



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

17 January 1983

Dear John,

Arab League Delegation Visit

Our negotiations with the Moroccans have reached the point where we are agreed with them that the visit can take place on 7/8 February, with Mohammed Milhem as the Palestinian representative. But public comments made over the past few days by other Arab leaders, including Arafat, throw doubt on the acceptance of the Milhem idea by the whole seven-member Fez committee, though they do not rule it out. The Moroccans have told us that the other Arabs are their business, and that they wish us to proceed soon with a joint announcement of agreement to the visit. We are replying that we are content for the Moroccans to make a formal announcement which we shall support with official comment from London, including a reference to an understanding on the composition.

There is a considerable risk that King Hassan will fail to persuade the other Arabs to accept the Milhem proposal. Mr Pym nevertheless believes it right to show as positive a face as possible to the Moroccans, the better to hold them to their obligation to settle the inter-Arab issues. As King Hassan has from the beginning attached great importance to the Prime Minister's own part in resolving this problem, Mr Pym believes it would be a helpful and timely gesture for her now to send a personal message to King Hassan. This would have the effect of (a) reassuring the King that HMG is fully behind his efforts to rearrange the delegation's visit; and (b) providing the King with evidence, for use if necessary with the other Arabs, that there has been no step backwards in British policy, and that we are still firmly in support of Palestinian self-determination and a freeze on Israeli settlements, two crucial issues for the Palestinians as the possibility of talks under the Reagan plan grows.

/ I enclose a draft message. The Fez Committee meets at Foreign Minister level on 21 January in Rabat and for the message to have the desired effect it should issue in the next day or so.

Yours ever

(J E Holmes)
Private Secretary

John Holmes

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street

CONFIDENTIAL

TELEGRAM

Classification and Caveats

CONFIDENTIAL

Precedence/riority

IMMEDIATE

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CLASS
CAVEATS
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TO IMMEDIATE RABAT
TELEGRAM NUMBER

ARAB LEAGUE DELEGATION VISIT

1. Please pass the following message from the Prime Minister to King Hassan as soon as possible:

BEGINS'YOUR MAJESTY

I have been following closely the exchanges between our two Governments about the visit which you propose to make to London ^{next} ~~for~~ month at the Head of the Arab League Delegation.

I am much encouraged by the progress which has been made and am most grateful to Your Majesty for the trouble you and your Ministers are taking to ensure the visit's success.

I look forward with much pleasure to seeing you. I am also delighted that Her Majesty The Queen will be able to welcome you and your colleagues herself.

The delay in the arrangement of your visit was especially disappointing, as I believe there is a broad area of agreement between the United Kingdom and the Arab States on ^{many} ~~may~~ aspects

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Classification and Caveats

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 2 of the Palestinian problem. Over the past fifteen years we
 3 have contributed as much as any western country to the now almost
 4 universal recognition that the Palestinian people have a right to
 5 self-determination. We have in no way diminished our support for
 6 that right; and we shall continue to play as active a part as we
 7 can in the search for a just and lasting peace. We have, for
 8 example, been pressing the Americans hard on the urgent need
 9 for Israel to cease establishing settlements in the occupied
 10 territories, a practice which we regard as illegal and
 11 very harmful to peace prospects.
 12 I attach great important to hearing the views of Your Majesty
 13 and your Delegation on those and other matters of present concern
 14 and assure you of a warm welcome in London.
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