

**United Nations**

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LETTER DATED 18 MAY 1948 FROM THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR SECURITY COUNCIL AFFAIRS ADDRESSED TO THE JEWISH AGENCY FOR PALESTINE, AND REPLY DATED 22 MAY 1948 ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL CONCERNING THE QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE SECURITY COUNCIL

18 May 1948

Sir,

I am directed by the President of the Security Council to communicate to you for transmission to the appropriate Jewish Authorities in Palestine the attached questions which the Security Council decided at its two hundred and ninety-fifth meeting, held on 18 May 1948, to address to the Jewish Authorities in Palestine.

I have the honour to inform you also that, in view of the urgency of the matter, the Security Council requested to receive a reply to the questions within forty-eight hours, counting from 19 May 1948 at noon, New York Standard Time.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

A. Sobolev  
Assistant Secretary-General  
in charge of Security Council Affairs

Mr. Arthur Lourie,  
Director of the New York Office,  
Jewish Agency for Palestine,  
16 East 66th Street,  
New York 21, N.Y.

/QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS TO THE JEWISH AUTHORITIES IN PALESTINE

- (a) Over which areas of Palestine do you actually exercise control at the present time?
- (b) Do you have armed forces operating in areas (towns, cities, districts) of Palestine where the Arabs are the majority, or outside Palestine?
- (c) If so, on what basis do you attempt to justify such operations?
- (d) Have you arranged for the entry into Palestine in the near future of men of military age from outside Palestine? If so, what are the numbers and where are they coming from?
- (e) Are you negotiating with Arab authorities regarding either the truce or a political settlement in Palestine?
- (f) Have you named representatives to deal with the Security Council Truce Commission for the purpose of effecting the truce called for by the Security Council?
- (g) Will you agree to an immediate and unconditional truce for the City of Jerusalem and the Holy Places?
- (h) Have Arab forces penetrated into the territory over which you claim to have authority?

REPLY

STATE OF ISRAEL

Office of the Acting  
Representative at the  
United Nations

Sir,

I am directed by the Provisional Government of Israel to communicate to you the following replies to the questions addressed by the Security Council at its 295th meeting held on May 18, 1948 to the "Jewish authorities in Palestine". These questions were transmitted by me to the Foreign Secretary of the Provisional Government of Israel in Tel Aviv.

I have to point out that the designation "Jewish authorities", which applied in the past to the Jewish Agency for Palestine and to the National Council of the Jews of Palestine (Vaad Leumi), now applies to the Provisional State Council and the Provisional Government of the State of Israel, jointly established by those bodies, and in which, since May 15, 1948, all legislative, executive and judiciary powers in the State of Israel are now vested.

I have the honour, Sir, to be

Your obedient servant,

(signed) Aubrey S. Eban

/REPLIES OF

REPLIES OF PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL TO SECURITY COUNCIL QUESTIONNAIRE

Question (a): Over which areas of Palestine do you actually exercise control at the present time?

Answer to Question (a): The Provisional Government of Israel actually exercises control at present over the entire area of the Jewish State as defined in the Resolution of the General Assembly of the 29th of November, 1947. In addition, the Provisional Government exercises control over the city of Jaffa; Northwestern Galilee, including Acre, Zib, Basea, and the Jewish settlements up to the Lebanese frontier; a strip of territory alongside the road from Hulda to Jerusalem; almost all of new Jerusalem; and of the Jewish quarter within the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem. The above areas, outside the territory of the State of Israel, are under the control of the military authorities of the State of Israel, who are strictly adhering to international regulations in this regard. The Southern Negev is uninhabited desert over which no effective authority has ever existed.

Question (b): Do you have armed forces operating in areas (towns, cities, districts) of Palestine where the Arabs are the majority; or outside Palestine?

Answer to Question (b): We consider the territory of Israel as a single unit with a Jewish majority. As indicated above, the Government of the State of Israel operates in parts of Palestine outside the territory of the State of Israel, parts which, with the notable exception of Jerusalem, formerly for the most part, contained Arab majorities. These areas have, however, been mostly abandoned by their Arab population. No area outside of Palestine is under Jewish occupation but sallies beyond the frontiers of the State of Israel have occasionally been carried out by Jewish forces for imperative military reasons, and as a part of an essentially defensive plan.

Question (c): If so, on what basis do you attempt to justify such operations?

Answer to Question (c): The above operations in areas outside the State of Israel are justified on the following grounds:

1. In order to repel aggression, and as part of our essentially defensive plan, to prevent these areas being used as bases for attacks against the State of Israel.
2. In order to protect Jewish population, traffic and economic life, including the protection of those Jewish settlements outside the area of the State where, owing to the absence of any duly constituted authority and the failure to implement the guarantees and safeguards provided for under the General Assembly Plan, life and property are in imminent danger. Similar considerations apply in the absence of any international statute for the City of Jerusalem to the Jewish area of that City.

Question (d): Have you arranged for the entry into Palestine in the near future of men of military age from outside Palestine? If so, what are the numbers and where are they coming from?

Answer to Question (d): Arrangements have been and are being made for the entry into Palestine of Jewish immigrants of all ages and both sexes from various countries in accordance with the avowed object and a primary purpose of the State of Israel to open its gates for large-scale immigration.

/State of Israel

State of Israel regards the matter of immigration as a matter within its domestic jurisdiction.

Question (e): Are you negotiating with Arab authorities regarding either the truce or a political settlement in Palestine?

Answer to Question (e): No such negotiations are at present proceeding. The Secretary-General of the Arab League was informed immediately after the November Resolution that the Jews were ready to negotiate for peaceful collaboration on the basis of implementation of the Resolution of the General Assembly of November 29. To this no reply was received. Repeated approaches were also made to King Abdullah of Trans-Jordan offering on behalf of the Jewish State peace and good neighborliness, but these offers were rejected by King Abdullah, who insisted that the whole of Palestine come under his rule and that the Jews accept Arab nationality and rest content with regional autonomy.

We have on repeated occasions indicated our affirmative attitude to cease-fire proposals coming from British authorities in Palestine and various organs of the United Nations. The cease-fire in the Old City initiated by the Trusteeship Council and observed by the Jews, was broken by the Arabs.

Question (f): Have you named representatives to deal with the Security Council Truce Commission for the purpose of effecting the truce called for by the Security Council?

Answer to Question (f): When the Security Council adopted the Truce Resolution the Provisional Government of the State of Israel did not yet exist, but the Jewish Agency kept in close touch with the Truce Commission in Jerusalem from its inception. This liaison has now been taken over by the Provisional Government.

Question (g): Will you agree to an immediate and unconditional truce for the City of Jerusalem and the Holy Places?

Answer to Question (g): Yes.

Question (h): Have Arab forces penetrated into the territory over which you claim to have authority?

Answer to Question (h): Arab forces have penetrated into the territory of the State of Israel in certain corners of the Northern Negev and in the Jordan Valley south of Lake Tiberias. In addition, planes of the Royal Egyptian Air Force have repeatedly raided Tel Aviv and southern Jewish settlements, while Iraqi air-force planes have been raiding settlements in the Northern Jordan Valley and artillery of the Syrian and Lebanese armies have been shelling settlements in Upper Galilee from across the frontier.