Religious Factor in Middle East
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Letters to The Times

with which Egypt is still technically at war and several thousand Jews of Egyptian nationality loyal to Egypt."

We beseech all Americans professing genuine interest in the Middle East to make the same distinction, in order not to really "aggravate existing conditions" by introducing into the conflict, directly or indirectly, a religious factor which would be more infuriating to an already grave condition. Otherwise, they are doing no better than adding fuel to the now smoldering fire.

ABDELMONEM SHAKER,
Writer, Lecturer and Teacher of Islamic Culture.
New York, Feb. 10, 1955.

Religious Factor in Middle East

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES:

Your recent editorial "Middle East Setbacks" as well as continuing accounts in your news columns of the Zionist leaders expressing indignation at the execution in Egypt of two spies, persistently being identified by their religion, call for clarification.

The fact that these convicted spies were of the Jewish faith should be of no significance here. It is, of course, understandable that Zionists should seek to perpetuate their thesis that all Jews, regardless of nationality, share national rights in and obligation to Israel. This Zionist purpose, however, endangers peace in the Middle East, and directly contravenes expressed American interest in that vital area. Former Assistant Secretary of State Henry Byroade made this clear when he warned the Israelis, and for that matter all the Zionists, not to look upon Israel "as a headquarters—or a nucleus, so to speak —of world-wide groupings of people of a particular religious faith who must have special rights within and obligations to the Israeli State."

It is an established fact, as far as the Arabs are concerned, that the Palestine problem has no religious basis whatsoever. This fact is confirmed by unbiased reports from the United Nations, different Governments, especially the United States, as well as prominent individuals from all faiths, groups and newspapers.

Your own correspondent, Robert Doty, reported from Cairo that a clear distinction was made between the religion of the defendants and their offenses. "Throughout the trial," he wrote on Jan. 28, "as in Egyptian public and private life a distinction was carefully drawn by the prosecution between Jews serving the interests of a foreign state

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