

FCO/ETHIOPIA P/A

2/28/80

memorandum

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

date February 28, 1980
to Bert Gold
from Abe Karlikow
subject Falashas

Just briefly to sum up some of the contradictory aspects of the Falasha issue.

Twelve more Falashas have arrived in Israel. I presume that these are from the Sudan, but am checking. (This is under censorship.)

Enclosed is the copy of a note from David Aaron. It is quite discouraging, as you will note, in its estimation of what can be done from the U.S. or Western side.

I learned in Israel that the meeting between the Berger-Halpern contact man and the Israelis, in Rome, brought no real change. The Israelis claim they knew a good part of the names on the contact man's list; and he, they said, was anxious to dissociate himself from Halpern and his concepts. Resnikoff got the message to me that he hears the Falashas plan a Passover hunger strike both in the U.S. and in Israel. The message did not indicate why. I already have told Bayer, and informed him we did not think Jewish groups should cooperate with this. I also informed him that we brought up the matter with Begin, who had given a vague, general answer that Israel was acting; and that we had been informed that Falashas would be sent into the Sudan to work on the problem. (We should check with Wishner. I believe he said they would be sent into Ethiopia itself; but Dominitz told me it would be the Sudan.)

I have informed you re Porvan, and JDC.

A delegation composed of Al Moses, Bookie, Brant Coopersmith and Representative Stephen Solarz met with Kenya president Daniel Moi Arap. (The main subject pressed was Kenyan recognition of Israel, with Arap saying he would consider their arguments; Moses is writing a report.) Coopersmith brought up the Falashas, and the Kenyans reacted positively and asked for a memo, which I am furnishing Brant.

ASK/anc
Att.

cc: David Geller
Mark Mintz

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

February 11, 1980

Dear Mr. Karlikow:

I welcomed the opportunity to meet with you in Philadelphia, as well as your January 21 letter, regarding the situation of the Falashas.

I enclose for your information a report based on a visit by an Embassy official to Gondar region last summer.

Our Embassy is unable to accurately determine how many Falashas wish to emigrate from Ethiopia. There has also been a long-standing opposition by both the Haile Selassie and Mengistu regimes to emigration of any kind, which regretablely makes the prospects bleak for achieving anything here.

External criticism of Ethiopia's human rights policies has so far been ineffective. Regretablely, the U.S. has little or no influence on Ethiopia's foreign or domestic policies. Thus, in our judgment, any effort to obtain Falasha emigration which seeks mass emigration of all the Falasha people, and relies heavily on Western public pressure has -- unfortunately -- virtually no prospect for success, and it is our considered view that a general demarche by the U.S. government at this time would in fact make any Falasha emigration even less likely.

Yet it is possible that the Ethiopian government would be responsive to individual requests from Falashas already in Israel that their families be permitted to join them. The U.S. appealed successfully to Chairman Mengistu in 1978 to resolve a number of Ethio-American family reunification cases. As you know, Soviet Jewish emigration to Israel is on the basis of family reunification.

We have told the Israeli government that we are prepared, within our laws and in a manner consistent with our own interests and values, to support Israeli efforts. Our Embassy in Addis has been directed to report fully and regularly, and we are continuing to gather information on this complex matter and to consider what more we might do.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "David Aaron", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

David Aaron
Deputy Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs

Enclosure

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