

October 8, 1980

**Letter from Saddam Hussein to Todor Zhivkov on
Iraq-Iran War**

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H. Excellency,
Mr. Todor Zhivkov ,
President of the People's Republic of Bulgaria .

Excellency,

With reference to relations of friendship and cooperation between Iraq and Bulgaria and in compliance with the desire of Iraq to consult and exchange viewpoints with friendly countries on the conflict with Iran, I send Your Excellency this message by our envoy

Mr. Naeem Haddad, Member of the Revolutionary Command Council and Speaker of the National Assembly, to explain the Iraqi position to Your Excellency, and to listen to your constructive viewpoints and positive suggestions.

Iraq is a country struggling for full independence, deeply believing in the policy of non-alignment, rejecting policies of aggression and expansion and the use of force in international conflicts. Iraq is also very concerned to establish relations of cooperation and good neighbourliness with neighbouring countries and those of the area where we live. Iraq is concerned with prevalence of security and stability in the area, with keeping it away from crises and foreign interventions of all sorts. Iraq has emphasized this belief through

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its responsible policy and stands, whether in dual relations with countries of the area and the world, or through activities on the international level.

But the area has faced a very serious state as a result of the irresponsible conduct of the present regime in Iran, adopting a policy of aggression and expansion against Iraq and the countries of the area by intervening in the internal affairs, making foolhardy threats, and fabricating crises therewith. Despite the efforts we made with the said regime through all political and diplomatic channels available to us, to indicate the serious results of such policy, our warnings and those of the countries in the area were of no avail.

Matters did not stop at that limit. The regime in Iran did not show any respect to agreements concluded between Iraq and Iran, continuing the occupation of Iraqi territory which those agreements confirmed our rights thereof, and continuing military aggression on our borders from all Iranian territories, and even from our own occupied lands. On 4 September, 1980, Iranian

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artillery shelled our civilian positions, and their forces bombarded the towns of Khaniqin, Zerbattia, Munthiria and other border Iraqi oil centres. Iranian planes raided our borders and violated our air space dozens of times. The regime in Iran did not heed the dozens of protests and memoranda which we sent through diplomatic channels.

This aggressive conduct forced us to confront the regime in Iran and defend the sovereignty of our territory and national security. Because of these recurrent incidents, there remained no justification for the continuation of the Agreement of 6 March 1975.

The regime in Iran continued to retain the privileges in Shatt-al-Arab, obtained by that Agreement, while consistently refusing to recognize our rights which are provided for by the same Agreement. On these bases, we announced on 17 September, 1980 the annulment of that treaty and the extension of our full sovereignty over Shatt-al-Arab, as the case used to be throughout ancient and modern history until 1975, when circumstances forced us to submit to Iran part of our sovereignty over the river, as we explained in our speech of 17 September, 1980.

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In that speech we called on the Iranian side to respect our rights and sovereignty, to renounce its former policies and adopt policies of good neighbourliness. We stressed that we have no intentions in Iranian territory and harbour no hostility against Iran and its peoples.

Despite these frank and lenient positions, the regime in Iran did not resort to reason, logic or international laws and conventions in dealing with such crises. It rather took to wage military offensive on Shatt-al-Arab and shell Iraqi and foreign ships sailing on it. The Shatt-al-Arab waterway, Your Excellency, is the only outlet for Iraq into the Arabian Gulf and the other seas, while Iran has hundreds and hundreds of kilometres on the shores of the Arabian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, where there are numerous Iranian ports.

The said Iranian threat meant the closure of Shatt-al-Arab to navigation and the blockage of this vital outlet in the face of Iraq. Matters did not stop at that limit, as the Iranians started shelling vital Iraqi economic and civilian installations in the Shatt-al-Arab area and the town of Basra.

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Later on, the Iranians controlled the strait of Hormuz and deprived Iraq from international rights of free passage through this and similar straits, as provided by international laws and conventions.

All these measures meant declaring war on Iraq and subjecting it to the tendency of domination and aggression adopted by the regime in Iran.

Defending its sovereignty, security and vital interests, Iraq had no choice but retaliate forcefully against this open aggression. Therefore, our armed forces fought a heroic battle causing the regime in Iran great defeat.

When our forces achieved basic objectives in their defensive battle against the regime in Iran, and when it became clear that Iraq is not in the weak position, but in a position of high military competence, we announced, in an official speech on September 28, 1980, our readiness to cease fire and resort to negotiations to achieve a fair and honourable settlement of the conflict.

On the following day, we informed the UN Secretary General of Iraq's official approval of the Security Council resolution to call on both Iraq and Iran to cease fire and resort to negotiations, that is the resolution of 28 September, 1980.

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But the regime in Iran refused our sincere call and rejected the said Security Council resolution, announcing persistence to continue military operations without submitting any ideas or political solutions for the conflict with Iraq except threatening with war and destruction. It also launched aggressive threats against countries in the area, revealing its intentions to threaten their vital interests demonstrating, thus, its total indifference to the sovereignty of these countries, the security of the area, the vital and legitimate interests of the world thereof.

We accorded a positive treatment to the initiative made by President Fidel Castro, Head of the Group of Non-aligned countries, who sent us his Foreign Minister. We have also received a mission by the Islamic Conference, headed by President Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq of Pakistan, accompanied by Mr. Al-Habeeb Al-Shatti, Secretary General to the Islamic Conference, and we welcomed the good offices made by this mission. Though the efforts made by President Zia-ul-Haq found hardly any response by the regime in Iran, Iraq readily accepted the proposal made by President Zia-ul-Haq, that Iraq should undertake a unilateral cease fire, on the hope

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that this would help the regime in Iran to forgo its persistence and resort to peace and negotiations. We actually authorized President Zia-ul-Haq to announce before the meeting of the Islamic Countries Foreign Ministers held in New York on October 2, 1980 that Iraq was ready to observe a unilateral cease fire from sunrise on 5 October, 1980 to sunrise on 8 October, 1980 on natural and practical conditions aiming to stop any intended aggression on our forces and territories during this period.

President Zia-ul-Haq did announce that at the time assigned, but the Iranian party did not heed that announcement and issued official statements by Khomeini and other Iranian officials rejecting to stop fighting. Yet Iraq fulfilled its commitment and actually ceased fire with the sunrise of 5 October, 1980. But the Iranian side made consecutive raids on our forces, territories and waters, which obliged us to retaliate. On the practical side, this put an end to the cease fire which we unilaterally undertook. Our readiness to cease fire is still on, should the Iranian side reciprocates.

This is an outline of the situation. Yet, we still honour our commitment to our own initiative,

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to our acceptance of the Security Council resolution, to our positive reception of the initiative by the non-aligned countries, or the Group of Islamic Countries. Our position shall remain unchanged in that Iraq is ready to resort to negotiations to achieve a fair and honourable solution for the conflict. I should like to assure Your Excellency that Iraq, while repeats continuously its firm stand emphasising the importance of preserving peace, is neither afraid nor alarmed of the future. Rather, we proceed from our principles and respond to those of the non-alignment movement, while at the same time we are highly prepared to carry on the fighting and teach the aggressors the lessons they deserve in order to force them to yield to the voice of right and respond to our legitimate rights.

Appreciating the responsibility Your Excellency feel towards security and peace in our region and the world at large, and the effective position in the international community which your country enjoys, we hope by presenting this picture of events that Your Excellency would try whatever measures deemed appropriate, to convince the Iranian party

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to give up its aggressive attitudes and rash policies; to resort to right, reason and logic; and to deal with the crisis and with its neighbours on the basis of solving problems peacefully and abandoning the illusions of expansion and domination.

In doing so, Your Excellency would render a great service to peace and security in the area and the world.

Our envoy will have the honour to listen to your evaluation and advice in this connection. We hope to continue our contacts in the future, by the available means, in order to reach a fair and honourable solution of the conflict, to serve the security and stability in the area, and to affirm the principles of liberty, independence and sovereignty

On this occasion, I confirm to Your Excellency the firm desire of our Government to continue relations of friendship and cooperation with your country for the sake of common interests and subline objectives in the service of humanity.

With best regards,

Saddam Hussein
President of the Republic of Iraq
Baghdad, October 8, 1980