



Middle East

Original in GR.
CF to MDC

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

3 April 1980

Thank you for your letter of 24 March about our policy in the Middle East. I understand that Foreign and Commonwealth Office Ministers have also written to you on this subject.

There is no change in our policy towards recognition of the PLO (a misleading term, since recognition is not given to organisations) nor do we accept their claim to be the sole legitimate representatives of the Palestinians. We do however accept that the Palestine Liberation Organisation is an important factor in the area and that at some stage they will have to be associated with negotiations. We have occasional contacts with PLO representatives at official level but there have been no discussions at Ministerial level. We continue to urge the PLO to renounce terrorism and to accept only the principle of a negotiated settlement in which Israel's right to live in peace within secure and recognised boundaries will be fully accepted. No settlement will be possible unless the PLO is prepared to accept these principles.

We have seen the Israeli Embassy's press release and the interview with Mr. Arafat which was published in a Venezuelan newspaper. As you may know this interview has since been disowned by Arafat and other PLO representatives. I am not in a position to comment on the interview but we have always made it clear that, if the PLO's aim is the destruction of Israel, then this is quite unacceptable to us and meaningful negotiations would be impossible.

/I hope this

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I hope this answers your question. Please assure your constituents that our commitment to Israel's future is in no way diminished. At the same time, it is not unreasonable to make the point that both sides must be prepared to compromise. We hope that the Israel Government on its side will reconsider its present policy of planting settlements in the occupied territories and show itself ready to implement Resolution 242.

(sgd) Margaret

Kenneth Baker, Esq., MP.