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22 January 1948

UNITED NATIONS PALESTINE COMMISSION

COMMUNICATION FROM THE JEWISH AGENCY FOR PALESTINE CONCERNING  
THE CREDENTIALS OF THE  
AGENCY

In response to the request presented to the Jewish Agency for Palestine in pursuance of the Commission's desire to know more precisely the extent to which the Agency represented the Jewish Community of Palestine, the following communication has been received. The letter was erroneously addressed to Mr. Epstein only because he had communicated the request to the Agency on behalf of the Secretary to the Commission.

THE JEWISH AGENCY FOR PALESTINE  
16 East 66th Street, New York 21, N.Y.

22 January 1948

Mr. W. Epstein  
United Nations Palestine Commission  
Lake Success, New York

Dear Mr. Epstein:

1. With reference to our telephone conversation yesterday I wish to make the following observations on the relation of the Jewish Agency and the Vaad Leumi to Part I, Section B, Para. 4 of the General Assembly's Resolution dealing with the establishment of Provisional Councils of Government in "consultation with the democratic parties and other public organizations of the Arab and Jewish States."
2. The phrase employed in the Assembly's Resolution is formulated widely in an effort to define the widely differing conditions obtaining in the Jewish and Arab areas. The Jewish population is not divided into a number of unconnected parties and public organizations. It holds countrywide elections on a basis of universal adult suffrage both for the World Zionist Congress which appoints the Jewish Agency Executive and for the Assephat Haniycharia (Elected Assembly) whose Executive organ is the Va'ad Leumi (National Council). The Jewish Agency Executive and the Va'ad Leumi are therefore constituted by democratic electoral processes similar to those whereby governments are elected in independent states.
3. The following parties took part in the election to the last Zionist Congress (December 1946) which appointed the Jewish Agency Executive:

Labor

Mapai  
Achdut Avodah  
Hashomer Hatzair  
Hapoel Hamizrachi

Non-Labor

Revisionists  
Aliya Hadasha  
General Zionists  
Mizrachi  
Others (smaller groups)

4. In the election of the Elected Assembly which appoints the Va'ad Leumi all the above parties put forward their candidates. In addition, certain sections of the community, e.g. women's organizations, put up separate lists, and the Palestine Communist Party polled 2% of the votes cast. In these elections held in December 1946, no less than 300,754 recorded their votes out of a total adult population of 378,000.
5. It follows that the only organized group which has not taken the opportunity to influence the composition of the Jewish Agency Executive and the Va'ad Leumi is the ultra-orthodox group known as Agudath Israel.

6. The Va'ad Leumi informed the Special Session of the General Assembly that the Jewish Agency for Palestine was competent to deal on its behalf and on behalf of the Jews of Palestine in all political and other matters. The Jewish Agency therefore has a two-fold capacity. It represents the Jewish population of Palestine organized under the Va'ad Leumi, and the interest in Palestine of the Jewish people throughout the world, organized in the World Zionist Congress. This status is recognized under Article 4 of the League of Nations Mandate for Palestine. The General Assembly of the United Nations through its appropriate committees has recognized the Jewish Agency as the sole and sufficient representative competent to speak for the Jewish population of Palestine and Jews throughout the world interested in the realization of Jewish national aspirations in Palestine. The General Assembly in May 1947 declined to hear other Jewish organizations on the grounds that they did not fulfil the condition of representing a considerable section of the Jewish population of Palestine.
7. Addressing the Special Session of the General Assembly on 12 May 1947, Sir Alexander Cadogan (United Kingdom) said:-

"As the representative of the Mandatory I can say that if we were to hear the Jewish Agency we should then have a fair picture of what the Jews of Palestine held and want."
8. In the light of these considerations I am directed to submit that the U.N. Commission would be acting in accordance with the facts and in conformity with established United Nations practice regarding the Jewish Agency for Palestine and the Va'ad Leumi as the representatives of "democratic parties and other public organizations" who should be consulted in the formation of a Jewish Provisional Council of Government.

I remain,

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) AUBREY S. EHAM