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22 January 1948

UNITED NATIONS PALESTINE COMMISSION

Memorandum From the Hebrew Committee of National  
Liberation Regarding Hebrew Political Prisoners  
Detained by the British Government

The attached memorandum was handed in to the Secretariat by two  
representatives of the Hebrew Committee of National Liberation on  
22 January 1948 with the request that it be called to the attention  
of the Commission.

MEMORANDUM

REGARDING HEBREW POLITICAL PRISONERS DETAINED BY

THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT

Prepared by THE HEBREW COMMITTEE OF NATIONAL LIBERATION  
2315 Massachusetts Avenue, N. W.  
Washington, D. C.

13 January 1948

DETENTION POINT	NO. OF PRISONERS	CATEGORY OF DETENTION	RECOMMENDATION
Bethlehem	10 (Women)	Convicted	Amnesty and Release
Atlit	50 (Women)	No Charge	Release
Latrun	415	No Charge	Release
Jerusalem	200	Convicted	Amnesty and Release
Kenya (British Africa)	288	No Charge	Repatriation and Release
Germany (British Zones)	10	Various	Amnesty, release and Repatriation

MEMO ON HEBREW PRISONERS

I. THE PRESENT SITUATION

There are today three categories of Hebrew prisoners held by the British for acts of war against the Palestine Administration. These are:

- (a) Prisoners who have been tried and convicted by British military courts on political charges.
- (b) Prisoners who are being detained administratively, without charge or trial, and are being held in Palestinian camps.
- (c) Prisoners who are being detained administratively, without charge or trial, and have been deported to the concentration camps at Gilgil, Kenya.
- (d) Hebrew prisoners in the British zone of Germany, held for political acts.

There are about two hundred convicted prisoners, about six hundred prisoners detained in Palestine without charge, and about four hundred prisoners detained in Kenya, also without charge, in all over a thousand prisoners, and about ten prisoners in Germany.

II. THE CONDITIONS OF DETENTION

The prisoners held in Palestine are guarded by Arab and British guards. Recently the security situation deteriorated to such an extent that all Hebrew prisoners were moved from the Acre Prison to the Jerusalem Prison. Also, all the Hebrew women detainees were moved from the Bethlehem Women's Prison to a Women's detention camp in Atlit. However, there are still five convicted Hebrew women prisoners in the Women's Jail in Bethlehem and there are about five hundred Hebrew men prisoners in the Latrun camp. Both

Bethlehem and Latrun are far removed from any Hebrew locality and the prisoners are at the absolute mercy of their guards. There is also a great risk of the Arabs staging an attack against either Bethlehem or Latrun and in such a case it is to be expected that the guards will not offer any serious resistance and a massacre of the absolutely defenseless prisoners will result. The conditions in Jerusalem are somewhat better because the prison is situated in the center of a city with a large Hebrew majority, but there too the prisoners are at the mercy of their Arab and British guards.

In Kenya, although there is no danger of an Arab attack, there exists considerable tension between the prisoners and their guards which once resulted in the guards shooting and killing two prisoners and wounding fifteen others.

### III. SUGGESTIONS

It is suggested that:

- (a) The three hundred Hebrew detainees deported to Kenya be repatriated to Palestine.
- (b) The emergency laws permitting the detention of persons without trial be abolished and that consequently the seven hundred fifty detainees of Kenya, Latrun and Atlit be released.
- (c) An amnesty be given to all Hebrew prisoners in Palestine and Germany convicted for political acts, and that all such prisoners be released.

### IV. THE REASONS BEHIND THE SITUATION

After Britain's declaration that it will leave Palestine in 1948, thus acceding to the extreme demands of the Hebrew underground, there does not seem to be any reason for the continuation of the conflict between the two sides. The fact that the conflict is still going on is due to an apparent

determination on the part of the British to take the maximum vengeance on its erstwhile Palestinian foes before leaving their country. The holding of over a thousand Hebrew prisoners is today completely unwarranted. The fact that this situation is tolerated by the United Nations has a considerable demoralizing effect not only on the members of the Hebrew underground, but on the whole Hebrew nation. The Hebrews feel that they should not be uselessly martyred in order to satisfy the lust for vengeance of a British police force.