

PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL NO. T50/83



TO DOWNING STREET

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THE PRIME MINISTER

21 April 1983

SUBJECT

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Your Majesty,

I am grateful for your letter about the need to take urgent steps to bring about an early end to the Iran/Iraq war. I know that Mr. Pym was able to discuss this with His Royal Highness Prince Saud al-Faisal during his recent visit to Saudi Arabia. He has told me of the great warmth of his reception in your country. I am sure that his visit has further enhanced the excellent relations between our two countries.

I too am deeply concerned at the continuation of the distressing conflict between Iran and Iraq. The enormous loss of human life, the grave suffering of the civilian population, and the material destruction already caused by the war are constantly in our minds. We are also aware of the threat to the security of our friends in the Gulf which any expansion of the fighting would cause.

I also share Your Majesty's concern at the lack of progress towards a settlement. It is tragic that the various attempts at mediation have so far proved unsuccessful. For our part we remain ready to support any realistic moves aimed at achieving peace. In 1982 we supported the two Security Council Resolutions calling on both sides to initiate a ceasefire and withdrawal to internationally recognised frontiers. I know that Saudi Arabia and the other countries of the Gulf Co-operation Council have also striven to find a solution.

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In your letter Your Majesty mentioned that previous Security Council resolutions had failed because they lacked any means of applying pressure on the belligerents, and that any future resolution should indicate the possibility of sanctions against whichever party fails to respond to a ceasefire call. We have considered this very carefully but have come to the conclusion that not only would a Security Council initiative at this stage be unwise but that the additional threat of sanctions would not necessarily have the desired effect.

In our view, the timing of any new initiative by the Security Council will be crucial to its success. We are ready to act when the time is right, but it is essential that before such an initiative is launched there are sound reasons to believe that both sides may be willing to respond positively to a call to observe a ceasefire and begin negotiations. Premature moves by the Council will do nothing to enhance the standing of the United Nations with both parties, and could possibly jeopardise the Organisation's ability to play a constructive and effective role in any future mediation efforts.

In the meantime we are in close touch with the UN Secretariat to encourage them to take advantage of any opportunity that might arise. We have encouraged the Secretary-General in his efforts to bring the two sides together to deal with the oil slick from the Nowruz field in the hope that his involvement in this limited sphere, as a first step, may enhance his position to mediate the wider conflict.

Please accept, Your Majesty, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Yours sincerely
Raymond D. White

His Majesty King Fahd Ibn Abdul Aziz of
Saudi Arabia