

COPY

Libya-Tripoli
General # 729

NO. 2 GENERAL

The Jewish Agency,

Tripoli

P.O.Box 92,

18th August, 1943.

Jerusalem

Gentlemen,

Recently we sent you a full report on the actual conditions prevailing in our community, with special reference to the social and schooling necessities.

Encouraged by the kind suggestions of the Army Chaplains Messrs. Rabinowitz and Urbach, we have the honour to write you the present letter and ask you kindly to consider also the very bad conditions which owing to the war, the children of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania who have been left without parents and means find themselves in.

They are many, but even larger are the numbers of these children of poor families which have had destroyed the bases of their economic life and who cannot rely on their families for education.

So we pray you to provide that the Palestinian beneficent institutions should receive as large a number of these children as possible and have them educated to a Jewish way of life in a Jewish land, thus relieving this community of this heavy financial and moral burden.

They number a few hundred and anything you could do for this good cause will be welcomed by God who likes to be considered the Father or Orphans.

If, as we hope you can help us, we will be very much obliged if you could let us know the number of children you can receive and give us all details for their entrance into Palestine so that we can apply to the local authorities for the permits and transport facilities.

Thanking you in anticipation we are,

Yours faithfully

Jewish Community of
Tripolitania

President
Halfalla Nahum

COPY

The Jewish Agency
P.O.Box 92
Jerusalem

Tripoli
13th August 1943

Re: Situation of the Jewish Community in Tripoli

Now, after a few months, and having resumed our work with calmness and serenity, after the most difficult period, we would like first of all to send you our brotherly salute.

Please allow us to submit to you an exact sketch of the situation of the Jews in Tripoli during the last years in order to show you the serious problems which must most urgently be solved.

The Jewish Community at Tripoli which consists of more than 20,000 souls (not including the 8,000 Jews living in small centers of Tripolitania) has suffered a great deal these past few years, either due to anti-racial laws or due to war.

But even before racial laws, this community was very badly hurt in his deepest Jewish feelings by Government proclamations compelling the Jewish youth to frequent medium schools also in the Sabbath, which law practically deprived the youth of any education, even of any elementary education, as the scrupulous observation of the Sabbath, as well as the kashruth laws are absolutely totalitarian in our City and further laws against us hurt the Jewish soul such as when the Government compelled the Jewish shop-keepers and merchants to keep their shops open on Saturdays in the new quarter of the town. Afterwards came the official anti-racial laws and the war, which put this community in a moral and material condition so serious and grave as never before in our life.

Wishing to limit this report only to the material damage, as the moral sufferings can never be adequately expressed, we beg to inform you that:

1. Four synagogues were completely destroyed and several seriously damaged;
2. The cemetery, which due to its position and site was used for numerous anti-aircraft batteries, has been bombed repeatedly and had the external wall almost destroyed and hundreds of the tombs were devastated and ravaged;
3. The Jewish quarters, more than any other part of the town, were bombed and several times houses were completely destroyed and others seriously damaged and uninhabitable;
4. The proclamation against the Jews in Tripoli and the fact that they were forced to do hard labour in far-reaching military areas, had compelled the community to serious sacrifices, as the Italian Government refused to give any allotment or aid to their families and paid the Jewish labourers less than six pence a day;
5. The sending of all Jews of Cyrenaica to concentration camps, had as an immediate consequence for our community the moral obligation to provide at least the elementary exigencies of life, because the Italian Government did not give them even the minimum of food to keep from starving. Notwithstanding our great sacrifices disease and deaths were very high; during ten months out of 3,000 interned Jews about 5,000 died; (?)

6. The application of the anti-racial laws which produced such serious restrictions in the wholesale and retail trades, the dismissal of all Jewish employees from the Government and public administrations, the prohibition for Jews to sell real estate, etc. seriously reduced the capacity of Jewish merchants and traders to earn their livelihood;
7. The limited possibility of labour and work raised the number of paupers to several thousands.

When our general conditions reached a point which let us become desperate and hopeless for the future, the victorious Allied troops marched in and we greeted them as real messengers of God, for they gave us back our dignity as human beings and allowed us the possibility of hoping again for a future under a better men. Since these few months of the reconquest of our liberty, we are happy to affirm, that the wounds inflicted on our souls and bodies by the fascist oppressors are slowly healing.

The possibility of labour after British military occupation has reduced the number of our beggars. The invalids, and these who are too old, the orphans and widows, are to be assisted completely by the community. They number about 848 persons. But this assistance requires enormous funds because of the high cost of living due to the devaluation of the Italian lira and lack of sufficient essential foodstuffs and other necessary articles on the market. To this category of very poor people there is to be added the sick and those poor who require aid from the community because their wages are not sufficient for them to live on with their families.

We are especially in need of blankets, clothing of any kind and milk for the sick and the children.

We have many other difficulties which concern education, for since three years about 3,000 children between the ages of 6 and 13 have been deprived of any education, whereas over 1000 between the ages of 13 and 16 must learn some profession in order to prepare them to be citizens and good Jews useful to themselves and others. The expenses for building schools and their functioning are very high. Even to reduce them to the strict necessity, it would cost about £ 15,000 merely for installation expenses (to repair the premises, purchase of education materials which have been most destroyed and for the functioning of these schools, based on a minimum programme, there would be needed another £ 28,000 a year.

It is just and fair that the community is entitled to a grant in aid or subvention from the British Government, specially for the elementary schools, and in addition, in a relatively modest amount we rely upon school taxes and the contribution of Tripoli Jews, who, of course, will help as much as they can. But the figures of necessary funds are reaching such proportions that we are compelled to call for aid and assistance from our Jewish brothers. We must try to solve this problem with a complete programme in all matters pertaining to Jewish education, supplying the schools with modern pedagogic materials, opening a free refectory for paupers, medical assistance for the sick, (especially trachoma cases which are very high among the school children) the foundation of a medium school, an asylum for children from 3 to six years of age, taking them off the streets and preparing them for the discipline of school life, etc., for all this money must be raised.

We must not forget that the life and regular development of the communal activities also are in need of large funds each year, but these we think we could ourselves provide, i.e. the functioning of 22 synagogues, beneficence, economic improvement of personnel for the creed and for administration, pension and allowances, Yeshivot, and Chevrot, etc.

We feel that we would be failing in our principal duty before God and our consciousness, if, soon after the autumn holidays, which this year will be in Thanksgiving to God, full of joy and happiness for the definite victory, if we do not open the schools for our youth who are thirsty for education and knowledge.

Shalem

C.B. No. 812/115 of 7.9.43

Jewish Community of Tripolitania

President
Halfalla Nahum