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## PRESS CONFERENCE

given by

**PRESIDENT ANWAR EL SADAT**

to African pressmen on the occasion of

« Africa Day »

May 26, 1976

On « Africa Day » President Mohamed Anwar El Sadat held a press conference to a number of African pressmen. He started the conference by saying :

« I am indeed happy to receive you in Alexandria, the second capital of African Egypt, which is celebrating the 13th Anniversary of the founding of the Organisation of African Unity.

« Egypt shall always bolster the liberation movements, especially in Africa, with all her resources and potentials. We shall be happy and shall together rejoice in this freedom.

« I am happy to meet colleagues of mine and thank you for selecting me as the honorary President of your Federation. I promise you that Egypt shall remain the home and sanctuary for every African. We are proud of being both part of the Arab world and the African.»

A Tunisian journalist then asked, I wish to transmit a message of approval and appreciation from the Tunisian people and press for your wise policy.

**Question :** Could you let us know your viewpoint on the position in Lebanon ?

**President :** No doubt, the position in Lebanon is a painful tragedy to us all. From the very outset, Egypt expressed her view of the situation and clearly stated that it is necessary to keep Arab and foreign hands off Lebanon. The problem there is twofold :

The first : The system adopted by Lebanon, following independence, is no longer compatible with the circumstances the world is passing through. Yet no one can force anything on the Lebanese. It is up to them to sit together and decide the way out, in the light of local conditions and the broad base of the Lebanese people. This is why we repeat : « Hands off Lebanon », since this is a matter that is solely the concern of the Lebanese and should be kept in isolation from both Arab and foreign influence.

The second : Is the relation between the Lebanese and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation. Hence I say that the Lebanese should sit and have a talk with the Palestinians, since this is a matter that concerns them both, but no one else is to interfere.

Once again I will repeat that we place all the responsibility on Lebanese statesmen for they should rise to the level of the responsibility involved at this stage and forget about factions, sectarianism and blocs.

This is not a controversy over Moslems and Christians. This is the impression they are trying to impart to the picture. The old corpses that walked out of their graves, such as Camille Chamoun, are trying to portray the position as such.

This is wrong. Lebanon passed through a similar crisis in 1958 which ended by the ousting of Chamoun. This is why we say to our Lebanese brothers : Come to an agreement, forget your

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differences, admit to yourselves and inform your brothers of any intervention in your affairs. Undoubtedly our hearts ache for this flow of blood that has been going on for over a year. We could say a great deal in this connection, but we prefer to keep silent, hoping that it would stop. We are not out-bidders, nor do we fish in troubled waters. We only say what we feel and what we think.»

**Question :** There are still many more problems in Africa : Liberation of Arab lands, restoration of Arab rights in the north-east of the Continent and struggle for liberation in Zimbabwe and Namibia, in the south. Do you not believe that Egypt is faced with heavy responsibilities for helping African people to recover their independence ?

**President :** First and foremost, we are proud of being Africans. Egypt's policy since the inception of the July 23 Revolution has been, and will continue to support liberation movements all over the world, especially our African brothers with whom we share the same Continent. We are glad that some of the African liberation movements that started in Cairo gained independence, though some have not and still have offices in Cairo. It was indeed a great honour to me to have become the first Secretary to the Afro-Asian Solidarity Congress, 19 years ago. The majority of African nations had not yet secured their independence, and I remember that we had used the Sudan and passage across forests for the delegations to arrive in Cairo. Now, it delights me to see that most of Africa has gained its independence and sovereignty. But some are still suffering under the yoke of oppression. And we are with them, with all that lies within our power.

**Question :** Please comment on Arab relations, following the conclusion of the second disengagement agreement.

**President :** We engaged in the October War with the purpose of destroying the Israeli security theory and liberate our lands.

America intervened. After fighting it for ten days, I announced that I was not prepared to destroy my forces and ruin my country to continue to fight against America. Following the cease-fire, there was a disengagement of forces on the two fronts : the Egyptian and the Syrian. A second disengagement was to take effect both in Syria and Egypt by the end of 1974. But on account of circumstances in America it was put off to 1975. Before going to meet President Ford in Salzburg, I communicated this to President El Assad. The second disengagement was conducted on the Egyptian front and was supposed to take place on the Syrian front as well.

But on account of a series of circumstances, outbiddings and rancours — I do not know the precise reason — the disengagement agreement relative to Syria was obstructed. Then started the aggressive campaign against Egypt.

But this does not change the position, since in the Rabat Summit Conference we approved the Arab strategy which provides : Not a span of Arab land should be ceded and that there should be no compromise over the rights of Palestinian people. To this, both Syria and Egypt are committed. The difference is therefore confined to party questions, outbiddings, narrow mindedness and rancours. I wish to assure you that Arab solidarity is safe, even if we differ, Arab solidarity will remain intact.

**Question :** The Organisation of African Unity will be meeting in Mauritius soon, and there are many African problems that need to be settled. What is Egypt's attitude towards the Sahara problem, the independence of Djibouti, and the Eritrea Question ? Also, what topics will you discuss at the arrival of President Idi Amin ?

**President :** With regard to our attitude to the problem of the Sahara, Vice-President Hosni Mubarak went there and was able

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prevent an imminent military clash. We shall not take sides, as we wish to be in a position to contact the two parties, both Morocco and Algeria. Certainly, I have my view over the dispute, but they are both brothers. To be able to exert a conciliatory effort, it is necessary not to take sides. This is exactly what Hosni Mubarak did and thus averted an imminent clash.

With regard to Djibouti, I told African ambassadors, a while ago, that we shall be happy when Djibouti obtains its independence and joins us in the membership of the United Nations Organisation.

As for the Eritrean problem, I had a talk with the President of the Ethiopian Military Council at the African Summit Conference in Kampala. I advised him of the necessity of granting autonomy to Eritrea. This preparation for a forth-coming battle is a most serious and painful thing. I would like to seize the opportunity to appeal to our brother Ethiopians not to engage in a war with Eritrea.

President Idi Amin will be arriving tomorrow (Thursday, May 27). There are many problems we shall discuss together, including the Middle East problem, African issues, the international position in general, and President Idi Amin's visits and meetings over which we shall exchange viewpoints and information.

**Question :** Would you please comment on Arab-African debate and the Dakar Declaration which was drawn up as a document of Arab-African cooperation ?

**President :** We are, undoubtedly, all for a strong solidarity of forces between Africans and Arabs, and certainly we agree with whatever sets this unity. We approve of the Dakar Declaration, in fact, we consider that this subject is progressing much too slowly, and should have been quickly concluded. In this connection, I cannot

deny the responsibility of our Arab brothers. Since the Algiers Conference in 1973 then the Rabat Conference of 1974, we have been pushing this solidarity to its utmost. I appeal to Arabs and Africans alike to see it through.

I take advantage of this opportunity to offer my thanks to the African brothers who stood by us, as one man (in the Arab-Israeli conflict).

**Question :** What is Egypt's attitude concerning the Non-alignment Conference scheduled to meet in Colombo ?

**President :** I wish to state a fact. Egypt and Gamal Abdel Nasser were one of the four founders of the non-alignment movement with Tito, Nehru, Abdel Nasser and Soekarno. Three of them have died and only Tito remains. This is why I had a meeting with him last month and we discussed the forthcoming Non-alignment Conference in Colombo. We agreed on the importance of the role of non-alignment at the detente stage the world is passing through, since the non-alignment started in the cold war stage. We want the Non-alignment bloc to play a principal part and not a secondary one, like its present role. It should have permanent organisations.

If the Non-alignment countries which possess the energy and raw materials and constitute the majority of the population of the world cooperate, they can change the world and influence the two big blocs.

In Yugoslavia, I also met Mrs. Bandaranaike, in whose country the forthcoming conference will be held, and discussed with her the same viewpoints. I reached an understanding with President Tito, the only living founder of the non-alliance movement, and with Mrs. Bandaranaike in whose country the conference will meet. I believe that Egypt's position is clear.

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**Question :** You said that there is to be no compromise over Palestinian rights. How can this be realised with Palestine torn to pieces ? What is your mission and the means that would lead to restoration of the rights of Palestinian people ?

**President :** There is to be no compromise over the rights of Palestinian people. They have an organisation that speaks on their behalf. The movement which arose in the occupied land proves that Palestinians are qualified to bear the responsibility of their country, and that the Palestinian Liberation Organisation is qualified to bear the responsibility of Palestinians. In our view a Palestinian entity must be established.