Since we are now on the eve of the most difficult and dangerous stage of our armed battle, we would like to make it clear to the Arab people and their leaders that no terrorism, acts of violence or threats will prevent the Jews from rebuilding their country, or deter those in the diaspora from returning to their land. As always, we seek peace. We want only to rebuild what has been ruined and make the desert bloom. We have no desire or need to take away what others have achieved. With our own hands we have created, and will create in the future, sources of life and livelihood in both town and country from what was abandoned and neglected. We have made those parts of this land which we have settled flourish. We can make the whole country thrive, and we are ready to work together with the free and independent Arab people to make the entire Near East prosper. We will not leave our homeland. We are sated with alienation and dispersion! Jewish immigration and settlement will be confined to the Jewish homeland and will not exceed its borders. We are prepared to cooperate with the peoples of the region in order to breathe life into the whole Near East, raise the standard of living and increase peace. We are prepared to make the Near East what it was in ancient times—a blooming and populated cultural center, a great human achievement.

But if you try to subdue us by force, and even though the U.N. or part of it succumbs to your threats, as some have already done, the Jewish people will not surrender! We stand fully-armed to defend our rights to our homeland and our independence. We are ready for peace as equals, as a nation in its own right, as a partner with equal rights in the alliance of Semitic peoples in the Middle East, and as a partner in the family of nations. But if anyone attempts to rob us of our rights by force, we will certainly answer with force! If the Palestine problem is to be settled by force rather than through international deliberations based on just and practical considerations, as the U.N. attempted to do last November, we shall mobilize all our might, and it shall decide!

To our great regret, some of the Jerusalem members of the People's Council could not get here today, the road from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv being impassable. The journey can be made only by air, but the weather has prevented our pilots from flying. We hope that this delay will not be protracted. In addition, some members of the National Administration were unable to participate in earlier sessions, when we made internal dispositions and discussed proposals, laws and directives to be submitted to the People's Council. For this reason, we are obliged to postpone the continuation of this session to tomorrow evening. We hope the weather will permit the twelve members residing in Jerusalem to fly here tomorrow, so that a session of the National Administration may be held tomorrow morning. The continuation of the sitting of the People's Council will be held here at eight tomorrow evening. I hereby close this sitting.

Statement by the Chairman of the People's Council

5 May 1948 (26 Nissan 5708)
JNF Building, Tel Aviv

The Chairman, D. Ben-Gurion: While the situation in Tel Aviv during the last few days has allowed us to forget that we are still at war, this meeting reminds us that the fighting continues. Unfortunately, the members from Jerusalem who were unable to get here yesterday cannot be here today either. At present, the only way to leave Jerusalem is by air. Due to the situation at the Etzion Bloc, where there are many casualties, the planes were needed there to transport medical supplies and evacuate the wounded. Consequently, we could not provide the Council members with transport here. We hope the situation will improve by tomorrow, although there is no guarantee of this. We live under abnormal conditions. Yesterday it was the Etzion Bloc; who knows what will happen tomorrow.

Thus, to our regret, we cannot begin our work, since the members from Jerusalem demand, quite rightly, that we not begin without them. Twelve members, almost a third of the People's Council, are involved. You all have before you the material which was to have been debated today. After discussing whether to hold our deliberations today or not, we concluded that the honor of the Council and our colleagues in Jerusalem requires us to refrain from beginning without them. We therefore ask that the members present take the material home for study.

I hesitate to say that we will meet tomorrow, although the chances for tomorrow are better than they were last night, but I am uncertain about that too. Thus, the sitting of the Council is postponed indefinitely. As soon as we know that the members from Jerusalem are coming we will inform you and assemble the Council without delay. We regret this very much, but far graver events are currently taking place. I hereby close this brief sitting.