

United Nations
GENERAL
ASSEMBLY
FORTIETH SESSION
Official Records*



SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
22nd meeting
held on
Monday, 4 November 1985
at 10.30 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 22nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KORHONEN (Finland)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 75: REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE ISRAELI PRACTICES AFFECTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE POPULATION OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL* (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 79: UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST

- a) REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER-GENERAL
- b) REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST
- c) REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE
- d) REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

* The full text of all statements made under this item will be issued as documents A/SPC/40/PV.16 et seq.

*This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-730, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate fascicle for each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL
A/SPC/40/SR.22
11 November 1985
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

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

AGENDA ITEM 75: REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE ISRAELI PRACTICES AFFECTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE POPULATION OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES
(A/40/702): REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/40/686, A/40/575, A/40/541, A/40/649 and Add.1, A/40/542, A/40/583; draft resolutions A/SPC/40/L.8 to L.14)

1. MR. TEWARI (India) said that despite Israel's revealing refusal to facilitate its work, the Special Committee had produced a comprehensive report which gave an objective portrayal of the situation in the occupied territories. The report indicated clearly that Israel had stepped up its policy of depriving the Palestinian Arab population of its fundamental rights and freedoms - particularly freedom of movement, freedom of expression and freedom of education - by adopting various orders concerning property, trade and exports, and of paralysing the Palestinians' economic activity, thus making their living conditions even worse.
2. Such brutal and repressive acts, which were dictated by impotence, could achieve nothing in the face of the determination of a Palestinian people strengthened by years of suffering and by international recognition in the struggle for its survival, its rights, its homeland and its freedom.
3. It was unfortunate that some powerful circles in the West preached respect for human rights while contributing to the brutal suppression of the rights of the Palestinian people. The international community had a duty to defend freedom without reservation wherever it was imperilled, whether in Palestine or South Africa, and to expose those who attacked freedom.
4. His country had long been a supporter of the Palestinian cause, and Mahatma Gandhi had said more than 30 years ago that "Palestine belongs to the Arabs in the same sense that England belongs to the English, or France to the French".
5. Only respect for the rights and dignity of others and for the fundamental principles of morality and justice could guarantee peace and security. By continuing its military occupation and seeking to change the geography, demographic composition and cultural life of the occupied territories, Israel was violating human rights, international law and morality and the Charter of the United Nations. His delegation was convinced of the need, if peace was to return to West Asia, to achieve a comprehensive and lasting settlement of the Middle East problem which envisaged total and unconditional Israeli withdrawal from all the territories occupied by it since 1967, including Jerusalem, as well as recognition of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and of the rights of all the States of the region to live within secure borders. Meanwhile, it was the duty of the international community to prevent any further abuse of the rights of the Palestinians.
6. Mr. VIKIS (Cyprus) said that he had considered most carefully the report of the Special Committee which, despite Israel's persistent refusal to facilitate its work, had once again provided disturbing information regarding the constant

/...

(Mr. Vikis, Cyprus)

deterioration in the situation of the civilian population in the occupied territories, whose rights and freedoms were still being eroded. Such violations were all the more worrying for being committed with a view to expansion and annexation, for, as the report clearly confirmed, the Israeli Government considered the territories occupied since 1967 to belong to it.

7. His delegation believed that only a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Middle East problem providing for Israel's total and unconditional withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories, in accordance with the relevant resolutions and decisions of the United Nations, would produce any improvement in the situation of the population of those territories. The persistence of serious problems threatening international peace and security not only in the Middle East but throughout the world was indeed closely related to the non-implementation of those resolutions and decisions. It was for that reason that the President of the Republic of Cyprus had requested in his address to the thirty-seventh session of the General Assembly the inclusion in the agenda of an item entitled "Implementation of the resolutions of the United Nations".

8. Mr. SENE (Senegal) said that, as a member of the Special Committee, he welcomed the interest various speakers had shown in the report on the situation in the occupied territories, which remained extremely worrying. Indeed, the situation of the Palestinian population had not ceased to deteriorate, viewed in the light of what had become of the plan for the partition of Palestine adopted by the United Nations in 1947, which recognized the Palestinians' inalienable rights.

9. The Palestinian people, which since the Israeli occupation of 1967 had been condemned to dispersal and homelessness and reduced to the status of a colonized people and of refugees, was fighting for its rights and, as many speakers had stressed, was subjected to all kinds of privations, attacks on its fundamental freedoms and rights, and discriminatory measures which contravened the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and The Hague Convention of 1907.

10. The facts included by the Special Committee in its report had been established on the basis of evidence gathered in the occupied territories, official Israeli statements, and information communicated by the Jordanian and Syrian Governments and by non-governmental organizations. The Special Committee had analysed and interpreted that information in the light of the legal instruments relating to the protection of civilian persons in time of war, but it had unfortunately not been able to visit the occupied territories to compare the information with the actual situation, owing to the refusal of the Israeli authorities.

11. The United Nations had a duty to put an end to practices which served only to fuel the tensions, foster the hatred and bitterness and diminish the chances of peace in a region which had already suffered five murderous Israeli-Arab wars, a region which, it must be remembered, had seen the birth of three great religions of peace and brotherhood.

12. History taught that a people had to persevere in order to regain its freedom, and the people of Senegal treasured the memory of the words of President Senghor calling upon Arabs, Jews and blacks to join together in a "triad of suffering

/...

(Mr. Sene, Senegal)

peoples". Colonialism, slavery and, for the Jews, exile, pogroms and persecution, had given an edge to nationalism and strengthened the determination to fight for freedom and justice. Some peoples had reached that goal but, leaving aside apartheid, there still remained the problem of the Palestinian people which had undergone hardships and exile and was still seeking courageously to have its rights restored, although it seemed that some people now wished to bury its cause and discredit its legitimate representative.

13. The international community had a duty to see justice done for the Palestinian people, to do everything possible to change the course of history and to help all the parties concerned, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, to negotiate a just and lasting peace on the basis of the principles and machinery already established. His country was mindful of the need to convene an international peace conference on the Middle East as soon as possible and was ready to contribute to the search for such a solution.

14. Lastly, he drew attention to an article in Le Monde of Friday, 1 November 1985, which reported that Israel had recently used two repressive measures enacted in 1945 as emergency laws by the British Mandate. The first measure was administrative detention, a penalty which had just been imposed on 90 Palestinians, and the second was the expulsion order imposed, subject to confirmation by the military commission, on four Palestinians who, according to the Military Administration, had engaged in activities threatening the security of the State. Students in two West Bank universities, several dozen Palestinian and Israeli intellectuals and a number of Israeli lawyers had protested against that measure and had made clear their solidarity with the four persons concerned.

15. Mr. DAMIAN (Romania) said that the information and conclusions contained in the report of the Special Committee and in the other documents submitted on the item provided a sound basis for examination of the situation in the Arab and Palestinian territories under Israeli occupation, and especially for devising effective measures that would bring about an improvement of the situation and, ultimately, an end to the occupation thus giving the Palestinian people the possibility of enjoying its human rights and exercising its fundamental and legitimate rights in the same way as all other peoples.

16. The continued occupation and the refusal to recognize the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people were infringements of the principles and norms underpinning the contemporary world which were all the more serious because they were taking place at a time when Member States had just reaffirmed their attachment to the purposes and goals enshrined in the Charter 40 years ago and their determination to work for the attainment of those purposes and goals in international relations.

17. Developments in the territories occupied by Israel, and in the Middle East in general, as well as the report of the Special Committee itself, confirmed that the absence of a comprehensive settlement of the region's complex problems had led to a continuous deterioration of conditions for hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees, who were still denied the right to return to their homes, because their properties had been absorbed into the new Israeli settlements.

(Mr. Damian, Romania)

18. The situation in the Middle East was politically complex and presented a number of difficulties. Increased efforts were required on the part of the international community in order to improve the human rights situation in the occupied territories. Such efforts were even more important in view of the fact that, during the period covered by the report of the Special Committee, an escalation of violence and incidents had taken place, together with the imposition of new restrictions on various freedoms and the establishment of new settlements, simultaneously with detentions and expulsions. The pursuit of such policies and practices, which constituted a violation both of the provisions of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and of the pertinent United Nations resolutions, created new obstacles to a settlement of the situation in the Middle East and to a peaceful solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

19. A peaceful, just and durable solution could be achieved only by negotiations in which all interested parties participated. Prior conditions for such a solution were Israel's withdrawal from the territories occupied since the 1967 war, recognition of the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, including its right to have its own independent State, and the guaranteeing of the security and independence of all countries in the region.

20. Romania was resolutely opposed to the threat or use of force and to any violation of the principle that acquisition of territories by force was inadmissible, and favoured the settlement of all conflicts and disputes among States solely by peaceful means and through negotiations. It therefore favoured the convening of an international conference, under United Nations auspices, with the participation of all interested parties, including the Palestine Liberation Organization. The international community should embark without delay on preparations for such a conference, which would provide the appropriate framework for the political and diplomatic activity necessary in order to achieve a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

21. Romania reaffirmed its solidarity and support for the just cause of the Palestinian people, and favoured the adoption of effective measures to protect the rights of the Palestinian population in the occupied Arab territories and to ensure respect for pertinent United Nations resolutions. It was also necessary to work for the recognition and implementation of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, and for the achievement of a political solution to all the complex problems of the Middle East, in accordance with the interests of the peoples of the region and of international peace and security.

22. Mr. BARROMI (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the representative of the United Arab Emirates had not explained, during his statement at the 21st meeting, why he had not called for the implementation of the fourth Geneva Convention in territories occupied by Iraq in the Gulf. Such an omission gave rise to doubts as to the impartiality and sincerity of his statement. As for the representative of India, he had not stated Mahatma Gandhi's position on violence. Would Gandhi have approved of Arab terrorism? With regard to the remarks made by the representative of Senegal, it should be noted that

/...

(Mr. Barromi, Israel)

orders for administrative detention were given only when there was an imminent risk of violence. The measures mentioned were of a short-term nature, taken in accordance with the Emergency Regulations of 1945, which had been applied by the United Kingdom, and subsequently by Jordan, before Israel. Like Senegal, Israel was convinced that only negotiations could lead to a solution of the Middle East conflict and comprehensive peace in the region, and that such negotiations must be conducted by the interested States, without prior conditions.

23. Mr. TEWARI (India) said that Mahatma Gandhi considered all forms of violence to be repugnant. However, Israel found it quite convenient to forget what it was doing to homeless Palestinians and Arabs who were prevented from exercising their human rights and subjected to acts of violence and State terrorism. The reaction of the representative of Israel showed instead the despair and isolation of his country, both in the Committee and in the rest of the world. Israel would do better to make efforts to find an amicable solution, in the framework of which the Palestinians would be accorded their inalienable rights. The international community would certainly do all in its power in order to attain a settlement which guaranteed the fundamental rights of the Palestinians. Israel's collaborators and accomplices would not succeed in depriving them of their rights.

24. Mr. DAAER (United Arab Emirates) said that, in his previous statement in exercise of the right of reply, he had erroneously referred to the representative of the United States of America when he had intended to speak of the Israeli delegation. He requested that the correction should be made in the relevant summary record. With regard to the remarks of the Israeli delegation concerning the Iran/Iraq war, it should be pointed out that the item was not part of the Special Political Committee's agenda and therefore did not warrant any reply. Such an argument proved Israel's lack of juridical coherence and logic, and confirmed that it wished to continue violating the Geneva Convention and pursuing practices which were contrary to all civilized behaviour.

25. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had concluded the general debate on agenda item 75.

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

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER-GENERAL
- (b) REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST
- (c) REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE
- (d) REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

26. The CHAIRMAN welcomed the new Commissioner-General of the Agency, Mr. Georgio Giacomelli, and paid tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Olof Rydbeck, who was retiring after six and a half years of service to the Palestine refugees.

/...

27. Mr. GIACOMELLI (Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) also expressed his gratitude to his predecessor, Mr. Rydbeck, for his important contribution to the humanitarian and political efforts of the United Nations in the Middle East.

28. Introducing the annual report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA (A/40/13), he noted that it described one of the most difficult years in the Agency's 35-year history. Refugees in Lebanon had been affected by almost uninterrupted fighting, and living conditions for refugees in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip had deteriorated.

29. In the Gaza Strip there had been a marked deterioration of the security situation in recent months, which had resulted in an increasing number of incidents. Since 1 July, nine UNRWA staff members had been detained by the authorities; five had subsequently been released without charge, and the other four remained in custody. Furthermore, recent actions by the authorities affecting Jabalia Camp had obliged UNRWA to suspend its maintenance and construction programme in the camp.

30. In the West Bank, the situation of refugees had been characterized by numerous incidents, including confrontations between Israeli settlers and the local population. Occasional curfews had been decreed in the camps, and there had been disruptions in schools. Three out of six members of UNRWA staff detained since 1 July had not yet been released but, for the first time in recent years, the Field Office Director had been able to visit one of those staff members.

31. Neither had any solution been reached to the problem of the Palestinian refugees, numbering approximately 5,000, on the Egyptian side of the border between the Gaza Strip and Sinai, to whom UNRWA continued to provide limited assistance.

32. In Lebanon, the fighting which had persisted intermittently in Beirut, and had broken out more recently in the vicinity of Tripoli, had brought untold suffering to the refugees in the camps. The Agency had made cash grants to refugees whose shelters had been destroyed in the fighting, while continuing to provide basic health, education and relief services for registered refugees throughout the country.

33. UNRWA was facing numerous difficulties in maintaining its operations: its facilities were damaged or destroyed as soon as they had been repaired or replaced, communication was frequently interrupted, the freedom of movement of its personnel was restricted, and they were constantly in danger. In this regard, the disappearance should be mentioned of Mr. Alec Collet, a public information consultant on assignment with UNRWA, about whom nothing had been heard for seven months. Such a situation, if it continued, would affect not only the refugees; it would also make the work of the Agency increasingly difficult, and it had already been necessary to move a small part of the Lebanon field office temporarily to Larnaca (Cyprus) in September 1985.

34. An encouraging recent development was the establishment, by the Prime Minister of Lebanon, of a committee to establish procedures for the speedy renewal of

/...

(Mr. Giacomelli)

Lebanese travel documents held by Palestine refugees, which would allow them to reside and work in other countries.

35. He expressed appreciation to UNIFIL, without whose support the Agency would have experienced even greater difficulty in providing both basic and emergency services to the Palestine refugees in Lebanon.

36. On the matter of the Agency's critical financial situation, he recalled that at the beginning of 1985 Commissioner-General Rydbeck, facing a shortfall of \$67 million, had taken some austerity measures including a reduction in staff costs, reductions in travel, maintenance, supplies and other costs, and cancelled all major repair and construction programmes. The result had been a reduction of some \$40 million in the 1985 budget, and to reduce the deficit to \$27 million. The Commissioner-General had then embarked on a strenuous fund-raising campaign, which had been actively supported by the Secretary-General, the Working Group on the financing of the Agency, and the Advisory Commission. In response to his appeals, several Governments - in particular Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Japan, Norway, Sweden and the United States - had made contributions amounting to \$13 million. The response from other countries had generally been discouraging, and the Agency had been forced to make further cuts which, for the first time, directly affected the services provided to refugees. Those reductions, combined with savings due to exchange-rate fluctuations, had made it possible to narrow the gap between income and expenditure to about \$5 million. The situation however continued to be very worrying, because without further contributions the cash balance at the end of the year would be about \$8 million, which was less than one month's cash needs for the Agency.

37. The requirements for the 1986 budget came to a little more than \$191 million. If UNRWA received that amount, it would be able to continue services at the current level and to pay for maintenance, supplies, services and some area staff salary adjustments that had been eliminated from the 1985 budget. Many of the austerity measures introduced in 1985 would be continued to 1986, including those involving an increase in the number of pupils per class, and the extension of double-shift classes. Budget estimates for the General Fund of the Agency for 1986 amounted to \$157 million, which was some \$20 million more than regular contributions received during 1985. If the Agency did not receive the necessary funds, it would have to reduce basic services and make cuts in personnel. Such measures would have serious consequences, not only for refugees but also for the Governments of host countries. It was for that reason that the previous Commissioner-General had suggested an informal meeting of interested Governments to discuss a rational approach to a solution of the Agency's financial problems, a suggestion which had been favourably received by the Advisory Commission and the Working Group on the financing of the Agency.

38. It should not be forgotten that, in the final analysis, the international community bore the responsibility for providing the Agency with the resources which it needed to carry out its mandate. In that regard it should be noted that 147 Governments had voted in favour of extending the Agency's mandate until

/...

(Mr. Giacomelli)

30 June 1987, that only 66 of them had made contributions or pledges to the Agency, and that only 16 of them had increased their regular contributions or responded to the special appeal of the previous Commissioner-General. If recent trends were not reversed, the future of the Agency would be bleak. He therefore made a fervent appeal to Governments to consider carefully the level of financial support which they could provide to the Agency in 1986 and, in order to enable the Agency to manage its limited resources better, to provide a clear indication of their level of support at UNRWA's annual Pledging Conference on 11 November.

39. Mr. BERGH JOHANSEN (Norway), speaking in his capacity of Rapporteur of the Working Group on the Financing of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, introduced the report of the Group (A/40/736).

40. Chapter II gave a brief summary of the activities of the Group during 1985. Throughout the year, the Group had followed with great concern the difficulties experienced by the Agency and in that regard called attention once again to its special report (A/40/207) which described the financial crisis and the steps which it had taken after hearing, on 1 March 1985, an up-to-date report by the comptroller of the Agency.

41. Chapter III provided information on the financial situation of UNRWA, as presented to the Working Group by the representative of the Agency on 1 October 1985. It gave details on the intensive fund-raising campaign launched by the Commissioner-General. It also offered UNRWA's projections for 1986 which made it clear that, even if the level of expenditures did not exceed that of the 1985 budget, the Agency would need, in order to fund its programme, an amount \$20 million higher than the total contributions received in 1985.

42. Chapter IV set out the conclusions of the Working Group on the financial situation of UNRWA. The Group noted that the Commissioner-General expected to be able to maintain Agency services at current levels until the end of 1985. It recognized the seriousness of the financial crisis that the Agency faced in 1985 and paid a tribute to the Commissioner-General for the efforts which he had made to obtain additional contributions and to limit expenditure by maintaining strict controls and instituting austerity measures. It underlined, however, that the bulk of those measures involved deferrals of expenditure, and that increases in salaries, maintenance, property replacement and construction would have to be funded in the future. The Group also noted with concern the trend towards lower voluntary contributions, and that the level of income in 1985 was not expected to exceed the level of 1984. At the same time it expressed its appreciation to those Governments which had continued to fund the Agency generously.

43. The Group continued to believe that the solution to the Agency's financial crisis lay in finding ways of ensuring that the Agency was provided each year with the resources it required to implement its programme. It was incumbent on the international community to provide the means it required to continue its work.

44. The Group welcomed the suggestion that a meeting should be convened to discuss ways of ensuring more rational funding of the Agency. It also supported the

/...

(Mr. Bergh Johansen, Norway)

suggestion made by the Advisory Commission that the Commissioner-General should send special fund-raising missions to current and prospective donor countries.

45. The Group urged all Governments to recognize the seriousness of the Agency's financial situation for 1986 and to take steps to match their political support with their financial support. He called upon all Governments which had not yet done so to make contributions, and upon those Governments which made regular contributions to increase the amount considerably and make special contributions as early as possible every year.

46. The Group paid a tribute to the outgoing Commissioner-General for his dedicated work over the previous six and a half years on behalf of the two million Palestinian refugees.

47. Mr. SALAH (Jordan) expressed his good wishes and those of his Government to Mr. Olof Rydbeck, the recently retired head of UNRWA. He congratulated Mr. Georgio Giacomelli on his appointment to the post of Commissioner-General of UNRWA, and assured him of the full support of the Jordanian Government in carrying out his mandate.

48. The Commissioner-General's report (A/40/13 and Add.1) brought into relief certain inescapable facts related to the situation of Palestine refugees, which could not be effaced either by the passage of time or by Israel's refusal to acknowledge them. The first was that the underlying cause of the Palestine refugee problem, the displacement of the Palestinians and the emergence of new generations of refugees resided in the failure to implement the provisions of General Assembly resolution 194 (III), paragraph 11, on the return of the refugees to their homes. The second was that the refugees were living in an increasingly difficult situation and were subjected to various threats as a result of the many and related forms of violence and instability in the region, which were likewise due primarily to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the refusal to acknowledge the refugees' right of return. The third was the difficult financial situation of UNRWA.

49. As indicated in successive reports of the Commissioner-General, UNRWA's activities were vitally important, not only in order to meet the refugees' needs, but also for the stability of the region. All support for UNRWA was support for the maintenance of peace and security. Jordan therefore reiterated that UNRWA's activities were vitally important and that the Agency should be enabled to continue providing assistance to Palestinian refugees in fulfilment of one of the international community's commitments in a tragedy for which it was responsible. Despite the refugees' many requirements and the need for UNRWA to carry out its noble and generous assignment, the Agency was threatened with bankruptcy, as emphasized by the Commissioner-General, the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA and the Advisory Commission. The resolute efforts of the Commissioner-General, the co-operation of the host countries, severe austerity measures, a reduction in UNRWA's essential operations and the voluntary contributions made by a limited number of countries had still not enabled the Agency to solve its financial difficulties.

/...

(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

50. There was still a shortfall of \$8 million in the income required for UNRWA's 1985 programme, which had already been considerably reduced, and the Commissioner-General forecast a deficit of some \$20 million for 1986. Since there was indeed a deficit, Jordan reaffirmed its opposition, on principle, to the method whereby the deficit was absorbed by cutting down UNRWA's operations on behalf of the refugees, a method which was ultimately detrimental to meeting their basic needs and which could not be continued indefinitely, particularly when it involved cancelling construction work, freezing teachers' salary increases and, above all, curtailing operations affecting the distribution of emergency rations. The international community should face up to its responsibility in a sincere and realistic manner and not pass it on to the host countries which already bore a very heavy burden in that respect. To be precise, the major responsibility lay with Israel which had created the refugee problem, and with the United Nations which had created Israel. The Palestine refugees, amounting to almost 2 million, were a collective problem and a concerted effort was therefore needed to protect them.

51. Jordan took on more than its fair share of the burden. Its direct aid had increased to more than \$100 million in the previous year, not including unquantifiable services such as the admission of a large number of refugee children to various Jordanian educational establishments. Jordan could not bear the burden of the 800,000 Palestine refugees currently on its territory alone and indefinitely and although, despite limited resources, it spared no effort to relieve the refugees' suffering, it considered its effort to be of a temporary nature and an integral part of the responsibility borne by the entire international community. His Government had consistently supported the Commissioner-General's efforts to raise additional funds, had always co-operated with the Working Group and the Advisory Commission to find solutions to the serious financial crisis faced by UNRWA, and had supported all constructive and effective proposals to that end.

52. The Commissioner-General's report showed that UNRWA had been unable to comply with the General Assembly's request to resume distribution of emergency rations to refugees in Jordan, Syria and the West Bank, which had resulted in demonstrations by those refugees. Any further retrenchment of UNRWA's operations would therefore affect the education services, with adverse consequences for the refugees themselves, for the host countries and ultimately for stability in the region as a whole. The Commissioner-General gave the education programme top priority, but that should not make UNRWA a single-purpose organization contrary to its terms of reference under General Assembly resolution 302 (IV), which declared it to be a body with the general humanitarian and social task of taking care of the refugees until they returned to their homes. UNRWA could not ignore the non-educational aspects, particularly that of emergency rations. Jordan therefore supported the General Assembly's request that their distribution should be resumed.

53. Jordan joined the Commissioner-General in thanking the countries which had made voluntary contributions to UNRWA and called upon the entire international community to find a solution to the present financial crisis. The solution was not to be found in reducing UNRWA's operations, but in increasing its income. If it proved impossible to collect the necessary funds by means of voluntary

(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

contributions, permanent sources of finance must be found. One such source would be the fund proposed by the General Assembly for the receipt of revenues derived from Palestine refugee properties. It was therefore essential to work towards the implementation of General Assembly resolution 39/99 H.

54. In conclusion, he stressed that, for the sake of UNRWA and the refugees themselves, the United Nations should discharge its continuing responsibility.

55. Mr. EL-ATTAR (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the tragedy of the Palestine people and the continual Zionist aggression against Arab countries were unique in the history of the world since the Second World War; for almost 40 years - for as long as the United Nations had existed - 4 million Palestinians and Arabs had been enduring torture of every kind, living under occupation or in camps not far from the homeland which had been wrested from them.

56. The origin of the tragedy lay in the Declaration made by Lord Balfour in return for Zionist financing of war expenses during the First World War. The systematic colonialist and racist invasion of Palestine had begun then, with the support of the British mandatory authorities, in the form of large-scale illegal immigration. Immediately on its creation in 1948, the racist colonialist State of Israel had started to expel the inhabitants and seize their property and lands by force, violence and terrorism.

57. The United States and other colonialist States had taken up the cause of Israel and enabled it to wage repeated wars of aggression against Arabs, to seize further territory by force and to expel the inhabitants, which had increased the number of refugees. The tragedy of the Palestine refugees was thus not a natural phenomenon but the result of a long-prepared and systematic imperialist plan carried out by Israel. The tragedy should be considered from a humanitarian point of view as well as a political one; the inalienable rights of the Palestine people must be acknowledged, and, above all, its right to return home and its right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent State.

58. He paid a tribute to the work of UNRWA, especially that of the Commissioner-General, carried out in difficult circumstances and with insufficient resources, and reaffirmed his country's full support for the Agency's humanitarian mission.

59. With regard to the Commissioner-General's report (A/40/13 and Add.1), his delegation wished to reiterate that it opposed the Commissioner-General's practice of showing the draft report to the military occupation authorities and giving consideration to their comments, as indicated in the letter of transmittal, whereas not a word was said about the Commissioner-General's reactions to the observations of the Arab host countries, which bore heavy responsibilities. Israel was an occupying and usurping Power and its comments did not serve the cause of the refugees. His delegation hoped that the next report would reflect the proposals put forward by the Arab host countries.

(Mr. El-Attar, Syrian Arab Republic)

60. It was disheartening to note that UNRWA, a humanitarian institution established to serve the refugees pending a political solution of the question of Palestine, saw its services reduced year after year, and the question might be asked why the international community, especially the colonialist Powers, which spent millions of dollars to arm Israel, did not provide the Agency with the funds needed to accomplish its humanitarian tasks.

61. It was clear from the report that food aid was far from adequate. He therefore hoped that the Commissioner-General would be able to resume the ration distribution to the refugees, as requested in General Assembly resolution 38/83 F. It must not be forgotten that the planning of the Agency's operations was the responsibility of the General Assembly, not the Commissioner-General. The year-by-year reduction in activities tended gradually to transfer the responsibilities of the Agency to the Arab host States without a solution having been found to the question of the Palestine refugees. His Government rejected any attempt to reduce or abolish the Agency's services in any field whatsoever.

62. It was regrettable that most of the paragraphs of the report described events in Lebanon and not what was being done for the refugees, especially in respect of essential services.

63. In paragraph 27 of the report, reference was made to the searches to which the camps in the southern part of Lebanon had been subjected after the Israeli forces had withdrawn, and that implied that the situation of the refugees had been better under the Israeli occupation. In the light of the massacre of Palestine refugees perpetrated by the Israelis during their 1982 invasion of Lebanon, that could not be what the Commissioner-General had meant.

64. It was stated in paragraph 46 of the report that unless additional funding became available the Agency might not be able to accept all refugee children who sought admission to its schools. Since secondary education had been discontinued several years earlier, the refugee children would thus be completely deprived of the right to education. The Agency should urge the international community to help it to carry out its obligations, and, in that regard, his delegation supported the comments made by the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA in its report (A/40/207).

65. The policy of aggression pursued by the Israeli occupation authorities against the Palestine refugee camps in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, especially the punitive demolition of the refugees' shelters, mentioned in paragraphs 139 and 140 of the report, was aimed at forcing the refugees to flee to neighbouring countries. Furthermore, Israel was trying to make the remaining refugees merge into Israeli society so that they lost their national identity. In that regard, it was disquieting to note from paragraph 140 of the report that the refugee community accepted voluntary moves. The Agency must not be used for the purpose of eliminating the question of the Palestine refugees, which had always been the objective of the colonial Powers which had established Israel.

(Mr. El-Attar, Syrian Arab Republic)

66. The report described the serious violations of the 1949 Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War committed by the military occupation forces. Israel's acts of aggression had not spared UNRWA officials: they were often prevented from accomplishing their mission, and some of them had been detained by the Israeli military forces, in violation of the 1946 Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations. The Syrian Arab Republic condemned those inhuman practices and demanded that the international community should intervene to end them. It also associated itself with the claim for compensation which the Agency had submitted to the Israeli occupation forces in respect of loss and damage caused to its property and facilities as a result of the 1982 invasion of Lebanon, as indicated in paragraph 172 of the report.

67. The Syrian Arab Republic rejected the austerity measures designed to reduce the gap between the income and expenditures of UNRWA, since they would cause considerable harm to the refugees. The colonialist Powers responsible for the tragedy should bear the costs of their aggression. The United Nations, which had played its part in the establishment of Israel, should also shoulder its responsibilities. Israel must respect United Nations resolutions, including General Assembly resolution 194 (III), which recognized the right of the refugees to return to their homes or to receive compensation, and Security Council resolution 237 (1967).

68. The report made no mention of efforts to implement the General Assembly resolution aimed at establishing a fund to receive the revenues derived from Palestine refugee properties, which would enable the Agency's budget deficit to be eliminated. It was regrettable that the report did not describe the services carried out by the Arab host countries, which bore a financial burden noticeably higher than the level of contributions which the Agency received from the international community, whereas the report highlighted the much smaller contributions made by international organizations.

69. The Syrian Arab Republic was host to over 250,000 refugees and had to bear a financial burden that was higher than the contributions paid to the Agency by the most generous donors. He therefore welcomed the fact that the report contained information on the services provided by his country to the Palestine refugees.

70. As a result of the austerity measures adopted, the situation of the locally recruited Palestinian officials was a matter for concern. He repeated the solution his delegation had already proposed, namely, to finance local staff costs out of the United Nations regular budget; the most appropriate solution, however, would be to merge the budget of the Agency with the United Nations regular budget. Moreover, his delegation again requested, in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 38/83 A, that the headquarters of UNRWA should be relocated to its former site, enabling operating costs to be reduced.

71. His delegation hoped that its comments would be borne in mind by the Commissioner-General in his next report. It requested that the General Assembly resolutions relating to UNRWA, especially those concerning the resumption of the

(Mr. El-Attar, Syrian Arab Republic)

ration distribution, should be implemented. Lastly, he commended the work carried out by the Agency under difficult conditions in order to provide the Palestine refugees, victims of Zionist aggression and colonialist hegemony, with the services they vitally needed.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.