



UN/SA COLLECTION

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 15th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KOUASSI (Togo)

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

AGENDA ITEM 75: UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (continued) (A/SPC/41/L.7)

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER-GENERAL (continued) (A/41/13 and Add.1)
- (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) (A/41/702)
- (c) REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE (continued) (A/41/555)
- (d) REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/41/457, 543, 563-568)

1. The CHAIRMAN drew the attention of the members of the Committee to the draft resolution on assistance to Palestine refugees in document A/SPC/41/L.7.

2. Mr. ASMI (Malaysia) said that it was particularly disheartening to note that UNRWA staff members continued to be harassed, detained, kidnapped and even killed. The Agency was essential to the welfare and well-being of the Palestine refugees who had been uprooted from their homes by Israel. Malaysia would continue to do what it could to assist UNRWA in carrying out its work. He fully supported the Agency's emphasis on education. It was encouraging to note that Governments, international organizations and individuals continued to make contributions earmarked for that purpose.

3. It appeared that the Israeli authorities were conducting a systematic campaign to deny the refugee children the right to an education by closing schools, suspending classes and banning books. Israel's attempts to deny the right of the Palestinians to an education was further illustrated in the report of the Secretary-General on the University of Jerusalem "Al-Quds" for Palestine refugees (A/41/457). There was still no sign that the Israeli Government would ever implement the General Assembly resolution on that subject. The Israeli authorities failed to understand that the Palestinians wanted an education which met their national, cultural and historical aspirations, not one imposed on them by an occupying Power. He hoped that the Israeli Government would co-operate so that the functional feasibility study on the proposed university might be completed.

4. Because of Israel's policies and practices, Palestine refugees faced further difficulties in Lebanon and the occupied territories. Inhuman treatment by the Israelis had led to the further displacement and exodus of large numbers of Palestinians. The report of the Commissioner-General (A/41/13 and Add.1) highlighted the deteriorating conditions in the Gaza Strip. If that situation did not change, it would lead to further violence resulting from the outrage and despair felt by the Palestine refugees.

5. His Government supported the renewal of the mandate of UNRWA, whose operations were essential until the implementation of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) was achieved. The task of the Agency was to provide humanitarian assistance for

(Mr. Asmi, Malaysia)

the immediate needs of the Palestine refugees. That, however, would not solve the Palestinian problem. A comprehensive, just and lasting solution must be achieved in order to ensure peace in the Middle East. That solution must be brought about within the framework of the United Nations with the full and equal participation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

6. Mr. AL SABAH (Kuwait) said that year after year the activities of UNRWA were discussed and General Assembly resolution 194 (III) remained unimplemented. The Agency represented the commitment of the international community to meet the needs of the Palestine refugees and work towards a just solution to their problem. Israel was seeking to divert attention from the real cause of the plight of the refugees, namely its usurpation of the land of Palestine. The Israeli Government pursued a policy aimed at forcing the Arab population to flee their land, depriving the displaced persons of the right to return to their homeland and encouraging Jewish immigration to colonize the land which the Arabs had fled.

7. The mandate of the Agency was of a temporary nature. In order to achieve a lasting solution to the problem, it was necessary to ensure the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, namely, the right to self-determination and the right to the establishment of its own independent State on the soil of its land. Until that was achieved, the services of the Agency would continue to play an important role in international efforts to alleviate the plight of the Palestine refugees.

8. In addition to its voluntary contributions, Kuwait contributed annually to the budget of the Agency. It hoped that the international community in general and the States which had created the problem would assume the responsibility of increasing their contributions to the Agency until a just solution was found to the problem.

9. Mr. SHIHABI (Saudi Arabia) said that UNRWA played a vital role in providing relief and assistance to the Palestine refugees. Weakening the Agency or halting its operations altogether would not eliminate the problem of the Palestine refugees and would not give the Zionists the security which they sought. The countries which had caused the expulsion of the Palestine refugees must not fail in the discharge of their responsibility for alleviating the plight of the refugees.

10. There would be no respite for the Israeli population, no matter what they or their supporters did, if the Palestinian people continued to be deprived of its security and of its right to return.

11. Those who had committed the crime of partitioning Palestine should recognize the importance of educating the refugees while they await their return to their country.

12. His delegation hoped that the Commissioner-General would not make any cuts in UNRWA's programmes and would succeed in convincing Member States to increase their financial support for the Agency. Otherwise, the 2,100,000 Palestinians would lack all means for a decent living if UNRWA should fail to discharge its function in the future.

13. Mr. FREUDENSCHUSS (Austria) said that the situation in Lebanon had been the most serious problem UNRWA had had to deal with. Austria itself had carried out a number of humanitarian projects in Lebanon to alleviate the suffering of the civilian population. His Government had also repeatedly called for the full restoration of Lebanese unity and independence.

14. His delegation noted that working conditions for UNRWA in the West Bank had improved. But although UNRWA had been able to continue its operations in 1986, its financial situation still remained serious. His Government therefore had welcomed the convening of an informal meeting of Governments in Vienna in early 1986 to consider the situation of UNRWA.

15. Mr. RADENKOVIC (Yugoslavia) said that the international community had a moral obligation to support UNRWA in its humanitarian mission of assistance to the Palestine refugees. UNRWA's activities were also important as a stabilizing factor in the precarious Middle East situation.

16. Within the limits of its modest possibilities, Yugoslavia would continue to contribute to the efforts to render assistance to the Palestine refugees. However, his delegation considered that such assistance, useful as it was, did not solve the underlying problem. What was needed was a lasting solution guaranteeing self-determination, independence and a sovereign Palestinian State, which must be achieved with the participation of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

17. His delegation was in favour of convening an international conference on the Middle East for the purpose of seeking a lasting settlement of the Middle East crisis. Any such solution presupposed Israel's unconditional withdrawal from all Arab and Palestinian territories occupied since June 1967, including Jerusalem.

18. Mr. SHIKIR (United Arab Emirates) recalled the circumstances of UNRWA's establishment in 1949 and drew attention to the humanitarian, legal and political aspects of the question of Palestine. The refugee problem was the result of a deliberate political decision, taken by the Zionist leadership with a view to driving away the Arab population of Palestine and establishing the so-called "State of the Jewish people". There were documents in the archives of the Israeli Government which showed that the displacement of the Palestinian people had been ordered by the Zionist military and political leadership. That fact had been established by Benny Morris, the diplomatic correspondent of The Jerusalem Post, who had studied various official archives and published his findings recently. There were also other authoritative sources which exposed the extent of Israel's responsibility for the displacement of the Palestinian people. The United Nations had recognized the human dimension of the problem as well as the need for the international community to assume responsibility for that tragedy. According to the Agency's latest statistics, there were 2,145,794 registered Palestinian refugees scattered throughout Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and Israel, not to mention those who were not registered.

19. The legal aspect of the question was reflected in the resolutions adopted each year for the dual purpose of alleviating the plight of the refugees, by endeavouring to integrate them in the economic fabric of the Middle East, and of

(Mr. Shikir, United Arab Emirates)

demanding that they be allowed to return to their homes in Palestine or be compensated for their losses. The political aspect of the question was linked to the establishment of the State of Israel and could be traced back to the days of the British Mandate.

20. Israel was still determined to drive away the Palestinian Arabs and liquidate them economically, politically and culturally. It was for that reason that it was trying to frustrate UNRWA's nutrition, educational and health programmes by destroying the infrastructure of the refugee camps, especially those of UNRWA as had been reported by the Commissioner-General. However, Israel had gone even further than that in June 1982, during its barbaric onslaught against Lebanon, whose ultimate political and strategic objective had been to eradicate the Palestinian presence in the Middle East altogether in the hope of liquidating the crux of the Arab-Israeli conflict, namely the question of Palestine.

21. The Palestinian refugees in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were subjected to the same treatment as those in Lebanon. Their shelters were constantly being destroyed and they were being driven away from their homes and property. Israel often closed universities and schools for long periods, ordered the dismissal of teachers and lecturers and prohibited the circulation of books. That policy merely exacerbated the refugee problem.

22. The plight of the Palestinian people was imputable to the creation of the Zionist Movement and the establishment of Israel, and was being perpetuated by Israel's disregard for the resolutions of the United Nations. However, the situation was made even worse by the gradual reduction of the amount of services provided by UNRWA, coupled with its annual deficit which reflected the unwillingness of certain Western States to contribute to its budget despite their responsibility for the refugee problem and the establishment of the State of Israel. The Arab host countries were doing their best to provide the Palestine refugees with assistance, housing and employment, although moral and political responsibility for the situation rested upon those who had taken part in the creation of Israel. Indeed, those States must force Israel to allow the refugees to return to their homes and property in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, and ensure that the Organization discharged its humanitarian and political obligations towards the Palestinian refugees until a comprehensive settlement was worked out.

23. Mr. IDRIS (Sudan) said that, despite the commendable efforts made by the Commissioner-General, the Secretary-General and the Working Group and despite the improvement of the Agency's financial situation, the question of the Palestine refugees, which had been pending for 38 years, had yet to be settled. On the contrary, since 1948 the number of refugees had increased from about 750,000 to 2,140,000 according to the Commissioner-General's report. Furthermore, the living conditions of the refugees had deteriorated, as illustrated by paragraphs 13 to 16 of the Commissioner-General's report, which described the plight of the refugees living in the Gaza Strip. The refugees were being subjected to increasing hardship as a result of the deliberate policy pursued by the Israeli authorities, which destroyed refugee camps in occupied Palestine and in South Lebanon.

(Mr. Idris, Sudan)

24. The exacerbation of the question of the Palestine refugees throughout the past 40 years was clearly related to the establishment of the State of Israel and its policy of repeated armed aggression against the Palestinian people in Palestine and in the neighbouring States, of disregard for the resolutions adopted by the international community and of terrorizing the Palestine refugees in order to drive them out and make way for Jewish settlers from abroad. To that end, the houses of Palestinians had been destroyed, settlements had been set up around the Palestinian camps in the occupied territories, and families had been displaced.

25. The question under consideration was primarily a political one which had been created by the international community when it had decided to set up the Zionist entity in 1948. It was therefore the responsibility of the international community to settle the question under the auspices of the United Nations, with the participation of the PLO with a view to enabling the Palestinian people to exercise its legitimate right to self-determination and establish an independent State in Palestine.

26. Sudan had supported the Palestinian people since 1948 and would continue to do so, especially in the field of education, by offering education grants through its sole legitimate representative, namely, the Palestine Liberation Organization. Those annual grants covered university and post-graduate academic and technical studies in Sudanese institutes and universities in various fields, including medicine, agriculture, economics and social studies. An agreement had recently been concluded between the Government of Sudan and the Chairman of the PLO, providing for the establishment of a Palestinian university for Palestine refugees in Khartoum, with the assistance of UNESCO.

27. UNRWA must continue to provide its services to the Palestinian refugees until a just and comprehensive settlement could be reached to restore peace in Palestine. The international community as a whole was responsible for financing the Agency's activities. However, the Agency should not have to depend on government contributions alone and serious thought should be given to securing a stable source of financing.

28. Mr. MAKSOUD (Observer, League of Arab States) said that the statement made at the previous meeting by the Israeli delegate had contained many half-truths that required a response from the Committee. Israel wanted to wish the Palestine refugee question away. That would give it a free hand to "Judaize" the Arab territories, as the Zionist Movement had always sought.

29. The Israeli delegate had raised the question whether Palestinians would always remain refugees and whether UNRWA should assist them permanently. If the relevant United Nations resolutions were implemented, they would no longer be refugees but citizens of a Palestinian State. The refugee problem must therefore be resolved expeditiously. The problem remained because Israel consistently refused to allow the refugees to return home or to grant them compensation.

30. Contrary to the statement of the Israeli delegation, the issue was not the absorption of refugees, but their right of self-determination. Jews who had left Arab lands had done so voluntarily, and any Arab Jew who wanted to return to his

(Mr. Maksoud, Observer,
League of Arab States)

Arab home could do so. He challenged Israel to grant the same right and compensation to the Arabs whom it had evicted. Their right of return had been denied because they were not Jews. Israel was predicated on a racist ideology that excluded non-Jews. If any other State applied the same criteria to Jews that Israel applied to non-Jews, it would rightly be condemned as anti-semitic.

31. Claiming that the PLO was a terrorist organization flew in the face of reality. The PLO was the sole legitimate representative of Palestine in the absence of a Palestinian State. All Palestinians were part of the PLO, and UNRWA must therefore deal with it. With regard to transfer of population, it was incorrect to make comparisons with what had occurred in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh because, in the case of the partition plan calling for a Jewish State and a Palestinian State, no Arab State had emerged.

32. The Israeli delegate had claimed that zionism was the very essence of Jewishness. But hundreds of thousands of Jews were not Zionists and considered that zionism interfered with their integration in the countries of which they were citizens.

33. The current Prime Minister of Israel had said on one occasion that Soviet citizens who were Jews should be mobilized and brought to Israel. That statement was in striking contrast to the attitude of Israel towards the Palestinian Arabs who could not return to their homeland. In one sense it was true that the Palestine refugees were refugees in their own country; in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria there were more than 2 million Palestinians having refugee status, thus compounding the tragedy that a person on his own territory was a refugee because he was denied the political, legal and human right to exercise the right to self-determination. That was why UNRWA remained the necessary framework to address the humanitarian consequences of that political and historical tragedy.

34. At the end of the Second World War, Israel had insisted on the near-permanency of reparations for Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany. It might well be asked why the Palestinian Arabs had been denied their right to repatriation and reparations. In the aftermath of the Holocaust and the Second World War, Israel could say that it would forget what the Western world had done to the Jews in the past provided the question of what Israel was doing to the Arabs in Palestine was not raised. It was within the context of that mutual absolution process that Israel was aiming at the ultimate elimination of UNRWA which was a reminder that Israel was guilty on the issue of the Palestinian people.

35. Notwithstanding its basic reservations regarding the issue of UNRWA and the continued status of the refugees, the Arab world wanted to expedite the historical turn by which the question of UNRWA and the refugees would be resolved. It was for that reason that the League of Arab States had advocated the need for an international conference within the framework of the United Nations at which all outstanding questions in the Middle East would be simultaneously and comprehensively resolved, on the basis of Israel's withdrawal from all Arab territories and the exercise by the Palestinian people of its right to self-determination.

36. Mr. BAALI (Algeria), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that, instead of seeking refuge in rhetoric, the representative of Israel should respond to the substantive accusations that had been made against his régime, which was responsible for the plight of the Palestinian people.
37. Algeria has always condemned acts of terrorism such as the State terrorism of Israel and South Africa in the same way as it had rejected the association of terrorism with the struggle for self-determination in southern Africa, Palestine and the occupied Arab territories. Israel had no right to make accusations on the issue of terrorism in view of the assassination of Count Bernadotte and Lord Moyne and the bombing of the King David Hotel. The Zionist delegate was attempting to rewrite history in order to deny refugee status to Palestinians. The people of Palestine living in camps would nevertheless eventually regain the land of their ancestors.
38. Mr. DOWEK (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the Arab delegations had made it clear that the problem, from their point of view, was not one of refugees but one of self-determination and that the refugee issue was to be kept alive until the creation of an independent Palestinian State on the whole territory of the former Palestine Mandate, under the leadership of the PLO, which had been referred to as the legitimate and sole representative of the Palestinian people. If that was their goal, then UNRWA would have to continue its activities indefinitely.
39. Self-determination was the right of a people to choose its course freely and could not be exercised in a manner predetermined by others. It might well be asked what kind of self-determination would forbid the Palestinian Arabs to choose their leadership freely but would impose on them the sole leadership of a terrorist organization which they had never elected and which forbade them, as individuals and as a group, to speak or even think differently than the PLO without risking being assassinated and which demanded the elimination of two sovereign and independent States, namely, Jordan and Israel, which had been Members of the United Nations almost since its inception. Israel rejected such a weird concept of self-determination.
40. Israel did not deny that Palestinian Arabs had legitimate rights, including the right to participate in the determination of their own futures. On the contrary, Israel had assumed clear-cut commitments to that effect in the Camp David Accord. Not even the United Nations could impose on the Palestinians a particular leadership by repeating endlessly that the so-called PLO, a federation of terrorist organizations, was their legitimate and sole representative. Israel was more than willing to talk with the true representatives of the Palestinian Arabs but it would have nothing to do with a self-styled leadership which was manipulated by foreign interests and which had made out of indiscriminate terror and bloodshed its only means of action.
41. Israel was ready, at any time, to conduct negotiations with a view to reaching a binding agreement for a comprehensive solution to the fundamental problems which were at the core of the conflict in the Middle East, on the following bases: acceptance of the State of Israel, within recognized and secure boundaries, by its Arab neighbours; determination of the manner in which the Palestinian Arabs were to

(Mr. Dowek, Israel)

fulfil their just requirements; and the establishment of a just and lasting peace. In the mean time, Israel had committed itself to grant full autonomy to the Palestinian Arabs and to withdraw its military Government and civilian administration as soon as a self-governing administrative council was freely elected and established by the Palestinian Arab inhabitants of Judea, Samaria and the Gaza district.

42. The Arab countries had no genuine interest in the plight of the Palestinians or in the creation of peaceful conditions that would at long last fulfil their rightful aspirations and allow them to lead a normal and rewarding life. Those countries had no qualms about sacrificing the well-being and the future of the Palestinians on the altar of their own interests. The PLO and other terrorist organizations were no less ruthless and had openly adopted violence as their sole policy. Since 1947, the current PLO heads and their predecessors had ruined every prospect for solving the Palestinian problem; instead, they had sown destruction and reaped tragedy; they had threatened the well-being of Jordan, destroyed Lebanon and were currently trying to destroy the chances of dialogue with Jordan and with a Palestinian representation committed to peace and peaceful coexistence.

43. Mr. ÖRN (Sweden), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that it had been alleged that the financial contributions of countries to UNRWA were proportionate to their responsibility for the existence of the problem of the Palestine refugees. Sweden had always been one of the largest contributors to UNRWA, but those contributions had been made on humanitarian grounds and to demonstrate his country's solidarity with the Palestine refugees. He hoped that others would act in the same way regardless of any involvement in the creation of the problem.

44. Mr. TERZI (Observer, Palestine Liberation Organization) said that the Palestinians had no problem with Jews as such; the refugee problem in the Middle East stemmed purely from the racist approach of the Israeli authorities. Israel, by occupying the Palestine homeland, had denied the Palestinian Arabs the basic condition for self-determination. Israel had expelled or blown up a number of elected officials and had replaced them with its own people. The representative of Israel had said that the State of Israel must be accepted, within recognized and secure boundaries, by its Arab neighbours. A question which arose in that connection was where exactly the boundaries of Israel lay. Ben Gurion had said that Israel extended as far as the Israeli army could reach.

45. On 6 June 1948, the Foreign Minister of Israel had instructed the Director-General of Information that it must not be understood that, once the war was over, the refugees would have the right to return. Other senior Israeli officials had, over the years, taken unequivocal stands against returning the Arab refugees to their lands, alleging that the Arabs were responsible for their own plight and could not be allowed to return as they would represent a dangerous fifth column and would cost too much. There had, however, been some wise people in Israel. On 21 July 1948, the Minister of Agriculture had warned that Israel did not appreciate the type of enemy it was creating outside its borders and, on another occasion, in a letter in which he had referred to Israeli atrocities during the conquest, he had stated that Jews were behaving like Nazis, that such behaviour

(Mr. Terzi, Observer, PLO)

should be concealed from the public but must nevertheless be investigated. A question which arose was whether there would be any refugees if it had not been for those Nazi-like crimes. The PLO believed that the Palestinians were determined to maintain their struggle for self-determination and for the right to return to their homes in peace.

46. Mr. SHIKIR (United Arab Emirates), in exercise of the right to reply, said that the shrinkage in UNRWA resources had occurred because some Western States did not contribute in proportion to the level of their responsibility. Basic responsibility for funding lay with those who had helped to create the State of Israel, and they should contribute proportionately to the cost of resolving the Arab refugee problem.

47. Mr. GLAIEL (Syrian Arab Republic) said that he wished to invite attention to the press releases which had been issued during the two preceding days. In that connection, he proposed to raise the issue of the loyalty and supposed integrity of United Nations staff members when the Committee came to consider agenda item 74 on questions relating to information.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.