



Prime Minister

LEBANON

Thank you for approving so promptly the line to be taken in the Security Council. We may be harshly criticised by the Arabs for declining today to consider at three hours' notice Chapter 7 action against Israel. But no-one has thought such action through. Without the Americans it would be futile. Their attitude may conceivably change; if so, we can think again.

2. The situation is becoming more dramatic. Whatever their choice of words the Israelis are now in effect assaulting Beirut. The American attitude is shifting. Western interests in the Middle East require a clear American statement repudiating Israeli action and drawing the consequences for US military and financial support if they continue.

3. I know that you do not want to overload the traffic between yourself ~~with~~ the President. But this is a critical moment. I would suggest something short and specific, on the lines of the attached draft, to influence his policy when it may be in the balance.

4. There will also need to be a European response if the Israelis continue to assault. There may be pressure for purely European sanctions (but these would be ineffective and require legislation here) or for symbolic acts such as the withdrawal of Ambassadors (but ours is already home). Probably a strong statement is the right objective. So far as action is concerned, President Reagan holds the only key.

Douglas Hurd

4 August 1982

Douglas Hurd

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DSR 11 (Revised)

DRAFT: ~~minute/letter/teleletter/despatch/note~~

TYPE: Draft/Final 1+

FROM: THE PRIME MINISTER

Reference

DEPARTMENT:

TEL. NO:

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

TO: PRESIDENT REAGAN

Your Reference

- Top Secret
- Secret
- Confidential
- Restricted
- Unclassified

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PRIVACY MARKING

SUBJECT:

.....In Confidence

The situation in Beirut has obviously got much worse since my message to you on 29 July and Francis Pym's discussion with George Shultz the same day.

CAVEAT.....

As you know, we have admired and fully supported Phil Habib's efforts to negotiate a withdrawal of PLO forces from Beirut. His task seems to have been made virtually impossible by the continued fighting. The ferocity of the Israeli bombardment of West Beirut on 1 August and the great suffering inflicted on civilians has deeply shocked people here. We may be only hours away from the final Israeli assault.

I understand of course that there are limits to what anyone, including the United States, can do to control Israeli actions in the immediate future. But the stakes are now very high. In recent weeks the Arab reaction has been hopelessly confused and divided. We cannot be sure that this will continue to be so as they understand what has happened. In

/moments

Enclosures—flag(s).....

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moments of humiliation the Arabs can easily turn on their own governments.

I hope that it may be possible for you to make a clear public statement that what Israeli forces are now doing is unacceptable to the United States and cannot be regarded as self-defence. It would help if we could all at this critical moment call publicly on the Israeli Government to draw back from the assault and conform with the resolutions of the Security Council. I am always sceptical of the impact of words, however strongly expressed. Would it be possible for you at the same time to make it clear to the Israelis that their expectations of future financial and military help from the United States must depend on their response?

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Lebanon

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

4 August 1982

The Lebanon

The Prime Minister was grateful for Mr. Hurd's minute of 4 August but decided that on balance she would prefer not to send the proposed message to President Reagan. In general she prefers to reserve her messages for those cases where they will have the desired impact. She doubts whether the proposed message would influence US policy at the present time.

A. J. COLES

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