



THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

26 February 1994

Excellency,

I am writing to you in connection with the tragic shooting incident which took place yesterday at the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron. I know that you share the world's horror at the massacre of Palestinian worshippers, and that you are making every effort to calm fears and to ensure that no further violence takes place.

It is deeply reassuring that the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization agree that this incident should not impede your bilateral negotiations, which have reached a critical phase. It is my earnest hope that the talks will take place next week in Washington, as suggested by President Clinton. However, I am concerned that a resumption of discussions on Gaza and Jericho will not by itself be sufficient to overcome the anxiety of Palestinians residing elsewhere in the West Bank.

While Friday's atrocity was clearly the act of a fanatic, the magnitude of his crime and the circumstances in which it was carried out -- in a place sacred to Muslims and Jews alike -- have heightened Palestinian feelings of insecurity regarding the Israeli settlers, whom they have long perceived to be operating outside the law. I know that Israel alone must decide how to enforce the law among its citizens, and I am confident that your government will take the necessary measures to ensure that an incident of this kind is not repeated.

At the same time, one cannot disregard Israel's obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention, which simultaneously requires it to maintain law and order and to ensure the safety and protection of civilians residing in the areas it occupies. The question of protection has, as you know, repeatedly been addressed by the Security Council. Following the Hebron massacre, it is once again the focus of international concern.

His Excellency
Mr. Yitzhak Rabin
Prime Minister and Minister of Defense
of the State of Israel
Jerusalem

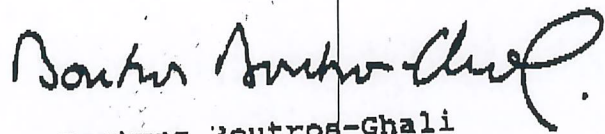
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I am well aware that Israel has long opposed the deployment of United Nations military observers in the occupied territories. Yet I would urge you, in the present circumstances, to consider some kind of United Nations presence, possibly civilians whose terms of reference would be worked out in consultation with your government. If you agree, I would be prepared to send an emissary to Israel to discuss what might be feasible. In my view, such a step would be an important confidence-building measure which could serve both to support the negotiating process and to help overcome the prevailing mistrust between Palestinians and Israelis in the occupied territories.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.



Boutros Boutros-Ghali