

THE WHITE HOUSE
CORRESPONDENCE TRACKING WORKSHEET

00072

INCOMING

DATE RECEIVED: MARCH 13, 1991

NAME OF CORRESPONDENT: DR. I. HAROLD SHAFMAN

SUBJECT: URGES THE PRESIDENT TO CONTINUE TO PRESS
THE IRAQI AND SYRIAN GOVERNMENTS TO GRANT
JEWISH RESIDENTS THE RIGHT TO EMIGRATE

ROUTE TO: OFFICE/AGENCY	(STAFF NAME)	ACTION		DISPOSITION	
		ACT CODE	DATE YY/MM/DD	TYPE RESP	C COMPLETED D YY/MM/DD
KATHY JEAVONS		ORG	91/03/13		⁰³ C 91/04/14
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COMMENTS: INCOMING ALSO LISTS BEIS HAMEDRASH REB YAAKOV
EMDEN, PREISDENT OF THE ORTHODOX RABBINCAL
ASSOCIATION

ADDITIONAL CORRESPONDENTS: MEDIA:L INDIVIDUAL CODES: 4400 4200

PL MAIL USER CODES: (A) (B) (C)

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*ACTION CODES:          *DISPOSITION          *OUTGOING          *
*                       *                       *CORRESPONDENCE:  *
*A-APPROPRIATE ACTION  *A-ANSWERED          *TYPE RESP=INITIALS *
*C-COMMENT/RECOM       *B-NON-SPEC-REFERRAL *           OF SIGNER *
*D-DRAFT RESPONSE      *C-COMPLETED        *           CODE = A   *
*F-FURNISH FACT SHEET  *S-SUSPENDED        *COMPLETED = DATE OF *
*I-INFO COPY/NO ACT NEC*                       *           OUTGOING *
*R-DIRECT REPLY W/COPY *                       *                       *
*S-FOR-SIGNATURE       *                       *                       *
*X-INTERIM REPLY       *                       *                       *
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REFER QUESTIONS AND ROUTING UPDATES TO CENTRAL REFERENCE
(ROOM 75, OEOB) EXT-2590
KEEP THIS WORKSHEET ATTACHED TO THE ORIGINAL INCOMING
LETTER AT ALL TIMES AND SEND COMPLETED RECORD TO RECORDS
MANAGEMENT.

UNCLASSIFIED

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

TRANSMITTAL FORM

S/S 9104965

Date April 2, 1991

FOR: Mr. William F. Sittmann
Executive Secretary
National Security Council Staff
The White House

REFERENCE:

To: President George Bush

From: Dr. I. Harold Sharfman

Date: March 7, 1991

Subject: Urges President to continue to press Iraqi and Syrian
governments to grant Jewish residents the right to
emigrate

WH Referral Dated: March 21, 1991
NSCS ID# (if any): 220271

 The attached item was sent directly to the
Department of State.

ACTION TAKEN:

 A draft reply is attached.

 A draft reply will be forwarded.

 A translation is attached.

 X An information copy of a direct reply is attached.

 We believe no response is necessary for the reason
cited below.

 The Department of State has no objection to the
proposed travel.

 Other (see remarks).

REMARKS:

for G. Longfellow

Director
Secretariat Staff

UNCLASSIFIED



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

Dr. I. Harold Sharfman
Rabbinic Administrator
Kosher Overseers Association of America, Inc.
P.O. Box 1321
Beverly Hills, CA 90213

Dear Dr. Sharfman:

I am responding on behalf of President Bush to your letter of March 4, 1991 concerning the situation of Syrian and Iraqi Jews.

The United States Government has long been concerned with the difficult circumstances facing the Jewish community in Syria, particularly as they relate to travel and emigration restrictions and the imprisonment of some members of the community. We estimate there to be approximately 3,800 Jews remaining in Syria, out of a population of about 30,000 in 1943. The vast majority of these Jews, about 3,000, live in Damascus with about 600 in Aleppo and 200 in Qamishli. According to our Embassy's most recent reports, Jews in Syria are allowed to practice their religion freely and openly. There are two Jewish schools in Damascus and one in Aleppo, along with functioning synagogues in Damascus, Aleppo and Qamishli. Syrian Jews participate actively in the economy, primarily as merchants. The government has exempted Syrian Jews from otherwise universal obligatory military service.

Relations between the Syrian Jewish community and the government are dominated by the continuing state of war between Syria and Israel. Travel by Syrian Jews is seen by the government as a potential security threat. Four Syrian Jews are currently in prison. Two have been there for over three years on suspicion of travelling to Israel (a crime in Syria, given its current state of war with Israel), while the other two were caught last year while trying to flee the country illegally. Emigration of all Syrian citizens, including Jews, is also seriously restricted. Through our Embassy in Damascus we monitor this situation and strongly urge the Syrian leadership to lift these impediments, which are contrary to the letter and spirit of Syria's international human rights obligations.

Our interest in human rights conditions among the Syrian Jewish community is an important aspect of U.S.-Syrian relations. We will continue to call public attention to the problems facing Syrian Jews, as we do in the Department of State's annual report to the Congress on human rights, and make this subject a prominent part of our diplomatic dialogue with Syria.

Given the very unsettled situation in Iraq at this time and the fact that we have no diplomatic relations with Baghdad, it is very difficult to assess the conditions faced by the very small Jewish community in Iraq. From what we know, there are only several hundred Jews who remain in Iraq at this time. Once we reopen our embassy in Baghdad, the status of the Jewish community will be among the issues which we will closely monitor.

I have enclosed for your information copies of the 1990 Human Rights Reports for Syria and Iraq, which were released recently.

Sincerely,



Theodore H. Kattouf
Director, Office of Lebanon, Syria,
Jordan and Palestinian Affairs

Enclosure:
Human Rights Reports

9104965

THE WHITE HOUSE OFFICE

REFERRAL

MARCH 21, 1991

TO: DEPARTMENT OF STATE

ACTION REQUESTED:
APPROPRIATE ACTION

DESCRIPTION OF INCOMING:

ID: 220271

MEDIA: LETTER, DATED MARCH 7, 1991

TO: PRESIDENT BUSH

FROM: DR. I. HAROLD SHAFMAN
RABBINIC ADMINISTRATOR
KOSHER OVERSEERS ASSOCIATION OF
AMERICA, INC.
POST OFFICE BOX 1321
BEVERLY HILLS CA 90213

SUBJECT: URGES THE PRESIDENT TO CONTINUE TO PRESS
THE IRAQI AND SYRIAN GOVERNMENTS TO GRANT
JEWISH RESIDENTS THE RIGHT TO EMIGRATE

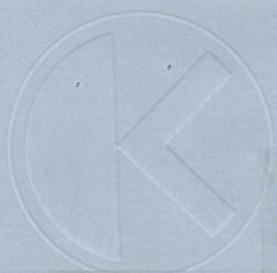
PROMPT ACTION IS ESSENTIAL -- IF REQUIRED ACTION HAS NOT BEEN
TAKEN WITHIN 9 WORKING DAYS OF RECEIPT, PLEASE TELEPHONE THE
UNDERSIGNED AT 456-7486.

RETURN CORRESPONDENCE, WORKSHEET AND COPY OF RESPONSE
(OR DRAFT) TO:
AGENCY LIAISON, ROOM 91, THE WHITE HOUSE, 20500

SALLY KELLEY
DIRECTOR OF AGENCY LIAISON
PRESIDENTIAL CORRESPONDENCE

220271

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9104965

March 7, 1991

Dr. I. Harold Sharfman, D.H.L.
RABBINIC ADMINISTRATOR

K. Jewons

President George Bush
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. President:

Kosher Overseers Association of America, representing food firms world-wide and its affiliated rabbinic body, The Orthodox Rabbinical Association, and its member synagogue, Beis Hamedrash Reb Yaakov Emden, extends congratulations upon freeing a captive land from a tyrants grasp.

Entering the post war period, human rights cries out that the Iraqi and Syrian governments grant Jewish "residents" the right to emigrate.

In obtaining the freedom of emigration of hostage Syrian-Jews, who have suffered for decades the same oppression as the Kuwaiti have during the comparative brief span of half-a-year under the Iraqi occupation. Like Nazi Germany, Syria requires each Jew to be identified by a special card that relegates him to the status of a social pariah, subject to all indignities, including the infamous "blood-libel", imprisonment, and unseparable torture and murder.

Just as you have been interested in the emigration of Soviet Jewry, this consistent act on your part would further demonstrate the enlightened policy you have pursued.

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ב"ר
מרכז מחזיקי
הכשרות
דמוקרטית
כ"ט

President George Bush

March 4, 1991

Page Two

Praying that G-d grant you strength and wisdom in the crucial period of leading the United Nations in forging a new world order of permanent peace, I am,

Respectfully,

Dr. I. Harold Sharfman
Rabbinic Administrator
KOA OA, INC.;
Rabbi
Beis Hamedrash Reb Yaakov Emden;
President
The Orthodox Rabbinical Association
IHS:mh

cc: Senator Alan Cranston
Senator John Seymour
Israel Consulate, Los Angeles
The Jewish Press, Brooklyn, New York

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