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B/C: Sir A. PARSONS ✓

## 10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

7 January 1983

Dear John,

Arab League Delegation

There was some discussion of this question when the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary called on the Prime Minister this morning.

Mr. Pym said that he was convinced that the proposals which we had put to the Moroccans for solving the problem of the composition of the Arab League Delegation would not find acceptance with the Arabs. But it was important to achieve an agreement on this matter before a meeting of Arab League Foreign Ministers which had been arranged for 21 January. Otherwise, the difficulties would worsen and considerable damage could be caused to our interests. He believed it would probably be necessary for him to agree to see the whole Delegation, including a PLO representative. This need not necessarily be regarded as inconsistent with our established policy that we would receive PLO representatives provided this helped the peace-making process.

The Prime Minister said that she saw considerable difficulty in this suggestion. The Government could be accused of appeasement. She doubted whether it could be argued that reception of the Delegation would help the peace-making process. This was now more a matter of public relations and damage limitation. The Government could not give the impression that it was bowing to Arab pressure. A formula which did not involve a Cabinet Minister receiving the Delegation would probably be necessary. It was also most important that on this occasion, whatever formula was adopted, we should have a detailed and carefully devised plan as to whom should be approached in the Arab world and at what time. We should certainly avoid any further public statements about a solution for the time being.

It was agreed that the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary would continue to explore the possibilities for a solution, without of course going beyond the positions of principle outlined by the Prime Minister.

Mr. Pym said that he believed it would be useful if HM Ambassador in Tunis could have a further discussion with Yasser Arafat to establish more clearly the latter's thinking on this problem. Arafat would have considerable influence on the meeting of Arab Foreign Ministers. The Prime Minister said that she had no objection to such a meeting, which did not conflict with the Government's policy that PLO representatives should not be received by Ministers.

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- 2 -

Mr. Pym informed the Prime Minister that he might decide to ask HM Ambassador in Saudi Arabia to return to London shortly for discussions. The Prime Minister said that she would be very glad to see Sir James Craig herself if this would be helpful.

*Yours ever*  
*John Holmes.*

John Holmes, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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