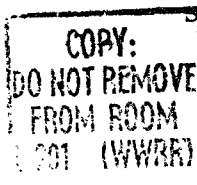




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SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
26th meeting
held on
Friday, 8 November 1985
at 10.30 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 26th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KORHONEN (Finland)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 79: UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (continued) (A/40/13 and Add.1, A/40/207, 216, 299, 350, 736, 580, 612, 613, 766, 614, 616, 756, 615 and 543)

(a) REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER-GENERAL (continued)

(b) REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (continued)

(c) REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE (continued)

(d) REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)

1. Mr. MOHAMAD RAZLAN (Malaysia) paid tribute to Mr. Rydbeck for the dedication he had shown in the six years he had served as Commissioner-General of UNRWA. He welcomed Mr. Giacomelli, the new Commissioner-General, and assured him of Malaysia's fullest co-operation.

2. The report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA (A/40/13 and Add.1) gave a lucid picture of the magnitude of the problems confronting the programme of assistance to more than 2 million Palestine refugees. The Agency, facing a deficit of about \$67 million, had had to take various measures and to make drastic cut-backs in services to refugees. For a number of years, the Agency had also had to operate under extremely trying circumstances, given the situation obtaining in Lebanon, the West Bank and other areas under Israeli occupation. Many of its employees had been harassed and detained, particularly by the Israeli authorities.

3. His delegation was happy to note that the Agency continued to give the highest priority to education, despite Israel's deliberate policy of making it difficult for Palestinians to receive an education by closing schools in the occupied territories. Israel also consistently refused to allow the establishment of the University of Jerusalem "Al-Quds" for Palestine refugees, insisting that the institutions of higher education met the needs of the area. The Palestinians, however, wanted an education that met with their own national, cultural and historical aspirations.

4. The report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/40/613 showed that Israel was continuing its policy of demolishing shelters, including shelters built by UNRWA, on the slightest pretext. His delegation shared the view expressed in the report that such demolition was punitive and amounted to collective punishment contrary to the 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. It also noted with concern that Palestine refugees continued to be forcibly relocated by the Israeli authorities.

5. His country, which had always contributed to the financing of UNRWA and would continue to do so, took note with concern of the statement by members of the UNRWA Advisory Commission contained in document A/40/350, which indicated that a failure on the part of the international community to provide the resources required would

(Mr. Mohamad Razlan, Malaysia)

force the Agency to cut back its already severely limited programmes of assistance to refugees. Until such time as the international community could take action at the political level to restore to the dispossessed Palestinians their right to their own homeland, all nations had the obligation to alleviate the sufferings of the Palestinian people. His delegation associated itself with the appeal made to that effect by the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA.

6. Mr. RADENKOVIC (Yugoslavia) said that the report of the Commissioner-General highlighted the brutality of the Israeli authorities and its effects on the Palestine refugees expelled from their land, dispossessed of their homes and property and deprived of their basic and most elementary rights. The persecution, detention and murder of civilians were continuing and even the Agency's employees had been mistreated despite the immunity they were supposed to enjoy and in defiance of international law.

7. Despite the obstacles to its work and the inadequacy of its resources, UNRWA had nevertheless succeeded in making the lives of Palestine refugees more bearable, particularly with regard to education, health, the construction of camps and the feeding of the population. Its activities were, moreover, a factor making for stability in the region and demonstrated the solidarity of the international community with the Palestinian people. Adequate material and financial resources must be secured for the Agency to continue its humanitarian work, which was of vital importance to the Palestine refugees. His delegation therefore associated itself with the appeal made to States by the Commissioner-General for a substantial increase in their contributions to the Agency's budget. Yugoslavia, which contributed regularly to the UNRWA budget and granted scholarships to refugees in its universities and schools, would continue its assistance to the best of its ability.

8. The Agency's activities, although necessary, could not solve the problem of the Palestine refugees. That would require a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Middle East conflict involving Israel's withdrawal from all the territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem. His delegation was in favour of seeking such a solution within the United Nations framework with the participation of the Palestine Liberation Organization as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, in all negotiations on an equal footing. It was also in favour of convening an International Peace Conference on the Middle East, supported the aspirations of the Palestinian people for the achievement of its rights to independence, self-determination and the establishment of its own State, and recognized the right of all States of the region to security, a national life and an independent social development.

9. Mr. TEWARI (India) said that his country had always maintained that the services provided by UNRWA could, at best, be only a temporary palliative for the hardships suffered by the unfortunate people of Palestine and could be no substitute for its right to live in freedom and dignity in its own homeland.

10. The Palestine problem was essentially a political one and only a just and comprehensive solution to the Middle East conflict could bring an end to the miseries and sufferings of the Palestinian people. As reaffirmed by the Seventh

(Mr. Tewari, India)

Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, held at New Delhi in March 1983, such a solution could not be brought about without the total and unconditional withdrawal of Israel from all Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied by it since 1967, including Jerusalem, and without the attainment and exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right of return, self-determination without external interference and the right to national independence and sovereignty, including the right to establish the Palestinian independent State in its homeland, Palestine.

11. The concern of his delegation at the humanitarian aspects of the Palestine refugee problem was further increased by the grave financial difficulties on which the Commissioner-General's report had once again focused. His delegation considered that it would be tragic if the Agency was obliged to curtail or cease such vital services as health, education, training, the provision of shelter or welfare assistance. Such a step would not only cause untold misery and suffering to the refugees, but would also exacerbate the already volatile situation in a region where UNRWA exercised a stabilizing influence. The international community had a moral obligation to assist the Agency, but only a small number of countries continued to shoulder the major share of its financing. There was an urgent need for broadening the participation of the international community and increasing financial contributions to UNRWA. For its part, his Government had, from the inception of the Agency, contributed regularly and increasingly to UNRWA funds in the form of cash and supplies and by providing scholarships and training facilities to displaced Palestinians.

12. Those who lectured others on human rights while aiding and abetting in the displacement and persecution of a whole nation would do better to fear the judgement of history and to assist the international community in assuming its political responsibility to expedite the inevitable, namely the recovery by the Palestinian people of all its rights.

13. Mr. IRTEMCELİK (Turkey) said that UNRWA both symbolized a failure of the United Nations to bring about a just and lasting solution to a major political problem figuring on its agenda for over three decades, and bore witness to the universal concern and sympathy for the Palestinian people. The item under discussion could not be dissociated from the political framework within which UNRWA had had to function for the past 35 years and the problems UNRWA faced could not be comprehended without acknowledging that the question of Palestine was at the heart of the matter. Only in that context could any proper assessment be made of the role that UNRWA had played over the years and the social and humanitarian services it had rendered against all odds. Until the Arab territories occupied since 1967 were returned to their rightful owners, there could be no viable and genuine peace in the Middle East.

14. The Turkish Government wholeheartedly supported the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and to establish their own independent State. The United Nations had a collective responsibility to the Palestinian refugees. As long as the question of Palestine remained unsettled, Member States should support the Agency, both morally and financially, since it was the only instrument at their disposal to alleviate the plight of the victims of the tragedy.

(Mr. Irtemcelik, Turkey)

15. Although, needless to say, the Agency could not be considered a substitute for a comprehensive settlement of the question of Palestine, if it were unable to discharge its duties political instability in the region would considerably increase and the ordeal of the refugees become much more desperate.

16. In view of the alarming facts underlined by the former and present Commissioners-General, Turkey, which was one of the few countries that had gradually increased its contribution to the budget of the Agency over the years, called the Committee's attention to the report of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA (A/40/736), in which all Governments were urged to recognize the serious financial situation that would confront the Agency in 1986 and to be prepared to respond to it to the best of their respective financial capabilities. In that context, Turkey expressed its appreciation to all those, and in particular the Turkish Cypriots who had contributed to the Agency's budget.

17. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) expressed his gratitude to the outgoing Commissioner-General for the selflessness, self-sacrifice and sense of responsibility with which he had directed UNRWA. He wished the new Commissioner-General every success.

18. His delegation attached great value to the work of the Agency, which was at present providing services to over 2 million Palestinian refugees. The situation of those refugees was continuing to deteriorate, making the Agency's services to alleviate the sufferings of the victims of Israeli expansionist policy even more necessary than before.

19. His delegation had carefully considered the report of the Commissioner-General whom it commended on the efforts made to provide the Palestinian refugees with an appreciable level of services despite the enormous financial difficulties confronting UNRWA.

20. The Agency had met other difficulties in the field, particularly in Lebanon where fighting had continued almost without interruption and Israel's occupation of the south of the country had continued to have repercussions on the refugees. In the other occupied Arab and Palestinian territories, the Israeli practices of expropriation, eviction, persecution and harassment had resulted in the displacement and exodus of large numbers of Palestinians, who were thus deprived of their means of subsistence. In view of the increase in the number of refugees and the deterioration of their situation, the international community might have been expected to provide UNRWA with sufficient financial resources to allow the Agency to do its work properly. Instead, during 1985, the Agency had been faced with considerable financial difficulties which had led the Commissioner-General on several occasions to adopt austerity measures that could not help but depress the quality and level of services provided by the Agency.

21. His delegation was very concerned by UNRWA's financial crisis; the search for a solution that would give the Agency a stable and reliable financial base was of crucial importance. That matter should be considered in more detail at the meeting that the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA had proposed to convene in the near future.

(Mr. Zahid, Morocco)

22. Contributing to financing the work of UNRWA was the best investment that could be made for peace and security in the Middle East region. However, the Agency's work for Palestinian refugees should not be considered an end in itself, since underlying the refugee problem was the more serious question of the Palestinian people as a whole, who were still subjected to the occupation of their land. The international community should, as a matter of urgency, take all appropriate measures to enable the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights to self-determination, to return to their homes and to found an independent and sovereign State in Palestine.

23. Mr. SHIHABI (Saudi Arabia) paid tribute to Mr. Rydbeck for the conscientiousness and integrity with which he had discharged his duties as Commissioner-General of UNRWA. He congratulated Mr. Giacomelli on his appointment to the post and was confident that he would be able to put into effect a large measure of the Agency's humanitarian objectives. He also thanked the Secretary-General and the members of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA for their efforts in supporting the activities of the Agency.

24. The Agency had been established in 1949 to provide relief for Palestinian refugees, who were victims of Zionist invasion. From the outset its mandate had therefore been related to the political dimension of the Palestinian problem, and the extension of that mandate was based on the principle of the absolute right of the Palestinian refugees to return to their homes.

25. Zionism, a colonialist theory that was founded on the dispossession of a people and their displacement from their land, was based on the most repugnant racial and colonial practices, as was evident from the report of the Commissioner-General (A/40/13 and Add.1) and the statistics therein. It had been Zionism that had persecuted and driven millions of Palestinians from their country and perpetrated the crimes that had led to millions of people living at a subhuman level. Palestine, an Arab country, had become a place where the Arab Palestinian was a refugee, deprived of his basic rights and subjected to various forms of oppression and torture, while every Jew in the world was entitled to go and settle there at the expense of its Arab people.

26. The following facts emerged from a review of the report. Israel was still refusing to implement United Nations resolutions, including those concerning the rights of refugees and their return to their homes. It was disrupting purely humanitarian actions designed to benefit the original Arab population and was still determined to defy the international community and to reject any solution to the problem, including its humanitarian dimension.

27. The international community had failed in its duty to a people which the United Nations had helped to disperse and had been unable to protect from the Zionist aggression it had helped to unleash. He stressed the serious consequences of the decline in services to the Palestinian refugees and of leaving future generations of those refugees exposed to ignorance, disease and need. That being so, the financing of UNRWA was not only a humanitarian duty but also a security requirement for the world, since the Agency made it possible to maintain a degree of stability in the region.

(Mr. Shihabi, Saudi Arabia)

28. Saudi Arabia, which supported the efforts and objectives of the Agency, called upon all countries, and in particular those that had international responsibilities for the Palestinian problem and held the key to its solution, to contribute towards the support of humanitarian efforts for the alleviation of some of the injustices inflicted on millions of Palestinian refugees and to impress on the Zionist authorities the importance of UNRWA's role.

29. Mr. BARROMI (Israel) paid tribute to the outgoing Commissioner-General for his dedication to his task and welcomed the new Commissioner-General.

30. Replying first to the remarks made by a number of delegations concerning the detention of UNRWA personnel, he pointed out that the number of UNRWA staff detained in the Israeli-administered areas was very limited and emphasized that members of the Agency's staff were also detained in other countries. Israel's position on the question was that the protection afforded to international civil servants by the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations of 1946 applied only to acts carried out in the exercise of their official functions and did not cover activities which endangered public order and safety. It was regrettable that certain members of staff had engaged in activities of that sort.

31. With regard to the allegation made in the statement by the representative of Yugoslavia to the effect that murders of civilians had been perpetrated by the Israeli authorities, he recalled that Israel, despite all its difficulties, had never imposed capital punishment, except in the case of Eichmann, who had been responsible for the extermination of Jews during the Second World War.

32. The report of the Commissioner-General provided much useful information on the activities of the Agency, particularly with regard to hospital treatment, environmental hygiene services and construction, in co-operation with the Israeli authorities, together with increased school enrolment in Gaza, currently totalling 84,000 pupils, teacher-training in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, and the establishment of centres and organization of courses for Palestinian women.

33. In the course of the past year, 2,000 people in the Gaza Strip had moved to new housing complexes. The aim of the programme was to provide refugees with accommodation of a higher standard than their previous shelters and to relieve the congestion in the camps. It was therefore reasonable that the shelters should have been demolished, as they would have attracted population from the outside and also because the materials from demolished houses were made available to the refugees for use in new construction.

34. Moreover, the report was not free of misrepresentations. The Agency complained, on the one hand, that the Israeli authorities did not provide sufficient protection to the premises of UNRWA when the latter were threatened by demonstrations, but refused to understand that the measures taken in certain circumstances by the Israeli authorities were designed precisely to prevent such disturbances.

35. The report, moreover, adopted a different and very lenient tone with respect

(Mr. Barromi, Israel)

to events in Lebanon and, with the exception of a brief mention of the Amal militia and the Druze militia of Walid Jumblat, never stated who was responsible for the acts of violence and looting. It did not request that the Lebanese Government, or Syria, which maintained a large military presence in the country, should provide adequate protection, nor did it present them with claims for compensation for the damage caused.

36. With regard to the question of financing for UNRWA, the representative of Israel noted that the immediate reason for the Agency's budgetary crisis was the reduction in its income. The States of the Arab League, for example, would contribute \$6.5 million in 1985, according to the Agency's estimates, by comparison with \$18.4 million in 1981. However, the real reason for the Agency's financial crisis lay in its mandate and in its structure.

37. While the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees performed its task in all parts of the world with a staff totalling 1,450, the number of UNRWA staff had risen in 1985 to 16,931. The reasons for that irrational use of funds from the international community were political. The Agency, established as a temporary measure in 1949 with the aim of helping refugees to achieve economic self-sufficiency, had become, under pressure from the Arab States, a permanent organ entrusted with functions normally discharged by Governments. Plans formulated in the 1950s to promote the economic integration of the refugees into their countries of residence had never been implemented, and a short-term relief operation had been transformed into an organization whose expenditures had multiplied over the years.

38. The Agency, moreover, had agreed to a spurious definition of the expression "Palestinian refugees" based on residence in Palestine of only two years and had allowed the list of refugees to grow inordinately without carrying out the necessary screening measures. The camps created by the United Nations had also attracted undesirable elements of the urban population in the host countries and had quickly become hotbeds of violence and, later, military and terrorist bases. The first victims had been the refugees themselves, who were mere pawns in a ruthless game. The financial difficulties of UNRWA should therefore provide an opportunity for a thorough reassessment of the action, methods and practices of the Agency.

39. As for the Arab States, they hardly seemed, to judge by their statements, to be worried by the administrative and financial problems of UNRWA, or by the immediate needs of the refugees, such as citizenship, legal equality and socio-economic integration into the countries where they lived. Their thoroughly political speeches were based on pseudo-historical arguments which distorted the facts.

40. It was necessary to understand the economic, social and demographic changes which had occurred among the populations of the Middle East. In the middle of the nineteenth century, on the eve of the Jewish Renaissance, Palestine had a population of, at most, 300,000 people. By the end of the century, the Muslim population had greatly increased through the influx of foreign settlers from Egypt, Algeria and the Ottoman Empire, brought to Palestine by the vicissitudes of

(Mr. Barromi, Israel)

history. The subsequent influx of Arabs into Palestine had been, in large measure, the result of migration by those attracted by the agricultural and industrial development of Jewish zones developed by the pioneers.

41. The argument according to which a prosperous Palestine with a large homogeneous Arab population had been crushed by fierce Zionist invaders coming from nowhere was without basis. The Arabs of Palestine were not of homogeneous stock. Many different elements had merged over the centuries, and recent Arab immigration into Palestine had taken place in parallel with Jewish immigration. It should also be remembered that there had been a Jewish presence in and Jewish immigration into Palestine since Biblical times and that before the Second World War millions of Jews in Europe and elsewhere had claimed the right to find refuge and peace in their ancient homeland.

42. The war of 1948 had been a tragedy. More than 500,000 Arabs had fled the country, and an equivalent number of Jews from the Arab countries had taken refuge in Israel, leaving behind them much valuable property. Both groups had experienced extensive hardships and deprivations. At the same time, Israel had received another stream of immigration - the survivors of the Nazi concentration camps, the total number of whom also amounted to 500,000. However, while Israel absorbed and rehabilitated the Jewish refugees, the Arab States refused to assist the Arab refugees and left them to the care of international charity.

43. A new state of affairs had thus been created in Israel and the Middle East. The Arab countries now constituted a large community of 21 States, some of which were endowed with enormous wealth. Many Palestinians had settled in those countries and had achieved, particularly in the Gulf States, remarkable economic success. In Israel, the entire country had been transformed and regions which were previously scarcely populated and desolate were now thriving industrial and agricultural centres. The demand to return to the status quo before 1948 was blatantly absurd. Only a settlement agreed by all parties, which would take into account all rights and claims, could prevent new disruptions and heal the wounds of the past.

44. Israel recognized, as the Prime Minister had declared in his address to the General Assembly, that a Palestinian problem existed and that it was necessary to find an honourable solution to it. The Israeli Government was convinced that there could be no solution other than by diplomatic means and hoped that Arab countries would recognize the merits of such an approach.

45. Mr. AL FARSI (Oman) remarked that all the rules and practices accepted by the international community applied to the problem of Palestine, the nature of which was political as well as humanitarian and cultural, and which had continued to increase in severity. International law accorded the right to return to every people which had been driven from its own country, and it was clear to all sentient persons that the Palestinians did constitute a people which had been driven from its country. By creating UNRWA, the international community had to some extent discharged its responsibilities towards the Palestinian refugees. In that context, the Omani delegation wished to acknowledge the dedication of Mr. Olof Rydbeck, who had recently retired as Commissioner-General of the Agency, as well as the courage

(Mr. Al Farsi, Oman)

of Mr. Giorgio Giacomelli, who was succeeding him. However, it was not sufficient simply to provide services to alleviate the lot of the refugees. The provisional character of UNRWA illustrated the fact that the international community had undertaken to find a just and lasting solution to the problem.

46. Such a solution assumed the application of international law and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, particularly those concerning the right of return and the right to compensation. No delegation, apart from that of Israel, had contested those rights. The international community must therefore take up its responsibilities, punish those who infringed its laws and ensure the implementation of the Organization's resolutions.

47. Israel refused not only to implement the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, with all the consequences which that implied at the regional and world levels, but also to reply to the letters of the Secretary-General requesting to be informed of the measures which it had taken to implement those resolutions; it had been content to refer the Secretary-General to statements by the representative of Israel in different Committees and sometimes even to statements made prior to the question which had been raised. UNRWA's legitimate demands for compensation for the damage caused to its buildings following the invasion of Lebanon by Israel in 1982 had also met with refusal.

48. The picture drawn by the Commissioner-General in his report was very gloomy. Israel, not content with expelling the Palestinians from their homes, had pursued them to their places of refuge, had demolished their shelters and prevented the delivery of food and assistance by UNRWA; Israel had even arrested and interrogated staff members of UNRWA and had followed practices such as those mentioned in paragraph 166 of the Commissioner-General's report. Such practices had not been limited to a few camps on the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and south Lebanon; they therefore reflected deliberate policy.

49. He would like to know why the Palestinian people should not enjoy the same international support as the peoples of Europe whose territory had been occupied by the Nazis and who had resisted fiercely. The Palestinian people, whose land had been occupied, had the same right to resist the occupation.

50. On the question of the displacement of refugees, he asked how such displacements could have been voluntary when the refugees had no other choice than to accept or to see their homes destroyed. Even when motivated by the temptation of better housing, such displacements required deeper study since all the evidence pointed to the fact that the ultimate goal of Israel was not to provide services to the refugees nor to mitigate their suffering but to eliminate the Palestinian camps which highlighted their tragic situation, lit the flames of resistance and reminded the world of its responsibilities.

51. In his report the Commissioner-General had expressed deep concern at the capacity of the Agency to pursue its mandate. In that connection, his delegation reminded members that the critical financial situation of UNRWA resulted from its increased responsibilities which were themselves the consequence of the escalating problems of the refugees. Responsibility for that situation rested with Israel.

(Mr. Al Farsi, Oman)

Israel had refused to implement General Assembly resolution 194 (III) regarding the right of refugees to return to their homes. It continued to occupy the Arab territories and to follow a policy of aggression against the populations of those territories in defiance of the provisions of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Pending a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian problem, it was up to the international community to provide the Agency with the means to accomplish the mission which had been entrusted to it. His delegation thanked those countries which had provided assistance to UNRWA and also all other donors; he associated his delegation with the appeal of the Working Group on the Financing of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East that countries which had not yet contributed should do so and that those which had already contributed should make supplementary contributions.

52. Mr. FARTAS (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) paid tribute to the devoted work accomplished, notwithstanding many difficulties, by Mr. Olof Rydbeck, the outgoing Commissioner-General of UNRWA and all his colleagues on behalf of the Palestinian refugees. He welcomed the new Commissioner-General, Mr. Giorgio Giacomelli, and wished him every success in his new duties and assured him that such comments as Libya might make regarding the activities of the Agency, would, as in the past, be intended to assist the Agency to carry out its duties better.

53. It was clear from the Commissioner-General's report (A/40/13, Add.1) that the Agency needed \$191 million in voluntary contributions, in cash and in kind, in order to maintain the modest level of the principal assistance programmes in the fields of health, education and assistance during the year 1986, that the cash expenditure estimates imputed to the General Fund were \$157 million, or \$20 million (15 per cent) more than total contributions to the regular budget for 1985, while those concerning expenses in kind were \$13 million, representing the cost of basic articles and essential services.

54. His delegation agreed with the Commissioner-General that the Agency was passing through a difficult financial situation but it did not approve of the method which had been adopted to solve the problem which must be attacked at its roots. The new budget could not be based exclusively on voluntary contributions when neither the amounts nor even their actual payment was assured. UNRWA's budget must therefore be integrated into the regular budget of the United Nations. The United Nations, by creating the Zionist entity, by legitimizing its existence in haste and by allowing it to defy General Assembly resolution 194 (III), which provided in its paragraph 11 for the return of the refugees or for their compensation, was responsible for the existence and fate of the Palestinian refugees.

55. His delegation hoped that the austerity measures envisaged would not threaten the basic needs of the refugees as that was the reason for the Agency's existence. At a time when the situation of the refugees continued to deteriorate, it was necessary to choose the lesser of two evils and to refrain from stopping the construction of absolutely necessary housing, freezing teachers' salaries and suspending the distribution of emergency rations. The Commissioner-General had himself pointed out in his report that any new austerity measures would affect the

(Mr. Fartas, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

teaching and health programmes and would mean that the Agency would no longer be the social and humanitarian instrument for the protection of refugees envisaged in General Assembly resolution 302 (IV). The solution to the financial crisis was therefore to be found in increased receipts and not in the reduction of activities. Libya therefore supported the resumption of the distribution of emergency rations as the General Assembly has requested and also supported the establishment of the fund for the receipt of income derived from property belonging to the refugees; such a fund would then represent a permanent and assured source of finance for the Agency.

56. The refugee problem and the financial situation of the Agency were the results of the continued occupation of the Arab territories by the Zionist entity and its practices mentioned during consideration of agenda item 75. In that connection, his delegation wished to draw attention to a number of false justifications advanced by the Zionist representative. The demolitions of housing in the refugee camps were not motivated by the overpopulation of the camps, when such overpopulation itself was the consequence of the stoppage of construction work by the Agency, but was designed to empty the country of its original inhabitants. The violation of the privileges and immunities of staff members of UNRWA in the countries bordering Palestine, if true, in no way justified the practices of the Zionist entity in regard to those staff members in violation both of their privileges and immunities as well as of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. So far as concerned the Zionist legal system which prohibited the death penalty and assured equality before the law of Jews and Arabs, his delegation pointed out that Palestinians died not as a result of being condemned by the courts, but during manifestations against the fate of refugees which was their lot, a lot avoided by the Jews who were supposed to be their equals before the law. The Zionist entity moreover had given the West Bank a new name and had baptized its occupation with the word "Administration".

57. In conclusion, he reminded members that Palestine had been a peaceful and prosperous land which Great Britain had been mandated to bring to independence but which had suffered the Zionist colonial invasion accompanied by violence and terrorism. The problem of the refugees therefore only represented one aspect - the humanitarian aspect - of the whole question of Palestine. That question could only be resolved through recognition of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including its right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent State on the whole of its national territory. Initiatives taken here and there which ignored those inalienable rights, particularly when they were taken by parties who recognized neither the Palestinian people nor their legitimate representative, the PLO, were doomed to failure.