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Chairman:

Mr. KARUKUBIRO-KAMUNANWIRE

(Uganda)

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AGENDA ITEM 74: UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN
THE NEAR EAST (*continued*)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 74: UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (continued) (A/45/13 and Add.1, 382, 429, 463-6, 530, 641, 645 and 646; A/SPC/45/L.5)

1. Mr. SMIRNOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) regretted that the situation in the Middle East had been marked by distinctly negative developments in the past year. That applied most particularly to the living conditions of the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza strip, as could be seen in the report of the Commissioner-General (A/45/13). His delegation was deeply concerned at the escalation of violence used against the Palestinian population, including killings, mass arrests, deportations and the destruction of houses. The Soviet Union condemned the growing number of violations of Agency rights, privileges and immunities, the intrusions of the Israeli authorities on UNRWA premises, schools and hospitals, the threat of physical violence against Agency staff and the interference in the humanitarian activities of that body.
2. His Government attached great importance to the work of UNRWA in providing emergency assistance to Palestine refugees in the area of health, education and social welfare. It commended the Commissioner-General's efforts to protect the Palestinians and, in particular, his sending of additional staff and his diplomatic activities in connection with the Israeli authorities' violations of international norms of human rights. The Soviet Union was pleased that, despite the extreme circumstances, the Agency had been able to extend assistance to thousands of refugees currently in Jordan as a result of the Persian Gulf crisis.
3. The Soviet Union had been stepping up its co-operation with UNRWA. The Soviet Committee for Solidarity with the Countries of Asia and Africa had decided to provide, through the Agency, material assistance on a yearly basis to the population of the occupied territories and to grant fellowships in 1991-1992 to a group of Palestinian students to study at Soviet universities.
4. The events in Jerusalem on 8 October 1990 and the resulting wave of violence in the occupied Arab territories had exacerbated the already explosive situation in the Middle East and created additional obstacles to the peace process and a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. It was unfortunate that the Government of Israel had refused to comply with the provisions of the resolutions recently adopted by the Security Council and had not allowed the Secretary-General to send a mission to examine ways and means of ensuring the safety of the Palestinian population.
5. In view of the changes taking place in the world, the international community could not accept that Israel, flying in the face of political realism, continued to rely on force in its treatment of the Palestinian population. The current situation in the occupied territories made it essential for the United Nations to take decisive steps to ensure better protection for the rights of the Palestinians and to put an end to the economic, social and cultural discrimination of the

(Mr. Smirnov, USSR)

population. The Soviet Union expressed its solidarity with the intifadah, which was testimony to the determination of the Palestinian people to achieve full realization of its inalienable national rights. His Government was in favour of taking active steps to launch a peace process in the Middle East and to seek real progress towards convening an International Conference with the participation of all parties to the conflict, including the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and the five permanent members of the Security Council. The Soviet Union was convinced that such a conference could, on the basis of a balance of interests, bring about a comprehensive settlement of the whole range of Middle East problems and contribute to strengthening peace and stability in the region.

6. Mr. MAKKAWI (Lebanon) expressed his Government's appreciation for the valuable work performed by the Agency in providing education, health and relief services to the more than two million Palestine refugees in the Syrian Arab Republic, Jordan, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Lebanon.

7. Over the past year, acute political, economic and financial problems had been added to the Agency's burden. Firstly, the Israeli authorities had increasingly interfered with the Agency's operations, disregarding its privileges and immunities in a deliberate attempt to assert control over UNRWA operations. Secondly, the loss of income of the growing numbers of Palestinians who had returned to Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic because of the events in the Gulf had increased the strain on the Agency's health and welfare services. Thirdly, the financial difficulties of UNRWA had been compounded in 1990 by a sharp drop in the funding of the emergency programme in Lebanon and the occupied territories. Clearly, an emergency situation had developed that must be addressed as a matter of urgency, and Lebanon appealed to donor countries to support the Agency's work by providing early pledges so that resource planning could be made more predictable.

8. Lebanon was host country to a large part of the total Palestine refugee population, and the welfare of those guests were of utmost concern to it. His Government gratefully acknowledged Agency accomplishments in Lebanon in the fields of education, health and relief and social services. During the 15 years of turmoil in Lebanon, UNRWA had had to work under precarious conditions aggravated by continuous Israeli air and land raids and invasion. Regrettably, the Agency's activities in Lebanon had also been affected in 1990 by inter-factional strife among Palestinian groups.

9. The best guarantee for the safety and protection of all civilians in Lebanon, Lebanese and non-Lebanese alike, was the speedy restoration of Lebanese authority through its army, police and governmental institutions. A system based on a judiciary and legislation adopted by a free parliament was the only way to achieve that end. The reunification of the Lebanese army, police and security forces, together with the Government institutions, was a major new development that provided Lebanon with the means of implementing its laws and extending its authority over its entire territory and would ensure the Agency's safe and effective operation. It was to be hoped that UNRWA would resume its full presence in Lebanon and continue its valuable activities.

10. Mr. SUMI (Japan) said that the Agency's efforts deserved the international community's profound admiration, especially in view of the extremely difficult circumstances under which they were carried out. That situation had been exacerbated by recent events in the Gulf region and, more directly, by the wave of violence in East Jerusalem, which had resulted in the death of numerous Palestinians and a further escalation of tension between the Palestinian people and the Israeli authorities in the occupied territories. Japan condemned the excessive use of force by the Israeli authorities and urged Israel to comply with international law in its treatment of the Palestinians in the occupied territories. His delegation also deplored Israel's refusal to receive the Secretary-General's fact-finding mission as called for in Security Council resolutions 672 (1990) and 673 (1990). The situation in the region underscored the urgent need to achieve a comprehensive peace in the Middle East, which could only be attained through swift and complete implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and through recognition of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, including the right to establish an independent State. If peace was to come to the Middle East, it was also necessary to resolve the problem of Lebanon.

11. In his report (A/45/13), the Commissioner General had presented a disturbing picture of UNRWA's financial difficulties, brought about by increased demands on its resources for emergency food, health and relief assistance. There were currently 2.5 million people under the Agency's direct responsibility, and UNRWA's activities would continue to be necessary as long as there were Palestine refugees. A major donor country since 1953, Japan's contributions in cash, kind and other assistance over the years amounted to approximately \$US 182 million. His Government was determined to continue to extend financial support to the best of its ability.

12. The donor countries of UNRWA did not regard the Agency as a mechanism for maintaining the political status quo in the Middle East. They supported UNRWA because they recognized its vital role in providing humanitarian assistance and bringing a measure of stability to the troubled region. The financial capacity of the Agency's traditional donor countries was not unlimited, and UNRWA must therefore continue to appeal to countries that had not already done so to become donor countries and thus share the costs of the Agency's crucially important work.

13. Japan joined the international community in condemning the assault on the Rimal Health Centre by the Israeli authorities on 12 June 1990. His delegation again called upon Israel to desist from obstructing the Agency's activities and urged all parties concerned in the area where the Agency was active to extend to it as much co-operation and support as possible.

14. Japan regarded the educational opportunities available to Palestinian young people as particularly important. In 1990, it would provide vocational training in Japan to 15 Palestinians and dispatch experts to a vocational training centre in Jordan. To date, 64 Palestinians had participated in vocational training programmes in Japan since the programme's inception in 1985.

(Mr. Sumi, Japan)

15. Japan's assistance to educational programmes continued to bear fruit. In addition to the Jerash Elementary/Preparatory Boy's School in 1989, the construction of a similar school for girls had been completed in 1990, and schools at four other locations were currently under construction. Japan had contributed \$US 1 million for university scholarships to Palestine refugee students in the occupied territories, to be spread over a five-year period, during which time it would help support 160 university students throughout the course of their university studies.

16. Mr. SINGH (India) said that his delegation shared the Commissioner-General's concern at the increasing violations of UNRWA staff privileges and immunities and unauthorized intrusions into Agency premises by the Israeli authorities. India commended UNRWA for continuing its regular and emergency assistance programmes despite adverse conditions, particularly in Lebanon, and the increasing obstruction on the part of the Israeli occupying authorities.

17. The Agency served as a stabilizing influence in the Middle East. The essential humanitarian services that it provided must not be curtailed in any way for want of funds. His delegation was alarmed about the shortage of funds for emergency programmes and the likely difficulties in the future referred to in the report (A/45/13). That disturbing prospect underlined the importance of continuing resource mobilization efforts, particularly since the expenditure on regular programmes was rising steadily with the increase in the refugee population.

18. India had been contributing regularly to UNRWA since its very inception. It had also provided for a number of scholarships, training programmes and occupational training courses for Palestinians under various programmes. But the Agency's services could be no substitute for the right of the Palestinians to live in freedom and dignity in their own national homeland. The problem was basically political and not humanitarian, the root cause being the persistent denial of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people. India paid tribute to the heroic people of Palestine in its valiant struggle to attain those rights. The only way to put an end to the suffering of the Palestinian people was through a just and comprehensive solution to the Middle East conflict based on Israel's withdrawal from all Arab territories occupied by it since 1967, including Jerusalem, the realization by the Palestinian people of its inalienable right to self-determination, including its right to its own homeland, and the recognition of the right of all States in the region, including Palestine and Israel, to live in peace within secure and recognized borders. In order to achieve those goals, it was necessary to convene the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, with the participation of all parties concerned, including the PLO.

19. Mr. AL-SUWAIDI (United Arab Emirates) said that it was clear from the reports on the item before the Committee that no appreciable progress had been made in solving the problem of the Palestine refugees. There had rather been a deterioration in their living conditions as a result of the arbitrary measures taken against them by Israel. By military order, 90 of the 98 schools in the West Bank had been closed during the reporting period, and the hostile measures taken by

(Mr. Al-Suwaidi, United Arab Emirates)

the Israeli security forces had had a far-reaching impact on UNRWA health services in the occupied territories. The reaction of the Israeli authorities to the intifadah had caused an enormous increase in the number of families no longer able to meet their own basic needs. Israel had also adopted the practice of taking innocent hostages, a practice reminiscent of that of the Nazis and Fascists during the Second World War and one that had been condemned and outlawed by the entire civilized world. The temporary detention of young people had been used as a form of economic pressure, and innocent parties had been made to suffer until suspected individuals turned themselves in.

20. The privileges and immunities of UNRWA had been increasingly disregarded, and greater administrative restrictions had been placed on the Agency's operations which had limited the freedom of movement of staff members and enforced new and time-consuming clearance procedures for activities that used to be carried out within the Agency's own authority.

21. The suffering of the refugees had been intensified and their numbers increased by the departure of tens of thousands of Palestinians from Kuwait as a result of the Iraqi invasion of a country that had opened its doors to them and assisted them in all aspects of their lives. A fourth exodus of Palestine refugees had thus been added to those from Palestine in 1948, from the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967 and from Lebanon in 1982. It had been hoped that Iraq would assist the Palestinians rather than adding to their sufferings and aggravating their plight.

22. Mr. KADRAT (Iraq), speaking on a point of order, said that he wished to remind the speaker that the item before the Committee was the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. Remarks should be addressed to that item only.

23. The CHAIRMAN said that members of the Committee should confine their remarks to the item under discussion.

24. Mr. AL-SUWAIDI (United Arab Emirates) said that the only just solution to the problem of the Palestine refugees required their return to the homes and property of which they had been forcibly deprived in 1948. That was the solution that had been endorsed by the General Assembly in paragraph 11 of its resolution 194 (III), which stated that the refugees had a right to return or to receive compensation. That was an absolute right and one that had been confirmed at every subsequent session of the General Assembly. The report of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (A/45/382), instead of explaining the fact that the necessary steps had not been taken towards the implementation of paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) in the light of circumstances and events in the region, should have mentioned the real reason, namely Israel's refusal to implement it and allow the Palestine refugees to exercise their right to return.

25. Article 13, paragraph 2, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights stated that "Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country". It was strange that Israel, the Zionists and certain States that

(Mr. Al-Suwaidi, United Arab Emirates)

supported Israel should call for the emigration of Jews from the Soviet Union and their settlement in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory on the basis of the first half of that statement, and that they should ignore the second half when it was a question of the right of the Palestinians to return to their country. Israel's claim that the refugees left Palestine at the instigation of the Arab leaders had been thoroughly refuted by the evidence and testimony brought before the Committee by the Arab delegations in past years. Instead of speaking of the financial difficulties facing the Agency in fulfilling its responsibilities to the Palestine refugees, delegations should rather bring pressure to bear on Israel to see to it that the refugees received the revenues derived from the properties that they had left in Palestine, which amounted to several times the annual budget of the Agency.

26. The sufferings of the Palestinian people had exceeded those of any other people in contemporary history, and the time had come to solve the problem in all of its aspects, including the refugee problem. The solution was clear: the Palestinians should be accorded the right to return, to exercise self-determination and to establish a Palestinian State on the soil of Palestine.

27. Mr. AL-SABAH (Kuwait) said that his delegation wished to express its particular gratitude to the Commissioner-General and staff of UNRWA for the humanitarian services they had provided to those who had been compelled to leave Kuwait for reasons beyond that country's control. Overnight, those people had lost all that they owned and their dreams and those of their families had been destroyed.

28. Mr. KADRAT (Iraq), speaking on a point of order, said that the speaker should confine his remarks to the agenda item before the Committee. That was agenda item 74, and comments on matters that had no connection with that item were out of order.

29. The CHAIRMAN said that he would like to appeal to all delegations to confine their remarks to the agenda item before the Committee.

30. Mr. AL-SABAH (Kuwait) said that the State of Kuwait had hosted in its territory hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who were not registered with UNRWA as refugees. Kuwait had provided them with a decent livelihood, with educational, health and social welfare services and with opportunities for employment that enabled them to meet their own needs and remit surplus amounts to their families in other countries. The Government and people of Kuwait were deeply pained at the fate of the Palestinians that had been with them in Kuwait at the time of the brutal Iraqi occupation.

31. At a time when it was going through the gravest crisis in its history as a result of the Iraqi occupation and the consequent destruction that had affected all of its citizens and residents, Kuwait was all the more insistent on the need to provide assistance to the Palestinian people in the occupied territories. It would do all that it could to relieve the burdens of its Palestinian brothers under Israeli occupation.

(Mr. Al-Sabah, Kuwait)

32. The Iraqi occupation of Kuwait had created new complications that would inevitably have an adverse impact on the standard of living of Palestinians both within and outside the occupied Palestinian territory and, in particular, on that of the refugees. Before the occupation, Kuwait had been giving serious consideration to increasing its contributions to UNRWA and, together with its colleagues in the League of Arab States, had been endeavouring to increase the Arab contribution in general. Kuwait had also been considering the project proposed by UNRWA in co-operation with the World Health Organization for the construction of a general hospital in Gaza, and it would examine the optimum way in which it could still contribute to that vital and important project.

33. Kuwait had contributed to UNRWA even before it was admitted as a Member of the United Nations, it had continued to make its annual contribution, and it had responded to emergency appeals by supporting educational institutions and hospitals in the occupied territories. To the extent possible under the weight of the brutal Iraqi occupation, it would continue to contribute to the alleviation of the plight of the Palestinian people until such time as it secured the full exercise of its legitimate rights.

34. Mr. AL-KHULAIFI (Qatar) said that the Palestine refugees continued to live in the difficult conditions that they had experienced since Israel had occupied their land and seized their property. In those circumstances, UNRWA was attempting to perform its humanitarian role, to provide emergency assistance and to protect the lives of the Palestine refugees despite the obstacles placed in its way by the Israeli occupation authorities. The Agency had also faced difficulties as a result of the naval blockade imposed on East Beirut and the fighting in various parts of Lebanon.

35. Since, day after day and year after year, the hope of a just solution to their cause had become dimmer, the Palestinians had had no option but to launch the *intifadah* within their occupied land, thereby declaring their rejection of subjection and surrender. They had offered up their martyrs on a massive scale, providing the most splendid examples of courage and sacrifice of the current era and showing irrefutable proof that they would not accept any alternative to the exercise of their legitimate rights on the soil of their own homeland and would never abandon the aims of their struggle against the Israeli occupation forces.

36. The situation of the refugees had been aggravated by the financial crisis of the Agency and the displacement of tens of thousands of Palestine refugees who had fled from the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, thereby bringing to a halt the remittances that had helped to improve the situation of their families in the occupied territories. That had also increased the difficulties faced by the Agency, which had found itself obliged to care for even larger numbers of refugees.

37. It was astonishing that, while the world was making rapid progress towards international reconciliation and peace and great efforts were being made for the resolution of many regional problems and conflicts, the Palestine issue continued to be discussed at the United Nations to no avail. Peace was indivisible, and it

(Mr. Al-Khulaifi, Qatar)

could not be achieved in one region while it remained an intractable problem in another. Israel must change its inflexible stance, and its rejection of Security Council resolution 672 (1990) was only the most recent indication of its intransigence and its contempt for the role of the international community.

38. In 1950, the number of registered refugees had been about 914,000, and today it was close to two and a half million. Every year, the Agency suffered from a financial deficit that had an adverse impact on its operations. Member States must contribute generously and in a timely fashion so that the Agency could implement its social and other programmes in order to mitigate the sufferings of the Palestinian people until such time as the issue was settled by the restoration to the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights so that it could establish its own State in its own land like all the other peoples of the world.

39. Ms. BIRD (Australia) said that UNRWA had continued to provide assistance in its traditional areas of health, education and social welfare, as well as stepping up its emergency programmes, despite the obstacles it was encountering in the discharge of its tasks. In particular its privileges and immunities were being increasingly disregarded. Those rights and privileges were essential to the Agency's performance and, moreover, were enshrined in international law. Israel must respect UNRWA operations in the occupied territories. The continued detention of UNRWA staff members was unacceptable.

40. The efficient functioning of the Agency was vital to long-term stability in the region. Her delegation was concerned over the financial difficulties faced by UNRWA, which might force it to curtail its operations. Given UNRWA's record of achievement in difficult circumstances, Australia hoped that more countries would provide financial support. Her Government, for its part, would continue its support of the Agency until the parties to the disputes in the region devised a durable political solution.

41. Mr. TARI (Israel) said that the problem of Palestine refugees would not have existed had it not have been for the aggressive war launched by Arab leaders against Israel 40 years earlier. The leaders of the Arab States and of the PLO had subsequently blocked any attempts to resolve the problem. The suffering of the refugees, who had been reduced to mere political tools, had been cynically nourished in order to breed hatred and violence.

42. While his delegation commended UNRWA for its efforts during a period of stress, it took exception to the general tenor of the report of the Commissioner-General (A/45/13), which was biased against Israel, as typified by the reference in paragraph 11 to the killing of alleged collaborators without making it clear that the Israelis bore no responsibility. In fact over 300 Palestinians, including some UNRWA staff members, had been assassinated by the PLO and other terrorist groups as alleged collaborators. Similarly, the report dwelt on the purported denial by Israel of UNRWA privileges and immunities, while mentioning only briefly (A/45/13, para. 110) its inability to visit staff in detention in Jordan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon. The statistics on casualties cited in the report belied the fact that no one was more concerned with human rights than Israel.

(Mr. Tari, Israel)

43. His Government had continued to co-operate with UNRWA on the basis of the agreement it had reached with the Agency in 1967. The fact that UNRWA employed some 8,000 local workers meant that it was the major non-government employer in Judea, Samaria and Gaza. There had thus inevitably been instances of friction with the Israeli security forces owing to the conditions prevailing since 1987. Unfortunately, too, numerous individuals among the UNRWA functionaries had participated in subversive activities, utilizing Agency facilities for those purposes. UNRWA could clearly not claim immunity in respect of its installations while allowing them to serve as a refuge for violence. It should be noted, in that connection, that UNRWA's monitoring of Israeli security movements had often served to inflame already tense situations.

44. It was clear that any unilateral effort by UNRWA to broaden its activities beyond its mandate, in contravention of the parameters agreed upon between the Agency and Israel, would not contribute to mutual understanding. Israel had in fact made a considerable effort to reduce friction and to assist UNRWA in discharging its tasks. Such co-operation was subject to the clear understanding that Israel was, under international law, the only responsible authority in Judea, Samaria and Gaza. His Government still believed that the Middle East could move towards peace. One step would be a resolution of the refugee problem, in which the Committee had the ability to play a role.

45. Mr. ARCILLA (Philippines) said that his delegation was disturbed by the steady deterioration in the conditions under which UNRWA operated and by the continued violation of the human rights of the Palestine refugees. Repressive measures by Israel in dealing with the intifadah could only sow more hatred.

46. Israel's increasing disregard for the privileges and immunities of UNRWA was particularly disquieting. On hundreds of occasions Israeli forces had entered Agency premises without authority, acts which were surely not consistent with international law. The Israeli authorities were also seeking to curtail UNRWA's capacity to discharge its functions by imposing bureaucratic measures and limiting the freedom of movement of Agency personnel. In addition educational facilities had been closed down. The Israeli authorities should refrain from any act which interfered with the Agency's mandate.

47. His delegation noted the Agency's funding difficulties, particularly with regard to emergency programmes, which were vital to the well-being of the refugee population. Increased contributions were needed.

48. The world was experiencing phenomenal political changes, with concomitant opportunities to bring peace to troubled areas. Peace could be given a chance in the Middle East, the most explosive region in the world, if the question of Palestine was resolved, beginning with the convening of an International Peace Conference under United Nations auspices. His Government unequivocally supported the right of the Palestinians to self-determination and the right of all States in the area to exist within recognized boundaries.

49. Mr. HANNAN (Bangladesh) said that his delegation noted with concern the difficult circumstances under which UNRWA was operating. The report of the Commissioner-General was a lurid chronicle of the atrocities committed by the Israeli authorities against Palestine refugees. Palestine was suffering unmitigated anguish and harsh repression, and men, women and children were wantonly killed. A whole community was being strangled.

50. While the Palestine refugees welcomed relief in their distress, they wanted above all to see their sufferings ended once and for all. A permanent solution on the basis of the full realization of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination must be found. There was an urgent need to convene the proposed International Peace Conference on the Middle East, under United Nations auspices.

51. Mr. AL ZAYANI (Bahrain) said that the Palestine refugee problem was a fundamental part of the Palestine issue, the core of which was its political aspect. Israel's persistent refusal over the past four decades to recognize the inalienable right of the Palestine refugees to return had made it necessary for UNRWA to become a vital institution providing them with basic services, short-term relief and long-term programmes aimed at improving their economic and social situation, without prejudice to their right to return to their homes in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

52. Since its establishment, UNRWA had become the major agency for the provision of assistance to Palestine refugees. The true character of Israeli intentions towards the Agency and towards any possible solution to the Palestine issue was clear from the qualitative change that had taken place in the techniques of repression used and in the new restrictions imposed by the Israeli authorities. It was Israel's aim to destroy the infrastructure of the Agency as a means of preventing the Palestinian people from exercising its right to self-determination. UNRWA had nevertheless endeavoured to strengthen its regular programmes by introducing new methods and new activities more in keeping with the increasing needs. It had adopted complex administrative measures in order to ensure the speedy and effective delivery of services without detriment to the management of its operations.

53. The Israeli occupation authorities had made use of the temporary detention of young people as a form of economic pressure since parents had to pay in order to secure their release. Owing to selective closure orders by the authorities, school life had been severely disrupted. The increased toll of lives and the physical repression had led to greater tragedies, and there had been a constant decline in the income of families owing to the slow-down and occasional paralysis of economic life and the detention or unemployment of breadwinners.

54. The report of the Commissioner-General showed that the privileges and immunities of UNRWA had been increasingly disregarded. Israeli troops had occupied Agency facilities for long periods of time, ambulances carrying injured persons for medical attention had been interfered with, and staff members performing their duties had been ill-treated.

(Mr. Al-Zayani, Bahrain)

55. His delegation hoped that the Agency would be able to obtain greater financial resources that would enable it to implement the construction programme, in addition to its regular and emergency programmes, in view of the negative impact that its postponement would have on basic services provided to refugees.

56. Mr. AWAWDEH (Jordan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the representative of Israel had distorted the facts. It was Israel's refusal to accept the provisions of General Assembly resolution 194 (III), which stipulated that refugees wishing to return to their homes should be permitted to do so or be paid compensation, which had created the problem. There was obvious irony in Israel's attempts to attract new immigrants to the occupied territories while refusing to allow Palestine refugees to return to their homes. The Arab States were not seeking to exploit the question of Palestine; on the contrary, they would be pleased if there was no further need for UNRWA.

57. With reference to Israel's claim that the report of the Commissioner-General had displayed bias in referring to UNRWA staff members detained in the Middle East, the Committee would note that only two Agency staff members had been detained in Jordan, and then only briefly. In contrast, Israel was responsible for hundreds of violations of UNRWA's facilities and for having imprisoned over 50 UNRWA staff members.

58. Mr. KHANI (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the claim by the representative of Israel to be concerned with human rights ignored the massacres which had been perpetrated in the past and which continued today. Israel was intensifying its attempts to suppress the intifadah. The international community had condemned Israel's intransigence, the latest example of which could be seen in its reaction to the Secretary-General's attempt to send a mission to investigate the recent killings in Jerusalem. Israel had never complied with United Nations resolutions or accepted the applicability of the fourth Geneva Convention to the occupied territories. It was clear that the Government of Israel sought to establish a "Greater Israel". The international community must oblige Israel to comply with United Nations resolutions and recognize the rights of the Palestinian people.

59. Mr. MANSOUR (Observer for Palestine), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that, as in previous years, the representative of Israel had presented a view of the situation that differed from the views of all the other speakers and those contained in the Commissioner-General's report and all the Secretary-General's reports on the subject. The Israeli Government had ignored international opinion, not only on the issue of Palestine refugees, but also on the general situation in the region and on a just solution to the Palestinian question. Although the statements made over the years by the representatives of Israel were valid in that they were truthful presentations of the Israeli Government's understanding of the origins of the Palestinian problem, the argument over those origins should be put aside so that the Committee could consider the draft resolution before it (A/SPC/45/L.5). That draft resolution was introduced annually by the representative of the United States, and no State, not even Israel,

(Mr. Mansour, Observer, Palestine)

had ever voted against it. He saw no reason why Israel could not comply with the draft resolution's call to implement paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III), which stated that Palestine refugees wishing to return to their homes should be permitted to do so, and that those choosing not to return should be compensated for the loss of their property.

60. The representative of Israel had indicated that according to international law, Israel had been entrusted with the maintenance of law and order in Judea, Samaria and Gaza. However, that position was inconsistent with Israel's refusal to acknowledge that it was an occupying Power in those territories, and was therefore an instance of Israel's hypocrisy in selectively applying the principles of international law. One example of Israel's obstruction of international law was its refusal to comply with Security Council resolution 672 (1990), which called for Israel to allow a fact-finding mission to investigate the massacre of 8 October 1990 in Jerusalem. In its reply to the Secretary-General, Israel had claimed that Jerusalem was not an occupied territory, but the capital of the State of Israel. That position was in violation of both international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

61. He recalled that Israel was the only State Member of the United Nations that had been admitted to the Organization on the condition that it would comply with General Assembly resolutions on the establishment of a Palestinian State and on the return or compensation of Palestine refugees. However, Israel still refused to observe those conditions. In addition, in a 1988 report to the Security Council (S/19443), the Secretary-General had said that the international community should attempt to persuade Israel to accept the applicability to the occupied territories of the fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

62. The statement by the representative of Israel that the Palestine refugees were being used by the Arab countries as tools for furthering political aims was a racist insinuation; of all countries, Israel was the least qualified to speak on behalf of the Arab States. The real attitude of the Palestinians was best expressed in paragraph 19 of the Secretary-General's report to the Security Council (S/21919), which indicated that they lived in constant fear, particularly because they had no recourse to any authority other than the Israeli security forces, who were often responsible for the measures inflicted upon them. In addition, paragraph 20 of that report mentioned the Palestinians' deep distrust of the Israeli occupation authorities and their wish to be protected by an impartial presence mandated by the United Nations.

63. Mr. TARI (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right to reply, said that, in the current atmosphere of political détente and freedom, history could no longer be rewritten, and that nothing could change the fact that the refugee problem had begun when Arab armies had invaded Israel in order to end its existence. In addition, the fact could not be ignored that Palestine refugees were the only refugee group in the world that had not only persisted, but even increased, over the course of decades. All of the possible solutions set forth by the United

(Mr. Tari, Israel)

Nations and other organizations had been blocked and sabotaged by the Arab States, in order to maintain the refugee situation as a political instrument against Israel. Many Palestinians were in favour of a dialogue with Israel, but had been assassinated or terrorized by the Palestine Liberation Organization. Moreover, the Syrian Arab Republic was in no position to express indignation against Israel, because of its own record of human rights violations. However, in spite of all obstacles, Israel would continue to seek peace through dialogue. He hoped that the Middle East would join the rest of the world in entering a new era of détente.

64. Mr. KHANI (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that zionism was inherently racist. The position that all Jews throughout the world had the right to emigrate to Israel had resulted in the displacement of Arabs and was evidence of Israel's attempt to impose zionism on all Jews and to separate Jews from other societies.

65. Mr. TARI (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that zionism was the liberation movement of the Jewish people, and that it represented their aspirations to freedom and self-determination. Israel was ready to co-operate with the international community, particularly with the Arab States, in the search for a peaceful solution to the conflict.

66. Mr. MANSOUR (Observer for Palestine), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that although Israel had deplored the failure of the many attempts to establish peace in the region, Israel was responsible for those failures because of its disregard of United Nations resolutions. In addition, the statistics cited in the Commissioner-General's report (A/45/13) on the number of Palestinians killed or injured by Israeli authorities demonstrated that it was Israel, and not the PLO, which was terrorizing the Palestine refugees.

67. However, the role of the United Nations was not to argue over the past, but to find immediate and lasting solutions to current problems. The previous year's General Assembly resolution (44/42) calling for the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East represented a concrete step towards finding a solution. The United Nations and the Arab States had been ready for many years to hold such a conference; he hoped that Israel would finally agree to participate.

68. Mr. GIACOMELLI (Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) said that the Committee's debate had provided him with a valuable opportunity to verify the Agency's orientation and priorities. The views and suggestions of the various delegations would be carefully considered.

69. It was understandable that there could be some divergence of views between the occupying authority, which was responsible for the maintenance of law and order, and an international agency that was trying to alleviate the plight of thousands of refugees. However, the Agency was not trying to expand the parameters of its mandate, but was only trying to respond flexibly to the current dramatic needs of the refugees. He took exception to the allegation that UNRWA staff had taken part

(Mr. Giacomelli)

in acts of violence and expressed his confidence in their loyalty and integrity in abiding by the values and obligations of the Agency. However, he was prepared to examine any alleged deviations from such standards that might be formally brought to his attention.

70. In response to the claim by the representative of Israel that the report on UNRWA activities was biased, he said that he was sure the Committee would appreciate the difficulty of preparing such a report in a manner that would appear unbiased to all. For that reason, a draft of the report was informally shared with Israeli authorities every year. He emphasized that the Agency acted in accordance with purely humanitarian goals.

71. He was heartened by the Committee's support of the Agency's work but stressed that the Agency's emergency relief and assistance programmes could be paralysed in a matter of weeks unless additional financial resources were received. He hoped that the upcoming pledging conference would provide a solid basis for the Agency's 1990-1991 budget requirements.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.