

Secretary-General's Interview with IDF Radio (Jerusalem).  
30 December 2002  
(unofficial transcript)

Q: Do you agree with Bush that Iraq is hiding WMD?

SG: I think the SC's mandate, the last res, is very clear that we need to do everything to disarm Iraq. And the inspectors have been given fresh power which I think they are using well. So far they have been able to keep up their work unimpeded and we are waiting their first report in Jan and I think at the rate if the inspectors are keeping up, we will soon figure out what is happening in Iraq.

Q: Again, do you agree with Bush that Iraq is hiding WMD?

SG: This is why the inspectors are in. They are supposed to find these things and they work very hard and come with the evidence. They have also told the Iraqis that they have to give them the evidence to prove that they don't have these weapons. So until then, the inspectors' report, I think to be premature of making any judgments and the whole Council is waiting for the inspectors who have been given that responsibility.

Q: Rumors about agreement b/w Arab countries and Iraq, Hussein exile in Libya or somewhere.

Do you agree this kind of solution?

SG: Well, there are lots of rumors around these days re what may be happening in many parts of the world. I have not been prevailed to any of these discussions. Yes I have read the newspaper articles but I have no basis for giving it any credits.

Q: What is timetable? The US will not act before the SC meeting 27 Jan?

SG: I think the inspections are going on and everybody has agreed that the inspectors will come back and report to the Council on 27 Jan. They will make an interim report before the 27<sup>th</sup> and I really do not see any basis for an action until then. Particularly us, they are able to carry on their work on unimpeded manner.

Q: You don't see any reason to act before 27 Jan?

SG: What I'm saying is that the mandate that the Council has given to the inspectors is to work on disarmament of Iraq and to report back any defiance. So far or any findings they would make obviously they are carrying out their work. They have to analyze what they have found and they will have to report to the Council and in the mean time Iraq is cooperating and they are able to do their work in unimpeded manner and therefore I don't see an argument for a military action now.

Q: Before 27 Jan, you do not expect the US military action?

SG: No, because we are all waiting for the report of the inspectors.

Q: Comment on Israeli public?

SG: I know it's a difficult situation for everyone in the region and recall what all of you went through the last this happened. And again also when there was a possibility of a major military action four years ago. I still hope that we'll be able to resolve this issue peacefully and if the cooperation continues and we are able to verify and have the evidence of what is going on in Iraq, I hope we do not have to have a military operation. So I have not given up hope and as we enter the next year 2003, my message for the Israelis and the people in the region is a message of hope and message of peace and message that 2003 both Israelis and Palestinians who will work with the Quartet and int'l community.

Q: Israel have the right to attack when it was attacked?

SG: I hope that Iraq will not attack Israel. That big mistake was made last time around and I can understand why Israel wants to protect itself and will be preparing this population. But I see no justification for them to attack Israel.

Q: If they do?

SG: If they do attack Israel, if a country's attacked, of course I know that you are also in a discussion with your allies, what measures you should take. But I really as I said don't see any justification for them to attack a country that is not party to a conflict.

Q: Arafat is still relevant to negotiate? Is this a int'l agenda after the Iraq crisis?

SG: I think it's always been an int'l agenda as it should be. And I hope that when we are moving to 2003 they will be reinvigorated to their to work with the parties to find a solution and I hope at that point parties will be prepared to work with the int'l community to resolve this long standing issue. As far as Chairman Arafat is concerned, he is the only elected leader of the Palestinians. Until they elect new leaders, for us, the UN, he is the leader. I know they have postponed the elections for early next year. I don't know when. But it does pose a problem and of course all the leaders among the Palestinians who are active and respected that we can all work with them.

Q: If he is re-elected, Israel should negotiate with him?

SG: This is the way democracy works. I know the Israeli position that he has been not done enough to stop the terror or to control the terror. And therefore Israel can't deal with him. But you also know the position of the vast majority of the int'l community that until there is a new leader, since he is the only elected leader, we have to deal with him. At the same time, tremendous pressure has been put on him to take every necessary measure to stop the attacks. I myself had a occasion to condemn suicide bombing and the use of

terror attack as well as, also demand that Israel should be careful in its own response not to harm civilians. And to ensure that it's an occupying power that the civilian populations are protected in accordance to law.

Q: Zionism, racism in the UN?

SG: I don't think this is a view shared vast majority of the member states and this idea that Israel equates racism as a resolution which was rescinded. And vast majority of member states voted for it and this is the way they feel. So while there is may be some individual members or small minority that may feel this way, that is not a position of the Organization. And of course it's been repeated by the UN itself.

Q: Words of hope towards next year?

SG: This year has been particularly difficult year wherever you turn, there were problems and tragedies and senseless loss of life. And in some cases you know that it could have been avoided. As we move into the next year I hope that we will all behave towards each other in a sprit of brotherhood, tolerance and aim to create a stable, peaceful world. And on the peace front, particularly in your region that everyone should be prepared to engage and sustain in a meaningful manner and work to achieve peace. And in the process not allow the extremists to dictate the calendar. We should proceed with the full knowledge that one will deal with the extremists as firmly as possible but continue on the peaceful without allowing them to derail it. That is the only way we are going to be able to resolve this problem. Otherwise the agenda will be on the wrong hands.