

✓ Ian Gow



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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

Dear John,

Arab League Delegation Visit:  
Reactions

You asked for a note on the position before the Prime Minister's meeting with a group of MPs this evening. I enclose this. In our public reaction and discussions with MPs we have not revealed exactly what we proposed. We have taken the line that we regret the postponement of the visit but remain in touch with the members of the proposed delegation. The formal request for the inclusion of a PLO representative came very late. We did our best to respond constructively in the light of our long-standing policy.

Yours ever

(J E Holmes)  
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq  
10 Downing Street

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ARAB LEAGUE DELEGATION VISIT: REACTIONS TO PROPOSAL FOR  
AGREED STATEMENT

1. Summary. The Moroccan reaction has been the strongest, reflecting King Hassan's personal involvement; firm even heated rejection, but with care to leave the door open for a fresh start. The Saudis, Tunisians, Algerians, Syrians and the PLO rejected the terms of our statement. The Jordanians understood our aim and considered the statement a fair one: but were in no position to swing the balance.

2. Morocco. King Hassan has reacted sharply. Lord Chalfont, who saw him over the weekend, reported (and this was confirmed by other accounts) that the King was angry both about the difficulties in meeting all his wishes over the programme for his visit to London, and about the form and substance of our proposed statement. As regards the form, the King would clearly have preferred us to put the draft statement to him first before showing it to other members of the Delegation. On the substance, the Foreign Minister, Boucetta, commented that it was provocative to demand of the PLO that they renounce terrorism, and unacceptable to require endorsement by the whole Delegation to a set of preconditions. Boucetta has now transmitted a formal response, rejecting the message from Mr Pym which accompanied the draft statement. As leader of the Arab League Delegation, King Hassan feels personally affronted. It is likely to be some time before he is prepared to look objectively at the reasons for our position.

3. Saudi Arabia. The Saudi reaction has been one of 'grave concern', but in a tone of sorrow and puzzlement rather than anger. Prince Saud said that it was quite impossible for the Arab side to accept the statement we had put forward. He

/argued



argued that there had already been some movement in the PLO's position (Fez, and the Jordan/PLO talks) and added that if there were still difficulties about receiving a PLO representative, the visit should have been postponed to allow time for reconsideration. He concluded that it was important to salvage what we could from the crisis, otherwise both British and Arab interests would suffer. Crown Prince Abdullah later relayed a message to HM Ambassador in Riyadh from King Fahd expressing grave disquiet at our position, and laying emphasis on Saudi-British friendship.

4. Jordan. The Jordanians share the aim of our proposed statement, and had no difficulty with its substance. They regretted King Hassan's decision to cancel the visit to London. But faced with opposition from other participants in the Delegation, including Kings Hassan and Fahd, King Hussein clearly felt that he was not in a strong enough position to push for reconsideration of the decision to cancel.

5. PLO. As expected, Qaddumi flatly rejected the proposed statement, and subsequently confirmed this position with Arafat.

6. Tunisia. The Tunisian reaction was focussed on the terms of our proposed statement. They particularly objected to our proposal that all participants (ie including Tunisia) should confirm their rejection of terrorism, and concluded that the statement was not helpful.

7. Algeria. We have so far only had a low-level reaction, to the effect that our statement was unacceptable.

8. Syria. The Syrians have responded negatively at official level, but more in sorrow than in anger. Invitations could not be issued with preconditions. They claimed that our decision had been taken under US pressure.

Bk for make colder in Monday

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PRIME MINISTER

ARAB LEAGUE DELEGATION

Mr. Ernie Ross MP telephoned this afternoon to say that a number of MPs from the Labour Middle Eastern Council, the Conservative Middle Eastern Council and the All-Party UK/Palestine Council would like to call on you to discuss the composition of the Arab League delegation. Clearly, they wish to raise the matter of PLO participation.

He mentioned the following MPs as being interested in calling on you:

- Dennis Walters
- Cyril Townsend
- Tony Marlow
- David Watkins
- and himself.

I said that your diary was very crowded between now and the likely date of arrival of any delegation and I could promise nothing, but would consult you.

Do you want us to try to fit them in?

- It will be difficult -  
~~could it~~ but  
 possibly - after a  
 3-hour debate  
 House

0382.23141.

A.J.C.

mt

25 November 1982

22.10 [after vote]  
 Monday - Please bring  
 colleagues -