



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

21 July 1982

Prime Minister

to note.

A.F.C. 21/7

Dear John,

Statement by PLO on Acceptance of Israel

There have been a number of statements from leading figures in the PLO in recent days setting out the PLO's position on acceptance of Israel.

The Prime Minister will have seen Arafat's interview with Avneri, an Israeli journalist, as reported in "The Times" on 8 July. I now enclose the full text of the interview. The main points of substance are on pages 3 and 4, although the interview is worth reading in full for the flavour of the exchange. Arafat comes over as a man under pressure and with solid reasons of his own for wanting a peaceful solution.

In addition, Dr Sartawi (a member of the Palestinian National Council and a leading PLO dove) has given press conferences in Paris on 13 July and London on 14 July. I enclose a copy of Paris telegram number 725 reporting that Sartawi had said on the first occasion that the PLO had "formally conceded to Israel in the most unequivocal manner its right to exist on a reciprocal basis". A COI journalist who attended the London press conference on our behalf has reported that he said the same thing there. Both Arafat and Sartawi point to three main texts to justify their claim:

- (i) the PLO's acceptance of the joint US/USSR statement of 1 October 1977 in all its parts. I enclose a copy: you will see that it refers explicitly to the need for measures to ensure the security of the borders between Israel and her neighbours;
- (ii) the statement issued following the Palestine National Council's meeting in April 1981, which "welcomed" Brezhnev's speech to the 26th CPSU Congress in February 1981. Brezhnev's speech had included a passage calling for measures to ensure the security and sovereignty of all states in the area, including Israel;

/(iii)



- (iii) Arafat's acceptance of the Fahd principles last year (although it is not explicit on Israel's rights, nor was it in the event translated into PLO support for the principles at Fez).

To carry any real weight, Sartawi's statements would require specific public endorsement by Arafat. They are nonetheless pointers in the direction in which we have at official level for some time been urging the PLO to move. The FCO spokesman has taken the following line in response to questions:

"We welcome the statement made by Dr Sartawi in London on 14 July in which he made clear that the PLO had formally conceded Israel's right to exist on a reciprocal basis. This statement, taken together with the points made by Mr Arafat in an interview with Mr Averni published in "The Times" on 8 July, marks a constructive step towards the mutual acceptance by Palestinians and Israelis on which a settlement of the Arab/Israel problem will have to be based. But the statement is not authoritative, and we would wish to see confirmation from the PLO leadership that they share Dr Sartawi's interpretation of the PLO's policy on this critical point, and that they intend to use political, not violent, means in pursuit of their objectives."

Yours ever,

for (J E Holmes)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street