

HUMAN RIGHTS

(Continued from Page 1)

would accuse Israel of "systematic torture" in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. State Department spokesman Hodding Carter told reporters after the story appeared that "instances of mistreatment" have occurred but "the State Department has no evidence of systematic torture."

The allegations in the Washington Post were based on two cables prepared by Alexandra U. Johnson, a junior foreign service officer, who had served in the U.S. Consulate in East Jerusalem last year. She was recently "selected out" of the Department. Miss Johnson, who was assigned to interview visa applicants for admission to the U.S., was reportedly engaged to a Palestinian at one time. She apparently made the allegations from interviews she had with Arabs.

Following the newspaper reports, the Israeli Embassy here issued a statement vigorously denying the charges. "Israel respects human rights, does not engage in torture and cannot but therefore come to the conclusion that the dissemination of such allegations through the media stem from anti-Israeli political motivations," the statement declared.

The Embassy stressed that "Suspects arrested by Israeli authorities accused of actual terrorist activities, including murder, assault and bombing, are dealt with by due process of law and the International Red Cross is granted access to them within 14 days of their arrest." The Embassy noted that Alexander Hay, the president of the International Red Cross, has expressed his "satisfaction" with this right to visit the prisoners. In Jerusalem, Justice Minister Meir Tamir denounced the charges of torture as "evil slander" against Israel. "There is no torture in Israel's prisons and there never has been," he declared. Tamir invited international jurists and representatives of "fair and neutral countries" to come to Israel and see for themselves. He said U.S. Congressional committees, judges, lawyers and "people of standing" would also be welcome to study prison conditions.

Premier Menachem Begin expressed "amazement" that the Washington Post made charges which he said were "totally baseless." He noted that similar charges were published in the London Sunday Times and Israel has "proven that these are inventions of our enemies."

BRITISH BLACKLIST OF INS. COMPANIES

LONDON (WNS) -- More than 70 British and foreign insurance companies are on an Arab blacklist being circulated by the British Bank of the Middle East.

The bank, which finances a large amount of trade in the Middle East, has confirmed it has provided the list to its correspondents with the advice that they should not use the firms in business with the Persian Gulf

state of Abu Dhabi. "Please be advised that the insurance companies listed below are blacklisted by the Israeli Boycott Office and in consequence no insurance policies or certificates issued by them can be accepted by us," the warning said. It was written on the letterheads of the bank's Abu Dhabi branch.

ISRAELITE ADS PAY

CAMP DAVID TALKS

WASH. (WNS) -- The United States has invited Israel and Egypt to hold ministerial talks on the Israeli-Egyptian peace agreement at Camp David later this month.

This meeting will be the first such talks since the two sides bogged down in a dispute over Egyptian demands in December. The talk will presumably be conducted between Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan and Egyptian Prime Minister Mustapha Khalil. U.S. Ambassador Samuel Lewis officially presented the invitation to Premier Menachem Begin Feb. 7. The Israeli Cabinet was expected to have a full scale debate on the invitation, although both Israel and Egypt are expected to accept.

One issue to be debated by the Cabinet is Dayan's demands that he be given more authority in the negotiations so that he would not have to clear every point with the Cabinet. But several Ministers are expected to demand that the Foreign Minister be barred from making any concessions or operative proposals without first getting Cabinet approval.

Meanwhile, the Carter Administration has come under attack from American Jews for its Middle East policy. The National Executive of the B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation League adopted a resolution at its meeting in Palm Beach, Fla., accusing the Administration of hampering the peace process by "its policy of exerting pressure on Israel." The statement urged "President Carter to apply diplomacy forceful

RESUME THIS MONTH

to convince Arab countries to support the peace process by making clear to them that Israel is a fact

of life in the Middle East, all countries in the region will be best served by living together in peace." The ADL stressed that the

situation in Iran shows the U.S. need for "strong and stable allies in the region" as in Israel.

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