



CONTENTS

Page

Agenda item 23:

Report of the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (*continued*) 115

Chairman: Mr. Selim SARPEN (Turkey).

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Sudjarwo (Indonesia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

AGENDA ITEM 23

Report of the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (A/3212, A/3212/Add.1, A/3498, A/SPC/9) (*continued*)

1. Mr. TABIBI (Afghanistan) said that the problem of the Palestine refugees was the real cause of unrest in the Middle East. Afghanistan had consistently supported the rights of the Palestine Arabs and had always taken the view that Palestine was an Arab land.
2. The sufferings of the refugees, which had been brought about by the policies of certain Powers, required urgent action by the General Assembly, but it should be borne in mind that no lasting peace or stability in the area was possible until a permanent solution had been reached on the basis of General Assembly resolutions 181 (II) and 194 (III). After ten years of effort the fate of Jerusalem, territorial issues and the refugee problem were still unsolved, simply because Israel had consistently refused to comply with General Assembly resolutions. Recent events in the Middle East had increased the urgency of the problem and placed the United Nations under an obligation to enforce paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III).
3. Afghanistan, which had strong ties with the Arab peoples, was keenly interested in the refugee problem, and felt that Israel, by refusing to recognize the rights of refugees, was defeating its own purpose and sowing the seeds of hatred in the area. The Palestine refugees could not forget the injustice that had been done them and until their right to repatriation or compensation was recognized their attention would remain focused on Israel. The Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) had rightly said that time was not a healing agent and that the longer the problem remained unsolved the more dangerous the consequences would be. In that connexion he felt that the proposal for resettlement in adjacent countries was unrealistic, for refugees could not be moved about like so many pawns.
4. He paid a tribute to the work of the United Nations and the specialized agencies and to the generosity of voluntary agencies in alleviating the hardships of the Palestine refugees, but pointed out that such action

could not be a substitute for a permanent solution which had to be achieved through a political settlement based on previous United Nations resolutions. Until that had been done his delegation would continue to support UNRWA's programmes.

5. The plight of the refugees in the Gaza Strip was obvious from paragraphs 2 and 5 of the Director's special report (A/3212/Add.1), and his delegation wholeheartedly supported General Assembly resolutions (997 (ES-I), 999 (ES-I)) calling upon Israel to withdraw immediately behind the armistice line as a means of solving that aspect of the problem. The conclusions of the Director in chapter V of his annual report (A/3212) deserved careful study, and clear directives on the Agency's future operations should be forthcoming. Financial assistance should be made available particularly by the great Powers which were alone responsible for the tragic situation in the area.

6. Mr. JAMALI (Iraq) pointed out that Israel's persistent refusal to comply with United Nations resolutions dealing with the refugee problem was not only a violation of the Charter and of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but a criminal act against humanity. It undermined the authority and prestige of the United Nations and jeopardized peace and security in the area. The plight of the refugees had sorely embittered the entire Arab world against all those who had brought it about and had created an atmosphere of political unrest in the Middle East in which subversive tendencies could prosper.

7. Three possible solutions of the refugee problem could be envisaged: maintenance of the *status quo*; resettlement of the refugees outside Palestine; and repatriation of the refugees to their homes in Palestine.

8. If the prevailing deplorable situation were allowed to continue, it might lead to further breaches of the peace in the Middle East, and have serious political repercussions for the whole world. Thousands of refugees might constitute *fedayeen* bands and attempt to reclaim their homes and property by force, in exercise of their legitimate right of self-defence. Their action would inevitably provoke counter-action by Israel, probably in the form of attacks on its Arab neighbours. Thus, the entire area would experience an upheaval. Human, as well as political reasons made it imperative that the *status quo* should not be maintained.

9. The resettlement of the refugees in Arab countries was impossible on human, political, spiritual and practical grounds. The refugees continued to cling to their natural right to live in their own homes in Palestine. The civilized world could not countenance the forcible exile of those unfortunate victims of Israel aggression. The resettlement of the refugees outside Palestine was, moreover, a political impossibility: it was a basic principle of Arab nationalism that Palestine should never be abandoned by the Arabs. There was no justification for giving Zionist nationalist sentiments priority over that principle. Nothing less than the total destruction

of the Arabs would alter their determination to reclaim their own land.

10. Furthermore, Palestine was also the spiritual home of the Arabs, as it was of Christians and Jews. It could never be exclusively Jewish. Islam and Christianity had spiritual ties with the Holy Land at least as strong as those of Judaism. No solution which failed to ensure equal rights for all three faiths in Palestine would be realistic or could be permanent. Finally, resettlement of the refugees in other Arab countries was a practical impossibility. There was no land available for their resettlement since the only two countries with future possibilities of land development, Syria and Iraq, could not cope with the needs of their own landless population. However, even if land were available, no Arab Government would undertake to resettle the refugees at the expense of Arab rights to Palestine.

11. The return of the Arab refugees to their homes in Palestine was the only just solution of the problem. Palestine should be a haven and a spiritual centre for Moslems, Christians and Jews alike. However, since Israel rejected that solution and Western public opinion, under the impact of Zionist propaganda, was not alive to the dangers inherent in continuation of the existing situation, there appeared to be no hope for achieving it or for peace in the Middle East.

12. There were many reasons for the arrogance and aggressive attitude of the Zionists. They had a great deal of influence on the political life and Press of parts of Western Europe and the United States, and on commercial and financial circles throughout the world. They had apparently inexhaustible sources of funds, especially in the United States. Those funds were used to help the Zionists prolong the forced exile of the Arab inhabitants of Palestine, and to uproot Jews in countries where they had lived in peace for centuries and take them to Palestine. The effect of the money that went to Israel was at least as disastrous for peace as the infiltration of the area by Communist volunteers would be. Nor was there any certainty that the money raised in the United States for Israel was not used to buy arms for use in aggression against Arab countries, for the United States Government placed no restriction on its use for that purpose.

13. If the United Nations was to serve peace and justice, Israel must be compelled, if necessary by applying sanctions, to abide by its resolutions, in particular, General Assembly resolution 194 (III) regarding Arab rights in Palestine. Pending an over-all settlement of the Palestine problem, Israel should be forced to repatriate at least those Arab refugees whose homes were situated in territory allotted to the Arabs under the partition resolution 181 (II) or in internationalized Jerusalem. The States which had voted in favour of that resolution were morally responsible for the fate of the refugees. Iraq was providing full support for over 5,000 refugees, which was more than its share of contribution to the United Nations. It protested against the discrimination whereby thirty dollars a year was allocated for an Arab refugee whereas over 300 dollars was being spent by the United Nations on a single Korean prisoner and on each Hungarian refugee.

14. Moreover, Israel should be made to pay the entire cost of maintaining the Arab refugees. It could easily do so from the yearly income it received from Arab property in Palestine, which it had usurped. The United Nations should ask the Governments of the United States and the German Federal Republic to deduct from the funds raised in the United States for Israel and

from the reparations Israel was receiving from Germany, the estimated annual income from Arab property in Israel.

15. Iraq had been shocked by Israel atrocities in the Gaza Strip and by the loss of life among the refugees. It deplored Israel's interference in the activities of UNRWA and the action it had taken against UNRWA employees. It also felt that Israel's interference with school curricula in Gaza was reminiscent of the worst type of colonialism. Israel's colonialist tendency had been shown even more clearly by its insistence on administering Gaza and controlling the Arab refugees in the area.

16. The attitude of Israel endangered the lives of the refugees, who were wards of the United Nations, and the peace in the Middle East. Israel must be made to yield and to recognize the right of the Arabs of Palestine to independence and self-determination in their own country.

17. Mr. ZARUBIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the United Nations had concerned itself for many years with the problem of the Palestine refugees but although a number of resolutions had been adopted, the problem remained unsolved. In the meantime, the number of refugees had increased from the original quarter of a million Arabs who had been forced to flee under threats of ruthless persecution, in violation of the precepts of international law.

18. General Assembly resolution 181 (II), which had provided for the creation of Israel, had made no provision for the transfer of the Arab population out of Palestine. On the contrary, it had been made clear that Arab residents of Palestine were entitled to choose the State in which they would live. Their right to remain in their homes was not questioned. Chapter 3, paragraph 1, of the declaration contained in the resolution relating to citizenship, stated that Palestinian citizens residing in Palestine outside the City of Jerusalem, as well as Arabs and Jews who, not holding Palestinian citizenship, resided in Palestine outside the City of Jerusalem, should, upon the recognition of independence, become citizens of the State in which they were resident and enjoy full civil and political rights. That provision recognizing the right of the Arabs to remain in Palestine had been the basis of all subsequent General Assembly decisions on the matter. Resolution 194 (III), paragraph 11, which established the only just solution for the refugee problem, repatriation or compensation, had been confirmed by the General Assembly many times. At the tenth session by its resolution 916 (X) the Assembly had again confirmed its decision and had also noted that the principles of paragraph 11 of resolution 194 (III) had not been put into effect.

19. In his annual report to the General Assembly, the Director of UNRWA had made repeated references to the fact that the decisive element determining the position adopted by the refugees was their desire to return to their homes. Until the refugees were allowed the choice between repatriation and compensation provided for in resolution 194 (III), or until some other political solution acceptable to all parties was arrived at, the Agency's long-term task of re-integrating the refugees into the economic life of the Middle East was impossible.

20. The legitimate claims of the Arab refugees must be supported by all peace-loving peoples. The African and Asian nations represented at the Bandung Conference of 1955 had taken a stand in favour of the rights of the Arabs in Palestine, and had called for the implementa-

tion of the General Assembly's resolutions. The Israel refusal to fulfil the terms of those resolutions could not be justified. Israel had not attempted to repatriate the refugees or to make arrangements for compensating them. In March 1956 the Israel Government had stated its unwillingness even to consider a programme of compensation at present, a disappointing negative position out of keeping with its previous stand on the question. The USSR felt strongly that the General Assembly's decisions on the question of Palestine refugees should be implemented, and that the refugees should be allowed to return to their homes or given compensation.

21. Mr. VOUTOV (Bulgaria) said that disappointment and discontent among the Palestine refugees was growing daily in the face of the United Nations failure to take concrete steps to meet their just demands for repatriation. The current report of the Director, in paragraph 101, made it plain that the passage of time had not been a healing force, and that, quite to the contrary, the strongest feeling, vocally and bitterly expressed by the great mass of the refugees, was the demand to return to their old homes. General Assembly resolution 194 (III) had resolved that those refugees who wished to return to their homes should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date and that those choosing not to return should receive compensation for their property. The success of UNRWA in providing minimum conditions of existence for the refugees was only a half-way measure. The fact that the problem had been approached only from the viewpoint of aid and rehabilitation was a cause of great tension.

22. To the Arab Governments the problem was also a political one. Unless decisive measures were taken to deal with it from that aspect there could be no optimism regarding an ultimate settlement. The planned Jordan River project for the production of electricity and the irrigation of land would undoubtedly ease the plight of a number of the refugees, but even if the refugees in Lebanon and Syria became self-supporting, the problem would remain unsolved, for there were no such possibilities in Jordan or in the Gaza Strip, where the refugees constituted 36 per cent and 69 per cent of the population respectively.

23. If the United Nations wished to bring about a just solution, it must take steps to ensure the refugees a choice of repatriation or the payment of compensation for their property and land seized by Israel. Until that question was solved in accordance with the recommendations of the General Assembly, UNRWA could not achieve its aim. The right of all peoples to live in their homes was guaranteed in the United Nations Charter and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

24. The main obstacle to the repatriation of the Palestine refugees was the refusal of Israel to comply with the United Nations resolutions. Israel had often tried to justify that refusal by asserting in the United Nations that the repatriation of so many refugees would imperil its security. The Bulgarian delegation was convinced that the repatriation of a peaceful population which had in former times co-operated with the Jews in Palestine would not endanger Israel. It would be in the interest of Israel to allow the refugees to return in order to farm land which was now deserted and thus repair present agricultural shortages.

25. The Bulgarian delegation considered it its duty to support the efforts of all peace-loving peoples for the restoration of peace in the Middle East and the correction of the great injustice which had been done. Unfortunately, the Western Powers, far from opposing Israel's aggressive policy, had recently openly encouraged it. He quoted a passage from an Egyptian newspaper to the effect that the struggle in the Middle East was not between the Arab peoples and Israel, but between all the peoples of the area and the imperialist countries. Those countries used Israel as a threat against the Arabs.

26. The special report of the Director of UNRWA confirmed that the recent Israel aggression against Egypt had meant increased distress for the refugees in the Gaza Strip. That policy had been adopted at the dictates of the Western imperialist Powers, which had sought to heighten the tension in the Middle East and thus to justify their imperialist encroachment on that area. After the aggression of the United Kingdom and France had been repelled by the Arab States and their friends, the United States, on the pretext that a so-called vacuum had been created, had proposed to intervene directly in the affairs of the Arab States, under the Eisenhower doctrine. It was obvious that that policy was one of imperialist expansion.

27. The Bulgarian delegation emphasized once more that it was time for the ruling circles in Israel to discard the role assigned to them in the Middle East by the imperialist Powers. It was in Israel's interest especially to live in peace with its neighbours. It should therefore obey the recommendations of the United Nations and permit the repatriation of those Arab refugees who wished to return. The Bulgarian Red Cross was to consider the possibility of supplying the Palestine refugees directly with clothing and medicines in 1957. In the meantime, the Bulgarian delegation would support all proposals for a just and speedy solution of the Palestine refugee problem.

The meeting rose at 12.5 p.m.