

April 22. ¹ States Syrian reps MAC claim closing of Huleh dam throughout daylight hours threatens extensive damage not only to crops but also to irrigation canals themselves (if empty many hours in sun, canals dry out and develop cracks). Hence, they believe opening of dam for part of daylight period necessary to obviate serious damage. Apparently believe plan wld permit continuation of some work on river bed. Source says Syrians desire enter direct conversations with Israelis to work out mutually satisfactory solution. Understand Syrians wld not renew their objections to continuation work on Huleh project if damage to Bouteiha farm obviated.

Chief of Staff states Israeli MAC reps have refused discuss MAC questions pertaining to Jordan water or other matters relating to demilitarized zone apparently for fear prejudicing Israel's claim to sovereignty. Adds, however, Israeli reps have agreed to meet with Syrians informally and hopes this may make it possible to arrive at some practical arrangement that will forestall a deterioration of situ such as occurred last year. He recd impression however from contacts with Israel officials that latter are determined to go ahead with Huleh project even if Syria again attempts to block work.

KEELER

¹ Telegram 608 from Damascus, Apr. 22, reported on the visit by the Military Attaché and Legation officers to the demilitarized zone on Apr. 19 in the company of Lieutenant Colonel Jaddid. It was noted that the gates of the Israeli dam south of Lake Huleh remained open, permitting the full flow of the Jordan River and irrigation of the Bouteiha farm. Jaddid hoped the dam would now remain open pursuant to the agreement of the Israeli representative on the Mixed Armistice Commission, as the flow of the Jordan was needed to irrigate crops at Bouteiha. (683.84A/4-2252)

No. 428

684A.86/5-552: Telegram

The Minister in Syria (Cannon) to the Department of State ¹

SECRET

DAMASCUS, May 5, 1952—noon.

649. Dept pass Défense. Fol two recent steps appear to be part Israel campaign consolidate absolute control over Syro-Israel demil zone west bank of Jordan and take step toward same objective in zone east of Jordan:

1. Arabs of Shamalneh District which was scene of last years heavy fighting have been told by Israeli they may not reside here but only work in zone in daytime. Six local Arab police threatened

¹ Repeated to Tel Aviv, London, Paris, Amman, Ankara, Baghdad, Beirut, Cairo, Jidda, Jerusalem, Moscow, Rome (for Unger), and Tripoli.