This submission in itself should not be understood as an endorsement of the "Commission of Inquiry," including its mandate. I would like to offer information regarding the “underlying root causes of recurrent tensions, instability and protraction of conflict in and between the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel; as well as systematic discrimination and repression based on national, ethnic, racial or religious identity."

My name is Varda Meyers Epstein and I would like to tell you about my husband’s cousin, Jacob (Yaacov) Wexler, who was murdered in the 1929 Hebron Massacre because of his religious identity as a Jew.

Jackie, as he was known, grew up in Chicago, where he was a promising student at the Hebrew Theological College. During a family visit to British Mandate Palestine, 16-year-old Jackie begged to stay in order to study at the famed Slobodka Yeshiva (seminary) in Hebron. Jackie’s father Richard, after being reassured by American students already at the seminary that Jackie would be safe and well taken care of, consented to allow his son to stay and fully immerse himself in his Torah studies.

During his time at the yeshiva, Jackie was happy. In a letter to his parents he praised the yeshiva and his life in the Land of Israel. "I've never experienced happiness my whole life as in *Simchat Torah*\*in Hebron," he wrote.

In August of 1929, the Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin El Husseini, preached from the Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem that the Jews planned to take control of the site. The Jews had no such plans and in any event, had no power. The British were in charge and they favored the Arabs. But the rumor that the Jews planned to take over the Mount was all that was needed to incite the Arab masses to violence.

The Mufti’s words unleashed a wave of pogroms beginning in Jerusalem and spreading to other cities. Angry Arab mobs stormed Safed and Hebron, massacring more than 100 Jews. Jackie Wexler, of Chicago, now 17, was one of the 67 Jews murdered in Hebron. Like the others, Jackie was murdered because he was a Jew.

There is documentation of what happened in Hebron. There were decapitations, gouged-out eyes, rapes, members cut off and stuffed into body cavities, limbs and digits sliced off, the heads of babies bashed against ancient walls. Women, babies, young children, and the elderly were all murdered. Jackie died from an axe blow to the head. All of these people were murdered because of their religious identity. They were murdered because they were Jews.

No one should be murdered because of their religious identity, no matter where they live. No young person should be murdered because of their religious identity while studying abroad at a seminary, no matter where that seminary is located. Jackie Wexler’s story is just one of many. Jews were killed because they were Jews before there was a state called “Israel.” Jews continue to be targeted in their own state in Arab terror attacks, only because they are Jews.

This is tragic. It is systematic discrimination based on religious identity—worse yet, it is *murder*, every time it happens—and it is plainly wrong.

In sharing this true story of a family member who was targeted and murdered in the city of Hebron because of his religious identity, I hope to add to the body of information examined by your “Commission of Inquiry.”

Further information and sources are listed below my signature.

Sincerely,

Varda Meyers Epstein

A photo of Jacob Wexler, circa 1929, is attached to this message.

A Western Union telegram telling Jackie’s parents that they should prepare themselves “for the worst,” can be seen here: [https://www.kedem-auctions.com/en/content/letters-yaacov-wexler-%E2%80%93-murdered-1929-massacre-yeshivat-hebron](https://mailtrack.io/trace/link/eeab784473bc53cbdd45c251004ae7ef378b4109?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.kedem-auctions.com%2Fen%2Fcontent%2Fletters-yaacov-wexler-%25E2%2580%2593-murdered-1929-massacre-yeshivat-hebron&userId=1486845&signature=6cae3dc4d787808f)

A list of the 67 murdered Jews of Hebron can be seen here: [http://en.hebron.org.il/history/520](https://mailtrack.io/trace/link/9282ea46b350d9f5b34764bda6e3dfaa47152fe8?url=http%3A%2F%2Fen.hebron.org.il%2Fhistory%2F520&userId=1486845&signature=2bf0357f4a673a6c)

Eyewitness testimonies from survivors regarding the Hebron Massacre can be seen here: [http://hebron1929.info/Hebronletter.html](https://mailtrack.io/trace/link/88304ce1cd6ae832ac9272c99bf2e477e6405b5a?url=http%3A%2F%2Fhebron1929.info%2FHebronletter.html&userId=1486845&signature=1342cfb6922be703)

\*Simchat Torah is a Jewish holiday that celebrates the yearly completion of the Torah as the new cycle is begun. The name of the holiday translates to “Rejoicing of the Torah.” See: [https://www.britannica.com/topic/Simchat-Torah](https://mailtrack.io/trace/link/4762bd07e2dbe9dec49acc8a24bafbfb6607f005?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.britannica.com%2Ftopic%2FSimchat-Torah&userId=1486845&signature=805942c02cba8eb4)

