

The Middle East Crisis: Is There A Middle Ground?

HON. ALI SUMAIDA (Ambassador of the Republic of Iraq): The Gulf crisis is a concern not only in Iraq or the Philippines but all over the world. This would reflect, in many ways, on the international relations between countries. If we talk about the Middle East, we should emphasize on its geographical importance and its other importance in the economic and political sense.

The Middle East, as you know, is situated between Pakistan and Egypt. It includes the area of Palestine, Jordan, Iraq, other countries like Syria, the Arab Peninsula, Iran, Pakistan and also the Gulf area. Geographically speaking, the importance of this area, where the oldest civilization of the world once flourished, is that it acts as the linkage between the East and the West. The most ancient civilizations in the area were in Iraq, the Mesopotamia, the Nile Valley in Egypt and the Arab Peninsula. No doubt that all the students in the country and all over the world, when they open their books, will find the civilization of Babylon in the Mesopotamia. Another importance of this area is its being the seat of all religions in the world. Its religious importance lies on the fact that it has the holy places for all religions like the holy places for the Muslims, Christians and the Jews. Its economic importance, on the other hand, is its having the most extensive oil field in the world. Iraq runs second to Saudi Arabia in oil reserves.

Because of its wealth, there were many attempts from allied countries to dominate the area. These policies of domination started in the 13th century by the western countries under the guise of religion. With the attempts having failed, all these countries couldn't seize the Palestine area. The Ottoman Empire came under the Islamic cover to dominate the area. After the Ottoman Empire, the western colonists came. They divided all of the areas and countries which were all under the Ottoman Empire. These areas were under the Empire as provinces, but the western colonists divided them into states. The share of the British in this area was the eastern part, so they moved to dominate Egypt, Palestine, Iraq and the Gulf region. During the colonization, the British tried to split and add areas to other areas. Thus, the British should shoulder the responsibility of this problem concerning the border aspects between these countries because they created the problem and just left it there.

One important issue the British left in the area is the entity of Israel. The British who created the entity before they left (there were no more than 50,000 Jews in the Palestine state at that time), gave access to all the Jews all over the world to immigrate. After their withdrawal after the second World War, the British declared the Palestine area as a Jewish community and allowed them to create their own entity. From that point, all the Middle East problems began. It started because the Palestine people have been pushed out of their territories and replaced by Jews coming from various countries who had nothing to do with Palestine. This is a crime that never happened in history before: to find the Jews living in the Palestinian house while the Palestinian lived in a tent either in southern Lebanon or in Jordan. This is inhumane and unacceptable under both international laws and human laws of the world. This crime is the core of the problem in the region and the world, and the root of all the problems in the Middle East. This area, since 1947, faced many wars.

The second thing which led to the unstable situation is the issue created by the British in splitting the Kuwait area from its motherland, Iraq, in 1913 to create the so-called entity of the Sheiks. Kuwait City, historically speaking, is part of the Basra province in the south of Iraq under the Ottoman Empire. When the British split this area from the motherland, no Iraqi government since independence in 1921 has recognized this state as a separate state. We believed that there was no border between Kuwait City and the Iraqi motherland because Iraq considers Kuwait as a stolen part of the land. But the circumstance was against the Iraqi government and the Iraqi people who wanted to regain this area. But the moment we had the capability to get it back, we would. And we have it back. This kind of move is not a unique move. There are many cases of these in other countries. Our claim that Kuwait is a part of our land is the same as with the Philippines' claim to Sabah. Britain, with a little support from the Americans, had split a part of your territory called Sabah Island. If the Philippines is not regaining this island, it doesn't mean that Filipinos have no right to claim it. Iraq, in the past, never had the opportunity to regain its split part because of the situation of the Iraqi government at that time. But when time came to have it back, we took it back. So, what is the problem with regaining our territories?

The other question is, why did this develop only lately? When the war broke out between Iraq and Iran in 1980, the goal of the Khomeini regime was to dominate all this area. Iraq has defended itself and the whole area. Without the stronger Iraq, you could just imagine how Iran would have swallowed this country in just one week. Iraq has defended this area and its country with the blood of tens of thousands of martyrs. But while Iraq was busy defending itself and the whole region during that war with Iran, the Kuwaitis were stealing our oil from the border area. So instead of compensating Iraq for defending their countries, they stole our oil and overflooded the international oil market. In 1985, the price of a barrel of oil was only \$7 while it was \$24 before the war. This kind of move of the Kuwaiti government at that time was to weaken the Iraqi government, economy and army so that it would be defeated by the Iranian army.

The other aspect of the problem is that when we asked them to discuss our problems in the Arab League within the Arab context, they contacted the Europeans and the Americans to invite their troops inside Kuwait. The aim of this move was to threaten Iraq itself. You will see it clearly these days now that the Americans are inside the territories. Some officers in the Kuwaiti army, upon seeing the intention of their government to invite the Western troops inside their area, objected and raged against the Kuwaiti role. They called on the Iraqi leadership to support them. The Iraqi army, upon this request of the new government of Kuwait, entered Kuwaiti territory to support the new government. After August 2, when the American fleets were reaching the gulf water just next to Kuwait, this new government called on the Iraqi leadership to have full unity with them. This has been done on August 8 when they declared full unity between the two countries. This kind of unity would not satisfy the Westerners, of course, so the American troops came to the area under the guise of defending the Saudi territories. But you must remember that we have a non-aggression pact with Saudi Arabia signed in 1989 and Iraq has never claimed any part of Saudi territories and we have no border problems with Saudi Arabia. But the Americans have used this kind of excuse to dominate the richest area. Their goal is not to defend Saudi territory or the region, their interest is the oil.

What is the outcome of all these? The oil price in the beginning of the crisis was between \$20 to \$21 per barrel. After the arrival of American troops in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf, we have seen the oil price go up to \$31 per barrel. Naturally, it's for the interest of the Americans to have high oil prices for two reasons. First of all, President Bush has his share in an oil company in Saudi Arabia. Our minister of information challenged Mr. Bush to deny this but we are ready to present our documents on it. Therefore, it is Mr. Bush's interest to increase the price of oil. Second, the oil fields in the southern part of the United States were not commercially viable because it cost \$21 per barrel while the cost of oil production per barrel in the Middle East was between \$6 to \$7. Therefore, if the price of the oil exceeded \$21, that would give the southern fields reason to start production. In the case were the price of oil production will remain under \$21, American oil cannot be commercially viable. To prove this, we in Iraq



felt that most of the Third World would be affected negatively by this high price of the oil. Therefore, the Iraqi government decided to provide the countries affected by the high price of oil with free oil. Only this morning, the State Department of the United States has announced that they will not allow any country who is affected by the high price of oil to benefit from oil out of Iraq, because if they are going to avail of the free oil, the oil price in the market will go down, which is not in the interest of Mr. Bush.

This crisis has been affecting much the countries in the world including the Philippines. We actually feel sorry for the Filipinos who got out of the area and lost their jobs. The responsibility should be shouldered by the Americans because they started this panic among the people. The Iraqi soldiers didn't intend to stop the course of everyday life when they entered Kuwait. On the contrary, they are there to create more jobs and more opportunities. But it is not in the interest of the Americans to have a stable region so they created a war situation which caused the evacuation of tens of thousands of foreign workers in the country. We believe that the Philippines has an interest in this region because this region is providing it with oil and because it has thousands of workers in the region. Therefore, with this kind of interests, we believe that the Philippines should push for peace and ask all the Western fleets and troops in the region to get out of the region and let the problem in the region be solved within the Arab context.

We have taken initiatives to solve these problems. Our President has initiated on August 12 a plan to solve all the problems in the region. This plan is based on the withdrawal of all troops of all other countries occupying territories in the region, starting with the withdrawal of the Israelis from the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Lebanon and also from Golan Heights in Syria, and the withdrawal of American troops from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf to be replaced by Arab and Muslim countries' troops. Why are the Americans rejecting these initiatives? Israel has occupied Arab territories since 1967 and Lebanese territories since 1982. There were many resolutions of the Security Council like Resolution Nos. 242, 425 and 338 which all called on the Israelis to withdraw from these territories. So the question is why do they ask the Security Council to push resolutions while they do not ask the Israelis to comply with the resolutions directed at them? Israel has not been implementing the resolutions of this good council for twenty-four years. We didn't see the Americans coming to the region to force the Israelis to implement these Security Council resolutions. We didn't see any economic sanctions against Israel for not implementing these resolutions. Why do we have to see the Americans and Israelis harm the Palestinians everyday? Where is the human sense of the Americans given these crimes -- the Americans who are always talking of human rights? Are the Palestines not humans? This is unfair logic, the double-standardness of their international policies. If we have to respect all the Security Council's resolutions, they should implement their resolutions.

Four months ago, an Israeli stopped a busload of Palestinian workers inside Palestine. He got them out of the bus, put them against a wall and shot all of them. The casualties in this incident were more than thirty, dead and injured. This has been discussed in the Security Council. The Arab representatives were denied to have an investigation team sent to Israel to investigate the case. The Americans used the veto against the demand, which is very natural. There is no problem when thirty Palestinians are killed. When the demand was to send an investigation team to Israel to investigate the case, they use the veto.

When the Americans threatened to raid our economic and military installations, we distributed some foreign guests in these installations as guests. They considered that we are using them as human shields. The Americans first used this tactic in the Philippines, they were using the bodies of children and women to make their troops advance. This is in your history, not in our history. During World War II, the Americans gathered the Japanese and those of Japanese origin which numbered about 1,000 and had them placed in military camps until the end of the war. Nobody objected to this move of the Americans. We are facing a threat to destroy our country when we put some nationals as guests in the installations. We are not killing them, we are putting them there as our guests. If they are going to be killed, they will be killed by their own national forces and the Americans will shoulder this responsibility.

DR. MERLIN MAGALLONA (UP College of Law): It is true that the complexities of the situation in the Middle East concerns not only Iraq, but practically every part of the world. However, it is not a question of complexity or how many nations are affected. In the first place, we should locate the direct and primary responsibility in Iraq. The Ambassador gave a very comprehensive historical background to the question. This is one exceptional case where a single case of invasion is justified by a very historical sweep of events. I hope the Ambassador is not suggesting that other countries who have been aggrieved by Genghis Khan or Alexander the Great also do the same. Precisely when we speak of international peace and security, the most abrasive and explosive question would be on territorial disputes and border questions. When we speak about the theory of fundamental change of circumstances, international law is justifying changes in agreement. International law tells us plainly that questions of territorial disputes should not be settled by the theory of fundamental change of circumstances. What has not been explained by the Ambassador is why precisely at this moment had Iraq attempted and succeeded in physically recovering Kuwait? Why not ten years ago? Why wait for the precise moment? I was trying to assess the events that led Iraq to such action. I understand that the Iraqi "move" (a polite word for aggression) against Kuwait is justified by citing British imperialism which drew the line that created Kuwait, and with the allegation that Kuwait was stealing oil from the Iraqi oil fields. It is not easy to see how Iraq decided on this kind of adventure given the casualties it suffered from the Iran-Iraq war.

Concerning the view of the situation from the middle ground, the middle ground, I think, would come from a Pan-Arabic solution. Not the solution from the viewpoint of the United States, the Soviet Union or the Security Council, but from the viewpoint of the Arab states. The most elaborate position was put forward by Jordan, and Jordan's situation is peculiar in the sense that it has a long common boundary with Israel and Arab countries. But the possibility of a Pan-Arabic solution might be remote because the first victim of the crisis was the unity of the Arab states. When it would seem at the first instance that there was some predominance of the Arab states which have shown an anti-imperialist position, Jordan took the initiative of convening the Arab summit meeting in Jeddah. But look at the situation of the alignment of forces in the Arab world now in relation to one of the most important Arab issues, the Palestinian cause. On this question, very little of Arab unity might be left in support of the Palestinian cause. You have Iraq which is supportive of the Palestinian cause, and while there are cleavages inside the Palestinian Liberation Organization, what I'm afraid of is that the destruction of Arab support would have repercussions on the cleavages inside the PLO. Syria is supporting some political organizations of Arab fronts inside the PLO. Egypt is supporting the Americans in a sense, as against the position of Algeria, Morocco and Libya. It is rather remote to consider the middle ground as some viable solution considering the situation of Arab unity

now. I was hoping the Ambassador would advance the position presented by Arafat as a solution to the crisis.

The other point I would like to elaborate is the repercussions of the conflict on the Philippines itself. Next week, there will be the renegotiation on the US bases and side by side with this, the multinational oil corporations have filed their petition before the energy board for an increase in oil prices, which would, if approved, move up oil prices by more than P11. I think we could already anticipate the upsurge of social restiveness that might be triggered with the trade union actions as the basis for this. The Philippine situation is also complicated by the fact that while 750,000 new recruits are coming into the labor force every year, there is a considerable number of migrant workers who are coming back with no foreseeable sources of income and employment. In addition to this, the \$1.3 billion foreign exchange brought in by the Filipino migrant workers would come to a halt, and according to the Secretary of Labor, that amount would suffice to cover up the internal financial hemorrhage due to the servicing of the foreign debt. While considerable income in terms of foreign exchange would be terminated because of the Middle East crisis, there is no termination of the financial hemorrhage through foreign debt. The situation has accelerated the forces that are pushing the Philippine economy to the brink of disaster.

Before the Iraqi invasion, the Americans had difficulty in hammering out a unified position with respect to the US military bases. As a matter of fact, until the invasion, there were two competing strategies: the strategy advanced by Pentagon and the strategy advanced by the US congressional committee on military installations. The view advanced by the congressional committee is to do away with the permanent basing system, and therefore the maintenance of military security groups here would be on the basis of periodic visits. The Pentagon was advocating merely for the reduction of American troops and the retention of the military bases here. The Pentagon position was weakened just before the Middle East crisis came because there was a suggestion from the US Congress that with the increasing budgetary deficits of the federal government, the whole military manpower of the US should be cut by twenty-five percent in the next five years, involving something like 500,000 troops in the first two years. Therefore, things were in favor of the position that military bases should be moved out since the financial situation in the US could not support the military bases. It would seem now that with the Middle East crisis, there is an indication that the Pentagon has set aside all cutbacks on expenditures and troops. Even in the US congressional circle, there is now stronger support for the Pentagon report and therefore, for the retention of the US military bases. So in a sense, while we might have free oil, I think that the Iraqi leaders would not be helping us in getting rid of the US military bases.

I should like to return to the point of his Excellency that there is some discrimination, an imbalance in the demand for the implementation of Security Council resolutions. I wonder if the Ambassador is saying that the justification for annexing Kuwait and invading it would be a matter of example with respect to the non-implementable or non-implemented resolutions.

In the end, I think that the impact on oil prices and an upsurge of social restiveness would decide the issue for us, I think that in the next two weeks, we will be busy grappling with the terrible repercussion of the Middle East crisis.

DR. CLARITA CARLOS (UP Department of Political Science): Quite a lot of what is going on arises from the kind of things that we read about, from Western sources, so much that when we talk about Arabs, for example, the images that are conjured in our minds are that of a terrorist or a sheik. I am glad that His Excellency has given us a comprehensive historical background to the Middle East crisis whose crux would be the Palestinian issue. Students, particularly of this university, should have a better understanding of what is going on there and not just accept the simple explanations and slogans which the Americans would like to make out of the crisis.

I think quite a number of things have to be understood about Middle East politics. One of them is the continuing attempt of the leaders of the various countries of the Middle East to

come together and establish Pan-Arabism. There is this continuous inter-Arab rivalry and what I can see now, as an observer of Arab politics, is that Pres. Saddam Hussein seems to be attempting to be the leader of the Arab world, for the Arabs to come together and put up a bloc against the superpowers which continue to form part of the landscape of the region. An occupation is an occupation, whoever does it. And so, on one end, the offer which the President has given to withdraw from some parts of Kuwait except those to which it has historical claims is something good. On the other end, from the Palestinian viewpoint, there is the demand for Israel to get out of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and southern Lebanon, for Syria to get out of Lebanon, and for all occupation forces to get out of where they should not be.



I differ with Professor Magallona when he said that maybe the Palestinians will be disadvantaged here. I think they might be the victors in this if Iraq will push for its position which calls for consistency in the implementation of Security Council resolutions; that while the US wants Iraq out of Kuwait, then they should follow the same principle for Israel. And yet, as the Ambassador puts it, resolutions after resolutions of the UN condemning Israeli occupation of West Bank and the Gaza Strip had come to nothing because the US continues to support Israel (which was created by a UN resolution). Something good will come out of this.

As regards to Pan-Arabism, I can only hope that Saddam Hussein would really be able to put together the many rival leaders in the area. Maybe, President Saddam Hussein should also start thinking about the effect of all these on his own citizenry, and also on the other Arabs in the region. I think they should start letting the citizenry know what is happening around the world. Monarchies are already anathema and still we see them in the Middle East. Why, because the citizenry is continued to be shielded from what is going on. So I can only see increasing politicization of the citizenry in the Middle East. For example, I think the Syrian President will have some questions to answer when he goes back to Syria. Once upon a time, he was so anti-American, and he was in the bad books of the Americans. Now he is sending the Syrians to the multinational force! What is this? Same with Egypt. But of course, Egypt has a history of being

with the US, being with the USSR, being with the US -- of shifting alliances. What about the Arab League? As Professor Magallona pointed out there might be a re-alignment of forces and I would like to ask His Excellency whether he foresees any changes in the structure of the Arab League or the Organization of Islamic Conference on account of this.

MR. MARK CONSTANTINO (President, International Club of UP): I am representing the foreign students in this university and let me give you some of their reactions regarding the gulf crisis. Our constitution is just like the UN charter. It states that the International Club of the University of the Philippines is against all forms of aggression and that any form of military aggression is to be condemned. We hope that the intervention of some international organizations will serve to give a venue to the peaceful solving of our problems.

We see the problem in the Middle East as a Third World problem. It seems that the political lines of demarcation were those of imperialist governments of the past which drew them without regard to the right of self-determination of a given nation. Those lines are open to change or reformation. This is the Iraqi argument. We would nevertheless condemn the use of military force because: a) it has been years since that division had been done; b) the invasion is an obvious pretense to eliminate billions of dollars that Iraq owed Kuwait and; c) if such acts of aggression are deemed acceptable by the world community, this returns us to an age of childlike morality, where might makes right.

Again, it is the purpose of our organization to promote understanding through education thereby providing for peace in resolving conflicts. That is our official stand.

The Western governments have chosen to lead the world, make its policies and run it the way that they see it fit to be run. They've done it through force, with much use of military force. If we look at the side of the Third World countries, the question of what can they do arises. That seems to be the basis of the problem. In the face of overwhelming military odds, economic odds and even political odds (e. g., political structures that are against the liberation of Third World societies), what can they do aside from using violence? That seems to be the question here which I can not answer but that's what I would like to bring out.

HON. SUMAIDA: Every civilized person would respect international law if this law is based on justice, i. e., if this law doesn't differentiate between big and small countries. It is very unjustified and unfair that this law is imposed on small countries and not on the big countries. On this occasion, I would like to ask: Where was international law when the Americans invaded Grenada? Where was this law when the Americans invaded Panama to get the President of this country in order to put him in jail? Where was this law when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan? Where was this international law when the Soviet Union entered Czechoslovakia and killed its people with tanks?

The next question is on why Iraq has regained Kuwait only now? Iraq as a small country has its problems socially, economically and politically. When Iraq became stronger in the late 1970s, the war with Iran was imposed by others on Iraq. And the goal of the war is to weaken Iraq. Iraq got out of this war much stronger than before, victorious and with the capability to defend its rights. This is our reading of our situation. Some of you may consider it invasion or aggression but we consider it as the liberation of a stolen area to regain it for the motherland. This is our reading. We don't care what the Americans are saying about us.

For the solution of this crisis, we are calling for an Arab solution. Iraq has provided many ideas and thoughts. The PLO leaders also presented some ideas and thoughts. King Hussein also has proposed some ideas. Pres. Khadaffy also has some ideas and thoughts. All these ideas and thoughts, if we put them on a table within the Arab context, without any foreign influence, we will find a compromise in all these to solve these problems. But the foreign powers don't want to allow us to have this solution because the pre-condition of these solution is to get all the foreign troops out of the area. The Westerners are not leaving this area.

There is no sense in saying that our "justification" for our action is the fact that others have done it and then were able to get away with not following Security Council resolutions. There is no connection, relation or similarity between the occupation of Palestine and the return of the splitted area of Kuwait to Iraq. Kuwait is an Iraqi territory while Palestine is an Arab land that has been occupied by foreign powers. Jews came from all over the world. They came from the Soviet Union, Europe, the US. They had their own homes and land in their motherland but they left it and came to Palestine. Is it just to have an Arab family out of its house to be replaced by others who are not related to this land? The Kuwaiti people are Iraqi people. They are still there, in their house. The only thing that changed is the administration. Kuwait was a kind of emirate and now it is one of the Iraqi provinces. Thus, the issues are not the same.

The industrialized countries have their policy of denying Third World countries development. There are red lines for the Third World countries which are not to be crossed. Underdeveloped countries should not progress or be much more developed. These countries have no right to gain technology. These Third World countries should be a market for the industrialized countries' products and remain a source of raw materials for these industrialized countries. Iraq has crossed these red lines and has started to build its economy. But at the same time, a conspiracy was against Iraq so as not to let him get out of this [red line] circle and give an example to the Third World countries how to progress.

For the Arab League, we can notice some anger out of the situation. The picture of this Arab countries is one of struggle between the wealthy and the poor countries, between the rulers and the people. You can see that all the poor people are supporting Iraq. This is because the private money of the ex-ruler of Kuwait is much more than that which these people own. The ruler of Kuwait at that time had \$60 million in the banks. King Fahd has \$25 billion in the banks. And most of the wealthiest people in this country have five and above million dollars. This, while we have people in Sudan, Somalia, Egypt and other countries dying from hunger. These dimensions ought to create a new Arab situation.

OPEN FORUM

Question: If I recall, it was Iraq's position that the price of oil was too low. You were saying that it was the low price of oil that you objected to and that you wanted an increase in the price of oil. Prior to your invasion of Kuwait you were, in fact, objecting to the over-production of Kuwaiti oil because that was causing a decrease in the price of oil. Now, you say that it is the Americans who want an increase in the price of oil which is why they are creating this war scenario. I see an inconsistency there. Do you want the oil price to go up, or down? Do you think the US would want the price of oil to go up because George Bush own stocks in oil companies? Personally, I don't think President Bush, whatever his flaws are, is taking the risk of war, endangering the lives of thousands of people so prices of oil will go up.

You also said that President Saddam Hussein has suggested that this crisis should be solved by the Arab community and that foreign troops should leave the Arab land and that Arab troops should occupy Arab lands. But the truth is Iraq has the largest military force in the Middle East which in itself will create an imbalance.

You justified your taking of hostages by saying that those people that you keep right now in the plants are "guests." Quite frankly, I don't believe that.

The biggest fallacy of all, argumentum ad populum, means that you justify your conclusion, or your choice or your act by saying that other people do it. But that's precisely it. If we continue to use that justification, there will be no end to any country invading any other country. The danger there is that as long as you use that justification, the biggest fallacy that "might is right" will prevail.

HON. SUMAIDA: The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) puts the price

of oil at \$18 per barrel. That's before the meeting of the OPEC last July 25. When Kuwait overflowed the international market with oil, also in addition to the prices of the United Arab Emirate, the price went down to \$13. Our objection was to the price becoming lower than the OPEC price. When the OPEC convened last July 25, they decided that the price will be \$21. We are committed to the OPEC price. Why did the OPEC say \$21? Why did not it say \$19, \$20 or \$24? This is because \$21 per barrel is the average price of American oil products. This means that the oil in the southern fields of the United States will be in the market and that we'll have another reduction of the price in the market. This is our policy of oil pricing within the OPEC. But the interest of the Americans is to see much higher prices in order to give them more opportunity, in addition to Mr. Bush's interest.

It is true that the Iraqi army is the biggest army in the region. When we say that these American troops will be replaced by Arab troops, that does not include the Iraqis because the Iraqis will never participate in this. The Iraqi army is only for defending its territories and never for going out of the Iraqi territories. Our army is not for rent. You know, the American action has humiliated the American people. When they accepted that the Saudi government will pay for their soldiers, this is a humiliation for the American people. They have become mercenaries. We are in a position of defending ourselves. We didn't keep the children and women. We gave them the liberty and they left. The hundreds of children and women were freed. We kept the men as guests in order to defend ourselves.

Regarding the other question about the occupation, this is not a justification because we are not occupying foreign lands. We regained Iraqi territory and we will continue to repeat this with Iraqi territories. We didn't go to Panama or Afghanistan or anywhere else. We are in our territories and we regained our territories. I hope you gain back yours.

Question: What is the policy of Iraq regarding Filipinos who are trapped in Kuwait? Will they be allowed a free ride home on Iraqi Airways like British women?

HON. SUMAIDA: There are one million Asians in the region. We cannot discriminate between Indians, Filipinos, Sri Lankans and Pakistanis because they are all Asians. We have no capability to handle all these people and fly them home. They have their states and we have provided all the facilities to these countries. Mr. Manglapus asked to visit Iraq and Kuwait City. We welcomed him and conducted a trip to Kuwait City and met with the Filipinos and asked us to give some kind of facilities for the evacuation of the Filipinos. We gave the priority only for the Filipinos to evacuate through four accesses in addition to the Jordan and Turkey exits. We provided them the Kuwaiti airport, the Basra International Airport and the Baghdad International Airport. These facilitation is not given to other nationals. We have provided also the transportation of Filipinos from Kuwait City to Baghdad and it is the Philippine government's turn to send the aircrafts to pick them up.

Question: How do you view the sending of troops from other Muslim countries like Bangladesh and Pakistan to defend Saudi Arabia?

HON. SUMAIDA: We are not going to interfere with other states' international affairs. Pakistan and Bangladesh are independent countries, and they can decide whatever they want, if they want to send their troops to Saudi Arabia or to the moon.

Question: Is there a limit on the volume of the oil Iraq is going to donate to other Third World countries? What should we do to avail for ourselves the free oil?

HON. SUMAIDA: We are going to compensate these countries in proportion to the damages they have suffered with the high price of oil. If the Philippine government for example used to spend \$100 million before the crisis and \$110 million during the crisis, we will give it \$10 million worth of oil.

Question: Have you communicated the "free oil" policy to President Aquino? I'm sure she will

be delighted, but at the same time, this will put her in some kind of a dilemma precisely because of the issue of the US bases that Professor Magallona talked about.

HON. SUMAIDA: The decision has been taken only after last night by the Republic. And we have already informed all the concerned governments and it has been published all over the world. We are ready to explain this matter to the Philippine government if they want.

Question: I cannot help feeling, your Excellency, that with respect to your President, this will again be one of those grand political gestures. He knows that the oil cannot possibly leave the Gulf because of the blockade so it is one of those political gestures that have to be put forward in order to gain sympathy for the Iraqi side. I am happy as a Filipino for the gesture of President Hussein, of course. But how real is it? Is there any way we can get your oil but not through the Gulf, by some circuit like getting it from Indonesia which you will then reimburse? Is President Hussein serious about this offer?

HON. SUMAIDA: We have announced this decision because we feel that we are a part of the Third World. The UN blockade is meant only for commercial trade. This critical resolution is talking about trade with Iraq but in this case we are not trading, we are giving oil for free. It is for you to try to send your vessels to Iraq. Our declaration of oil reserves is 100 billion barrels. It is not difficult for us to donate some oil to the Third World countries but we cannot buy from another country and give them to you.

DR. CARLOS: Has your country drawn up any regional security arrangements which will put together under an umbrella organization the various Arab states?

HON. SUMAIDA: We have no specific things on the table with the Arab countries for the time being, but we have some ideas. We have asked the Arab governments to discuss these with the other ideas. We can meet on common grounds for all these ideas.

Question: Is there any attempt on the part of the Iraqi government to ascertain the sentiments of the Kuwaiti people themselves, whether they want to belong to Iraq or want to remain as an independent country?

HON. SUMAIDA: We consider the people in Kuwait City as Iraqis because they are Arabs. And as you know, the Arabs are living in the area between the gulf and the Atlantic Ocean and they have twenty-one states. The population of the Arabs is 220 million. They have the same culture, language, civilization and mutual interests. Therefore all the Arabs in Kuwait City are considered Iraqis and have the same rights as Iraqis. The people who hold Kuwaiti nationality do not exceed half a million people. The other Arabs in Kuwait like the Egyptians, Syrians and Palestinians number 1.1 million and most of the others are Asians. We do not discriminate among Arabs in Kuwait City and we give them the liberty if they want to leave or stay. Some of them left and some of them are still there.

DR. CARLOS: I would like to introduce one perspective which non-students of Middle East politics may not be cognizant of. Little has been written about this on the papers, Western-controlled as they are. This is the issue of Arab nationalism. If we are able to find out the perceptions of the people in the area, then there might be considerable reason to believe that quite a lot of them are in support of what is happening, taking from the vantage point of an Arab country faced with a formidable power, which is the United States. This political force, the structure of Arab nationalism, has to be considered when we look at what the Middle East is to be in the future, as soon as this crisis blows over. I would like to think that the Middle East countries would move towards a certain direction. I don't know what it will look like but there will be a major change. Earlier, I talked about the increasing politicization of its citizenry. If they have perestroika in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, there is no reason why there will not be another in the Middle East.

Question: What specific policies have been drawn by the Iraqi government since reports have it that women, Filipinas among them, have been raped and abused in Kuwait?

HON. SUMAIDA: We have seen through the media here all these allegations. We asked the Department of Foreign Affairs to provide us with any evidence of these allegations because we consider this media as a part of the international media against Iraq. The goal of this international media is to create public opinion against Iraq all over the world, to put pressures on the Philippine government to give the approval of the use of the American bases here against Iraq and to implement a sanction of the Security Council against Iraq. When we asked for evidence from the Department of Foreign Affairs, we had a lot of contradicting things. They said one of the girls had been killed. After that, they found her alive and she's going regularly to the Philippine Embassy in Kuwait City. They said also that another girl was assaulted or raped. When this girl reached the Philippines, she denied this.

It is not difficult to find whoever conducted this kind of crime, if it was committed, because we have some details of place and time. Iraqi law is very clear on this type of crime. We will take those accused to the court and we will invite the victim to Iraq in order to appeal before the court. If the soldiers are convicted of the crime, they will be executed. We have no mercy on those who commit this kind of crimes.

Question: What has Iraq done to normalize the situation for the foreign workers in Kuwait? Have they tried to reverse the stampede so that the people would start to stay in Kuwait or Iraq rather than leave?

HON. SUMAIDA: We have no changes with the workers in Iraq. They are working and we have no problem with them. For those in Kuwait City, there are two kinds: those who have a contract with the ex-government in Kuwait have a chance to continue; those who were working with the private sector have been stopped from working lately, some of them also were working in the houses as janitors or domestic helpers. These are the people we are evacuating from Kuwait. We have provided them with transportation to reach the exit they wanted to evacuate through. There are thousands of Filipinos in Jordan but there are no aircrafts to pick them up.

DR. MAGALLONA: There is reason to believe that the Middle East crisis is going into a stalemate. Of course, on the part of Iraq, there had been a relief recently with the release of women and children. I think that generally, Iraq is observing the embargo of the United Nations and that it is trying its best not to create a shooting situation, perhaps, with the view of preventing the implementation of the sanctions under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. In recent incidents, the American forces boarded Iraqi vessels and I understand there was no resistance because of the instruction from the Iraqi authorities that there should be no resistance and that the Iraqi vessels should comply with the embargo.

On the part of the US, it seems to me that there is an indication that the US is not in a position to start a shooting war because as one general explained, in the first place, American forces are not prepared for a protracted and decent war, and that in order to sustain a protracted war to smash the Iraqi war machine, the Pentagon thinks that it should double its forces that are now along the border in Saudi Arabia. In other words, there will be an increase from the present 100,000 troops to 250,000 in order to sustain the warfare that is foreseen. And it seems that Pentagon is now considering some human factors. It is not in a position to execute a surgical operation because the situation would result into a bloody affair. I think that the recent Helsinki summit has somehow put some additional inhibition on the part of Bush and I think there were some key presentations on the part of Gorbachev that the Soviet Union is interested on the settlement of the dispute by political means. Of course, the Americans are interested in their own agenda, in staying in the Middle East, perhaps, with the view of developing relations with Saudi Arabia leading to the development of a more permanent military base which it has been trying to get for a long time. And of course, we should consider that the US economy is on the brink of economic recession. The Americans admitted that they cannot support the

presence of the US forces now at the rate of something like \$600 million a day which would put that to something like \$2.5 billion up to December. The Americans could not afford this considering their high budgetary deficit. I suppose that the Iraqi authorities would take this into account, the weaknesses on the side of the Americans. On the other hand, the Iraqi authorities do not seem to have any leeway through which they can move forward. With the effect of the embargo, what would be a more dramatic initiative on the part of the Iraqi authorities out of this situation?

The other problem is with respect to international law. I agree with the Ambassador that the countries he enumerated have grossly violated international law as shown in Afghanistan, Panama and Grenada. Is it the logic of the Iraqi authorities to join the side of the violators? It is not really the case that Iraq is not accepting international law. As a matter of fact, Iraq is a member of the United Nations and has come out very clearly on specific suggestions for the development of international law in the United Nations. But I thought that the Kuwait situation in which Iraq finds itself is something exceptional. Therefore, instead of accepting violations of international law, Iraq would be in a better moral standing if it condemns violations of other countries instead of committing the same.

We are aware that the Security Council's resolutions with respect to the behavior of Israel, with respect to occupied territories, had not been complied with. I would be speaking for Iraqi authorities when I say that Iraq did not really move to Kuwait for the reason that Security Council resolutions would not be implemented with regards to Kuwait. Was there a miscalculation on the part of the Iraqi authorities in the sense that they had underestimated the high strategic value of oil, that if there was any Security Council resolution, there was going to be some consensus among the big powers that they should defend Saudi Arabia which has the biggest share in oil production in the Middle East?

Lastly, on the withdrawal of foreign troops. I understand that your Excellency stated by way of advocating that foreign troops or occupation forces should leave occupied Arab lands. I'm sure you're referring to Palestine, to Israel, and perhaps, to Syria with respect to Lebanon. Don't you think that Iraq would have been in a better moral position to advocate this before it moved into Kuwait?

HON. SUMAIDA: The American plan originally was to find any incident to start a war. Our plan is to avoid any war. Therefore, we asked our vessels not to resist because our plan is to be within our limits. We have no plan to attack any other state in the region. But we are also ready to stand firm to defend our country with all our troops, means and capability. The Iraqi army is one million-strong and they are armed. With the volunteers, the army grew to six million and they are ready to die in defending our country. We are not afraid of anybody. If the Westerners and foreign powers want to try, let them try. After all, there is nothing to defend in the Middle East area. They came to defend oil. If war breaks out, all the oil fields will be burned. If war breaks out, the oil price will be \$100 or you may not even find oil. Those countries who want to create an economic crisis in the world should shoulder this responsibility. We are in the position of defending ourselves. In our defensive position, we will use and bear everything.

With regards to international law, we said we will respect it if it is based on justice. We didn't attack anybody. If you are considering Kuwait as Panama, this is wrong. Kuwait is an Iraqi territory. Panama is not American territory and neither is Afghanistan Soviet territory. There is a big difference between Kuwait as an Iraqi territory and Panama and Afghanistan.

Question: Even when US troops pull out from the Arab states, particularly Saudi Arabia, what is the world's guarantee that Iraq would not enter other small nations like Bahrain or Qatar?

HON. SUMAIDA: As I have said, we have no problem with the other countries in the region. I have explained the historical relations between Iraq and Qatar or any other country. We have no claim to any other countries in the region except Kuwait which is, historically speaking, a part of Iraq.