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## SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE, 617th 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. The CHAIRMAN read out a letter dated 18 November 1968 (A/SPC/127) from fourteen countries, which requested the Committee to grant a hearing to the Palestine Liberation Organization during its discussion of agenda item 33. He said that, in the absence of any objections, he would take it that the Committee agreed to that request, without, however, implying any recognition of that organization.

*It was so decided.*

2. Mr. BERARD (France) said that the fact that the problem of the Palestine refugees had existed for two decades and the further dimension it had acquired as a result of the events of June in 1967 surely made it one of the most poignant problems the world had ever faced. His delegation had studied most carefully the report of the Commissioner-General of the Agency (A/7213) for the period from 1 July 1967 to 30 June 1968. It was no wonder, under the circumstances, that all the activities described in the report had been affected by the hostilities which had broken out in June 1967. The successive military actions initiated since the end of the conflict had, moreover, extended the unfortunate effects, and the movement of refugees from the West Bank of the Jordan had been complicated during recent months by a steady flow of refugees from Gaza. In spite of the difficulties, which had been increased by the measures adopted in the occupied territories, the Commissioner-General and his assistants had carried out their mission with devotion and competence. His Government praised their effective action, and congratulated them on the way in which they had carried out their humanitarian task.

3. The Agency's mission consisted, in the first place, of giving relief and assistance to the refugees and supplying them with basic rations and supplementary food. His delegation noted that considerable progress

had been made in those activities at Gaza and on the West Bank of the Jordan. Secondly, the mission was to ensure that the refugees' health was safeguarded through preventive measures and treatment. Lastly, since half of the persons registered were under eighteen years of age, a programme of education and training had to be provided for them.

4. The contribution of several United Nations organs should be recalled in connexion with the work of assisting refugees; the World Food Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Health Organization and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization all played a role in that combined operation. The situation, despite that co-operation and the assistance from governmental and non-governmental resources, was still precarious; according to the Commissioner-General, the Agency's deficit for 1968 was estimated at roughly \$3.7 million and it was expected to be \$5 million for 1969. Those sums might be reduced, however, if the question of recovering claims could be settled. His delegation had noted with interest that the Agency's claim to Lebanon was about to be successfully concluded (*ibid.*, annex II, paras. 12-15), and it once again expressed the hope that the efforts being made to recover other requisitions would finally be successful.

5. The Commissioner-General had also reiterated that the Agency's capacity to help refugees would be much greater if, in accordance with Security Council resolution 237 (1967), the inhabitants who had fled were allowed to return to the places where they had been living before the outbreak of hostilities. The Commissioner-General hoped that the return to the territories now occupied would be considered and permitted at the earliest possible date and without waiting for the settlement of the refugee problem. The Secretary-General, in his statement on 11 November to the Committee (612th meeting), had, for his part, said that the early return to their former places of residence was for the displaced persons the only remedy that would appear to be at once acceptable and practical. His Government attached particular importance to the question of the return of displaced persons to their homes or camps. A repatriation operation had indeed been authorized by Israel in July and August 1967 but, out of the 400,000 persons involved, only 14,000 had been able to benefit from that action and the operation had not been pursued, despite the appeals made by the Commissioner-General, save for 2,000 to 3,000 special cases. The speaker associated himself with those countries which had called for action that would unquestionably be a gesture of generosity and confidence, but above all an act of justice.

6. On the other hand, his delegation could not accept the suggestion contained in paragraph 41 of the report

to the effect that the administrative expenses of the Agency should be incorporated in the regular budget of the United Nations. The transfer to the United Nations budget of certain expenses relating to the Palestine refugees would have the result of making those expenses mandatory for all the Member States, whereas General Assembly resolution 302 (IV), which had established the Agency, like those which had subsequently renewed its mandate, provided only that it should be financed from voluntary contributions. His delegation hoped that those who were not at present taking part in that great movement of international mutual aid would shortly come to swell the ranks of those who were already giving their support to the Agency.

7. His Government, being keenly concerned with the tragic situation of the Palestine refugees, had made every effort to give increased support to the Agency, within the limits of its capabilities. Thus, France's contribution had been raised by more than a quarter in 1964, and it had decided, as an exceptional contribution in response to the Secretary-General's appeal, to contribute 5 million francs in 1967 and 4 million francs in 1968. Those contributions had been accompanied by assistance in kind, such as various properties and an audio-visual centre made available to the Agency, the training of teachers and the organization of training for young Palestinians. Independently of all that, his Government had decided to earmark a credit of 2 million francs for direct assistance to Arab refugees in Jordan, in response to the urgent and continuing need for tents in the refugee camps as well as for the financing of a dispensary.

8. His delegation felt that, whatever developments might occur in the Near East and whatever results might be achieved by the Special Representative, the Agency must continue its activities for some time to come. The question, then, was one of defining the extension of the Agency's mandate and of determining its conditions. The Commissioner-General pointed out that the choice of a fixed period, as long as possible, would facilitate the setting up and the effective implementation of programmes. The French delegation would vote in favour of such a formula and would give favourable consideration to any other proposal designed to renew the mandate by tacit extension.

9. His delegation nevertheless considered that the Agency's action could not bring about a true and a lasting solution to the problem of refugees. It felt that the necessity for achieving a just settlement of the refugee problem which was affirmed by Security Council resolution 242 (1967) defined the elements of a political solution of the Near East question; it was the implementation of that resolution which would finally put an end to the human tragedy of the refugees.

10. Mr. BAROODY (Saudi Arabia) noted that Mr. Tekoah, in replying to the Yemeni representative at the 616th meeting of the Committee, had merely resorted to the same epithets that he had been using ever since he had been representing Zionism in the United Nations. He wished to reply to Mr. Tekoah's invective, since the latter's charge of "aggressors" affected the thirteen Arab States as a whole. Mr.

Tekoah was attempting to impress the members of the Committee, the Security Council and other United Nations bodies by employing a style worthy of Goebbels, and to brain-wash members of the Committee, as Israel had done in the case of certain European countries and the United States. Mr. Tekoah had said that there would be no Palestine refugees if there had been no Arab aggression. The aggressor in Palestine, however, had surely been the forces of Zionism.

11. He commended the Yemeni representative's survey of the problem at the previous meeting which he had supported by a number of quotations from sources which included the Jewish Encyclopedia and liberal Jewish scholars. Zionism was indeed creating a world problem. Legislation had been enacted to ensure equal rights for Jews in Europe, where they had for so long been persecuted. However, the sufferings which they had endured did not entitle the Zionists to invade the Holy Land of Palestine.

12. The United Nations was the only forum in the world available to the Arab nations. In order to realize that, it sufficed to note that the United States Press had omitted all reference to the Yemeni representative's admirable speech, although those of the United Kingdom and United States representatives had been mentioned. That fact, however, was not so surprising when it was borne in mind that most of the information media in the United States were in Zionist hands. That was also the reason why the Press had devoted so much space to the three Yemenites who had allegedly plotted to assassinate Mr. Nixon. It was obvious that the sole aim of the United States Press was to smear the Arabs and to discredit them in the eyes of United States public opinion.

13. Trying to justify their presence in Palestine, the Zionists argued that God had given Palestine to the Jews. God had never given anything to anyone; the whole earth was given to mankind for them to live on it in brotherhood. Mr. Tekoah also said that his people had been driven from their land by the Romans. Who were those people who had been driven out? Mr. Tekoah overlooked the fact that most Zionists were not of Semitic origin. According to the Jewish Encyclopedia, the Zionists for the most part were descendants of the Khazars, a people of the southern Caucasus which had converted to Judaism towards the end of the eight century, primarily for political reasons. Therefore, Mr. Tekoah could hardly say that the representative of Yemen had distorted the historical facts.

14. Furthermore, Herzl had thought that the Jews should have an enclave in Palestine because they were being persecuted in Europe. Obviously that claim had ceased to be valid in the light of the legislation enacted to the benefit of Jews, particularly in France after the Dreyfus affair.

15. One of the Zionist arguments was that they had lived in Palestine 3,000 years ago and that therefore that land belonged to them. That argument was transparently fallacious. How should one feel about the North American Indians, driven out by the Europeans who were themselves forced to flee Europe because of persecution? The Europeans had not been Jews, but they had killed the Indians and had put the survivors

on reservations merely because they had red skin, and they were trying to do the same thing to the American Negroes. In contrast—and to the everlasting credit of the Spanish people—Latin America was multiracial and, in spite of the excess of the original Conquistadores, the former conquerors had become naturalized.

16. In line with Mr. Tekoah's argument, the United Nations should return North America to the Indians, who had no way of obtaining recognition of their rights. The island of Manhattan had been bought for \$24 from its legitimate owners. Why not give it back to them? The New York Times reported that the United States Government had paid the Indians \$5 million for 9 million acres of land which had been taken from them in 1874. That was an absurd compensation, amounting to about fifty cents per acre.

17. One could also cite the example of Gaul, a former Roman province later occupied in part and for some time by the English, who—following Mr. Tekoah's reasoning—could put forward a claim to the French provinces which they had captured. Similarly, the Arabs had been in Spain for hundreds of years, but it had never occurred to them that the sovereignty over the areas which they had occupied should be returned to them. Clearly, neither the religious nor the historical arguments put forward by the Zionists were of the slightest validity. Zion was an idea and not a geographic entity. The original Jewish tribes, who had founded the Jewish religion, were not from Palestine. It was therefore obvious that another people had lived there before them.

18. The Zionists thought that Judaism was a race. For economic and political reasons they wanted to make their religion a nationality and to reunite all the Jews in Palestine. Many Jews did not want to go to Palestine, and the Zionists were brain-washing them. In fact, Herzl's dream no longer had any foundation. Quoting from the autobiography of Henry Morgenthau All in a Lifetime,<sup>1/</sup> published in 1922, he recalled that the author, although a Jew and partial to the Jewish cause, said that Zionism was the most stupendous fallacy of the century. Around 1920, Palestinians had already begun to defend themselves against the first wave of Zionist aggression. Wanting to establish their own State, the Jews did not have the right to dispossess the inhabitants of a country like Palestine, where there had long been an indigenous population. Zionism was a backward-looking and anachronistic movement.

19. Again quoting at length from the autobiography of Henry Morgenthau and a 1936 Zionist publication which was published in London, he traced the history of the Balfour Declaration<sup>2/</sup> and recalled that the British Government had favoured the establishment of a home-land for the Jewish people in order to induce the Jews of the world to help the United Kingdom fight Germany during the First World War. The Zionists also had great influence in the United States and had brought the United States into the First World War on the side of England. The Balfour Declaration

had not been an altruistic gesture on the part of the British Government, and the contradictory promises which it contained were the origin of the whole Palestine question.

20. Clearly, there was no substance to the Zionist claims, and Mr. Tekoah's allegations were fraudulent. After the War, the British had been unable to reconcile the conflicting interests in Palestine and had transferred their responsibility for Palestine to the United Nations. At that key point in the history of Palestine the United States was under the leadership of President Truman, and from the President's memoirs<sup>3/</sup> he wished to bring out certain facts to support the thesis that the Zionists were an international force whose influence was felt even in the White House. In his memoirs President Truman said that at the time of the Proclamation of the State of Israel, the White House had been under very heavy pressure from the Zionists, and that subsequently the President had even been asked to send American soldiers to Israel to defend that new State should the need arise. After quoting other excerpts from President Truman's memoirs, he strongly recommended that the members of the Committee read those memoirs, particularly those parts which had to do with Palestine.

21. What had occurred in Palestine served the interests of the great Powers. Each of the two greatest Powers, since the end of the war, had been seeking dominant influence in the Middle East. Signs of their rivalry could be seen every day. As to the United Nations, it had been under pressure when it established Israel, as he had explained and proved on many occasions and as was made clear in President Truman's memoirs.

22. In 1919 there had still been hope that Palestine, like Iraq, Syria and its other brother countries, would become independent. But then an alien people, made up of Europeans who had embraced Judaism, had invaded the territory of Palestine, using the religion they professed as an excuse to settle there.

23. In the Security Council in 1967, the two major Powers had referred the question for consideration to a special session of the General Assembly, knowing well that if they had not done so, the very grave dispute which it was their task to resolve, could result in a conflict which could destroy mankind.

24. As the Special Political Committee at present was considering the problem of the refugees from twenty years ago and those from the recent confrontation, he wished to take that opportunity to appeal to the goodwill and the sense of justice of those who in 1947 had brought pressure on the United Nations for the establishment of Israel, in the hope that they would now use their influence to persuade the Israelis to withdraw from the territories which they occupied and to allow the refugees to return to their homes. For their part, the Arabs felt no rancour towards the Jews; they wished only that the refugees might be allowed to go back to their homes. At one time the United Nations had made a mistake, and it was now high time for it to rectify the consequences of that mistake.

<sup>1/</sup> Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Page and Co., 1922.

<sup>2/</sup> Official Records of the General Assembly, Second Session, Supplement No. 11, vol. II, annex 19.

<sup>3/</sup> Memoirs by Harry S. Truman (Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday and Co., 1955.)

25. The Zionists, who controlled the information media in some countries, in particular the United States, had the power to plunge the world into chaos. The Palestinian people were beginning to awaken, and the youth who were born in refugee camps were prepared to lay down their lives in order to recover what was theirs. No Arab Government would tell them that they should not. As the number of refugees grew,

their suffering also increased, and with it the likelihood of conflict.

26. He repeated that the Arab countries had no quarrel with the Jews and that the latter had often reached high positions in Arab countries. What they sought was rectification of the error which had been made.

*The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.*