

PALCOR NEWS AGENCY

PALESTINE TELEGRAPHIC SERVICE

Telegrams: Palcor London.
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Monday, 14th July, 1947.

TWO KIDNAPPED SOLDIERS

Hostages for Condemned Jews

Jerusalem, July 12 (Palcor Agency).

Two British soldiers were kidnapped on Saturday by members of the Irgun Zvai Leumi, as hostages for the three condemned Jews. The following official details are given: Two men were walking with a Jewish friend who is described as a clerk, near the Cafe Rimon in Nathania, when a car drove up and a number of armed Jews jumped out. The N.C.O.s wore civilian clothes and, together with their Jewish friend, they were dragged inside the car. It is believed that the two N.C.O.s were chloroformed and one of them was struck on the head while struggling. The Jew was blindfolded.

After driving for some time, the statement says, the Jew was told to get out of the car and he left under the guard of two captors while the taxi with the two Britons, drove away. After some time the car returned and the Jew was closely questioned whether he really was a Jew. When the kidnapers were satisfied that this was so, he was pushed into the car again and driven to an orange grove where - still blindfolded - he was bound to a tree and told not to move until dawn.

The local Council of the Nathania Township has appealed to all inhabitants to assist in the search for the kidnapped men and their liberation. Haganah has been called out in the Nathania district and is engaged in active search operations.

The Kidnapped

The names and employment of the kidnapped men are not yet officially released, but it is learnt that both are Sergeants in the Intelligence Service which explains the fact that they were wearing civilian clothes. Their Jewish companion was Abraham Weinberg, a clerk in the Military Leave Camp at Nathania, with whom they had spent the evening in a cafe.

The Mayor of Nathania, Mr. Benami, was twice summoned during the day by Commander of the District, Brigadier Moore, and was informed that the whole population might be "inconvenienced" by measures necessary, if the two kidnapped ^{men} did not return immediately. Searches are going on throughout the area and many settlements have been cordoned off. However, so far no results have been achieved. The Jewish Mayor, in a statement to the population, says that kidnapping endangers the last chance for a reprieve of the three men who have been condemned to death.

THREAT OF MARTIAL LAW

Haganah's Difficulties

Jerusalem, July 13 (Palcor Agency).

Large-scale Army searches were going on throughout the day in various localities near Nathania, the most thorough being carried on in the Sharon valley and including the settlements of Yehudah, Tel Zur and Beth Yehoshua.

P.T.O.

14th July, 1947.

Army searches are said to interfere greatly with the Haganah's efforts to find the two kidnapped British sergeants, especially as among the places searched are even kibbutzim whose members are engaged in the Haganah action, like Mishmar Ha'sharon, Kfar Chajim, and Maabarot, all in the Emek Hefer.

Current rumours in Nathania say that the Army intend to impose martial law on the area, if the two kidnapped sergeants are not found soon.

A later message states that the army intend to declare Nathania as "a protected area" (a form of martial law) from noon to-morrow, if the two kidnapped police N.C.O.s are not returned till then.

Emergency Supplies

The local Council to-night held an emergency meeting to prepare for dealing with the supply situation which is at present described as good. The area likely to be put under martial law is apparently intended to be a small one, ranging from Avi Chajil, north of Nathania, to Ramath Tiomkin in the south.

The so-called "High Command" of the Irgun Zvai Leumi in a secret broadcast states that the two British soldiers will not be released unless the death sentences on the three Jews are revoked.

POLICE RAID FACTORY IN TEL-AVIV

Jerusalem, July 11 (Palcor Agency).

About 9.30 this morning, military and police visited the Karasher Barzel Engineering Works, at Levant Fair, Tel-Aviv, and the 24 employees who were present were made to remain at their benches and carry on with their work during the ensuing search.

Large quantities of precision tools, screws, bolts and jewels were found as well as numerous parts of sten guns, sten-gun blueprints and other sten components. During the inspection of the workshops a Jew was found working on a milling machine, fluting a cap used in sten-gun rrel extensions, it is alleged.

Other reports state that ordinary, legitimate work was being done at the factory, but nevertheless all 24 workers were detained for interrogation and the works was closed and placed under military guard. The shop is situated close to the R.E.M.E. Workshops.

Police Report Ridiculed

It is learnt in Haganah circles that the police report according to which "a Haganah factory" was discovered in the Levant Fair Ground, Tel-Aviv, is ridiculous. These circles say that all the police found in the factory were normal machine parts, without any connection with weapon manufacture, and that what the police described as sten-gun parts were in reality nothing of the sort.

The "witch hunt" now going on throughout the country for "Haganah factories" was a chase after shadows hardly calculated to quieten the country, and is only resulting in the shutting down of harmless enterprises.

WORKERS RELEASED

Jerusalem, July 12 (Palcor Agency).

Of the 24 workers arrested yesterday in the alleged "Haganah factory" 21 have been released on £50 bail each. The workshop however is still closed.

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Wednesday, 16th July, 1947.

15,000 JEWS UNDER MARTIAL LAW

Nathanya Declared A Controlled Area

Jerusalem, July 14 (Palcor Agency).

The search for the two kidnapped British N.C.O's having proved unavailing, the Nathanya area has been declared a "controlled area" (Martial Law area) beginning from 7 o'clock this evening. The official communique issued gives as a reason for the action not only the kidnapping but recites a number of other incidents in that area. It recalls that on the 29th December, 1946, a British officer was kidnapped and flogged; on the 1st March, 1947, three vehicles were blown up and military camps at Beith Lid and Kfar Yona were attacked with mortars and small arms fire; on the 18th April, 1947, an Army Medical Station was attacked, the sentry murdered and the medical inspection room blown up; on April 20th, 1947 six soldiers were injured when the cinema in a convalescent home was blown up, and on July 12th two N.C.O's were kidnapped. The communique says that Martial Law was imposed "to facilitate a thorough search of the area and prevent further activities of the nature enumerated above."

The area under Martial Law comprises about six square miles and the main Jewish settlements within it are Ramath Tionkin, Havzeloth Ha'sharon, Givat Shapira, Avi-Chail and Beith Yitzhak. It may be noted that the term now employed by the Army is "Controlled Area" according to the amendment to the Emergency Regulations published a few months ago. This, however, is only a change of name as de facto it is still Martial Law.

Town Cut Off

Jerusalem, July 15. (Palcor Agency).

The imposition of Martial Law started with the troops of the First Guard Brigade ^{which} surrounded Nathanya in a loose cordon for the last 26 hours, moving in, closing the cordon by erecting barbed wire fences round the area's perimeter. A strict road and house curfew is enforced, there are no buses, no telephones and no telegraph; all civil courts except the Coroner's have been closed and a military court has been installed. There will be no newspapers until the curfew is lifted.

During the last hours before the curfew the cattle was moved into the town and sufficient flour for a fortnight's bread supply was provided. The Municipality, as well as the citizens, were getting ready for a prolonged siege but there was no panic in buying.

Last Appeal

The Army calls this action "Operation Tiger" and the Mayor of Nathanya, Mr. Benami, terms it "collective punishment." In a last minute appeal to the High Commissioner, the Mayor telegraphed: "I am making this last appeal to you not to impose collective punishment on the majority of the population on whose behalf I gave all humanly possible assistance to find clues to discover the two kidnapped British N.C.O's. Martial Law will antagonise the whole community, and I pray that you will avoid such disaster."

P.T.O.

16th July, 1947.

The Town Clerk of Nathanya, ex-British Army Major Menachem Arkin, who was once Military Mayor of Tripoli, told local journalists: "Putting the whole community under such a strain will not help the British in finding the two kidnapped men. The population is not alarmed. They feel that this thing will also pass like so much else we have stood. It is just one more experience in our history."

The allegation that the objective of the imposition of Martial Law was collective punishment was strenuously denied at a press conference at the Army Head Quarters in Tel-Aviv to-night. The sole intention, it was stated, was to find the two kidnapped men.

A Civil Affairs Advisory Council has been set up, comprising representatives of the Army, British Government officials and the Jewish District Officer who are provided with special passes allowing them in and out of the controlled area. Journalists are allowed into the area only when accompanied by a conducting officer.

Kidnapped M.C.O's Outside Besieged Area

The Mayor of Nathanya, Mr. Benami, to-day told the military authorities that he had definite information that the two kidnapped British sergeants were not within the sealed-off area but "at some fortified place elsewhere."

From six o'clock onwards, troops augmented by Arab Legionaries carried out searching operations over the entire area, whilst the population of 15,000 in and around Nathanya is still besieged since curfew was imposed at 7 p.m. last night. It is hoped that they will be permitted to leave their homes for a few hours early to-morrow for shopping.

Round-Up And Arrests

During the searches all men up to the age of 45 were rounded up at three interrogation points where they were subjected to the most minute inspection, several of them being detained for further questioning. While shopkeepers had to open their premises for close searches inside, no goods, not even food, were allowed to be purchased.

It is now officially reported that eleven wanted men, among them one "top-ranking" leader and sixty-eight suspects, were arrested as result of screening of 1,224 people at Nathanya today. It is stated that half of the cordoned area has been searched.

The official reports from the beleaguered area are somewhat dramatic and unusually detailed. Only half-an-hour after announcing the arrest of eleven "wanted men", among them one "top-ranking", the official announcement has been amended to read as follows: "Fifteen wanted men have been arrested among them two top ranking and one second-grade," whatever that may mean.

The official announcements are being taken with a grain of salt and it is pointed out that the imposition of Martial Law was generally known 26 hours in advance and it was therefore unlikely that any "top-ranking" terrorists would have remained in the area. The statement by Mayor Benami that he knew that the kidnapped men were not in the area is generally believed.

The latest official figures say that the number of suspected men arrested in Nathanya is 68, but that they "included" the fifteen "wanted men" who were arrested and among them there are still "two top-rankers and one second-grader".