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United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

Persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In its resolution [68/77](#), the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General, after consulting the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, to report on the progress made with regard to the implementation of the resolution.

The present report pertains to correspondence between the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations regarding action taken by the Government of Israel in implementing the relevant provisions of the resolution. It also presents the information made available by the Commissioner-General to the Secretary-General on the return of refugees registered with the Agency to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip from Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic.

* [A/69/150](#).



1. In its resolution [68/77](#) on persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General, after consulting the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), to report on the progress made with regard to the implementation of the resolution. The present report is submitted to the Assembly pursuant to that request.
2. On 19 May 2014, the Secretary-General addressed notes verbales to the Permanent Representatives of Member States to the United Nations, including the Permanent Representative of Israel, in which he drew attention to his reporting responsibility under resolutions [68/76](#) to [68/80](#) and requested them to inform him of any action that their Governments had taken or envisaged taking in the implementation of the relevant provisions of the resolutions.
3. In a note verbale dated 21 July 2014, the Permanent Mission of Israel replied as follows:

The Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General and has the honour to refer to the latter's note dated 21 May 2014 concerning resolutions [68/76](#) to [68/80](#) adopted by the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session under the agenda item entitled "United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East".

While Israel voted, as it has done in the past, against those resolutions owing to their politicized character and one-sided perspective, the Permanent Mission wishes to reiterate Israel's support for the humanitarian activities of UNRWA.

Despite an ongoing and acute threat to its security, Israel has gone to great lengths to foster conditions for Palestinian economic development and cooperation, approving a substantial number of UNRWA projects and facilitating UNRWA humanitarian assistance to its Palestinian beneficiaries.

Since 2010, 277 international projects have been approved for the benefit of the civilian population in Gaza. As at December 2013, 161 projects had been completed and 44 were being implemented.

As at 31 December 2013, 30 UNRWA projects had been approved, of which 24 had not yet been implemented on the ground by UNRWA. In 2013, UNRWA completed the construction of 30 new school buildings.

The Government of Israel has taken further steps to facilitate the crossing of both people and goods in and out of the Gaza strip. All civilian goods are allowed into Gaza, with the exception of weapons and "dual-use" items (items that can easily be appropriated for terrorist activities). During 2013, 59,883 truckloads of goods entered Gaza, including 2,311 truckloads of medical supplies, and 560 truckloads of goods, spices, fruits, vegetables and flowers were exported from Gaza through Israel to Europe.

Notwithstanding the ongoing security threats posed by the Hamas rule in Gaza, 2013 shows an increase in the number of Palestinians entering Israel. In this regard, during 2013, 69,323 Palestinians crossed to Israel through the Erez terminal and over 1 million Palestinians from the West Bank entered Israel during Ramadan.

High priority is given to humanitarian cases. Israel is doing its utmost to facilitate the entry of patients in need of medical treatment. In 2013, 13,734 medical permits for Gaza Palestinians were granted, a 40 per cent increase compared with 2012. In this regard, Israel also works closely with the Palestinian Ministry of Health to support the medical needs of the Palestinian population in the West Bank. In 2013, 225,410 medical-related permits were issued, 100,145 for patients, 121,967 for family members accompanying patients and 3,298 for visiting patients receiving treatment in Israel. In addition, Israel promotes the development of the Palestine health system through several different programmes and training. In 2013, 2,314 Palestinian doctors, nurses and other medical health-care professionals attended the 159 courses, conventions and programmes that Israel hosted.

In 2013, the Government of Israel continued taking steps to ease security-related restrictions in the West Bank. Roadblocks were removed throughout Judea and Samaria and there is a free flow of movement between all major Palestinian cities, from Jenin in the north to Hebron in the south.

Notwithstanding the above, terrorist organizations in the West Bank and the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip remain active in planning, preparing and executing terrorist attacks on Israeli civilians. In 2013, 1,271 terror attacks took place in Judea and Samaria, a 110 per cent increase compared with 2012. It is also important to emphasize the change in the nature of the terror attacks. 2013 saw a 500 per cent increase in terror attacks using firearms and explosives.

In 2013, Gaza terror elements, headed by Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, continued efforts to strengthen their military capabilities, in particular increasing the size and range of their rocket arsenal (long-range rockets, up to 110 km).

Much effort was also put into the building of offensive tunnels constructed some 20 m underground and crossing the Gaza border into Israel. In 2013, two tunnels were discovered and demolished: one near Nir Oz (January 2013) and another near Ein Hashlosa (October 2013). The tunnels were constructed using approximately 24,000 concrete slabs (allowed by Israel into Gaza for the building of humanitarian projects) and were tall enough inside to allow people to stand fully upright as they travelled along them.

The purpose of the tunnels is to allow the infiltration of terrorists from the Gaza strip into Israeli civilian villages and cities in order to carry out terror attacks.

Hamas invests tens of millions of dollars into the construction of these terror tunnels instead of investing the money in schools, civilian industry and employment.

In 2013, the Hamas rule of terror in Gaza committed crimes, not only towards Israelis and toward Palestinians living in Gaza, but also towards United Nations staff. The latest UNRWA report describes the torture of a staff member of UNRWA by Hamas in Gaza.

Notwithstanding its support for UNRWA humanitarian activities, Israel remains concerned by the political motivation of the aforesaid resolutions and

is disturbed by the fact that they present a one-sided view that fails to reflect the reality on the ground.

As a derivative of the political nature of the resolutions, UNRWA took it upon itself to promote the Palestinian narrative and to use humanitarian funding for the purpose of advocacy. There is no shortage of advocacy organizations for the Palestinian cause and Israel strongly objects to the blunt misuse by UNRWA of the funds that the international community donates for the welfare of Palestinian refugees. For example, while complaining about a serious funding shortage and the cancellation of important humanitarian programmes such as summer camps in Gaza, UNRWA, in its 2013 report, takes pride in its communication outreach, securing 56,238 mentions in the Arabic- and English-language media and 1,083 positive mentions in Arabic and international media. This is not a role of a humanitarian organization. UNRWA is a work and relief organization and not a press outlet.

Israel supports a consolidation of UNRWA resolutions and a removal of all extraneous political language. Moreover, Israel urges the Secretary-General and UNRWA to consider, together with the parties concerned, ways in which the United Nations can enhance the manner in which it advances the welfare of the Palestinian people.

In this respect, Israel strongly supports an application to the Palestinian situation of the standard principles guiding the United Nations with regard to treatment of refugees elsewhere. Specifically, the UNRWA mandate should be consistent with the standard United Nations policy on refugees. Furthermore, the UNRWA mandate should include the active promotion in the Palestinian context of the broadly applied United Nations goals of resettlement and local integration of refugees.

While other refugee populations are not treated by UNRWA, thereby allowing for a gradual decrease in their numbers commensurate with their rehabilitation into civilian life, the Palestinian refugee population is growing at an exponential rate (from 700,000 in 1949 to 4.2 million in 2005 to 4.9 million in 2012 and is due to reach 6.2 million in 2020). As the resolutions are of a political nature, UNRWA as an organization does not aspire to create a solution to the refugee problem and rehabilitate the refugees, but rather merely “freeze” and perpetuate their current status. Those refugees (now into their fourth generation) are reliant on international aid and funds for their health, education and livelihood. The aspiration to maintain the political issue at the expense of the humanitarian needs of the refugees, as reflected in the resolutions, is also manifest on the ground: even the Palestinian Authority refuses to take responsibility for providing services to the refugee population in areas under its complete control, insisting on the “exclusivity” of UNRWA in that respect.

Not only does the Palestinian Authority refuse to take responsibility for alleviating some of the problems experienced by refugees residing within the territory under its control, but it also puts an additional financial burden on the organization by collecting value added tax illegally. According to the latest UNRWA report, the Palestinian Authority owes the organization \$89.77 million in tax returns.

4. In connection with paragraph 5 of General Assembly resolution [68/77](#), the Secretary-General has obtained from the Commissioner-General of UNRWA the information available to him on the return of refugees registered with the Agency. As indicated in previous reports on the subject, the Agency is not involved in any arrangements for the return of refugees, nor is it involved in any arrangements for the return of displaced persons who are not registered as refugees. Its information is based on requests by returning registered refugees for the transfer of their UNRWA registration records from Jordan, Lebanon or the Syrian Arab Republic to the areas to which they have returned. The Agency would not necessarily be aware of the return of any registered refugees who did not request the transfer of their registration records. So far as is known to the Agency, from 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014, 242 refugees registered with UNRWA returned to the West Bank and 257 to the Gaza Strip from places outside the occupied Palestinian territory. It should be noted that some of those may not have been displaced in 1967, but may have been displaced in earlier or later years or may be members of the family of a displaced registered refugee. Thus, taking into account the estimate given in paragraph 3 of the previous report ([A/68/347](#)), the number of displaced registered refugees who are known by the Agency to have returned to the occupied territories since June 1967 is about 35,628. The Agency is unable to estimate the total number of displaced inhabitants who have returned. It keeps records only of registered refugees and, as noted above, even those records, in particular with regard to the location of registered refugees, may be incomplete.

5. In connection with paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution [68/77](#), the Secretary-General refers to the report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2013 ([A/69/13](#)) and to the previous reports of the Commissioner-General for accounts of the ongoing assistance provided by UNRWA to persons displaced and in need of continued assistance.
