

UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE

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MEMORANDUM DATED 9 MAY 1949  
SUBMITTED TO THE CONCILIATION COMMISSION  
BY MR. EDWARD N. BEIROUTI, SECRETARY  
JAFFA AND DISTRICT INHABITANTS COMMITTEE

Gentlemen,

We have had the advantage of appearing before your Commission at Beirut on the 25th of March following a meeting of refugees representing the towns of Jaffa, Lydda and Ramleh as well as many villages in the district.

We confirm the position outlined in our memorandum sent to you under cover of our letter dated the 20th March, 1949 requesting you to recommend the following:

- 1) The immediate return of all inhabitants of Jaffa District to their homes and lands.
- 2) The release of blocked assets.
- 3) The return of all movable and unmovable properties to their Arab owners and the payment of adequate indemnity for damage or loss caused to such properties.
- 4) The immediate return of owners of citrus plantations together with a sufficient number of workers to enable them to irrigate and to take care of their plantations.

It is regretted that the Jewish authorities continue to create in Jaffa District conditions designed to hinder the return of the refugees. We therefore, must reject in advance any argument to the effect that the town of Jaffa is at present occupied by Jewish immigrants. We would request you to take steps to put an end to these conditions and to call for the immediate evacuation of the premises. The continued occupation by the Jews of an area which was neither allotted to them under the Partition Scheme of 29th November, 1947, or under any subsequent measures nor acquired by conquest is without justification and, even at the risk of repetition, we wish to review hereunder the particular position of Jaffa.

I. The fighting in the Jaffa area ceased on the 30th April, 1948 upon the orders of the Military Commander for the Jaffa area. (Copy of orders attached and marked "A".)

II. The position of the town was then taken up with the District Commissioner who was authorized to enquire as to the terms the towns was likely to be accepted as an undefended town. (Copy of authority dated 4th May, 1948 attached and marked "B".)

III. The matter was followed up by the Jaffa Emergency Committee who declared the town an undefended town on the 9th of May, 1948 following the approval of the United Nations upon the application of the High Commissioner for Palestine (Copy of Declaration attached and marked "C") and it finally culminated in the agreement dated 13th of May, 1948 between the Jaffa Emergency Council and the Haganah, copy of which is already in your possession.

This agreement you will observe, and it cannot be stressed too strongly, reserves in specific terms the right of every inhabitant of Jaffa to return to his town. Furthermore, it clearly appears from the provisions and general tenor of the agreement that the Jewish occupation of the town and any action taken therein was to be of a temporary nature.

This Committee further insists upon the application to the inhabitants of Jaffa, Lydda, Ramleh and District of the United Nations Assembly resolution of 11th December, 1948. We cannot agree to any compromise upon the subject of the return of the refugees and the preservation of their several rights.

We must again refer to the particular position of the inhabitants of the District we represent, the greater percentage of whom were directly engaged, either as owners, merchants or labourers, in the citrus industry and, in this connection, would request you to consider taking the following two measures which are of an urgent nature.

1. The return of the owners of citrus plantations and of a sufficient number of labourers to enable them to take care of their plantations and prevent the total loss of the main industry of the country.
2. The release of the blocked assets held by the Barclays Bank (D Cto) and the Ottoman Bank at the insistence of the Jewish authorities. It must be pointed out that the

seizure imposed upon the assets is merely a vexation measure and its removal will not involve any consequence of a financial nature as the currency involved is held outside Palestine.

We have limited ourselves in this memorandum to the question of the return of the refugees and the preservation of their properties wherever situate, but would request you to seek our views in connection with any proposed political solution affecting the area we represent.

Yours faithfully,  
FOR THE JAFFA DISTRICT INHABITANTS  
COMMITTEE

s/ E. N. Beirouti

Edward N. Beirouti, Secretary

ORDERS BY THE MILITARY COMMANDER FOR THE JAFFA AREA

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- (1) There will be no aggressive action of any sort by either side in the JAFFA area, including the road JAFFA-BEIT DAJAN.
  - (2) The British Army will hold the line ZORACH BARNETT STREET- AZZEIN STREET, with effect from 1200 HRS. 1st May, 1948. No armed person of either side will be allowed to cross this line and any armed person approaching it will be shot or captured.
  - (3) Unarmed Jews and Arabs will be allowed through one gate on HASSAN BEK STREET. Each side may keep one unarmed representative at this point.
  - (4) Unarmed Arabs will be allowed to occupy areas recently occupied by them without let or hindrance.
  - (5) Any firing with small arms or mortars by either side will be punished severely by the Army only.
  - (6) The Army will, at its convenience, patrol the road HASSAN BEK STREET up to the Municipal Boundary. Any interference with this patrol will be dealt with as in para. 5 above.
  - (7) Any infringement of the above terms by either side will result in the full weight of the Army being used without further warning.
  - (8) The above orders will remain in force so long as Great Britain holds the Mandate.

JAFFA

30th April, 1948

MAJOR-GENERAL  
Military Commander  
LYDDA DISTRICT

B

May 4th, 1948

District Commissioner,  
Lydda District,  
J A F F A.  
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Dear Sir,

Referring to the interview held at your  
Offices yesterday and to your suggestion and advice  
that Jaffa be declared an undefended town, we shall  
be glad if you will find out upon what terms Jaffa  
is likely to be accepted as an undefended town after  
May the 15th.

It is understood of course that you may  
make enquiries from any source.

Yours very truly,

s/ M. El Issa   s/ S. Nazer   s/ E. Berouti   s/ Ahmad Abou  
Laban

Jaffa  
May 9th, 1948

TO DISTRICT COMMISSIONER,  
J a f f a.

Sir,

On the 30th of April, 1948, as a result of representations on the part of Tel-Aviv made to Major-General H. Murray, Commanding the 1st Infantry Division, a cease fire was ordered by the British Military Commander. This was followed not by a truce such as might have been expected, but by an order of the Commander to both sides that there should be no aggressive action of any sort in the Jaffa area.

In view of the fact that such an order is unlikely to remain in force after the 15th of May, when Great Britain will terminate the Mandate, and in view of the fact that the town of Jaffa is no longer defended, we, the Members of the Emergency Committee of Jaffa, hereby declare that this town will not be used for Military purposes and we request the Government of Palestine to ensure that this position is made known by radio and other means to the United Nations Organization and the general public, and to appoint without delay a Neutral Observer acceptable to both parties who may see to it that the state of an Undefended Town shall be observed and respected.

We remain, Sir,

Yours respectfully,

Emergency Committee  
Jaffa