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THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

SECURITY COUNCIL
Forty-first year

Letter dated 4 March 1986 from the Permanent Representative of Israel
to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

For many years now, terrorists hands have freely operated in Lebanon killing with indiscriminate abandon. But in recent months some of these killers have begun to be more selective about their victims. They have struck with particular cruelty against Lebanon's ancient Jewish community, kidnapping nine of its members. Since December 1985 four of these nine have been brutally tortured and murdered.

The murdered Jews are:

1. Dr. Haim Cohen-Halala, 39, a merchant from Beirut, murdered on 25 December 1985.
2. Dr. Isaac Tarrub, 70, a professor of mathematics at the American University of Beirut, murdered on 1 February 1986.
3. Dr. Abraham Benisti, 34, a physician from Beirut, murdered on 17 February 1986. (Mr. Benisti's body was found in a street gutter in Beirut; his body, badly beaten and cut, showed signs of cruel torture.)
4. Dr. Eli Hallak, a physician who was Vice-President to the Higher Council of Lebanon's Jewish community, murdered on 19 February 1986.

The five Jews still being held by the terrorists are:

1. Mr. Isaac Sasson, 65, President of Lebanon's Jewish community, kidnapped on 1 March 1985.

2. Mr. Joseph Benisti, 56, father of one of the victims, Dr. Abraham Benisti, kidnapped on 1 March 1985.
3. Mr. Judah Benisti, 15, son of Dr. Abraham Benisti, kidnapped on 1 March 1985.
4. Mr. Salim Janous, 45, former Executive Secretary of the Lebanese Jewish community, kidnapped on 17 November 1985.
5. Mr. Eli Sarour, 50, a merchant from Beirut, kidnapped on 17 November 1985.

These men were not fighters. They were not part of any of the many militias battling each other in Lebanon. They were not involved in any political activity whatsoever. They were decent law-abiding citizens: teachers, merchants and doctors. In the classic pattern of anti-Semitism, they were abducted and murdered for the simple crime of having been born Jewish.

The Government of Lebanon has not taken any measures to protect its citizens. This is hardly surprising since no effective government exists in Lebanon. Syria dominates not only Lebanon's leadership but also many of the gangs of terrorists who freely roam the country. Syria, consequently, also bears responsibility for these anti-Semitic outrages (S/PV.2640 p. 22).

Incredibly, the Government of Lebanon has not found the decency to make even a single statement about these dastardly acts. President Gemayel, Prime Minister Karameh, Minister Berri and other Lebanese leaders who repeatedly voice their concern for the safety of Lebanese citizens, apparently do not consider Lebanon's Jewish citizens worthy even of the most elementary humanitarian concern.

The Government of Israel categorically denounces these atrocities. In the absence of any official Lebanese response regarding this matter, it calls upon the international community to join it in holding the Government of Lebanon accountable for the protection and safeguarding of all its citizens, regardless of their religion or ethnic origin.

Immediate action is required to prevent the remaining hostages from being murdered and to stop future kidnappings of defenceless Jews. The Government of Israel reserves its right to seek out the perpetrators of these crimes in order to bring them to justice.

I have the honour to request that this letter be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under item 37 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Benjamin NETANYAHU
Ambassador