



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 14th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KOUASSI (Togo)

later: Mr. IRTEMCELIK (Turkey)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 75: UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (continued)

- (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. Mr. ABLOU GHEIT (Egypt) said that the situation of UNRWA had changed significantly since the previous year, notably because of the stabilization of the financing of the Agency and the balancing of its income and expenditure. In that connection, the administrative work done by the Commissioner-General and also his political skills were commendable. The efforts made by the Agency's staff also deserved appreciation.

2. His delegation reiterated its support for the measures proposed by the Commissioner-General with a view to elaborating three-year medium-term plans to be financed on an annual basis. It was hoped that the international community would increase its annual contributions to the budget of the Agency, as called for in the report of the Commissioner-General (A/41/13 and Add.1). Egypt supported the priorities set by the Agency, namely education, training and public health care. However, relief operations must not be neglected, especially in view of the difficult conditions confronting the refugees in the occupied territories.

3. His delegation was in favour of the extension of the Agency's mandate for another term. However, although UNRWA should continue to perform its task until a just solution could be worked out in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Agency was by its very nature a temporary body and must not be regarded as a final solution to the refugee problem.

4. Egypt was endeavouring to initiate negotiations between the parties concerned within the framework of an international peace conference aimed at working out a just, comprehensive and permanent settlement in the Middle East, covering all the aspects of the question of Palestine, because the situation as it stood jeopardized not only the future of the Palestine refugees but also those who opposed the idea of a just settlement and denied the Palestinian people its legitimate rights. Egypt condemned Israel's attacks against the Palestine refugee camps in Lebanon. The deterioration of conditions in those camps was a direct result of Israeli intervention in the affairs of Lebanon. Interference with the refugee camps in Lebanon must stop.

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(Mr. Aboul Gheit, Egypt)

5. In view of the situation in the refugee camps in the occupied territories, the international community must adopt a resolute position to force the occupying Power to stop its policy of oppression against the inhabitants of the camps. Attempts to put more pressure on the Palestinian people only exacerbated the bitterness and anger of the Palestinian fighters. Israel bore full responsibility in that respect. It must put an end to its policy of collective punishment and stop destroying the houses of refugees and imposing curfews on the camps. Israel must also stop harrassing the staff of the Agency. It had been hoped that the Agency's report would reflect an improvement in the attitude of the occupation authorities towards co-operation with the Agency, in terms of the assistance and services provided to the refugees, but the only improvements reported were the disclosure of information on UNRWA staff who had been arrested and the fact that UNRWA officials were being allowed to visit them in prison. In that connection, the commitment of the Agency's staff in Lebanon was commendable.

6. The situation with regard to economic and living conditions in the Gaza Strip and in the other occupied territories, as described in the Agency's report, was unacceptable, and remedial action must be taken. Israel's responsibility in that respect was undeniable. All the Arab States must help the Palestinian population of the occupied territories to resist Israeli pressure, and prepare it for the aftermath of occupation. Egypt, for its part, would continue to work for a settlement of the conflict in the Middle East, with a view to enabling the Palestinian people to exercise its rights in full.

7. Mr. Irtemcelik, Turkey, took the Chair.

8. Mr. ENDO (Japan) said that the dual nature of the Agency's role as the administrator of humanitarian assistance in the Middle East and as a sorely needed stabilizing factor in that troubled region made it an especially valuable institution. His delegation was relieved to note that UNRWA's deficit for the 1985 fiscal year was considerably smaller than had been anticipated, but, despite positive financial developments, efforts should not be slackened to improve the efficiency of operations. In particular, many donor countries continued to face serious problems in their domestic economies, and their support for UNRWA must not be taken for granted.

9. The three-year medium-term financial plan would help donor countries gain a clearer understanding of the Agency's future programmes and financial needs. The importance of realistic financial plans, in which expenditures corresponded to available resources, could not be overemphasized. Japan's cash contributions over the period 1965-1985 had amounted to \$64 million, and the food assistance granted since 1967 was valued at \$42 million. Despite a strict austerity policy, his Government had decided to increase its cash contribution to UNRWA for 1986 by half a million dollars, for a total contribution of \$9.5 million.

10. UNRWA's financing was beset by an inherent contradiction: its expenditures were to an increasing extent determined by fixed commitments, while its income was dependent on voluntary contributions which could fluctuate from year to year. His

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(Mr. Endo, Japan)

Government hoped that the international community would recognize the difficulties arising from that uncertainty and ensure that UNRWA was able to continue its activities at an adequate level. The Agency should strengthen its efforts to persuade all Member States that their financial support was absolutely crucial. Additional support would be needed in 1987.

11. Mrs. MIAO (China) said that despite harsh and deteriorating working conditions, the Agency had made new progress over the past year in providing the Palestine refugees with services and had won recognition from the international community.

12. Her delegation was very much concerned about the insecure financial resources confronting the Agency. The international community and, in particular, the developed countries should give greater attention to that question and make further collective efforts accordingly. China would also continue its bilateral assistance to the Palestinian people.

13. The Chinese delegation once again conveyed the sympathy and moral solidarity of the Chinese people with the Palestinian people. Israel's refusal to recognize the national rights of the Palestinian people and the continuing Israeli occupation of Palestinian and other Arab territories was the root cause of the 40 years of misery suffered by the Palestinian people. A settlement of the Palestine refugee problem and the Middle East question was contingent upon the halting of Israeli aggression and expansion, the withdrawal of Israel from all Arab territories occupied since 1967 and the respect and restoration of the national rights of the Palestinian people.

14. Mr. TELLMANN (Norway) said that a seemingly endless cycle of violence in Lebanon was taking a terrible toll among the Lebanese and refugee populations alike. His delegation commended UNRWA for having been able to keep most Agency installations running and hoped that the situation in Lebanon would improve so that operations that had been closed down might be allowed to reopen. His Government appealed to all parties to exercise respect for UNRWA's facilities and employees and to extend their full support to the agency's activities.

15. His delegation voiced concern about the deteriorating situation of the refugees living in the Gaza Strip and hoped that the situation could be redressed through increased support to UNRWA by the international community and the parties involved.

16. His delegation was pleased to note that UNRWA had so far managed to weather the financial storm. In the absence of further contributions, the deficit in 1986 for the General Fund was expected to be about \$2 million. Although austerity measures would have to be applied in the coming years also, they could not go below a certain threshold without damaging the Agency's operations and worsening the plight of the refugees. UNRWA must therefore have sufficient financial support for 1987.

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(Mr. Tellmann, Norway)

17. His Government was pleased to announce the appropriation of a special contribution of 2 million Norwegian kroner in 1986, bringing Norway's total contribution for 1986 to Nkr 66 million, or approximately \$US 8.9 million.

18. His delegation believed that the medium-term financial plan represented a first effort to establish a secure financing for UNRWA on a multi-year basis.

19. It was the responsibility of the entire international community to shoulder the financing of UNRWA, and all countries should pay their fair share. The Agency must be able to continue its important task until the Palestinian problem had found a lasting political solution.

20. Mr. DOWEK (Israel) reiterated the support of the Government of Israel for the humanitarian action undertaken by UNRWA. However, the problem of the Palestinian refugees had been created and exacerbated by the Arab States and was maintained intentionally for political reasons.

21. Having gone through the proceedings of the Special Political Committee from the previous years, he had come to realize that hatred was boundless and what had been called for was nothing less than the wiping off the map of the State of Israel and the obliteration of its people. As a Jew, an Israeli and an active Zionist, he could, by virtue of innumerable United Nations resolutions, be locked up and put on trial for numerous charges ranging from war crimes to genocide, as well as for terrorism, which had been recognized in the Committee as a legitimate means of struggle. While the representative of the Palestine Liberation Organization participated in the debates, his organization could continue, in full conformity with the relevant United Nations resolutions, to terrorize the civilian population in Israel and elsewhere, assassinating women and children, international peace-keeping soldiers and fellow Palestinians alike and attacking synagogues and blowing up planes. It could collaborate openly with international terrorism and its so-called "freedom fighters" in other countries, and could even continue to fight among its various factions, transforming refugee camps into terrorist bases and using thousands of innocent Palestinians in the UNRWA camps as pawns. Such things would never be even hinted at in the reports before the Committee.

22. There seemed to be various definitions for the word refugee, with different rights accorded to different refugees. In order to be considered a refugee by UNRWA, the only criterion which had to be met was that a person should be a Palestinian Arab, or have resided more than two years in Palestine and not be Jewish. Place of birth, current residence, factual nationality, and economic and social conditions were not relevant, nor was the time factor; no limitations whatsoever were allowed, not even death. If the same criteria had been applied to the 850,000 Jews who had had to flee for their lives from Arab lands, he himself would still be considered a refugee and would enjoy international assistance in addition to his salary as Ambassador to the United Nations. The same would be true for the survivors of the Holocaust who could not or would not return to their countries of origin or for the White Russians or the refugees from wars and internal strife in Pakistan, India and Bangladesh as well as Finns and Germans and millions of other individuals who had had to flee their country of origin.

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(Mr. Dowek, Israel)

23. The Palestine refugees were even considered to be refugees in their own country, Jordan. Those Palestinians were nevertheless Jordanian citizens with rights and duties equal to those of all other citizens of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The same was true of Palestinians residing in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza district who not only lived in their own homes but also enjoyed fairly good economic and living conditions and quasi-full employment. The 226,000 refugees in Syria registered with UNRWA could no longer be regarded as true refugees, and almost all had houses, jobs, income and education. Even those who were still in the camps lived as well as they had lived in their villages in Palestine. The refugees had no incentive to leave the camps. According to a study published recently in the Arab weekly Al Watan Al Arabi, 50 per cent of the underprivileged Palestinians in Lebanon resided outside the refugee camps like any other Lebanese citizen, worked successfully in all fields of the economy and had even established factories, workshops and commercial enterprises.

24. Refugee status should not be confused with national aspirations. National aspirations should not be the key to the acquisition of refugee status and should certainly not condition the perpetuation of an agency such as UNRWA, which had been specially designed to prevent the solution of the Palestinian so-called refugee problem, rather than to solve it. Initially, UNRWA's working definition of a Palestine refugee had been a needy person who, as a result of the war in Palestine, had lost his home and livelihood. Over the years, under heavy Arab pressure, the definition of the term Palestine refugee had been widened to apply to a person whose normal residence had been Palestine for a minimum of two years preceding the conflict in 1948 and who, as a result of that conflict, had lost both his home and livelihood and had taken refuge in one of the countries where UNRWA was active; refugees within that definition and their direct descendants were eligible for UNRWA assistance if they were registered as living in the area of UNRWA operations and in need. Although the concept of being in need had been retained, it had become secondary and in practice had been completely discarded. The target was not to alleviate the alleged plight of the Palestinians but to bribe them into staying in the camps, thus perpetuating their refugee condition and thus serving the interest of the PLO, using and misusing the camps for their own purposes.

25. Initially, UNRWA had tried to promote development, public works and other projects leading to resettlement. It had committed itself to two major schemes - the Yarmouk-Jordan Valley Project and the Sinai Development Project - which had offered the tantalizing prospect of resettling almost 300,000 refugees out of the 600,000 who had been incited by the Arab Government to leave their homes. Those projects had never come to fruition, and, already in 1955, Arab pressure had brought UNRWA to foresake any idea of implementing positive and permanent solutions that would allow the refugees to become self-supporting and that might lead to the termination of their refugee status. Inexplicably, the registered refugee population had increased by 400,000 persons, and UNRWA had transformed itself into an immense specialized agency with a staff of 17,000 people and an annual budget of \$200 million, with the sole task of extending health, educational and welfare services, in the place of the local Governments whose duty it was to provide those services. The Arab delegations had made it clear that they would never allow UNRWA

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(Mr. Dowek, Israel)

to disappear and indeed, at the Special Political Committee's twenty-second meeting at the fortieth session, the Syrian delegate had stated that the Agency must not be used for eliminating the question of the Palestine refugees.

26. The PLO's involvement with the UNRWA camps, some of which it had taken over completely, illustrated the extent to which the Agency had become enmeshed in the politics of the Middle East. Over the years, UNRWA's overall direct expenditure had reached almost \$3 billion, equivalent in current values to \$12 to \$15 billion, most of which had gone down the drain in wages and salaries with very little having been invested to create an infrastructure that would lead the refugees to become self-supporting and constructive elements of society. The refugee camps had gradually lost their initial connotation and had become normal quarters at the edge of the cities, inhabited by all strata of the Palestinian population. Most of the original genuine refugees had succeeded in promoting themselves to affluence and had moved to high-income areas where they had become completely integrated into the neighbourhood in which they lived. According to UNRWA's own statistics, only 35.23 per cent of the registered refugee population was currently living in the camps. UNRWA had made enormous efforts over the years to eliminate persons who no longer qualified for rations, including absentees and the dead, and to make ineligible for health and education services those whose known income rendered them wholly self-supporting. In the face of obstruction and even hostility from the refugees and the security concerns of host Governments, UNRWA had never been able to correct the legacy of inflated registration inherited from the chaotic emergency conditions in which the dispensation of relief had been organized in 1948-1949. Hannah Siniora, a leading Palestinian editor of the Arabic-language daily in Jerusalem, had stated clearly that the camps, the schools and the clinics were a symbol indicating that UNRWA's work would be over when the Palestinian State was created and not before.

27. The problem of the Palestine refugees was not only humanitarian, it was also political. Israel nevertheless welcomed increased financial, technical, cultural and economic assistance to the Palestinian Arabs so long as such assistance was extended for constructive purposes and channelled through the legitimate organs. The more that was done in that regard, the better it would be for the cause of peace and of peaceful coexistence between Arabs and Jews. What was really needed was an overall effort to allow those Palestinians who had not yet been able by their own means to promote themselves socially and economically, to do so with the active assistance of the world community.

28. The process of human restructuring through economic progress and social integration was already well-advanced. Jewish refugees from Arab lands had become an integral part of the Israeli nation and were participating in the development and well-being of the country. The Palestinian Arabs on both sides of the Jordan and in the Middle East in general were going through the same process. Within a reasonable time, it could be completed but for extraneous intervention by those who had a greater stake in strife and war than in peace, progress and peaceful coexistence.

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(Mr. Dowek, Israel)

29. The destruction of Israel, as a pre-condition for allowing the world community to remove from its agenda the quasi-non-existent problem of Palestine refugees, was not a solution acceptable to Israel. By the simple realities of geography, all the peoples of the Middle East, including the Palestinian Arabs, were bound to live together. They had therefore no alternative but to find, through negotiation, pragmatic and feasible solutions to all pending issues, including mutual compensation for the exchange of populations which had taken place in the region in the wake of the onslaught of seven Arab armies on Israel. All parties concerned must, sooner or later, reach a pragmatic compromise based on good faith and good will, acceptable to all parties concerned, including the Palestinian Arabs. Israel was ready to go to great lengths to achieve a real and lasting peace, based on justice and fairness, that would allow all peoples in the region to live and develop in security and freedom, according to their own values and traditions.

30. Mr. GLAIEL (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the statement made by the representative of the Zionist entity had consisted only of lies and misrepresentations. In fact, it was unfortunate that he was being allowed to attend the meeting and discuss the assistance provided by UNRWA. His attempts to absolve Israel from responsibility for the refugee problem and blame Arab leaders instead were unacceptable and irrational. Indeed, there was much evidence indicating that the Zionist entity had plans to depopulate the Arab lands in order to make way for Jewish settlements.

31. The fact that there were Palestinians living in Syria did not imply that they no longer had the right to return to their homeland. Claims to that effect were unacceptable. Lastly, Syria was not hostile to Jews or any other religious group; it was opposed to zionism only.

32. Mr. AL-SHANFARI (Oman), speaking in exercise of the right of reply and in his capacity as representative of the Chairman of the Group of Arab States, rejected the claim that it was the Arab States which had created and were perpetuating the refugee problem for political reasons. Israel's tribute to UNRWA, coupled with its disregard for the resolutions of the United Nations, was an insult to the intelligence of participants in the meeting. The Group of Arab States, for its part, supported all the relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

33. Mr. MANSOUR (Observer, Palestine Liberation Organization), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the Zionist representative's implication that the PLO was not to be taken seriously and did not represent the Palestinian people was an insult to all the participants present.

34. Turning to the question of terrorism, he said that the State terrorism practised by the Zionist entity was particularly evident in Lebanon, where many refugee camps had been attacked, not to mention the massacres that had been perpetrated in Sabra and Shatila in 1982 at the instigation of the former Minister of Defence, Mr. Sharon. The representative of the Zionist entity should not attempt to divert attention from those facts by discussing other matters, because the Zionist entity was responsible for the refugee problem - a fact which was even substantiated by information from Zionist sources.

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(Mr. Mansour, Observer, PLO)

35. The Zionist representative had failed to mention the long list of acts of State terrorism carried out by Israel against the Palestinian people and had tried to demonstrate that Israel had had nothing to do with the creation of the refugee problem itself. In that connection, he cited two Zionist sources which directly indicated the responsibility of Israel for the refugee problem. The first, a report written by a former leader of the Israeli United Workers Party (Mapam) on the emigration of the Arabs of Palestine during the period from December 1947 to June 1948, provided information on the number of refugees, the causes of the emigration, the destination of the refugees, and the problem of their initial absorption in the host countries. That report concluded that 70 per cent of the Palestine refugees had left because of the military operations carried out by Haganah, the Israeli army and other Jewish groups. Another 10 per cent had fled in panic. The second source was a newspaper interview in October 1985 in which the former National Secretary of the United Workers Party (Mapam) had stated that the flight of the Palestinian Arabs had been caused by Jewish political and military leaders who had felt that Zionist colonization and statehood required the transfer of the Arab population from Israel to neighbouring Arab States.

36. The economic situation of the Palestinian people in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip was not as wonderful as the Zionist representative would have the Committee believe. There were numerous sources which testified to the deteriorating conditions in those areas, particularly in the Gaza Strip. A recent report indicated that the economic growth of the Gaza Strip had decreased while the dependence of its inhabitants on the Israeli economy had increased.

37. Mr. BURAYZAT (Jordan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the Israeli representative had failed to investigate what Israel had been doing against the Palestine refugees and the Arab States. He should not have complained about the United Nations, which had demonstrated its generosity and the benevolence with regard to Israel. The Israeli representative had claimed that he had found hatred in United Nations resolutions and documents. In actual fact, the Zionists had brought hatred and terror to Palestine. In his book The Evasive Peace, Mr. John H. Davis, a former Commissioner-General of UNRWA, described Palestine before the establishment of the State of Israel as a land of basic religious tolerance and tranquillity.

38. Contrary to what the Israeli representative had stated, the task of UNRWA was not to solve the problem of the Palestine refugees, but rather to provide assistance and relief to them until Israel allowed them to return to their homeland. The responsibility for solving the Palestine refugee problem, therefore, lay with Israel, not with the Agency and the Arab States. The Israel representative had asked whether a refugee could still remain a refugee after 40 years. If he had had the proper moral perspective, he would have asked whether an occupying Power should be allowed to prolong the refugee status of a group for 40 years.

39. Since he mistakenly viewed the refugee problem as one to be solved by the Agency and the Arab countries, the representative of Israel had failed to

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(Mr. Burayzat, Jordan)

understand that his country, which had created the problem, bore direct responsibility for finding a solution to it. The 800,000 Palestine refugees in Jordan were treated as human beings. The temporary assistance and relief which his Government provided to them did not mean that the refugee problem should be solved at the expense of Jordan.

40. Mr. DOWEK (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the representative of Syria and other Arab representatives had intentionally tried to ignore the distinction between blind terrorism and the armed struggle commonly known as guerrilla warfare. In that connection, it was difficult to establish a constructive dialogue with Syria, a country which had participated in planning the bombing of a civilian aircraft carrying 350 innocent persons, a country whose Government had made terrorism, kidnapping and hostage bartering its main weapon of political blackmail.

41. The Israeli Government totally rejected the use of terrorism to achieve political goals, which amounted to nothing more than the law of the jungle. In that regard, he stressed that the cause of a liberation struggle could not be invoked to legitimize the use of terrorism against civilian populations. Terrorists were outlaws who considered that they had the inalienable right to use abject and repugnant means to achieve their ends.

42. Mr. GLAIEL (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking on a point of order, asked whether the representative of Israel was discussing the question under consideration or that of international terrorism.

43. Mr. DOWEK, speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that his remarks on terrorism also applied to Palestinian terrorism. No distinction could be made between Jewish victims of terrorism and victims of other nationalities. There was no difference between terrorist activities in Israel or the administered territories and terrorist activities anywhere else in the world.

44. Mr. GLAIEL (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the representative of Israel was employing prevarication in order to divert attention from the basic issue under consideration. Furthermore, the attempted bombing of the civilian aircraft referred to had been a sinister Zionist plot aimed at misleading British public opinion.

45. Mr. DOWEK (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that from 1 January 1984 to 30 June 1985, 593 terrorist acts had been committed in the world. Of that number only 12 had been perpetrated in Israel. The number of terrorist organizations, most of which had close ties with the Palestine Liberation Organization and some of which were given training on Syrian soil, was now no fewer than 35. The international community must join forces to eradicate that scourge of humanity. His Government would not condone terrorism in any form, even when it was conducted under the guise of a struggle for self-determination or thought to be legitimized through the United Nations. The Palestine refugee camps were being used as terrorist bases. What the Arab representatives referred to as a liberation struggle was nothing more than terrorism plain and simple.

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46. Mr. MANSOUR (Observer, Palestine Liberation Organization), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that his delegation supported the call for joining forces against terrorism. In 1985, however, Israel had voted against a General Assembly resolution condemning State terrorism and individual terrorism. That was another example of Zionist hypocrisy. Referring to the question under consideration, he said that the solution to the problem of the Palestine refugees lay in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 194 (III). Israel was the only party to the conflict which refused to implement that resolution and allow the Palestine refugees to return to their homeland. The way to achieve a just and comprehensive settlement was to convene an International Peace Conference on the Middle East in accordance with General Assembly resolution 38/58 C. If the Zionist Government really wanted peace it would co-operate with the United Nations to that end.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.