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MINISTER OF DEFENSE
GENERAL STAFF

Jerusalem, 12 October 1953.

Dear Mr. Minister,

I have the honor to acknowledge receipt of your letter FA/796/53, dated 11 October, suggesting that we should hold at my earliest convenience the further meeting for seen in the joint communique of 28 September.

The contemplated meeting has been delayed owing to my other responsibilities, and also because I wanted to have information on one of the very first points I had raised; viz., did Israeli engineers start their work in connection with the canal project on Arab-owned land? You are moreover aware that the record of our 27 September meeting was not sent to me by your office until 5 October. That record was necessary to avoid misunderstandings on the views you had expressed.

The situation as I see it today is as follows: the investigation of land titles in the Land Registry Office in Safad has proved that work in connection with the canal project was started in September on Arab land, without the consent of the General Staff. This has taken place, notwithstanding the "categorical assurance" by Israeli representatives, to which Your Excellency has referred in your letter of 24 September 1953 (paragraph 7 a). Actual facts have contradicted the assurance "that the project has not so far involved, nor will it involve in the future, the use of Arab-owned land in the Demilitarized Zone, and that it has not otherwise affected, nor will it in the future affect such land."

This contradiction between "categorical assurances" and reality provides, in my opinion, a powerful argument for the acceptance by the Israel Government of the measure indicated in paragraph 7 of my letter dated 26 September 1953. Your Excellency will remember that, on the basis of a statement contained in paragraph 9 of your letter of 24 September, I suggested that the Government of Israel should instruct the responsible authority to cease working in the Demilitarized Zone, in order to facilitate the clarification of moot points which you had proposed, as well as the examination by the Security Council of the issue which your Government was also, if necessary, ready submit to it. This suggestion has been "noted" in your letter FA/791/53, dated 27 September, but has not up to now been answered.

I am at your disposal for a meeting on the 13th or 15th, if either of these dates is convenient to you.

Yours sincerely,

(-) V. Bennis

Major General Vagn Bennis
Chief of Staff

His Excellency Mr. Moshe Sharett,
Minister for Foreign Affairs,
Government of Israel.