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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

19 January 1983

Arab League Delegation

You told me earlier today that the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary considered that the time had come to make the further move which he discussed with the Prime Minister informally on 17 January. You said that Mr. Pym had in mind that Yasser Arafat had apparently convened a meeting of senior PLO officials in Tunis on 21 January and that the seven Arab Foreign Ministers would be meeting on that day.

The Prime Minister agrees that Arafat may be approached on the following lines: we cannot change our existing policy whereby PLO representatives are not received at the level of Cabinet Minister or above but we could envisage a meeting between Mr. Douglas Hurd and Farouk Qaddumi in a foreign capital either at the same time as the visit of the Arab League Delegation to London or after that visit.

The Prime Minister has observed that this would amount to a step in the direction of the Arabs in that for the first time a Minister would receive a PLO official alone, not as part of an Arab League Delegation. But it must be clear that we could not be manoeuvred into a position where the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary himself - or any other Cabinet Minister - would receive a PLO official.

A. J. COLES

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