

# Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of India

C/o Magen Hasidim Synagogue,  
8, Morland Road,

BOMBAY.-11, INDIA.

Dated 31st May 1961.

Dear Rabbi,

I acknowledge with thanks receipt of your letter of May 25, and I hasten to explain the circumstances that led us to the action resorted to. I have absolutely no doubt that the entire World Jewry (except of course those who issued such prohibition) must be appalled at such atrocity. You could imagine our feelings on learning the news and especially when our non-Jewish friends and acquaintances taunted and ridiculed us.

There were fortunately no mass protest meetings but every person of Jewish faith, we met, pestered us with the question "what is the orthodox Union doing about this affair?" The day the reports appeared in the Press, I got in touch with Mr. Kelman and through him requested the Consul to issue a statement immediately to the Press, denying the facts as far as the Government of Israel was concerned and that he would investigate the matter. Had this been done, there would have appeared very few or no letters in the Press, condemning the decision and the silence of the Government, over such a touching issue. He did issue one after eight days, which slightly worsened matters (copy enclosed).

A meeting of the Executive was convened and a resolution adopted, which was released to the Local Press with the sole intention of toning down the agitation of the masses. Fortunately, Rabbi Gotthold sent me the following telegram, which though vague, somewhat relaxed the tension on being released to the Press.

RESOLUTION OF UNION ORTHODOX JEWISH CONGREGATIONS OF MAY SEVENTEENTH BASED ON UNFOUNDED MISLEADING INFORMATION STOP ALLEGATIONS ABOUT ISRAEL JEWISH RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES DECISION VICIOUS AND DANGEROUS FABRICATION PLEASE CORRECT YOUR MISINFORMATION SHALOM GOTTHOLD MINISTRY FOR RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS.



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The report appeared in the French Press in the first instance and was carried by the Press Trust of India in the Indian Express (not the Times of India). But the French papers appear to have picked up the news from the Israeli papers like the 'Haaretz' and 'Jerusalem Post'. The J.Post reported that the office of the Chief Rabbinate did not comment, when asked by Reporters.

On Monday, the 29th a meeting of the Presidents of all religious bodies was convened by Mr.E.E.Jhirad of New Delhi, (where I was invited, may be because I am also Jhirad). When, it was agreed to form an action Committee to appeal to the R.C.A., the Chief Rabbinate, England, and the World Jewish Congress, etc. to intervene and set right the matters. It might please you to note, dear Rabbi, that it has also been agreed not to issue any communication to the Press but seek clarification from Israel on the issue. Dr.Hattis, who represented the J.R.U.stated emphatically that if there was any possibility of the said decision of those few Rabbis revised/rescinded, it would be possible only through the good offices of the Orthodox Section of the World Jewry.

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The main reason, the UOJCI appealed to the Israeli Government, was that if they accepted the Bene-Israel as citizens on their migrating to Israel in accordance with the Law of Return, then the decision of those Rabbis in accepting the Bene-Israel as full fledged Jews, was violating the said Law.

I have taken the liberty of replying you without consulting my colleagues (though I have conveyed your confidential message to them) but allow me to assure you on solemn oath that we all have complete and implicit faith in you and the UOJCA and we are all confident that you will bring us all safely to shore from amongst this storm of conflict.

I close with my humble prayers to the Almighty to give you strength, long life and success in all your ventures.

With all best wishes.

Most sincerely yours,

*A.D.Jhirad*  
(A.D.JHIRAD)

Rabbi Norman Lamm  
The Jewish Center, 131 West, 86th Street,  
New York, 24, N.Y., U.S.A.

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P.S. : Samuel Aaron, the student for Rabbinate leaves for Israel tonight. The student for the American University has applied for the Forms.

P.P.S. : I have despatched today separately by Airmail Book Post the bulletin published by Mr. B.B.Benjamin. Could it be possible to have your or the UOJCA's comments on the points raised by Mr. Benjamin ?



50, Pedder Road,  
Cumballa Hill,  
Bombay 26.

CONSULATE OF ISRAEL

19th May, 1961.

Dear Sir,

In view of the recent article in the press about the Benei-Israel community who have emigrated to Israel, and further to our letter of 15-5-1961 in this connection, I wish to bring to your notice the following facts:

1. Members of the Benei Israel community in Israel are, and have always been regarded as jews by both the Government of Israel and the Rabbinical Authorities, nor is there any question of their purity. Moreover, the very fact that they are enjoying the right to emigrate to Israel under the provision of Law of Return, as any other jew elsewhere, proves their unquestionable jewishness.
2. In Israel as in many other countries marriage ceremonies of members of various communities are performed by their Religious Authorities. The Government having no jurisdiction, has no authority to decide on this matter. The Benei Israel community in Israel, as other communities, is also subjected to the Jewish Religious Authorities, as far as religious ceremonies are concerned, a fact which again proves undoubtedly their jewishness.
3. In their country of origin there was little encouragement given to marriages between members of Benei Israel communities and other jewish communities. In fact such marriages rarely took place. This custom was imported to Israel and whilst a few Rabbis have seen fit to follow this tradition, the others have not, and for that reason marriages of Benei Israel jews with jews of other communities are performed.
4. With the election of a new Chief Rabbinate it is hoped that the problem will be brought to its attention.
5. I am authorised by my Government to state that there is no, there has never been, and never will be, any question of discrimination of any community in Israel.

Yours sincerely,

*Y. Yatin*

(Michael Th. Michael)

Consul General of Israel