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UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE

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Letter dated 8 July 1949
addressed by Mr. Gershon Hirsch of
the Delegation of Israel to the
Principal Secretary of the Conciliation
Commission

Dear Dr. Azcarate,

I beg to refer to Dr. Eytan's letter to you of June 27th in which he informed the Conciliation Commission (para.5, page 2) that the Government of Israel was engaged in working out administrative arrangements for the re-uniting of Arab families, and that a detailed announcement would soon be made.

I now write to inform you that the announcement forecast in Dr. Eytan's letter was issued by the Israeli Ministry for Foreign Affairs at Hakiryah on July 7th. Its terms are as follows:

"On June 5th the Foreign Minister announced in the Knesset (Constituent Assembly) that the Government would consider favourably applications submitted by Arab citizens of Israel for permission to bring back into Israel their wives and infant children, and that special arrangement would be made in order to facilitate the entry of those receiving permission to return. These arrangements have now been completed. Applications should be submitted to the Offices of the District Representative in Jerusalem, Haifa, Jaffa, Lydda and Ramle. In zones which are under military rule applications should be submitted to the Offices of the Military Governors.

Announcements will be published in the various localities as to the days and exact places where applications will be received. Special Officials of the Ministry of Immigration will be present on those days at the application centers. After local examination the application will be forwarded to the Ministry of Immigration at Hakiryah for final review, and applicants will receive notice of the decision.

The Government of Israel has, through the medium of the Mixed Armistice Commissions, approached the Governments of Egypt, Trans-Jordan and the Lebanon and requested their

cooperation so as to facilitate the speedy return to Israel of members of families receiving permission to do so. The Governments of Egypt, Transjordan and the Lebanon have been requested to appoint special Representatives who will meet Israeli Representatives in order to work out matters of procedure.

The Government of Israel has suggested the establishment of special frontier stations somewhere on the Armistice Lines with Egypt, Transjordan and the Lebanon. These stations will be opened up for the entry of those receiving permission to do so, on certain days to be agreed upon with the neighbouring Government. The three Governments which are in Armistice-relations with Israel have been requested to cooperate in locating members of families whose names will be transmitted to them, in bringing them to the Transit Stations and in identifying them.

Up to the present the entry to Israel from abroad has been permitted only through the ports of Tel-Aviv and Haifa and through the airdromes. The opening of special Transit Stations is designed to speed up and facilitate the entry of members of families of Israeli Arab citizens who are at present in refugee camps in the neighbouring states.

Permission to return to Israel will be granted to wives and minor sons under the age of fifteen, as well as to unmarried daughters of Israeli Arab citizens. In certain extraordinary cases permission to return will be granted to other members of families dependent on Arab breadwinners in Israel.

The above decision of the Government of Israel follows in addition to the many individual entry permits already granted to members of families of Arab citizens of Israel. The scheme represents a comprehensive measure designed to ease the lot of the Arab families which were torn asunder in the course of the war. The overall solution of the Arab refugee problem within the framework of a general peace settlement with the neighbouring States continues to exercise the mind of the Government of Israel."

I should be much obliged to you if you would kindly bring the contents of the above announcement to the notice of the members of the Conciliation Commission and of its General Committee.

It is hoped that the Conciliation Commission as well as the Arab Delegations will note that the above decision of the Government of Israel involves a substantial relaxation of the principle that any return of Arab refugees to Israel must take place within the framework of a general settlement which assures peace and security to the State of Israel. The Government of Israel has taken the decision to implement the above measure forthwith, in order to assist in relieving an urgent humanitarian problem.

Yours sincerely,

(s) Gershon Hirsch