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UNITED NATIONS PALESTINE COMMISSION

Communication Received from Jewish Agency Concerning the Food Situation in Jerusalem.

The following communication, concerning the increasing gravity of the food situation in Jerusalem, has been received from Mr. Moshe Shertok of the Jewish Agency for Palestine.

THE JEWISH AGENCY FOR PALESTINE

16 East 66th Street
New York 21, N.Y.

Hon. Karel M. Lisicky, Chairman
United Nations Palestine Commission
Lake Success, New York

Sir:

We are constrained to call the attention of the United Nations Palestine Commission to the increasing gravity of the food situation in Jerusalem where 100,000 Jews are threatened with starvation as a result of the indifference of the Mandatory Government to the depredations of armed Arab gangs. Primary responsibility for the depletion of Jerusalem's food supply must rest with the Mandatory Power which, despite its pledges and protestations, has utterly failed to maintain law and order on the highways.

Press reports from Palestine emanating from official British sources allege that the Jewish Agency has refused to cooperate with the Mandatory Government in arranging for the adequate protection of such convoys. Such reports are apparently inspired to divert attention from the facts and thus to exonerate the Mandatory Government from its responsibility. We have sought information on this subject from Jerusalem and are now able to inform the Commission that these reports are untrue.

The facts are as follows:

1. The Mandatory Government has not offered to escort food convoys in Jerusalem, nor has it stipulated any conditions under which such escort might be provided. Since November 29 the Mandatory Government has never acknowledged a duty to protect vehicles bringing food to

Jerusalem. The Jewish vehicles undertaking this journey were for several weeks halted, searched and sometimes disarmed by British security forces. This practice has now ceased and the present position is that the Mandatory Government no longer obstructs the journey of food convoys to Jerusalem, but it takes no active measures to facilitate their safe arrival.

2. Whatever food now reaches Jerusalem for the Jewish population arrives through the efforts and usually through the self-sacrifice of Jewish defenders.

Only today it is reported from Jerusalem that a fifty-truck Jewish convoy finally entered Jerusalem after battling its way through Arab forces which attempted to block its path.

3. Mr. R. M. Graves, a British official, Chairman of the Jerusalem Municipal Commission, appointed by the High Commissioner, informed the press on March 3, 1948, that the Commission had not taken any special steps to assure the food supply of Jerusalem. Mr. Graves expressed himself as satisfied by the statements of the Government Food Controller that the supply of foodstuffs was adequate for the next three months, i.e., till the end of May.

4. We are informed that the President of the Vaad Leumi has called on Mr. Azcarate to communicate to him the facts about the dangerous depletion of Jerusalem's food supplies. The President of the Vaad Leumi has suggested that the Advance Party use its good offices to request the Mandatory Power to assume the responsibility of conveying supplies to Jerusalem until the termination of the Mandate. For the Mandatory Government to tolerate the free operation of Arab bands, whose avowed purpose is the starvation of the population of Jerusalem, is incompatible with the elementary obligations of any government worthy of the name. The Jewish Agency fully supports the Vaad Leumi's suggestion and expresses the hope that the Commission will use its influence to secure the fulfilment of its request.

Sincerely yours,

Moshe Shertok (signed)