

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, May 18, 1983

The House met at 2 p.m.

● (1405)

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S.O. 21

[English]

HUMAN RIGHTS

SYRIA—DENIAL OF EMIGRATION RIGHTS TO JEWISH CITIZENS

Mr. Roland de Corneille (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Veterans Affairs): Madam Speaker, approximately 4,500 Jews live in Syria. Syria is the only Arab country which, since 1948, has never officially permitted its Jewish citizens to leave. Alone among Arab countries, the Syrian Government continues to hold its Jewish community hostage.

The dashing of all hopes for legal emigration, combined with the deteriorating situation in Syria, has prompted Syrian Jews to turn in desperation to illegal avenues of escape. These illegal attempts to escape have led to arrests, harsh interrogation and long imprisonment of those caught by the authorities or suspected of aiding others to leave. Syria certainly would be especially opposed to the emigration of its Jews to Israel.

Even if they could get out, we must ask the awful question, as in the days before the Holocaust, "Where then could such refugees go?" I suggest that this is a subject of humanitarian and urgent concern to which Canada should direct its attention. There are various things we can look to our Government to do in addition to its present efforts. We should intensify our monitoring and surveillance of the situation. We should try to remind Syria of its obligations under the United Nations Charter of Human Rights to allow freedom of emigration. We should let Syria know that we are ready to open our doors in a special way to receive Syrian Jews in Canada, and we should encourage the many Canadian sponsors who are ready and willing to receive and support them to come forth.

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PENITENTIARIES

EDMONTON INSTITUTION—SECURITY STAFF GRIEVANCES

Mr. Peter Elzinga (Pembina): Madam Speaker, it has been well in excess of one year that I have been continuously bringing to the attention of the Solicitor General (Mr. Kaplan) concerns relating to the Edmonton maximum security institution and the security aspects of that institution. Those concerns

were started initially with the escape of Harvey Andre from the Edmonton maximum institution.

My specific concerns relate not only to the prison guards but also to the individuals who live around the institution. The prison guards have consistently asked for an audience with the Solicitor General so that they might relate directly to him their concerns in order that both the security of the prison guards and of the residents will be secured, concerns such as the inadequacy of the electric fence package in place in the maximum institution at Edmonton which cost in excess of \$1 million, the lack of arms being granted to those posted at hazardous posts within the institution, and the overcrowding of a number of the bunking facilities whereby two inmates are now housed where there should only be one.

The new duty schedules have not only caused a loss of family time, but have broken up traditional squads that have worked together. Unfortunately these pleas have fallen on deaf ears when they are communicated to the Solicitor General's Department in Ottawa. Local management has been very—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

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HUMAN RIGHTS

CHILE—PLIGHT OF POLITICAL DETAINEES

Mr. Bob Ogle (Saskatoon East): Madam Speaker, last week in Santiago, Chile, and in many other Chilean cities there were mass arrests of people who have been held without trial. Although some of them have been released, Amnesty International still says there are hundreds who are being held under a special provision of the Pinochet Constitution of 1981 which says that for 20 days they may be detained without charge. During this period of time Amnesty is afraid that there will be torture, as has taken place in that country before.

At this time I call upon the Government of Canada to use every possible method that it can to bring pressure on the Chilean Government to give out a complete list of the detainees to make sure that those who are being held will come before competent courts or be released immediately, and that they all be treated humanely while they are in prison. I also ask the Cabinet to reconsider a decision made by the National Energy Board to send 440,000 barrels of oil to Chile. I ask that that sale be seriously looked at again and stopped until the human rights situation in Chile improves.