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FM TUNIS 271140Z NOVEMBER 82

TO IMMEDIATE FCO  
TELEGRAM NUMBER 261 OF 27 NOVEMBER  
AND TORABAT  
INFO IMMEDIATE ALGIERS AMMAN DAMASCUS JEDDA WASHINGTON  
INFO PRIORITY OTHER MIDDLE EAST POSTS UKMIS NEW YORK PARIS

YOUR TELNO 851 TO RABAT AND TELECON HARDINGE/WILSON:  
ARAB LEAGUE DELEGATION

1. I DELIVERED YOUR MESSAGE TO OMRAN ON 26 NOVEMBER. (KLIBI WAS TAKEN ILL AGAIN IN TRIPOLI AND RETIRED TO BED ON HIS RETURN ESSEBSI AND MESTIRI HAD DELAYED THEIR RETURN TO MAKE THE POINT THAT THE TUNISIAN DELEGATION WAS AMONG THE LAST TO LEAVE THE ABORTIVE MEETING).
2. OMRAN COMMENTED THAT AT FIRST SIGHT THE MESSAGE WAS UNACCEPTABLE. HE FEARED THAT THE WORDING OF THE DRAFT STATEMENT WOULD BE REGARDED AS OFFENSIVE AND HE REGRETTED THAT IT HAD NOT BEEN DISCUSSED INFORMALLY IN THE FIRST INSTANCE. HE CONSIDERED THAT THE ARAB GOVERNMENTS WOULD OBJECT TO BEING ASKED TO CONFIRM THEIR REJECTION OF TERRORISM SINCE THIS COULD IMPLY THAT THEY HAD USED OR CONDONED IT. HE SAID, HOWEVER, THAT THE LEAGUE WOULD CONSULT OTHER MEMBERS OF THE DELEGATION AND THAT THE MESSAGE WOULD BE GIVEN FULL CONSIDERATION.
3. I DELIVERED THE MESSAGE TO CAID ESSEBSI THIS MORNING. HE ASKED ME TO THANK YOU FOR IT AND TO SAY THAT TUNISIA WOULD ABIDE BY THE CONSENSUS REACHED BY OTHER MEMBERS OF THE FEZ COMMISSION. HOWEVER, HE HAD TO SAY WITH REGRET THAT THE PROPOSAL WAS UNACCEPTABLE SO FAR AS HE WAS CONCERNED AND THAT HAD IT BEEN MADE TO TUNISIA ALONE, HE COULD NOT GO TO LONDON ON THIS BASIS.
4. HE SAID THAT BRITAIN APPEARED TO HAVE RETREATED FROM ITS EARLIER POSITION: OMRANEEEEEE QADDUMI HAD BEEN RECEIVED BY MR HURD WITHOUT THE MEMBERS OF THAT DELEGATION, WHICH HAD INCLUDED HIMSELF, BEING ASKED TO SUBSCRIBE TO A DECLARATION. I REITERATED OUR ATTITUDE, BUT HE WAS NOT MOVED BY THE ARGUMENT THAT THE PRESENT PROPOSAL REPRESENTED AN ADVANCE.

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5. ESSEBSI SAID THAT WHILE REALISING THAT THIS WAS A CIRCULAR MESSAGE, HE FOUND IT EXTRAORDINARY THAT TUNISIA SHOULD HAVE BEEN ADDRESSED IN THESE TERMS. PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA HAD BEEN THE FIRST ARAB LEADER TO CALL FOR THE ACCEPTANCE OF ISRAEL AND HAD STOOD UP TO SEVERE CRITICISM AS A RESULT. THE REFERENCE TO THE REJECTION OF TERRORISM COULD BE HELD TO IMPLY THAT THE TUNISIANS HAD AT SOME STAGE CONDONED IT. (HE ACCEPTED MY INTERJECTION THAT NO SUCH IMPLICATION WAS INTENDED, BUT COMMENTED THAT THE WORDING WAS UNFORTUNATE.) HE SAID THAT THE FEZ RESOLUTION ITSELF, TO WHICH THE PLO HAD EXPLICITLY SUBSCRIBED, WAS PROOF OF THE ARAB READINESS TO ACCEPT ISRAEL AND TO WORK FOR A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT. HE CONCLUDED THAT THE DRAFT STATEMENT WAS NOT HELPFUL AND HE WISHED THAT WE HAD NOT PUT IT FORWARD. HE REPEATED THAT THE PROPOSAL WAS UNACCEPTABLE TO TUNISIA, THOUGH HE WOULD BE BOUND BY THE CONSENSUS OF THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION WHICH HE EXPECTED TO BE CONVEYED TO YOU THROUGH KING HASSAN.

6. ESSEBSI DID NOT INDICATE THAT HE WAS AWARE OF KING HASSAN'S REACTION (RABAT'S TELNO 467) AND DID NOT MENTION IT.

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