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Box 66, Folder 11, Lebanese Jews, 1985-1987.

12/23/85

GEORGE E. GRUEN

Mr. Max Pankenbaum  
David Harris

FOR YOUR INFORMATION



The American Jewish  
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December 20, 1985

Mr. Karl D. Zukerman  
Executive Vice-President  
United HIAS, Inc.  
200 Park Avenue South  
New York, New York 10003

Dear Karl:

Following our telephone conversation, I am herewith sending you the latest information we have on the Lebanese Jewish community.

The major new development since the issuing of my "Update on Seven Kidnapped Lebanese Jewish Leaders" on October 2, 1985, is the claim by the "Organization of the Oppressed on Earth" that they are holding four of the kidnapped Jews. They have offered to trade them for 300 Shiites, allegedly held in an Israeli detention camp in Khaim in South Lebanon. Israeli sources denied to me that they have a camp there, but that the South Lebanese army does.

This is the first time that Lebanese Jews have been linked to political demands by a pro-Iranian Lebanese Shiite group. In the last few days, the Organization of the Oppressed has threatened to kill its Jewish hostages unless its demands are met very quickly.

We do not know whether the other three hostages are being held by the same group or by another faction.

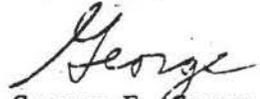
The basic point to stress to the State Department is that, although life is precarious for everyone in war-torn Lebanon, the Jewish community, which has scrupulously stayed out of the inter-communal fighting, has, nevertheless, been specially targeted by Shiite militant groups and other fanatical elements, which operate freely in that lawless country. As was made clear in the TWA plane hijacking, Islamic militants single out Jews as their targets, irrespective of the nationality that the Jew may possess. The distinction between Jews, Zionists and Israelis does not seem to exist in the fanatical minds of Muslim and Arab militants, whether they be those who took over the TWA plane or the Achille Lauro. To send

... more

December 20, 1985

Jews back to Lebanon under present circumstances clearly means exposing them to grave personal danger simply because they're Jewish.

Sincerely,



George E. Gruen, Ph.D.  
Director  
Middle East Affairs

GEG:mr

- Encs. - AJC backgrounder and clippings



Memorial Service for Murdered Lebanese Jews and Plea for Redemption of all

Held Captive in Lebanon

January 8, 1986

Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun

SCHEDULED LIST OF SPEAKERS

Rabbi Haskel Lookstein, President, New York Board of Rabbis

Congressman Bill Green

Rev. Joseph O'Hare, President, Fordham University

Comptroller Harrison J. Goldin

Mrs. Myra Mizrahi, relative of one of the hostages

Howard I. Friedman, President, American Jewish Committee

Rabbi Israel Mowshowitz, representative for Gov. Cuomo

David Dinkins, Borough President of Manhattan

Peggy Tishman, President, Jewish Community Relations Council of New York

Cantor Avrom Davis

Messages to be read from: Donald Shriver, President, Union Theological Seminary  
Andrew Stein, City Council President

Among Distinguished Members of the Audience:

David E. Cohen, Pres., Shaare Zion Congregation - B'klyn - (Syrian Jewish Community)

Ralph Hanan, Exec. Secty, Har Halevanon Cong. - Bklyn - (Lebanese Jewish Community)

Rabbi and Hazzan Rahmol Mizrahi, formerly of Beirut

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Original documents  
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# NEWS COMMITTEE

FROM THE



**THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE** Institute of Human Relations, 165 E. 56 St., New York, N.Y. 10022, (212) 751-4000

The American Jewish Committee, founded in 1906, is the pioneer human-relations agency in the United States. It protects the civil and religious rights of Jews here and abroad, and advances the cause of improved human relations for all people.

*MORTON YARMON, Director of Public Relations*

**FOR RELEASE AFTER 12 NOON  
WEDNESDAY, January 8, 1985**

NEW YORK, Jan. 8 . . . Howard I. Friedman, President of the American Jewish Committee, stated today that "It is now time for civilized people and nations to treat terrorists and the nations which provide them with succor as outlaws and beyond civilized norms."

Speaking at a service at the Kehilat Jeshurun Synagogue, protesting the killings of two Lebanese Jews by Shiite terrorists and the continued holding of other Jewish hostages in Lebanon, Mr. Friedman said: "We would be remiss in our memorial to them if we did not express our profound conviction that the time has come to require more than rhetorical flourishes when terrorism is addressed."

He added: "Nations harboring outlaws must be held accountable for what they permit to take place from their own territories. Nothing less will reach the root of that which permits the ongoing growth of terrorism in our time."

Describing the two victims, Haim Cohen and Professor Isaac Tarrab, as persons revered by Lebanese of diverse origins, Mr. Friedman said that they were the victims of the greatest scourge of the time -- "the extensive phenomenon of terrorism and the vicious and unpredictable swath it cuts across the mass of innocent people."

"Jews know only too well the sublime importance of societies and people adhering to norms of civilized behavior," Mr. Friedman added, continuing: "We have learned over a long history that when moral norms unravel, civilization itself is jeopardized. We are attuned particularly to the inseparable connection between ends and means, and the inevitable corruption that occurs when brutal and barbarous means are employed."

The American Jewish Committee is this country's pioneer human relations organization. Founded in 1906, it combats bigotry, protects the civil and religious rights of Jews here and abroad, and advances the cause of improved human relations for all people everywhere.

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Howard I. Friedman, President; Theodore Ellenoff, Chair, Board of Governors; Alfred H. Moses, Chair, National Executive Council; Robert S. Jacobs, Chair, Board of Trustees;

David M. Gordis, Executive Vice-President

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CSAE 1707

TEXT OF REMARKS BY HOWARD I. FRIEDMAN, PRESIDENT,  
AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE, MEMORIAL SERVICE, KEHILATH JESHURUN SYNAGOGUE,  
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 8, 1986

With sadness and grief we gather to remember and memorialize Haim Cohen and Professor Isaac Tarrab, each of whom was brutally and mindlessly murdered by fanatic terrorists in Lebanon within the last two weeks. Neither was a political person; each was revered by Lebanese of diverse origins; each was beloved by their families; each in his own way, like Leon Klinghoffer, was an "everyman" -- an ordinary citizen with whom ordinary people can identify. Yet each is a victim of the greatest scourge of our time -- the extensive phenomenon of terrorism and the vicious and unpredictable swath it cuts across the mass of innocent people.

As fellow Jews, we grieve with the families of Haim and Isaac in the fashion hallowed by our tradition. We feel diminished ourselves by the premature ending of their useful lives and, more, we feel horrified at the circumstances of their deaths.

As Jews, we know only too well the sublime importance of societies and people adhering to norms of civilized behavior. We have learned over a long history that when moral norms unravel, civilization itself is jeopardized. We are attuned particularly to the inseparable connection between ends and means and the inevitable corruption that occurs to ends when brutal and barbarous means are employed.

If one phenomenon characterizes our age, it may well be the prevalence of terrorism wielded by ideological zealots. These are people who reject the application of civilized standards for themselves and believe, in David Hartman's words, "that the anger and frustration of the deprived give them the right to destroy all moral boundaries."

That is a cultural mindset which flourishes in an atmosphere in which statesmen make excuses for terror and violence; it is nourished when states give material support and sanctuary to terrorists; it is bolstered by states which permit their own territories to serve as training and launching sites for terrorism; and yes, it is also fueled by the conduct of states, not themselves the sources of support to terrorism, which nonetheless maintain trade, political and cultural relations with those states which are.

.....more

The Jewish pantheon is replete with famous names -- Akiba, Maimonides, Mendelsohn, Buber and too many others to mention. But it also includes the names of ordinary persons whose names were not familiar to their times. These ordinary people include most of the 6,000,000 and surely include the names of Haim and Isaac -- ordinary, decent people whose deaths were part of the terrorist assault on civilization.

We would be remiss in our memorial to them if we did not express our profound conclusion that the time has come to require more than rhetorical flourishes when terrorism is addressed. It is now time for civilized people and nations to treat terrorists and the nations which provide them with succor as outlaws and as beyond civilized norms. Such nations must be held accountable for what they permit to take place from their own territories. Nothing less will reach the root of that which permits the ongoing growth of terrorism in our time.

Howard Friedman  
1/7/86

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January 7, 1986

Dictated on telephone to Rabbi A. James Rudin, American Jewish Committee  
Statement by Dr. Donald Shriver, Union Theological Seminary

The human specie is approaching an ultimate confrontation with its tendency to solve its internal conflicts by resort to violence. We cannot long continue our life on this planet under the tyranny of this tendency. Either we will learn to live with our enemies or we will surely die with them. Whether we dismantle the world human community piece by piece through escalating terrorism or by one great nuclear war, we must now as never before in our history reckon with the Cain-like killer in only too many of us. Not only does modern war along with its mean cousin, terrorism, erase old distinctions between innocent and fair targets of violence, they open the human imagination to the thought of violence as a way of life. In fact, it is the way of death.

In that ancient story, God put a "mark" upon Cain's forehead to protect him from revenge-in-kind at the hands of his neighbors. The mark of Cain is the mark of God's mercy upon murderers. If humans are to live together in the wake of our murderous history, we must be willing at some moment in this history to cut the nerve of revenge. The only human response to terrorism is our refusal to indulge in terrorism and our like refusal to offer it <sup>any</sup> excuses. Either to indulge in it or to excuse it will be to sacrifice the future of humanity.

DR. DONALD SHRIVER

## THE MURDER OF LEBANESE JEWISH HOSTAGES

(An International Relations Department Analysis)

By George E. Gruen, Ph.D.  
Director, Middle East Affairs

The murder of two defenseless Lebanese Jewish hostages at the end of December 1985 by a militant Muslim group has aroused deep fear within the tiny remnant of the ancient Lebanese Jewish community, which today numbers fewer than one hundred.

The murder victims are Haim Cohen, 38, a department store accountant who was killed on December 24. He leaves a wife, Sheila, and three young children -- Robert, 16; Edward 13; and Alain, 6. He was one of four Jews kidnapped at the end of March 1985 from West Beirut.

The second murder victim, Professor Isaac Tarrab, was killed at the end of December. A single man in his 70's, Tarrab was a retired professor of mathematics who was a much admired teacher and distinguished member of his profession, honored in France as well as Lebanon for his innovative mathematical formulas. He continued to be active and was giving a series of lectures in the Spring of 1985 at the time he was kidnapped.

Neither Mr. Cohen nor Professor Tarrab was involved in partisan Lebanese politics or in the Arab-Israel conflict in any way. Indeed, it was because they felt themselves deeply rooted in Lebanon that they and the other Jews who are now hostages remained behind when most of the Lebanese Jewish community emigrated either to Israel or to join relatives in Western countries during the years of turmoil that engulfed their country.

Mrs. Myra Mizrahi, a niece of Isaac Sasson, one of the other hostages, and a neighbor for many years of Professor Tarrab, stressed to me that they were not Zionists. While her uncle has been active in the local Jewish community, Professor Tarrab had virtually no connection with Jewish life. "He was not interested in anything but his figures and his pipe," she recalled. Professor Tarrab was a Jew only in that "he had the luck to be born one." She characterized his killing as a "senseless death."

Presumably because the Shi'ite fundamentalist group who killed them know that it is explicitly against Islamic law to persecute innocent Jews, since they belong to a recognized monotheistic religion, the kidnapers denied that they were seized simply because they were Jewish. The previously little known group, which calls itself "the Organization of the Oppressed (Mustad'afin) in the World," in its statements in mid-December declared it had arrested "a group of spies who work for the



Lebanese branch of Israeli intelligence." It added the further ridiculous claim that "they were trying to establish an association under the name of "The Committee to Support the Establishment of Israel in Lebanon." It nevertheless offered to trade the four Jewish hostages it claimed to hold for Shi'ite mujahidin (holy warriors) allegedly being held by the Israeli-backed South Lebanese Army in a camp in Khiyam.

The Organization of the Oppressed threatened to kill them if their comrades were not released "promptly." (An-Nahar, Beirut, December 17, 1985.) In a statement on December 28, the fundamentalist group also threatened to strike at other Jews "on whom we may lay our hands" unless Israel stopped shelling Shi'ite Muslim villages in South Lebanon. (Unconfirmed rumors that three additional Jews had in fact been kidnapped at the beginning of January have been circulating among Lebanese Jews in the United States. The first name of one is believed to be Ephraim and of another Joseph. Nothing further is known as yet.)

The two other Jewish hostages which the Organization of the Oppressed says it is holding are Elie (Yussef) Srour and Isaac Sasson. Mr. Srour, 68, had been in charge of preparing the dead for burial according to Jewish religious rites. He was kidnapped on March 30, 1985.

Mr. Sasson, in his mid-60's, is the president of the Lebanese Jewish community. He was kidnapped by an armed gang on Sunday, March 31, while travelling to the city from Beirut International Airport. Mr. Sasson was returning to Beirut from a business trip to the United Arab Emirates on behalf of Khalil Fattal & Fils, a major Lebanese trading company, whose pharmaceutical department he heads. When news spread of the kidnapping of three other Lebanese Jews earlier in the weekend, his friends sought to warn him not to go to West Beirut, and the company sent a car with police guards to meet him and take him to presumably safer Christian East Beirut. Eyewitnesses say that when armed men stopped the car and demanded Mr. Sasson, the guards in the car offered no resistance. Mr. Sasson is believed to suffer from diabetes.

The other Lebanese Jewish leader kidnapped at the end of March is Dr. Elie Hallak, 60, vice president of the Central Committee of the Lebanese Jewish community. Dr. Hallak is a respected pediatrician whose patients have come from the various ethnic and religious communities. Indeed, some years back he treated the son of one of the Palestinian Liberation Organization's leaders in the city. Although there were reliable reports that he was earlier being held together with Mr. Sasson and some of the other hostages, the Organization of the Oppressed has not claimed to be holding him. He has been reported to be working as a doctor among his captors, who are believed to be connected with the Shi'ite fundamentalist group Hezbollah (the Party of God), whose headquarters are in Baalbek in the Beqaa Valley.

Also still missing is Salim Jammous, secretary general of the Jewish community, who was kidnapped on August 15, 1984, reportedly by three armed men who abducted him from his car near the communal office located in the compound of the main synagogue in the Wadi Abu Jamil quarter of West Beirut.

Nothing is known of the whereabouts of Yehuda Benisti, 68, a former manager of Bank Safra in Beirut. His son, Joseph, 32, is rumored to be among those kidnapped in recent days.

The number of Jews remaining today in Muslim West Beirut is estimated at between 20 and 30, while those in Christian East Beirut is about 47. This is only a tiny remnant of a community, which still numbered 6,000 in 1967. This gradually dwindled to 200 in 1981 and the few dozen at present.

The Hezbollah and the Islamic Jihad (holy war) are other Shi'ite radical groups aligned with Iran, who have been implicated in attacks on American and other Western installations in Lebanon. It is not known what precise links there are between these groups and the recently surfaced Organization of the Oppressed. Until the latter made its declarations, no group claimed responsibility for the Jews kidnapped during the past year, nor were any political demands made for their release.

A clear linkage among these groups emerges from the words of Ayatollah Khomeini. During a meeting with the Syrian Foreign Minister on August 16, 1979, Khomeini declared:

I hope that a party under the name of the "Party of the Oppressed" will be formed throughout the world...in order to actualize the promise of Islam which means the reign of the oppressed over the oppressors and their inheritance of the earth...Now that a demonstration of unity among the oppressed has actualized in the Muslim lands, this must be applied more extensively among all strata of mankind in history under the name of the "Party of the Oppressed" which is the same as the "Party of God" (Hezbollah). (The Imam Versus Zionism, official publication of the Iranian Ministry of Islamic Guidance, 1983, p. 40.)

At the same meeting, Khomeini charged that the Arab and Islamic countries had been disunited and "made the mistake of not stifling the voice of Israel right from the beginning." Khomeini went on to charge that Israel had "set Southern Lebanon on fire and wants to push Palestine aside." He concluded:

We have repeatedly stated that Israel -- this germ of corruption -- will not content itself with Quds (Jerusalem); and if it is given the opportunity it will endanger all of the Islamic governments.

The past mistake must be rectified through the Muslims' unity and through the "Party of the Oppressed" against the oppressors, at the head of which are the criminal America and its most corrupt servant, Israel. (Ibid., p. 41.)

Indeed, precisely because the Lebanese Jews have no connection with Israel and play no role in local or regional politics, the kidnappings have outraged Muslim as well as Christian leaders in the country. In fact, Nabih Berri, the leader of the Amal, the mainstream Shi'ite militia, explicitly condemned the kidnapping of four Jewish leaders at the end of March. Mr. Berri, who has served in the Lebanese Cabinet as Minister of Justice and Minister for South Lebanon Affairs, declared on April 4 that the kidnappings "falsify the image of Beirut, which is built on co-existence." He concluded that "whoever kidnaps a Jew just because he is Jewish only helps Zionism and has nothing to do with patriotism or the struggle...."

However, as became evident during the TWA hostage crisis, the more pragmatic and Western-educated Mr. Berri has himself been facing a challenge to his leadership within the Shi'ite community posed by fanatical, pro-Iranian fundamentalist groups such as the Hezbollah. Some of the latter apparently have been so blinded by hatred that they make no distinction between Israelis and Jews in general, despite Ayatollah Khomeini's clear injunction that under an Islamic Republic Jews and Judaism are to be respected, so long as they do not actively aid "the Zionist enemy."

How absurd the charge of aiding Israel is when applied to the Lebanese Jewish hostages was most poignantly pointed out by Dr. Rosemary Cohen, the sister-in-law of Haim Cohen. Speaking at a memorial service for him in Los Angeles, Dr. Cohen noted that "my brother-in-law was given the opportunity to go to Israel. But he did not want to go so as not to have to face the possibility of killing his Arab friends. He chose to stay in Lebanon. He was such a kind and gentle person. How could his killers look into his loving eyes and pull a trigger?"

The American Jewish Committee, which has been in contact with the American, Lebanese, French, and Syrian authorities, and with various other governments and human rights groups since the beginning of the kidnappings, urgently appeals to all persons of good will to intensify their humanitarian efforts to obtain the safe and unconditional release of the Jewish and other hostages still being held in Lebanon.

January 7, 1986  
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# NEWS

FROM THE

# COMMITTEE



**THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE** Institute of Human Relations, 165 E. 56 St., New York, N.Y. 10022, (212) 751-4000

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*MORTON YARMON, Director of Public Relations*

**FOR RELEASE AFTER 12 NOON,  
WEDNESDAY, JAN. 8, 1986**

NEW YORK, Jan. 8 ... New York Christian and Jewish leaders in religion, politics, and government joined today in condemning the murder of two Lebanese Jews by an Islamic fundamentalist group, and in demanding that all remaining hostages be released.

The declarations of concern were made at a special memorial service held at Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun, on East 85th Street between Park and Lexington Avenues. The service was co-sponsored by a broad representation from the Jewish community, including the New York Board of Rabbis, the American Jewish Committee, and the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York.

Among the civic and religious leaders who joined in deploring the killing of the hostages and in urging the release of the remaining captives were:

Rabbi Haskell Lookstein, President of the New York Board of Rabbis; Congressman Bill Green; Rev. Joseph O'Hare, President of Fordham University; Comptroller Harrison J. Goldin; Howard I. Friedman, President of the American Jewish Committee; Rabbi Israel Mowshowitz, representing Governor Mario Cuomo; David Dinkins, Borough President of Manhattan; Peggy Tishman, President of the Jewish Community Council of New York; Cantor Avrom Davis, and Mrs. Myra Mizrachi, a relative of one of the hostages.

Messages were read from Donald Shriver, President of Union Theological Seminary, and Andrew Stein, President of the New York City Council.

Among those attending the service were David E. Cohen, President of Congregation Shaare Zion, Brooklyn, from the Syrian Jewish community; Ralph Hanan, Executive Secretary of Cong. Har Halevanon, Brooklyn, from the Lebanese Jewish community, and Rabbi and Hazzan Rahmool Mizrach, formerly of Beirut.

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1/7/86

Howard I. Friedman, President; Theodore Ellenoff, Chair, Board of Governors; Alfred H. Moses, Chair, National Executive Council; Robert S. Jacobs, Chair, Board of Trustees;

David M. Gordis, Executive Vice-President

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CSAE 1707

Bill Green - murdered because they were Jews / not involved in factional struggle

→ Haskell Hochstetler -

- Rab. Joseph O'Hagan - sympathy, solidarity, outrage - to all victims of terrorism, death loses its meaning being obscured, forgotten
- Terrorist does not recognize face, name; not become faces in polit. violence
- dark, muddled current of violence permeates n.e. since of relig. trad.
- don't name of relig. traditions, corruption of tradition
- God & light, not off death
- violate of human face violates face of God
- no greater humanization than
- victims of demonic force
- 365th day Janco - hostage - today
- in mourning & sympathy - meaning not destroyed, final indignity of facelessness

Harmon Golden - (Kenya - 5 & 6th grade)

- indignation at indifference - meet with Jews - d.w.o. caring
- esp. relig. obligation - caring, feeling human being
- humanity compromised if exiles to killing
- arouse community of civilized people, there must be outrage - to protect silence / react forcefully as civilized moral leaders
- write Via Senatus - drop of indignity, silence over Africa

Relative of Hostage - not speaks publicly - for intercom in 2003, with you in redemptor

- Mr. Tach -
- Howard Friedman -
- Seggy Fishman -

- Israel Moshkowitz - rep Gov. Cuomo pleached & outraged via brutal murder
- not Jew vs Arab, but oppose democracy
- Mein adject. to terrorism - become accustomed to brutal acts
- appeal UN, U.S. then foot - some hostages to redeem on our humanity

- David Dimkis - victims senseless terrorism
- Come new protection for all victims / future victims. hell captive
- redemption of captive
- MESSAOS - MASHI. HAN / DON STRONG





הקונסוליה הכללית של ישראל,  
ניו יורק

CONSULATE GENERAL  
OF ISRAEL IN NEW YORK



*With the compliments of*  
**GERSHON GAN**  
Consul for Information

**FOURTH LEBANESE JEW REPORTED KILLED**

By Edwin Eytan

PARIS, Feb. 19 (JTA) — A fourth Lebanese Jewish hostage was reportedly murdered in Beirut this week. An extremist Shiite Lebanese group, "The Organization of the Oppressed in the World," announced the "execution" of Dr. Elie Hallak, 60, a physician and the vice president of the Lebanese Jewish community. Last Sunday, the body of another hostage, Ibrahim Benisti (also spelled Benesti), 50, was found in west Beirut. He had been badly beaten and shot in the back of the head.

Hallak, a popular general practitioner and lecturer at Beirut Medical School, was kidnapped outside his home in west Beirut March 30, 1985. Three other Jews were kidnapped at the same time.

Lebanese police say his body has not yet been found but a Beirut daily, An-Nahar, published Wednesday a Polaroid photograph of Hallak's body. The photo was of the same type as the one showing the body of Benisti and two members of his family who had also been kidnapped.

**Claims By The Killers**

The killers also published a communique saying that Hallak's killing was in retaliation for "Israeli terrorist activities in villages of oppressed people in south Lebanon." The Shiite organization, believed to be close to the pro-Iranian Hezbollah movement, also accused Hallak of having been "a prominent member of the Israeli Mossad (secret service)."

In similar fashion, a statement found pinned to Benisti's body said he had been killed "for having been an Israeli spy" and as an example "to all other Israeli agents." It called the victim "a pillar of Israeli espionage in Lebanon."

Two months ago The Organization of the Oppressed murdered two other Jewish hostages, Prof. Isaac Tarrab and Haim Cohen Halalah. Three more Jewish hostages are believed to be in the hands of the gang, which has murdered four of its Jewish captives since December.

The Organization of the Oppressed is a relative newcomer to the terrorist scene which first became known last June when it hijacked a TWA airliner to Beirut demanding the release of 300 Shiite prisoners believed to be held by Israel.

Jewish organizations in France contacted throughout the day Lebanese officials in Beirut to try and obtain the release of the four Jewish hostages still held by the gang.

**BACKGROUND REPORT  
LEBANESE JEWS FACE TERRORISM**

By George Gruen

(Editor's note: The spellings of the names of Lebanese Jews who have been in the news lately, and even their ages, keep changing depending on the sources of the reports, making it difficult to standardize this information. The article by Dr. George Gruen, director of Middle East Affairs of the American Jewish Committee, provides the most authoritative spellings and ages to date.)

NEW YORK, Feb. 19 (JTA) — The murder of two Lebanese Jews within the past week by a radical Shiite Moslem group indicates an intensification of the terrorist campaign against Lebanon's tiny and defenseless Jewish community.

The latest victim is Dr. Elie Hallak, 60, a prominent pediatrician and vice president of the High Council of the Lebanese Jewish community. In a statement published Wednesday in the Lebanese daily An-Nahar and in the French press, the group, which calls itself "The Organization of the Oppressed in the World," said it would not release Hallak's body until the Israelis had left Lebanon.

A Polaroid photograph accompanying the statement confirmed that Hallak was in their hands, but it could not be determined from it whether he was dead or alive.

The caption provided by the group depicted him as "a leader of the Mossad," the Israeli intelligence service.

**An Ominous Statement**

This is ominous since the charge of spying for Israel was used by the group to justify its killing of three other innocent Lebanese Jews within the past three months.

The Organization of the Oppressed had not earlier admitted to holding Hallak, although he was kidnapped at the end of March 1985 together with three other Lebanese Jews, presumably because it knew how patently false the charge of spying was.

Hallak was a much-loved and highly respected doctor whose patients came from all ethnic and religious segments of Beirut's society. Indeed, some years back he treated the son of one of the leaders of the PLO.

When news of his abduction was revealed, the kidnapping was condemned by Christian and Moslem officials including Lebanese Justice Minister Nabih Berri, the leader of the mainline Shiite group, Amal.

Following Hallak's kidnapping, his wife, Rachel Hallak, who was in Paris at the time, went to Beirut and remained there for several months, trying, in vain, to obtain his release. She is back in Paris now with the couple's three sons — Andre, Alain, and Marc, who range in age from 17 to 21 — who were sent there to study several years ago because of the turmoil in Lebanon.

During Hallak's months of captivity, he was reported to have served as a physician. The Organization of the Oppressed is apparently connected to the pro-Iranian Hezbollah (the Party of God), as one of the Americans held captive by the fundamentalist Hezbollah at the time of the TWA hijacking reportedly saw Hallak treating patients.

**Other Killings By The Gang**

The Organization of the Oppressed kidnapped and murdered Haim Cohen and Prof. Isaac Tarrab, in late December. At that time, it threatened to kidnap and kill additional Jews unless its demands — that "Shiite mujahidin (holy warriors) captured by the Israel-backed South Lebanon Army were promptly released from a detention camp in Khiyam — were met.

Ibrahim (Abraham) Benisti, a Lebanese Jew in his forties, and his 68-year-old father, Yehuda, were kidnapped in the past few weeks. Yehuda's other son, Youssuf, 33, had been seized in May 1985.

The Organization of the Oppressed brutally murdered Ibrahim Benisti on February 15. According to the Beirut police, his body was found the morning of February 16, wrapped in blankets in a street in west Beirut near the line dividing the predominantly Moslem section from Christian east Beirut. The coroner's office reported that Benisti's body bore signs of torture and beatings to the head. He was shot twice and then strangled.

Near the body was a copy of the statement issued by The Organization of the Oppressed to the press, declaring that Benisti had been "a prominent agent" of the Mossad. The charges were categorically denied as "nonsense" by the Israeli Foreign Ministry.

#### Victims Not Involved In Politics

Indeed, none of the kidnap victims had been involved either in internal Lebanese politics or the Arab-Israel conflict. Outraged students and friends of Tarrab attested that the distinguished retired professor of mathematics had only nominally been Jewish and had had no connection to Israel.

Cohen was a department store accountant known as a kind and gentle person, who chose not to go to Israel, his sister-in-law Rosemary Cohen declared in Los Angeles, because "he did not wish to face the possibility of killing his Arab friends in battle."

It was precisely because they felt fully integrated in Lebanese society and had both Moslem and Christian friends that the kidnap victims chose to remain in Lebanon even after the overwhelming majority of Lebanon's 6,000 Jews left in the years after the 1967 Six-Day War and the decade of internal strife following the eruption of the civil war in 1975. Today fewer than 75 Lebanese Jews remain, most in east Beirut.

#### Tragic Fate Of The Benisti Family

The tragic fate of the Benisti family is typical of the misplaced trust of those Lebanese Jews who remained. The family lived in the Wadi Abu Jamil section of Moslem west Beirut near the main synagogue. Yehuda Benisti operated a gift shop and general store near the Beirut airport, which adjoins a Shiite and Palestinian neighborhood.

When his other son, Youssuf, was abducted last May 18, the father at first did not notify the police or the Jewish community, because he believed that his friends and customers from within the Shiite community would discreetly intervene on behalf of his son and arrange for his release. It was only toward the end of last year, when all quiet interventions had failed, that Yehuda Benisti approached the Jewish community in east Beirut for help.

According to the February 15 statement by The Organization of the Oppressed, they had seized Ibrahim Benisti -- as well as Yehuda and Youssuf -- because "all three were part of an Israeli spy network."

In its statement, published in An-Nahar the next day, The Organization of the Oppressed declared that Ibrahim had been slain in revenge for Israel's presence in south Lebanon, the alleged "violation of the Al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem ... by the filthy boots of Jewish Israeli occupation," and the shelling of Shiite Moslem villages in south Lebanon.

The fanatical Shiite group also threatened that "all those interested in having any kind of relations with Israel" would face "adequate measures from us." It added that "the punishment of the spy Ibrahim Benisti should serve as a warning."

The latest kidnappings bring to 10 the number of Jews known to have been abducted in the past two years. There are hopes that five are still alive. The Organization of the Oppressed had earlier claimed to be holding Elie (Youssef) Srour, 68, who was in charge of preparing the dead for burial according to Jewish rites, and Isaac Sasson, in his mid-60's, a pharmaceutical executive who is the president of the Lebanese Jewish community. Both were kidnapped at the end of March 1985.

On July 1, 1984, Raoul Sobhi Mizrahi, 54, an electrical engineer who ran an electrical supply company, was kidnapped by three armed gunmen from his apartment in west Beirut. There were no ransom demands. He was beaten to death and his body was discovered on July 3. A group calling itself the "National Resistance Army -- The Nation's Liberation Faction" said it had killed Mizrahi "because he was an Israeli agent." This was firmly denied by his family.

Still missing is Salim Jammous, secretary general of the Lebanese Jewish community. He was kidnapped on August 15, 1984, reportedly by three armed men who abducted him from his car near the communal office located in the compound of the main synagogue in west Beirut.

#### FOUR TERRORISTS KILLED BY IDF SOLDIERS WHO CONTINUED THEIR SEARCH FOR TWO MISSING IDF MEN IN LEBANON By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Feb. 19 (JTA) -- Four terrorists believed to be members of the Hezbollah extremist group were killed Wednesday in a clash with Israel Defense Force soldiers who continued their massive search of south Lebanon for two Israeli soldiers kidnapped by Shiite extremists Monday.

The clash occurred near the village of Haris in south Lebanon, according to a communique issued here by the IDF. No Israelis were injured. But according to Lebanese sources, the clash resulted in the death of 10 Lebanese -- four Hezbollah members, four members of Amal, and two civilians.

The Army, meanwhile, declined to comment on a threat by the kidnapers to kill one of the two soldiers unless all Israeli forces are withdrawn from south Lebanon by 9 p.m. Wednesday, local time.

But some army and Defense Ministry sources expressed fear that the soldiers are no longer in south Lebanon and that their captors have taken them to Beirut or possibly to the Bekaa Valley. Nevertheless, Uri Lubrani, the Israeli Coordinator for south Lebanon, said the search would continue until the missing men were found.

#### Missing IDF Soldiers Identified

They were identified by the IDF Wednesday as Yossi Fink of Raanana and Rahamim Alsheich of Rosh Haayin, both 20 and both students at the Karnei Shomron Yeshiva in the West Bank, which combines religious studies with military service under a program called Yeshiva Hesder. Fink, born in Manchester, England, was brought to Israel by his parents at the age of five. They were kidnapped by an organization calling itself the Islamic Resistance Front.

Israeli commentators said that the IDF's efforts to find the two soldiers has become as much a retaliatory

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HIGHLIGHTS OF DEFENCE MINISTER YITZHAK RABIN'S KNESSET  
STATEMENT ON ISRAEL'S POLICY IN LEBANON

13 MARCH 1985

- IN THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY GUIDELINES (ON LEBANON ),  
ONE OBJECTIVE ONLY WAS SET: ENSURING THE SECURITY OF OUR  
NORTHERN BORDER WITHOUT THE IDF'S HAVING TO STAY IN  
LEBANON .

-ON 14 JANUARY 1985, THE GOVERNMENT DECIDED ON THE IDF'S  
REDEPLOYMENT ALONG OUR NORTHERN BORDER- SO AS TO DEFEND  
IT AND THE NORTHERN PART OF THE COUNTRY-A REDEPLOYMENT TO  
BE CARRIED OUT IN THREE STAGES.

-THE FIRST STAGE HAS BEEN COMPLETED . THE IDF IS  
CURRENTLY EXECUTING THE SECOND STAGE, AND WILL MAKE EVERY  
EFFORT TO EXECUTE THIS STAGE IN THE SHORTEST POSSIBLE  
TIME.

-TERRORISM IN LEBANON IS PART OF THE WAY OF LIFE IN THAT  
COUNTRY . THERE IS TERRORISM WITHIN EACH ETHNIC COMMUNITY  
AND AMONG THE COMMUNITIES.

-SHIITE TERRORISM IS AT TIMES ACCOMPANIED BY  
MANIFESTATIONS OF A MADNESS WHOSE EXTENT IT IS DIFFICULT  
TO GRASP.

-ON 6 FEBRUARY 1985, THE SHIITE LEADER NABIH BERRI STATED  
THAT HE HAD HAD ADVANCE KNOWLEDGE OF THE KAMIKAZE ATTACK  
AGAINST OUR TROOPS AT BURJ ASH-SHIMALI ( OF THE PREVIOUS  
DAY) AND ADDED THAT THIS WAS PART OF A SERIES OF THE 50  
KAMIKAZE ATTACKS WHICH HE HAD ANNOUNCED LAST SEPTEMBER.

-THE EXTREMIST KHOMEINIST SHIITE TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS  
OPERATE AGAINST ISRAEL FOR THEIR OWN REASONS . WE  
THEREFORE HAVE NO CHOICE: WE MUST COME TO GRASP WITH THIS  
TERRORISM.

-THERE ARE ONLY TWO POSSIBILITIES : PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE  
ON BOTH SIDES OF THE INTERNATIONAL BORDER ( WHICH IS WHAT  
WE DESIRE)- OR TERRORISM . SHOULD THE SHIITE TERRORISM  
CONTINUE , WE WILL HAVE TO REACT WITH GREAT FORCE, USING  
ALL THE MEANS AT OUR DISPOSAL . WE WILL NOT PERMIT A  
SITUATION OF ONE-SIDED ATTACKS AGAINST US.

-THE IDF WILL DEFEND ITS TROOPS UNTIL THE LAST SOLDIER  
LEAVES LEBANESE SOIL. WE WILL DO THIS IN ANY WAY WE SEE  
FIT, CONSIDERING THE CONDITIONS. EVEN UNDER THESE  
DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES, WE WILL MAINTAIN THE IDF'S NORMS  
OF ETHICAL COMBAT.

-THE GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL IS DETERMINED TO SECURE OUR  
NORTHERN BORDER , TO DEFEND OUR SOLDIERS AND CIVILIANS  
AND , UNDER THESE CONDITIONS , TO BRING THE IDF BACK  
HOME.

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VXCRV/LFBHN;

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COLOMBIA Jan. 29, 1986 (120 words)

#### COLOMBIAN BISHOPS SEEK IMPROVED SOCIAL CONDITIONS BEFORE POPE'S VISIT

VATICAN CITY (NC) — Colombia's Catholic bishops have asked the nation's political leaders to improve social conditions prior to the July visit of Pope John Paul II, Vatican Radio reported Jan. 29.

The planned papal visit should spur politicians to decrease unemployment, improve the educational system and overcome injustices, said Archbishop Hector Rueda Hernandez of Bucaramanga, president of the Colombian bishops' conference.

He said the bishops planned to form a commission to discuss solutions to national problems with political leaders, company executives and labor leaders.

The bishops have announced that the pope plans to visit July 1-7. Vatican officials have confirmed that the pope plans to visit, but have not released dates. Normally, the Vatican releases the dates several weeks before the start of the trip.

END

LEBANON I Jan. 29, 1986 (1,110 words) First in a six-part series. With photo to come. Two takes.

#### CHRISTIANS IN LEBANON: QUESTIONS OF TERRITORY AND RELIGION

By Sister Mary Ann Walsh

BEIRUT, Lebanon (NC) — Lebanon is tiny, three-fourths the size of Connecticut. But in this small Middle Eastern nation of 2.6 million people, members of the world's two largest religions, Christianity and Islam, have been in bloody battle since 1975.

Lebanese debate whether this is a religious war, or a territorial war with religious labelling.

Some Christians see the conflict as part of a larger effort to push Christianity out of the Middle East. Others fear that a 42-year-old unwritten accord will be broken, tipping the balance of Lebanese political power to the Moslems.

More than 100,000 Lebanese have been killed and hundreds of thousands more pushed from their homes by the war. If loss is measured in acres, the Christians have lost.

Ten years ago, Christians lived throughout the nation. During the war they were driven from their homes in the Lebanon Mountains, in the southwest, and from homes in west Beirut. Most of them today live as displaced persons in east Beirut and around the towns of Zahle and Jezzine.

"Christians are being systematically eliminated," said Msgr. John Esseff, a priest from Scranton, Pa., who heads the Pontifical Mission for Palestine. The mission provides war relief and other social services in Lebanon.

"The Christian presence in Lebanon is a wart on the Moslem nose. The Moslems can't stand it," said Msgr. Esseff. "It's so small and insignificant that they would like to destroy it."

In the overwhelmingly Moslem Middle East, Catholicism is an inflammatory presence, Msgr. Esseff said.

"The open exercise of the Catholic faith, the sanctity of Sunday, the ringing of church bells, and the dotting of the hills with crosses is the red flag in front of the bull," he said.

Msgr. Esseff stressed the significance of driving Christians from their homes.

"The Islamicization of Lebanon is by the land," he said. "If they can't Islamicize the people, they will Islamicize the land."

But Lebanese President Amin Gemayel, a Maronite Christian, said the fighting is not based on religion. He said Lebanon, in the past, has been a land of religious "tolerance and coexistence."

However, the president also voiced concern for preserving "the Christian patrimony of Lebanon."

"We work as Christians to promote the Christian patrimony and as Lebanese to preserve the patrimony of coexistence for all," he said.

(MORE)

aerospace industry and Edwards Air Force Base, where the space shuttle has routinely landed.

"The men and women of our space industry here in Southern California are also deeply affected by this tragedy. They surely have a special place in my prayers now and in the days ahead," he said.

Cardinal John J. O'Connor of New York, recalling his days as a military chaplain, said the fact "that these men and women were engaged in a mission of peaceful exploration that would benefit all people on God's planet Earth" compounds the sorrow.

"In my years of military service (as Navy chief of chaplains and auxiliary bishop of the military ordinariate), I saw again and again the suffering and heroic strength of the families of men and women whose lives were lost in the service of our beloved country. I know the pain that the families of the crew of the Challenger must be experiencing now.

"I assure them of my prayers that the God of all consolation will comfort them in their sorrow and give them the peace that he alone can give," the cardinal said.

He called for special prayers in the archdiocese Feb. 2.

Faith is very important at such a time as this, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin of Chicago said, and "I just think that our faith in God makes it possible for us to accept the human tragedies that we face in life."

"We don't have answers for all of life's mysteries, but what's more important is our faith in God and it's that faith that makes it possible for us to cope with these tragedies when they occur," Cardinal Bernardin said.

Auxiliary Bishop Kenneth D. Steiner of Portland, Ore., called the explosion "a tragedy" to the educational community as well as to whole nation because the first teacher in space was aboard the flight.

Archbishop James A. Hickey of Washington said the Challenger crew "died in the service of humanity as explorers and pioneers seeking to harness the wonders of space for the benefit of those on Earth."

He added, "Let us unite in this time of tragedy in common prayer for those who have lost their lives and in compassion and care for those they left behind — families, co-workers, students, and a grateful and saddened nation."

END

NICOLA Jan. 29, 1986 (80 words)

#### CHURCH ACTION GOES BEYOND RELIGIOUS ISSUES, POPE SAYS

VATICAN CITY (NC) — The Catholic Church's international action goes beyond religious issues to include activities which promote human solidarity, Pope John Paul II said Jan. 27.

These activities include working for world peace, European unification and greater social justice in Third World countries, the pope said in receiving the credentials of Prince Nicola of Liechtenstein as his country's first ambassador to the Vatican.

The pope visited Liechtenstein, which is about the size of the District of Columbia, last September on a one-day trip.

END

ADVISORY Jan. 29, 1986

Editors: We will begin moving later today a six-part series on the Christians in Lebanon, written by Sister Mary Ann Walsh of our Rome bureau staff. Sister Walsh spent two weeks among the Lebanese Christian community last December and has written six main articles and four sidebars. The series will be illustrated with a map and logo in addition to photos from the area.

END

Charles Malik, a Greek Orthodox, said Lebanese Christians are victims of a region-wide "squeezing-out phenomenon." Malik was president of the U.N. General Assembly in 1958 and was Lebanon's ambassador to the United States from 1946 to 1956.

"This region is solidly Christian, more than anywhere else in the whole Middle East," Malik said. "We have a Christian culture, society and tradition. Seven miles from here is a church on the spot where St. Paul landed. We're mentioned in the New Testament two or three times. Now we're in danger of extinction. In 1920 in Turkey there were 2 million Christians. Today there are 15,000.

"It's been going on since the days of Christ. We're the only Christian country in the whole damn place."

Rev. Salin Sahiouny, a Presbyterian minister who heads the Middle East Council of Churches, called the civil war "a Christian crisis." He said that "Lebanon is the only place that can be used as the base for a Christian mission in the Middle East."

Several Lebanese, however, said that the war is political. But they also note that religious identification is woven into the nation's government.

The constitution, for example, states that the president of the country must be Maronite Catholic, but it also says he cannot act without the agreement of the prime minister, who must be a Sunnite Moslem. The president of the national assembly, where Christians hold a majority of the seats, is a Shiite Moslem.

The formula giving Christians a larger number of assembly seats than Moslems, despite Christians no longer being a majority in Lebanon, is an important factor in the national conflict.

Since independence in 1945 an unwritten agreement known as the National Pact has divided elective and civil service posts among the various religious groups. The division is based on each group's proportion of the population, as determined in a 1932 census. Moslems argue that census, weighing in the favor of Christians, is no longer valid.

"It's a political war," said Sunnite Sheik Jhassan Lakkis, who lives in Beirut's Christian sector.

"None of the Moslem groups has claimed that Lebanon is a Moslem country, nor have Christians claimed it is a Christian country," he said.

Another Shiite Moslem, who asked not to be identified for fear of reprisal from Moslem extremists, said that religious sects "take on the role of the political party" in Lebanon, he said, but the real problem is one of overpopulation.

"To fit everyone in," he said, "we need to drive someone out. There are no really religious issues in this country," he said.

The Lebanese army, which is considered inferior to the militias of the various Christian and Moslem groups, is divided among Christians and Moslems.

Antonine Sister Isabel Nassif said that the soldiers "are not able to rise above religion to fight as Lebanese army for Lebanon."

Armenian Patriarch Jean Pierre XVIII Kasparian of Cilicia of the Armenians, whose patriarchate is in Beirut, said he does not fear for Christianity in Lebanon.

"Christianity was here before the Moslems," he said. "Lebanon and Christianity are twinned, rooted together. This is not the first time we've had a war between Christians and Moslems."

The patriarch said the country's crisis "stems from the presence of Palestinians in Lebanon."

He predicted that the nation would develop a new constitution, which he said, must be "based not only on numbers but on the overall rights given to the various communities" and upholding "the principle of equality between Moslems and Christians."

Syrian Catholic Patriarch Ignace Antoine II Hyack said "the future is clear. If the population continues as it has grown, in 15 years from now there will be four Moslems for every Christian in Lebanon. We will live with that."

Whether or not the war is religious, the symbols of the fighting are.

(MORE)

In Moslem-controlled west Beirut, for example, Christian church bells may not be rung. And Walid Joublatt, leader of the militia of the Druze, a Moslem sect, keeps church bells as war trophies.

The Catholic Center for Information, an agency of the Lebanese bishops' conference, has noted that throughout the civil war more than 120 churches, monasteries and convents have been destroyed.

Whatever the future holds for Lebanon, said Patriarch Hyack, "what is most important is that Christians maintain their freedom to live as Christians."

Next: Homelessness is major problem.

END

GHANA INSERT Jan. 29, 1986 (110 words)

In GHANA of Jan. 28, 1986, INSERT after the sixth paragraph beginning, According to some...:

Father Thomas Hayden, a member of the Society of African Missions in Washington, said the Catholic Standard was "one of the leading newspapers in Ghana" and quite outspoken about human rights issues such as false imprisonment and free elections.

Father Hayden, whose order has had missionaries in Africa for about 100 years, said the paper was considered by Ghanaians as being a truthful" source of news.

In the past, he said, when other newspapers had been shut down under government pressure, Ghanaians had formed lines to wait for copies of the Catholic Standard.

PICK UP with original seventh paragraph, beginning, The Ghanaian government....

END

SHUTTLE—MCAULIFFE Jan. 29, 1986 (480 words)

TEACHER ON SHUTTLE SAW HERSELF AS A PIONEER

By Joe Michael Feist

NC News Service

When the space shuttle Challenger exploded 72 seconds into its flight Jan. 28, the nation lost six astronauts and one private citizen.

Her name was Sharon Christa McAuliffe. She was a teacher.

Last July, Mrs. McAuliffe — an active member of St. Peter's Parish in Concord, N.H., where she taught religious education — was chosen from among 11,400 applicants to be the first teacher in space — in fact, the first private citizen in space.

A high school social studies teacher in Concord, Mrs. McAuliffe, 37, saw herself as a pioneer.

"I cannot join the space program and restart my life as an astronaut, but this opportunity to connect my abilities as an educator with my interests in history and space is a unique opportunity to fulfill my early fantasies" of space travel, she wrote on her application for the shuttle program.

She said she wanted to "de-mystify" space for students. "I want students to see and understand the special perspective of space and relate it to them," she said.

Mrs. McAuliffe was to conduct two classes from space. The lessons were to be broadcast live via satellite to the nation's schools. The first was titled "The Ultimate Field Trip" and was to focus on daily living in space. The second was called "Where We've Been, Where We're Going, and Why." It was aimed at helping students understand the reasons for space exploration.

That fact made the Challenger launch all the more special for thousands of schoolchildren across the country, many

(MORE)

February 24, 1986 (1:30 pm)

ISRAELIS FORCE LIBYAN PASSENGER PLANE TO LAND IN ISRAEL

[Summary] Israel has forced down, but since released, a Libyan private executive jet flying over the Mediterranean in international airspace near Cyprus. It was thought that the plane might be carrying Palestinian guerilla leaders; it actually contained only Syrian politicians on their way to Damascus. Syria has called for an emergency session of the UN Security Council to discuss the incident.

[IDF Spokesman] "A Libyan executive airplane which was suspected of carrying people involved in planning attacks against Israel was intercepted on its way from Libya by IAF [Israel Air Force] aircraft.

"The plane obeyed instructions, and was forced to land at a military airfield in Israel.

"An inspection of the passengers and the plane is being conducted now, and afterwards it will be allowed to proceed on its way.

"The passengers and the crew are being treated well."

[Reuters - excerpts] Israel...released...Libyan plane...12 people aboard...9 passengers...3 crew members...[nationalities not identified by Reuters]

[Background - previous Libyan-Israeli aviation incident]

On February 22, 1973, Israeli fighter jets shot down a Libyan passenger plane over the Sinai desert, killing 108 of the 113 passengers aboard. The plane had been flying from Benghazi (Libya) to Cairo, and had strayed over the Sinai desert -- a significant deviation from its regular flight path. The Libyan pilot ignored repeated Israeli warnings that he was flying in Israeli airspace.

Israel paid \$30,000 in compensation to each of the victims' families. Although Israel was condemned diplomatically, there was no Arab military reprisal. (At that time, the Arab states were engaged in preparation for the Yom Kippur War.)

(Prepared by Harry Milkman)

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE  
165 E. 56 St., New York, NY 10022

DATE: 1/28/76

FROM: GEORGE E. GRUEN

TO:  KENNETH BANDLER  
 DAVID GELLER  
 DAVID HARRIS  
 ALLAN KAGEDAN  
 JACOB KOVADLOFF  
 SIDNEY LISKOFSKY  
 MARC TANENBAUM

For approval  
 For your information  
 Please handle  
 Read and return  
 Returned as requested  
 Please telephone me  
 Your comments, please

REMARKS: *As per your instructions  
copies have gone to Leo Nevas,  
Howard Friedman, Ted Ellorff,  
David Gordis, and Nives Fox.  
Is there anyone else?  
George*

**THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE**

**date** January 27, 1986  
**to** IRD Files  
**from** George E. Gruen  
**subject** Lebanese Jewish Hostages

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

When we learned of the murder of two Lebanese hostages, Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum called his contacts at the office of United Nations Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuellar. Mr. Alvaro de Soto, the Special Assistant to the Secretary-General, agreed to a meeting with Rabbi Tanenbaum and myself on condition that we keep this intervention strictly confidential. The meeting was set for January 21 at 11 a.m.

When we came to the meeting, Mr. de Soto introduced us to F.T. Liu, the Assistant Secretary-General for Special Political Affairs, whom he had asked to join us at the meeting because he has been handling Lebanese and other Middle East issues on behalf of the Secretary-General.

Rabbi Tanenbaum began by expressing our general concern over the problem of terrorism and the taking of hostages. He recalled his involvement in helping to set the record straight when, during the TWA hostage crisis, a TWA stewardess was falsely accused of having helped in selecting Jews for specially harsh treatment.

Mr. de Soto noted that the Secretary-General is very concerned over this problem and has spoken out strongly against terrorism. Mr. Liu added that, in its interventions on behalf of the persons kidnapped in Lebanon, the Secretary-General and his aides had, of course, first spoken to the Lebanese Government and in particular to President Gemayel, Prime Minister Karami and Nabih Berri, who is not only a cabinet minister but a leader of the Shiites.

Mr. Liu stressed that in their interventions on behalf of the American, French and British hostages, they also included the "Israelis or Jews." Marc and I quickly pointed out that we were in this instance not talking about Israelis but Lebanese citizens who were Jewish and stressed that these persons have scrupulously avoided any involvement in Lebanese internal politics or the Arab-Israel conflict.

I then presented brief details about what we knew about the specific cases of the Jews still being held hostage, which demonstrated

the extent of their rootedness in Lebanese society. Mr. Liu responded that he personally knew several Jews in Lebanon who, in the period before the civil war, played a prominent role in the professional and business life of the country. He added that the situation of the Lebanese Jews in the past was generally much better than that of their coreligionists in Syria.

He noted that the United Nations had a direct interest in the Lebanese hostage situation since Alec Collett, a British journalist, was abducted in March 1985 from the southern outskirts of Beirut while he was engaged in a writing assignment for UNRWA. Jean-Claude Aimé, Director, Office of the Undersecretaries-General for Special Political Affairs, who went to Beirut to investigate Collett's abduction and seek his release, at the same time also raised the matter of the Lebanese Jewish hostages with Berri, Gemayel and Karami. [In fact, according to press reports, Collett's abduction from a clearly marked UN vehicle occurred on March 25, only a few days before four Lebanese Jews were kidnapped. -- GEG]

Rabbi Tanenbaum inquired whether the UN had been in touch with the Iranians in view of their influence on the Hezbollah. Mr. Liu said that they had not been in direct contact with the Iranians on this. They have raised it with the Syrians, but have to do it very discreetly so as not to be rebuffed by them.

Mr. de Soto recalled that when former Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim went to Iran to try to free the American hostages he was rebuffed by the Ayatollah and at one time Mr. Waldheim was even in physical danger. He noted that the United Nations had taken landmark decisions this past year when the UN General Assembly passed unanimously a resolution condemning terrorism and the UN Security Council also adopted unanimously a resolution outlawing the taking of hostages. The problem is that in the present case we are not dealing with governments but with fanatical groups, which often are only splinters of other groups. The UN was not designed to deal with such groups.

I asked whether the UN Secretary-General might not have more influence on the Iranians now since they seem to need the UN to help them resolve the Iraq-Iran war. Mr. de Soto agreed that once Iran agreed to come to terms with Iraq, then it would seek to utilize the good offices of the Secretary-General. However, until the terms of an agreement were in sight, which was not likely in the near future in view of Khomeini's unyielding opposition to Saddam Hussein, the UN had no leverage.

Both Mr. de Soto and Mr. Liu said they would continue their quiet efforts and counselled patience. They thought Terry Waite, through his highly publicized efforts, had unwisely raised expectations that he could not fulfill. At the UN, they were more realistic in their assessment as to his chances of success.

With regard to south Lebanon, Mr. Liu noted that Berri had warned that unless Israel withdrew totally from southern Lebanon by the end of 1985, resistance would increase. Berri wanted a quiet border with Israel but he was under pressure from the Hezbollah to show that he was a strong Shiite leader. The UN believed that UN forces should be permitted to go down to the Israeli border and that they were capable of maintaining quiet along the border. The incidents that have occurred have taken place not in the area now patrolled by the UN but in the southern border region where the South Lebanese Army is operating with Israeli help. This has drawn attacks from Shiite elements and counter-action by Israel. I asked what had happened in the village of Kounin, which was specifically mentioned by the Organization of the Oppressed that killed two Jewish hostages.

He said that Lebanese "resistance" forces had attacked the village, which led to fighting with SLA forces and most of the villagers fled to escape the conflict. The UN was now trying to get the villagers to return.

Lebanon was again descending into chaos with the collapse of the Syrian-brokered Damascus Agreement for reforming the Lebanese political system. This has led to the outbreak of heavy fighting within the Christian community itself as well as between the Christians and the Muslims and other Syrian-backed militias. The prospects were bleak. Nevertheless, the UN would continue to do whatever it could to help free the hostages.

Rabbi Tanenbaum thanked Messrs. de Soto and Liu for seeing us and sharing with us their concern. He also asked Mr. de Soto to express to the Secretary-General our appreciation for his efforts, and recalled warmly the positive reaction that had been generated by the Secretary-General's address to the AJC Annual Dinner.

We left with them a one-page aide-memoire summarizing the situation of the Lebanese Jewish hostages, as well as my four-page backgrounder on "The Murder of Lebanese Jewish Hostages" and the remarks by Rev. Joseph O'Hare, President of Fordham University, at the memorial service for the two murdered Jews, which we said was representative of the expressions of outrage by many religious leaders in this country and abroad.

Mr. de Soto promised to send us the texts of the UN resolutions condemning terrorism and hostage-taking.

cc: David Gordis

9602-(IRD-5)  
og: 1/27/86

## LEBANESE JEWS -- VICTIMS OF SHI'ITE MUSLIM TERROR

### An International Relations Department Analysis

By George E. Gruen, Ph.D.  
Director, Middle East Affairs, American Jewish Committee

The announced execution of two Lebanese Jews within one week by a radical Shi'ite Muslim group indicates an intensification of the terrorist campaign against Lebanon's tiny and defenseless Jewish community. The same group killed two other Jews in December. The latest victim is Dr. Elie Hallak, a prominent pediatrician and Vice President of the High Council of the Jewish community.

In a statement published on February 19 in the Lebanese and French press (*An-Nahar*, Beirut, *Le Monde*, Paris), the group, which calls itself the "Organization of the Oppressed (*Mustadafin*) in the World," said it would not release Dr. Hallak's body until Israel "stopped its criminal operations" in southern Lebanon, withdrew from "all of the occupied territories" and released "all our brothers detained in Khiyam," a South Lebanese Army detention camp.

Two Polaroid photographs accompanying the statement confirmed that he was in their hands, but in the pictures he appeared still to be alive. The caption supplied by his captors depicted him as "a leader of the Mossad," the Israeli intelligence service. This is ominous since the charge of spying for Israel has been used by the group to justify its killing of three other innocent Jews within the past two months.

The Organization of the Oppressed had not earlier admitted to holding Dr. Hallak, a man in his fifties, although he had been kidnapped in March 1985 together with three other Lebanese Jews, presumably because the group knew how patently false the charge of spying was. Dr. Hallak was a much loved and highly respected doctor, whose patients came from all ethnic and religious segments of Beirut's society and whom he treated regardless of their ability to pay. Indeed, some years ago he treated the son of one of the leaders of the Palestine Liberation Organization. When news of his abduction was revealed, the kidnapping was condemned by Christian and Muslim officials, including Justice Minister Nabih Berri, the leader of the mainstream Shi'ite group, Amal.

Even during his months of captivity, Dr. Hallak was reported to have served as a physician. The Organization of the Oppressed is apparently connected to the pro-Iranian Hezbollah (the Party of God). One of the Americans who had been held captive by the fundamentalist Hez-



bullah at the time of the TWA airliner hijacking last June reportedly had seen Dr. Hallak treating patients.

Dr. Hallak's wife, Rachel, and his three sons, André, Alain and Marc (in their teens and early twenties), have been living in Paris in order to escape the turmoil in Lebanon and to enable the boys to continue their education.

On Saturday, February 15, the Organization of the Oppressed brutally murdered Ibrahim (Abraham) Benisti, a Lebanese Jew in his forties. The group had previously kidnapped and murdered two other Jews, Haim Cohen and Professor Isaac Tarrab, in late December. At that time they threatened to kidnap and kill additional Jews unless all their demands were met. Ibrahim Benisti and his father, Yehuda, 68, were kidnapped in recent days. Yehuda's other son, Joseph, 33, had been abducted last May.

According to the Beirut police, Ibrahim Benisti's body was found wrapped in blankets on Sunday morning, February 16, in a street in West Beirut near the line dividing the predominantly Muslim section from Christian East Beirut. The coroner's office reported that Mr. Benisti's body bore signs of torture and beatings to the head. He was shot twice and then strangled.

Near the body was a copy of the statement issued by the Organization of the Oppressed to the press on Saturday night declaring that Mr. Benisti had been "a prominent agent" of the Mossad and that other Lebanese Jews they had captured were members of the same network. The charges were categorically denied as "nonsense" by the Israeli Foreign Ministry. Moreover, outraged students and friends of Professor Tarrab attested that the distinguished retired professor of mathematics had only nominally been Jewish and had no connection to Israel. Mr. Haim Cohen, 38, was a department store accountant, who was known as a kind and gentle person, who chose not to go to Israel, his sister-in-law, Rose Mary, in Los Angeles declared, because "he did not wish to face the possibility of killing his Arab friends in battle."

Indeed, none of the kidnap victims had been involved either in Lebanese internal politics or the Arab-Israel conflict. It was precisely because they felt fully integrated in Lebanese society and had both Muslim and Christian friends that they chose to remain in Lebanon even after the overwhelming majority of Lebanon's 6,000 Jews left in the years after the Six-Day War of 1967 and the decade of internal strife following the eruption of the civil war in 1975. Today fewer than 75 Lebanese Jews remain in Beirut, most of them in the eastern section of the city.

The tragic fate of the Benisti family is typical of the misplaced trust of those Lebanese Jews who remained. The family lived in the Wadi Abu Jamil section of Muslim West Beirut near the main synagogue. Yehuda Benisti operated a gift shop and general store near Beirut airport,

which adjoins a Shi'ite and Palestinian neighborhood. When Mr. Benisti's son, Joseph, was abducted on May 18 of last year, the father at first did not notify the police or the Jewish community, because he believed that his friends and customers from within the Shi'ite community would discretely intervene on behalf of his son and arrange for his release. It was only toward the end of last year, when all quiet interventions failed, that Mr. Benisti contacted the Jewish community in East Beirut for help.

According to the February 15 statement by the Organization of the Oppressed, they seized Yehuda Benisti as well as Ibrahim and Youssuf (Joseph), because "all three were part of an Israeli spy network."

In its statement, published in the Lebanese daily, An-Nahar, on February 16, the fanatical Shi'ite group declared that Ibrahim had been slain in revenge for Israel's presence in southern Lebanon, the alleged "violation of the al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem. . .by the filthy boots of Jewish Israeli occupation," and the shelling of Shi'ite Muslim villages in South Lebanon. It also repeated the threat in its December statements that it would kill Jewish hostages unless "Shi'ite mujahidin" (holy warriors) captured by the Israeli-backed South Lebanese Army were promptly released.

In its February 16 statement, the group threatened that "all those interested in having any kind of relations with Israel" would face "adequate measures from us." It added that "the punishment of the spy Ibrahim Benisti should serve as a warning."

The latest kidnappings bring to ten the number of Jews known to have been abducted in the past two years. The death of four, not including Dr. Hallak, has been officially confirmed. The Organization of the Oppressed had earlier claimed to be holding Elie (Youssef) Srour, 68, who was in charge of preparing the dead for burial according to Jewish rites, and Isaac Sasson, in his mid-60's, a pharmaceutical executive who is the President of the Lebanese Jewish community. Both were kidnapped at the end of March 1985.

On July 1, 1984 Raoul Sobhi Mizrahi, 54, an electrical engineer who ran a major electrical supply company, was kidnapped by three armed gunmen from his apartment in West Beirut. There were no ransom demands. He was beaten to death and his body was discovered on July 3. A group calling itself the "National Resistance Army--The Nation's Liberation Faction" said it had killed Mizrahi "because he was an Israeli agent." This was firmly denied by his family.

Still missing is Salim Jammous, secretary general of the Jewish community, who was kidnapped on August 15, 1984, reportedly by three armed men who abducted him from his car near the communal office located in the compound of the main synagogue in West Beirut.

Although the kidnappings have been condemned by both Muslim and Christian officials in Lebanon and numerous governments and international human rights organizations have appealed for their release, these appeals have thus far fallen on deaf ears. While Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran has ostensibly opposed hostage taking -- he claims the American Embassy personnel held hostage for 444 days were all "spies" -- he has not yet forcefully spoken out to call upon his supporters in Lebanon, such as the Organization of the Oppressed and the Hezbollah, to release these innocent Jews. They are entitled to protection under Islamic law as members of a recognized monotheistic faith.

At the Memorial Service for Murdered Lebanese Jewish Hostages and Plea for Redemption of All Held Captive in Lebanon, cosponsored by the American Jewish Committee, the New York Board of Rabbis and the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York, on January 8, 1986, the Rev. Joseph O'Hare, S.J., President of Fordham University, poignantly declared: "It is once again a cruel irony that the murderers of Haim Cohen and Isaac Tarrab should dare to call themselves representatives of the oppressed of the world. No greater human oppression is possible than the reduction of individual human beings to nameless symbols whose lives are snuffed out in some sterile political gesture."

