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LETTER DATED 27 JANUARY 1969 FROM THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF ISRAEL TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I regret to convey to you the shocking news that the Government of Iraq executed nine Iraqi Jews this morning by public hanging in a central square in Baghdad.

The charge that they were spying for Israel is without a shred of truth. The Iraq Government has perpetrated an act of barbarity which exceeds even what the world has come to expect from a country in which violence and murder have become almost commonplace. The appeals made through a number of channels were disregarded, including that of yourself as Secretary-General.

The statement made by Prime Minister Eshkol in the Knesset this afternoon expressed the grief and anger felt throughout Israel at this deed. I have asked our Acting Permanent Representative to give you a copy of that statement.

As you will be aware, the Israel Government and people have felt increasing anxiety at the persecution of Jews in certain Arab countries in the Middle East. The facts of the matter have on a number of occasions been placed before the appropriate organs of the United Nations. To our profound distress, it must be recorded that these bodies have failed to take the required action.

I can only express the earnest hope that everything possible will yet be done by the international community, and the United Nations in particular, to relieve the plight of these helpless Jewish minorities. They are being subjected to gross discrimination and oppression, to imprisonment and torture, and even, as in the case of Iraq, to brutal public murders that must arouse the greatest revulsion in the minds of all civilized men.

I would request that this letter be circulated as a Security Council and General Assembly document.

(Signed) Abba EBAN
Minister for Foreign Affairs

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TEXT OF THE STATEMENT MADE BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF ISRAEL,
MR. LEVI ESHKOL, IN THE KNESSET ON 27 JANUARY 1969

What we have feared has come true. At dawn, the Iraqi authorities have hanged nine Jews. Let us pay homage to the memory of:

Ezra Najji Zilkha

Fuad Gabbai

Yaacov Gurji Namurdi

Daoud Yehezkeel Baruch Dalal

Daoud Ghali

Yehezkeel Salah Yehezkeel

Sabah Hayim

Naim Kadoori Halal

Charles Raphael Horesh

The blood of the innocent martyrs of Babylon cries out to us and to the world from Iraqi soil. "Oh Daughter of Babylon, that art to be destroyed, happy shall be He, that repays thee as thou served us." The Lord shall avenge their blood.

The first spontaneous reaction in the heart of every one of us to the murder trial of nine Jews in Iraq, is profound mourning and the redoubled determination to fulfil in Jewish history that thoroughgoing charge of Israel's redemption and ingathering of the exiles, to which our lives are consecrated.

Beyond any doubt, there is more than the merely humane aspect to this murder. Here is further evidence, if such evidence was needed, to the essence of the régimes in Arab countries and to the fate they have ordained for the Jewish people and for each of its individuals, if they could but do as they pleased. These régimes are incapable of solving the problems besetting their own nations and they try hard to disclaim responsibility, unburdening it on others. Thus they strive to blunt the sting of their nation's despair, redirecting it at helpless hostages whom they have imprisoned within their boundaries.

The similarity between these régimes and movements and those régimes and movements which threatened the entire world until they were defeated in the Second World War is manifest to one and all.

The criminal plot of the Baghdad hangings and that of the demands of what goes by the name of "Liberation of Palestine" is part and parcel of the self-same design. Unless a halt is put to it from outside it will not cease on its own. Between the design of genocide and its perpetration there stands the State of Israel alone - Israel and its strength.

The world's élite must understand this reality. As in the days of May 1967, this is not a matter of demands and counter-demands, between which a compromise must be sought. The conflict is one between a furor of destruction and a nation defending itself from its would-be assassins.

The Baghdad hangings have illuminated the fate of the remnants of Babylonian Jewry with a nightmarish light. The land of Iraq has become one great prison for its Jewish remnant. Our brethren are prey to terror at the hands of villains.

Iraq has become a gallows to its Jewish citizens. For 2,500 years the Jews have helped to build up Babylon - Iraq - with all their hearts and souls. When Israel attained statehood we welcomed those driven out from there.

Now, the persecutions have culminated in the hanging of nine Jews, whilst Iraq's leaders promise that this is not the end. The sole and only crime of these nine martyrs consists in their Jewishness. We know full well, and I do declare that the Iraqi Government also knew, that all accusations levelled at these Jews were entirely baseless. It is not for nothing that their trial took place behind locked doors.

The oppression of Jews in the Arab countries has been going on incessantly for years - yet the world's conscience has not been stirred. Thus, we have come to this pass - the hangings in Baghdad.

As soon as we learnt of the death sentences, we appealed to everybody likely perhaps to take action in order to rescue these people in Iraq. Many, including States, personalities, religious leaders, as well as the United Nations Secretary-General, have appealed to the Baghdad rulers - to be fobbed off with mendacious denials and deliberate misleading. These lies were meant to cover up for the murderous death sentences already passed, in spite of statements to the contrary. Once the ground had thus been prepared, the murder was carried out. I cannot help but reach the sorry conclusion that the world and all its institutions have failed to muster the necessary determination in this matter - and in the matter of Jews

in Arab lands in general. Last-minute appeals and making do with hypocritical replies will not relieve from the awesome responsibility and the turning of a blind eye to the fate of the Jews in Arab countries.

From this rostrum I demand that the entire world should act, each one to the best of his capacity, in order to avert further acts of murder, to save the families and to protect the Jewish remnant.

If there is a conscience in this world, let its voice be heard, now. Let us awaken to the immediate need to rescue the remnant of the Jewish communities in the Arab countries.

Our hearts mourn for the victims and our fraternal feelings go out to the bereaved families and communities.

We are firmly resolved to accomplish Israel's revival until its full redemption.

Our actions will aim at strengthening the State of Israel and at the salvation of Jewish communities in distress.

