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Chairman: Mr. Humberto LOPEZ VILLAMIL (Honduras).

AGENDA ITEM 34

Report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (*continued*) (A/6713, A/6723 and Corr.1, A/6723/Add.1 and Corr.1, A/6787 and Corr.1, A/SPC/L.155, A/SPC/L.156)

1. Miss DEVER (Belgium) recalled that Mr. Harmel, the Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs, had stated during the fifth emergency special session of the General Assembly (1531st meeting) that the tragic fate of the Palestine refugees contained the seeds of a new conflict and that the United Nations should find a lasting solution to that problem. Unfortunately the June 1967 war had made the situation even worse. The fighting had driven other people from their homes. He had then expressed the hope that the Commissioner-General of UNRWA would have the necessary powers to overcome in the immediate future the difficulties arising from the fighting and to enable the displaced persons to return home. He had also asked that an appeal should be addressed to Governments and charitable organizations to afford the Agency the necessary means to carry out its task. Those ideas and those hopes were reflected in resolution 2252 (ES-V), which Belgium had co-sponsored. The reports of the Secretary-General (A/6723 and Corr.1, A/6723/Add.1 and Corr.1, A/6787 and Corr.1) and that of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA (A/6713), together with the latter's statement (A/SPC/121), provided the necessary information for a better evaluation of the scope of the problem. There was now a total of some 200,000 new refugees and the needs of the old refugees had increased.

2. Every effort should be made to avoid political dispute during the present debate. It was not a question of assigning responsibilities, but of trying to alleviate the suffering of the refugees. Steps must be taken to ensure that the refugees were living under the least adverse conditions possible while awaiting a basic solution to the problem. The countries directly concerned were in the best position to ease the Agency's task. She could not but endorse the view

of the Commissioner-General that the Agency was in a much better position to help the refugees if they returned to their camps and homes on the west bank. It seemed paradoxical that new camps should have to be built while the old premises stood empty, especially since UNRWA's financial position was more precarious than ever.

3. In that connexion, she once again deplored the fact that the financing of expenses was borne by a minority of States, despite the movement of solidarity which the June events had brought into being. As it had announced at the Pledging Conference on 6 December 1967, Belgium would, subject to parliamentary approval, contribute in 1967 a sum of \$35,000, the Belgian Government having decided to increase by \$5,000 the contribution of \$30,000 announced in December 1966. Furthermore, after the events of June, two Belgian air force planes had been assigned for the transport to the Middle East of goods collected by relief organizations in Belgium. The total cost of that assistance, excluding the transport, came to \$46,540.

4. Her delegation joined with the other delegations which had expressed gratitude to the Commissioner-General and the staff of UNRWA for their devotion and efficiency. It was important that the Committee should support them by giving the Commissioner-General the instructions he had requested from the General Assembly in his report. The Belgian delegation considered that the Committee should answer affirmatively the question of whether the Agency should maintain its existing services in 1968 and should continue to give temporary and emergency assistance to new groups of beneficiaries (see A/6713, para. 66). Moreover, she hoped that a larger number of countries would make contributions, so that the necessary expenses could be met. It would indeed be very difficult to decide which services should be reduced. If, however, a choice had to be made, she felt that the maintenance of health services and education and training services should be given priority.

5. She assured the Committee that Belgium was profoundly concerned over the human tragedy of the Palestine refugees, and would always be ready to co-operate, as far as its means allowed, in any action aimed at improving their lot and providing an equitable solution to their problems. She hoped that the countries directly concerned would make an effort to come to a political settlement which would bring to an end a distressing situation which had existed for twenty years.

6. Mr. ABIDIA (Libya) thanked the Commissioner-General and the staff of UNRWA for their untiring efforts in favour of the Palestine refugees and for

the report (A/6713) before the Committee which he found most informative. The story of refugees everywhere, whatever their nationality, was a tragic one and everything possible must be done to help them. He himself had been forced to leave his homeland, together with many thousands of other Libyan families, and live the life of a refugee for more than twenty-five years, first in Egypt and then in Transjordan; although he had been generously welcomed and helped, his eagerness to return one day to his native land had only grown stronger. Those were also the feelings of the Arab refugees from Palestine and the Secretary-General had confirmed that clearly in his annual report for the year ending 15 June 1967 (A/6701), in which he stated in particular that:

"Moreover, the refugees continued to maintain what they considered to be their lawful right to return to their former homes and to emphasize that the United Nations had repeatedly given them assurances, which remained unfulfilled, regarding repatriation or compensation. As year succeeded year, there was no sign that the refugees were becoming any less embittered by their conviction that a grave injustice had been done to them through the loss of their homes and country and the continued deprivation of any benefit from the property they left behind. Thus the implications for peace and stability in the Middle East of the continued existence of the Palestine refugee problem remained as grave as ever." (See A/6701 and Corr.1, p. 50.)

That statement once again, and in the clearest fashion, confirmed the fundamental facts of the question. The most important fact, with reference to the current debate, was the unquestionable determination of the refugees to return to their homeland, as provided for in the resolutions of the United Nations.

7. Those Arab refugees, to whom Palestine belonged by right, had been the victims of an international conspiracy, financed and inspired by Zionism, which had resulted in their being expelled and replaced by Zionist invaders. In that connexion, a publication released in 1964 by the State Department in Washington, namely, Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers 1943, vol. IV, The Near East and Africa, was particularly instructive since it contained exact information on the Zionist plans of aggression and domination. In that publication (p. 777), Brigadier General Patrick J. Hurley, the Personal Representative of President Roosevelt in the Middle East, had in fact reported to the President on 5 May 1943 that the Zionist organization in Palestine had adopted a programme for the creation of "a sovereign Jewish State, which would embrace Palestine and probably Transjordan"; the creation of that State implied an eventual transfer of the Arab population from Palestine to Iraq and was aimed at ensuring Jewish leadership for the whole Middle East. When it was borne in mind that that statement had been made at a time when over 70 per cent of the population of Palestine had been Arab and that the Arabs owned not less than 90 per cent of the land, the aggressive designs of the Zionists became evident and an exact idea could be formed of the reasons why the Zionist terrorists and armed forces had massacred and terrorized the people of Palestine and expelled them

from their homeland. It could then be understood why Israel had always defied General Assembly resolution 194 (III) and why it had always been a partisan of aggression and domination rather than of peace and justice.

8. For his part, Count Bernadotte, the United Nations Mediator and the head of the International Red Cross, had stated before the General Assembly in 1948 that it was undeniable that no settlement could be just and complete if recognition were not accorded to the right of the Arab refugee to return to the home from which he had been dislodged by the armed conflict between the Arabs and the Jews.^{1/} The denial of that right was contrary to the most elementary principles of justice, especially since the arrival of a large number of Jewish immigrants in Palestine offered a threat of permanent replacement of the Arab refugees by the newcomers. It was Israel's refusal to implement entirely General Assembly resolutions 181 (II) and 194 (III), anticipated by a number of States, which had caused the representatives of those States to oppose the admission of Israel to the United Nations.

9. Yet Mr. Abba Eban, then the Israel representative, had made a pledge on behalf of his Government, of entire compliance with those resolutions, as mentioned in the preamble of General Assembly resolution 273 (III). Although Israel had agreed to respect its obligations, it had done nothing but break its promises, violate the United Nations Charter and refuse to comply with not less than thirty General Assembly resolutions and six condemnations by the Security Council. Moreover, in 1956, Israel had attacked one of its neighbouring States and today was going even further in its challenge to the international community. The recent six-day war of Israel against the people of Palestine and the neighbouring Arabs constituted further proof of its complete disregard for the obligations to which it had subscribed. Israel and some of its allies had rejoiced in its aggression of June 1967 and in the results of that aggression, despite the crimes which had been committed on that occasion. The sufferings of the Arab population and the wholesale destruction of Arab villages by the Israel army had been described in detail in the report of the Secretary-General of 15 September 1967 (A/6797).

10. It was therefore questionable whether Israel had the right to remain a Member of the United Nations, which it was constantly defying. It was high time for the United Nations to make Israel understand once and for all that it must respect its obligations as a Member State, or leave the Organization. The United Nations could certainly invoke Article 6 of the Charter to expel Israel. It could also, under Article 41 of the Charter, impose economic sanctions against Israel or ask the International Court of Justice to take a decision on that question.

11. Until the Organization decided to take such action, however, it was responsible for caring for the refugees, who were the innocent victims of one of its decisions and of its inability to implement its resolutions. He considered that UNRWA should con-

^{1/} See Official Records of the General Assembly, Third Session, Supplement No. 11, part I, chap. V, para. 6.

tinue its activities as long as the refugees existed, and that the United Nations should provide the Agency with the funds it needed to carry out its mandate. He fully supported the views expressed by the Commissioner-General in his annual report (A/6713) and in the statement he had made at the 584th meeting (A/SPC/121). The refugees, of whom there were now one and a half million, had been forced to abandon property valued at over \$2,000 million, yielding a yearly income of more than \$170 million, which the Israelis had been appropriating illegally for nineteen years, while the refugees were living on a budget which was under \$48 million and had a deficit of \$7.5 million. The proposed budget for the coming financial year should therefore be approved, and the deficit covered as soon as possible.

12. Many Governments and organizations had endeavoured to provide the refugees with material assistance, but the refugee problem was first and foremost a problem of morality and justice. Israel and its allies were wholly responsible for the dangerous situation in the Middle East, which had been greatly aggravated by the fact that the United Nations had been unable to take firm action to ensure that its resolutions were implemented. Among the great Powers, the United States was most responsible for the present situation, because it continued to give Israel financial and military assistance and also because it opposed the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Israel forces from the occupied Arab territories. The Organization's inability to remedy the fait accompli set a disastrous precedent and was a source of concern to all the small countries which placed their confidence in the United Nations. The international community had, however, had an opportunity of identifying the real causes of the Arab-Israel conflict and of concluding that the Arabs had been right to draw attention over the years to the danger represented by Israel's existence. It had also been able to see the falsity of the image of Israel as a small, peace-loving State surrounded by aggressive Arabs determined to destroy it, which had been so widely diffused by the Zionists and their supporters, for the facts indicated clearly that Israel was a militant, expansionist State, a new colonial Power of which the Arabs were the victims.

13. The Arab refugee question was the crux of the Palestine problem, which had caused three wars in the Middle East; unless that problem was solved with justice, in accordance with the Charter and resolutions of the United Nations, it would be a permanent source of danger to peace and security, not only in the Middle East but everywhere else. The Arab world would have no choice but to defend its own rights if the problem was not solved justly and peacefully.

14. Mr. BOZOVIC (Yugoslavia) congratulated the Commissioner-General of UNRWA on behalf of his delegation on his detailed introduction of his annual report (A/6713).

15. On 11 December 1948, the General Assembly had adopted resolution 194 (III), which stated that the refugees wishing to return to their homes should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return. That resolution had

never been applied, and the number of refugees registered with the Agency continued to increase, having totalled 1,344,576 persons at the end of May 1967. The refugees' living conditions had deteriorated further after the hostilities of June 1967 and the occupation of Arab territory by Israel. Steps should be taken at the bilateral or multilateral level, in particular through the Agency, to alleviate at least partially the refugees' suffering. Yugoslavia supported UNRWA's activities in the Middle East and would make available to it the voluntary contribution announced for 1968, in addition to the direct aid already given to the Arab countries to enable them to cope with the immediate consequences of the war.

16. The international community must take adequate action to cope with the present situation of the newly displaced persons in the countries victims of aggression. That was the primary aim of resolution 2252 (ES-V) adopted at the fifth emergency special session of the General Assembly, which had given the Commissioner-General certain well-defined tasks, relating not only to the persons for whom he was responsible under his present mandate, but also to other displaced persons who needed urgent help as a result of the recent hostilities. In his delegation's view, the Agency should continue to help all refugees, whether they had been registered with it before the outbreak of hostilities or not. Yugoslavia would continue to give all necessary assistance, within its means, to improve the living conditions of the Palestine refugees.

17. However, assistance of all kinds, whether furnished by the Agency or by voluntary organizations, was nothing more than a temporary measure, which could not solve the basic problem. As Mr. Nikezić, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Yugoslavia, had stated at the current session of the General Assembly (1580th plenary meeting), the Arab States and Israel could not make peace, and the United Nations could not fulfil its task, until the vital interests of the Arab people of Palestine had been recognized and satisfied and until justice had been done to that people. The injustice done had caused the war between the Jews and the Arabs, and that injustice must be redressed if the war was to end and peace was to reign in the Middle East.

18. Mr. BEAULIEU (Canada) congratulated the Commissioner-General on his report (A/6713) and on the way in which he and his staff had coped with the unforeseen problems which had arisen in the Middle East as a result of the hostilities of June 1967. He hoped that Security Council resolution 242 (1967) would enable progress to be made towards a just settlement of the refugee problem.

19. The continually increasing number of the Palestine refugees had been a source of tension for eighteen years. The problem had emotional, historical and legal roots. The United Nations resolutions calling for the repatriation, resettlement and compensation of the refugees had not succeeded in solving the problem, and the time had perhaps come to make a sincere effort towards a political settlement.

20. In the meantime, the refugees must be cared for. The Commissioner-General stated in his report

that it was more than ever essential that the Agency's requirements should be adequately financed if it was to continue carrying out its mandate (see A/6713, para. 64). The Canadian delegation believed that it was particularly important that the Agency should be given the means to discharge its responsibilities.

21. He wished to reply briefly to the questions put by the Commissioner-General in paragraph 66 of his report. First, his delegation believed that the Agency should, as far as possible, maintain its existing services for the refugees registered with it. The substantial contributions which Canada had made to UNRWA's budget since the latter's establishment, and particularly the special contribution made in the summer of 1967, bore witness to his Government's interest in the refugees' well-being; his Government had also contributed \$100,000 to the International Committee of the Red Cross for emergency aid to the Middle East refugees. On 6 December his Government had announced a contribution of \$1,200,000 in food and cash, representing its regular 1968 contribution to the Agency's budget. His delegation considered that it was impossible to refuse assistance to the persons displaced as a result of the recent hostilities. The Commissioner-General expected the Agency's budget to fall some \$7.5 million short of the amount needed to satisfy requirements for 1968 (see A/SPC/121, para. 22). That sum must be raised in one way or another, for example through supplementary voluntary contributions.

22. With regard to the new refugees, his delegation believed that the measures envisaged in General Assembly resolution 2252 (ES-V) and Security Council resolution 237 (1967)—the return to the west bank of the Jordan of the inhabitants who had fled at the outbreak of hostilities—would help to solve the problem and would considerably lighten the Agency's burden. So far, however, the results had been discouraging; of the 200,000 persons who had sought refuge on the east bank of the Jordan, only 14,000 had returned to the west bank. Furthermore, according to the Commissioner-General's report only 3,000 of those 14,000 persons were registered with the Agency. His delegation therefore sincerely hoped that steps would be taken to facilitate the return of both the old and the new refugees to the west bank, in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 2252 (ES-V).

23. The third question asked by the Commissioner-General related to expanding education and training services for refugees. His Government favoured such measures but they could not be put into effect unless special contributions were available for that purpose.

24. The fourth question concerned means of providing the Agency with secure and adequate financing. That was an extremely important question. The Agency had been in existence for eighteen years and would probably have to continue its operations at least until such time as the Special Representative to the Middle East had fulfilled his mission. The Commissioner-General, in paragraph 9 of his report, had outlined several suggestions that had been made to provide a stable basis for the Agency's finances. His Government believed that the existing method of financing the work of the Agency by voluntary con-

tributions, unsatisfactory though it might be, was the only possible solution. Steps could be taken to ensure that the Agency did not have to draw on its working capital; each Government could, for example, give priority to the payment of contributions to the budget of the Agency. Furthermore, a very few countries had provided all the funds for the Agency's operations so far; his delegation urged Member States which had not yet contributed to the Agency's budget to consider doing so. It was convinced that the only way of solving the problem of the Agency's financing was to broaden its financial base; the matter was made extremely urgent by the fact that, as matters stood, the Agency would probably have to deal with some 235,000 additional people as a result of the recent conflict.

25. His delegation hoped that the need to reply to the final question would never arise. It would be deplorable if the Agency should find itself forced to reduce its operations at a time when the refugee problem was more acute than it had ever been. If the dilemma ever did have to be resolved, the Commissioner-General would undoubtedly consult the Advisory Commission. To resort to cutting down certain parts of the programme would amount to the abandonment by the General Assembly of its responsibilities. He hoped that Member States which had not yet contributed to the work of the Agency would respond to the Commissioner-General's appeal to provide it with adequate financing.

26. He pointed out, in connexion with Security Council resolution 242 (1967), that the refugee problem was specifically mentioned in paragraph 2 of that resolution; without wishing to interfere in the difficult assignment of the Special Representative to the Middle East, he would recall that at the current session of the General Assembly (1569th plenary meeting), Mr. Martin, the Secretary of State for External Affairs of Canada, had suggested that the solution to the tragedy of the Palestine refugees might lie in an economic development programme for the region.

27. In conclusion, he expressed the hope that the efforts of the Special Representative to the Middle East, the co-operation of all the parties concerned, the assistance of the Agency and the generous support of all Members of the United Nations, would make it possible for rapid progress to be made to enable the refugees to receive what they justly deserved: permanent homes and the means to enjoy a decent life, not as protégés of the United Nations, but as free people living in dignity and sharing in the economic development and cultural growth of the Near East.

28. The CHAIRMAN announced that a new draft resolution, document A/SPC/L.156, would be circulated to the members of the Committee.

29. Mr. CHAMMAS (Lebanon), referring to the statement which the representative of the Palestine Liberation Organization was about to make, said that he had the text of that statement in his possession, but that the Secretary of the Committee had told him that the text could not be circulated to members without a formal request to that effect. As the statement would be of great importance for the work of the Committee, he asked that the text should be circulated to members and reproduced in extenso.

30. The CHAIRMAN said that the Secretariat would take the necessary action.^{2/}

Mr. Lannung (Denmark), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

31. The CHAIRMAN, in accordance with the decision taken by the Committee at its 585th meeting concerning a letter dated 11 December 1967 (A/SPC/120), invited Mr. Izzat Tannous to address the Committee.

32. Mr. TANNOUS, speaking as one of the persons constituting the delegation of the Palestine Liberation Organization, in accordance with the decision taken by the Committee at its 585th meeting, which did not imply that the Committee recognized that organization, thanked the Committee for giving him the opportunity of explaining the point of view of the Palestine Arabs and expressed his gratitude to the Commissioner-General for his report (A/6713), which he found very valuable, for the statement he had made to the Committee at its 584th meeting (A/SPC/121) and for the humanitarian work he was performing so magnificently. He quoted from a report made by Mr. L. Emmett Holt, President of The American Middle East Rehabilitation, to that organization concerning his visit to the Middle East towards the end of July 1967, in which he told of the techniques used by the Israel military authorities to compel the Arab inhabitants and refugees living on the west bank of the Jordan to seek refuge on the east bank; those techniques had varied from intimidation to complete destruction of villages and dwellings occupied by Arabs: at Qalqiliya, for example, 820 out of 1,100 houses had been demolished. The Zionists responsible for those atrocities covered up their evil deeds by propaganda of unparalleled cleverness; whenever the truth was in danger of being revealed, they raised the bogey of anti-Semitism. They had done so earlier in connexion with the conclusions which the historian Arnold Toynbee had reached and they were doing so today against General de Gaulle.

33. The result of the clever policy of the Zionists had been that, since their recent aggression against the Arab people, the United Nations had heard of nothing but free navigation, the ending of the state of belligerency, the territorial integrity of Israel; on 22 November 1967, the Security Council had adopted a resolution (242 (1967)) guaranteeing those rights and privileges to the Israelis and had confined itself to referring to the Palestinian people as refugees deserving pity and a just solution for their plight. Who had given the Security Council the right to give away the birthright of the Palestine Arabs? Why were 2 million Palestine Arabs reduced to the status of refugees and exiles? Those were the questions they asked and they were bewildered when one spoke to them of the Balfour Declaration,^{3/} of the United Nations Charter and resolutions, of self-determination and human rights. Had their ancestors not lived in Palestine from time immemorial, long before all those documents had been written, had they not been there under that divine charter which had made that

country their permanent home, was it not elemental justice that they should be able to return to it? That had been recognized in General Assembly resolution 194 (III) and the Palestine refugees claimed for themselves the right to independence, the right to exist, the natural right to be at home in their own country. A great deal had been said about the blockade of the Suez Canal, the closing of the Strait of Tiran and the state of belligerency. That was not, however, where the Palestine problem lay; they were merely the by-products of the problem. For months, the United Nations had dealt with the symptoms and not with the disease. The Palestine problem lay in the fact that a group of people imbued with religious and racist prejudices and colonial ambitions, and supported by a well-organized movement, had taken upon itself to invade a country, to uproot its innocent population and to make it into a Zionist State.

34. He then recounted the origins and history of the Zionist movement. He said that, before being occupied by the British in 1918, Palestine had been a peaceful country where 700,000 people, including 56,000 Jews, had lived in harmony, all imbued with Arab culture. That atmosphere of harmony had been shattered by a double crime of transplantation and annihilation, for which two illegal political documents were responsible: the Balfour Declaration and the United Nations resolution on the partition of Palestine.

35. The Balfour Declaration, which had given to one group of people a home in a country belonging to another, was the greatest crime in history. Attempting as it did to carry out two contradictory undertakings, it could not have produced satisfactory practical results. How could it have been possible to establish a Jewish home in a Palestine 93 per cent of whose population was at that time Arab, while undertaking to do nothing which might prejudice the civil rights of the non-Jewish communities in Palestine? Those terms were contradictory, as had, indeed, been recognized in 1947 by Mr. Ernest Bevin, then the United Kingdom Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. But the Balfour Declaration had been the result of a bargain: Palestine had been sold to the Jews by the Allied Powers in the darkest hours of the First World War to secure the moral and material support of world Jewry. Furthermore the United Kingdom, which had had no right to dispose of Palestine, had previously given the Sherif Hussein a definite promise of independence for the Arabs if they would revolt against the Turkish and German armies in Arab territory. The Arabs had revolted, but the British had not kept their promise.

36. As for the Zionists, they had taken advantage of the contradictory nature of the Balfour Declaration. During the period of the Palestine Mandate they had brought in more than 600,000 Jews, despite the stubborn resistance of the Arab population. For thirty years the Arabs of Palestine had fought alone against the United Kingdom and world Zionism. Realizing too late the injustices committed, the United Kingdom had published in March 1939, following a conference with the Arabs and the Jews, a White Paper^{4/} making it clear that the Balfour Declaration had envisaged

^{2/} A verbatim record of the present meeting was circulated as document A/SPC/PV.589.

^{3/} Official Records of the General Assembly, Second Session, Supplement No. 11, vol. II, annex 19.

^{4/} Palestine: Statement of Policy, London, H.M. Stationery Office, 1939 (Cmd. 6019).

in Palestine a national home for the Jews and not the establishment of a Jewish State. Consequently the 1,300,000 Arabs and 650,000 Jews should enjoy the right of self-determination and become independent within ten years. The Zionists had rebelled against that policy and had not hesitated to resort to violence and terrorism to prevent its implementation. The United Kingdom, intimidated, had not tried to restore order in Palestine and had put the problem before the United Nations.

37. The United Nations had taken up the question in 1947. The resolution partitioning Palestine (181 (II)) had been adopted after Zionist manoeuvres and pressure which James Forrestal, then Secretary of Defence of the United States Government, and Sumner Welles, former Under-Secretary of State, had described. President Truman, concerned lest he alienate the Jewish vote, had in turn succumbed to the pressure exerted by the Zionist leaders, as described by him in his Memoirs.

38. The Arab people of Palestine, like the Arab States, had rejected the United Nations resolution partitioning their country, considering that decision illegal and contrary to the principle of self-determination enunciated in the Charter. The Arab States had requested that the problem should be referred to the International Court of Justice, but in vain; the General Assembly, also yielding to pressure, had denied that request. For the first time in the entire history of the Christian Church, Christian leaders of all denominations had met in Jerusalem and, on 3 March 1948, signed a historic statement condemning the partition scheme;^{5/} in their view, the Holy Land was indivisible and the United Nations policy was doomed to failure, for right was stronger than might. Those predictions had come true, the sacredness of the Holy Land had been violated, and the United Nations was responsible for the catastrophe.

39. In 1967, the Israelis had attacked the Arab people with the intention of liquidating the Palestinian problem and the rights of the Arabs of Palestine to their homeland, but also with the intention of increasing Israel's territory and laying the foundation for a Zionist empire. Under United States pressure the Security Council had upheld the aggressors at the expense of the victims. By its resolution 242 (1967) the Council on 22 November 1967 had written the blackest page in the annals of the United Nations. But no aggression by Israel would deter the Arabs of Palestine from the pursuit of their goal. They would liberate their homeland, as Europe had liberated itself from the Nazi occupation and as Asia, Africa and Latin America had liberated themselves from occupation by the colonialists. The people of Palestine would fight to the end for their freedom, their sovereignty, their honour, for they would rather die than live in the shame of exile.

40. Mr. DOSUMU-JOHNSON (Liberia) said that where the problem of the Palestine refugees was concerned it was the obligation of every member of the Committee to do justice to all the peoples of the area. He was convinced that with a realistic and practical approach it would be possible to reach an objective

solution. Hitherto the United Nations had tried to solve the problem of relations between the Arab countries and Israel by ambiguous and unworkable resolutions. Yet what was needed was a virtual transformation of the entire area, with the co-operation of all; that was the solution called for by a changing world.

41. The Commissioner-General had earned the gratitude of the United Nations for the invaluable services he had rendered to the refugees despite the obstacles which recent events had placed in his path. His delegation wished to express its appreciation of the dedication, perseverance, courage, patience and love which the Commissioner-General had shown in discharging his functions. In his statement made at the 584th meeting (A/SPC/121), the Commissioner-General had asked for guidelines to deal with the problems created by the June 1967 war. As everyone realized, polemics and emotional outbursts would not suffice to combat the scourges of hunger, illiteracy and disease. It was to be hoped that the Committee would provide the Commissioner-General with the funds he needed to carry out his task and that Member States would respond in a humanitarian spirit and recognize their obligations to society. His delegation was entirely impartial in its approach to the matter. It wished to play a disinterested role as peace-maker. Its only concern was to ensure respect for the provisions of the Charter relating to the settlement of disputes between States, in conformity with Article 33, paragraphs 1 and 2.

42. For nearly twenty years the United Nations had been trying unsuccessfully to bring the two sides together, but it had not been able to induce them to overcome their prejudices and subordinate their feelings to reason. The fact that the United Nations had likewise disregarded spiritual realities was perhaps also one of the reasons for its failure. Respect for spiritual values offered the only means of avoiding conflicts, as demonstrated by the example of Liberia, which had lived in peace for the past 120 years. The Arabs and the Israelis must coexist rationally rather than continuing in a state of warfare. It would be a great day for the Middle East when its leaders devoted their efforts to securing for their peoples the guarantees of a modern State, free from any ideological or ethnic considerations. The Members of the United Nations were great only to the extent that they knew now to compose their differences; it was to be hoped that the leaders of the Middle East would move in that direction. No conflict could be resolved without a dialogue, mediation, or negotiation. Those were the surest means devised by man for the settlement of disputes.

43. He appealed for the triumph of reason, since Europeans, Americans, Asians, Arabs and Jews were all responsible for peace and justice in the Middle East. Peace could not be sought in an atmosphere poisoned by the arms race and by bellicose statements. Realistic negotiations alone could help to bring it about. The only solution lay in negotiation.

44. In conclusion, he expressed the opinion that nothing should be done to poison the atmosphere while the Special Representative to the Middle East was carrying out his mission. It would be advisable to

^{5/} Muhammad Khalil, The Arab States and the Arab League, vol. II, International Affairs (Beirut, Khayats, 1962), pp. 551 and 552.

refer the whole issue to the Security Council, if possible, or to the next session of the General Assembly, on the understanding that in the meantime steps would be taken to meet the Commissioner-General's financial needs. Members must try to find a way of implementing General Assembly resolution 194 (III), instead of being content with fine words. The settlement of disputes by negotiation and compromise was the supreme law. The essential task of the United Nations was to harmonize the divergent interests of States, and he hoped that the Special Representative to the Middle East, Mr. Jarring, would succeed in working out an acceptable formula that would restore peace to that area.

45. Mr. KUTAKOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) wished to congratulate the People's Republic of Southern Yemen on its accession to independence and its admission to the United Nations.

46. The problem of the Palestine refugees was unfortunately not a new one and its long history was closely linked with general political developments in the Middle East. It had been engendered by the policy of aggression and expansion which the Israel leaders followed with respect to the neighbouring Arab countries. The aggression committed by Israel in June 1967 had not only aggravated the situation in the Middle East, but had also had serious repercussions on the lot of the refugees. Israel had used the tactics which it had already employed in 1948. The capture of Arab towns and villages had been accompanied by acts of violence against the peaceful Arab population and by acts of pillage. For example, the Israelis had removed about 1 million Egyptian pounds from banks in the Sinai peninsula and the Gaza Strip. As a result of the acts of violence perpetrated by the Israel army on the occupied territory, many Arabs had been forced to leave their homes and seek refuge in neighbouring Arab countries. Those acts committed by the Israelis on occupied territory constituted a flagrant violation of the principles of international law and of the United Nations Charter; that was why the Security Council had adopted resolution 237 (1967) on 14 June 1967. On 4 July 1967, the General Assembly, in emergency special session, had adopted a similar resolution (2252 (ES-V)).

47. The Israel Government, however, had completely disregarded those resolutions and continued to impose an arbitrary régime in the occupied territories. The excesses which the Israel armed forces had committed in the occupied Arab territory were confirmed in the report of the Secretary-General of 15 September 1967 (A/6797). As that document showed, the Israel aggression had forced about 350,000 Arabs to leave their homes and take refuge in neighbouring countries; 200,000 refugees had gone to Jordan, 110,000 to Syria and 35,000 to the United Arab Republic (A/6797, para. 159). Of that number, 113,000 refugees had already been registered with the Agency. As the Jordanian representative had pointed out (585th meeting), that number was increasing steadily. Because of the wretched conditions of those refugees, who had to face the winter without shelter or means of existence, the United Nations must urgently take the necessary measures to remedy the situation. It

must force Israel to allow the Arab refugees to return to their homes without delay.

48. The acts committed by the Israel army against the Arab population of the occupied territory were closely linked to Israel's territorial claims. Moreover, the Israel leaders made no secret of the fact and stated more and more frequently their intention of annexing one part or another of the occupied Arab territory. Furthermore, the Israel Government was endeavouring to populate that territory with Jewish immigrants. On 23 November 1967, the Israel Ministry of Agriculture had announced that it was setting up a ten-year plan for the development of agriculture in the occupied zones of Jordan and Gaza. The leaders were also endeavouring to annex the Jordanian part of Jerusalem. In its resolutions 2253 (ES-V) and 2254 (ES-V), the General Assembly had rejected Israel's claims to the Arab territory of Jerusalem; but Israel continued up to the present time to disregard those resolutions. In spite of the cease-fire decided upon by the Security Council, Israel extremists continued to commit acts of aggression against the Arab States. On 20 November 1967, for instance, Israel units had carried out a raid on the refugee camp at Karameh.

49. The Soviet Union energetically denounced the policy of aggression pursued by the ruling circles in Israel. In June 1967, the fifth emergency special session of the General Assembly had been convened on the initiative of the Soviet Union. The Soviet delegation, headed by Mr. Kosygin, had made constructive proposals which would rapidly eliminate the consequences of the Israel aggression. At the twenty-second session of the General Assembly, an overwhelming majority of Member States had expressed their will to restore peace as a matter of urgency in the Middle East, the first step being the withdrawal of Israel forces from the territories they had occupied. The Soviet Union was granting substantial assistance to the Arab countries, to enable them to eliminate the consequences of the Israel aggression. The Soviet Government and voluntary organizations in the Soviet Union had sent free food, medicines, clothing and other articles to the United Arab Republic, Syria and Jordan. The Soviet Union would continue to give the Arab States the aid they needed in their struggle to restore their lawful rights and eliminate the consequences of the Israel aggression.

50. The settlement of the conflict and the restoration of peace in the Near East were closely linked to the solution of the Palestine refugee problem. On 11 December 1948, the General Assembly had adopted resolution 194 (III), in which it had resolved that the refugees wishing to return to their homes should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property. That provision had been reiterated each year and each year Israel had continued to flout it. At the current session, the Israel representative had still not announced that Israel intended to apply the General Assembly resolutions relating to the refugees' right to return to their homes. On the contrary, Israel was taking every step to perpetuate the injustice done to the Arab refugees.

51. The question of eliminating the consequences of the Israel aggression had been considered by the Security Council, which on 22 November had adopted resolution 242 (1967), calling for the withdrawal of Israel armed forces from occupied Arab territory and a just settlement of the refugee problem. When Israel had been admitted to the United Nations under resolution 273 (III), the General Assembly had noted the declaration by the State of Israel that it unreservedly accepted the obligations of the United Nations Charter and undertook to honour them from the day when it became a Member of the United Nations. The General Assembly had also stressed the need for Israel to apply resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948. Since its admission to the United Nations, Israel had consistently belied the "peaceful intentions" which it frequently proclaimed.

52. Why had Israel for so long now refused to implement the General Assembly resolutions, and why was it pursuing its policy of aggression against the Arab countries? The basic reason was that Israel was supported by certain imperialist circles, especially in the United States, thanks to which the Israel Government continued to defy the United Nations and flout the decisions taken by the General Assembly with a view to maintaining peace and security in the Near East and ensuring a just settlement of the refugee problem. The Commissioner-General's report bore further witness to the serious consequences of Israel's policy of aggression. The report showed that the number of Palestine refugees registered with the Agency had in 1967 reached the figure of 1,344,576 persons, whose living conditions remained extremely precarious (see A/6713, para. 3).

53. The Palestine refugee problem was primarily political, and could not be considered separately from the situation now prevailing in the Middle East as a result of the Israel aggression. First of all, the consequences of that aggression must be eliminated, which meant the immediate withdrawal of troops from the territory occupied by Israel since 5 June 1967. Without that withdrawal, peace could not exist in the Near East and the refugee problem could not be settled justly. The Soviet Union considered that not only should the aggressor's troops be withdrawn from all occupied Arab territory, but that Israel should also pay compensation for the damages suffered by the Arab population of the United Arab Republic, Syria and Jordan, and return all property stolen from it. That was the most effective way of settling the Palestine refugee problem and the other humanitarian issues. If that problem was to be solved, Israel must implement General Assembly resolution 194 (II). The ruling circles in Israel, supported by the United States and certain other Western States, could no longer be allowed to pursue their policy of aggression against the Arab people and to flout systematically the decisions of the United Nations.

54. Mr. GHAUS (Afghanistan) requested that the statement made by the Kuwait representative at the previous meeting should be reproduced *in extenso*.

55. Mr. CHAI (Secretary of the Committee) replied that the full texts of statements made to the Committee would be reproduced on the basis of the sound transcription whenever no written text of the statement existed.

The meeting rose at 6.35 p.m.