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Series D: International Relations Activities. 1961-1992

Box 76, Folder 4, Wallenberg, Raoul committee, 1980.



The Consul General of Sweden
and Mrs. Bengt Friedman
request the pleasure of the company of

Rabbi Mark Tannenbaum

at a buffet supper
on Thursday, May 8 at about 8:30 PM

600 Park Avenue
New York
Informal

P.S.V.P.
Plaza 1-5900, Ext. 313
To receive

May 29, 1980

A. James Rudin

Inge Lederer Gibel

I am attaching an NCC press release on the three Palestinian leaders deported from the West Bank who spoke at 475 a few days ago. This was slipped to me by our good friend Ann Patrick Ware just before I spoke there yesterday.

It did occur to me that perhaps I should introduce a reference to this release in my remarks as an indication of our very real problems with their methods of being "evenhanded" -- sending out the tape but claiming to "offer no endorsement of the speaker's views."

This is such a serious matter, however, that I felt I ought to consult you and our other colleagues, and that in any case the forum yesterday wasn't the proper place to raise it as an issue, particularly since most of the people there would not yet have received the release.

ILG/es

Enclosure

cc: Judith Banki
Marc H. Tanenbaum ✓

Dictated but not read

According to Mayor Kawasmeh, the Hebron population warned the Israeli government that the settlement would lead to problems. "Twenty thousand people prayed in a mosque to let them know we wouldn't accept a settlement in our town," he said. In addition, religious and political leaders made every attempt to "tell them this decision would mean more trouble."

After trouble occurred, he pointed out, those same political leaders were singled out for punishment. "But what have we done? We told them all of this. We tried to explain to them. But they did not listen."

In answer to questions, the mayors firmly supported the Palestine Liberation Organization, which they said has the support of all Palestinians. When asked why the PLO has not changed its covenant, which calls for the destruction of Israel as a Jewish state, Mayor Milhem argued that it is not the PLO that is intent on destroying Israel, but Israel that is intent on destroying the Palestinian people.

Whenever the PLO has indicated a readiness to change its covenant or recognize Israel, he said, the Israeli government--whether Labor or Likud--has made it clear that this would not lead to any change in its position. "When there is something positive in what the Israelis say," he said, "the Palestinians will respond more positively."

Despite its covenant, he added, the PLO is not committed to the destruction of Israel. But "when Begin and Peres--Likud and Labor--say the West Bank and Gaza Strip are liberated territories, this means that they are committing themselves to wiping away the identity of the Palestinians.

"When Begin and his cabinet say that the Jews have the right to settle on every inch of land in the occupied territories, this means that you dislocate the Palestinians and you replace them with the Zionists. This is the destruction of a people."

When Israel halts the settlements, stops "their collective punishment of our population," recognizes the Palestinian right to self-determination and announces it is ready to withdraw from the occupied territories, "then we will ask the PLO to stop their operations," Kawasmeh added.

After the forum the three Palestinians met with several members of the NCC Middle East Panel, which recently released a report calling on the PLO to cease all violence and renounce its commitment to the destruction of Israel and on Israel to cease its settlements and recognize Palestinian rights to self-determination.

The National Council of Churches, though hosting the forum, offered no endorsement of the speakers' views. In early May, after the Hebron killings, NCC General Secretary Claire Randall issued a statement condemning the raid.

The U.S. visit of the three Palestinians, which will take them to Washington, D.C., Chicago and Minneapolis, is being coordinated by the American Friends Service Committee.

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Note to editors and reporters: the Middle East Office and the Division of Overseas Ministries Office of Interpretation and Promotion are preparing a tape cassette of the forum. If you would like a copy please contact the Office of Interpretation and Promotion, 475 Riverside Dr., Rm. 620, New York, N.Y. 10115 (212-870-2079).

Office of NEWS AND INFORMATION /Room 850/475 Riverside Drive, N.Y., N.Y. 10115/212-870-2227

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MAY 27 1980

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DEPORTED WEST BANK MAYORS MAKE THEIR CASE IN U.S.

NEW YORK, MAY 23-----Pledging that they are ready to talk with anyone from the American Jewish community, three Palestinian leaders deported from the West Bank in early May are in the United States to explain their side of the Middle East conflict.

"There is much to be said to Jewish leaders," according to Muhammad Milhem, mayor of the West Bank city of Halhul. "We have been saying to them that there is a possibility of coexistence between the Jews and the Arabs anywhere in the world, provided that Palestinian rights to self-determination are recognized."

Milhem spoke along with Hebron Mayor Fahad Kawasmeh and Islamic Judge Sheikh Raja Bayud Tamimi at a May 22 forum sponsored by the Middle East Office of the National Council of Churches. All three were deported by Israeli authorities on May 3, after a Palestine Liberation Organization attack that killed six Jewish settlers in Hebron.

After hearing from the three on May 20, the United Nations Security Council voted to censure Israel for their deportation. The United States abstained from the vote.

Referring to the recent riots in Miami, Mayor Kawasmeh asked his audience at the NCC, "Did Mr. Carter deport the mayor of Miami? What does deportation mean? In Florida more people were shot than in Hebron; there was much more damage. But no one was deported from his homeland because of this."

Israel has accused the three Palestinians of attempting to incite war against Israel. The three, none of whom were involved in the PLO attack, charge that they were deported for their opposition to the concept of limited autonomy--or self-rule without jurisdiction over land, water, or defense--projected by Israel for the West Bank.

"What is Begin offering me?" Mayor Milhem asked, speaking of Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin. "The perpetuation of the occupation, the same thing I have now. We reject this."

The two mayors accused those who were killed in the PLO attack, members of the Jewish group Gush Emunim, of harassing the Arab residents of Hebron.

Noting that those killed were referred to by the Israeli government as worshipers, Mayor Milhem said, "A Jewish worshiper needs a place where there is a synagogue. In Hebron we have no synagogue. We have a mosque... which they want to change into a synagogue."

When the attack occurred, Milhem added, "They were smashing cars, destroying cars, breaking into houses and scaring women and children.... These were not worshipers. They are people who are blinded with conceit."

Tensions had been rising between the Gush Emunim members and Hebron residents ever since the Israeli government approved the settlement last winter.