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By **AB** NARA Date **7/15/01**

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1969-72 POL-13
ARKV JEWS
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~~SECRET - EMBOTS~~

March 18, 1969

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~~TWS~~ Ethn?
~~DND~~ Natl
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~~ING~~ JEWS (1969)

MEMORANDUM

TO : NEA - Mr. Sisco
FROM : NEA - William J. Handley
SUBJECT : Iraqi Jews

You asked me last night to review what we have done so far on the tragic question of the Iraqi Jews. Here is a wrap-up on the past as well as on our reactions to the Williams-Scott Resolution.

1. What have we done publicly?

Publicly, we have condemned the executions and public hanging of bodies. The Secretary made a statement, Yost addressed a letter to U Thant, and McCloskey has made at least two public statements to this effect. We have been reluctant to say more publicly because (1) the Iraqi Government is very hostile to us and any overt evidence of USG interest might be used as an excuse to persecute the Jews further and (2) as a practical matter, we have no influence with the GOI and cannot hope to persuade the Iraqis to change their handling of what they regard as entirely a domestic matter.

2. What have we done privately -- diplomatically?

We have confidentially asked the French Government to intervene. To date, the French have not reported any success. Starting in the fall of 1967 we asked the Spanish to help. The Spanish Ambassador in Baghdad made a number of approaches at various levels in the GOI. He was finally told in no uncertain terms to stay out of Iraqi domestic affairs. Following the executions in January, the Spanish Government, on its own initiative, asked the Egyptian Government to intervene. We have no report on the outcome of this endeavor.

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DECLASSIFIED

Authority NND 35857
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- 2 -

We have asked Ralph Bunche to have U Thant appeal to the Iraqis. U Thant has done so, but we have no indication that the Iraqis ever replied. We have also asked the assistance of the International Committee for the Red Cross and that of the UN High Commission for Refugees. Neither of these organizations appears to have any influence with the GOI.

I tried my best to get the Indians (who represent the Iraqis here) involved in this, on humanitarian grounds, and Banerjee promised to help. It appears, though, that they never really tried and my impression is that they would rather stay out of this. They did try to help on the Bail case and made a rather tough demarche in Baghdad.

3. What else could be done -- diplomatically with other Arab or other governments?

Unfortunately, there is little that can be done diplomatically. The Iraqi Government is so torn by internal dissension and political rivalry that it is basically impervious to world opinion. Very few nations have any influence whatsoever with Iraq. The French and Spanish have marginal influence and we have used them. Other nations with influence--such as the USSR or Communist China--would hardly be receptive to our request for intervention. Pakistan has some influence, but it is so limited that it is doubtful that it would risk what little influence it has on such a dubious venture. Thus, until there is a change in government, which could occur at any time, there is little that can be done.

4. Our attitude toward the Williams-Scott Resolution; i.e. should we endorse or keep quiet?

As noted above, official USG interest in the Jews might only further prejudice them. While we should keep quiet, we could and probably should tell Senators Williams and Scott what we have done and why we are reluctant to do anything more.

5. Should we make a public statement welcoming the Iraqi Jews, and reaffirming that our immigration laws permit them to enter?

Again, it is the public aspect that is troublesome. We have had a deluge of Congressional correspondence on this subject, and in all cases we have been able to report that under existing legislation we can take the Iraqi Jews as refugees. Many other nations have indicated a willingness to do the same. We could reiterate this to Senators Williams and Scott.

DECLASSIFIED

Authority

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~~SECRET~~

- 3 -

The only real problem is that the GOI will not permit the Jews to depart. All other potential problems, such as transport, resettlement, etc., can be handled with ease once the first hurdle is overcome.

Recommendation:

I recommend that you telephone Senators Williams and Scott to express understanding of their action and to explain what we have done and why we would be reluctant to take a strong supportive public role. You might say something to Ambassador Lucet about this matter at some appropriate time. So long as the French have some capital in the Arab world, they might have some influence if they should wish to spend some of it.

NEA:WJHandley:ARN:BHbaas:eae
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PA/HO Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
June 21, 2006