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Chairman: Mr. Carlet R. AUGUSTE (Haiti).

AGENDA ITEM 26

**Report of the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (A/4478) (continued)**

*At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. John H. Davis, Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, took a place at the Committee table.*

1. Mr. SULEIMAN (Sudan) stressed the importance of the events and circumstances which were at the root of the tragic problem of the Palestine refugees. The problem had arisen as a result of resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947 in which the General Assembly had decreed the partition of Palestine against the will of its people. It was therefore for the United Nations to correct the injustice. The problem should not be considered simply from the point of view of providing annual relief; a just and lasting solution must also be contemplated and adopted. The origin of the Palestine problem lay in the unjust and illegal Balfour Declaration of 2 November 1917, which promised the establishment of a Jewish home in Palestine. At that time, the United Kingdom was not occupying Palestine and Palestine had never belonged to it, but, contrary to all moral principles, the United Kingdom had undertaken to establish a "home" for a people who had no right to it, and had done so without consulting the people of Palestine or securing their consent. The Balfour Declaration had unleashed the Jewish invasion of Palestine, which had resulted in the expulsion of a million and a half Arabs. Under the pressure of Zionist organizations and their supporters, the United Kingdom Government had incorporated the Balfour Declaration into the Mandate in contravention of the principles of the Covenant of the League of Nations, thus forsaking its obligations towards the people of Palestine and imposing on that country such political and administrative conditions as would facilitate the establishment of the Jewish home. The Jewish population had risen from 27,000 in 1918 to 600,000 in 1947 and the land in their possession had risen from 2.5 per cent to about 6.5 per cent. That influx of Jews had taken place under the protection and with the encouragement of the Mandatory Power despite the protests of the people

of Palestine and their claims to self-government and independence. Mr. Suleiman quoted a passage from *A Study of History*<sup>1/</sup> in which Arnold J. Toynbee described the role played by the British and their responsibility in the tragedy of the Palestine Arabs, and showed how the Jews had been able to arm themselves and, through the use of force and terrorism, had brought the issue of Palestine to the United Nations.

2. Resolution 181 (II) was a clear violation of the sacred trust of civilization affirmed in the League of Nations Mandate, and had deprived the people of Palestine of its right to self-determination, one of the cardinal principles established by the United Nations Charter. The endorsement of the partition plan was inconsistent with the objectives of the Covenant of the League of Nations and the Mandate for Palestine, and with the basic principles of democracy. The resolution further recommended the establishment of a Jewish State although, at the time, the Jews had owned only 6 per cent of the total land in Palestine. Thus, instead of having been led towards self-government and independence as provided in the Mandate, the Arabs of Palestine had watched their fate being decided for them by others under political pressures closely bordering on scandal, as James Forrestal, former Secretary of Defense of the United States, had noted in his diary, and despite the continued appeals of the Moslems and Christians of Palestine, who had foreseen the tragic results of the adoption of the resolution. Immediately after partition, the Zionists had applied themselves to expanding their State by ruthlessly expelling defenceless Arabs from their homes and lands. Atrocious massacres had caused panic and had driven hundreds of thousands of Arabs to take refuge in neighbouring countries.

3. The situation had become so dangerous that the General Assembly had appointed Count Bernadotte as Mediator under resolution 186 (S-2). Upon his arrival, Count Bernadotte had been confronted by the shocking sight of thousands of Arabs seeking refuge in neighbouring countries and, in his report to the General Assembly (A/648),<sup>2/</sup> he had said that the Jewish State had been born in violence and bloodshed and that elemental justice demanded that the innocent victims of the conflict should not be denied the right to return to their homes. On the basis of that report and of the recommendations it contained, the General Assembly, on 11 December 1948, had adopted resolution 194 (III), paragraph 11 of which established the right of the refugees to repatriation and confirmed that the choice between repatriation and compensation belonged to the refugees alone. During the same ses-

<sup>1/</sup> Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, vol. VIII (London, Oxford University Press, 1954).

<sup>2/</sup> See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Third Session, Supplement No. 11*.

sion, the General Assembly had established the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine to facilitate repatriation and the Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees to assist the refugees pending their repatriation. Since then, in various resolutions, the General Assembly had reaffirmed the right of the refugees to repatriation or compensation.

4. The major question was how much progress had been made since 1948 with respect to the implementation of paragraph 11 of resolution 194 (III). The answer to that question given in paragraphs 4 and 36 of the annual report of the Director of UNRWA (A/4478) and in paragraph 2 of the eighteenth progress report of the Conciliation Commission (A/4573) were not entirely understandable unless account was taken of the fact that Israel was persisting in its refusal to abide by the decisions of the United Nations. If Israel had complied with resolution 194 (III), the refugees would have been spared the torture of exile and destitution, and the Conciliation Commission, twelve years after its establishment, would not be exploring ways of implementing the principles establishing the right of the refugees to return to their homes. Nor would there have been any necessity for extending the Agency's mandate, which would have relieved Governments of the financial burden and enhanced the prestige and authority of the United Nations. Israel's defiance of United Nations decisions could only be explained by the support it continued to receive. Despite Zionist atrocities and crimes, and while the General Assembly was still considering the future of the area, Israel, on 14 May 1948, had proclaimed the establishment of the Jewish State and the United States had immediately recognized it.

5. Since then Israel had thwarted all the efforts of the General Assembly to reach a solution of the problem, with the result that unable to advance towards a just settlement, the Assembly had had to confine itself to providing relief for the refugees. Yet, as the Director of the Agency recalled in paragraph 11 of his annual report, the Agency itself could not solve the problem. A serious approach must be made to the problem with a view to reaching even a partial solution. He hoped that, as suggested by the representative of Saudi Arabia (200th meeting), the General Assembly would immediately appoint an administrator or an agency to look after the property of the Palestine Arab refugees in Israel and collect the revenues, which amounted to millions of dollars. That would improve the lot of the refugees, pending their repatriation, and reduce the financial burden shouldered by Governments. As Mr. Emile Ghory had said (202nd meeting) on behalf of the Palestine Arab delegation, it was the duty of the United Nations to correct the great injustice that had been committed. Any solution maintaining the status quo would be completely unacceptable to the Sudanese Government.

6. Mr. DIALLO Telli (Guinea) said that his delegation's main reason for participating in the discussion of the Director's report (A/4478) was its concern for fair play. The Republic of Guinea would never take a stand against one race or nation in favour of another, but it would always speak out against injustice in any form and whatever its origin. In that spirit, President Sékou Touré had asked the United Nations, in the General Assembly (896th plenary

meeting), to recognize in a practical manner the legitimate rights of the Arab people of Palestine and to take proper measures to guarantee the strict application of the relevant resolutions. That was in keeping with the decisions on the Palestine problem unanimously adopted by the major African and the African-Asian conferences held at Bandung, Cairo, Acera, Tunis and Conakry.

7. The Guinean delegation deplored the fact that the serious problem of the Palestine refugees had remained unsolved for twelve years. The United Nations had, of course, not been inactive for all that length of time. It had sent a Mediator to the Near East and established the Conciliation Commission for Palestine as well as the Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. There was a danger, however, that the activities of the various relief organizations, useful as they were, might obscure the political aspects of the problem, for charity was no more than a palliative.

8. The political responsibility of the United Nations was obvious, since the refugee problem dated from General Assembly resolution 181 (II), sanctioning the partition of Palestine. In taking that grave decision, without previously consulting the people of Palestine as a whole, the Organization had departed from the sacrosanct principle of the right of self-determination. A direct consequence had been the exile of an entire people which had been enduring material and moral hardship ever since.

9. In its desire to remedy the serious wrong done to the Palestine refugees, the General Assembly had first adopted resolution 194 (III), recognizing the right of the refugees to repatriation or compensation. Resolution 393 (V) had subsequently confirmed that the choice between returning to their homes or resettlement, with compensation, in the host countries lay with the refugees and with them alone, while the responsibility for repatriation lay with the Conciliation Commission for Palestine and resettlement was the concern of the Agency. In his statement to the Special Political Committee on 17 November 1960, Mr. Emile Ghory, the spokesman for the Palestine refugees, had reaffirmed (202nd meeting) their unshakable determination to return to their homes and their land. Indeed, all the organizations dealing with refugees confirmed that that was their wish. Clearly, any abiding solution of the problem would have to be acceptable to the refugees themselves. The United Nations should therefore adhere firmly to resolution 194 (III), which had been endorsed and clarified by a dozen other resolutions since 1948.

10. The Guinean delegation noted with some satisfaction what UNRWA had achieved. It associated itself with the tributes paid to the Director and staff, and took note of the fact that the Agency had managed to reduce to a large extent the risk of malnutrition. The Guinean delegation had supported resolution 1456 (XIV) embodying the General Assembly's decision to extend the Agency's mandate for three years. In doing so, his delegation hoped that the intervening period would not only allow time for the parties concerned to arrange for repatriation or resettlement after compensation, but also enable the Agency to carry on with its task of protecting and helping the refugees. It believed that the very existence of the Agency—as the Director himself had indicated in

paragraph 11 of his annual report—was dependent on a political solution of the Palestine question.

11. If the United Nations wished to hasten a political settlement that would put an end to the sufferings of the Palestine refugees, it should not merely be content at the present session, to add to the list of resolutions which had not yet been implemented. The Guinean delegation would support any proposal leading to practical action which would help to bring about a satisfactory solution of the problem. In its opinion, three sets of measures had to be taken. First, the Conciliation Commission for Palestine should be given a new lease of life. An increase in its membership, as suggested by the representative of Saudi Arabia (200th meeting), would certainly make it more effective. The new appointments could be made from among the States of Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America which would broaden the geographical representation in the Commission. The Commission's task would be to secure the repatriation of the refugees before the expiry of the new mandate and in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 11 of resolution 194 (III). Then, an administrator should be appointed to look after the refugees, his function being temporarily to administer the property left behind. Once an inventory of the property had been drawn up it would be possible to allocate compensation and hand over to the refugees the income deriving from the use of their property. Naturally, any compensation accruing to the refugees would have to be paid within the same period, namely before the expiry of the Agency's new mandate. Lastly, the United Nations should call upon the authorities responsible for the tragic state of affairs to assist the Conciliation Commission, UNRWA and all parties concerned with a view to giving prompt effect to the many resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and particularly to paragraph 11 of resolution 194 (III) which offered the only real solution for the problem. In the case of those refugees who decided not to return to their homes, the Agency, in co-operation with the Governments of the host countries, should provide for their integration within the economy of the Near Eastern countries.

12. The Guinean delegation considered that if all those measures were carried out conscientiously and promptly, all the inhabitants of Palestine, without distinction, would finally be able to forget their disputes and live as before in perfect harmony in a spirit of tolerance and good neighbourliness. The very stability and prosperity of the Near East as well as international peace and security were at stake.

13. Mr. HASSAN (Iraq) congratulated the Director of UNRWA on his excellent report, which gave a clear picture of the tragedy suffered by the people of Palestine. He pointed out that, at the present session, particular emphasis had been placed, in welcoming the new Member States, on the duty of all peace-loving States to respect the decisions of the United Nations and the tenets of international law. That was the only means the international community had of protecting the freedom of all countries, preventing aggression and contributing to general progress. Any United Nations decision that was based on a denial of those fundamental rights should be repealed as soon as possible.

14. The problem of the Palestine refugees was essentially the problem of ending aggression and

enabling those concerned to live in their own country, as they were entitled to do. The problem could not be considered in isolation from the real causes underlying it, in other words from its political implications. It was sufficient to recall the historical background, as was done in the paragraph 1 of the annual report, to realize that that political problem was unique in history. The report rightly emphasized that the Agency could not solve the problem of the refugees by itself, since the problem was part of the highly complex question of Palestine, the solution of which would depend primarily on forces outside the United Nations. Those same forces would determine the future of peace in the Middle East, and in fact in the whole world. The serious question at issue was whether the United Nations would play a decisive role. Before that question could be answered, it was important to look ahead and gauge the logical evolution of the situation. In addition to those who had put forward constructive analyses or commendable humanitarian ideas, some countries had merely urged the parties concerned to come to an understanding, ignoring all the wrongs done to the Arabs. Those who thought that all that need be done was to appeal to the Arabs to come to terms with the Zionist occupation forces did not understand, or refused to understand, the true nature of the aggressive philosophy of Zionism, its scheming and designing, carried out at times with the help of the Arabs' friends.

15. Ever since the beginning of the political Zionist movement, Zionist propaganda, exactly like Fascist propaganda, had been founded on distortions and misinformation. It had omitted any mention of the Arabs in Palestine and had claimed quite simply that the Jews were returning to their homeland after 4,000 years of exile. At the same time the main lines of the world-wide Zionist plot were laid down, entailing the promotion of Jewish colonization of Palestine with the help of Governments. Accordingly, the Zionist movement, which was founded on racism and was hence fascist in character, called upon world Jewry to betray its citizenship obligations and to resist assimilation so as to be the strongest ally of the Jewish homeland. It was a well-known fact that the number of Jews in Palestine at that time had been negligible. Small wonder, then, that Zionist propaganda had chosen either to avoid any reference to the Arabs of Palestine or to picture them as simple nomadic tribesmen. After trying, without success, to enlist the support of the Sultan of Turkey, the Zionists had turned to the United Kingdom and had stopped at nothing to deceive leading British personalities by adapting their arguments to suit each particular statesman.

16. The British had fully appreciated the importance that an alliance with the Zionists could have for their colonial policy. Owing to its strategic position between the Suez Canal and Egypt on the one side and the desert routes to Iraq on the other, Palestine constituted an ideal link on the road to India. Moreover, the British colonialists who had occupied and exploited the Arab lands had needed to have sufficient armed forces in the region to forestall any national revolution. The Zionists had hoped that under a British Mandate a million or more Jews could enter Palestine. Once the Jews controlled Palestine they would continue to defend the Suez Canal. Those were the aims of that marriage of convenience. The Arabs,

on their side, firmly believed that the Zionists whom the British had permitted to enter Palestine had been simply forces of occupation. Persistent Arab opposition to that form of colonialism, including several national uprisings, had been to no avail, and the British had not heeded Arab protests against Jewish immigration. The process of Zionist occupation of Palestine under the protection of British guns had thus continued up to the end of the Second World War. In 1940 Churchill had agreed to the formation of a Jewish army, with the clear intention of sending the greatest possible number of Zionist troops into Palestine under the pretext of defence. That was how the Zionist forces had begun to suppress all Arab resistance to their terrorist plans.

17. Towards the end of the Second World War, the leadership of the Zionist movement had shifted to New York to begin the second phase of the plan.

18. As soon as the United Nations had been created, the United Kingdom had prepared to transfer its responsibilities under the Mandate to the new organization. By that time, Palestine had become a Zionist citadel with aggressively trained and fully armed forces. The stage had been set for the United States to play the leading role in the Palestinian tragedy and the creation of the refugee problem: international Zionism had fully exploited the United States' predominant influence in the United Nations and its immense prestige, and thus the United Nations itself had been forced into becoming another partner in the plan. At the same time, the Jews had exploited the wide-spread sympathy for the victims of Nazism, while ironically, they had been perpetrating similar atrocities against the Arabs in Palestine. In the final analysis, it was the United Kingdom, the United States and the United Nations that were responsible for the refugee problem and for the loss of an entire Arab land and its occupation by foreign forces. The partition resolution had given the Zionists 55 per cent of the Arab land, of which they owned only 5.6 per cent. Yet international treaties explicitly denied occupation forces the right to establish a State on occupied land.

19. The United States had imposed the partition plan of 1947 mainly for economic and military reasons. Close relations existed between United States capital and Israel's economy, and certain United States enterprises which were mostly under Zionist influence had looked upon Israel as a bridgehead for their investments in the Middle East. Thus, the United States share of investments in the private sector had risen from 32 per cent to 56 per cent and even to 73 per cent. The military expenditure of the Zionists from 1948 to 1957 had reached \$1,100 million, while United States aid to them during the same period had amounted to \$1,300 million. Thus, the possibility could never be ruled out that Israel might play the same role in future acts of aggression as that assigned to it in 1956.

20. Those who urged the Arabs to be realistic, in other words, to accept the "fait accompli", failed to realize that they themselves were lacking in realism. To understand why the Zionists constantly refused to implement United Nations resolutions, it was suf-

ficient to hear them speak about the third stage of their aggressive plan. Ever since the emergence of Israel, Zionist leaders had been putting forward claims to what they called the "historic boundaries of Israel". Several of them, in particular Mr. Ben-Gurion, emphasized that the State of Israel constituted only a portion of the Land of Israel, and that there would be no peace until the entire homeland had been liberated, and they went so far as to speak of a country extending from Iraq to Suez. The sad history of colonialism showed nothing comparable to the role played in Palestine by the British Government, which had paved the way for the uprooting of an entire people and the imposition of a new type of imperialism supported by tremendous forces in the capitalistic world which were intensifying the aggressive policies of Zionism.

21. The Iraqi delegation believed that any solution of the refugee problem should take into consideration the fact that it was the problem of a whole people uprooted from its homeland through military occupation and replaced by completely alien elements. The only solution therefore lay in the repatriation of the refugees, with just compensation for the losses they had suffered.

22. Two important facts emerged from what he had said. First, the strategy of imperialism in the Middle East was based on the existence of forces that could be used to protect its interests, as had been the case in 1956. Such a situation was a serious threat to peace throughout the world. Secondly, world Zionism intended to conquer the whole region. The Zionist structure in Palestine was, in fact, that of an army of occupation: it was not composed of immigrants who had come with the consent of the lawful inhabitants of the country. The so-called immigration was a reinforcement of occupation troops in an Arab region. As a result, the Arab countries were justified in feeling fear and distrust and in considering using all means within their power for their self-preservation. The establishment of Israel in the heart of the Arab nation had created a climate of fear and instability in the Middle East, thereby endangering peace. The United Nations could not disregard the principles on which it was founded; nor could it escape its responsibilities. The failure of the United Nations Conciliation Commission proved that the problem could not be solved through the establishment of committees controlled by the very Members that had brought Israel into being. The United Nations had not attempted to halt continuous Zionist aggression and military expansion; nor had it succeeded in forcing Israel to pay the refugees the fair proceeds of their rightful property representing many times what was now spent by UNRWA. That should be done.

23. Ultimately, the Arabs themselves would decide the fate of the Middle East and solve the refugee problem. But it was none the less the duty of the United Nations, in the interests of world peace and of stability in the Middle East, to help in the realization of the legitimate rights of the Palestine Arabs before the situation was further aggravated. Iraq asked that the resolution relating to repatriation should be effectively implemented, that the refugees should receive just compensation, and that an international body should be appointed to administer their

property and hand over the proceeds to the rightful owners. He requested those who looked to the Arab States for a solution of the Palestine problem to turn to the Arab people of Palestine themselves, who were

the principal party concerned and whose existence as a people could never be denied.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.