

UNITED NATIONS PALESTINE COMMISSION

Communication Received From the Camp Chaplain,  
Jewish Detainees Camp, Kenya.

The following communication has been addressed to the United Nations Palestine Commission by Rabbi H. D. Kanana, Camp Chaplain, Jewish Detainees Special Camp, Gilgil, Kenya.

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10 March 1948

RABBI H.D. KAHANE,  
Chaplain to the Jewish Detainees  
in Exile,  
Special Camp,  
Gilgil,  
Kenya Colony.

Gilgil, 3rd March 1948.

The Palestine Implementation Commission,  
The United Nations Organisation,  
LAKE SUCCESS,  
U. S. A.

Sir,

I kindly beg to draw your attention to a problem which is of great importance to the exiled detainees of this camp, to thousands relatives of theirs, and in fact, to the whole of Palestine Jewry.

The two attached memoranda which have lately been sent to the Kenya Authorities, by the detainees themselves, need, in my opinion, no further explanations.

As the matter is approaching the climax of gravity and is undoubtedly urgent, may I kindly ask for your immediate and helpful intervention.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Yours faithfully,

/s/ Rabbi H. D. Kahane

Rabbi H. D. Kahane,  
Camp Chaplain.

JEWISH DETAINEES IN EXILE  
SPECIAL CAMP, GILGIL, KENYA.

Col. H. P. Rice,  
Camp Commandant,  
Special Camp, Gilgil,  
Kenya.

Gilgil, 27th February, 1948.

Subject: Safety and security of the 288 exiled detainees  
under your charge.

Sir,

Following our interview concerning the above mentioned subject I beg to sum up the main points.

2. A considerable number of inspectors of your staff have openly shown their enmity towards the detainees; it is an established fact that some of them have even threatened the detainees in one way or another. May we just put in writing some of their utterances:

"I am sorry you are recovering; I'd rather see you die" (this was said to a patient in hospital). "A mysterious mine will explode in the ship aboard which you will go to Palestine." "I belong to the Farran group and you know what it means to you." "Something will soon happen in the camp; I know I'll be later dismissed, but I don't care." etc; etc;

Lately it was found out that two inspectors of the staff are deserters from the Palestine Police. After having passed through many Arab countries they arrived in Kenya with forged documents and considerable amounts of money, to serve in this camp.

Knowing the feelings and taking in consideration the probable plans of all these officers, we are in complete darkness as to the real intentions of many other officers of the staff.

In this connection it is also worthwhile mentioning that an African orderly said to one of the detainees that he had been told the reason of our detention: "You are under detention because you have killed Jesus Christ."

3. We wish to call your attention to the unprovoked murder of two detainees and the wounding of twelve others by instigated African guards, while this camp was still in Asmara. It should also be borne in mind that some of the recent anti-Jewish outrages in Palestine - such as the explosion in the 'Palestine Post Press' and the 'Atlantic Hotel' in Jerusalem, are alleged to have been committed by members of a certain element within the British Forces.

4. We learn with some relief that the services of certain inspectors - among whom are some of those mentioned in para. 2 - have been dispensed with. At the same time we gathered from the special security precautions you have taken lately to ensure the camp - that even in your opinion an outside attack on the detainees is not altogether improbable.

5. We feel it our pleasant duty to reaffirm that you have succeeded in establishing exemplary good relations between yourself, your chief assistant and a few other officers on the one hand and the detainees and their representatives on the other hand; it should also be noted that under your command the staff was very helpful to the detainees in many ways. But unfortunately, the detainees feel that they are now subjected to a grave threat to their very lives.

6. The 288 exiled

6. The 288 exiled detainees in the camp persistently demand their immediate repatriation to Palestine. Apart from our sacred right to live in our country we have always known that only in our homeland we shall be safe. However, we are still kept against our will in exile and in detention.

Repeating our strong demand to be immediately repatriated to Palestine we again wish to emphasize the immense responsibility for our lives and safety which lies both upon you and upon the Kenya Government, while we are still in this territory and on our way back to Palestine.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Yours faithfully,

/s/ Shmuel M. Katznelson,

Shmuel M. Katznelson,  
Camp Supervisor.