

United Nations
**GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**

TWENTY-THIRD SESSION

Official Records

**SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE, 620th
MEETING**



Friday, 22 November 1968,
at 3.25 p.m.

NEW YORK

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*Report of the Commissioner-General of the
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Palestine Refugees in the Near East (con-
tinued) 1*

Chairman: Mr. Abdulrahim Abby FARAH
(Somalia).

AGENDA ITEM 33

Report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (continued) (A/7213, A/SPC/126, A/SPC/127, A/SPC/L.165)

1. Mr. EL BOURI (Libya) noted that, for the first time in the history of the United Nations, the Secretary-General had made a statement to the Special Political Committee (612th meeting) on the subject of the Palestine refugees, a fact which emphasized the seriousness of the situation and the need for urgent action. For twenty years the lengthy discussions in the General Assembly had only culminated in measures which enabled UNRWA to cater for the refugees' immediate needs, without leading to a fundamental solution of the problem.

2. The consequences of the hostilities of June 1967 had shown that the exodus of refugees in 1948 and in 1967 was part of a long-term plan devised by the Zionists to eliminate the Arab population and establish a Jewish State throughout the territories covered by the Palestine mandate. It was clear that the Israel aggression in June 1967 had been an expansionist act rather than a defence of its territorial integrity as the Zionist propaganda maintained. Not content with occupying part of the territories of three Member States—the United Arab Republic, Jordan and Syria—Israel, inebriated by its easy victory, did not conceal its intention to annex all the parts of these territories, as set out in the "Allon Plan", published in *Le Monde* on 16 November 1968, and to expel their inhabitants.

3. The tragedy of the Arab refugees of Palestine who, deprived of their homeland and their right to self-determination, had been forced to seek exile and live on international charity while strangers from the four corners of the world usurped their land and property, had no parallel in history. The injustice appeared all the more flagrant at a time when most peoples formerly oppressed by colonialism had achieved independence.

4. The earliest of the General Assembly resolutions on the subject, resolution 194 (III), which called for repatriation or compensation for refugees, had been reaffirmed by the General Assembly at every subsequent session, but had never been implemented. That and the tragic events in the region since the adoption of the partition plan clearly showed that the national Jewish home envisaged in the Balfour Declaration of 1917^{1/} was to be transformed into an expansionist, racist and military State.

5. The only difference between the consequences of the events of 1948 and 1967 was that a large number of the Arab inhabitants had preferred to remain in the territories occupied in 1967 and resist the occupiers. However, nearly half a million refugees, old and new, had fled from Israel's reprisals so that almost 1.5 million Palestine Arabs were leading the wretched life of refugees in tented villages, where they were still being attacked by the Israel forces. The refugees who had remained in the occupied regions on the West Bank and at Gaza had been subject to all types of repression by the Israel occupiers, in contravention of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949^{2/} and the principles of international law and of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

6. The report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA (A/7213) had drawn attention to the plight of the new and old refugees, who lacked the essentials for physical survival—food, water, shelter, blankets, clothing, health care and education—and whose sufferings were being intensified with the coming of winter. Yet Israel had never implemented the humanitarian resolutions of the United Nations or of the International Conference on Human Rights held at Tehran in April and May 1968 and had even appropriated Jerusalem, despite General Assembly resolutions 2253 (ES-V) and 2254 (ES-V). The refusal of the Israel authorities to allow the representative of the Secretary-General to visit the occupied territories proved that they feared the results of such an inquiry.

7. Of the 1,364,294 refugees registered, only 824,366 received their full ration of less than \$2 worth of food a month. Lack of medical assistance, education and housing was even more serious. As the Commissioner-General had said in his report, it was neither feasible nor realistic to attempt to make up the deficit of \$4.9 million in the Agency's budget for 1969 by reducing services to the refugees, which were even more vital to them now than they had been before

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

^{2/} United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, 1950, No. 973, p. 287.

the 1967 hostilities. Therefore, unless the Agency received additional contributions, amounting to 10 per cent of its prospective income for the current year, the implementation of Security Council resolution 242 (1967) would be seriously endangered and the United Nations, after failing in its political task, would have failed in its humanitarian task also.

8. If the United Nations set up a service responsible for administering the property of the Palestine refugees, the value of which had been estimated at \$2,000 million, and for giving the income to the owners, the amount of international assistance would be much reduced.

9. The Commissioner-General had said that the Agency would be in a better position to help the refugees if they were allowed to return to the places where they had lived before the hostilities and where the Agency's facilities were installed. However, despite the declared intention of the Israel authorities to permit the return of the Arab population, they had accepted only 14,000 out of over 400,000, while at the same time many thousands more had fled to the East Bank. The Secretary-General and the United States representative had said, in their statements at the 612th and 618th meetings respectively, that the only way of avoiding incalculable suffering for the new refugees was to allow them to return to their former place of residence and the United Kingdom representative had recommended at the 616th meeting also their immediate return if they had homes to go to and wished to do so. The return of the original Palestine refugees had been called for in General Assembly resolution 194 (III) which, like all other United Nations resolutions on the same subject, Israel had refused to implement, despite its undertaking to do so as mentioned in the fifth preambular paragraph of General Assembly resolution 273 (III) which admitted that country to the United Nations. It had also defied the resolution of the Security Council (250 (1968)), which was adopted unanimously, by holding a military parade in Jerusalem in May 1968.

10. The Libyan delegation therefore hoped that at its twenty-third session the General Assembly would adopt the following measures: first, to reaffirm the right of refugees to repatriation or compensation pursuant to General Assembly resolution 194 (III); secondly, pursuant to Security Council resolution 237 (1967) and General Assembly resolutions 2252 (ES-V) and 2341 (XXII), to call upon Israel as soon as possible to permit the return to their homes of all refugees who had been forced to flee from the Arab territories taken over by Israel; thirdly, to extend the mandate of the Agency for a reasonable period; and fourthly, to consider such measures as might be necessary to ensure an increase in the Agency's revenue, as requested by the Commissioner-General.

11. Those measures were only a temporary remedy and the question of the refugees was in fact only a corollary of the political problem. Until it was finally settled by recognizing the refugees' legitimate right to return to their homeland and to self-determination, the question would continue to be a source of tension and disturbance in the Middle East, which might degenerate into a new conflagration, with incalculable consequences.

12. Mr. de PINIES (Spain) said that he welcomed the Secretary-General's presence at the first meeting at which the Committee had discussed the problem of the Palestine refugees (612th meeting). His call for an urgent solution had brought home their responsibility to all members. Spain, which was linked to the Arab countries by so many ties of culture and friendship, felt the tragic situation of those refugees as if it were its own.

13. His delegation shared the preceding speakers' concern at the immediate problems facing the refugees and earnestly hoped that the rigours of the winter would be averted for the entire refugee population through a programme enabling them to return to the abandoned UNRWA camps. However, the urgency of that humanitarian action should not divert attention from the imperious need to find a political solution to the over-all refugee problem which was a grave source of political tension in the Middle East.

14. His delegation reiterated its appeal to the great Powers to find such a solution without delay and to prevent that tension from degenerating into further anger and violence. General Assembly resolutions 194 (III) and 513 (VI), which called respectively for the repatriation and compensation of the refugees and for their reintegration by repatriation or resettlement, had never been implemented, and in succeeding years the General Assembly, in successive resolutions, had had to content itself with expressing its regret at the lack of progress made. There was an urgent need to implement the provisions of both resolutions.

15. As in previous years, his country would continue to give material assistance to the refugees through UNRWA, whose efficient administration and humanitarian work were worthy of appreciation. In view of the Agency's increasing financial difficulties and the ever-growing needs of the refugees, the Spanish Government, despite its recent economic difficulties, had approved a substantially higher contribution than that of the preceding year, in the form of the immediate delivery of 5,000 tons of wheat flour.

16. His delegation considered it necessary to prolong the mandate of the Agency and urged all Governments to increase their voluntary contributions as far as possible to enable it to continue its humanitarian work. That was, however, only an urgent palliative, and peace in the Middle East would be seriously threatened so long as the injustice committed daily against the Palestine refugees went unremedied.

17. Mr. TARCICI (Yemen) recalled that the representative of the Zionist authorities had challenged the accuracy of the quotations in the Yemeni delegation's statement at the Committee's 616th meeting. The quotations had been selected from works of serious scholarship and even from Israel and Zionist sources, including the Standard Jewish Encyclopedia, the New Jewish Encyclopedia, and the Universal Jewish Encyclopedia.

18. The essence of Zionist reasoning was based on ancient history. His own statement had shown that the Hebrews had entered the Holy Land—then Canaan—as invaders and had been resisted, often successfully, by the local population. In addition to the evidence in the Bible, there was unimpeachable archaeological

proof of the circumstances surrounding the invasion in the form of contemporary letters from the kings of Canaan—the old kings of Palestine—to the Egyptian Pharaohs asking for help against invading Hebrew nomads from Mesopotamia. Centuries had elapsed before the invasion had culminated in success with the occupation of Jerusalem by King David in the year 1000 B.C.

19. His delegation had already explained that the Palestinian people, who had been expelled by force of arms through an international conspiracy, were simply the inhabitants of the Holy Land who had been converted to pagan religions or to Judaism. That part of his statement had been disputed by those who sought to convince the world that the Holy Land had been theirs by right since time immemorial. The representatives of the Zionist authorities were occupying a seat at the United Nations which rightfully belonged to the Palestinian people, who still survived. His delegation hoped that a Palestinian delegation would one day occupy the seat which belonged to it.

20. He had also pointed out that Herod, King of Judea in Roman times, had been a Palestinian, not a Hebrew, and that after his reign a large number of Hebrews and other Jews had been converted to Christianity. The Palestinians of the present day, whether Christian or Moslem, could well be of Hebrew origin and, as he had pointed out, the mere fact that their ancestors had chosen Christianity as a religion was no reason why they should lose their right to live in their ancestral homeland. The Gospel according to St. John described how Jews, or Hebrews, had been converted to Christianity during the time of Christ and how the people of Jerusalem had welcomed Christ as the King of Israel. Those Hebrews, converted to Christianity, had been Palestinians—yet the Zionists now considered them to have no right whatsoever to their ancestral homeland. The Zionists, who claimed ownership of the Holy Land, were for the most part Ashkenazim. Thus, the tragedy of the Palestinian people had been brought about by a fanatical, chauvinistic, racist movement. Every such movement inevitably provoked a similar reaction within the

opposing camp. If nazism had not attempted to exterminate the Jewish people, Zionism would not have been espoused by so many fanatics of the same kind. Zionist fanaticism, applied in Palestine and the Middle East, must inevitably and logically provoke reactions of the same kind.

21. The Zionist movement had originated among the Ashkenazim who, according to the Standard Jewish Encyclopedia accounted for 85 per cent of the world's Jewish population and 92 per cent according to the Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, which pointed out that the main sense of the word "Ashkenazim" in Hebrew was "Germans".

22. A constant theme of Zionist propaganda against the Arabs was that Israel Zionism was a meek lamb surrounded by a pack of wolves. As the representative of Saudi Arabia had observed (616th meeting), Zionism's aggressive plans against Palestine were not new. The Frontiers of a Nation,^{3/} published in 1955, stated that immediately following the Balfour Declaration, the Advisory Committee for Palestine, a Zionist committee, had noted that the State, or rather the national homeland, was to include an area extending from near the sources of the river Jordan southwards to the Hedjaz railroad. Those specific plans for the occupation of part of the Arab countries bordering on Palestine thus dated as far back as the First World War and included the seizure of Lebanese-owned river waters. Even the name Palestine had been erased from the map. Nevertheless, at the very moment when the Committee was discussing the fate of a people which had been invaded, martyred and dispersed, the representative of the perpetrators of the crime called the Committee to witness that it was the Arabs who were the aggressors. The Yiddish word "chutzpanik" described the person who, having killed his parents, begged for mercy because he was an orphan. It was particularly appropriate when applied to the statement made in the Committee by the representative of the perpetrators of the crime against Palestine.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.

^{3/} H. F. Frischwasser-Ra'anani, London, The Batchworth Press, 1955.