

ARAB STATES - ISRAEL: Syria's announcement yesterday that it would not participate in the Geneva conference which begins Friday reflected the ingrained convictions of important elements in Syria that productive negotiations with Israel are still not possible.

By casting doubt that Arab objectives can be realized early through negotiation, the announcement heightened the chances of renewed hostilities on the Golan front,

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the possibility exists that Egypt and Syria might advance their timetable for putting direct military pressure on Israel to hasten its withdrawal from Arab territory.

Egypt's reaction to the announcement, however, held out the hope that the Syrians could be persuaded to come to Geneva later, if sufficient progress could be made to dispel their doubts. In an official statement, Cairo expressed an understanding of the "fear and suspicion that have forced" Syria not to attend the conference. The statement, nevertheless, emphasized that significant progress during the initial meetings in Geneva could open the way for Syria and other Arabs to contribute positively to the peace effort. The message warned, however, that procrastination and stalling by the Israelis would force the Arabs to resume their armed struggle.

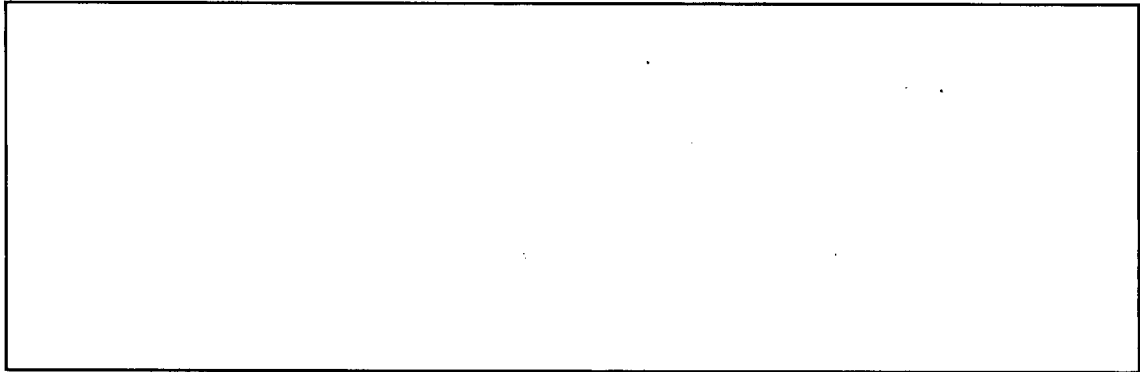
According to press reports from Geneva, Israeli officials reaffirmed Israel's agreement to attend the conference, despite Syria's decision to stay away.

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Despite Egyptian nervousness, there were few cease-fire violations noted yesterday. UN observers reported anti-aircraft firing near Fayid on the west bank of the Great Bitter Lake. Several heavy explosions were heard north of Suez City. According to Jerusalem Domestic Service, there were no incidents of cease-fire violations on the Syrian front.

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