

United Nations
**GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**



THIRTY-FOURTH SESSION
Official Records *

SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
6th meeting
held on
Wednesday, 17 October 1979
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 6th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. EL-CHOUFI (Syrian Arab Republic)

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IN THE NEAR EAST

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79-57572

Distr. GENERAL
A/SPC/34/SP.6
26 October 1979
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 50: UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (A/34/13, A/34/480, A/34/549, A/34/567)

1. The CHAIRMAN said that in addition to those documents already announced, the Committee would have before it, under sections E and F of General Assembly resolution 33/112, two reports from the Secretary-General. A/34/517 dealt with Palestine refugees in the Gaza Strip, and A/34/518 dealt with population and refugees displaced since 1967. Letters from the United Arab Emirates (A/34/293), Israel (A/34/337) and Jordan (A/34/281 and A/34/298) and letters from the Secretary-General (A/34/339 and A/34/340) had also been circulated under the item.

2. Mr. RYDBECK (Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) said that the experience he had acquired at first hand and the contacts he had had since he had assumed his responsibilities, had convinced him of the very important role which UNRWA played in the general scheme of things in the Near East. The consequences would be extremely serious if, for financial reasons, UNRWA were unable to continue its operations at least at the current level. The Palestine refugees were people without a country of their own, waiting for the day when they would have one again. In the meantime UNRWA, on behalf of the international community, provided them with services in the fields of education, health and welfare which their own Government would provide if they had one. It was not necessary to stress the importance of those services from a humanitarian point of view. It should be pointed out, however, that because of the quasi-governmental nature of the services that UNRWA provided for many Palestinians, acknowledged status as a refugee under UNRWA rules had come to acquire the character of an internationally recognized proof of their Palestinian identity, ensuring their right of return to their homes or to compensation in accordance with a series of General Assembly resolutions.

3. As his predecessors had emphasized, emergency programmes of relief for situations where refugees were in desperate immediate need of food, shelter and clothing were no longer the principal concern of UNRWA. Nevertheless, the Agency did mount such programmes when necessary, as in southern Lebanon in 1978 and in 1979. UNRWA's main activities had long been fully institutionalized. They provided part of the social framework for the refugees about half of whom were born as refugees and were under 20 years of age. It should also be clear to everyone what the social and political consequences would be if UNRWA were dismantled partly or wholly, without any arrangement having been agreed upon for an orderly transfer of its services to Governments and authorities in the areas where the refugees lived.

4. UNRWA served the Palestine refugees under a mandate given by the General Assembly, pending a political solution to the Palestinian problem. Any cessation of its services, before a political solution had been arrived at, would hit the refugees hard - particularly the young, who would be deprived of the education which ensured opportunities for the future. It would also be seen by all Palestinians as

a failure of the international community to meet its moral and political obligations towards them. In such a highly politically charged area, that would have very serious consequences. It would add one more disruptive element to an already unstable situation. The search for lasting peace based on the recognition of the rights of all peoples of the region would receive a severe setback. It had always been assumed that the achievement of a solution to the Palestine problem in the context of an over-all Near East peace settlement, should lead to the dissolution of UNRWA and to the transfer of its responsibilities and installations to Governments in the area of its operations. No over-all peace settlement had yet been achieved in the Near East. Any decision by Governments that the time had come to wind up the activities of UNRWA would represent a major change in policy. Any such change should come as the result of deliberate policy decisions, not as a by-product of a failure to meet UNRWA's financial needs. It was inconceivable that the world community should allow the Agency simply to collapse because of insufficient funds.

5. As was explained in section B of the introduction to the annual report (A/34/13), UNRWA's programmes had developed in a pragmatic fashion to meet the needs of the Palestine refugees, as those had been determined over the nearly 30 years of UNRWA's existence. UNRWA had become in the course of time an institution predominantly concerned with education, to which it would devote 55.5 per cent of its income in 1979. Twenty-five per cent would be spent on relief, including the distribution of rations, and 16 per cent on health services. The bulk of the Agency's income would continue to be spent on education, and an irreducible amount on health services. The Agency intended to concentrate its relief funds on the poorest section of the Palestine refugee population, which had no other means of support. The only food commodities that the Agency was distributing were those it received in kind. Sufficient funds were not available to purchase additional commodities. As a result, the flour component of the basic ration had been reduced by more than half to roughly five kilos a month. Only the really poor could apply for the full 10 kilos of the original basic ration.

6. Turning to some of the other subjects raised in the introduction to the annual report, he recalled that the situation in Lebanon had been the cause of great anxiety during the period covered by the report, as indicated in paragraph 26. Since 30 June 1979 large numbers of Palestinians and Lebanese had continued to flee from southern Lebanon. Depending on the frequency and severity of military action, up to 50,000 Palestine refugees had at any one time been displaced between the camps and their homes in southern Lebanon, particularly in the area of Tyre and Nabatieh. Emergency programmes of assistance to the displaced refugees had been organized by the Agency, including the distribution of food-stuffs and health services.

7. Population movements had seriously disrupted teaching programmes. The situation in the occupied territories had also interrupted the Agency's activities, particularly in some schools and training centres, such as Ramallah (A/34/13, para. 27) which, fortunately, had been able to reopen. The student population in Agency schools and training centres could obviously not be insulated from the political emotions that ran through the Arab population at large.

(Mr. Rydbeck)

8. Relations between the Agency administration and the staff unions had at times during the reporting period been strained. The cause had mainly been differences on remuneration (Introduction, paras. 28 and 29). The Agency had had the difficult choice of maintaining the purchasing power of staff pay, or of minimizing the cutback of services to the refugees. In 1978 and the first three quarters of 1979 the decision had gone in favour of the programmes, at the expense of increases in pay to match the ever-rising cost of living. In the last quarter of 1979, however, some increases in staff remuneration had been approved. He hoped that the new round of negotiations between the Administration and the staff representatives, opening in Amman on 17 October, would lead to an equitable agreement. The Agency's locally engaged staff numbered about 16,500, almost all of them Palestine refugees. While they gave devoted service to their own community through their employment with UNRWA, it was not right that they should be called upon indefinitely to bear the brunt of the Agency's lack of sufficient income.

9. The headquarters of the Agency was still divided between Vienna and Amman. The Vienna staff of about 250 had moved to the Vienna International Centre in August and September. He would give due consideration to General Assembly resolution 33/112, which called upon the Agency to reconsolidate its headquarters in the area of operations as soon as practicable. As his predecessor had pointed out, practicability encompassed considerations of cost and security, the duration of the Agency's mandate, and the facilities required by the Agency's headquarters as communicated to the Syrian and Jordanian Governments in May 1978. He was ready to consult with any of the host Governments which so desired with a view to establishing the Agency's headquarters in one of the capitals in the region. The most appropriate forum for discussion of the matter would be the Advisory Commission, of which all three host Governments were members.

10. The Agency's financial situation was somewhat better than that described in paragraph 18 of the introduction to the annual report. Estimated income for 1979 was \$143.1 million against an adjusted budget of \$166.8 million, giving an estimated deficit of \$23.7 million. That deficit would be covered by reductions in expenditure of a magnitude designed to bring expenditure and income into balance. That meant that improvements in staff salaries in line with cost of living increases, and the cost of restoring the basic rations to formerly established levels would have to be dropped from the budget. The Agency had entered 1979 without sufficient foreseeable income to cover the costs of the lower secondary cycle of education after the summer holidays. Additional income had enabled the Agency to assure its financing until the end of 1979, but the prospects for 1980 were extremely grim. Members of the Committee had heard successive Commissioners-General cry "wolf" before, and might listen to his statement with some scepticism. Unlike the boy in the fairy tale who cried "wolf" when there was no danger, the Commissioners-General had faced a real "wolf" in the shape of an impending financial débauche for the Agency. As the representative of Sweden in the Special Political Committee in the 1970s, he could assure it that the prospects for the following year were indeed alarming, unless considerable additional income could be found.

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11. There were three main reasons for UNRWA's financial difficulties: the increase in the school population (by about 10,000 children a year), inflation, and the depreciation of the United States dollar. Urgent decisions had to be taken, and could have catastrophic effects for the Agency. As the report showed, UNRWA had two courses open to it: to reduce its expenditure to the level required to keep it within the predictable income, or to continue operations on a reduced scale while avoiding any irreparable damage to the structure of the Agency, until resources were approaching exhaustion, in the hope that the international community would then come to the rescue. Under the former option, as it was virtually impossible to cut back on health or relief services, the education programmes would have to be cut: schools would be closed, thousands of teachers thrown out of work, and thousands of students abandoned to their fate. Adoption of the second course would mean risking the collapse of the Agency in the near future. Under the mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly, the Agency must in fact continue its operations until June 1981. The Commissioner-General therefore could not deliberately choose such a dangerous alternative. The Agency could only be saved from its cruel dilemma by a considerable increase in its income. He therefore urged Member States to respond generously to the Agency's appeal by increasing their voluntary contributions, and by starting to contribute if they were not already doing so.

12. In his letter of 29 August 1979, reproduced at the beginning of the annual report, the Chairman of the Advisory Commission recommended, through the Commissioner-General, that the General Assembly should call upon the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA to study the Agency's financial deficit and to make specific recommendations for measures to increase contributions to UNRWA. That recommendation was now before the Committee for its consideration. He would welcome any comments or suggestions which the Working Group might make. In conclusion, he wished to point out that he was appealing on behalf of the Palestinian refugees registered with UNRWA, and not in his capacity as spokesman for the Agency.

13. Mr. KOLBY (Rapporteur of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA), introducing the report of the Working Group (A/34/567) said that after a brief introduction on the origin and background of the Working Group, and a chapter on its activities during 1979, the present financial situation of the Agency was described in detail.

14. It was pointed out that at the beginning of 1979, expenditure required by the Agency was estimated at \$162.7 million, with a deficit on the regular budget of approximately \$36.5 million. The Agency also needed an additional sum of \$6.35 million to finance the construction of a new camp in Lebanon, the total cost of which was estimated at \$11 million and of which \$4.75 million had already been pledged, mostly by the Government of Lebanon. By October 1979, total estimated budgeted expenditure had increased from \$162.7 to \$168 million, and pledged or expected contributions had risen from \$126.2 to \$143.1 million thereby bringing the budgetary deficit down to \$23.7 million. Unless further

(Mr. Kolby)

substantial contributions were received by the end of 1979, the Commissioner-General would be unable to approve certain committed items of expenditure, such as the restoration of the flour content of the ration, the financing of the new camp or an increase in working capital. Expenditure in 1980 was, moreover, expected to increase to \$185.3 million, and it was feared that the Agency would consequently have to maintain the reduction in the flour component of the ration and reduce expenditure on education, and would have no funds available to increase staff remuneration.

15. Administrative measures taken in recent years had improved the financial management of the Agency, but would not be able to solve the problem of its long-term financial security. General Assembly resolution 32/90 A called upon all Member States to participate in the financing of UNRWA, which could not be carried indefinitely by a small number of States. Regular donors must pay higher contributions, and new contributions were needed from other countries, if the Agency's activities were to be maintained at their present level and the serious implications of a cutback in services avoided.

16. Mr. NUSEIBEH (Jordan) said that he wished to thank the new Commissioner-General for his report and for the arduous work he and his predecessor, Mr. Thomas McElhiney, had performed on behalf of the Palestinian refugees. The review of the work of UNRWA had become an annual ritual; the statements made each year were almost identical, except for the figures. They indicated a steady worsening of the Agency's position year by year, confirmed in the report of the Working Group. Because of the deterioration in its financial position, UNRWA had faced the necessity of substantially reducing expenditure on education, and closing its preparatory cycle schools from 1 July 1979. Although it had been possible to postpone the school closure till the end of the year, certain other essential obligations had not been met. The 16,000 non-international Palestinian employees had also been affected by the deficit. The situation of the Palestinians was unique; they had been uprooted, dispossessed and savagely dispersed for three decades, and reduced to the status of refugees. It was hardly surprising that Fidel Castro, Chairman of the Group of Non-aligned Countries, had described that catastrophe as one of the biggest crimes of the era. To leave the dispossessed Palestinians in limbo in their greatest hour of need would be a crime against humanity, the moral and legal responsibility for which must be borne by those who had caused the catastrophe.

17. The prospects for 1980 were even gloomier than for 1979. The options before the Commissioner-General were to reduce the Agency's expenditure from 1 January 1980 to a level which could be met by expected income, even though that would mean temporary or even permanent reduction of some of the basic services, or to continue basic services at a reduced level, until funds were exhausted and the Agency had to declare bankruptcy. Both options were equally untenable, immoral and brutal, and would violate the twofold trust of the General Assembly: to maintain assistance pending the return of the Palestinian people to their homeland, and to implement their inalienable right of repatriation to their homeland, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III), paragraph 11, of 11 September 1948. Their

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(Mr. Nuseibeh, Jordan)

hands were tied behind their backs, they were at the mercy of the international community; would it leave them indefinitely living in makeshift dwellings, sleeping on the floor, and inadequately nourished, or even worse, let them be threatened for lack of funds with having even that bare minimum discontinued?

18. As one of the host countries, the Government of Jordan was seriously concerned with the potential destabilizing effect on the region of closing schools where hundreds of thousands of destitute young people were studying, of reducing already inadequate food aid, or abandoning the sick. But for the jobs offered to numerous refugees by Jordan and other host countries, they would starve. His Government hoped that its repeated warnings would not be taken lightly, as they directly affected the 1,803,564 registered refugees as of 30 June 1979. The 830,000 Palestinian refugees currently receiving assistance, and especially the 34 per cent of them who were living in the indescribable squalor of the refugee camps, would have to bear the brunt of the growing indifference of the international community, as indicated by its feeble response. At a time when the General Assembly was vibrating with highly commendable speeches on the International Year of the Child, it was as well to recall that the non-recipients of assistance were mainly the 560,000 Palestinian children, because of the restrictions imposed for the past few years.

19. The allocation of available funds was the best which could be devised under the circumstances (55.5 per cent to education; 25.7 per cent for relief; 16.1 per cent for health and 2.7 per cent for other costs). The education and training services were functioning as best they could despite the bombings of Lebanon by Israel and the closure of training centres in the occupied zone by the Israeli authorities, who were only too glad to seize upon the flimsiest pretext. However, the number of university scholarships had dwindled from 600 to 300 despite General Assembly resolution 33/112 C of 18 December 1978, which appealed to all Governments and specialized agencies to contribute scholarships, in view of UNRWA's inability to expand that important programme. His delegation reiterated that appeal, and would submit a draft resolution to that effect. As well as assisting nearly 250,000 people, a responsibility which it had shouldered since Israel's aggression in 1967, Jordan had contributed \$36,791,755 directly to the refugees. The representatives of the host Governments were understandably apprehensive that the continuing diminution of UNRWA's services would result in the entire burden of the plight of the refugees being placed on the shoulders of the host Governments. That was unacceptable on two grounds: it would mean that the United Nations was failing in its solemn legal, moral and historical obligations to the Palestinian refugees, and secondly, there was no reason why host countries with limited means should bear the consequences of a tragedy created by the United Nations itself.

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(Mr. Museibeh, Jordan)

20. The Advisory Commission had explored various avenues for salvaging the situation. It was suggesting that UNRWA should use revenue from the properties and assets of the Palestinian refugees, which would vastly exceed the Agency's needs, but which at present went into the coffers of those who had uprooted them and were being handled by absentee owners. It was also suggested that the United Nations could itself cover the Agency's deficits from its own budget, or incorporate the salaries of UNRWA's local staff into its regular budget, as was the case with the international staff. He wished to refer to the letter to the Commissioner-General dated 28 August 1978, which expressed regret that part of the UNRWA headquarters had been relocated from the area of its operations. The General Assembly's mandate to the Agency required it to be located within the area of its operations. The United Nations would only solve the Palestinian problem by ensuring the repatriation of refugees to their homeland, and compensating those who might opt not to exercise that right. In 30 years, not a single refugee had been able to return, and that situation could not last forever. The time had come to take measures which would be more than temporary palliatives.

21. Mr. DOLLING (Sweden) said that for the past 30 years the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East had provided invaluable assistance to refugees, and he paid tribute to the staff of UNRWA, who often worked under difficult conditions. In southern Lebanon, the civilian population lived in a state of insecurity, under the constant threat of armed violence and in conditions which not only rendered the work of the Agency in Lebanon more arduous and dangerous but also highlighted the urgency of its tasks. In Jordan, where about one third of the refugees lived, the Agency's schools were, from time to time, closed on military orders. Such facts showed that the Agency's humanitarian work must continue until the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

22. His delegation had carefully studied the report of the Commissioner-General and the other documents presented under the agenda item before the Committee. It was particularly concerned about the financing of the Agency. Although it was heartening to see that the over-all contribution to the Agency continued to grow, it was doubtful whether the growth was sufficient to keep up with inflation and currency exchange fluctuations, let alone with the growing responsibilities of the Agency. The financing of UNRWA was the responsibility of the international community as a whole; it was not equitable that a small group of countries should bear the burden. Governments that had not previously contributed should therefore be encouraged to participate, and those that had thus far made only modest contributions should be asked to be more generous.

23. Like the Commissioner-General, his delegation felt that if the Agency had to deal with a major deficit, it should, in order to avoid a complete cessation of its activities, establish a level of services compatible with existing resources, later adding lower-priority services should additional funding be made available. His delegation also endorsed the Commissioner-General's decision to seek, whenever possible, to maintain the rations provided to poor families.

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(Mr. Dolling, Sweden)

24. Sweden had contributed about \$65 million to the Agency since 1950 and thus was the second largest contributor. It would continue to give substantial support to the Agency and would announce the exact amount of its contributions during the forthcoming pledging conference. It also intended to make a multiyear minimum commitment in response to the Commissioner-General's appeal for such a new and more effective procedure for financing, which would make longer-term planning possible and reduce the amount of time spent by the Agency's staff in trying to resolve financing problems.

25. Turning to the legal matters raised in the report (A/34/13), he said that his delegation was concerned at the arrests and detention of Agency staff members and the restrictions imposed on staff travel, and it counted on the goodwill of all parties concerned to eliminate such problems.

26. His delegation also hoped for an amicable settlement of the dispute that had arisen between the Agency and its staff over cost-of-living allowances. No matter how important the activities of the Agency were, staff allowances should not be used to finance them; for it was the responsibility of Governments to do so.

27. It was his delegation's view that the humanitarian assistance provided to Palestinians as a result of the June 1967 war should be continued, and it would return to the question at a later stage of the Committee's proceedings. In that connexion, it hoped the Agency's headquarters would be re-established in the region where it was carrying on its activities.

28. Mr. FAKHOURY (Lebanon) wished the Commissioner-General every success in the performance of his duties and thanked him for his report, which gave a concise outline of the situation of the Palestinian refugees and the Agency's financial situation, highlighting the need to obtain additional contributions if the essential needs of the Palestinians were to be met and if the feeding of nearly one and a half million refugees was to be ensured.

29. The financing of the Agency was of vital importance for its survival and effectiveness. The services it provided remained the responsibility of the international community as a whole. His country urged contributor countries to increase their contributions and urged previously abstaining States to agree to participate in financing the Agency.

30. Repeated Israeli acts of aggression in southern Lebanon and against the Palestinian refugee camps were an added financial burden on UNRWA because of the resulting displacements of people. The international community must therefore act in concert to put an end to such acts of aggression and find an over-all solution for the Palestinian problem.

31. While his delegation understood the reasons that had led the Agency to transfer its headquarters from Beirut to Vienna, it hoped that the day was not far off when the situation would permit the headquarters services to return to Beirut, since there they would be in a position to follow the situation of the refugees more closely and be more aware of their problems.

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(Mr. Fakhoury, Lebanon)

32. His Government attached great importance to the building of a new refugee camp near Bayssarieh and hoped to be able, before the end of the debate on agenda item 50, to inform the Committee of the Lebanese parliament's endorsement of the project and the contribution his Government would make towards its cost.

32a. In conclusion, he stressed the need to find a just and lasting solution of the Palestinian problem based on recognition of the right to self-determination, the right of return and the legitimate right of the Palestinians to create their own national State in Palestine.

33. Mr. AHMAD (India) commended the Commissioner-General for the competent manner in which he had handled the complex task entrusted him and for his dedication to the humanitarian cause which his Agency represented.

33a. In his report (A/34/13), the Commissioner-General had rightly warned Member States of the precariousness and unpredictability of UNRWA's finances, which might come to affect the very existence of the Agency. The two choices open to the Agency - reduction of its rate of expenditure so that it was brought into line with foreseeable income, or continuation of all operations until resources were nearly exhausted and cessation of all operations from a given date - had grave implications. The importance of the Agency's humanitarian work should not be underestimated, and the reduction, let alone the termination, of essential services, such as health services, would bring untold misery and suffering to the unfortunate Palestinian population. The world community could ill afford to allow such a situation to come to pass. It was the duty of all States Members of the United Nations to heed the appeal of the Commissioner-General and to contribute generously to UNRWA's funds.

34. Despite its own heavy burdens, India had always met its international commitments and had contributed to the Agency's financing from the very outset. In 1978 India had increased by 50 per cent its annual contribution in kind to the Palestinian refugees. It had recently made available a further contribution of \$13,500, also in kind, as humanitarian assistance. In addition, it had for many years provided scholarships and training facilities to displaced Palestinians.

35. It was his delegation's view that the situation of the Palestinian refugees would not be remedied until a political solution was found which would ensure Israeli withdrawal from Arab territories occupied in 1967 and recognize the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people and the right of all States in the region to coexist in security. The services provided by the Agency could at best be only a temporary palliative, but so long as the Palestinian Arabs were unable to live in freedom and dignity in their homeland, UNRWA had a duty to continue its humanitarian task.

36. The CHAIRMAN recalled that, in accordance with the decision taken by the General Assembly the number of statements made in exercise of the right of reply would be limited to two per delegation, and their length to 10 and 5 minutes respectively.

37. Mr. DORON (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said he agreed with the representative of Jordan that the discussions had become an annual ritual in which the same arguments were reiterated to the point of exhaustion. He wished, however, to give the lie to allegations made in statements by the representatives of Jordan and Lebanon to the effect that Israel had committed acts of aggression. The representative of Jordan was very well aware that in 1967 Mr. Levi Eshkol, then Israeli Prime Minister, had sent two messages to the King of Jordan assuring him that Israel would not act against Jordan provided that that country took no part in the conflict. Jordan had chosen to shell Jerusalem, and that was how the war had begun. Those were the facts: history could not be invented, falsified or rewritten.

38. Turning to Lebanon's allegations of Israeli acts of aggression against refugee camps, he read out an excerpt from a letter dated 7 August 1976 addressed to the Chairman of the Fifth Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Countries at Colombo, in which the Deputy Prime Minister of Lebanon stated that the Palestinians admitted into Lebanon 28 years ago as refugees had gradually turned the camps into military fortifications and had established bases there for the training of terrorists of various nationalities. In his address to the General Assembly at its thirty-first session, the representative of Lebanon had also mentioned that the refugee camps had been turned into military strongholds where criminals under ordinary law found protection and shelter and that they also served as training centres for mercenaries sent and financed by other Arab countries. Those statements clearly showed on what side the responsibility lay.

39. With regard to the financial situation of the Agency, he recognized that all countries should respond generously to the appeal for funds launched by the Commissioner-General; however that appeal should be addressed primarily to the Arab countries themselves, which paid ridiculously small contributions, as was clear from table 16 of the Commissioner-General's report (A/34/13).

40. The representative of Jordan had also evoked the moral aspect of the problem and mentioned, in particular, that the Palestinian Arab refugees were even obliged to sleep on the ground. One could only wonder at the fact that after 31 years the Arab countries had not even been able to give their brothers a bed. The truth, as the King of Jordan had already stated in 1960 to Associated Press, was that, since 1948, Arab leaders had taken an irresponsible approach to the Palestinian problem and had used the Palestinian people for selfish political ends.

41. Mr. NUSEIBEH (Jordan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the annual consideration of the work of UNRWA had become a ritual, because Israel did not implement United Nations resolutions on the repatriation of the refugees. Israel coveted the Palestinians' land, but did not want the inhabitants. If there was a resurgence of fascism, it was in Israel that it was to be sought. However,

(Mr. Nuseibeh, Jordan)

it was not possible to go back to the age of conquest and deny a whole people their most elementary human rights, and even the right to survive, by refusing to allow them to return to their homeland. That right was expressly recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Charter of the United Nations, which enshrined all the noble ideals for the defence of which the Organization had been created. Israel was forgetting that, from 1948 to 1967 and during its years of expansionist policy which had followed, it had been nothing but an illegal entity and a non-legitimate member of that Organization, where it was the only country in the world that had acquired its seat by usurpation. Its admission had been made conditional on the implementation of General Assembly resolutions 181 (II), which established the frontiers of a Jewish State and a Palestinian Arab State, and 194 (III), which provided, inter alia, for the repatriation of the refugees "at the earliest practicable date". However, once admitted to the Organization, Israel had hastened to deny its obligations and had never respected those resolutions, despite the formal commitment undertaken before the General Assembly by its Minister for Foreign Affairs. If it had not refused to comply with the provisions of the Protocol, which had, however, been signed by all the parties concerned under the auspices of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine, the problem would have been settled more than 30 years earlier and the Special Political Committee would not have to consider it in perpetuity.

42. The representative of Israel seemed also to have forgotten, when speaking of aggression, that, in 1967, it was Israel's pre-emptive attack against Egypt which had sparked off the hostilities. Israel's objective had been to occupy, annex and colonize the West Bank and Jerusalem, as subsequent events had proved. It was true that Israel had made it known to the Jordanian Government that it would not attack Jordan. However, the latter had signed a collective security pact with other Arab countries, including Egypt, and had been ready to fulfil the obligations incumbent on it under that pact. That was, moreover, what Israel had been afraid of when, as its representative failed to mention, the Israeli Cabinet had met in the morning of 5 June 1967 to consider whether it was advisable to reveal the fact that the Israeli Air Force had demolished the Egyptian Air Force.

43. With regard to the alleged low level of the Arab countries' contributions to the budget of UNRWA, was it necessary to remind the representative of Israel that it was thanks to the intervention of some Arab countries, which had advanced \$12 million in June 1979, that it had been possible to continue the education and training programme? The Jordanian Government, for its part, had undertaken to allocate all the resources at its disposal to assistance for the Palestinian refugees - without such assistance they would be condemned to die of hunger. The reason why they accepted to live in such wretched conditions was because they wanted to return to their homes in their ancestral homeland and refused to settle down with refugee status.

44. Mr. FAKHROURY (Lebanon) said that he felt that the Committee should not let itself be drawn by Israel into a discussion which did not lie within its competence but within that of the Security Council which could, in fact, determine on which side the blame lay.

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(Mr. Fakhroury, Lebanon)

45. Nor was it right for Israel to speak in the Committee about what had taken place between Lebanese and Palestinians: that was a question which concerned only Lebanon and which Lebanon itself would resolve. That did not, however, in any way reduce the heavy burden of responsibility which, as all knew, Israel bore in the tragedy through which the Palestinians were going, and Lebanon could not allow Israel's refusal to comply with Security Council decisions on that subject to be forgotten.

46. Mr. DORON (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that he could only commend those representatives who did not wish to get side-tracked by considerations unrelated to the item before the Committee. He had exercised his right of reply for the first time when one delegation had referred to the so-called acts of aggression committed by Israel, which allegation he had had no difficulty in refuting.

47. The term "ritual" might well be applied to the arguments put forward by the representative of Jordan in the exercise of his right of reply, because those arguments were repeated at every session of the General Assembly and the Israeli delegations had no difficulty in demonstrating that they were unfounded. There was only one point to which he would like to draw attention: for reasons well-known to the representative of Jordan, the representatives of the Arab countries had cited a truncated version of resolution 194 (III) and had omitted, as always, that part of the resolution which stipulated that it was a question of the refugees "wishing ... to live in peace" with Israel. That omission was in itself revealing.

48. Mr. NUSEIBEH (Jordan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that he had meant resolution 194 (III) in its totality, without any omissions. It was well known that Jordan had accepted the Security Council resolution providing for recognition of the security and territorial inviolability of all the States of the region and their right to live in peace. Could Israel say as much, when, 12 years after the adoption of that resolution, it rejected its provisions in practice, while paying lip-service to them? There was another question that might be asked: if the Palestinians expressly agreed that, once returned to their homes, they would live in peace with Israel, would the latter be prepared to accept them, thereby respecting the norms of international conduct and a human right which no country could repudiate? That seemed unlikely: the Security Council Commission set up in accordance with resolution 446 (1979) had established and confirmed that some 27.1 per cent of the occupied West Bank had been confiscated and colonized by Israel, and that process would continue, as the Israeli leaders had publicly declared. In that case, what would be left of the Palestinian homeland?

49. Mr. ABDEL RAHMAN (Observer for the Palestine Liberation Organization), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, expressed the Palestinian people's deep gratitude towards the fraternal Arab States which had shared their limited resources with the Palestinian refugees since they had lost their property and their homes in 1948. Israel had not been satisfied with trampling on the rights of the Palestinians; it had also given a biased version of history. Was it

(Mr. Abdel Rahman, Observer, PLO)

necessary to recall that the Palestinian problem was a direct consequence of the creation of a colonial State in Palestine? It was not by chance that 65 per cent of the Palestinians were refugees in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and even, in fact, in the country where they had been born, while 65 per cent of the Israelis were settlers living in houses which they had not built, and reaping the harvest of lands which did not belong to them and whose rightful owners were reduced to the status of refugees. The only just solution to the problem of the Palestinian refugees was not to annihilate them as a nation and a community but to recognize their right to return to their homes. The Palestinians categorically refused to find themselves a substitute homeland; the Palestinian people were struggling to return home and exercise their inalienable right as a nation and as a community in their sole homeland, Palestine.

50. The CHAIRMAN reminded the Committee that it would be continuing consideration of item 50 until 26 October and that the list of speakers would be closed in the afternoon on 19 October.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.