

RESTRICTED

M/16

17 March 1948

UNITED NATIONS PALESTINE COMMISSION

Communication Received from Assire Zion Committee, London,
Concerning Jewish Detainees at Gilgil, Kenya

The following communication, addressed to the Secretary-General, has been received from the Assire Zion Committee, London, concerning Jewish detainees in the Detention Camp at Gilgil, Kenya.

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ASSIRE ZION COMMITTEE

Remo House,
312 Regent Street, London,
W.1

10th March, 1948

His Excellency Trygve Lee,
Secretary General to U.N.O.
Lake Success,
U.S.A.

Your Excellency,

May I respectfully submit for your consideration and interest the question of the repatriation of the Jewish Deportees now in the Detention Camp of Gilgil, Kenya.

I am sure that you are aware that the Jewish Detainees are detained without judgement or trial by virtue of the Emergency Regulations 1945.

The Implementation Commission in Palestine has announced in the British and Jewish press on 1st March that the British Authorities have agreed to co-operate in the repatriation of the Detainees to Palestine before the termination of the Mandate. We have received from the Camp information that the Detainees are restless, and after the exclusion of Palestine from the sterling area were completely isolated from Palestine. Our Palestine Committee therefore was unable to transfer to the Camp food, medical supplies, or money, and the Detainees were considering the proclamation of a hunger-strike.

In order to prevent this unnecessary suffering I cabled the camp informing them of the U.N.O. Implementation Commission's announcement. Today, however, I received from the camp the following cable: -

"ATTORNEY GENERAL KENYA OFFICIALLY TOLD US YESTERDAY: (A) DENIAL REPATRIATION ANNOUNCEMENT (B) CAMPS REPATRIATION ONLY JUST BEFORE EVACUATION BRITISH FORCES AND NOT BEFORE MANDATE TERMINATION BUT IF UNO OBJECTS OUR ARRIVAL AFTER MANDATE TERMINATION BRITAIN WILL REPATRIATE US BEFORE MAY 15th. (C) SMALL ORDINARY GROUP INCLUDING SICK RETURNING SOON STOP BITTERLY SHOCKED CAMP URGES STRONGLY INTERVENTION CABLE - JEWISH EXILED DETAINEES GILGIL KENYA"

Under these conditions may we appeal for your intervention with the UNO Implementation Committee. UNO's intervention is urgent if only because of the cutting-off of Palestine from the sterling area deprives the Detainees of the minimum support which they used to receive from their Parents and our Committee in Palestine. The international Red Cross Committee of Enquiry has established that the provisions on the spot are not sufficient to maintain people not fit to live in the climatical conditions in Gilgil.

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At the same time the Detainees strongly resent the fact that the British guard has been replaced by Negroes under the charge of E.C.O's former members of the Fascist League in England. They remember, only too well, the incident which occurred on January 17th 1946 in the Detention Camp of Asmara, Eritrea, when the Negro guard then opened fire without any provocation killing three and wounding twelve others.

As none of the Detainees were convicted by a Court of Law, and as the repatriation of the Detainees seems to be a decided issue, prolongation of their detention is nothing more than a sadistic desire to inflict injury and sufferings.

By submitting for your consideration this humanitarian problem, may we add that we are acting not only on behalf of the Detainees themselves, but on behalf of their Parents, Wives, and Children, who for many years were deprived of their bread-winners and were obliged to seek our assistance.

Please accept, Your Excellency, the expression of our high esteem.

We remain, Sir,

Yours faithfully,

ASSIRE ZION COMMITTEE

I. Benari (signed)