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Thirty-first session

Item 112 of the preliminary list*

MEASURES TO PREVENT INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

WHICH ENDANGERS OR TAKES INNOCENT HUMAN LIVES OR JEOPARDIZES FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, AND STUDY OF THE UNDERLYING CAUSES OF THOSE FORMS OF TERRORISM AND ACTS OF VIOLENCE WHICH LIE IN MISERY, FRUSTRATION, GRIEVANCE AND DESPAIR AND WHICH CAUSE SOME PEOPLE TO SACRIFICE HUMAN LIVES, INCLUDING THEIR OWN, IN AN ATTEMPT TO EFFECT RADICAL CHANGES

SECURITY COUNCIL

Thirty-first year

Letter dated 4 July 1976 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On instructions from my Government I have the honour to submit the attached excerpts from the statement delivered by the Prime Minister of Israel in the Knesset on 4 July 1976 with regard to the operation conducted by the Israel Defence Forces to rescue the hostages hijacked by Palestinian terrorists on 27 June 1976, and held in captivity in Uganda.

I also have the honour to request that this letter and its attachment be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under item 112 of the preliminary list of items to be included in the provisional agenda of the thirty-first session, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Chaim HERZOG
Permanent Representative of Israel
to the United Nations

* A/31/50.

ANNEX

Excerpts from the statement delivered by the Prime Minister of Israel,
Mr. Yitzhak Rabin, on 4 July 1976 in the Knesset

In a bold and imaginative operation, the Israel Defence Forces carried out the decision of the Government of Israel to rescue and liberate the passengers of an Air France airplane, who were hijacked by Palestinian terrorists and held prisoner and in danger of their lives in Uganda. In the course of the rescue operation three of the Israeli passengers of the plane were killed, and one officer fell in action.

The decision to undertake this operation was taken by the Government of Israel, on its sole responsibility. We did not consult any other Government in advance, and we shall not place responsibility on any other country or Government.

Anti-Israel terror has become a matter of international concern, and we do not exclude any Government from the duty to fight for the elimination of terrorism. For our part, we shall persist in this struggle - even alone.

An Air France plane that left Israel for France on 27 June was hijacked after a stopover in Athens. The hijackers forced the French pilots to land first at Benghazi in Libya, and then at Entebbe in Uganda.

As the hijacked aircraft belonged to the French national airline, it was natural to regard the French Government as bearing the immediate and principal responsibility to do everything demanded for the release of all the passengers. We immediately contacted the French Government, which accepted this responsibility. In addition, we approached other Governments and institutions to do their utmost to ensure that no harm befall the hijacked passengers and to expedite their release. The terrorists transmitted their ultimative demands to the Governments of Israel, France, Germany, Kenya and Switzerland, but it soon became clear that the attack against the Israeli and Jewish passengers was the main objective of the operation. The terrorists' demands were accompanied by the threat that the passengers would be killed, if the Governments did not carry out their demand that murderers, terrorists and accessories to terrorism, who had been apprehended and imprisoned for their crimes, should be freed.

Self-defence against the attacks of the terrorist organizations, and the war against the terrorists within our own borders and abroad, in complex and unusual circumstances, have been part of our daily life for years. When the terrorist organizations found themselves unable to operate on our territory, they tried to attack us on foreign soil, in conditions which place inestimable difficulties in the way of protection, rescue and action. There are cases in which the terrorist organizations operate against us in countries where we enjoy the co-operation of the authorities. On the other hand, operational conditions are particularly difficult

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from our point of view in countries where we have no access because of open hostility, the absence of diplomatic relations or even governmental co-operation with the Palestinian terrorist organizations. On more than one occasion, we have found ourselves faced with appalling dilemmas, each alternative being more difficult than the other, with our dear ones held captive far away, isolated and without any possibility of our aiding them or acting rapidly for their release.

In the hijacking of the Air France plane to Entebbe, all indications were that the President of Uganda co-operated with the terrorists, under a cloak of deception and false pretences. This was the situation on the eve of 1 July 1976: the expiry of the first ultimatum was drawing ever closer; the release of non-Israeli passengers blatantly exposed the sinister conspiracy against Israeli citizens. Political efforts bore no fruit. The sand in the hourglass was about to run out, leaving no possibility for an independent rescue effort.

Under these conditions, the Government of Israel unanimously decided to declare its readiness to release terrorists detained in Israeli prisons. Following the Cabinet's decision, we informed the French Government, through which the negotiations with the terrorists were being conducted. In default of any other alternative we were even prepared to adopt this course to rescue our people. It was not a tactic to gain time and, had it been the only choice left, we would have stood by our decision as a last resort.

During the entire period after the hijacking we sought ways to foil the terrorists' scheme by our own means. The Israel Defence Forces and the Intelligence Services did not lose any time in this respect. When the appropriate moment arrived, the plan was submitted for the Cabinet's consideration. The Cabinet approved the operation unanimously.

This rescue operation is an achievement of great importance in the struggle against terrorism. It is Israel's contribution to humanity's struggle against international terror, but it should not be viewed as the final chapter. It will give us encouragement as we continue our efforts, but the struggle is not over: new efforts, new methods and unremitting sophistication will be required. Terrorism will find us neither immobilized nor hidebound by routine.

I know the Israel Defence Forces from within. I am well aware of its qualities and achievements. Nevertheless on this occasion I feel a personal need to express special thanks and appreciation to the Israel Defence Forces, the Chief of Staff, the General Staff, the several arms and all those who participated in the rescue operation, for risking their lives in the fulfilment of their duty as Jews and human beings, and for being an example and a source of pride to us all.
