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NEW YORK

Chairman: Mr. Abdul Samad GHAUS
(Afghanistan).

AGENDA ITEM 35

**United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine
Refugees in the Near East: report of the Commissioner-
General (continued) (A/8013, A/8040, A/8084 and
Add.1, A/SPC/140, A/SPC/141, A/SPC/L.196)**

1. Mr. SHAFIE (Malaysia) expressed his delegation's deep appreciation to the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East for his patient and untiring efforts to alleviate the lamentable plight of the Palestine refugees. Those refugees, uprooted from their homeland, deprived of any means of livelihood and denied hope for the future, had reached the limits of human endurance. The injustice inflicted on them more than twenty years before had not only escaped rectification but had been compounded by its mere persistence. It was in recognition of that fact that the General Assembly at its twenty-fourth session had adopted resolution 2535 B (XXIV), which reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the people of Palestine.

2. No people could be expected to endure such a tragedy and such injustice indefinitely. The Palestine refugees had grown tired of living a subhuman existence on charity, waiting for the international community to solve their problems, and were now taking matters into their own hands in an attempt to correct a situation which was really beyond their control. The inevitable result was that while their tragedy remained unsolved, the action they were compelled to take complicated still further the situation in the Middle East and increased its potential dangers.

3. While his delegation would continue to support UNRWA in providing humanitarian relief to the refugees, it wished to stress again the political nature of the problem. It should not be forgotten that UNRWA's intended role had been to provide temporary relief pending a settlement of the refugee problem as a whole. The refugee question was only one aspect of the entire Middle East problem.

4. His delegation wished to stress the urgent need for achieving a lasting peace in the Middle East through the implementation of the relevant resolutions, notably General Assembly resolutions 194 (III) and 2252 (ES-V) and Security Council resolutions 237 (1967) and 242 (1967). Although the Middle East problem had been compounded by the 1967 hostilities, the crux of the matter was still the just settlement of the refugee question. There would never be

peace in the area until the injustice inflicted on the people of Palestine had been redressed.

5. Mr. BILIMATISIS (Greece) said that he intended to concentrate on the humanitarian aspects of the Palestine refugee problem, since a lengthy examination of its political ramifications would serve little purpose. He paid tribute to the Commissioner-General and his able staff, who had carried out their duties with devotion and dedication under adverse and sometimes perilous conditions.

6. It was encouraging to note from the Commissioner-General's report (A/8013) that in recent years UNRWA had continued to place great emphasis on education, although, since it was the largest item in UNRWA's budget, education would be certain to suffer most if the Agency had to curtail its activities because of financial difficulties. His delegation was also heartened by the harmonious co-operation between UNRWA and international organizations in various fields. In that connexion, he expressed appreciation for the work done by UNESCO and UNICEF in education and by WHO in the health sector. Furthermore, it was gratifying to observe the efficiency and speed with which UNRWA had resumed its functions after the unfortunate incidents of September 1970. The plight of the Palestine refugees when the Agency's services had been temporarily disrupted demonstrated how vital those services were to the existence and well-being of those unfortunate people.

7. Nevertheless, in spite of the progress made by UNRWA during 1970 towards alleviating the living conditions of the Palestine refugees, it was disappointing to observe that no significant progress had been made towards a workable solution of the over-all Middle East problem, and that, if anything, recent incidents had further aggravated the refugee problem and increased UNRWA's difficulties. The Palestine refugee question was a political as well as a humanitarian problem and as such it affected the peace and stability of the whole Middle East region. The Greek delegation regretted that General Assembly resolution 194 (III), which provided the only just basis for the solution of the Middle East problem, remained inoperative. General Assembly resolution 2452 (XXIII) and Security Council resolution 242 (1967) also proposed means of achieving a just settlement of the refugee problem.

8. His delegation was also discouraged by the apparent breakdown of the negotiations undertaken by the parties to the conflict through Ambassador Jarring. It sincerely hoped that those negotiations would soon be resumed for a permanent solution to the refugee problem would be found only within the context of a general settlement. Until such a settlement was achieved, the international community should ensure that UNRWA was provided with the financial

means to continue its life-saving operations. The collapse of UNRWA's activities would have grave consequences not only for the refugees but for the general situation in the Middle East. His delegation therefore joined with those who had appealed for generous increases in governmental and private contributions to UNRWA. It was also ready to support any initiative leading to a more permanent solution which would prevent the recurrence of financial crises. The Greek Government had in the past contributed to UNRWA within its means and the exact amount of its contribution for 1971 would be announced at the forthcoming pledging conference. Its contribution was tangible proof of the importance it attached to the continuation of the Agency's functions and of its concern for the plight of the almost 1.5 million human beings who, through no fault of their own, had for the past twenty years been forced to depend on international charity for their continued existence.

9. Mr. CAVAGLIERI (Italy) expressed his delegation's deep appreciation to the Commissioner-General and his staff for their efforts to carry on their task under the pressure of political events and financial difficulties. It was now well established that the problem of the Palestine refugees was political as well as humanitarian in nature and that any attempt to solve it must take into account all the ramifications of the Middle East situation. Although progress on such a complex problem would not be easy, certain steps could be taken to improve the existing situation or at least to prevent its deterioration. Any initiative which could help to establish an atmosphere which might facilitate negotiations should be encouraged in all possible ways. As the Commissioner-General's report pointed out, the transfer of an adequate number of refugees to the twenty UNRWA camps in the Jericho area would be extremely helpful in that respect, and it was to be hoped that any obstacles to the distribution of all necessary textbooks to UNRWA-UNESCO schools would be promptly removed. In more general terms, the situation might be substantially improved if a greater number of 1967 refugees were permitted to return to their homes.

10. It was important to bear in mind the dynamic nature of the situation. The Commissioner-General's report described how the refugees' attitude towards the Agency's activities had gradually changed, and made it clear that UNRWA was adjusting to the new situation by shifting the emphasis in its activities from relief to education. UNRWA's role in that sector should be to disseminate the principles and ideals of peace, justice and progress and to inculcate in the younger generation of refugees a sense of individual and collective responsibility. In view of the vital function of education, it was extremely disquieting to note that the Agency's educational activities would be seriously affected if its existing financial problems were not relieved.

11. Italy had always supported UNRWA through both regular and special contributions, and would contribute to the Agency in 1971. It associated itself with the appeals for much broader support of the Agency made by the Secretary-General and by other representatives and particularly welcomed the valuable initiative taken by the representative of Turkey (728th meeting). Since it was recognized that UNRWA's activities were linked to a political question of acute general concern, it was to be hoped that all Governments would feel it their duty to contribute to

the continuation and fruitful development of the Agency's work. It was impossible to assess the full implications of the disintegration of the Agency; at the very least, it would so exacerbate the refugee situation as to complicate the general situation in the area still further. The Italian Government shared the view that such a development must be avoided at all costs. It remained confident that it was through avoiding rigid positions and through constructive co-operation with the efforts of Ambassador Jarring that it would be possible to implement Security Council resolution 242 (1967), which remained the basis for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

12. Mr. CORNELISSEN (Netherlands) said that UNRWA's task, never an easy one, had been complicated by a serious financial crisis which was threatening the Agency's very existence. The Netherlands Government had consistently supported the activities of UNRWA, and in 1970, concerned that lack of funds might endanger the Agency's humanitarian activities, it had contributed a sum of 200,000 guilders in addition to its contribution for that year of 400,000 guilders. It would maintain its contribution for 1971 at the level of 600,000 guilders. It had hoped last year that many other Governments would follow its example, but as the Commissioner-General had informed the Committee (726th meeting) the Agency's income had not increased at the rate required.

13. It was gratifying to note that many speakers in the current debate had paid due attention to UNRWA's financial problems; a number of delegations had stressed that the time for urgent action had come and the representative of Turkey (728th meeting) had appealed for a greater collective effort to solve the Agency's financial crisis. It was therefore to be hoped that there would be a radical change in the situation in the very near future. He noted in that connexion that only 53 of the 127 States Members of the United Nations had contributed to UNRWA during 1970.

14. His delegation had noted with interest draft resolution A/SPC/L.196, submitted by the delegation of the United States of America, and would vote in favour of that proposal, which, in general, coincided with its own views.

15. In conclusion, he emphasized that in his Government's view a just and lasting solution of the Palestine refugee problem must be found, either within the framework of an over-all political settlement in the Middle East or, if possible, in the form of a specific settlement of the refugee problem pending an over-all settlement.

16. Mr. TEKOAHI (Israel) said that, more than any other aspect of the Middle East conflict, the refugee problem had over the years become enveloped in passion and acrimony; facts had become secondary to arguments, and humanitarian concern had been replaced by political considerations and invective. A solution to the refugee problem, which was not only vital but possible, would require an attitude of understanding and co-operation on the part of the Arab States—an attitude long overdue if it was truly the welfare of the refugees that they sought. With goodwill it should be possible to remove the obstacles to such a solution. No issue arising out of the Middle East situation had ever been resolved through confrontation and discord; only agree-

ment between the parties concerned could achieve a solution—a fundamental truth recognized by the Security Council in resolution 242 (1967). The Government of Israel had suggested that an international conference of the contributing Powers, the Arab States and Israel should be convened at an early date to agree on a five-year plan for solving the problem. However, the Arab States had rejected that proposal, for no logical reason.

17. Nations in other parts of the world had demonstrated that refugee problems could be solved. Since the Second World War 50 million refugees had had to leave their homes and move to other lands. As in the case of the Palestine refugees, those movements had resulted from war; many of them had involved large ethnic, religious or national groups and all of them had created deep grievances and been accompanied by loss of property and deprivation of political and human rights. Yet all those problems had been settled constructively; the refugees had been absorbed in the countries of refuge and given new life in new surroundings. The same had happened in the Middle East. Jewish refugees from Arab lands, equal in number to the Arab refugees from Israel, had been received by Israel and rehabilitated within the Jewish State, and they now composed almost half the population of Israel. A virtual exchange of population had taken place between Israel and the Arab States, with the acquiescence of the Arab Governments. The search for a possible settlement of the problem should not be seen in terms of reversing those parallel movements of large masses of people; it should be guided by the successful experience of the integration of refugees gained in all parts of the world. The criterion applied in assisting refugees to rebuild their lives had always been where they could best live in peace and harmony with society, not necessarily where they had been born.

18. The various efforts made by the United Nations since 1948 to resettle the Arab refugees had consistently been rejected by the Arab Governments. Their attitude had been explained in the January-March 1957 bulletin of the Research Group for European Migration Problems, of the Hague, which had stated, *inter alia*, that the Arab Governments had systematically rejected all organization and employment for the refugees and had sought to prevent any sort of adaptation and integration, because the refugees were seen as a political means of pressure to get the greatest possible number of concessions. Furthermore, on 17 January 1960 King Hussein of Jordan had declared that since 1948 Arab leaders had approached the Palestine problem in an irresponsible manner and had used the Palestine people for selfish political reasons.

19. Not content with frustrating international plans for dealing constructively with the refugee problem, the Arab Governments had turned the refugees into an instrument of continued warfare against Israel. Once they had realized that they were unable to crush Israel by the use of regular military forces, they had resorted to terrorist warfare. The Egyptian army had organized the so-called *fedayeen* squads and sent them into Israel with explicit instructions to murder civilians. The refugees had served as a reservoir of manpower for those acts of aggression. Later, Syria had established the organization El Fatah for the same purpose. Since 1967 such organizations had increased in number and intensified their activities. Their avowed aim was to destroy

Israel, and their method was the murder of innocent citizens. They had claimed credit for a whole series of terrorist acts. Gradually the refugee camps had become centres and bases for such activities, while United Nations assistance continued to flow into them. Emboldened by that situation, the Arab Governments were now suggesting that the terrorist organizations grouped in the so-called Palestine Liberation Organization should be given advisory status with UNESCO and UNRWA. On the one hand, the international community was desperately seeking ways to cope with the criminal activities of the terrorist organizations, and international organizations, including the United Nations, were adopting resolutions condemning air terror and hijacking; on the other hand, UNRWA was being asked to bolster those groups. That was an irresponsible suggestion fraught with dire implications.

20. The attitude of those Palestinian organizations towards Israel and the support they enjoyed from Arab Governments were sufficient to explain the impossibility of moving large numbers of refugees into territory under Israeli jurisdiction. General Assembly resolution 194 (III) had made any return of refugees conditional on peace, and the resolutions adopted by the Security Council in 1967 had called on Israel to ensure the welfare and security of the inhabitants in Israeli-held areas, but the Arab Governments and the Palestinian armed organizations had made the refugees a tool in their continued aggression against Israel and their uninterrupted assaults on the welfare and security of the civilian population in Israeli-administered areas.

21. Nevertheless, Israel had over the years admitted approximately 50,000 refugees displaced by the 1948 hostilities. Since 1967 Israel had been granting permits for the return of West Bank and Gaza inhabitants, but little more than half of the permits issued had been used. Of 21,000 permits issued in 1967 on the basis of an agreement between the Governments of Israel and Jordan, only 14,000 had actually been used. Thereafter, the return to the West Bank and Gaza had continued under the family reunion scheme and on the basis of special arrangements for hardship cases. Those arrangements remained in force, and up to 30 August 1970, 18,629 Arab inhabitants had returned, bringing the total number of returnees to nearly 34,000 to date. Moreover, in 1970 alone, 55,000 visitors from Arab States had been allowed to enter Israeli-administered areas, and a considerable number of them had applied for authorization to remain.

22. The Israeli Government was prepared to take certain security risks for the sake of the refugees, but there were limits beyond which an influx of refugees could become a direct threat to the welfare and security of the population. Statements made by certain Arab representatives during the current session indicated that their designs had not been abandoned, and the recent hostilities in Jordan had reinforced the need to weigh most carefully the effects that the return of large numbers of refugees would have on public order and security.

23. Attempts had been made to cloak the terrorist activities of the Palestinian organizations in the mantle of a struggle for Palestinian rights, but in fact their aims were as destructive as their means. Yasir Arafat, head of El Fatah,

had stated on 29 March 1970 that the goal of his organization's struggle was the end of Israel. Indeed, the primary objective of the terrorist organization was to deprive the Jewish inhabitants of Palestine of their legitimate rights. However, the legitimate rights of the two peoples who inhabited Palestine were not irreconcilable; the Arabs exercised them in the Palestinian State of Jordan established within the borders of mandatory Palestine, and the Jews exercised them in Israel. The Arabs were free to determine the structure and character of the Arab State, and the Jews were equally at liberty to do so in their State. To question the right of Jews to freedom and sovereignty in their ancient homeland simply because they had been conquered and exiled from it by foreign invaders was untenable historically, legally and morally.

24. It had been shown throughout the years that Arab refugees could be integrated into the local economies. An article published in the Lebanese press over ten years earlier had admitted that Lebanon's attitude towards the settlement of the refugees was hypocritical, since about 120,000 refugees had been absorbed into the country. An article in the November 1961 issue of the *Swiss Review of World Affairs* had stated that the refugees in Syria had probably made the best adaptation to the host country's standard of living, adding that the fact that many of the Palestinians in Syria received UNRWA rations did not necessarily mean they had no other source of income; the Syrian authorities prevented the Agency from carrying out any investigations regarding the income of the refugees.

25. Integration was a natural process because the majority of Arab refugees had never left the territory of Palestine. The Commissioner-General's report (A/8013) indicated that two thirds of the registered 1948 refugees and 60 per cent of the total number of 1948 and 1967 refugees lived outside camps. Moreover, it should be borne in mind that the rolls were inflated by names of dead persons and by refugees who had become self-supporting. For hundreds of thousands of refugees, UNRWA relief was merely a source of additional income. As early as in 1964 the Commissioner-General had reported that between 50 and 60 per cent of the total number of registered refugees were economically independent or partially self-supporting. The continuation of the progress of economic integration was reflected in the fact that although expenditure for education had increased and had become the main item of UNRWA's budget in 1970, and despite the difficulties faced by the Agency in the past year, the health of the refugee population, according to the report, had not worsened, nor had there been a deterioration in the nutritional state of the refugees.

26. Israel's objectives in the Israeli-administered areas were to improve the standard of living of the refugees and make them self-supporting, to encourage economic development, and to reduce security measures to the minimum. Considerable progress towards economic integration and self-support was in fact being made. Of nearly a million Arab inhabitants of the areas in question, about one quarter lived in refugee camps on the West Bank and in the Gaza area, while a further 300,000 UNRWA-registered persons lived outside the camps. Israel's contribution to UNRWA for 1970, as recorded in table 20 of the Commissioner-General's report, was \$601,000. In addition, as could be

seen from table 22, Israel had during the year ended on 30 June 1970 contributed over \$4,230,000 directly to refugees for education, medical services and social welfare. Table 20, again, showed that his country's total contribution to the Agency since 1967 had been about \$2,830,000; it was interesting to compare that sum with the contributions of other Governments in the area.

27. Services provided by the Israeli Government to the general population of the administered areas had also indirectly benefited the refugees, who constituted about half of the population. The 1969 budget for those services, shouldered largely by the Israeli taxpayer, had been about \$45 million.

28. Particular emphasis had been placed on full-time employment for refugees, for which purpose there was no differentiation between refugees and non-refugees. Labour exchange offices, established throughout the administered areas, not only channelled applications for employment but also protected Arab workers from exploitation. The Government was promoting activities in various sectors of the economy, while relatively well-paid employment was also offered in Israel itself. As a result, unemployment had now sharply declined to a very low level, and was non-existent in certain seasons. The expansion in the economy had been acknowledged earlier in 1970 by Radio Cairo, *The Guardian*, of London, and *The Wall Street Journal*, of New York.

29. In the refugee camps, certain public utility improvement projects had been undertaken by the Israeli authorities, usually in co-operation with the residents and local councils. Education had been expanded. In the year under review, according to table 22 in the report of the Commissioner-General, the Israeli authorities had spent nearly \$1.5 million on education for refugee children; that, however, was a mere fraction of the total expenditure on general education in the administered areas. While 85,000 refugees attended UNRWA/UNESCO schools in those areas, 24,000 studied in public and private schools.

30. As indicated in paragraphs 112 and 113 of the Commissioner-General's report, the education of refugee children had proceeded under improved conditions. That was significant when compared with the interference with school work in neighbouring countries, as reported in paragraph 24 of the report. As the Commissioner-General had stated in the Committee (726th meeting), the difficulties over the import of textbooks from Arab countries had largely been resolved. Of 118 textbooks submitted to UNRWA, permits had been granted for the import of all but 15, to which the Israel Government objected because they contained derogatory passages regarding Jews and Israel. It was regrettable that such texts were still in use in UNRWA schools in Arab States; it was a primary responsibility of United Nations organs not to lend themselves to the dissemination of incitement to national, religious or racial hatred. But even when security risks were involved, Israel was making continuous efforts to facilitate the normal functioning of the school system, as indicated in paragraph 107 of the report and in the Commissioner-General's statement to the Committee.

31. With the improvement in security conditions, measures to protect the population had been curtailed; they could not be compared to the drastic security measures taken by neighbouring host countries. The steps undertaken by Israel were unavoidable, especially since Palestinian terrorist organizations exerted great efforts to mobilize saboteurs from among the refugees, whose camps were considered to be ideal bases. The pressure which those organizations had brought to bear on the Arab staff of UNRWA explained why some local Agency staff had been affected by the security measures.

32. It was important to note, however, that Arabs, more often than Jews, were the targets and victims of Arab terror attacks. Of 2,000 persons killed and wounded since 1967, over half were Arabs, both refugees and non-refugees. Radio Damascus had stated earlier in 1970 that the death of a starving Arab in the occupied territories would arouse international wrath against Israel—an admission which indicated the sinister objectives of the terrorist organizations. The security measures which Israel was sometimes obliged to take were clearly as vital for the protection of the Arab population, including the refugees, as for the safety of the Israeli civilians; that applied to the regulation of admission of refugees, particularly persons displaced by the 1967 hostilities, from Arab-controlled territory.

33. In conclusion, his delegation wished to associate itself with the appreciation expressed by other representatives regarding the Commissioner-General and his staff. Whether in the search for an over-all solution within the context of a just and lasting peace, or in the efforts to assist the refugees to rebuild their lives, it was essential to abandon bloodshed. He urged Arab Governments and members of the Committee to think of the refugee problem in terms of peace and understanding with Israel, for the good of the refugees and of all the peoples of the area.

34. Mr. DURAISWAMY (Ceylon) expressed his delegation's gratitude to the Commissioner-General and his staff for their valuable services in alleviating the distress of the refugees under exceptionally difficult circumstances. It was tragic that the continued failure to achieve an over-all political settlement had steadily aggravated the plight of the refugees, who were the unfortunate victims of an action initiated by the United Nations twenty-two years earlier. No effort should be spared, therefore, to reach a permanent and just solution; and such a solution could be assisted by the proper implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions.

35. In view of the Organization's continuing responsibility to provide relief to the refugees, every assistance must be given to UNRWA to discharge its mandate. It was therefore distressing to hear of the Agency's steadily increasing deficit, which from \$4.9 million in 1969 had reached \$5 million in 1970 and was expected to exceed \$6.5 million in 1971 if funds were not forthcoming. The Secretary-General had stated in document A/8040 that in the prevailing circumstances, the Agency would be unable to meet its cash obligations beyond the first months of 1971, and its obligations would in effect exceed its cash assets by the end of 1970. The rising costs of UNRWA goods and services had not been matched by increased contributions, while the rapid growth in the refugee population from

natural causes had entailed greater expenditure, especially on education. According to the Commissioner-General (A/8013), a thorough examination of all possibilities had indicated that education was the only factor in which some reduction was possible; but that, as he had stated, would deal a grievous blow at the most constructive sector of the Agency's work and produce repercussions that might well shatter the Agency to the point of disintegration.

36. The delegation of Ceylon wished, therefore, to appeal to all Member States for generous contributions; the international community must not abdicate its responsibility. Despite the meagre means at its disposal, his own Government would continue to contribute to the best of its ability.

37. Mr. PAL (Pakistan) said that his delegation associated itself fully with other representatives in paying tribute to the Commissioner-General and his staff for their spirit of selfless dedication to humanity in the face of increasingly hazardous and difficult circumstances. Against the tragic background of the story of Palestine since the First World War, their perseverance and courage stood out in sharp relief. The Agency and its Commissioner-General deserved the full support of Member States. ¹

38. The refugee problem could not be considered in isolation from the circumstances which had created it, namely, the great injustice done to the people of Palestine by certain Powers in order to protect their vested interests. The Zionist plot to establish a so-called homeland for the Jews had been prepared in 1897, although the alleged homeland admittedly had had a Jewish population of no more than 5 or 10 per cent. Following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 181 (II), providing for the partition of Palestine, violence begun by the Jews had developed into a war with the Arabs. Arabs who had lived in Palestine for generations had been forced to flee from their homes by the activities of Jewish terrorist organizations, which had imported terrorists in large numbers for the purpose. It was tragic that those organizations had been supported by certain big Powers which proclaimed their belief in the right of self-determination and the rule of law. That very right had been denied to the people of Palestine, and the creation of a State for people not occupying the territory had been declared by vested interests against the basic principles of international law.

39. Some Powers belittled the importance of the refugee problem, little realizing that it could not be solved unless the root cause of the grievance was eradicated. As the Commissioner-General had acknowledged in his report, while the political aspects of the problem were no direct concern of UNRWA, they formed part of the environment in which the Agency's work took place.

40. In 1948 the United Nations Mediator had recommended, *inter alia*, the affirmation by the United Nations of the right of the Palestinian people to return to their homes in the Jewish-controlled territory as early as possible, and their repatriation, resettlement, rehabilitation, together with the payment of adequate compensation to those choosing not to return, supervised and assisted by the United Nations Conciliation Commission. The General Assembly had accepted those recommendations in its resolution 194 (III).

41. It was sad to note that UNRWA's financial difficulties were increasing, to such an extent that its very existence was threatened. Expenditure on health and sanitation had been restricted so that essential services might be maintained; many amenities and facilities had been stopped completely; and subsidies made to various Governments to be spent on refugees had been withheld. Such reductions should be a matter of concern to all Members, for the Agency's work was essential and must continue.

42. It was feared that if adequate funds were not provided, cuts would also have to be made in education. That would be most unfortunate, since educational facilities were essential. His delegation supported the proposals already made for UNRWA relief to the displaced persons of Palestine, but wished to emphasize that the financial burden should fall entirely on the States which had supported Zionism in creating an illegal State, in complete disregard of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The States concerned were spending vast sums on weapons of destruction; they should spend part of those funds on alleviating the hardships of the victims of their illegal acts.

43. The refugee problem could be solved only if Israel complied with United Nations resolutions on the subject; but that country had so far disregarded them and had pursued measures which could only aggravate the misery of the Palestinians. The Commissioner-General had referred to the refugees' continued disillusionment over the delay in the realization of their hopes for repatriation. The Pakistani delegation wished to stress that the problem could not be solved merely by feeding or sheltering the refugees. They were struggling for the attainment of human and political rights, and could not be blamed for resorting to force. In his address before the General Assembly on 22 October 1970 (1878th plenary meeting), the President of Pakistan had drawn attention to the danger occasioned by the denial of fundamental rights in the Middle East.

44. It should be remembered that the refugees registered with UNRWA were not destitute people asking for international charity; if they had been able to receive the income from the property illegally usurped from them by Israel, they would have been self-supporting. The Palestine problem was the result of many factors, of which three were important: first, the illegal partition of Palestine; secondly, Israel's refusal to allow repatriation; and thirdly, Israel's expansionist policies and aggressive acts. Israel had caused further resentment in connexion with the attempt to set fire to the holy Al Aqsa mosque, an event which was unparalleled in its horror and in the world-wide revulsion which it had caused particularly among Moslems, and which called for some meaningful action by the Security Council. Israel bore a heavy responsibility to both Moslems and Christians for the preservation of the Holy Places in Jerusalem. The issue was not whether it was competent to discharge that responsibility; rather, it was whether the military conquest of the Holy City could bestow a title, in violation of an established order sanctified by history and consecrated by the sacrifices of generations. The only act of restitution that could eradicate the bitterness caused by that incident was the immediate relinquishment of Arab territory which, even according to the United Nations, Israel was illegally occupying. In his aforementioned address to the General Assembly, the President of Pakistan

had expressed the anguish felt by his people at the continued occupation of Jerusalem, and had said that no settlement which left the Holy City under Israeli control could bring peace to the Middle East.

45. He drew attention to four basic points which, as the Commissioner-General had said in his report, deserved the General Assembly's most earnest attention: first, the continuing increase in the total needs of the refugees, whose number was growing daily; secondly, the importance of meeting those needs; thirdly, the Agency's increasing deficit, which threatened to reach \$7 million by 1971; and fourthly, the difficult circumstances under which UNRWA had to operate.

46. It was abundantly clear that the 1967 hostilities and the dangerous situation prevailing in the region had hampered the Agency's operations. The looming danger of an income shortfall in 1971 made it imperative for the United Nations to fulfil its obligations to the victims of Israeli aggression.

47. Mr. OTUATHAIL (Ireland) said that the courage and devotion of the Commissioner-General and his staff deserved tribute, especially in view of the conditions of tension and financial difficulties under which they worked. His delegation noted with concern the personal hardship, including arrest and detention, suffered by members of the Agency's staff, and had learned with sorrow that eleven had been killed during the recent hostilities in Jordan.

48. The Commissioner-General's report gave ample evidence of the continued need for UNRWA's services. In the period under review the total number of UNRWA-registered refugees had increased to 1.4 million; and in addition, the Agency continued to assist the displaced persons in east Jordan. The Agency's success in continuing its programmes more or less intact in its five areas of operation was a remarkable achievement, to which the valuable assistance given by UNESCO and WHO had certainly contributed.

49. His delegation was particularly pleased to note the emphasis which members had placed on UNRWA's education and training activities, which constituted the most constructive sector of the Agency's programme and would have a lasting effect on the refugees' ability to lead useful lives. It was gratifying that expenditure on education had risen in the previous year to 45 per cent of the UNRWA budget, becoming for the first time the main item of expenditure. The increased enrolment in UNRWA/UNESCO schools during the current year, involving some 245,000 students, offered great hope for the future; but unless further finances were forthcoming the education programme would be substantially curtailed.

50. His delegation subscribed fully to the importance of a political solution, and had already made known its views on that question. It considered that Security Council resolution 242 (1967) provided the basis for a settlement, and supported the efforts which had been made to implement it. Despite the disappointing lack of progress on the essential political issues, his delegation saw no purpose in going over the same ground again; the main task must be to concentrate on upholding and salvaging one of the really successful United Nations operations in the Middle East,

namely the work of UNRWA. While that work was solely humanitarian, its beneficial effects went far beyond the humanitarian field; as the Commissioner-General had stated in his report, UNRWA had become by virtue of its twenty years of existence and the scope of its activities a *de facto* element of stability in some of the host countries.

51. The recurring financial deficits of UNRWA, a perennial feature of the Committee's debates, had now reached crisis proportions, as the Secretary-General had pointed out in document A/8040. The Commissioner-General had stated that the financial problem had become so serious that the Agency's very continuance was threatened.

52. Despite the urgent appeal to Governments to help UNRWA meet its needs made in General Assembly resolution 2535 (XXIV), and despite some generous contributions from Governments and private sources, the over-all result had been disappointing. Only 3 more Member States had pledged contributions in 1970 than in 1969, which meant that 75 countries still did not contribute. The outcome of the current debate on UNRWA could therefore not be merely another urgent appeal for funds. As the Commissioner-General had said, either Member States must find some way of increasing the funds available, or there must be a radical review of the Agency's role and programme in order to prevent a complete breakdown in its services in 1971.

53. His delegation had constantly supported UNRWA and felt strongly that the Agency should be able to continue its important humanitarian work at its current level. It fully agreed that further reductions in UNRWA's activities would lead to serious hardships for the refugees and undermine the Agency's basic function, as well as having an unsettling effect in the disturbed conditions of the area. UNRWA not only brought relief and alleviated distress but also restored hope, dignity and self-respect to hundreds of thousands of human beings through its educational programmes. It would be disappointing if the United Nations were to fail the refugees for whom it and the international community had definite responsibilities, dating back to the early years of the Organization.

54. The method of voluntary collective financing was the most realistic way of financing UNRWA in the present circumstances, but if it was to be successful, every State Member of the United Nations, and especially the developed countries, must contribute. Any other method of financing likely to win support, such as the proposals put forward in the Commissioner-General's note submitted at the previous session,¹ should also be carefully considered. Such new proposals would, however, need wide if not unanimous acceptance, or their effect might be negative rather than positive.

55. As an indication of his Government's firm desire to support the Agency at a critical time, Ireland's contribution for 1971 would be higher than that for 1970. He appealed to all Member States, in particular those which had never made contributions, to make a special effort at the forthcoming Pledging Conference in order to give the

Agency the means to continue its vital work for refugees in the Middle East and to avert the grave consequences which would undoubtedly result if UNRWA were to fail.

56. Mr. BASSETTE (Belgium) expressed his delegation's concern at UNRWA's financial difficulties, as outlined by the Commissioner-General in his report (A/8013, para. 31). In such a critical situation, his delegation supported the Turkish representative's appeal (728th meeting) that consideration be given to the plight of over a million people rather than to the political implications of the question.

57. Previous speakers had said that the Agency could not work efficiently in its current financial situation. Food and health services could be curtailed no further; the only possible reductions were in education, and such reductions would have serious consequences for the future of the young Palestine refugees.

58. His Government considered that the solution to UNRWA's financial difficulties could be found only in increased financial support, and it therefore intended, subject to parliamentary approval, to increase its cash contribution from 3 million to 5 million Belgian francs in 1971. It was the responsibility of the whole world community, not only of countries which had been contributing to the Agency for over twenty years, to provide for the elementary needs of the Palestine refugees. His delegation wished to support the statement made by the Danish representative (730th meeting) and would welcome a statement by the Committee Chairman at the end of the debate that greater effort was expected of all States Members of the Organization than they had made in previous years.

59. Mr. BACKES (Austria) said that UNRWA was now confronted with a budget deficit; his delegation had noted with alarm that the Commissioner-General estimated a possible shortfall of some \$6.5 million to \$7 million for 1971. The time for positive and decisive action to prevent the breakdown forecast in the Commissioner-General's report had come. He was impressed by the ingenuity and determination shown by the Commissioner-General and his staff, particularly during the past year, in overcoming difficulties, hardships and frustrations, and wished to express his Government's regrets at the death of eleven UNRWA staff members during the recent tragic events in Jordan.

60. Austria had considerable experience of refugee matters, and its Government, non-governmental organizations and people had contributed substantially to support those who had found refuge on its soil. It had also witnessed and benefited from international solidarity.

61. He had noted with satisfaction the attention given by so many speakers to the Agency's serious financial situation, and supported the Turkish representative's appeal to speakers to avoid controversial subjects and concentrate on the need for a greater collective effort on the part of the international community. It was inconceivable that in the year of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, Member States could not raise some \$6 million to permit the continuation of vital relief, health and educational services. He shared the concern expressed by representatives

¹ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-fourth Session, Annexes*, agenda item 36, document A/SPC/134.

speaking before him about possible reductions in the educational programme, the most constructive part of UNRWA's activities. Education was a basic human right, and a United Nations agency should not be associated with the denial of such a right.

62. Despite the heavy burden of its own humanitarian programme, Austria had increased its contribution for 1969 by 50 per cent over the previous year. In 1970 it had again raised it by 30 per cent, and it would maintain its contribution at that higher level for 1971. His delegation earnestly hoped that Member States which had not so far been able to do so would now join the collective effort to fulfil the Organization's humanitarian responsibilities. International solidarity should be demonstrated by action rather than words.

63. Mr. EREN (Turkey) said that when, at the beginning of the discussion on the issue under consideration (728th meeting), he had appealed to the Committee to concentrate on its humanitarian aspect, he had realized the impossibility of separating it from the political aspect. He was very grateful, however, to the members of the Committee who had responded to his appeal and had shown compassion and understanding for the problems of the Palestine people.

64. He accordingly requested the Chairman to make a statement that it was the consensus of the Committee that services to the Palestine refugees had been reduced to a bare minimum, and as even that minimum appeared to be in jeopardy, the Committee appealed to the international community for further efforts of help. He could not believe that there would be one dissenting voice, and he hoped that the Committee would be able to tell the world that the United Nations could at last unite in the face of human affliction.

65. The CHAIRMAN said that nearly all delegations that had spoken so far had voiced their concern about the financial situation of UNRWA and had agreed with the Commissioner-General's assessment of the grave consequences that would ensue from the reduction of services to the Palestine refugees that a further year of inadequate income would make inevitable. It had been pointed out that the relief and health services were already at a minimum level, and it was clear that curtailment of education services could handicap refugee children for the rest of their lives.

66. It had been urged repeatedly that the situation required an additional, and a greater, effort on the part of the international community. He believed therefore that he was expressing the feeling of the Committee in appealing to all representatives to represent that situation urgently to their Governments, whether already contributors to UNRWA or not, before the pledging conference was held, so that further hardship and bitterness among the Palestine refugees might be averted by a demonstration of practical concern for their welfare and contributions to UNRWA made on the scale necessary to eliminate the Agency's deficit.

67. As services to the Palestine refugees had been reduced to a bare minimum and as even that minimum appeared to be in jeopardy, he felt it imperative that the appeal should

be reiterated that the international community make further efforts of help.

68. Mr. BENHIMA (Morocco), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said he was sure that the Committee did not understand the Turkish representative's appeal for priority to be given to the financial aspects of the problem, in view of the acute crisis being faced by the Agency, to mean that its fundamental nature, which was political, should be entirely ignored. The representative of an Arab country could not forget that the matter was not only a problem for the Agency but one being faced daily by a whole people and a whole region.

69. The Israeli representative had unfortunately ignored that fundamental point and had tried to confuse the issues by quoting figures without drawing the logical conclusions from them and by distorted explanations of facts, without taking into account the evolution of the attitude of the Palestine refugees during the past year.

70. The Israeli representative had spoken of the Israeli Government's desire to find a solution, and had accused the Arab States of lack of co-operation and of failure to integrate the refugees into the economy of their countries. But the plight of the refugees was caused by a war made possible by the installation of a foreign occupier on their soil and by an influx of immigrants which had provided Israel with manpower, technical resources and foreign support. When the refugees had been driven from their villages after seeing their compatriots massacred, the Arab States had welcomed them as unreservedly as other countries had welcomed the refugees during the Second World War. They had not, however, treated them as permanent residents and had not contemplated integrating them into the life of the country because they knew that the legitimate aim of the refugees was to return to their own land. The Arab States' duty was to provide temporary hospitality, not integration, since it was the sacred right of all exiles to return home. The Jews themselves had claimed that right after two thousand years during which they had become full citizens of the countries where they had found refuge; surely they had no moral justification for supposing that the Palestinians would not wish to return to their homeland after only twenty years. The Palestinians' attitude was that of the refugees during the Second World War, most of whom had returned home after their countries were liberated.

71. Instead of realizing that the solution to the refugee question lay in the recommendation of so many United Nations resolutions that the refugees should be allowed to return home or be paid compensation if they did not wish to do so, Israel was now proposing an international conference on the subject, although it was hard to see on what basis it could be held or what its terms of reference would be. Since Israel refused to comply with those resolutions, the solution must be found within the United Nations, which was responsible for the fundamental cause of the problem.

72. The Israeli representative had wrongly interpreted Security Council resolution 242 (1967) concerning the necessity of achieving a settlement of the refugee problem within the context of agreement on a just and lasting peace.

The Security Council was the political organ of the United Nations, and the political elements had not been inserted in the resolution without good reason.

73. He had been pleased to note that the representative of the United States of America thought that it was impossible not to include in a solution to the refugee problem the possibility of the refugees' return to their home; that indicated some progress in the United States position on the matter.

74. The Special Political Committee could not ignore the political aspects of the question, and must try to find a political solution, even though the financial problems were so pressing. The refugees themselves understood the need for a political solution; the generation which had grown up in what were mere concentration camps had given up hope of outside help and had realized that they must fight for their rights. Yet Israel called them terrorists and accused them of attacking civilians.

75. The Israeli representative had tried to justify the occupation of Palestinian territory since 1948 by describing its economic development. But economic activity could not make the refugees forget their true aspirations. The Israeli masters were the gainers from that development; the wages given to the Arab workers were nearer the pittance allowed to prisoners than the pay of free workers. In any case, what they received was only a minute percentage of the money due to them as interest on their occupied lands and property.

76. The reductions in health and education services for refugees made because of financial difficulties were jeopardizing the future of the young generation; yet the interest on the \$500 million which the United States of America was to lend Israel could support the refugees for a whole decade.

77. The Israeli representative had also made an issue of the content of certain textbooks imported from Arab countries. United Nations agencies could not lend themselves to the censoring of textbooks; that would be tantamount to depriving children of their cultural heritage. No power

could impose culture on a people, and even if young Palestinians were given books which distorted historical facts, they had knowledge enough of the truth not to be influenced by them. No textbook could efface history.

78. Mr. TEKOAH (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that although the Moroccan representative's view differed from his own on many points, everyone had the right to his own opinion, and a civilized exchange of views might eventually lead to agreement.

79. He wished, however, to protest against the accusation that Israel wished to deprive Arab children of their cultural heritage. Israel appreciated and admired the civilization of its Arab cousins and neighbours; it could not, however, fail to object to textbooks based on hostility and hatred, such as the reader produced by the Egyptian Ministry of Education which said that every Israeli home should be like the Wailing Wall of Jerusalem. He was sure all members of the Committee would agree that a United Nations organ could not disseminate such texts.

80. His country, however, remained convinced that a solution to the refugee problem could be reached through discussion and agreement between the parties concerned. He therefore reiterated his appeal to Israel's Arab neighbours to forgo recriminations for the sake of the refugees and not to create new obstacles to their welfare.

81. Mr. EL-ERIAN (United Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the Israeli representative had tried to remove the refugee problem from its real context. He had made disparaging remarks about the books and traditions of the United Arab Republic. That country's record of tolerance, like that of its brother Arab States, was known all over the world, and not least by the Jews themselves, who had lived in the countries concerned with full rights of citizenship which were not accorded to them in many other countries. The world knew who had introduced hate and destruction in the Middle East; history could not be distorted.

The meeting rose at 6.5 p.m.