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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL  
FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, WITH PARTICULAR  
REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES  
AND TERRITORIES

Letter dated 9 March 1977 from the Permanent Representative  
of Israel to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed  
to the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights

Enclosed herewith, I have the honour to transmit to you a statement concerning human rights of Jews in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and in Syria.

I shall be grateful if you would circulate this statement as an official document of the Commission on Human Rights under agenda item 12, "Question of the Violation of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in any Part of the World, with particular reference to Colonial and other Dependent Countries and Territories."

Accept, Sir, etc.

(Signed) Theodor MERON  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative

I have the honour to draw the attention of the Commission to the plight of more than three million Soviet Jews.

The situation of the Soviet Jews did not improve during the last year. The problem faced by a significant number of the Soviet Jews is the absence of free emigration from the USSR and the continuation of the harassments directed against those who want to emigrate to Israel. The following are the numbers of emigration permits received by Jews who applied to go to Israel: in 1973 the total of 35,000 persons had left; in 1974 - about 20,000; in 1975 - about 13,000 and in 1976 - about 14,000 Jews had left the USSR. The number of persons requesting invitations (affidavits) from their relatives in Israel continues to be much larger than the number of permits issued by the Soviet authorities. In 1976, 36,100 persons had asked for and received their first affidavits and another 19,500 had renewed (extended) the affidavits that they already had, thus bringing the number of the applicants to the total of 55,600 persons while the number of the permits granted was 14,200.

The heavy pressure exerted on Jews in order to dissuade them from daring to apply for emigration is continuing. The press campaign against the applicants for emigration goes on as before; the authorities are trying to prevent the Jewish activists in different cities from maintaining contacts between them; Hebrew text-books and educational and religious materials about Israel are being confiscated; applicants for emigration are being dismissed from work or demoted to lower positions and their salaries are cut down; reserve officers have had their pensions terminated; telephones are often cut off and mail (including the affidavits sent from Israel) is being intercepted and frequently confiscated; Jewish students are expelled from universities; Jewish young men are conscripted into the army deliberately so as to prevent their families from applying for emigration. Some Jews who have been trying to receive emigration permits for a long time had appealed in October 1976 to the Minister of Interior of the USSR and the Director of the All-Union OVIR office in order to protest against the difficult situation they had been placed in; they tried to organize a protest demonstration in the streets of Moscow and near the offices of the Supreme Soviet. The demonstrators were seized by the authorities, cruelly beaten and then sentenced to 15 days of arrest (the women among them were fined).

In a number of cases Jews wanting to emigrate were tried on criminal charges - and not on political ones - in order to serve as examples for other possible prospective applicants and in order to conceal from the world public opinion the real reasons for their arrest and trial. The situation of the Jewish prisoners who were arrested and sent to prison for their desire to go to Israel is very serious. The harassments to which they are subjected both by some anti-Semitic camp administrators and by other prisoners - instigated criminals - turn their lives into hell.

The situation of the Jewish intellectuals who had been dismissed from their positions in universities and research institutes after they applied for emigration permits is especially difficult; they are forced to stay out of work for a long period of time and, in addition to their poor material situation, the authorities do everything they can to reduce them to the state of spiritual and professional stagnation. Their attempts to improve their professional situation by organizing scientific seminars and by publication of a magazine devoted to the problems of the Jewish minority in the USSR ("Jews in the USSR") are met by strong opposition of the authorities (including court charges, threats of such charges, arrests of those taking part in cultural and scientific activities, etc.). The attempt of the Jewish activists in December 1976

to organize in Moscow a symposium on the problems of the Jewish culture deserved special attention. Representatives of the Ministry of Culture of the USSR, Soviet cultural workers as well as lecturers and guests from overseas were openly invited to participate in the work of the symposium, but the Soviet authorities did their best to prevent the symposium from being held; the foreign guests were denied entrance visas to the USSR, others had their visas cancelled, tourists who happened to enter the USSR during those days were expelled, the majority of the symposium's participants were held under house arrest. As a result, those of the symposium's organizers who were not detained could only hold a symbolic session of the symposium that lasted a few hours.

The anti-Semitic campaign in the official mass media is continuing. Fabricated misinformation appears in the mass media under the guise of "anti-Zionist" and/or "anti-religious" propaganda. A certain Professor V. Emelyanov, employed by the official organization "Znanie" as a lecturer, mainly to students, has become lately known for his public lectures about Zionism. His lectures are full of malicious allegations directed against the Jewish people and its national heritage, against its religion and history.

In previous sessions of this Commission, we have had occasion to point out that virulently anti-Semitic books, articles, cartoons etc. are periodically published in the USSR with the official blessing of the authorities. To these we should now add equally anti-Semitic television and radio broadcasts as well as lectures delivered under ostensibly scholarly auspices.

The continuous anti-Semitic barrage in the Soviet media is often camouflaged under the guise of a political propaganda campaign against Israel. Interspersed with denunciations of Israel are defamatory statements about the Jewish religion, outrageous misrepresentations of Jewish culture and sheer nonsense about Jewish history.

A recent anti-Semitic film called 'Secret and Other Things' suggests that Jews tried to kill Lenin, that 'Jewish capital helped Hitler to power' and juxtaposed scenes of deprivation with pictures of prominent Jews.

Seventy-six Jews signed a statement condemning an anti-Zionist film called 'Buyers of Souls', which was shown by the State television network on 22 January.

The radio broadcasts transmitted for the Soviet Jews - even Hebrew lessons, lectures on Jewish history and Jewish and Hebrew literature - are systematically jammed by the Soviet authorities in contradiction to international agreements relating thereto signed by the Soviet authorities.

The Human Rights Commission must carefully examine these grave violations of human rights and of the rights of a national minority and it should firmly demand that the USSR should remove all the obstacles in the way of those Jews who wish to leave the Soviet Union for Israel in accordance with the basic rights laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international agreements. The members of the United Nations must demand the immediate release by the Soviet authorities of all those prisoners whose sole "crime" was their desire to live as Jews and to go to Israel, and to allow them to go there. The anti-Semitic campaign, the prohibition to pass on to the new generation the religious and national Jewish traditions and the acts directed against these traditions, the violations of the freedom of communication between the

Soviet Jews and their brethren overseas, the attempts to isolate them, the obstacles placed in their way to their historic homeland - all these contradict both the spirit and the letter of the Helsinki Agreement and are a violation of fundamental human rights.

## II.

Another grave humanitarian problem pertains to the plight of the Jews in Syria.

From year to year we have regularly drawn the attention of the Human Rights Commission to the tragic conditions of this people, unfortunately without eliciting any reaction, except for the repeated statements by spokesmen for the Syrian Government, denying with indignation that the Jews of Syria were subjected to restrictions or to discrimination.

It is therefore of importance to note that the Syrian authorities have now decided (as reported in the Kuwaiti Newspaper "Alkabas" of 28 December 1976) to lift some of the restrictions which had been imposed by them on the Jews of Syria. The declared reason for the decision of the Syrian authorities "to consider the Jews as ordinary citizens" was "to prevent Israel from claiming that the Jews in Syria were being persecuted". Yet whatever the reason, if the report is indeed true, it refers to a positive objective.

The report indicates that the Syrian Government has now taken the first hesitant steps to grant Jews some basic human rights: the right of free movement within the country itself, the right to inherit and to bequeath immovable property and the possibility of making a trip abroad for medical treatment or family reasons.

It is obvious that in more liberal countries such rights for every citizen are considered as basic.

Taking into account the humiliating conditions under which Syrian Jews have been suffering for so many years, we must of course be grateful for any improvement. Yet, in order to place in proper perspective the newspaper reports pertaining to the intention of Syria to consider Jews as ordinary citizens, particularly in relation to generally accepted standards, one point must be mentioned: any Jew permitted to travel abroad - and permission is only granted for health or family reasons - has to post a bond equivalent to more than 25 thousand Syrian pounds, which is about six thousand five hundred dollars. On top of this any Jew permitted to travel abroad is required to leave behind as hostage a member of his closest family, a spouse or an unmarried child.

All this, of course, applies only to Jews, in conflict with the provisions of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. The only humane solution to this problem and the only way by which this small community can at last be relieved of its sufferings is by permitting those of them, who wish to do so, to leave the country to be reunited with their families, wherever they may be. By doing so, Syria will do no more than comply at last with generally accepted standards and obligations with respect to human rights. It is of particular urgency that Syria should permit the departure of some 400 Jewish women of marriageable age, who cannot find husbands in Syria.

In conclusion, I should like to draw the attention of the Commission to the following Resolution adopted on 8 February 1977 by the World Sepharadi Federation at its Convention held in Jerusalem:

"Recalling the internationally acknowledged right of every person to freedom to leave his country,

Expressing our great concern, at the continuing denial of the right to leave Syria, a right denied to those Syrian Jews who wish to do so,

Fearful of the threat to the survival of the ancient Jewish Community of Syria, the World Sepharadi Federation:

1. Calls upon international public opinion to demand from the Syrian Government respect of the right of the Syrian Jewish Community to the freedom to leave.
2. Urges Governments of the free world to demand from the Syrian Government to end their discriminatory practices against the Jewish Community.
3. Appeals to concerned persons around the world to call upon President Assad of Syria to fulfil his obligations and undertakings to respect the basic rights of the Syrian Jewish Community to join their relatives overseas."