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SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE, 618th  
MEETING



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Chairman: Mr. Abdulrahim Abby FARAH  
(Somalia).

## AGENDA ITEM 33

Report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (*continued*) (A/7213, A/SPC/126, A/SPC/127)

1. Mr. GOYER (Canada) said that the responsibilities of the Agency had been increased not only during the immediate aftermath of the June 1967 conflict but also subsequently, when many refugees—both old and new—had moved from occupied to other areas. Apart from the admirable efforts made by UNRWA to care for those unfortunate people, little had been done to enable them to enjoy the normal human existence to which they were entitled and no real progress had been made towards a solution of the basic problems.

2. The Canadian Government had made regular annual contributions to UNRWA, which had from time to time been voluntarily and substantially increased. It had responded to the Secretary-General's appeals and had made important contributions to other international organizations concerned with the problem of the Palestine refugees, though such contributions did not resolve the problem in a permanent or satisfactory manner. The Agency had been created as an emergency measure and its essentially temporary character should not be forgotten. Those contributions had been made to further the humanitarian task of UNRWA and would be continued, in order to enable the Agency to cater for the vital needs of the refugees.

3. No country could fail to heed the appeal of the Secretary-General (612th meeting) for further material support for UNRWA in order to avoid a deterioration of the situation in the area. It was also necessary to give the Commissioner-General of UNRWA the means to carry out the mandate given to him, without at the same time committing the Agency to a permanency incompatible with its original purpose. His Government therefore would support the renewal of the mandate of UNRWA for a further reasonable period, but thought that the mandate should be reviewed annually by the General Assembly.

4. Humanitarian gestures could not provide a definite solution to an essentially political problem and his Government was firmly convinced that, as the Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs had stated at the present session of the General Assembly (1687th plenary meeting), a solution to the refugee problem would be feasible only in the context of an agreed settlement between the Arab States and Israel. Hopes of a political solution had been raised by the unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution 242 (1967) but so far, despite the tireless efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mr. Jarring, there seemed to be little prospect of a solution.

5. The Canadian Government strongly supported the Secretary-General's appeal that the refugees and other civilians who had been displaced from their camps and homes on the West Bank of the River Jordan during the hostilities of 1967 should be allowed to return, thereby alleviating to a great extent UNRWA's burdens.

6. His Government supported the Secretary-General's appeal that Member Governments should offer Mr. Jarring all possible co-operation in achieving a solution to the conflict in the Middle East by the establishment of a just and lasting peace through an agreed peaceful settlement. He appealed to all those who could contribute to that aim, and especially to those directly involved in the question, to continue and renew their efforts.

7. Mr. Chih-Ping CHEN (China) said that the question of the Palestine refugees had taken on a new urgency after the hostilities of June 1967. With the coming of winter, all those who had been forced through no fault of their own to join the ranks of the destitute, were facing all forms of privation and lived in the shadow of fear and uncertainty.

8. The problem was particularly serious for the Kingdom of Jordan. In addition to the 494,000 refugees in east Jordan shown in UNRWA records, the Government had registered some 237,000 displaced persons from the West Bank and 8,500 from Gaza. The military occupation of the West Bank had deprived Jordan of its greatest income-producing territory and it was to the credit of the Jordan Government that it had done everything possible to deal with the refugee problem.

9. It was regrettable that, despite Security Council resolution 237 (1967), which had subsequently been endorsed by the General Assembly (resolution 2252 (ES-V)), the total number of persons returning to the West Bank between September 1967 and July 1968 was only a few thousand. His delegation supported the

Commissioner-General's suggestion that the refugees should return to all territories under Israel occupation as soon as possible, without waiting for the final settlement of the refugee problem as a whole.

10. UNRWA was the one international organization that provided for the essential needs of the refugees and his delegation endorsed the Secretary-General's recommendation (1612th meeting) that its mandate should be renewed for a reasonable period. It hoped that Member States would make even more generous contributions to the Agency's funds to enable it not only to carry on its existing services, but also to meet its increased commitments. His Government had always attached great importance to the welfare of the Palestine refugees and intended to contribute the same amount as it had the previous year, namely, \$30,000,

which, although modest, represented a sincere effort to support the cause of common humanity.

11. Security Council resolution 242 (1967), endorsed by both Israel and the Arab States, described a just settlement of the refugee problem as one of the elements essential to a lasting peace in the Middle East. His Government supported both that resolution and Security Council resolution 237 (1967) concerning the safety and welfare of the inhabitants of the area affected by the June 1967 hostilities. It hoped that the parties concerned would deal with the refugee problem in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, which was in their interests and in those of the world community.

*The meeting rose at 3.50 p.m.*