

RESTRICTED

M/34

13 April 1948

UNITED NATIONS PALESTINE COMMISSION

Communication received from the Hebrew Committee
of National Liberation concerning Jewish Detainees
at Gilgil, Kenya.

The following communication, concerning the detention of Jewish
prisoners in Kenya, has been received from Mr. Eri Jabotinsky of the Hebrew
Committee of National Liberation.

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HEBREW COMMITTEE OF NATIONAL LIBERATION

2315 Massachusetts Ave. NW,
Washington 8, D.C.

April 10, 1948.

Dear Dr. Lisicky:

On April 9, 1948, a letter was sent to the Mandatory Government for Palestine by your Commission under the signature of Dr. Ralph J. Bunche. The letter referred to was reproduced in the New York Times' edition of April 10th and, we regret to note that among the sixteen matters listed as "requiring immediate attention", the problem of the political prisoners being held by the British at present in Kenya has been omitted.

We want to take this opportunity once again of stressing the graveness of this problem. There are today, according to our latest figures, two-hundred and ninety-one men who have been deported from Palestine to the Gilgil camp near Nairobi, Kenya. Some of these men have been held prisoners by the British for over six years. None of the prisoners has ever received a court trial or had charges preferred against them for any crime. They were originally detained in Palestine, but in September 1944 they were deported to a camp in Erythrea. Since that time they have been moved to a desert camp in the Sudan and later returned again to the camp in Erythrea, where they remained up until one year ago. One year ago they were transferred to the camp in Kenya.

When the British relinquish their mandate on Palestine on May 15th, there will remain no vestige of legal grounds for the further detention of these men. We fear, however, that the British intend to invoke some local Kenya regulation as grounds for further detention. Indeed, it is apparently the stated intention of the British to hold these men prisoners in Kenya until July of this year.

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We feel that the prisoners of Gilgil should be liberated, together with all other Palestinian political prisoners, on the cessation of the Mandate on May 15th. The liberation should be effectuated at that time on Palestinian soil and, therefore, the prisoners will have to be returned to Palestine some time prior to May 15th. Should transportation difficulties prevent their repatriation on time, they will have to be liberated in Kenya on May 15th and returned to Palestine, as free men, at the earliest possible date.

It has also been rumoured that the British do not intend to release the prisoners held in Palestine until the final British evacuation of Palestine on August 1st. The reason that has been given is that of security of British personnel. It should be realized by all concerned that, should the British hold these men beyond the termination of the Mandate, there will inevitably ensue a counter-offensive on the part of the Hebrew Underground. On the other hand it is difficult to understand why the British should fear for the security of their personnel if they really intend to evacuate Palestine.

The fact that the Palestine Commission has failed to take up this matter of the Kenya prisoners in the letter of April 9th is most regrettable and may give reason for unwarranted interpretations. I have, therefore, been instructed by the Hebrew Committee of National Liberation, to request that this matter be the subject of an additional communication by your Commission to the Mandatory Government of Palestine, supplementing the original list of matters requiring immediate attention.

Trusting that the Commission will find it possible to accede to our request and with the assurances of my highest esteem and consideration, I am

Sincerely yours,

/s/ Eri Jabotinsky.

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