

United Nations
GENERAL
ASSEMBLY

TWENTY-FOURTH SESSION

Official Records

SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE, 685th
MEETING



Friday, 5 December 1969
at 11.5 a.m.

NEW YORK

CONTENTS

	Page
Agenda item 36:	
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (<i>continued</i>):	
(a) Report of the Commissioner-General;	
(b) Report of the Secretary-General	235

Chairman: Mr. Eugeniusz KULAGA (Poland).

AGENDA ITEM 36

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine
Refugees in the Near East (*continued*) (A/7577, A/7614,
A/7665, A/SPC/133, A/SPC/134, A/SPC/L.175, A/SPC/
L.176 and Add.1, A/SPC/L.177):

- (a) Report of the Commissioner-General;
- (b) Report of the Secretary-General

1. Lord CARADON (United Kingdom) said that no more important matter was being examined by the United Nations than the problem of the Palestine refugees. It was essential to determine what course of action would be most likely to bring positive results. The best method was to proceed according to the unanimous resolutions adopted by the Security Council in 1967, which had not been adequately followed up. The four Foreign Ministers who had discussed the Middle East situation with the Secretary-General last September had reaffirmed that Security Council resolution 242 (1967) should be implemented, that a durable peace must be established in the Middle East and that all States in the area had the inalienable right to exist as independent and sovereign States.

2. The preceding week, the representatives of the four Powers, permanent members of the Security Council, had resumed their discussions on the Middle East. As he saw it, the way to proceed was for those meetings to continue; the next meeting would be on 6 December and he trusted that the four Powers would give the refugee problem high priority on any agenda dealing with the Middle East. It should be possible to ask Mr. Jarring to resume his contacts very soon with the parties. The refugee problem should be high on the list of priorities suggested to him by the four Powers. The representatives of the four Powers would continue their meetings and would make every effort to find a peaceful solution.

3. Unfortunately, the debate which was taking place in the Committee seemed to him to be militating against the efforts of the four permanent members of the Security Council. Although the problem was too complex to be

solved through the mechanism of the four-Power talks and the representative of the Secretary-General, the traditional United Nations procedure of searching for common grounds of agreement was essential in the present case. The adoption by the Committee of draft resolution A/SPC/L.176 and Add.1 would bring about division rather than unity. The Committee would be taking a step backward which would greatly hamper the representatives of the four Powers at their forthcoming meeting. Although it was impossible for everyone in the Organization to be fully agreed on many issues, there had been virtually unanimous agreement on the question of the refugees in the past, and also on perhaps the only other problem in the Middle East which he would put in the same category of importance, the problem of Jerusalem. That unity, which was of the greatest consequence, was now being threatened in the Committee.

4. He appealed to all the representatives to hesitate before acting within the narrowness of the debate that had taken place in the Committee. There was, however, a way for the Committee to proceed which would contribute to a solution. It could recall the previous actions of the Organization, express deep concern at the situation and at the failure of Israel to allow the new refugees to return to their homes while requesting the Security Council in general and the four permanent members in particular to make every effort to find a solution. Such action could have been taken unanimously. Instead, while the representatives of the four permanent members of the Security Council would be meeting the next day with a view to achieving unity, the Committee might be led today to destroy that unity.

5. His own genuine interest in the fate of the refugees and his desire to see action could not be questioned. He had consistently insisted that the United Nations should assign high or top priority to the refugee problem. Mr. Jarring should be authorized to deal with that priority in the very near future. In view of present circumstances, draft resolution A/SPC/L.176 and Add.1 would only work against the refugees. Although he understood and respected the intensity of feelings on both sides, he felt that it was necessary that those who were seeking to preserve unity in searching for a solution should not, when they met, be faced with a recollection from today of a division which was not only unnecessary, but could do great harm. He appealed to the members of the Committee to ask themselves whether or not their action would truly be conducive to a peaceful settlement.

6. Mr. CABEZAS (Ecuador) said that his delegation, in line with its long-standing policy would vote for those draft resolutions which, in a humanitarian spirit, would help improve the situation of the refugees, namely draft resolu-

tions A/SPC/L.175 and A/SPC/L.177. However, his delegation found it impossible to vote for resolution A/SPC/L.176 and Add.1. The Government and people of Ecuador had friendly relations with the Government and people of Israel and felt the deepest compassion for the victims of nazism. Respect for the juridical existence of the State of Israel was a moral obligation. Since draft resolution A/SPC/L.176 and Add.1 cast doubt on the legal foundation of the State of Israel, his delegation would vote against it.

7. Mr. JOHNSON (United States of America) said that draft resolution A/SPC/L.176 and Add.1 had had the effect of troubling and dividing the members of the Committee and of the General Assembly as a whole. The Committee was concerned with a deeply humanitarian problem, which was inevitably an important political problem as well. That draft resolution, if adopted, would have a harmful effect on the refugees and displaced persons, not only in the long run but possibly in the short run as well. Because the Government and people of his country were deeply concerned with the welfare of the Palestinian refugees, his delegation hoped that it might be possible to avoid having to take a vote on draft resolution A/SPC/L.176 and Add.1.

8. Mr. TOMEH (Syria), referring to paragraph 4 of draft resolution A/SPC/L.175, drew attention to a document entitled "Historical Survey of efforts of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine to secure the implementation of paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III): Question of compensation."¹ In view of that document's relevance to the refugee problem, he regretted that no reference had been made to it in the annotated agenda to the present session of the General Assembly.

9. After reading out the second preambular paragraph and operative paragraph 2 of draft resolution A/SPC/L.176 and Add.1, he read excerpts from two letters from the International Committee of the Red Cross operating in Syria to the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, containing what he considered irrefutable proof of the information provided by Arab delegations in the Committee concerning the situation in the Israel-occupied territories. One of the letters stated that it was impossible for Red Cross representatives to visit the 2,000 Arab detainees as frequently as would be desirable. The second letter contained a list of forty-nine Palestinians whose families lived in Syria; five had been detained by the Israel authorities and the International Red Cross was attempting to obtain their release.

10. Such information from a humanitarian organization substantiated the allegations which had been made against Israel practices and strengthened his delegation's determination to vote in favour of draft resolution A/SPC/L.176 and Add.1.

11. Mr. SAYEGH (Kuwait) said that he had listened with great attention to the eloquent and moving statement by the United Kingdom representative. He wished to present some observations which, he felt, would shed a different light on the draft resolution A/SPC/L.176 and Add.1.

12. The Palestine refugees were experiencing physical, mental and spiritual suffering. The United Nations had to some extent ministered to their physical needs through UNRWA. Their spiritual and mental anguish, however, could not be allayed merely by such assistance. That anguish stemmed in part from the feeling that they were being denied their inalienable rights as human beings, rights which were enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. He could not accept the view that, were the Committee to adopt a draft resolution reaffirming those rights, it would have an adverse effect on the situation. On the contrary, such a pronouncement would contribute to the welfare of the refugees by alleviating their desperation and would help to create an atmosphere conducive to the settlement of the problems of the area as a whole.

13. Mr. TEKOAH (Israel), exercising his right of reply, said that the "evidence" referred to by the Syrian representative indicated nothing negative concerning the treatment of the detainees by the Israel authorities. The only point made in the letters was that 2,000 Arab agents of terror were in Israel prisons, and they testified to the intensity of the terrorist warfare against Israel, which was in flagrant violation of the cease-fire resolutions of the Security Council.

14. The figure of 2,000 should be compared with the hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arabs who had been detained in Jordanian prisons and special concentration camps during the Egyptian-Jordanian occupation of the East Bank of the Jordan River; with the hundreds, if not thousands, of Palestinians and others in Egyptian prisons on the West Bank and the Gaza area; and with the large number of innocent Jews still in Syrian prisons and Egyptian concentration camps.

15. That was not the first time that the Syrian representative had quoted those letters, or that selective quotations had been submitted to international bodies by Arab delegations.

16. Mr. TOMEH (Syria), speaking on a point of order, said that his statement had referred specifically to the operative part of the draft resolution and had not contained any comment on the substance of the evidence provided. The Israel representative was now injecting propaganda into the discussion.

17. The CHAIRMAN reiterated his appeal to representatives to limit their statements to the three draft resolutions before the Committee.

18. Mr. TEKOAH (Israel) said that he was referring to paragraph 2 of draft resolution A/SPC/L.176 and Add.1. He read out an excerpt from a statement by the Vice-President of the International Committee of the Red Cross to the effect that the Arab Governments quoted selectively from confidential reports of the Red Cross and reports to Governments, thereby presenting an inaccurate picture of the true situation and exploiting the information for political ends.

19. Mr. TOMEH (Syria) said that he would show the letters he had quoted to any member who wished to verify the accuracy of his statement.

¹ Document A/AC.25/W.81/Rev.2.

20. Mr. FARAH (Somalia) read out the first and third preambular paragraphs of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which emphasized the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all human beings and stressed that they must be protected by the rule of law. Those paragraphs had guided the sponsors of draft resolu-

tion A/SPC/L.176 and Add.1. He hoped that the Committee would unreservedly reaffirm the rights of the Palestine refugees.

The meeting rose at 12 noon.