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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 12th 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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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 to L.9)

1. Mr. HAMODY (Mauritania) welcomed the incoming Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and expressed appreciation to his predecessor for the services he had provided through the Agency.
2. The story of Palestine had always been one of resistance to an arbitrary force endeavouring to erase the very name of Palestine from the map. At a time when colonialism was in its death throes, a unique experiment in colonization had been carried out with the connivance of the international community, namely, the barbarous and criminal expulsion of the traditional inhabitants of Palestine and their replacement by vestigial populations, claiming to be there in fulfilment of mythical prophecies whereas they were actually the instruments of imperialist strategy. Suffering was an integral part of the Palestinian tragedy, particularly the suffering imposed by the disastrous social and economic consequences of the exodus of Arab populations in May 1948 and their financial implications.
3. It was easy to say that the problem of the Palestine refugees was an Arab problem and it was for the Arabs to solve it; certainly, all Arab countries had an undeniable responsibility and national duty with regard to Palestine. Thus, to relieve UNRWA's most recent crisis, Arab States had given speedy and effective help. However, the responsibility for contributions to the Agency should be borne by all countries, regardless of geographical area or degree of affluence. It was a matter of honouring the collective responsibility of the United Nations and expressing solidarity with the victims of disaster.
4. Those who were financing the Israeli "economic miracle" and providing it with weapons for use to maintain and extend its conquests and thus prolong the agony of the Palestine people, should be among the first to contribute towards alleviating the sufferings of the victims of zionism.
5. However, the refugee problem was only a by-product of the rape of Palestine. Member States should certainly contribute to the humanitarian effort to lessen the suffering of the deprived people of Palestine and provide them with the basic necessities, but they should recognize that the true and final solution of the refugee problem must be a political solution. Only the restoration to the Arab people of Palestine of their inalienable rights would enable the refugees to return to their country and to live in peace and fruitful labour. His delegation was confident that as understanding of the struggle of the people of Palestine grew, a free Palestine would be reborn.
6. Mr. DORON (Israel) expressed his delegation's respects to the Commissioner-General of UNRWA and assured him of the co-operation of the Israeli Government. He also expressed appreciation of the work of the outgoing Commissioner-General.

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(Mr. Doron, Israel)

7. It was regrettable that at a time when the world was confronting the imminent extinction of the Cambodian population, the tragedy of the Vietnamese refugees and famine in Africa, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, first established in 1950, should still be maintaining a refugee population of some 500,000 Arabs at the expense of the world community.
8. Those refugees could have been resettled, absorbed and integrated long ago, but plans to do so had always been callously rejected by Arab Members of the United Nations, who were interested in keeping the refugee problem alive as part of their political and propaganda warfare against Israel. The responsibility which must be borne by Arab Governments for preventing a solution of the refugee problem was attested to inter alia by a statement in the January-March 1957 bulletin of the Research Group for European Migration, and by a statement made in Jordan in August 1958 by Mr. Galloway, a former head of UNRWA.
9. The Commissioner-General's current report (A/34/13) did not go into the background of the Palestine problem. The history of that problem, as documented in the records of the United Nations, could be summarized briefly as follows.
10. The Arab States had rejected out of hand General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947, and the end of the United Kingdom mandate had been swiftly followed by a full-scale invasion of the mandated territory of Palestine by Arab armies. The Arabs had not disclaimed responsibility for initiating the fighting, as could be seen from statements made to the Security Council on 16 and 23 April 1948 by a representative of the Arab Higher Committee (S/PV.283 and S/PV.287). The Foreign Minister of the USSR had told the Security Council on 21 May 1948 that the Arab States were carrying out military operations aimed at the suppression of the national liberation movement in Palestine (S/PV.299); that movement was the national movement of Israel, namely Zionism. The Foreign Minister of the USSR had also expressed the view that the Israeli reaction to the Arab invasion was self-defence in the full sense of the word.
11. The United States representative had stated in the Security Council that the admission by the countries whose five armies had invaded Palestine that they were carrying on a war constituted the highest type of evidence of an international violation of the law (S/PV.302). The Foreign Minister of the USSR had stated in the Security Council that world public opinion had already condemned the action of certain Arab circles which had attacked the Jewish State and occupied the territory allotted to the Arab State in Palestine (S/PV.331). At the same time, Arab leaders had exhorted their brethren to leave the area, so as not to be in the way of the advancing victorious Arab armies.
12. A number of newspapers published in Lebanon and Jordan at various times between 1948 and 1955 had stated that the existence of the refugees was the direct consequence of the action of the Arab States in opposing the Jewish State and spreading rumors of Jewish atrocities causing the Palestinian Arabs to flee in fear. On the other hand, a report of 26 February 1948 from the mandatory Power's Palestine Police Force in Haifa to its Jerusalem headquarters had stated that every effort was being made by the Jews to persuade the Arab population to stay and carry on with their normal lives.

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(Mr. Doron, Israel)

13. His delegation had on numerous occasions explained the real dimension of the refugee problem (see, for example, A/SPC/33/SR.20). He wished briefly to recapitulate the relevant figures. According to the 1947 census carried out by the United Kingdom mandatory authorities, the total number of Arabs living in the mandated area of Palestine west of the river Jordan in 1947 was 1,303,000, while the Arab population in the areas outside what later became Israel numbered 556,300. Subtracting that figure from 1,303,000 gave 746,700 Arabs in the area which had become Israel. However, the first census held in Israel in 1949-1950 had shown an Arab population in Israel of 160,000. Deducting that figure from the original 746,700, it followed that there could not have been more than 586,700 Palestine Arab refugees at the very most. It was known, however, and confirmed in contemporary United Nations reports, that at least 20 per cent of those refugees were relatively well-to-do members of the liberal professions and others who had no trouble integrating into the life and economy of their new countries of residence. Thus, deducting those 20 per cent, a maximum of perhaps 470,000 people could have qualified at the time for UNRWA's support. Thus, the present official figure of registered refugees, namely 1,803,564, was four times as high as the maximum possible figure of 1948.

14. It should be borne in mind that in the last two years of the Mandate a large number of Arab immigrants from neighbouring countries had entered Palestine, attracted by better employment possibilities than in their countries of origin. On the other hand from 1948 onwards some 700,000 Jews in Arab countries had been forced to flee to Israel by growing discrimination, official threats, deliberately fomented attacks and persecution by Arab Governments. They had had to abandon their property, and their homes had been confiscated, yet all had been absorbed in Israel without the help of UNRWA or any other international organization.

15. At the same time about 15,000 Jewish residents in Israel had been forced to leave their homes and be resettled elsewhere in Israel. For a little while those people had received assistance from UNRWA but that assistance had stopped after they had been integrated.

16. The exchange of populations which he had described was generally recognized, except by the Arab States, which continued to demand the return of the Palestinian Arabs to their former places of residence. Yet the fact that an exchange of populations had occurred was borne out by a statement in "Trends and Characteristics of International Migration since 1950" (ST/ESA/SER.A/64 of May 1979).

17. As he had pointed out, the figure of 700,000 Palestine refugees was inflated by at least 230,000. More significant was the fact that tens of thousands of the poor among the Arab population of the West Bank and Jordan had succeeded in obtaining refugee status and receiving UNRWA support. The Director of UNRWA in 1955 had stated in his report that there was a black market in UNRWA ration cards, and the Commissioner-General in 1965 had said that it would be misleading to attach undue importance to the number of ration recipients as an index of the extent to which the refugees were dependent on international aid. Furthermore, every annual report

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(Mr. Doron, Israel)

of the Commissioner-General including the current one contained a foot-note 1/ stating that the statistics were based on the Agency's registration records, which did not necessarily reflect the actual refugee population owing to factors such as unreported deaths and births, false or duplicate registrations or absences from the area of UNRWA operations. Similarly, paragraph 6 of the current report of the Commissioner-General went into the details of eligibility for UNRWA's services and concluded that if the Agency could investigate need properly, many refugee families would no longer be eligible for health services and the children would no longer qualify for admission to UNRWA schools, thus relieving UNRWA of a heavy financial burden. Paragraph 101 of the report also referred to the Agency's difficulty in carrying out investigations to determine employment status or income levels. Paragraph 10 of the report stated that a relatively small minority of the refugees were true hardship cases in need of relief. The difficulty in compiling reliable figures arose because none of the Arab countries would co-operate in updating the registration records.

18. It was stated in paragraph 2 of the report that the total number of registered refugees was 1,803,564 and paragraph 13 (c) said that of that number, about 830,000 refugees were supplied with the various services enumerated in that paragraph. Paragraph 16 stated that some refugee families were without means to support themselves and must depend on the charity of relatives and neighbours as well as assistance provided by UNRWA. That the international community should be called upon to finance assistance for those families as well as for the whole of the refugee community was an international scandal because the people in question lived in the Arab States, and those States should be responsible for their integration, as well as for relief to welfare cases among them. But the Arab countries refused to take any constructive steps in that respect. He maintained that about 20 per cent of the population of Kuwait consisted of Palestine Arabs, yet they were not allowed to acquire Kuwaiti citizenship; Saudi Arabia could easily provide stable employment to a much larger number of Palestine Arabs than it did, but it preferred to import labour from Pakistan, Korea and elsewhere.

19. Table 16 of the report showed that although Israel, in spite of its difficult economic situation, had contributed nearly \$1 million to UNRWA in 1979, Bahrain had given only \$15,000. Libya had given \$1 million in 1977 and again in 1978, and had promised \$4 million for the current year, which was \$1 million less than the bounty of \$5 million which Libya had given in 1972 to the murderers of Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympic games. The contribution of the United Arab Emirates, in spite of its oil riches, was just a little more than a quarter of that of Israel. It would be recalled that in his capacity as Chairman of the Arab Group, the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates had addressed a letter to the Secretary-General (A/34/293) concerning the budgetary problems of UNRWA, calling for more and higher contributions by Member States. The Permanent Representative of Israel had replied at length to that letter (A/34/337 of 27 June 1979).

20. It should also be noted that the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics had never contributed to UNRWA, but it did provide extensive training and ample arms to PLO terrorists to assist them in their efforts to murder more Israeli children.

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1/ See A/34/13, p. 59, foot-note (a).

(Mr. Doron, Israel)

21. Despite the attitude of the Arab world vis-à-vis its own kith and kin, Israel had demonstrated that it was possible to help the Palestine refugees to shake off the mentality of welfare cases living on international charity. Since 1967 the refugees living in areas under Israeli administration had been given access to employment, which had been withheld from them by Arab Governments since 1948. Indeed, the word "works" in the title of UNRWA had lost all meaning because of the refusal by Arab Governments to permit the implementation of any plan to set up a system of works for the refugees. Since 1967 every able-bodied refugee who was willing had been able to obtain work in Israel, or in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. That employment had effected a transformation in the economic situation of those people and of the areas in which they lived. There was no more unemployment there, and, as the Commissioner-General's report stated (para. 125), those refugees who had purchased houses in projects developed by the occupying authorities or had purchased land and built their own houses enjoyed accommodation, markedly superior to the shelters they had formerly occupied.

22. The number of refugee families in the Gaza Strip who had availed themselves of housing provided by the administration was 2,892, and assuming that the average household consisted of six or seven persons, that was a total of some 20,000 people.

23. Progress in the provision of housing in the areas administered by Israel had been accompanied by a steady improvement in the general living conditions of the refugees. Thus, paragraph 69 of the report showed that the number of claims for financial help had gradually decreased as many refugees had joined the Government National Health Insurance plan in Gaza or Israel. The improvements introduced in the areas administered by Israel since 1967 had clearly benefited the refugees living in those areas in such matters as health, accident insurance of workers, vocational schools and courses, agriculture, employment possibilities and building.

24. The Report of the Commissioner-General (para. 49) mentioned the Egyptian secondary school-leaving certificate examinations held in the Gaza Strip, in co-operation with the Governments of Egypt and Israel. A total of 6,696 candidates had sat for those and other examinations, logistical support and other essential facilities being provided by the Israeli authorities. He hoped that sincere co-operation between the competent authorities would serve as an example to be followed in other fields, despite the constant propaganda of hate from across most of Israel's borders and in United Nations forums.

25. Israel's contribution to the UNRWA budget for the current year was \$988,000. It had also made direct contributions to the refugees totalling \$16,400,257, an increase of over \$5 million compared with the preceding year. It should also be borne in mind that a considerable part of the Israeli annual budget for the administered areas was of direct benefit to the refugees, who constituted a large proportion of the local population. Only a small part of that budget was contributed by the local inhabitants, the bulk of it being borne by the Israeli taxpayer.

26. If there had been a positive and constructive approach on the part of Arab Governments to the problem of the Palestine Arab refugees, it could have been solved long ago, and UNRWA could long since have been dissolved. However, in the  
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(Mr. Doron, Israel)

circumstances, and given UNRWA's constant budgetary difficulties, instead of adopting propagandistic resolutions against his country, the Committee should call upon the Arab Governments concerned to make their contributions to the UNRWA budget really meaningful, instead of the miserly sums so far allocated by them.

27. Israel did more than its share to help, in human as well as in financial terms. Its policy of the "Open Bridges" fostered contact between the Arab populations on both sides of the Jordan River and further afield. In 1978, 203,280 persons had come to the administered areas from Jordan. Frequently, they took the opportunity to visit Israel as well, and he hoped that such human contacts would contribute to a better understanding. Israel had continued to grant permits for the return of displaced persons to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; 50,467 had been issued for that purpose at last report. In 1978, 1,511 persons had been admitted for family reunion, and 1,008 applications for admission under that heading had been approved between January and July 1979. Another 34,500 Arab refugees who had been displaced by the 1948 war, but had remained within Israel's borders, had been rehabilitated by the Government of Israel.

28. His delegation intended to act in a constructive spirit, and without malice. He hoped that the peace-making process initiated by the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt would gather momentum and soon include other countries of the region. The refugee problem would find its proper solution within the framework of those peace treaties. The 1978 Camp David framework accords had been succeeded by the first-ever peace treaty between Israel and an Arab State, signed on 26 March 1979 by Prime Minister Begin of Israel and President Sadat of Egypt, duly witnessed by President Carter of the United States. The first of the accords dealt with the refugee problem: paragraph 4 of section A of "The framework of peace in the Middle East" specifically called for Egypt and Israel to work with each other and with other interested parties to establish agreed procedures for a prompt, just and permanent implementation of the resolution of the refugee problem. Israel's Arab neighbours had been invited to join the peace process, but so far those invitations had not been taken up. Israel could only reiterate its hope that the Arab States would join in the ongoing peace process and thus demonstrate their genuine interest in peace and their genuine concern for a solution of the refugee problem.

29. Mr. KUDRAVETS (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that the new sufferings recently inflicted on the Arab people of Palestine were the appalling result of the conclusion of the separate Egyptian-Israeli agreement, which had done nothing to advance the achievement of a lasting peace in the Middle East. In fact, it was another obstacle to the just settlement of the Middle East conflict which could only be solved with the full participation of all interested parties, including the authentic representative of the Arab people of Palestine, the Palestine Liberation Organization.

30. The report of the Commissioner-General noted (para. 26) that from the end of 1978 Israeli military operations had been carried on by land, sea and air, mostly on Palestinian targets in southern Lebanon. The resulting disturbances and the massive displacement of refugees in and from south Lebanon had led to serious interruptions of regular Agency operations.

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(Mr. Kudravets, Byelorussian SSR)

31. In his delegation's view, the refugee problem could not be considered solely in its humanitarian aspects, for it was in essence the political problem of a people which had its own land and a legal right to return home. It was hardly surprising that, inspired by the separate anti-Arab deal with Egypt, Israel was acting in an increasingly unrestrained manner, especially towards Lebanon. The peaceful inhabitants of Lebanon as well as Palestinians who were in Lebanon only because their native land was occupied by Israel were being killed by Israeli bombs and shells. The Palestinians were being denied the right to their homeland and to a normal life. Israel was violating the most elementary human rights.

32. Forgetting the harsh lessons of history, it was flouting morality and international law. It was impossible to ignore the bleak reality to which the people of Palestine had been exposed, at the instigation of Israel, for 30 years. Israel and its supporters, including those who supplied it with weapons, bore the full burden of responsibility for the present sufferings of the Palestinian people. No casuistry on the part of Israel could justify or absolve it from responsibility for aggression against Arab countries in 1967. It was now clear to all that the situation in the Middle East had become even more strained, and the position of the Palestinians had worsened as a result of the treaty between Israel and Egypt, concluded at the behest of the United States. The whole point of that treaty was to impede the implementation of the legitimate national rights of the people of Palestine, strengthen the occupation by Israel of part of the Arab lands, and encourage it to launch new aggressive ventures.

33. It had recently become fashionable to talk of so-called "Palestinian autonomy", "self-government", or "increased humanitarian assistance". Such talk by those who supported the separate Egypt-Israel deal had nothing to do with the real solution of the problem, which lay in the attainment by the Arab people of Palestine of their legitimate national rights.

34. The Byelorussian people, which had experienced the horrors of occupation by Hitler's armies from 1941 to 1945 fully sympathized with the Palestinian people. References to humanitarian assistance to some of the refugees were meaningless on the lips of those who were working to expel an entire people from its homeland, to deprive it of the means of subsistence and to install its aggressor on its land.

35. His delegation expressed full solidarity with the Arab peoples in their struggle to defend their legitimate rights and interests, and supported their efforts to achieve a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. That peace could only be achieved when Israeli forces were withdrawn from all Arab territories occupied in 1967, and when the legitimate rights of the Arab people of Palestine were secured, including their right to self-determination and to the creation of their own independent State, and the security of all States of the region had been guaranteed.

36. Mr. APOPEI (Romania) said that the report of the Commissioner-General reflected the tireless efforts exerted by him and his staff in behalf of the refugees. UNRWA had been established as a temporary intermediate mechanism to meet humanitarian needs, and had been consistently supported by Romania. Romania had also assisted the Palestine refugees on a bilateral basis.

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(Mr. Apopei, Romania)

37. However, the problem of the Palestine refugees was not limited to the humanitarian aspects only; it was deeply political. The humanitarian problems would be solved once there was a just and comprehensive political solution of the Palestine question, with recognition and fulfilment of the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people to self-determination and independent development, in a free and sovereign homeland. A just settlement required that the Palestinian refugees should recover their national and inalienable rights to return to their homes and to repatriation or compensation, rights which had been repeatedly reaffirmed in United Nations resolutions. A just settlement of that problem was widely recognized as essential for attaining a lasting peace in the Middle East.

38. The Romanian people, who had always fought to preserve their freedom, fully supported the liberation struggle waged by other peoples, including the Palestinian people, for independence and national sovereignty. Romania strongly favoured a settlement which would allow the Palestinian people to have an independent State of their own. That position had been reaffirmed during the recent meeting in Bucharest between Nicolae Ceausescu, President of the Socialist Republic of Romania, and Yasir Arafat, Chairman of the PLO. On that occasion, it had been emphasized that a just and durable solution of the Middle East conflict, must be based on the total, unconditional and prompt withdrawal of Israel from all Arab territories occupied in 1967, and the recognition of the Palestinian people's inalienable national rights. Moreover, that basic problem could only be resolved through the direct participation in the negotiations of the Palestinian people, of whom the Palestine Liberation Organization was the authentic and legitimate representative.

39. Romania therefore considered its assistance to UNRWA activities and its humanitarian aid to Palestinian refugees as part and parcel of its consistent support for the cause of the Palestinian people, and as part of the political, diplomatic, moral and material assistance granted to the Palestine Liberation Organization. In a joint communiqué issued on 26 August in Bucharest, the leader of the PLO had mentioned the firm and consistent policy pursued by Romania to achieve a just settlement of the Palestinian question.

40. Romania had been one of the first countries to establish relations with the PLO. It had supported bringing the question of Palestine before the United Nations, recognition of the PLO as an observer to the United Nations, and recognition of the right of the Palestinian people to have their own independent State. It was now necessary to intensify efforts, including efforts in the framework of the United Nations, to bring about a comprehensive political solution of the Middle East problem. More resolute action should be taken to ensure the participation of all States and parties concerned in the settlement of the problems of the area. His delegation would continue to contribute its share to United Nations efforts towards that end.

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41. Mr. SHIHABI (Saudi Arabia) warned of the far-reaching repercussions of allowing a cutback in UNRWA's activities due to a lack of resources. He rejected the elimination of secondary education and the prospect of restricting preparatory and vocational education and drew attention to the dangers of reducing the Agency's health and food services. To deprive 93,000 students of secondary education would be a crime.

42. The budgetary deficit of \$52 million facing the Agency in 1980 was a result of the failure of a number of States to meet their obligations towards the refugees. He referred in particular to those States which, in 1947, had voted in favour of giving the land, homes and livelihood of part of the Palestinian people to the Zionists and which had continued to provide Israel with material support, thus enabling it to occupy the rest of Palestine and transform additional hundreds of thousands of Palestinians into refugees. Those States had made it possible for Israel arrogantly to defy United Nations resolutions and leave the Palestinian refugees in their wretched condition for 30 years with a bare minimum of their human needs met through UNRWA.

43. Those who had not witnessed or who had forgotten the early stages of the Palestinian tragedy might not understand the Palestinians' revolt against displacement, injustice, tyranny and deprivation. Part of the reason for that revolt could be found in the report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA. The displaced people of Palestine were intent on regaining their full rights and the whole world was committed to that quest. He hoped that all countries would help UNRWA to continue to provide its services without any reduction in their scope or type and thus avoid the human and political consequences of a paralysis of the Agency.

44. The representative of Israel had objected a few days earlier to the designation of Israel as an "aggressor" by an Arab ambassador. The representative of Saudi Arabia agreed that that designation was unacceptable since a crime against humanity that had continued for over 30 years was indefinable and it was astonishing that the perpetrator should sit among the judges and abuse the victims.

45. In his view, the Commissioner-General had not placed sufficient blame on Israel for the difficulties being faced by the Agency. Although it was wholly responsible for the creation of the Palestine refugee problem, Israel had asserted that the continuing unacceptable situation of the refugees was due to the insistence of the Arab States and that the refugees should remain in camps. The real reason, however, was the continued occupation of their land and homes by the Zionists and no amount of Israeli air raids and terrorist attacks on the camps in Lebanon and elsewhere would change that fact. The international community bore a heavy responsibility for failing to prevent such Israeli aggression. Moreover, it was ridiculous for Israel or any other country to challenge the right of the Palestine Liberation Organization to represent the Palestinians who had themselves chosen it as their representative.

46. He called for the return of UNRWA's headquarters to Beirut within the area of its operations as soon as possible.

47. Ms. AL-MULLA (Kuwait) said that ever since its inception in 1950 UNRWA had been considered as a temporary body and its relief and works programme had originally been envisaged on an ad hoc basis, in line with commitments made by the international community in the United Nations guaranteeing the refugees' right of return and right to compensation. But there had been no return and no compensation for the Palestinians; instead they had been systematically uprooted and displaced.

48. There had been consistent attempts on the part of Israel, to misrepresent its responsibility for the tragedy of the Palestinians to the international community and to Israel's own population, which shied away from admitting its role in events. The censorship of sections of former Prime Minister Rabin's memoirs bore testimony to those actions.

49. The Israelis had made consciously calculated efforts to drive out the indigenous Palestinian population in 1948 and again in 1967, and the Palestinian refugees still remained a prime target for Israel in its attacks on and encroachments into Arab territory, notably into Lebanon. Those attacks and the resulting constant displacement of refugees in and from southern Lebanon confirmed that the decision to drive out the Palestinians was premeditated and was being applied now as it had been in 1948.

50. Her delegation agreed that the problem of the refugees could only be solved through a comprehensive statement recognizing the rights of the Palestinians to self-determination and to a State of their own. But until that objective was achieved, Kuwait agreed that services which would have been provided by the Palestinians' own government, if one had existed, should continue to be provided by UNRWA on behalf of the international community. It was alarmed that the international community was failing to meet its responsibility for supporting UNRWA, which was concerned with only part of the problem, i.e. the provision of services. That failure would be construed by the refugees and others as a tactic for solving the refugee problem once and for all. Her delegation wished to stress that the work of the Agency was essential, and agreed with the Commissioner-General's remarks that winding up of the Agency's work should be the result of a deliberate policy decision and not come about as a consequence of financial difficulties. Such a decision should be taken only when a solution to the Palestinian problem was in sight.

51. The immediate need, however, was to help UNRWA increase its finances. She was aware of the reservations held by other delegations about certain of the proposals put forward to that end, and suggested that UNRWA adopt a programme of action to ensure a solid foundation for and a continuity of contributions. To avoid stop-gap, eleventh-hour rescues, of no benefit either to the thousands of refugees or to UNRWA staff, her delegation suggested a role for the private sector, a role for the non-governmental organizations and continued approaches by UNRWA to potential donors. Kuwait would like to see the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA continue to study the Agency's financial deficit and make recommendations thereon.

(Ms. Al-Mulla, Kuwait)

52. Her country would continue to support the efforts of the Palestinian people to achieve self-determination and the establishment of an independent state of their own, and would in the meantime continue to give support to those displaced. The more than 200,000 Palestinians living in Kuwait, who were not registered with UNRWA, were given every facility for work, education and health care. Places at the University of Kuwait and other higher education establishments were awarded free of charge and with monthly stipends to Palestinians on the same basis as to all other residents of Kuwait. Palestinian residents in Kuwait were also offered scholarships for higher studies abroad. Private assistance as well as government assistance was available for Palestinians, particularly, in education.

53. Since it had become a member of the United Nations in 1963, Kuwait's annual contribution to UNRWA's budget had averaged over half a million dollars. For that reason, the contribution total given in table 16 of the Commissioner-General's Report was somewhat misleading since Kuwait had not been a member of the United Nations in 1950 when the Agency was set up. She reminded other delegations that Kuwait had been among those who responded to appeals to alleviate the Agency's financial difficulties by providing an additional contribution of \$1.5 million. Kuwait's total contribution to the Agency for 1979 should therefore read \$2.1 million.

54. Mr. NAIK (Pakistan) spoke of the steady increase in the number of Palestine refugees and of the insecurity of their existence, an insecurity based on their dependence on world charity and the constant fear that the services provided them by UNRWA might be reduced or abolished owing to lack of funds. Every year it was pointed out that the plight of the Palestine refugees was inextricably linked with the political problem and that there was an urgent need for a just and comprehensive solution in the Middle East, which would ensure total Israeli withdrawal from all occupied territories, including Jerusalem, the return of the Palestinian refugees to their homes and exercise of their inalienable right to self-determination and national independence under the leadership of their sole legitimate representative, the Palestine Liberation Organization.

55. The report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA indicated the continuing deterioration in the Agency's financial position and prospects, the threat of substantial budget cuts and reduction in services. It was not only disturbing to know that but for last-minute financial improvements, the Agency's education programme would have been disrupted and its preparatory schools closed down as from 1 July 1979, but also ironic that it might have happened during the International Year of the Child. He was concerned because future prospects for the financial viability of the Agency remained bleak and in 1980 it would again be faced with the necessity of closing down the preparatory cycle schools. Its problems were being exacerbated further by Israeli attacks in Southern Lebanon, which had seriously curtailed its operations.

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(Mr. Naik, Pakistan)

56. The question of the Agency's financial solvency was of critical importance not only in its humanitarian aspects but also because of the grave political and security risks that might result from a collapse in its services at the present juncture. It was an international responsibility to ensure the continued functioning of UNRWA until the problem of Palestine was solved by implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions. Pakistan, despite its own severe financial handicaps, had regularly been making contributions to the Agency, but he emphasized that primary responsibility for its support rested with the States that had created the problem by bringing the State of Israel into existence in complete disregard of Arab rights. It was likewise their responsibility because their acts of commission and omission hampered implementation of United Nations resolutions on the Middle East and Palestine.

57. With regard to the future financing of the Agency, his delegation agreed with the view of the Arab Group (document A/34/293) that the United Nations must reach a formula for allocating funds to cover refugee needs on a stable and continuing basis. He was confident that the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA would address itself to that question.

58. Like many other speakers, he hoped that the Agency's headquarters would be shifted back to its area of operation at the first practicable opportunity, as the relocation of its offices to Vienna and Amman had not proved the most efficient arrangement.

59. Pakistan acknowledged the important work being done by the Agency, but considered that the problem was not one of funds or proper management but of finding a just and equitable political settlement in the Middle East. As the leader of his country's delegation to the present session of the General Assembly had stated during the general debate: "An agreement on the fundamental basis for a just settlement in the Middle East, namely, total Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories and the fulfilment of the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people, already exists in the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly. This consensus has now won universal support". Only a solution in accordance with that consensus could bring peace to the area and put an end to the sufferings of 1.8 million Palestine refugees.

60. Mr. BENCHEKROUN (Morocco) considered that the level of the debate had not been commensurate with the magnitude of the problem and that no progress had been made towards a solution. He did not claim any originality for his criticisms but like others he wondered how long Members could continue to repeat the same litanies, the same accusations, the same counsels of patience and the same obstinate refusals, all because one of the players in the tragedy of the Palestine refugees refused to acknowledge its responsibility and still believed it could continue to use a combination of force and linguistic sleight-of-hand to dominate the Region. Had the Israeli leaders agreed to lay down arms and been prepared to negotiate a settlement the whole world would have applauded, including those countries that Israel put on its blacklist of so-called enemies. However, no such Hollywood-type happy ending to the tragedy was in sight. He used the word "Hollywood" advisedly because the original script for the drama being played out in the Middle East, setting Semite against Semite, had been dreamed up in Anglo-Saxon countries.

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(Mr. Benchekroun, Morocco)

61. The Commissioner-General had been right in saying that the cries of wolf had turned out to be all too true. Most of the delegations had come to terms with that fact and many of them recognized that UNRWA's financial resources were in a disastrous state, despite the sound financial and administrative management of the Agency. However, the interim solutions put forward by the Commissioner-General to keep the Agency going and avert bankruptcy were mere palliatives. The various solutions put forward to resolve such major financial problems were ultimately just cruel games at the expense of the health care, education and feeding of the Palestine refugees.

62. In reality, all those opposed to UNRWA were really hoping that the Palestinians would vanish once and for all, in a new type of "final solution". That was the logic of Israel's stubborn refusal to collaborate with UNRWA. By continuing to keep the Palestinians in the humiliating position of refugees, they were storing up trouble for themselves. Far from making Palestinian national identity disappear, the status of refugee had helped to consolidate it.

63. The Israelis appeared to think the refugee problem could be solved by creating more refugees and that was why they were bombing not only refugee camps but also certain towns of southern Lebanon in a ceaseless endeavour to salve their bad conscience. Their attitude was the most cruel insult to the memory of those, Jews and non-Jews alike, who had perished in the Nazi camps.

64. The Committee should support the Commissioner-General by a generous response to his appeal for moral and material aid to the refugees and his country would continue to assist in that effort. While it was true that the international community was making aid available in increasing amounts each year, the needs of the refugees were increasing at the same rate and no long-term solution was in sight. The only real solution would be for Israel to agree to total and genuine collaboration with UNRWA. His delegation condemned the stubborn obstinacy of the Israeli leaders in rejecting any compromise and in refusing to heed the advice of Mr. Nahum Goldman, President of the World Jewish Congress who had suggested that they enter into a dialogue with the Palestinian leaders. The Israeli leaders had much to gain from an exchange of ideas and constructive views.

65. General de Gaulle had once said that the Israeli people were a conquering and overpowering race. In view of their refusal to have dealings with UNRWA, their contempt for the problems of the refugees, and their condescending attitude towards the recommendations and advice of both friends and enemies, perhaps General de Gaulle had not been altogether wrong. It was a pity he had not added "arrogance" to the other two qualities he had attributed to them.

66. With regard to the Jews of North Africa and, in particular, those who had originally come from Morocco, the representative of Israel might have been better advised not to use arguments which had boomeranged long ago. The social situation of those Jews inside Israel was a crying scandal. Their return in steadily growing numbers to their countries of origin was perhaps a sign that there was something rotten in the paradise that had been promised them.

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67. Ms. VALERE (Trinidad and Tobago) observed with regret that UNRWA's activities for the past year had not differed substantially from those of previous years. Its financial position continued to deteriorate and it faced bankruptcy, or at least a further drastic cutback in its services. The latest report indicated that a deficit of approximately \$52 million was anticipated for 1980. The Commissioner-General had said that the only way to deal with such a situation was to reduce operations further or to exhaust the Agency's resources and hope that the international community would come to the rescue.

68. Both options required serious consideration. The second was extremely risky and, under the first, the education programme would be severely affected and thousands of young Palestinians deprived of an education. The international community should make observance of the International Year of the Child more than a symbolic gesture and take constructive action to ward off the potential disaster facing Palestinian young people. Education was the single most important factor which could provide young Palestinians with opportunities for the future, and their parents, many of whom had been psychologically damaged by their displacement, lived their lives vicariously through their children.

69. The social, political and security implications of either course of action were self-evident and the international community must avert disintegration of UNRWA's services until a just and lasting settlement was found to the Palestinian problem. Her delegation therefore appealed to Member States to respond to the Commissioner-General's request for financial contributions within the limits of their resources.

70. Her delegation wished to commend the staff of the Agency for their work in helping the former Commissioner-General to alleviate the hardships of the Palestine refugees and to welcome his successor, to whom it pledged its fullest co-operation.

71. Mr. GHAFORZAI (Afghanistan) said that there were at least two essential factors on which any consideration of Palestinian rights and the Palestine refugees should be based. Firstly, the refugees had been forced to leave their land and property because of the enforcement of a doctrine engineered by imperialism, zionism and international reaction. Secondly, since the problem of Palestine refugees and displaced persons was a recognized international responsibility, the General Assembly must take immediate action to compel the aggressor to allow the refugees to return to their lands and to provide them with adequate shelter. The Palestine refugee problem was a political problem and required a political solution. The only comprehensive solution would be one which took into account the undeniable right of the Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and lands and to establish their own independent State.

72. His delegation praised UNRWA for the sincerity and devotion with which it was carrying out its task in the face of serious financial difficulties. He was deeply concerned, however, that the Agency, which had been established as a temporary measure nearly three decades earlier, appeared to have become a permanent feature because no progress had been made towards solving the refugee problem.

(Mr. Ghafoorzai, Afghanistan)

73. The responsibility for that impasse fell squarely on Israel, which had consistently opposed the refugees' return and the restoration of their property. It was unacceptable that a situation resulting from the aggression and usurpation of a country and the displacement of a nation still persisted. Israel continued to occupy Arab and Palestinian territories in defiance of the Charter and international law, and continued to enjoy the privileges of United Nations membership while disregarding United Nations resolutions and decisions.

74. His delegation regretted the situation resulting from the removal of UNRWA headquarters from Beirut. Every effort should be made to return the headquarters to Beirut or to some other city within the area of operation.

75. His delegation was also deeply concerned that, unless additional funds were provided, the Agency would have to curtail food rations and educational services or simply continue its services and face bankruptcy. UNRWA's services were the responsibility of the entire international community, and the latter should make every effort to ensure that the Agency was not compelled to reduce those services.

76. As far as the method of financing the Agency was concerned, his delegation believed that either Israel should contribute to UNRWA the revenue it derived from properties belonging to the refugees, or the Agency should continue to rely on voluntary contributions. Any other practical proposal on strengthening the Agency's financial situation deserved careful attention by the General Assembly.

77. Mr. AL-SAYEGH (United Arab Emirates), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the representative of Israel had made a reference in his statement to the United Arab Emirates' contribution to the UNRWA budget. He wished to place on record that, despite his country's position of principle that the blame for the plight of the Palestine refugees rested not with the Arabs but with those who had created Israel, namely Zionism and colonialism, his country had responded to appeals for contributions from the United Nations, the Secretary-General and the Commissioner-General. In 1977, it had made a \$2 million donation to UNRWA over and above its annual contribution, and it was considering making a similar donation in response to the latest appeals by the Secretary-General and Commissioner-General.

78. With regard to the situation of Palestine refugees in his own country, it was his country's policy to support the PLO in its insistence that Palestinians must demand the right to live in Palestine and not be forced to seek citizenship elsewhere. When the Commissioner-General had recently visited the Palestine refugee camps in his country, the refugees had said that they wished to live only in Palestine. Israel should realize that his country was not going to give the Palestine refugees citizenship, but would do everything to help them to return to Palestine and establish a Palestinian State. He also wished to point out to the representative of Israel that his country was providing \$2 billion in aid to the developing countries, a figure corresponding to more than 10 per cent of its gross national product.



79. Mr. AL-ARAYYED (Bahrain), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that he wished to refute the false information given by the representative of Israel regarding Bahrain's contribution to UNRWA. Bahrain was not a rich oil country. Although it produced a mere 40,000 barrels of oil a day, its only source of income, it assumed fully its financial, material and moral responsibilities with regard to the Palestine refugees. As usual, Israel was trying to evade its responsibility for the dispersion of the Palestinians, but the world knew that Israel was responsible for their suffering.

80. Mr. BAAYO (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, recalled that the representative of the Zionist entity had mentioned that Libya had contributed \$4 million to UNRWA for its educational programme. That contribution had been made out of duty and he called on all States to support the Agency's humanitarian activities.

81. Mr. DORON (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that as the representative of a Member State of the United Nations he was entitled to be referred to by his proper title: the representative of Israel. Israel was indeed Zionist, but it was called the State of Israel and not "the Zionist entity".

82. Mr. ABOUL-NASR (Oman), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, expressed the hope that the representative of Israel would follow the example he had set for other States and not refer to the West Bank as Judaea and Samaria.

83. Mr. BAAYO (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that, concerning Munich, those who had carried out the Munich attack had announced their responsibility. He wished to know how much the Zionist entity was spending on attempts to assassinate the Palestinian Arab leaders; how much it was spending on terrorist acts in the occupied Arab lands; how much it had paid to the Hagana in its attempts to usurp Palestine in 1948; how much it had spent in trying to buy the conscience of the world and to bribe the Sultan Abdel Hamid.

84. Mr. AL-ATIYYAH (Iraq), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, observed that the Zionist representative had said that the Commissioner-General's report had exaggerated the numbers of Palestinian refugees. He wished to refer him to the newspaper Al-Hamishmar of 28 July 1972, which had quoted figures prepared by a body established in Tel Aviv to consider how the Palestinian refugee population could be eliminated. That report had indicated that there were a total of 545,400 Palestinian refugees in the West Bank and 541,000 in the Gaza Strip alone.

85. The Zionist representative had also referred to the departure of Jews from neighbouring Arab States. In fact, Jews had been forced to leave neighbouring Arab countries by international Jewish circles. In Iraq, a decision had been taken to allow any Iraqi Jew to return to Iraq. It was regrettable that West Bank Arabs could not do likewise. The Zionist representative had said that some Palestinians had been allowed to return to their lands, but in fact he had been referring to those West Bank Arabs displaced after the 1967 war, of whom only a few thousand out of a total half a million had returned.

(Mr. Al-Atiyyah, Iraq)

86. The Zionist State gave virtually no assistance to UNRWA, and what it did give was designed to settle Palestinians in other Arab countries so that they could no longer exercise their rights as Palestine refugees or maintain their right to return to Palestine.

87. Al-Hamishmar of 16 February 1973, had quoted the Israeli Prof. Emmanuel Marx as proposing that the UNRWA staff should be transferred to the Israeli Ministry of Social Affairs and UNRWA simply dismantled in order to make it easier for Israel to deal with the refugee problem. The cost to Israel would have been 20 million lire but the Israeli Minister of Finance, after expressing some reservations about the financial burden involved, had agreed that such a move was necessarily. Only certain elements in the Foreign Ministry had opposed the suggestion.

88. All the arguments put forward in the current debate had not served to change Israel's position one iota. Delegations had recalled how Israel had forced the Palestinians to leave Palestine. He himself had referred to the latest revelations concerning the censorship of Mr. Rabin's memoirs. Reference had been made to numerous books and reports on the expulsion of the Palestinians from Palestine. Yet the Israeli representative continued to blame the Arab countries for the refugee situation. If people from any country in the world could be given Israeli citizenship, why could the Palestinian refugees not be allowed to return to their land? That situation was untenable and unworthy of a Member of the United Nations.

89. Mr. SHIHABI (Saudi Arabia), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that he was familiar with the arguments advanced by the Zionist representative in his lengthy statement. If Israel did not exist, there would be no refugees, no Zionist terrorism and no victims in the Middle East. He did not know what Israel was doing on Arab land. One must ask to whom Palestine belonged in 1947, and in what way it differed from African lands settled by colonialists. Yet Israel was trying to blame the Arab countries for the refugee problem. In his statement, the Zionist representative had suggested that Saudi Arabia might absorb the refugees, instead of importing workers from Korea, Pakistan and other countries. But the Palestinians should first have the chance to go home; they could then come to Saudi Arabia, not as refugees, but as free individuals. He hoped that they would soon be able to do so.

90. Mr. ABDEL RAHMAN (Observer for the Palestine Liberation Organization) said that he had heard a barrage of lies, distortions and perverted logic. Tens of thousands of articles had appeared on the Palestine question, and it was always possible to find arguments to support or refute any view. But there were certain facts to be taken into consideration. First, the whole international community acknowledged that there were over 1,800,000 Palestinian refugees living in refugee camps. Secondly, the Palestinians were not in possession of their homes or property, because of the state of war instigated by the Zionist movement, a product of the State of Israel. When the lands where they lived were at war, the Palestinians had been forced to flee; that did not mean that they now had no right to return. It was held that the Jews in Palestine had the right to return because 3,000 years previously Jews had lived in Palestine. If the right to return existed after 3,000 years, it surely existed after 30. The question was one of international legality and basic human rights.

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(Mr. Abdel Rahman, Observer, PLO)

91. Thirdly, with regard to the assistance given by Arab States to UNRWA, each Palestinian refugee was given only \$1.50 a month by UNRWA, which was hardly enough to sustain life. The assistance given to the refugees by the Arab peoples and Governments should not be measured in terms of contributions to UNRWA, but in the light of the thousands of scholarships offered to them in Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Kuwait and Syria, the hundreds of thousands of jobs they were given by Arab States, and the shelter provided for those who had been expelled in 1948 and subsequently. Fourteen out of every 1,000 Palestinians were qualified graduates, and there were 100,000 Palestinian students enrolled in courses of higher education; those facts would not have been achieved without the assistance of Arab States.

92. Finally, he wished to point out that living in a refugee camp was not merely an economic indicator, but a psychological and mental condition. The camp was a substitute for the village from which the Palestine refugee had been uprooted. Even doctors and engineers continued to live in the camps. The refugees defined themselves as Palestinians, and resisted integration or absorption into the surrounding States. They were not individuals seeking charity; indeed they washed dishes and worked on farms to be able to afford an education. It was not a question of Jordan or the United Arab Emirates refusing citizenship to the Palestinians; the Palestinians themselves rejected that option, and insisted on retaining a collective identity as Palestinians, whether living inside or outside Palestine.

93. Mr. DORON (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that he was not surprised that the official statistics he had supplied had raised eyebrows among the Arab representatives, who did not care for hard facts. They had replied in considerable anger, but he would not respond in the same way; he stood by the information he had given and was content to leave the matter at that.

94. The CHAIRMAN said that draft resolution A/SPC/34/L.8, on Palestine refugees in the Gaza Strip, was sponsored by Afghanistan, Indonesia, Iran, Pakistan and Yugoslavia.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.