

MIDDLE EAST: ADVANCE COPIES

16

PS/MR HURD  
PS/PUS  
SIR J LEAHY  
MR EGERTON  
SIR J BULLARD  
ED/NENAD  
ED/MED  
ED/UND

NO 10 DOWNING STREET  
CABINET OFFICE D10

ED/... ..

ED/CONSULAR DEPT

... ..

... ..

PUSD (2)  
NEWS D  
RESIDENT CLERK

IMMEDIATE



GRS 770  
CONFIDENTIAL  
FM TUNIS 031435Z FEBRUARY 83  
TO IMMEDIATE FCO  
TELEGRAM NUMBER 15 OF 03 FEBRUARY  
INFO IMMEDIATE RABAT ALGIERS AMMAN JEDDA DAMASCUS  
INFO PRIORITY OTHER ME POSTS WASHINGTON PARIS UKMIS NEW YORK

ARAB LEAGUE DELEGATION

SUMMARY.

1. KLIBI AND OMRAN SEPARATELY EXPRESSED DEEP DISAPPOINTMENT YESTERDAY AT THE CONTINUED FAILURE TO FIND A SOLUTION TO PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION IN THE DELEGATION. THEY ASSUMED THAT THIS WAS THE REASON FOR THE LATEST POSTPONEMENT OF THE LONDON VISIT. NEITHER BELIEVED THAT IT HAD BEEN CAUSED BY THE MOROCCAN INTERNAL SITUATION. THEY PLEADED FOR GREATER FLEXIBILITY BY HMG OVER THE PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATIVE.

DETAIL.

2. OMRAN FIRST LEARNT OF THE POSTPONEMENT FROM NEWS AGENCY REPORTS FROM RABAT. HE INDICATED THAT THE MOROCCANS HAD GIVEN THE ARAB LEAGUE NO INFORMATION ABOUT THE VISIT OR ABOUT PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION IN THE DELEGATION. HE SAID THAT THE ONLY DETAILS WHICH THEY HAD RECEIVED HAD BEEN A COPY OF THE PROGRAMME FOR 7/8 FEBRUARY GIVEN TO OMAR AL HASSAN BY THE FCO ON 31 JANUARY. SPEAKING IN STRICT CONFIDENCE, HE EXPRESSED GREAT FRUSTRATION AT HAVING TO DEAL THROUGH KING HASSAN AND SAID THAT THE ARAB LEAGUE WAS INTENSELY ANXIOUS TO FIND A WAY FORWARD. HENCE THE ATTEMPT TO ARRANGE A CONFIDENTIAL MEETING BETWEEN KLIBI AND MRS THATCHER, WHICH HE AND KLIBI HAD RELUCTANTLY RECOGNISED TO BE IMPRACTICAL.

WAS INTENSELY ANXIOUS TO FIND A WAY FORWARD. HENCE THE ATTEMPT TO ARRANGE A CONFIDENTIAL MEETING BETWEEN KLIBI AND MRS THATCHER, WHICH HE AND KLIBI HAD RELUCTANTLY RECOGNISED TO BE IMPRACTICAL.

3. OMRAN SAID THAT IT WAS VITAL TO FIND AN EARLY SOLUTION. APART FROM THE POTENTIAL DAMAGE TO ARAB-BRITISH RELATIONS, THE DELAY WAS CONTRIBUTING TO THE DIFFICULTIES OF MAINTAINING THE ARAB CONSENSUS TO WORK FOR A NEGOTIATED ARAB-ISRAEL SETTLEMENT AND TO THE PRECARIOUSNESS OF ARAFAT'S POSITION. DIVISIONS IN THE ARAB WORLD, IN THE PLO AND WITHIN FATAH WERE REASSERTING THEMSELVES AND IT WAS DANGEROUSLY POSSIBLE THAT HARDLINERS WOULD REGAIN THE INITIATIVE. HE SAID THAT HE COULD NOT REALLY COMPREHEND OUR POSITION AND HE BEGGED US TO CONSIDER SOME WAY OF ALLOWING THE DELEGATION TO INCLUDE A REPRESENTATIVE APPROVED BY ARAFAT. HE ASKED WHETHER THERE WAS ANY CHANCE OF KHALID AL HASSAN BEING ACCEPTED. I SAID THAT HIS NAME HAD NOT BEEN PUT TO US, BUT THAT I WOULD EXPECT THERE TO BE DIFFICULTIES IF HE WERE PROPOSED.

4. AT DINNER LAST NIGHT, KLIBI SPOKE TO ME SIMILARLY, BUT MORE URGENTLY, EMPHASING THAT WHILE THE MIDDLE EAST SITUATION HAD NEVER BEEN MORE CRITICAL, IT ALSO OFFERED AN UNPRECEDENTED OPPORTUNITY FOR A SETTLEMENT IF ALL CONCERNED WERE PREPARED TO GRASP IT. HE SAID THAT HE WAS BEWILDERED BY OUR CONTINUED INSISTENCE ON EXCLUDING A PLO MEMBER FROM THE DELEGATION AND HE WONDERED WHETHER THIS MIGHT BE DUE TO THE APPROACH OF THE GENERAL ELECTION. HE COMMENTED THAT BOTH SIDES WERE STUCK WITH DEALING THROUGH KING HASSAN, BUT HE THREW OUT THE FOLLOWING IDEA AS AN UNOFFICIAL SUGGESTION:- EITHER QADDUMI OR KHALID AL HASSAN MIGHT GO TO LONDON WITH THE DELEGATION AND ATTEND A DINNER GIVEN BY KING HASSAN AT THE MOROCCAN EMBASSY TO WHICH MRS THATCHER WOULD BE INVITED. THE PLO MAN WOULD ATTEND NO OTHER MEETING OR FUNCTION DURING THE VISIT AND THE DINNER WOULD BE THE ONLY OCCASION ON WHICH HE AND THE PRIME MINISTER WOULD BE UNDER THE SAME ROOF. I SAID THAT ANY SUCH SUGGESTION WOULD HAVE TO COME TO US FROM KING HASSAN. I WOULD REPORT IT, BUT I COULD NOT SAY THAT IT WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE. (KLIBI GAVE THE IMPRESSION OF SNATCHING RATHER DESPERATELY AT STRAWS).

5. I SPELT OUT OUR POSITION ON PLO CONTACTS YET AGAIN TO KLIBI AND OMRAN, EMPHASING TO KLIBI THAT THIS WAS A LONG STANDING MATTER OF PRINCIPLE, NOT A QUESTION OF ELECTORAL CONSIDERATIONS. I SAID THAT MILHEM WAS THE ONLY CANDIDATE AS PALESTINIAN MEMBER OF THE DELEGATION THAT HAD BEEN PUT TO US, THOUGH WE WERE READY TO CONSIDER ANY OF THE WIDE RANGE OF LEADING PALESTINIANS WHO WERE NOT PLO MEMBERS. BOTH KLIBI AND OMRAN REPEATED THAT THEY SAW NO PROSPECT OF MILHEM BEING ENDORSED AS THE PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATIVE AND SAID THAT THIS NO DOUBT ACCOUNTED FOR THE POSTPONEMENT OF THE VISIT.

6. I SPOKE TODAY (3 FEBRUARY) TO OMRAN ON THE LINES OF (B) AND (C) OF YOUR TEL NO 102 TO RABAT. (A) HAD BEEN COVERED IN PREVIOUS CONVERSATIONS. I DID NOT (NOT) MENTION THE MR HURD/QADDUMI OFFER AND I DO NOT PROPOSE TO DO SO WHEN I GO OVER THUS GROUND WITH OUNAIES (MFA) TOMORROW. I THINK THAT THIS WOULD BE UNNECESSARILY DEFENSIVE, SINCE NEITHER THE ARAB LEAGUE NOR THE TUNISIANS HAVE RECENTLY REPEATED THE SUGGESTION THAT OUR POLICY ON PLO CONTACTS HAS BECOME MORE RESTRICTIVE. IT MIGHT ALSO PROVOKE URGINGS THAT THE

~~DEFENSIVE, SINCE NEITHER THE ARAB LEAGUE NOR THE TUNISIANS HAVE  
RECENTLY REPEATED THE SUGGESTION THAT OUR POLICY ON PLO CONTACTS  
HAS BECOME MORE RESTRICTIVE. IT MIGHT ALSO PROVOKE URGINGS THAT THE  
MEETING SHOULD GO AHEAD REGARDLESS OF PROGRESS ON THE DELEGATION'S  
VISIT.~~

7. SINCE THIS WAS DRAFTED, OMRAN TELEPHONED IN CONSIDERABLE  
AGITATION ABOUT A REUTERS REPORT WHICH, HE SAID, QUOTED FCO  
OFFICIALS AS BLAMING THE ARAB LEAGUE FOR THE LAILURE SO FAR TO  
ARRANGE THE VISIT TO LONDOB (TELECON HARDINGE/RICKETTS), I HAVE  
TOLD HIM THAT WE ARE INVESTIGATING THIS. HOWEVER, THERE IS SOME  
POSSIBILITY OF A - PROBABLY DISOBLIGING - STATEMENT BEING ISSUED  
BY THE ARAB LEAGUE. KLIBI AND OMRAN ARE ABOUT TO LEAVE ON A VISIT  
TO ZAMBIA, ZIMBABWE AND ANGOLA AFTER WHICH OMRAN IS DUE TO GO TO  
SCANDINAVIA.

STIRLING

NNNN

SENT/RECD AT 031828Z SP/AV