

PREM19

78

IRAN

(Jewish community -  
correspondence with  
President Carter)

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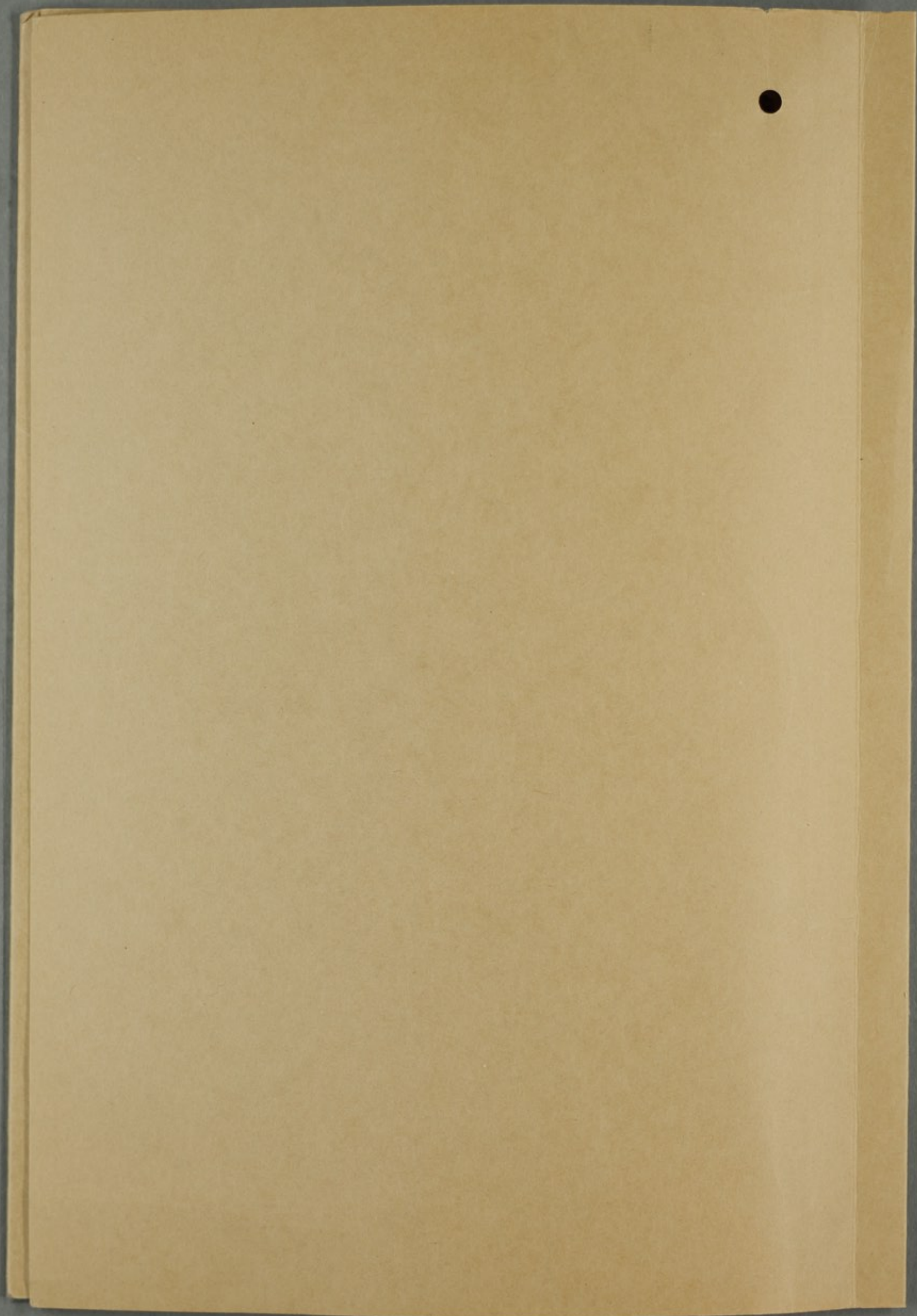
The Protection of the Jewish  
Community in Iran.

SB  
830

IRAN

May 1979

Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date
<del>17.5.79</del> 24.5.79							
<p>PREM 19/78</p>							



T14/79T



CCFCO MRS  
Subject Iran

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

24 May 1979

PRIME MINISTER'S  
PERSONAL MESSAGE  
SERIAL No. T14/79T

Dear President Carter,

Thank you for writing to me about the position of the Jewish community in Iran. I and my colleagues fully share your concern about this issue and have followed with anxiety the numerous reports of trials and executions.

Since you wrote, some leaders of the Jewish community are reported to have received assurances from Ayatollah Khomeini for their safety. While we cannot necessarily accept these at their face value the view of our Embassy, who have I know been in close touch with your Embassy in Tehran on this question, is that the present difficulties being experienced by the Jewish community, while naturally arousing anxiety, do not amount to an organised campaign of persecution. In this situation an approach specifically on behalf of the Iranian Jewish community could indeed make their position less secure.

I believe therefore that we can best help by continuing to watch the situation very carefully and be ready to take prompt action with the Iranian authorities if we see a serious deterioration in the position of the Jewish community. To have a useful effect, such approaches should, I believe

/come from

*[Handwritten signature]*  
gu

come from as many quarters as possible within the international community; and should focus on the general issues of security of minorities and standards of justice, which of course encompass the rights of Iranian Jewry to fair and equal treatment.

I hope that we can keep in touch on all aspects of the complex and unstable situation which now prevails in Iran.

(Signed) Yours sincerely,

Margaret Thatcher

The President of the United States of America.

SECRET



AG  
6  
File

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

23 May 1979

Jewish Community in Iran

Thank you for sending me, with your letter of 21 May, advice on the reply which the Prime Minister might send to President Carter's message of 15 May about possible representations to the Iranian authorities about the safety of Jews in Iran.

The Prime Minister is content with the general lines of the draft which you sent me but has made some minor amendments which are incorporated in the enclosed signed original. I should be grateful if you would arrange for the Prime Minister's reply to President Carter to be delivered to the White House as soon as possible.

B. G. CARTLEDGE

J.S. Wall, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

SECRET



3

10 DOWNING STREET

PRIME MINISTER

REPLY TO PRESIDENT CARTER  
ON IRANIAN JEWS

I have amended the draft of  
your reply to President  
Carter's message about  
Iranian Jews to take account  
of your comments.

If you are content with it,  
would you like to sign the  
revised version below?

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'B. M.' or similar, written in a cursive style.

23 May 1979



Prime Minister

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

The odds are that representations at this stage would do more harm than good. Agree to reply to President Carter in the terms of the attached draft?

21 May 1979

Dear Bryan,

Jewish Community in Iran

See r. side meetings on draft  
ant

[A]

[0]

Thank you for your letter of 15 May, with which you enclosed a message from President Carter to the Prime Minister about the Jewish community in Iran. I attach a draft letter in reply which the Prime Minister may care to send. As you will see, in the light of Tehran telegram no 608 (a copy of which is enclosed) we consider that representations are not appropriate at this stage. We understand that the French and the Holy See hold a similar view. But the Embassy in Tehran are keeping a close eye on the position of the Jewish and other minorities in Iran. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office are in contact with various Jewish interests in this country who have voiced concern.

J S Wall  
Stephen

(J S Wall)

ant

B G Cartledge Esq  
10 Downing Street



DSR 11 (Revised)

DRAFT: LETTER  
minute/letter/teleletter/despatch/note

TYPE: Draft/Final 1+

FROM:

Reference

PRIME MINISTER

DEPARTMENT:

TEL. NO:

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

TO:

Your Reference

Top Secret

Secret

Confidential

Restricted

Unclassified

PRESIDENT CARTER

Copies to:

PRIVACY MARKING

SUBJECT:

.....In Confidence

CAVEAT.....

Thank you for writing to me about the position of the Jewish community in Iran. I and my colleagues fully share your concern about this issue and have followed with anxiety the numerous reports of trials and executions.

Since you wrote, some leaders of the Jewish community are reported to have received assurances from Ayatollah Khomeini for their safety. While we cannot necessarily accept these at their face value the view of our Embassy, who have I know been in close touch with your Embassy in Tehran on this question, is that the present difficulties being experienced by the Jewish community, while naturally arousing anxiety, do not amount to an organised campaign of persecution.

~~We also have to recognise that the Iranians have shown great sensitivity ever since the revolution over the representations which we and other Western countries have made on various occasions about the trial and execution of political detainees.~~

In this <sup>situation</sup> ~~situation~~ an approach specifically on behalf of the Iranian Jewish community could indeed make their position less secure.

I believe therefore that we can best help by continuing to watch the situation very carefully keep a very close eye on the situation, and be ready to take prompt action with the Iranian

/authorities

Enclosures—flag(s).....

Carl's  
Just a  
letter please?

authorities if we see a serious deterioration in the position of the Jewish community. To have a useful effect, such approaches should, I believe, come from as many quarters as possible within the international community; and should focus on the general issues of security of minorities and standards of justice, which of course encompass the rights of Iranian Jewry to fair and equal treatment.

I hope that we can keep in touch on all aspects of the complex and unstable situation which now prevails in Iran.

SECRET

CR 700

SECRET

DESKBY 171700Z MAY

FROM TEHRAN 171215Z MAY 79  
TO IMMEDIATE FCO  
TELEGRAM NUMBER 603 OF 17 MAY  
INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON, PRIORITY PARIS, HOLY SEE.

YOUR TEL NO 367: JEWISH COMMUNITY IN IRAN.

1. IT IS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO ESTABLISH THE FACTS, AND INEVITABLY THE PICTURE MUST BE SOMEWHAT SUBJECTIVE. WE HAVE OF COURSE BEEN COMPARING NOTES WITH OTHER MISSIONS, AND THE GENERAL CONCLUSION IS THAT WHILE INEVITABLY THERE IS MUCH DISQUIET AMONG THE JEWISH COMMUNITY FOLLOWING THE EXECUTION OF ELGHANIAN, THERE IS NO EVIDENCE OF A GENERAL PERSECUTION. SOME JEWS HAVE UNDOUBTEDLY BEEN ARRESTED. THE CHIEF RABBI, SPEAKING TO A MEMBER OF THE US EMBASSY, PUT THE NUMBER AT BETWEEN 20 AND 30, BUT THE US CHARGE, TO WHOM I DID NOT REVEAL THE SUBSTANCE OF YOUR TUR, TELLS ME THAT ON THE BASIS OF OTHER INFORMATION, HE BELIEVES THE TRUE FIGURE IS MORE LIKE 10. THE RABBI, THOUGH HE BROKE INTO TEARS DURING THE CONVERSATION, HAD NO EVIDENCE OF A GENERAL PERSECUTION..
2. THE JEWISH COMMUNITY HAS DWINDLED FROM A PRE-REVOLUTIONARY FIGURE OF 80,000 TO ABOUT 50,000. MANY JEWISH BUSINESSMEN ARE GLOOMY ABOUT THE FUTURE AND SOME AT LEAST WILL WISH TO SELL UP AND LEAVE, AT LEAST UNTIL THEY CAN SEE HOW THINGS ARE GOING TO DEVELOP. WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE OF A PANIC EXODUS.
3. ALL THIS HAS TO BE SEEN AGAINST THE GENERAL BACKGROUND. THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IS NOT ALONE IN BEING WORRIED ABOUT ITS POSITION OR THE FUTURE. THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS ALSO WORRIED, ESPECIALLY THE PROTESTANTS, WHO ARE IN MANY CASES CONVERTS FROM ISLAM AND WHO WERE PROFOUNDLY SHAKEN BY THE MURDER IN FEBRUARY OF THE IRANIAN PROTESTANT PRIEST IN SHIRAZ BY MOSLEM ZEALOTS, EVEN THOUGH THE CRIME WAS LATER CONDEMNED

SECRET

/BY

SECRET

BY THE MOSLEM AUTHORITIES. MUSLIM IRANIANS ARE OF COURSE ALSO UNDER PRESSURE. WE DO NOT KNOW HOW MANY ARE DETAINED THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, BUT THE NUMBER IS LIKELY TO RUN INTO THOUSANDS, AND MANY MORE ARE LYING LOW. THE POSITION OF THE JEWS IS OF COURSE COMPLICATED BY THE SUSPICION WHICH IS ESPECIALLY STRONG AT THE PRESENT TIME HERE, THAT ANY LINK, EVEN A SENTIMENTAL ONE, WITH ISRAEL, PUTS THEIR LOYALTY TO IRAN IN DOUBT. KHOMEINI HIMSELF DREW THIS DISTINCTION, BETWEEN THE JEWS AND THE ZIONISTS, WHEN ON 14 MAY HE RECEIVED A DELEGATION OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY WHICH HAD COME TO CONGRATULATE HIM ON THE SUCCESS OF THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION AND TO DECLARE THEIR LOYALTY TO IT (SEE MIFT FOR A FULLER REPORT). IT IS INEVITABLE THAT ISRAELI SYMPATHIES WILL BE QUOTED AGAINST ANY JEW WHO HAS BEEN PROSECUTED IN THE NAME OF THE REVOLUTION ON MORE GENERAL CHARGES OF CORRUPTION OR SUPPORT OF THE PREVIOUS REGIME (JUST AS GENERAL RABII, SHOT FOR MUCH WIDER REASONS, WAS ALSO ACCUSED OF BUILDING UP RELATIONS BETWEEN THE IRANIAN AIR FORCE AND ITS US COUNTERPART). THE STANDARD CRY OF THE STREETS AND THE DEMAGOGUES IS THAT ALL THE TROUBLES OF IRAN ARE ATTRIBUTABLE TO AMERICAN, BRITISH AND ZIONIST IMPERIALISM, BUT IT HAS YET TO BE SHOWN THAT ANYBODY HAS BEEN ARRESTED OR PROSECUTED ON THE GROUNDS THAT HE IS A JEW OR THAT JEWS AND JEWISH BUSINESS HAVE BEEN SUBJECTED TO MOB VIOLENCE FOR THAT REASON.

4. I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT INTERVENTION BY HMG AT PRESENT WOULD HELP THE IRANIAN JEWS. THE IRANIANS WOULD DISMISS IT AS INTERFERENCE IN THEIR TREATMENT OF THEIR OWN CITIZENS AND, AS I HAVE SAID IN THE CONTEXT OF EXECUTIONS, THEY ARE IN A DEFIANT MOOD ABOUT THEIR PROCEDURES GENERALLY. INTERVENTION BY US MIGHT FEED THE DOUBTS ABOUT THE LOYALTIES OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY HERE AND IN FACT MAKE THEIR POSITION WORSE. ACTION BY THOSE IN BETTER STANDING, E.G. THE HOLY SEE, MIGHT BE A DIFFERENT MATTER.

/s.

SECRET

5. IF WE DECIDE NEVERTHELESS THAT WE SHOULD MAKE SOME REPRESENTATIONS, I STRONGLY RECOMMEND THAT
- (A) WE SHOULD DO SO ON BEHALF OF ALL THE NON-ISLAMIC MINORITIES.,
  - (B) WE SHOULD NOT ACT IN COMPANY WITH THE US, AND
  - (C) WE SHOULD IF POSSIBLE DO IT IN COMPANY WITH OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS.

GRAHAM

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DESKBY 171700Z MAY

FROM TEHRAN 171215Z MAY 79  
TO IMMEDIATE FCO  
TELEGRAM NUMBER 608 OF 17 MAY  
INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON, PRIORITY PARIS, HOLY SEE.

*Enter with  
6/24  
18/1-*

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184

SECRET

SECRET

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SECRET

SECRET

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(B) WE SHOULD NOT ACT IN COMPANY WITH THE US, AND  
(C) WE SHOULD IF POSSIBLE DO IT IN COMPANY WITH OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS.

GRAHAM

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DESKBY 170500Z TEHRAN

FM FCO 161648Z MAY 79

TO IMMEDIATE TEHRAN

TELEGRAM NUMBER 367 OF 16 MAY

AND TO WASHINGTON, PARIS AND THE VATICAN.

YOUR TEL NO 589: PARA 4

IRAN JEWISH COMMUNITY

*Enter me  
6/20  
18/5*

1. THE PRIME MINISTER HAS RECEIVED A REQUEST FROM PRESIDENT CARTER TO JOIN IN MAKING URGENT PRIVATE REPRESENTATIONS TO IRANIAN AUTHORITIES TO HELP ASSURE THE SAFETY OF IRANIAN JEWS. THE PRESIDENT CLAIMS TO HAVE NUMEROUS REPORTS SINCE ELGHANIAN'S EXECUTION THAT PROMINENT JEWS ARE BEING ARRESTED AND ARE TO BE TRIED. THE PRESIDENT REFERS TO PREVIOUS ASSURANCES GIVEN BY KHOMEINI, BAZARGAN AND OTHERS THAT THE RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY WOULD BE PROTECTED. APPARENTLY SIMILAR APPROACHES HAVE BEEN MADE BY THE PRESIDENT TO PRESIDENT GISCARD AND THE POPE.
2. BEFORE WE DECIDE WHAT RECOMMENDATION TO PUT TO NUMBER 10 IT WOULD BE VERY HELPFUL TO HAVE YOUR VIEWS. IN YOUR TELEGRAM UNDER REFERENCE YOU GAVE A FAIRLY REASSURING PICTURE OF THE POSITION OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY ON THE BASIS OF WHICH, AND TAKING INTO ACCOUNT BROADER ASPECTS OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE IRANIAN REGIME, AN APPROACH ON BEHALF OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY AT THIS POINT MAY NOT SEEM NECESSARY. BUT WE CERTAINLY WANT TO KEEP THE POSITION OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN IRAN UNDER CAREFUL REVIEW. WE ARE ALREADY FACING CONSIDERABLE PARLIAMENTARY AND PUBLIC CONCERN OVER THE ELGHANIAN AFFAIR.
3. IF IT WERE DECIDED THAT AN INTERVENTION ON SIMILAR LINES TO THAT PROPOSED BY THE AMERICANS WAS JUSTIFIED, OUR INCLINATION WOULD BE TO TAKE UP THE SAFETY OF ALL RELIGIOUS MINORITIES, INCLUDING THE JEWS, RATHER THAN PLEADING FOR THEIR CAUSE ALONE.

*/4. YOUR*

SECRET

SECRET

4. YOUR SHOULD NOT AT THIS STAGE REVEAL THE PRESIDENT'S APPROACH TO YOUR US OR FRENCH COLLEAGUES, BUT IF YOU OR PARIS CAN DISCOVER ANYTHING OF WHAT THE FRENCH MAY HAVE IN MIND ON THE SCORE OF THE JEWS IT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO KNOW. COULD THE VATICAN MAKE SIMILAR ENQUIRIES?

5. GRATEFUL FOR A REPLY BY 171700Z.

CARRINGTON

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10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

15 May 1979

B.F. 18/5

I enclose a copy of a message to the Prime Minister from President Carter, delivered to No. 10 by the American Embassy today, proposing representations to the Iranian authorities about the protection of the Jewish community in Iran.

I should be grateful for very early advice on how the Prime Minister should respond to President Carter and on whether or not the British Government should join in the action which the President is proposing. It would be helpful if this advice could reach me by 1700 on Friday 18 May.

BGE

Paul Lever, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.



10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

15 May 1979

I am writing on the Prime Minister's behalf to thank you for your letter of 15 May with which you enclosed a message to the Prime Minister from President Carter.

I am of course bringing President Carter's message to the Prime Minister's immediate attention.

BGC

His Excellency The Hon. Kingman Brewster.



2

10 DOWNING STREET

PRIME MINISTER

Iranian Jews

You will wish to be aware of the attached message from President Carter which arrived today.

I have asked the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary for advice on your response and on whether we should join in the action which the President is proposing.

*BM*

15 May 1979

*I am very  
happy to join  
in.*

*at.*

*C-a  
Sia  
18/5*

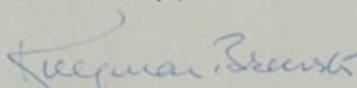
EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
LONDON

May 15, 1979

Dear Prime Minister:

I have been asked to deliver the attached message to you from President Carter, which was received at the Embassy this morning.

Sincerely,

  
Kingman Brewster  
Ambassador

The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher  
Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London, SW1

EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

LONDON



115 MAY 1974



CONFIDENTIAL

T6/79T

**SUBJECT**

SECRET

**PRIME MINISTER'S  
PERSONAL MESSAGE  
SERIAL No. T6/79(T)**

May 15, 1979

Dear Prime Minister:

I am writing to urge that you join me in making urgent private representations to the authorities in Iran to help assure the safety of Iranian Jews. We have received numerous reports since the execution of Mr. Elghanian that many prominent Jews are being arrested and that trials are planned. Because of the unsettled conditions in Iran, we believe it will require strong and courageous action by Iranian civil and religious leaders to protect the lives of members of the Jewish community. Since the revolution in February, Ayatollah Khomeini, Prime Minister Bazargan and other leaders have given assurances that the rights and freedoms of the Jewish community would be protected.

I believe it is now vital that we immediately urge Iranian authorities to confirm in practice their assurances of safety and protection for the Jewish community.

I am also writing to President Giscard D'Estaing and the Pope asking that they make similar approaches.

Sincerely,

Jimmy Carter

SECRET



END

Filmed at the National  
Archives (TNA) in London

February 2010