

Cooperation with other Governments: United Nations: Iraq

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2 - War Refugee Bd / m. F. H. L.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
DIVISION OF
FOR 20 1244
COMMUNICATIONS
AND RECORDS

FROM
Baghdad

DATE
February 18, 1944

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Secretary of State
Washington.

A-o, February 18, noon.

Department's circular airgram of January 26,
1944, 7 p. 1.

1. So far as the Legation has been able to ascertain no Jewish or other refugees from Nazi persecution desire or have desired to find a refuge or to establish a domicile in this country. The only refugee problem which has faced Iraq, therefore, has been that of refugees in transit. The Iraqi Government has in general pursued a policy of permitting these refugees to pass through the country unless they happened to be Jews traveling to Palestine to settle there. Although the Legation does not know that there are any Jews awaiting permission to cross Iraq to Palestine it is possible that there are some at present in Iran.

2. It will be recalled that my predecessor on October 20, 1942, under instructions from the Department discussed this matter with the Prime Minister who explained to him why the Iraqi Government would not permit Jews to cross Iraq in order to settle in Palestine (see Legation's telegram no. 240 of October 20, 1942, 9 p. 1.) and that the Counselor of the British Embassy under instructions from his Government also mentioned the matter several days later to the Prime Minister and received a rather sharp rebuff (see Legation's telegram no. 248 of October 23, 1942, 5 p. 1.).

3. The considerations which prompt the Iraqi Government to refuse visas to Jewish refugees bound for Palestine appear to be based on national policies of so vital a nature that in my opinion no approaches of the character suggested in the penultimate paragraph of the airgram under reference would alter them. The main objective of Iraqi foreign policy is to

promote/

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By B. H. [unclear] Date SEP 13 1972

1-2 Baghdad, February 14, 1944

promote closer Arab cooperation with a view to the formation in the not distant future of some kind of a union of Arab states in this area. The Iraqi Government is convinced that if the Zionists are able to achieve their goal of setting up a National Jewish State in Palestine this objective cannot be accomplished and that the success of the Zionist program would mean the non-realization of Arab hopes for the future. They also believe that the settlement of additional Jews in Palestine would serve to strengthen the Zionist cause and to weaken their own. They take the view that the Zionists are taking advantage of the sympathy which Nazi atrocity has aroused for the Jews in order to introduce great numbers of Jews into Palestine and thus to ensure the success of their program at a time when the Arabs, because of wartime limitations upon communications and transportation are not able fully to present their side of the case. It is believed that unless backed by foreign armed forces it would be almost impossible for any Government to survive in Iraq just now which would take steps to facilitate the travel of Jewish settlers to Palestine, and it would be difficult to convince local Arabs that Jewish refugees bound for Palestine will not eventually settle there.

4. Increased Zionist activity in the United States has served to strengthen suspicions which the enemy is propagating by every means available to it that the American Government has some kind of an understanding with the Zionists and intends following the termination of the war to support the Zionist program. Nazi propagandists in particular have exploited to the full certain statements made recently by prominent American politicians in favor of the Zionists and as a result the sensitiveness of the Iraqi Government with regard to American support of Zionism has grown (see my telegram no. 31 of February 14, 7 p. n., 1944).

5. Since the only refugee problem which might become active here is that of the transit of Jewish refugees to Palestine, and since any approach which I might make with regard to that problem is not likely to alter the attitude of the Iraqi Government towards it, I shall not make the approach suggested unless I receive further instructions from the Department. I am convinced that such an approach by me would be of help to no one except to the enemy.

The/

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Baghdad, February 10, noon.

The Legation will continue to observe any developments which might take place in the situation with regard to refugees and will not hesitate to approach the Iraqi Government in case it would appear that by so doing it could assist any of them. The Legation will also keep the Department informed of developments or of cases of refugees who appear to be in need of our aid.

Henderson

LH/dcb