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LETTER DATED 11 OCTOBER 1968 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
ISRAEL TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I am instructed to refer to the telegram addressed to you on 1 October 1968 by the Associations of Jews from Egypt, Iraq and Syria now in Israel, a copy of which is enclosed, and have the honour to state that the Government of Israel wishes to endorse this appeal, in which it finds confirmation for its own views on the matter, as expressed in the Security Council and elsewhere.

Additional evidence of the grave nature of the problem to which these organizations have called attention, and additional support for the urgent demand for appropriate international action to alleviate the plight of the victims, appears in reports published by other public organizations in different countries.

A report released in Paris on 5 October 1968 by the American Jewish Committee, and based on reliable sources within the Arab countries, establishes the following facts:

(a) The United Arab Republic has recently decided to ban the departure from Egypt of all Jews, thus apparently holding them as hostages. This decision applies to Jews of Egyptian citizenship, to Jews nominally stateless, and even to Jews holding foreign nationality if that nationality was acquired after the six-day war. In the past Jews had been allowed to leave Egypt after having been forcibly deprived of their Egyptian nationality by the Egyptian authorities.

(b) About a quarter of the remaining estimated thousand Jews of Egypt still are in prison. They have been kept in detention since the June 1967 war, though they have been neither charged nor found guilty of any offence. The Egyptian

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Government has not even made any pretence that these detained Jews were guilty of any offence. "They are being held prisoners simply because they are Jews", the report states. The Jewish prisoners, whose number is estimated at between 223 and 230 persons, have been transferred to the Tourah prison near Cairo after initial detention at the Abu Zaabal gaol, where they were the object of odious and inhumane treatment, including torture.

(c) In Iraq, twenty-six Jews out of the 2,500 souls remaining of the Jewish community of that country are also being held in prison without charges having been brought against them. After the June 1967 war, more than 100 heads of Jewish families were thrown into gaol, but most of them have since been released. Since June 1967, the Iraqi Government has conducted a house-to-house search of all Jewish homes and has drawn up a register of all occupants. Jews have been forbidden to travel from their areas of residence, and remain under constant surveillance. Iraqi Jews are forbidden to emigrate and cannot sell or otherwise dispose of immovable property.

(d) In Syria, Jews are held virtual prisoners in their own homes, being forbidden to travel more than a mile and a half from their residences without special permits. They must carry special identity cards and may not sell or otherwise dispose of their property. Palestinian Arab refugees have been resettled in homes in the former Jewish quarters, posing a continual threat to Jews in Damascus and Aleppo, where incidents have already occurred.

The situation described in this report and supported by many other sources has created deep concern in Israel and throughout the world. The continued persecution of Jews in Arab countries constitutes not only a gross violation of human rights but also adds to the already grave tensions existing in the area of conflict in the Middle East.

I have the honour to request that this letter and its enclosure be circulated as documents of the General Assembly and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Yosef TEKOAHI
Permanent Representative of Israel
to the United Nations

Telegram sent by the Associations of Jews from Egypt, Iraq
and Syria, addressed to the Secretary-General of the United
Nations on 1 October 1968

We the leaders of the Associations of Jews in Israel originating from Egypt, Iraq and Syria, meeting under the auspices of the Israeli section of World Jewish Congress, express our deep anxiety at the fate of our innocent brothers languishing in prisons in Arab countries. The condition generally of our brothers in the Arab countries has greatly worsened following six-day war. The authorities in the Arab States persecute them, prevent them from earning a livelihood, seize their property, restrict their movements, wreak vengeance on them and hold them as political hostages in violation of international morality.

The Arab States have refused and still refuse to permit international organs such as the International Red Cross to inspect the condition of the Jews. They also refuse to permit the Jews to leave their countries. The remnants of the Jewish communities in the Arab States serve as scapegoats for the Arab rulers who use them to deflect the attention of the masses during difficult periods.

In the name of our oppressed brothers cruelly persecuted we cry out to the world's conscience and call upon the United Nations Secretary-General to examine their situation, ease their lot, and make it possible for them to leave the Arab States which have denied them human rights. While severe oppression is waged against the Jews in the Middle East, let there be no repetition of that conspiracy of silence which prevailed when our brothers in Europe were destroyed.

Chaim Goshen,
Chairman,
Association of Jews from Egypt

Shimon Ben Yaacob,
Secretary,
Association of Jews from Iraq

Yaacob Roffe,
Chairman,
Association of Jews from Syria
