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Iraq Executes 15 Alleged Israel-US Spies As United States Condemns 'Blood Bath'

WASHINGTON, Aug. 25(JTA) -- Secretary of State William P. Rogers called today for an end to the mass executions of Iraqi citizens for allegedly spying for the United States and Israel. Mr. Rogers deplored the executions at dawn today of 15 Iraqis, including two Christians and two Jews in Baghdad. According to the Iraqi radio, six of the condemned were military men and were shot by a firing squad. The nine others were hanged in the central prison. All had been accused as espionage agents for Israel and the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (C.I.A.). Baghdad radio made no mention of a trial, saying merely that the accused had been convicted.

Mr. Roger's statement, read by State Department spokesman Robert J. McCloskey, said "the current blood bath in Iraq is a matter of serious concern to people everywhere. We hope this will be recognized and serve to bring an end to the series of executions in Iraq."

At the United Nations today, Secretary-General U Thant disclosed that he had intervened in a last minute attempt to influence the Iraqi Government to delay the executions. He said he asked the Iraqi representative at the UN last night "to convey to his government my serious concern about the international repercussions that would be likely to follow the executions." Mr. Thant added that he did not "question the right of the government of Iraq to try and sentence anyone within its jurisdiction who might be charged with a serious offense. But I did question the contemplated action on both humanitarian and political grounds." The Secretary General said he felt the executions "will increase tension and danger in the Middle East."

Today's executions brought to 51 the number of Iraqis put to death for spying since last Jan. 27. Eleven of them were Jews. Mr. McCloskey recalled that on Jan. 27, 1969 when 14 persons, including 9 Jews were hanged and publicly displayed in Baghdad and Basra, Secretary of State Rogers denounced Iraqi authorities for putting on a "spectacle repugnant to the conscience of the world." The U.S. has no diplomatic relations with Iraq.

Mr. Thant's 11th hour attempts to have the Iraqi executions postponed followed a meeting he had Sunday night with Israel's chief representative to the UN, Ambassador Yosef Tekoah. Mr. Tekoah informed the Secretary-General of Israel's appeal for intercession with the Baghdad regime to prevent the executions.

Israel Warns Of New Trials, Calls For World Action To Save Rest Of Iraqi Jewry

JERUSALEM, Aug. 25(JTA) -- Israel called on world political and religious leaders today to "act immediately to save the remaining Jews in Iraq, Syria and Egypt" by making it possible for them to leave those countries. Foreign Minister Abba Eban said last night that there would be further trials and executions in Iraq on trumped up spy charges unless all the weight of world opinion is brought to bear on Iraqi authorities. He disclosed that Israeli envoys abroad had been alerted to approach the heads of state and of international humanitarian agencies in that connection.

The Knesset announced that it will convene in extra-ordinary session next Thursday to discuss the situation of Iraqi Jews at the request of the Government. The Knesset is presently in recess.

The Jewish Agency Executive held a memorial meeting today for the two Jews hanged in Baghdad. They were identified as Itzhak Eliahu Dallal, a small shopkeeper and Raphael Yehezkel Yaacob, 55, who was engaged in trade and commerce and was once among the richest Jews of Basra. Both were married. Mr. Yaacob was the father of three children. Chief Rabbi Itzhak Nissim said today that the Iraqi executions were a "warning to mankind" to do something about "a state which lives by the sword and destruction and continues to sit together with the United Nations."

In Tel Aviv last night, the Association of Iraqi Jews in Israel held a mass rally at which appeals were made to world leaders to help save Iraqi Jews facing the gallows. The names of the 15 Iraqis executed today were not the same as the 12 men and women whose arrest on spy charges was announced by the Baghdad radio on Aug. 17. Two Jewish brothers were in the latter group. Their fate is unknown and it is presumed that they and the other accused are awaiting trial and execution.

American Jewish Organizations Urge United Nations Action to Save Iraqi Jews

NEW YORK, Aug. 25 (JTA) -- American Jewish organizations bitterly denounced the Iraqi executions today and warned that more could be expected unless world opinion and the United Nations acted to avert them.

Philip H. Hoffman, president of the American Jewish Committee called the executions "an effort by the government to lead the mass of Iraqis to believe that the country's social and economic problems have not been solved because of alleged subversive elements involved in spying for Israel." He said "We call upon the United Nations and men of good will everywhere to halt this travesty of justice and to end once and for all the persecution of Jews and other minorities" in Iraq.

The American Jewish Congress, in a telegram to U Thant, urged the Secretary General to extend his personal protection to Jews living in Moslem lands who face "persecution and terror" as a result of Arab demands for a holy war against Israel. The message, signed by Rabbi Joachim Prinz, chairman of the AJCongress international affairs committee, warned that "the brutal executions of a group of alleged spies for the U.S. and Israel today...may prove to be a foretaste of the revenge which blood-thirsty Arab tyrants have sworn to wreak against Israel as a result of the unfortunate fire at the El Aksa mosque in Jerusalem."

Rabbi Israel Miller, chairman of the American Zionist Council, noted that the execution of 15 alleged spies in Iraq came at a time when spokesmen in Cairo and other Arab capitals were "capitalizing on a fire in Jerusalem which, as the whole world knows, was the work of a misguided non-Israeli" not of the Jewish faith.

Rabbi Herschel Schacter, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, expressed "deep regrets" today over the failure of diplomatic efforts to save the executed Iraqis. He charged the Iraqi regime with planning further "mock trials" and executions and urged "enlightened public opinion" to raise its voice against "further acts of barbarism."

In Washington today, Rep. Leonard Farbstein, New York Democrat and a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, asked Secretary of State Rogers to file a U.S. Government appeal at the UN to deter Iraq from further executions and to condemn Iraq for its past actions. Rep. Farbstein added that a way must be found to facilitate the emigration of Jews from Iraq before they are exterminated.

British Jews Condemn 'Wilful Act Of Savagery' And Call For Aid For 'Hostages'

LONDON, Aug. 25 (JTA) -- The Board of Deputies of British Jews called today's executions in Baghdad a "wilful act of savagery" and called on "all those to whom humanity and justice are not dead to prevent these barbaric acts." It appealed for the safety of Jews remaining in Iraq "who are held as hostages."

The Zionist Federation of Great Britain observed that if the United Nations had agreed to Israel's demand that it investigate the condition of Jews in Arab countries the Iraqi regime might have "second thoughts about continuing its reign of terror." The British Poale Zion addressed a statement to Prime Minister Harold Wilson and the general secretary of the British Labor Party expressing shock over the Iraqi executions. The organization urged the British Government to "use its good offices to free the Jews of Iraq, Egypt and Syria." The Anglo-Jewish Association "strongly condemned the senseless execution of 15 innocent and helpless men" and called on public opinion to make itself heard against "the latest act of inhumanity."

World Jewish Congress Hits World Failure To Halt 'Monstrous Crimes'

GENEVA, Aug. 25 (JTA) -- The World Jewish Congress today denounced the Iraqi executions as "utter barbarism" and deplored "the continued failure of the international community to take effective measures to halt these monstrous crimes." Dr. Gerhard M. Riegner, secretary general, said the WJC "renews its urgent appeal to international organizations, to governments based on the rule of law, and to men and women of good will in all countries to take immediate action to prevent further executions."

Israel Bars Lebanon's Bid To Reactivate Mixed Armistice Commission

UNITED NATIONS, N.Y., Aug. 25 (JTA) -- Israel has flatly rejected a Lebanese proposal for the reconstitution of the Lebanese-Israeli Mixed Armistice Commission and advised Secretary-General U Thant today that if and when Lebanon is prepared to accept the proposal of August 16 for the stationing of UN cease-fire observers on the border, Israel will give him its "considered views" on the proposal.

Mr. Thant asked both countries to accept UN observers whose function would be "observing and maintaining the Security Council cease-fire." Lebanon, in reply, insisted that the 1949 armistice agreement was still in effect and that, if necessary, additional staff for the mixed armistice commission could perform the function.

In his reply today, Ambassador Yosef Tekoah pointed out that "the armistice period is now behind us, and since June, 1967, the international policy is to move beyond the cease-fire to permanent peace. Since the Lebanese reaction does not represent a positive reply to your proposal, there is no point my government studying it further in detail."

The envoy charged that difficulties on the Lebanese border were the result of activities of terrorist groups based on Lebanese soil. He said it was "the unquestioned duty" of the Lebanese Government to prevent all cease-fire violations from Lebanese territory. When Lebanon does this, he said, "the cease-fire will be properly maintained and the situation will cease to be disturbing."

Meanwhile efforts to draft a resolution to settle the Lebanese and Israeli cross-complaints pending in the Security Council since Aug. 12 remained stalemated today. The Americans are pressing a draft resolution which condemns Israel for its airstrike against the terrorist enclave on the slopes of Mount Hermon, in Lebanese territory, on Aug. 11 and rebukes other cease-fire violations.

In more than a week of consultations, the Americans have not been able to get the Lebanese to go along with the draft so that it can get the required nine votes in the Council. The Arabs want an out-and-out condemnation of Israel with no reference to the cease-fire violations which generated the Israeli reply and a threat of sanctions.

Israel Protests To UN Against Arab Use of Mosque Fire To Inflamm Passions

UNITED NATIONS, N.Y. Aug. 25 (JTA) -- Israel protested in the United Nations today against the "unpardonable... attempt" by some Arab governments "to inflame religious passions in the Moslem world" in the aftermath of a fire that severely damaged the El Aksa mosque in East Jerusalem last Thursday. The Israeli protest was contained in a letter from Ambassador Yosef Tekoah to Sr. Don Jaime de Pinies, of Spain, this month's President of the Security Council. A similar letter was addressed to Secretary General U Thant.

Mr. Tekoah charged that the Arab governments were trying to exploit the occurrence "for political and propaganda purposes" and to "whip up hatred between the members of the two ancient and related faiths of Islam and Judaism." He said that "Such conduct can only exacerbate still further the unhappy conflict in the Middle East."

The Israeli Ambassador's letter noted that the El Aksa mosque and all other Islamic shrines in Jerusalem "is controlled, administered and safeguarded solely by the Wakf, the appropriate Moslem religious authority." He detailed the efforts made by the Arab and Jewish fire brigades in Jerusalem to confine the fire to one wing of the mosque thereby saving the rest of the structure. He also noted that at the Israel government's request, the Israeli Supreme Court appointed a five-man panel to investigate the causes of the fire. Two of its members are Arabs, a Christian and a Moslem.

"On the basis of information supplied by Moslem watchmen in the employ of the Wakf, who were on duty at the time, the Israel police have arrested a suspect, a visitor of Australian nationality. His trial will be public, and open to observers from any country," Ambassador Tekoah wrote.

Investigation Commission Holds First Hearing; To Receive Full Report From Police

JERUSALEM, Aug. 25 (JTA) -- A blue ribbon committee set up to investigate the causes of a fire that severely damaged the El Aksa mosque in Old Jerusalem last Thursday held its first session here this morning and later toured the mosque area. The five-man panel appointed by the Israeli Cabinet, is headed by Supreme Court Justice Joel Sussman and includes two prominent Nazareth Arabs among its members.

Legal sources here said however that the arrest of an Australian national, Michael Denis William Rohen, on suspicion of having set the fire largely pre-empted the investigative aspects of the committee's work. They said the panel would probably concentrate on a study of future security and fire-fighting needs at religious shrines.

Israeli Attorney General Meir Shamgar appeared before the group today and asked that it postpone its hearings until next Sunday, Aug. 31, at which time it would have complete details of the police investigation which led to Rohen's arrest last Friday. Mr. Shamgar said he would probably file formal charges against Rohen by the end of the week and that his trial would begin ten days later. Justice Sussman indicated that his committee would not submit a formal report until Rohen's trial and a possible appeal are over.

Sources here said that the government would try the Australian Protestant under the strictest security arrangements since the trial of Gestapo deportation chief Adolf Eichmann here a decade ago. But the government is planning to give the trial the most extensive world-wide press and television coverage.

U.S. Counsels Restraint Over 'Regrettable and Deplorable' El Aksa Fire

WASHINGTON, Aug. 25 (JTA) -- The United States Government considers the fire that damaged the El Aksa Mosque in Jerusalem "regrettable and deplorable" and is counselling restraint to all parties concerned, State Department spokesman Robert McCloskey said today. In a comment on a statement by President Nasser of Egypt calling for a holy war against Israel, the spokesman noted that every statement and action carries with it the possibility of worsening an already bad situation.

Mr. McCloskey stressed that the United States was "deeply concerned" and was trying to reduce tensions arising from the fire. He said the United States did not have sufficient information on the cause of the fire.

Turkish Police Guard Izmir Jewish Homes After Arab Bomb Attempt At Israeli Exhibit

LONDON, Aug. 25 (JTA) -- Turkish police guarded Jewish homes and synagogues in Izmir today after an attempt to bomb the Israeli pavilion at an international trade fair in which one Arab terrorist was killed and another injured.

According to reports from Izmir, the terrorists were described as "Jordanian students." The bomb apparently detonated before they could plant it owing to a "heavy Turkish police guard" around the pavilion. The reports said the bomb went off between 10:30 and 11:00 p.m. local time although it had been set for 1:30 a.m., more than two hours after the exhibit closed for the night. The terrorists apparently had instructions to avoid injuring fellow Moslems. Turkey is a predominantly Moslem, though non-Arab country.

Police said the injured student told them he received training from the National Front for the Liberation of Palestine in handling explosives and that he had been instructed to blow up the Israeli pavilion at the Izmir fair.

Zim Line Passenger Office In London Is Target Of Crude Bomb Attempt

LONDON, Aug. 25 (JTA) -- Scotland Yard is investigating an explosion in the passenger offices of the Israel Government-owned Zim Israel Navigation Co. here today. A woman clerk, Rachel Picker, was slightly injured when what police described as a home-made bomb stuffed under a carpet, went off at about 1:30 p.m. Most of the staff was out to lunch at the time. The clerk was treated for leg injuries at Middlesex Hospital.

Police said that two hours after the explosion in the Zim Lines office, an anonymous telephone caller warned the staff at Jewish Agency headquarters in London that a bomb had been placed in the building. Police arrived promptly but a search yielded no bomb.

The Jewish Agency offices and the Zim Lines office are both located on Regent Street in a fashionable district of downtown London. The steamship company has its office on the second floor of an office building. The bomb went off in the reception area near the passenger ticket counter where the clerk was the only person present. Police said the bomb was a crude, home-made device about four inches long which anybody could have put together. Damage to the office was minor.

Fire Of Mysterious Origin Damages Famed Synagogue In Budapest

WASHINGTON, Aug. 25 (JTA) -- A fire that might have been caused by Arab terrorist arsonists damaged a famous synagogue in downtown Budapest, today, according to reports received here today. The largest synagogue in the Hungarian capital, known as the Dphany-Ucca Synagogue, was a famous landmark with its Moorish-style towers. The Budapest police reported that some "religious scrolls" (apparently Torah scrolls) were destroyed in the fire but gave no other indication of the extent of damage.

Two Israeli Soldiers Killed By Mine As Clashes Continue On All Fronts

TEL AVIV, Aug. 25 (JTA) -- An Israeli Army officer and a sergeant were killed yesterday when the vehicle struck a mine in the Kasser El Yahud area north of the Dead Sea. Two other soldiers were injured last night when they were ambushed on a road near the Lebanese border. Five Arab saboteurs were killed in a clash with an Israeli patrol which they tried to ambush on the central road in the Golan Heights. An Israeli military spokesman identified the fatalities as Lt. Odded Shachnai and Sgt. Yaacob Wagner, 21.

In other action today, Israeli jets raided two military positions inside Jordan. A spokesman said the targets were an Army post and a guerrilla camp in the Wadi Zarka area, 30 miles northeast of the Dead Sea. A Jordanian military spokesman claimed that Israeli planes raided civilian targets 19 miles north of Amman. An Israeli military spokesman said Egyptian and Israeli forces exchanged artillery and rocket fire across the Suez Canal for three-and-a-half hours last night and for more than six hours today.

Several bazooka shells were fired at Nahal Golan in the Golan Heights and Kfar Yuval in Upper Galilee last night. Shells exploded near Metullah this morning. An Israeli unit on Mt. Hermon was fired on by mortars from Lebanese territory early today. Small arms fire was aimed at two Army vehicles near Kabatiyeh village northeast of Nablus last night. No casualties were reported in any of the incidents.

State Dept. Says Soviet Shows 'Good Faith' In Continuing Mideast Bilateral Talks

WASHINGTON, Aug. 25 (JTA) -- The State Department disclosed today that bilateral contacts with the Soviet Union on the Middle East are continuing and that there had been demonstrations of "good faith" and "constructive work" on the Russian side. Spokesman Robert McCloskey made this known but warned that there was "still a distance to go."

He was asked if the developing crisis required an urgent, fullscale resumption of contacts. He replied that such bilateral contacts were important and that he was certain they would ensue. But he was not in a position to say when this might occur.

While conceding that little had occurred since Joseph Sisco, Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs, left Moscow, Mr. McCloskey made a disclosure. He revealed that U.S. Ambassador Jacob Bevel had continued contacts in Moscow since Mr. Sisco gave counter-proposals to the Kremlin on the Russian formula for a Mideast settlement. He indicated that the Russians had made some reply to the U.S. counter-proposals through the American Ambassador. It was expected that the bilateral talks would be resumed in Washington, however, according to the spokesman's comments.

Mr. McCloskey suggested that Moscow and Washington were doing whatever could be done to ease tensions resulting from the El Aksa Mosque fire, but the United States would oppose "anything extraordinary." It was not clear from his remarks whether the United States and Soviet Union were cooperating to ease the tensions of the last few days. He was questioned about this.

Mr. McCloskey indicated that the Soviet Union might not have done everything it could have and that some gaps remained. It remained unclear whether this related to Moscow's response to the mosque fire alone or to her general policies in the Middle East. The spokesman said he knew of no development related to a reported French proposal for renewal of the Big Four Mideast talks at the United Nations.

U.S. Is Watching Soviet Naval Maneuvers Off Egyptian, Syrian Coasts

WASHINGTON, Aug. 25 (JTA) -- State Department spokesman Robert McCloskey said today that Soviet naval maneuvers in Egyptian and Syrian waters, reported by NATO headquarters in Naples bore watching and did not go unnoticed. The State Department spokesman said he did not want to raise an alarm but he did want to give the assurance that the general matter of increased Russian naval activity in the Mediterranean was being observed.