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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/119, A/SPC/120)

1. The CHAIRMAN said he had received a letter dated 8 December 1967 (A/SPC/119) from the representatives of Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan requesting that the Palestine Arab delegation should be heard by the Committee during its consideration of the present item. He had also received a letter dated 11 December 1967 signed by the representatives of twelve Arab States (A/SPC/120), requesting that the delegation of the Palestine Liberation Organization should be heard on the same item. The Committee had granted similar requests at its 435th and 498th meetings at the twentieth and twenty-first sessions of the Assembly. If there were no objections, he would take it that, in accordance with the established practice, the Committee authorized him to invite the persons constituting those delegations to speak in the Committee, without such authorization implying recognition of the organization or delegation.

It was so decided.

2. Mr. CHAMMAS (Lebanon) formally proposed that all statements in the debate on the present item should be given *in extenso* in the Committee's records.

3. The CHAIRMAN said that, if there was no objection, he would take it that the Committee decided to request the Secretariat to make arrangements for the publication of the verbatim records of the entire debate, if that was possible.

It was so decided.

4. Mr. COMAY (Israel) said that his delegation wished to express its formal reservations with regard to the requests in documents A/SPC/119 and A/SPC/120. Although it had never opposed such hearings, his delegation had seldom found them constructive.

5. Mr. EL-FARRA (Jordan) expressed appreciation of the report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (A/6713), which he thought was most valuable.

6. The item before the Committee involved the destiny of the Arab people of Palestine, whose problem had not yet been solved, despite the many resolutions affirming that people's legitimate rights. The inaction of the United Nations had encouraged Israel to displace yet more people and occupy more Arab territory by force. There had been 719,000 Palestine refugees in his country; there were now 245,000 more. During the current week, Israel had expelled the 294 members of the Nuwaseirat tribe, which had lived for centuries in the Jericho area. In the army raid which had preceded that expulsion, a number of persons had been killed and houses, the local school and the mosque destroyed.

7. On 14 June 1967, the Security Council had unanimously adopted a resolution (237 (1967)) calling upon Israel to ensure the safety of the inhabitants of the areas where military operations had taken place and to facilitate the return of those who had fled since the outbreak of hostilities. Israel had implemented neither that resolution nor previous resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly. It was adamant in its refusal to allow the hundreds of thousands of new refugees to return. Moreover, there were more than 160 UNRWA teachers from the Gaza Strip, and others from the west bank, who had been absent taking university examinations before the outbreak of hostilities in June 1967. They had so far been unable to return, in some cases, with tragic results. A further fifty-four UNRWA teachers had been deported across the Suez Canal immediately after the Security Council cease-fire resolutions. The families of most UNRWA teachers had remained in Gaza and the teachers transferred part of their salaries to them through UNRWA. The families had no other support. Agency efforts to ensure the return of the teachers to their posts had so far failed and he understood that UNRWA was contemplating terminating its services at the end of December. Since the absence of the teachers affected the future of their students, it was necessary to expedite their return and to assure their safety and welfare. Until that had been achieved, UNRWA should make sure that their salaries were protected, since otherwise the suffering of the teachers and their families would be unimaginable. He hoped that the Commissioner-General would clarify the issue. Furthermore, sufficient funds must be made available to implement the recommendations of the educational conferences

in Beirut in 1965 and in 1966 in connexion with the educational needs of the refugees.

8. Israel's behaviour left no doubt that it was reverting to terror tactics in order to prevent the return of the refugees and to create a new vacuum. Israel's officials were urging the Zionist movement to increase immigration in order, as one Israel Minister had said, "to settle the liberated areas in the country". Israel's aim was to reduce the Arab population in the occupied areas. The United Nations should take action to frustrate that aim and not be satisfied with measures that had proved ineffectual. Such action was all the more necessary in view of the Commissioner-General's observation that UNRWA's capacity to help would be much greater if the refugees were allowed to return to their camps and homes on the west bank where the Agency already had installations.

9. Some refugees had been expelled from Jerusalem and Jewish immigrants were being introduced. Mr. Ben-Gurion, addressing the Zionist Organization of America on 24 July 1967, had said that the foremost project in connexion with settlement was the rebuilding of a united Jerusalem and had proposed that 2 per cent of every Jewish community should emigrate annually to Israel. In disregard of General Assembly resolution 2253 (ES-V), Israel had taken illegal steps to change the status of the City of Jerusalem, where the entire Mughrabia quarter had been razed. In its resolution 2254 (ES-V), the Assembly had on 14 July deplored Israel's failure to implement that resolution, but Israel had persisted in its defiance. The Commissioner-General had stated, in his report that among those permitted to return, it appeared that there were very few former inhabitants of the Old City of Jerusalem (see A/6713, para. 36). Refugees from Jerusalem now on the east bank of the Jordan would have to face the rigours of winter in huts and caves because United Nations resolutions were not implemented and because those who could help to secure their rights were not doing so.

10. The problem posed a real challenge to all Member States; indeed, it was destroying the image of the Organization, which stood by while crimes were being committed against its Charter. The people of the Holy City of Jerusalem and other occupied areas of Jordan were being blackmailed and subjected to intimidation, humiliation and torture. The Israel authorities were daily strengthening their hold on the city. Every day which passed without the United Nations taking action to implement its resolutions was an invitation to disaster. General Dayan had suggested the annexation of Gaza as the next step, and none could tell what other steps would follow. Shortly after the cease-fire resolutions, the Israel Foreign Minister had said that Israel would not withdraw from the territories it had occupied, even if the United Nations voted by 121 votes to 1 that it should do so. That renunciation by Israel of the United Nations as a machinery for peace was outrageous, the more so since Israel had been created by the United Nations and the latter should be responsible for its behaviour.

11. Distinguished religious figures, such as the President of the Islamic Supreme Court, had been expelled from their homes in Jerusalem. Their de-

portation had aroused the indignation of the Arab population and brought immediate protests from the leaders of the Christian and Moslem communities.

12. The failure of the United Nations to react to Israel's defiance of its resolutions had merely encouraged the Israelis to commit further oppressive acts. For instance, on 21 July 1967, seventeen days after the General Assembly had called upon Israel to rescind all measures which would alter the status of Jerusalem, four Jordanian political leaders had been banished from Jerusalem to northern Palestine for three months on charges of incitement to subversion against Israel. They had in fact been arrested because of their loyalty to Jordan and their refusal to co-operate with the occupying authority. That was yet another example of the treatment applied by Israel to persons who refused to accept the usurpation of Jerusalem or any part of the west bank. But if high officials from Jordan had openly advocated civil disobedience, they were not alone in their struggle against Zionism and occupation by Israel forces. They were supported by the leaders of many European countries which had known nazi occupation. In particular, President de Gaulle had on 27 November 1967 described Israel as a warrior State which appeared determined to use any suitable opportunity for enlarging itself.

13. While the General Assembly at its fifth emergency special session had dealt largely with the question of Jerusalem, the situation in the Middle East as a whole was still an item before the present regular session, and the Assembly was expected in due course to take further action on that important issue. Israel had already committed many violations of the Security Council's cease-fire resolutions, and more violations seemed sure to come. For instance, in Qalqiliya, a border town with 25,000 inhabitants, more than two thirds of the houses had been dynamited after the arrival of Israel troops. Most of the villages located along the Armistice Demarcation Line with Jordan had been razed to the ground. Their inhabitants were homeless, and many had died of hunger and cold while Israel had been celebrating its victory. On 30 November 1967 The New York Times had reported that an Arab village in the west bank area of Jordan, containing 800 buildings which had housed some 6,000 Arab refugees receiving partial support from UNRWA, had been destroyed on the pretext that it was a staging area for terrorists. Reports on the situation of the victims of Zionist oppression had been presented both to the Security Council and to the General Assembly. Israel's occupation forces were also trying to reap the fruits of their aggression by creating new Israel settlements in Arab lands and changing the status quo in the area.

14. If Israel's recent actions were compared with its conduct in 1947, it was clear that the practices Israel was adopting in the territories it had occupied were premeditated, and that the refugees of 1947 and 1967 alike were victims of the same Zionist policy of expansion based upon the plans of the Zionist Congress of 1897 for the creation of the Zionist State. The Zionists had exploited the circumstances of the First World War to obtain from the United Kingdom the

Balfour Declaration^{1/} and of the Second World War to obtain a promise that they would be allowed to establish a purely Jewish State. On both occasions, the promises had been given by foreign politicians in violation of the Palestine people's right to self-determination. It was power politics which had led to the partition of Palestine and the creation of Israel in 1947 and had later encouraged Israel to expand.

15. Those who wished to know how the problem of Palestine refugees in the Near East had arisen should study the United Nations records of 1947. Encouraged by the concessions made to them, the Israelis had ignored the legitimate rights of the refugees and refused to allow them to return home. They had, instead, worked for continued expansion. More than 650,000 of the million and a half refugees had come from an area which had been allotted to the Arabs under the Partition Plan, but had been forcibly occupied by Zionist terrorists even before the United Kingdom Mandate had been terminated and the State of Israel established. Jaffa and Acre, for instance, had been occupied on 26 and 27 April 1948, eighteen days before the termination of the Mandate. After consolidating their position in the area occupied prior to 5 June 1967, the Israelis had decided that a suitable moment had come for acquiring more land and displacing more people by invasion. In the new campaign, they had occupied all the west bank after displacing 245,000 of its people, part of Syria after displacing 115,000 of its inhabitants, all of Sinai after expelling half its population, and all the Gaza Strip after expelling unknown numbers of inhabitants of Khan Yunis and Gaza. Now, in various forums, they were harping on the theme of peace; but there was no peace. The Israelis were attempting to establish the line reached at the time of the cease-fire resolution as a demarcation line.

16. In a letter dated 29 June 1967 to the Secretary-General, the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations had said that in his Government's view the sole function and concern of General Bull and his staff was with the cease-fire resolutions of the Security Council, and no longer with the General Armistice Agreements and the obsolete arrangements of the past.^{2/} Thus, Israel had now repudiated the General Armistice Agreements, just as Mr. Ben-Gurion had repudiated the Egypt-Israel General Armistice Agreement after the 1956 Sinai campaign; and, from its position of strength, it was using all the Zionist information media to convince the world public that peace, and not occupation, was its objective. The refugee problem must be considered against the background of the wider problems arising from Israel's policy of expansion.

17. His delegation would like to know what currency UNRWA was using in the occupied area, and particularly in the Arab-Jerusalem area, to pay its staff members. There was no information on that point in the Commissioner-General's report (A/6713).

18. To all delegations which were calling for a true peace, he would say that the United Nations had in recent times heard too much about peace and too little about justice. That had been the tragedy of the Palestine problem over the past twenty years. Superficial treatment was never the answer. Peace imposed by conquerors on their enemies was only a sham peace, which led to even more disastrous conflagrations. Those who talked of peace should ask themselves which party to the conflict was conquering and expanding. His own country had repeatedly affirmed its adherence to the 1949 General Armistice Agreements; and to paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III). Israel should demonstrate the same attitude. If the Israelis wanted their promises to be accepted in the future, they should honour the obligations they had assumed in the past. How could any United Nations representative prepare a satisfactory plan for the future, if Israel did not show good faith by fulfilling its obligations under the 1949 General Armistice Agreements, the Lausanne Protocol and all the United Nations resolutions to which it had subscribed? As long as Israel forces remained in occupation of Arab territory in violation of the General Armistice Agreements and of the rights of the local people, Israel was clearly not interested in peace.

19. The only just solution was the unconditional repatriation of all refugees. That solution had been advocated by the United Nations for the past twenty years, and the peoples of the areas concerned would accept no alternative. The Israelis must therefore have a change of heart and announce their intention of allowing the refugees to return to their homes in Jaffa, Acre and elsewhere, as was their right. That right could not be dependent on race or religion. He could not accept the assertion that Jews, because they were Jews, could oust Arabs from their land because they were Christians or Moslems, when those Arabs and their fathers and forefathers had owned the land for centuries.

20. Lastly, the Israelis should not be blinded by their victory. Hitler's occupation of almost all Europe had not forced Europe to surrender nor made Hitler a better man. If the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations were not applied to the problem of the Palestine refugees in the Near East, the peoples concerned would not shrink from any sacrifice to safeguard their legitimate rights.

21. Mr. COMAY (Israel) said that his delegation reserved its right to reply to the Jordanian representative's comments at a later stage if it saw fit to do so. For the moment, he wished merely to deny the Jordanian representative's statement that the Israel authorities had recently expelled a Bedouin tribe from the Jericho area. A reply to the letter dated 8 December 1967 on that subject, which the representative of Jordan had addressed to the Secretary-General^{3/} was now in preparation.

22. Mr. EL-FARRA (Jordan) said that facts were facts, however persistently they were denied.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.

^{1/} Official Records of the General Assembly, Second Session, Supplement No. 11, vol. II, annex 19.

^{2/} See Official Records of the Security Council, Twenty-second Year, Supplement for July, August and September 1967, document S/7930/Add.20, para. 3.

^{3/} Ibid., Supplement for October, November and December 1967, document S/8290.