

# Singapore Government **PRESS RELEASE**

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ADDRESS BY SINGAPORE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UNITED NATIONS, PROFESSOR TOMMY KOH THONG BEE, AT THE EMERGENCY SPECIAL SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON THE GOLAN HEIGHTS, ON MONDAY, 1 FEBRUARY 1982

The Golan Heights belong to Syria. They came under the occupation of Israel as a result of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. On the 14th of December 1981, the parliament of Israel enacted a law extending its laws, jurisdiction and administration to the Golan Heights. These facts are not in dispute. What is disputed is whether the parliament of Israel has the right to do what it did.

The action of the Israeli parliament is tantamount to the annexation of the Golan Heights by Israel. The Israeli law is without international legal effect for the following reasons. First, the Charter of the United Nations prohibits the acquisition of territory by the use of force. Secondly, the Israeli action is contrary to the Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Article 47 of that convention forbids an occupying power from depriving protected persons of the benefits of the convention through the mechanism of annexation of part or the whole of an occupied territory. Thirdly, the Hague convention (No. VI) of 1907, which the Fourth Geneva Convention supplements, makes clear that a belligerent occupant is only a temporary administrator of the territory it occupies. It is prohibited from annexing, dividing or pursuing any act that may permanently affect the legal status of the occupied territory. Fourthly, it violates the letter and spirit of Security Council Resolution 242 (1967) which, inter-alia, reaffirms the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and consequently, calls for the withdrawal of Israel from occupied Arab territories. Fifthly, it is an infringement against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria.

In defence of his Government's action, the Representative of Israel, Ambassador Blum, has adduced three arguments. His first argument was that Syria has regarded itself as being in a state of war with Israel since 1948. His second argument was that the annexation was necessary in order to put an end to what he called an anomalous situation in the Golan Heights and to normalise the situation. His third argument was that Israel remains ready to negotiate unconditionally with Syria in accordance with Security Council Resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). None of these three arguments can justify the action of the Israeli parliament. The fact that Syria regards itself as in a state of war with Israel does not confer on Israel any right, under international law, to annex occupied Syrian territory. If the occupation of the Golan Heights by Israel for 14 years creates an anomalous situation, the cure of this anomaly is for Israel to restore the territory to Syria rather than to annex it. As for the third argument, while my Government welcomes Israel's offer to negotiate unconditionally a peace settlement with Syria, we regard Israel's action as having weakened rather than strengthened the prospects of negotiations with Syria.

Has the action of Israel advanced or set back the cause of peace in the Middle-East? In my delegation's view, Israel's action has set back the cause of peace in the Middle-East. First, as we have already said, it weakens rather than strengthens the prospects of negotiations between Israel and Syria. Secondly, it encourages extremism in the Arab world. Thirdly, it compromises the Camp David peace process.

My Government enjoys diplomatic relations with the state of Israel. We recognise the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Israel. We believe that Israel has a right to live in peace within secure and internationally recognised borders. It is, therefore, as a friend that we address an appeal to the Government of Israel to rescind the law which its parliament enacted on the 14th of December 1981. If Israel is sincere in seeking peace with its Arab neighbours, then Israel must refrain from taking such actions as the annexation of Syrian Golan Heights; the annexation of East Jerusalem, and the implantation of Israeli settlements in occupied Arab territories. Finally, there can be no just and lasting peace in the Middle-East until Israel is prepared to recognise the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination and until the Arab nation is prepared to accept the legitimacy of the state of Israel.

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