

CONFIDENTIAL  
UK/77  
22 March 1948

UNITED NATIONS PALESTINE COMMISSION

Communication Received from the United Kingdom  
Delegation Concerning Prisoners and Detainees

The following communication, concerning the disposal of prisoners and criminal lunatics, has been received from Mr. Fletcher-Cooke of the United Kingdom Delegation.

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UNITED KINGDOM DELEGATION TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
Empire State Building, New York 1, N. Y.

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22nd March, 1948.

My dear Bunche,

May I refer you to Section 3 - Prisoners and Detainees, of paragraph 2 of the note submitted to the Commission on the 21st January relating to certain matters to be discussed with the Commission at some stage.

2. The Government of Palestine have been giving further consideration to the problem of the disposal of prisoners and criminal lunatics, and it is proposed to reduce the number of convicted prisoners to approximately 1,200 by an order substituting "one half" for "one third" in paragraphs (a) and (b) of Section 69(1) and for "two thirds" in Section 71 of the Prisoners Ordinance 1946, which would have a general effect of releasing prisoners who had served half their sentences.

3. Since in present circumstances there appears to be no assurance that such of these prisoners and criminal lunatics as are confined in Arab areas will be properly guarded after the 15th May, I have been asked to ascertain in confidence whether the Commission see any objection to the Government of Palestine approaching the Arab Higher Committee with the suggestion that the Committee might wish to make some preliminary arrangements to avoid these many hundreds of Arab criminals being let loose on the community at the termination of the Mandate.

4. I should be very grateful to know as soon as possible whether the Commission agree to this proposal.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Ralph J. Bunche,  
Principal Secretary to the United Nations  
Commission on Palestine,  
United Nations, Lake Success.

J. Fletcher-Cooke (signed)