

United Nations
**GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**

THIRTY-FOURTH SESSION
Official Records *

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SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
8th meeting
held on
Friday, 19 October 1979
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 3rd MEETING

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

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AGENDA ITEM 50: UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN
THE NEAR EAST (continued)

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Distr. GENERAL
A/SPC/34/SR.8
29 October 1979
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

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 (continued) (A/34/13, A/34/480, A/34/517, A/34/518, A/34/549, A/34/567; A/SPC/34/L.3)

1. The CHAIRMAN drew the attention of members of the Committee to the draft resolution sponsored by the United States of America (A/SPC/34/L.3).
2. Mr. AL-SAYEGH (United Arab Emirates) said that he fully appreciated the efforts made by UNRWA under the enlightened leadership of its Commissioner-General. He hoped that the financial difficulties which the Agency was experiencing would quickly be overcome and that it would be able under the best conditions to discharge its humanitarian task on behalf of an innocent people uprooted from its country and sacrificed to colonialist doctrines reflected in the Balfour Declaration and its successors.
3. The problem of the Palestinian refugees could not be dissociated from the overall problem of the Middle East because both were the product of the creation of the State of Israel within the Arab world, the result of the colonialist policy in a region rich in cultural heritage and economic resources, which, despite the aggression, had kept its true character. The conscience of mankind had finally been awakened to condemn the colonialist spirit. Since 1950, the United Nations had been striving to create a new context in that part of the world and, through UNRWA, to dress the wounds of the victims of the establishment of Israel in the Arab world.
4. As the Commissioner-General's report showed, the Agency's humanitarian task was being impeded in various ways. In southern Lebanon, military operations launched by Israel had resulted in the massive displacement of refugees, which had "led to serious interruptions of regular Agency operations and necessitated emergency assistance to some 50,000 displaced refugees" (para. 26). In the occupied territories, a series of measures imposed by Israel on the "refugee population, and in particular on students in educational establishments of the Agency," had "gravely affected the Agency's services" (para. 27). Thus Israel, disregarding resolutions adopted by the international community, was endangering world peace and security and causing innumerable difficulties for its Arab neighbours which, for their part, desired only to co-operate fully with UNRWA, as, for instance, paragraphs 103 and 116 of the report showed.
5. The content of the report of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (A/34/549) was identical to that of previous years. In arguing that the circumstances limited its possibilities of action, the Commission sought only an excuse for not carrying out its mission. It was to be hoped that in the future it would endeavour to assume the responsibilities which had been entrusted to it under General Assembly resolution 194 (III).
6. It was incumbent upon the members of the international community to see to it that the resolutions which it had adopted were implemented and to ensure that the

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(Mr. Al-Sayegh, United Arab Emirates)

Arab countries which had welcomed the Palestinian refugees - in particular, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic - did not have to shoulder a burden disproportionate to their resources, through the fault of Israel. That same conscience of mankind which had denounced the injustice visited upon the Palestinians must today respond to the appeal made by the Commissioner-General of UNRWA by increasing the Agency's budget in order to enable it to carry out its work. The problems confronting the Palestinian refugees, who included many handicapped people, as well as women and children, far transcended narrow political views. They should be regarded as brothers. The responsibility for redressing the wrongs done to them lay primarily with Israel, which had expelled them from their homes and plundered their goods. Second, it lay with the imperialists, who had supported Israel on the military, economic and diplomatic fronts. Finally, it lay with the international community, which, under Zionist influence, had long since forgotten the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to return to their homeland.

7. The United Arab Emirates, which had always supported UNRWA and responded to appeals by the Secretary-General, proposed that the Special Political Committee should consider the following programme. First, it should adopt a budget which would be part of the regular budget of the United Nations and would permit the Agency to avoid clashes with unilateral political considerations and to meet the needs of all the refugees, in Jordan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon, as well as on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip. Secondly, it should exert pressure on Israel to cease interfering with the movements of Agency officials and preventing them from undertaking measures within their competence. Thirdly, it should restore to the Palestinians that which belonged to them. If the land and goods which had been taken from them were restored to them, they would not need charity from anyone. Until they could return to their country and enjoy their right to self-determination, the income from their property should be paid to them on a regular basis. Fourthly, it should ensure that the resolutions of the United Nations were implemented in order to frustrate the plans of those who, by reducing the budget of UNRWA, were aiming at the Palestinian refugees themselves. Finally, it should induce Israel to cease its attacks against the camps in southern Lebanon which both aggravated the situation in that peace-loving State and endangered the international staff of the Agency.

8. He welcomed the efforts made by UNESCO and WHO in the region on behalf of the Palestinian refugees.

9. Mr. IBRA DEGUENE KA (Senegal) said that the report of the Commissioner-General was extremely interesting in that it depicted in a striking and detailed manner the tragic situation of the Palestinian refugees and pin-pointed the complex nature of UNRWA's activities. His delegation supported the measures for the financial reorganization of the Agency, which were essential if it was to be made more operational. It was none the less aware that those measures would not suffice to relieve the Agency of all the budgetary problems which beset it. New resources were now required to eliminate the deficit which had been recorded and to maintain and strengthen humanitarian programmes. Despite its relatively limited financial means, Senegal would continue to support the Agency while believing that the

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(Mr. Ibra Deguene Ka, Senegal)

additional funds required should come from the most developed countries. In that connexion, the Working Group on the Financing of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East should prepare recommendations aimed at alleviating the difficulties encountered by the Agency. The Committee should also carefully study the problem of the arrest of some members of the Agency; it was essential that such unacceptable practices should be stopped. During the phase through which the Arab world was currently passing, the insolvency of UNRWA would have dire consequences not only for peace in the Middle East, but also for international security. It could, moreover, indirectly have a detrimental effect on other assistance programmes for refugees throughout the world. The international community must assume the obligations which it had itself laid down by giving the Agency adequate resources to discharge its mandate.

10. The problem of the refugees in the Middle East would not be truly solved until the occupied Arab territories were completely liberated and the Palestinian people restored to their legitimate rights, which were recognized by a large part of the international community. To that end, the United Nations must work tirelessly to create the conditions for a just and lasting settlement of the Middle East question. It should seek ways and means whereby the thousands of wandering refugees could return to their own lands and be reintegrated into their traditional structures, there to play their proper role beside their brothers and to enjoy their former prestige among those Semitic peoples.

11. Mr. KEATING (Ireland), speaking on behalf of the States members of the European Community, said that the report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA and his introductory statement to the Committee were most interesting.

12. As they had already stated, for example in the general debate when the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ireland had set forth their position, the nine States members of the European Community believed that the humanitarian and political aspects of the Palestinian problem were inseparable. Related as it was to the question of respect for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to a homeland, the subject must be considered within the framework of a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East. The General Assembly would shortly address itself to all aspects of the problem under agenda items 24 and 25, the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East. The Committee should therefore give priority attention to the immediate needs of the Palestinian refugees.

13. UNRWA continued to provide the refugees with a wide range of services, but it could do so only with the financial support of the States Members of the United Nations. It was clear that, during the past year, once again the Agency's financial situation had been precarious and that the prospects for 1980 were even worse. The shortage of funds prevented the Agency from purchasing the additional food supplies needed and it might at any minute be forced again to cut back the flour ration, already reduced by half in 1979. In the field of education, the insufficiency of foreseeable income in the first part of 1979 had seriously threatened the lower secondary cycle of education. As had been pointed out, UNRWA, which provided continuing institutionalized services to a Palestinian refugee population of almost 2 million people, had responsibilities normally shared by

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(Mr. Keating, Ireland)

several government departments. Unlike Governments, however it did not have routine procedures for increasing income but it depended on voluntary contributions. As matters stood, it was clear that it must obtain more financial resources. In that connexion, serious attention should be paid to the practical problems raised in paragraph 6 of the report regarding the need for an accurate assessment of the refugees' needs.

14. The various members of the European Community, and the Community as such, had increased their contributions during the year and accounted for about 30 per cent of the contributions to the Agency from Governments in money and in kind. Many other Governments, including some in the Middle East, had increased their assistance, thus showing in a practical way their solidarity with the Palestinian refugees. Nevertheless, the group of donors was still too small. At such a time of crisis, it was perhaps not too much to hope that all States Members of the United Nations, including those most active in support of the Palestinian cause, would give UNRWA all the help they could.

15. During the year under review, the tragic situation in Lebanon had exacerbated the plight of the Palestinian refugees in that country. As the Commissioner-General indicated in paragraph 26 of his report, the Agency's burden had similarly increased. He would remind all the parties concerned that the increased suffering of those whose lives were already so hard was of paramount concern to the international community, as it was to the Commissioner-General. The report also noted that certain Agency officials had been subjected to harrassment. As the impartiality and dedication of the staff were universally acknowledged, it was to be hoped that nothing of the sort would occur in the future.

16. On the matter of the division of the Agency's headquarters between Amman and Vienna, the countries of the European Community continued to believe that, although it was not in itself desirable, security and practical considerations must be given full weight. The paramount consideration was that the Agency should be as effective as possible. However, the possibility of consolidating the headquarters in the region of operations should be kept under review.

17. The nine States members of the European Community continued to believe that, pending a just and comprehensive settlement of the situation in the Middle East as a whole, UNRWA had an essential role to play in ensuring decent living conditions for the Palestinian refugees. The European Community therefore recommended the continuation of the Agency's mandate.

18. Mr. ABDEL MEGUID (Egypt) said that the fact that the agenda item under discussion had been considered each year by the United Nations since the Agency's establishment in 1950 might give the impression that it was merely a routine operation. The role played by the Agency in alleviating the suffering of the Palestinian refugees over the past 30 years must not, however, be underestimated, and his delegation expressed its appreciation of the efforts of the Commissioner-General and his staff - and of his predecessor, Mr. McElhiney - to carry out the task entrusted to them.

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(Mr. Abdel Meguid, Egypt)

19. It was vital that the Agency should be able to continue providing services to the hundreds of thousands of refugees who had lost their homes and property during the long and painful years of the conflict in the Middle East. Valuable as it was, however, that assistance was not a solution: the problem of the Palestinian refugees would only be solved within the framework of a just and lasting settlement of the Middle Eastern problem and the restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, in particular resolution 194 (III) of 1948, which recognized the right of those refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours to do so and the right of those choosing not to return to compensation for their property from the Governments or authorities responsible.

20. The Agency's chronic deficit, the result of insufficient contributions, was a cause of serious concern. In present conditions, it was undoubtedly preferable to opt for a reduction of services rather than to maintain them at their present level until resources were exhausted and activities had to cease. Nevertheless, there were serious implications in such a decision. His delegation therefore appealed to all States, in particular those which did not contribute, to participate generously in financing UNRWA.

21. In the past, several suggestions had been made for absorbing the chronic deficit. The suggestion that the Agency's expenditures, or at least its staff salaries, should be transferred to the regular budget of the United Nations had failed to receive the necessary support. Nevertheless, such a decision might be unavoidable in order to prevent massive reductions in the educational programme, to the extent even of the closing of the Agency's preparatory schools, which, in the opinion of the Commissioner-General himself, would be interpreted by the refugees as another and highly significant move by the international community to abandon the Palestinian people. The international community bore the greatest responsibility for the problem of the Palestinian refugees, since it had been unable to secure the implementation of the relevant resolutions of the United Nations; it could not shirk its obligations but must take the urgent steps necessary to cover the deficit.

22. Egypt, in spite of the economic difficulties it was facing because of its role regarding the Palestinian problem had helped the refugees through UNRWA, directly and indirectly, and would continue to do so. Assistance furnished during the period covered by the report had totalled more than \$12 million. In that regard, he drew attention to a mistake concerning Egypt's contribution in the Arabic text of table 16 of the report (A/34/13).

23. His country attached great importance to education, and had been one of the first to provide scholarships for higher education to the Palestinian refugees in response to General Assembly resolution 32/90 F; for 30 years moreover, it had been providing education assistance to Palestinian students at all levels. There were currently 13,209 students receiving scholarships at Egyptian universities. Egypt was one of the countries that provided the most university scholarships through UNRWA, particularly in medicine and engineering. Recently the Egyptian

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(Mr. Abdel Meguid, Egypt)

Government had decided to allocate 793 places in Egyptian universities to refugees from the Gaza Strip and to make 549 places available to the Palestine Liberation Organization, to which Egypt was always ready to extend its support.

24. His country was deeply concerned about the interruption of education in some UNRWA schools as a result of arbitrary decisions by the Israeli authorities and the refusal of those authorities to allow the use, authorized by UNESCO, of some books which Egypt had sent to the Gaza Strip.

25. Egypt strongly condemned the repeated Israeli attacks against Lebanon and the resulting vicious circle of violence. Such action hindered the efforts being made to reach a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East, and was contrary to international law and covenants. It merely served to increase the suffering of the Palestinian people and to aggravate the financial situation of UNRWA because of the displacement of the refugees or the destruction of UNRWA facilities and camps. His delegation also denounced all practices aimed at preventing UNRWA employees from implementing their humane task, in particular their detention or arrest without trial, and any violation of the immunity enjoyed by UNRWA and its staff.

26. He recalled that the non-implementation of United Nations resolutions had led to several devastating wars which had threatened international peace and security and inflicted untold suffering on the peoples of the area. The Middle East was currently at a crossroads: it could opt for a just and lasting peace that would restore to the Palestinian people its inalienable national rights and would safeguard peace and security for all States in the region, or it could return to a prolonged state of tension and instability. He therefore appealed to the entire international community to support all sincere efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East and put an end to the tragedy experienced by the heroic Palestinian people for 30 years.

27. Mr. STEPHANOU (Greece) wished the Commissioner-General every success in fulfilling his mandate and expressed gratitude to the previous Commissioner-General, Mr. McElhiney, for the work he had accomplished. The high degree of competence and the attributes which the present Commissioner-General had exhibited throughout his career were the best guarantee that he would carry out his mission in accordance with the aspirations of the international community and the long humanitarian tradition of his country. Greece would support all future UNRWA activities and any initiatives aimed at solving UNRWA's financial difficulties, keeping in mind above all the fate of the innocent victims of the Palestinian tragedy.

28. His country, aware of the tragedy of the 200,000 Cypriot refugees, could not remain indifferent to the magnitude of the Palestinian problem. The fact that over one half of the approximately 2 million Palestinian refugees were less than 20 years old should spur the international community to spare no effort to assist them, especially during the International Year of the Child, and to furnish UNRWA with the necessary means to implement its programme of relief, education and health care. To deprive students of the opportunity to continue their studies for lack of funds was an injustice incompatible with the spirit and goals of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

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(Mr. Stephanou, Greece)

29. When stressing the need to provide assistance, his country did not seek to minimize the political problem in Palestine, caused by the fact that the Arab peoples of Palestine had not been able to exercise their legitimate rights, including their right to self-determination and to a homeland, within the framework of a comprehensive settlement. Nor was it unaware of the armed incursions into Lebanese territory. But as long as a political solution to the problem had not been found, it was the duty of all Member States to contribute to UNRWA's mission by furnishing the funds required for its operations. Greece, for its part, would continue to participate in that programme and, at the next pledging conference, would inform UNRWA of the amount of its contribution.

30. He expressed the hope that circumstances would shortly permit the headquarters of UNRWA to be returned to Lebanon.

31. Mr. THIABIT (Comoros) thanked the Commissioner-General for his report and the former Commissioner-General, Mr. McElhiney, for the manner in which he had performed his functions in especially difficult circumstances. He pointed out that, as the representative of Jordan had noted, consideration of the question had become an annual ritual because of Israel's adamant refusal to abide by the relevant United Nations resolutions.

32. Referring to the history of the problem of the Palestinian refugees, he recalled that the Palestinian people had been able to exercise neither its right to self-determination, recognized in the United Nations Charter, nor its independence, promised under the Covenant of the League of Nations upon the expiration of the British mandate. In the meantime, a new situation had been created by the increase in Jewish immigrants - from 60,000 in 1918 to 600,000 in 1946. Those immigrants, far from wishing to live in peace in Palestine, had only one objective: to get rid of the Arab Palestinians by any available means. Great Britain had been obliged to renounce its mandate and withdraw its forces, and the United Nations had unjustly divided Palestine into two entities, one for the Jewish community of 630,000 people, who had received 57 per cent of the territory, and the other for the Arab Palestinians, who had totaled 1,350,000 but had received only 43 per cent of the territory.

33. Next the Zionists, through a deliberate policy of expansionism aimed at extending their territory beyond the limits fixed by General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947 and at expelling the Arab Palestinians from their lands to make room for the Jewish immigrants, had brought about a mass exodus of refugees by using terror and force. That aggression had culminated in 1967 with the Israeli occupation of the Golan Heights, the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The vast majority of the West Bank and Gaza Strip Palestinians had become refugees, and those who had remained under Israeli military occupation had been deprived of their civil rights and freedom.

34. The Palestinian question was the core of the Middle East problem. The people of Palestine, scattered in neighbouring countries and living in constant fear of armed aggression by the Zionists against their camps, could be satisfied

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(Mr. Thabit, Comoros)

with only one solution: return to their national land. Any permanent solution to the problem must therefore meet the following conditions: recognition by Israel of the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people; withdrawal by Israel from all occupied Arab territories; recognition of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and a homeland in Palestine; recognition of the right of their sole legitimate representative, the Palestine Liberation Organization, to be involved in all negotiations aimed at settling the problem.

35. He paid a tribute to all staff members of UNRWA and appealed to all members of the international community to enable the Agency to carry out its duties. The Comoros with its very limited financial resources, was making a special effort to meet its international obligations.

36. Mr. DORON (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the representative of the United Arab Emirates would have to get used to the existence of the State of Israel, whether he liked it or not, and should by that time have learnt the truth concerning the origins of the Palestinian problem. He invited the representative of the United Arab Emirates and the representative of the Comoros, whose pseudo-historical comments showed how little he knew about the question, to refer to the four letters from the Permanent Representative of Israel issued under the symbols A/33/386, A/33/543, A/33/488 and A/34/337.

37. The refugee camps, whether in Lebanon or elsewhere, had never been Israel's target. Israel, however, had to combat terrorist groups which continued to abuse Lebanon's hospitality, as Lebanese leaders themselves had often acknowledged.

38. The representative of the United Arab Emirates, who had inquired as to the usefulness of the resolutions adopted on the subject by the United Nations every year, should put that question to all those who insisted on drafting and seeking adoption of unrealistic resolutions. They would be better advised to renounce their Utopian plans and become involved in the peace process, instead of sabotaging it.

39. Mr. AL-SAYEGH (United Arab Emirates) speaking in exercise of the right of reply, referred the representative of Israel to the Commissioner-General's reports, particularly paragraphs 30, 99, 100, 153, 158 and 159 of the most recent report (A/34/13) and paragraph 154 of the preceding report, which stated that Israel had placed restrictions on movements of UNRWA staff, and paragraphs 46, 119 and 158 of document A/34/13, which showed that Israel was the only country creating problems in the region.

40. The whole world knew only too well that all the refugee camps were occupied only by women, children and the disabled. The question was whether Israel would be brazen enough to deny that fact.

41. Mr. DORON (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, assured the representative of the United Arab Emirates that the Israeli delegation had carefully studied the Commissioner-General's very interesting reports and, like others, had been able to note that the paragraphs in question named States other than Israel. Nevertheless, it was true that, on a few rare occasions, Israel had had problems with some UNRWA staff members.

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(Mr. Doron, Israel)

42. The representative of the United Arab Emirates knew full well that the refugee camps were used by terrorists precisely because there were women, children, disabled persons and unarmed civilians among whom the terrorists could hide. No refugee camp would ever again be attacked by Israel if the terrorists decided to leave them once and for all. Even as matters stood, however, Israel sought to avoid harming innocent people. The responsibility for the death of innocent people lay with those who hid in or near those camps and used them as springboards for their unspeakable acts of aggression.

43. Mr. ABDEL RAHMAN (Observer, Palestine Liberation Organization), sneaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the representative of Israel had apparently adopted one of the methods advocated by Hitler's Minister of Information, according to which constantly repeated lies eventually became accepted as truths. The origins of the Palestinian problem had already been described to the Committee, but he would repeat that description for the benefit of those who insisted on turning a deaf ear.

44. The turn of the century had witnessed the birth of the Zionist movement, long before the emergence of nazism or fascism in Europe. That movement had advocated the establishment of an exclusively Jewish State in Palestine; supported by the major colonial Powers and using sinister manoeuvres, the Zionists had succeeded in establishing that State, without the slightest consideration for the Palestinian people. The Zionist movement had never ceased to confiscate Palestinian lands, increase the number of settlements in the occupied territories and turn the Palestinians into refugees in their own country. In the light of those facts, the claim by the representative of Israel that his country was anxious to find a solution to the Palestinian problem was quite astonishing.

45. If acts of violence had originated in the camps, it was because people who had been expelled from their lands and homes and put in refugee camps were not going to be grateful to their aggressors. It was natural, too, that those fighting against Israeli aggression should come from the refugee camps, because it was in those camps that the Palestinians lived. There was no shame in coming from outside camps and fighting for one's rights: fraternal African peoples were themselves combating racism in Southern Rhodesia and South Africa from camps situated in neighbouring countries such as Zambia and Angola; it was from the United Kingdom that de Gaulle had fought against the Nazi invasion of France. In any event, if both international law and United Nations resolutions declared the Israeli occupation illegal, the Palestinian resistance to that occupation could only be lawful.

46. Mr. AL-SAYEGH (United Arab Emirates), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, asked the Israeli representative, who had stated that PLO was a terrorist organization, whether he would deny that the Prime Minister of Israel was himself a terrorist. It should be borne in mind that the Special Political Committee was in the process of considering a humanitarian question and that PLO had done much to improve the conditions in refugee camps.

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47. Mr. LAFDA ABBEH (Mauritania), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said it was not the first time that a Zionist representative had attempted to prostitute the history of the Middle East and the Palestinian problem. The representative of Israel had stated that his country was being attacked by terrorists, but had not referred to the question of Palestine - a word which did not exist in the Zionist vocabulary. Some passages from Theodor Herzl's book The Jewish State had given a forewarning, even before the establishment of the State of Israel, of the suffering in store for the Palestinian people. It was also unacceptable for the representative of Israel to claim that PLO had abused the hospitality extended to it by Lebanon, when Israeli aircraft were causing loss of life in that country every day.

48. The CHAIRMAN said that a draft resolution entitled "Assistance to persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 hostilities" would be issued as document A/SPC/34/L.4. It was sponsored by Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, the Federal Republic of Germany, Greece, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Norway, the Philippines and Sweden.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.