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MEETING**

Friday, 27 November 1970,
at 11 a.m.



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. SHLEPAKOV (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that the Palestine refugee problem was complex and of long standing. A new generation of the Palestinian people, which for more than twenty years had been deprived of the right to live and work on its land, had been born in exile.

2. The refugees had been expelled from their homeland by force and herded into camps, and were still living under precarious conditions. In the letter of transmittal accompanying the report¹ of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories, the Chairman of that Committee had rightly stated that all the efforts of the relief organizations that ministered to the needs of the refugees could not restore to them the conditions of social stability and economic security from which they had been dislodged by war. Although the material assistance offered the refugees, in particular by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the host countries, was useful and necessary, it did not represent a radical solution to the problem and was no more than a palliative.

3. The essence of the problem, as many speakers had pointed out during the commemorative session, was the exile of an entire people which had been deprived of its elementary rights. That was the root of the Palestinian tragedy at present as it had been in the past. Any attempt to ignore those facts would simply make a mockery of the Palestinian people's legitimate rights and aspirations.

4. Since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 194 (III), many decisions had testified to the interest of the United Nations in the plight of the Palestinians. In particular, the General Assembly, at its twenty-fourth session, had stigmatized Israel as the responsible party and had drawn attention to the inalienable right of the Palestinians to repatriation or adequate compensation; but the resolution (2535 A (XXIV)), like many others, had

regrettably not been implemented. Following the Israeli aggression of 1967, the number of refugees had risen further, and life in the camps had become increasingly hard. The fact that a few dozen persons had been allowed to return home made little difference to a harrowing situation.

5. It was therefore natural and legitimate for the more energetic of the refugees to have set up resistance organizations. The Israeli representatives had sought to represent those forces of the Palestinian people as "gangs" and to describe living conditions in the occupied areas in glowing terms. Yet, although they talked constantly of the right to nationhood, the Israelis refused to concede that right to the Palestinians.

6. He was convinced that the really crucial need of the Palestinian people in exile was repatriation or compensation. As to the over-all solution to the problem, that was to be found in the establishment of a normal situation in all of the Middle East.

7. Mr. REECE (Canada) welcomed the constructive and practical tone of most of the discussion on the item. He commended the Commissioner-General of UNRWA and his staff for their tireless efforts to relieve the suffering of innocent victims of armed conflict. The role played by the Agency in the recent civil strife in Jordan was evidence of its vitality and its capacity to meet any new challenges.

8. It was distressing to find UNRWA facing financial difficulties. His delegation deplored the fact that in the absence of sufficiently increased contributions to cover the deficit, the Commissioner-General would be forced to envisage drastic reductions in the Agency's programmes. Retrenchment in education would be especially regrettable in that the possible curtailments would deal a grievous blow at the most constructive part of the Agency's activities and the only one to go beyond mere relief and look towards the future of the Palestine refugee youth.

9. That unfortunate situation was due to the fact that many States did not fully understand the vital role played by the Agency. UNRWA did not claim to provide a solution to the Palestine refugee problem. That would have to form part of an over-all peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute. In the meantime, UNRWA had the task of mitigating the suffering of the Palestinian people. In that respect, its operations were political as well as humanitarian, since the Agency, by providing for the basic needs of the refugees, helped to maintain a measure of political stability, which was an essential component of an atmosphere conducive to the achievement of peace.

10. His delegation considered that all States Members should heed the urgency of the Commissioner-General's

¹ Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-fifth Session, agenda item 101, document A/8089.

appeal. More than ever the Agency needed financial support. He therefore requested all Member States, and especially those which had not yet contributed to UNRWA, to review their position and see whether they could not enable the Agency to continue its work and provide for the immediate needs of the refugees.

11. It would be most unfortunate if UNRWA's work were to be jeopardized just when some prospect of a peaceful settlement was emerging. The cease-fire was being observed and the negotiations under the auspices of Ambassador Jarring might be resumed. A concerted effort by Member States to help UNRWA would express the conviction of the United Nations that peace with justice could be achieved in the Middle East.

12. Mr. HOLDER (Liberia) paid tribute to the Commissioner-General and his staff, who had spared no effort to maintain the Agency's humanitarian services to the refugees in the Near East under adverse conditions.

13. In his delegation's view, the financial crisis facing the Agency was fundamental and should be resolved as a matter of priority. UNRWA had long had financial problems, but they had never reached such critical proportions as to endanger its very existence. Unless the situation was remedied immediately, a complete breakdown in the Agency's services in 1971 would be inescapable. Alternatively, if no progress could be foreseen in UNRWA's financial prospects, drastic cuts would have to be made in the existing programmes, and in particular in the education programme, at present the most constructive part of the Agency's activities.

14. In a discussion of the financial crisis facing UNRWA, it was absolutely essential to bear in mind the existence of more than a million refugees in the Middle East. Whatever the cause, the fact was that they had to be cared for. Furthermore, the responsibility of caring for those refugees lay with the international community as a whole. The Agency's financial problems had arisen in part because some countries had cut back their contributions, while others had simply refused to do their part in assisting the refugees. For the refugees, the present attitude of the international community to their plight was catastrophic.

15. There were exceptions invariably to the principles or rules of behaviour which governed the actions of men and of States. In the United Nations, however, the exception to the rule must surely involve all refugees, their need for care and support, and the collective responsibility of the international community. There was also the individual responsibility of Member States, which was to contribute to the collective support of UNRWA and thus to the support of the refugees in the Middle East, and to increase that contribution wherever possible, in order to meet the estimated deficit for 1971 which was about \$6 million.

16. His delegation attached considerable importance to the current efforts by all parties to seek a general and final settlement of the issues in the Middle East, and thus to restore a sense of dignity and purpose to the refugees.

17. The CHAIRMAN recalled that, at its 732nd meeting, the Committee had decided to grant the request made by

twenty-five representatives in their letter of 23 November 1970 (A/SPC/141), that it should hear statements by members of the Palestine Liberation Organization, whose names had been listed in that letter, without such authorization implying recognition of that organization. If there were no objections, he would call upon Mr. Hasan to make a statement.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Saadat Hasan (Palestine Liberation Organization) took a place at the Committee table.

18. Mr. HASAN² thanked the Commissioner-General and his staff for their efforts on behalf of the Palestine refugees. He hoped that the Agency would work not only for the Palestine refugees but also with them.

19. During the past year, the Palestinian people had proved themselves in their struggle for the liberation of their homeland and the restoration of their rights. The world now recognized them as a main party in the settlement of the conflict in the Middle East. The majority of peoples had acknowledged that the Palestinian people were a people like any other, entitled to the restoration of their rights, and the United Nations had conceded that respect for the rights of the Palestinians was a prerequisite for peace and justice in the Middle East, while recognizing its responsibility for the injustice inflicted upon them. But the goal of the international community must be the elimination of the causes, and not merely the consequences, of that injustice.

20. During the past year, the Palestinian revolution had demonstrated that it had the unwavering adherence of every segment of Palestinian society as well as the Arab masses. In solidarity with the peoples struggling for freedom and democracy, the Palestinian revolution was a partner in the global struggle against the forces of racism, colonialism, imperialism and zionism, in short, the forces of dehumanization. That was why it had the sympathy and support of those who were engaged in a similar struggle and who were determined to achieve victory.

21. The many challenges which the Palestinian people had encountered during the past year, armed confrontations or attempts to liquidate the Palestine issue, had merely strengthened their resolve and crystallized their political thought. The most serious confrontation had occurred in September 1970, during the struggles against the special forces unleashed by certain circles to protect the interests of zionism, imperialism and Arab reaction. A triple alliance, which *The New York Times* of 8 October 1970 had laid bare by indicating its plans to destroy the Palestinian people, had only strengthened the Palestinian revolution. The fact that its ranks had emerged organically unified had proved that its existence in Jordan was based on its rights. It had shown that there could be no solution without its consent, that its enemies had been clearly identified and that the Rogers plan had been exposed for what it really was, a plot to liquidate the Palestine question through the

² Mr. Hasan took the floor in accordance with the decision taken by the Committee at its 732nd meeting to authorize members of the Palestine Liberation Organization to address the Committee, without such authorization implying recognition of that Organization.

liquidation of the Palestinian revolution. Finally the unity of the people of the West Bank and the East Bank of the Jordan had become a reality.

22. Whatever the cause of the events in September 1970, the right of the people of Palestine to revolt was indisputable. By not revolting, they would be abdicating their responsibility to future generations. Between revolution and abject submission, there could be no mutual ground. Furthermore, the Palestinian people had waited too long, hoping that the international community would redress the grave injustice which it had helped to perpetrate and perpetuate through indecision and inaction.

23. Because of the support which it received from the masses, because of the fact that every freedom-loving Palestinian was an integral part of it, because it united all Palestinians without distinction as to age, education or sex, the Central Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, as the representative of the Palestinian revolution, was the only spokesman for the Arab people of Palestine. That capacity had, moreover, been conferred on the Central Committee by the thousands of Palestinian men and women who had opted to bear arms to liberate their homeland and to restore their rights.

24. If those who claimed that they did not know who spoke for the Palestinian people were to read the Commissioner-General's report A/8013, they would realize that the Palestinian people were not without a spokesman. The Palestine Liberation Organization was a political and military organization which exemplified the collective strength and will of the Palestinian people. It was that Organization which sat in the councils of Arab States and in other international conferences, entered into treaties and covenants with sovereign and independent States, and embodied the determination of the Palestinian people to carry on their struggle until victory or until death. The representativeness of the Palestine Liberation Organization did not come from the claims of other parties who when they said that it was a constructive force wished to believe that it was submissive, and when they said that it was a destructive force meant that it did not allow their machinations to materialize. The representativeness of the organization derived from its sufferings, its wounds, its guns, and from those of the Palestinian people. Its representativeness was recognized by the majority of mankind, except for those who had been blinded by Zionism and imperialism, or those who wished that the Palestinian revolution would cease to exist.

25. If the United Nations was really interested in having peace and justice restored to the Middle East, it must re-evaluate the failures it had experienced since it had first muddled the affairs and destiny of the Palestinian people, and it must seek the causes of the strife in that area. It must not endeavour, through endless resolutions, to placate those responsible for the tragedy of Palestine, whose policies posed a continual threat to international peace and security. It must go to the root of the problem and return Palestine to the Palestinians. The financial crises of UNRWA would then disappear, since the Palestinian people would cease to be dependent on the international community. If the United Nations desired peace in the Middle East, it must support the Palestinian revolution in its

struggle against forces which were violating the Charter and the principles of international law. If the United Nations wished to rise to the level envisioned by its founders, it must realize that the Palestinian revolution was striving to undo its mistakes.

26. In 1947, when the great Powers had agreed to partition Palestine, without taking into account the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, the United Nations had forfeited its status as the embodiment of mankind's hopes for justice and peace. By submitting to the whims and wishes of the United States of America the United Nations had played a key role in the tragedy of Palestine. Had it not been for the one-sided policy of the United States, Israel would not have come into being, and its aggressive, racist and expansionist policies could not have been implemented. The links between Israel and the United States of America were unique in history, and made Israel the sheriff of the Middle East, carrying out its master's tasks, and then travelling to Washington to collect its reward.

27. One would have thought that the revolutions, coups d'état and wars of the previous twenty-three years would have made the great Powers and the United Nations understand that the destinies of peoples and their right to their homeland were not determined by resolutions adopted in the marketplace of compromise and political expedience. Apparently, however, such hopes were vain and the super-Powers were repeating the mistake of seeking to settle the problems of the Middle East without respecting the rights of the Palestinian people. Until those rights were restored, however, there could be no lasting peace in the Middle East. The United Nations and the great Powers were still thinking in terms of antiquated resolutions which did not reflect the reality of the Middle East situation. So long as discussions were based on Security Council resolution 242 (1967), they would be nothing more than an exercise in futility. To consider the Palestinians as refugees only was to pervert history and perpetuate injustice. There could be no compromise between justice and injustice; a little less injustice was still not justice.

28. The rights and destinies of peoples were determined by their struggle, their suffering, their willingness to endure and their ability to create. The people who kept repeating that they had given food to the refugees, as if they expected the refugees to absolve them of their guilt, were the same people who had created the Palestine problem to serve their own imperialist ambitions, and who had given tents to the Palestinian people which barely sheltered them from inclement weather, while at the same time giving bombers and napalm to their adversaries. They were the same people who, after the confrontation between the Palestinians and the special forces of the Hashemite monarch, had proclaimed their readiness to replace by airlift the arms and ammunition consumed in the attempt to destroy the Palestinians.

29. To those who were suggesting the establishment of a so-called Palestinian State in the territories occupied since 1967, the Palestinians could only reply that such a truncated State was unacceptable to them. Such a State could not be politically, militarily or economically viable, because it did not correspond to the legitimate rights of all

Palestinians. It would place the Palestinians between the Hashemite anvil and the hammer of Israeli expansionism. The suggestion bore a remarkable resemblance to the Bantustan policy of South Africa. He wondered whether Israelis who were born in South Africa had brought with them the experience of their repugnant cultural background.

30. The only way to resolve the UNRWA and Middle East crisis was to adopt the programme and spirit of the Palestinian revolution, which sought to establish in Palestine a State where Moslems, Christians and Jews could live in peace, to make the refugees into normal citizens in their ancestral homeland, and to restore their dignity and freedom. At the same time, the Palestinian revolution sought to free the Palestinian Jews from Zionism, an odious phenomenon which insisted that Jews could not live in any society in which they did not constitute a racist, supremacist majority. The Palestinian revolution offered them citizenship in a secular, pluralistic and democratic society.

31. The Palestinians wanted what every other people wanted, the right to be free in their homeland. They would not absolve the international community of its responsibility for the creation of their tragedy, and the dispersion of their people, until their homeland had been returned and their rights restored. They were prepared to pay back all the money that had been spent on their behalf.

32. Mr. NEKROUF (Morocco) requested that the statement by the representative of the Palestine Liberation Organization, which shed light on fundamental aspects of the Palestine problem, should be circulated as a partial verbatim record.

33. Mr. ABDULLA (Southern Yemen) supported that request.

34. The CHAIRMAN said that, if there was no objection, he would take it that the Committee had decided that the statement by the representative of the Palestine Liberation Organization should be transcribed from the tape and circulated as a verbatim record.

*It was so decided.*³

³ The full text of the statement was subsequently circulated as document A/SPC/PV.734.

35. Mr. YAZID (Algeria) observed that for the first time the request to grant a hearing to the representative of the Palestine Liberation Organization had been signed not only by the Arab countries but also by other countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe, which proved that the Palestine problem did not concern the Arab world alone but formed part of the general struggle of peoples for national independence, justice, progress and peace.

36. His delegation whole-heartedly supported the statement by the representative of Palestine, and wished to reaffirm its unconditional and steadfast support for the national liberation struggle of the Palestinian people. It wished also to emphasize that the problem of imperialist-Zionist colonization of Palestine, as manifested in particular by the refugee problem in that area, could no longer be separated from its real political context and its implications for the Middle East and world situations. The current attitude of the United Nations towards the Palestine tragedy was full of inconsistencies. The United Nations recognized the inalienable rights of the Arab people of Palestine, but refused to draw all the conclusions which that attitude implied.

37. The participation of a representative of the Palestinian people in the Committee's discussion was an event of fundamental importance. There could be no solution to the Palestine problem or to the Middle East question without recognition of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and participation of the representatives of the Arab people of Palestine. One such representative had just spoken, and had outlined a solution involving the establishment of a secular, multireligious and democratic Palestinian State in which Jews, Christians and Moslems would live together.

38. The existence of the Palestinian element could no longer be disputed. Those who wished to ignore it or who schemed to eliminate it were doomed to failure. The Palestinian people were not alone in their heroic struggle. They were supported by the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America and the progressive countries and masses of the whole world.

The meeting rose at 12 noon