that the purpose of such
an occasion could only be to improve relations and mutual
understanding, not to score points or cause embarrassment.
The Ambassador agreed and said that he and his colleagues
regarded the proposed dinner as a great opportunity. It
would, however, be very difficult to exclude Mr Ramlawi.

/no

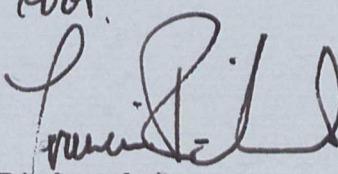


No representatives of the press would be invited and it was intended that the dinner should be entirely private. On present plans the numbers would be small, and guests would be limited to those who fully understood the intricacies of the problem. If, on the other hand, it would be easier for the Prime Minister to attend a larger party, this could be arranged.

Lord Carrington considers that it is unlikely that the Ambassadors will agree to remove Mr Ramlawi's name from the list. This would be an extremely embarrassing step for them, particularly as his name has been firmly on the list from the beginning. It is a fact that they accept Mr Ramlawi as their equal, because the PLO is a full member of the Arab League. It would be politically difficult, probably impossible, for the Arabs to unite on a step of this sort.

Equally, Lord Carrington recognises the awkwardness for the Prime Minister of the presence of a PLO representative. He believes, however, that it would be regrettable if the dinner were to fall through after her acceptance had been so warmly welcomed. The timing, coinciding with the start of the UK Presidency, is an additional factor in our wishing this event to be a success.

A. The best solution, if the Prime Minister agrees, might be to encourage the Arabs to enlarge the guest list (which is at present limited to a few Conservative Members of Parliament sympathetic to the Arabs, apart from the Ambassadors themselves and the Arab League representative). The advantage of another dozen guests would be that it would no longer be possible to argue that Mr Ramlawi's presence implied recognition of any special status for him. Lord Carrington believes that it would be possible to get an assurance from the Arab Ambassadors that Mr Ramlawi would do nothing to embarrass the Prime Minister, and that this assurance would be honoured. In the event of publicity we would say that there was nothing new in the attendance of Ministers, including the Prime Minister, at social functions at which a PLO representative was also present.

Yours ever,


(F N Richards)
 Private Secretary