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MIDDLE EAST HOSTILITIES

Statement by the Acting Prime Minister, Mr. John McEwen

The outbreak of fighting in the Middle East is a tragic development. All Australians are dismayed at the suffering and destruction that is being brought to the people of the countries which are now in conflict. In addition any large scale fighting in that region which upsets the precarious balance there holds dangers of involving outside powers and endangering peace elsewhere.

The failure of the Security Council to act before hostilities began is to be deplored. The Australian Government still hopes that the United Nations can discharge its responsibilities and take decisions for which the Australian and other governments can offer their full support. The Australian Permanent Representative to the United Nations has been instructed to give all support to this end.

On 25th May, the Minister for External Affairs, Mr. Hasluck, said: "I hope that all the Great Powers, whatever their differences on some aspects of the present situation, will nevertheless work together to prevent hostilities." Now that hostilities have broken out, this appeal to the Great Powers is no less valid. In fact, the urgency is even greater.

Australia has a great concern that peace should be maintained in the Middle East. Where our own good offices can be of use, we are ready to be helpful. Australia looks to the Security Council to act to prevent a widening of hostilities and to bring about an end to the present fighting.

CANBERRA,
6th June, 1967.