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Chairman : Mr. Selim SARPER (Turkey).

Palestine : (b) Assistance to Palestine refugees : report of the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (A/1905, A/1905/Add.1, A/AC.53/L.35) (continued)

[Item 24]*

1. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the request for a hearing, dated 18 January 1952, addressed to the Chairman of the *Ad Hoc* Political Committee by Mr. Izzat Tannous, General Secretary of the representatives of the Palestine Arab refugees in Lebanon. Copies had been distributed to delegations as document A/AC.53/L.35. He asked whether the Committee agreed to hear the representative of the Arab refugees.

2. Mr. EBAN (Israel) said that his delegation entered no objection to the request that Mr. Izzat Tannous should be heard. It considered, however, that in such cases the Committee should satisfy itself that the person concerned was in possession of proper credentials. He would not press the point, as all members of the Committee knew that Mr. Tannous was the qualified representative of the Palestine Arabs in Lebanon.

3. Mr. PATIJN (Netherlands) asked whether similar requests had been received from other representatives of the Arab refugees. If so, it was to be feared that the hearings would take a great deal of the Committee's limited time.

4. Mr. CHOUKAYRI (Syria) said that the representative of the Palestine refugees in Lebanon was in the Committee room. He had no information that other organizations had asked for a hearing.

5. Mr. AL-JAMALI (Iraq) wished to say in reply to the Netherlands representative that time should be no

object when it was a question of the Committee obtaining information and taking decisions in harmony with truth and justice.

6. Mr. PATIJN (Netherlands) said that he was satisfied with the Syrian representative's explanation, and was willing to hear Mr. Tannous' statement.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Izzat Tannous, General Secretary of the representatives of the Palestine Arab refugees in Lebanon, took a place at the committee table.

7. Mr. TUAN (China) said that all the speakers had expressed their sympathy for the plight of the Arab refugees. Generally speaking, men seemed to feel more compassion in situations resulting from natural disasters than in those created by political events ; for example, the International Red Cross and voluntary organizations never failed to come to the rescue of victims of natural catastrophes. Yet, when, as in the case of the Palestine refugees, political events had disastrous consequences for large numbers of individuals, no less zeal should be shown in seeking remedies and affording aid to the victims. That was the task of the United Nations. It was the responsibility of the United Nations to find a just solution to the problem of the Palestine refugees.

8. The circumstances of the case were, briefly, as follows. The Arab refugees, whose ancestors had always lived in Palestine, had been forced to leave their homes as a result of political events for which they were in no way responsible. It was, therefore, a matter of elementary justice that the principle of repatriating those refugees who wished to return to their homes should be accepted. In addition, those refugees ought to recover their property or be paid fair compensation ; and those who would not return to Palestine ought *a fortiori* to be compensated. The choice between repatriation or resettlement in another country was a practical question which should be decided in the light of the refugees' interests.

* Indicates the item number on the General Assembly agenda.

9. The draft resolution submitted by France, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States (A/AC.53/L.34) needed clarification in a number of respects. In the first place, the three-year programme should be carried out without prejudice to the application of the principle of repatriation, which was a matter of justice. The situation being urgent, however, the relief programme should be applied concurrently with the principle of repatriation.

10. In addition, no programme of assistance and economic development could be carried out without the approval and co-operation of the Governments concerned. The Chinese delegation would vote for any new draft resolution, replacing that which the four Powers had withdrawn, if it took those principles into account.

11. The refugee problem was the most important of all those arising in connexion with Palestine; once it was settled all other questions would probably solve themselves. The Chinese delegation therefore urged the United Nations to take promptly the decisive measures necessary to discharge the responsibilities morally incumbent upon it.

12. Mr. CASTRO (El Salvador) felt obliged to intervene in a debate that raised a problem which was of such importance to world peace and of special significance to the United Nations because of the responsibilities it had assumed in the matter.

13. During the discussion, various views had been expressed on the actual nature of the problem. For some speakers it was a purely humanitarian question. That view was not shared by his delegation which was convinced that it was a matter of justice. There could be no doubt that the General Assembly had acted precipitately in taking a decision on resolution 181 (II) dealing with the partition of Palestine. Many of the problems facing it resulted directly from that hasty decision. When the partition of Palestine had been under consideration, his delegation had opposed all draft resolutions dealing with the future of Palestine, on the ground that the adoption of any such resolution, whose implementation would irrevocably affect the future of the peoples of Palestine, should be preceded by a plebiscite to ascertain the views of the peoples concerned. That argument had not been accepted and the partition of Palestine had been decided upon without consulting the population. The delegation of El Salvador had made other constructive proposals at that time, in particular one for negotiation between representatives of Arab and Jewish interests, which would have made it possible to maintain peace in Palestine and ensure respect for any decisions the General Assembly might have taken. Although the Chairman of the *Ad Hoc* Political Committee had supported that suggestion, the proposed conversations had not taken place. The Assembly, then, had taken its decision and had thereby assumed a measure of responsibility, for which no precedent existed, for all the events that had inevitably ensued either directly or indirectly from the implementation of the resolution partitioning Palestine. Among those events, which

there was no need to recall, was the exodus of the refugees.

14. The creation of the State of Israel had resulted from the Assembly's decision, on the one hand, and, on the other, from the influx of Jewish immigrants whose concentration had built the political strength of Israel, a strength that had become apparent when the Jews had occupied the areas of Palestine allotted to them by the General Assembly. When hostilities broke out, the movement of concentration had been transformed into a movement of expansion, as a result of which the Israelites had occupied the territory which now formed the State of Israel. The double process of concentration and expansion had been bound to lead to the displacement of the Arab refugees who had fled before what they regarded as a menace to their survival. That was a natural consequence for which no one could be blamed. When a situation arose involving racial or religious as well as internal problems and when differences became so acute as to fan the flames of passion, panic was bound to spread. Panic was the underlying cause of the Arab refugee's flight.

15. With regard to the question of Jewish immigration to Israel, so long as the establishment of the State of Israel was accepted, that process could not be retarded or halted. As a sovereign and independent State, Israel had a perfect right to set whatever conditions it deemed appropriate to ensure immigration. In that respect, the only valid objection was that Jewish immigrants settling in Israel were allotted property abandoned by the Arab refugees. Such property remained the property of the Arabs to whom it must be restored or who must receive appropriate compensation. That was a general principle which did not apply exclusively to Arab refugees. If the Israelites had been in the same position in respect to the Arab States, they would have had exactly the same right.

16. In that connexion, the draft resolution proposed by the delegations of France, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States was not wholly satisfactory; it could be interpreted as substituting new provisions for the obligations incumbent upon Israel and the Arab States, which had been defined by the General Assembly resolutions. The joint draft resolution contained no mention of the refugees' right to return to their homes and to have their property returned or to receive adequate compensation. To avoid any misunderstanding, the delegation of El Salvador had intended to submit an amendment to the joint draft resolution stating that the draft left unchanged the right of the Palestine refugees to return to their homes, to have their property restored to them or to receive compensation, a right which had been recognized by the Assembly. The amendment was not concerned solely with Arab refugees, but all refugees who had left Palestine because of the tension and conflict which had followed the General Assembly's resolution on the partition of Palestine. The delegation of El Salvador regretted the withdrawal of the draft resolution which recommended effective assistance to the refugees. If the resolution were submitted again, he would submit the amendment he had just outlined.

17. His delegation would carefully study any proposal that might be submitted, bearing in mind the need for reconciling so far as possible the interests of the parties and preserving intact the refugees' right to return to their homes and to recover, or to receive compensation for, their property.

18. Mr. PATIJN (Netherlands) paid tribute to the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine and to his staff for the work they had accomplished and the recommendations contained in their excellent report (A/1905 and A/1905/Add.1). He expressed satisfaction at the proposal to provide the refugees with homes, work and opportunities for reintegration, namely, the means of recovering the self-respect which went with material and moral freedom.

19. It was for the United Nations to undertake responsibility for the new programme. To illustrate his meaning, he referred to a French law which made it a criminal offence not to go to the assistance of a person in mortal danger. That law might also be applied on an international plane and, in the tragic circumstances of the Arab refugees from Palestine, it was the duty of governments and international organizations to come to their aid.

20. His delegation was therefore grateful to the Governments of the United States and the United Kingdom which had made known their intention of contributing generously to the implementation of the relief programme for the Palestine refugees. The Netherlands Government would also contribute, though on a smaller scale, to the execution of the programme.

21. Mr. TANNOUS (General Secretary of the representatives of the Palestine Arab Refugees in Lebanon) thanked the Chairman for giving him an opportunity of placing before the Committee the views of the Palestine Arab refugees. He also paid tribute to the representatives of the Arab States which, after coming to the rescue of the refugees in 1948, had always defended their interests before the Committee.

22. He had been surprised to hear the view expressed in the Committee that the Arab States were responsible for the present situation of the refugees. He recalled in that connexion that most of the refugees had left Palestine before the Arab armies had entered the country. It was under pressure from the terrorist bands of the Stern group and the Irgun Zvai Leumi that hundreds of thousands of Arabs had been forced to flee the country. There could be no doubt that the massacre of Deir Yassin, the King David Hotel incident and the Semiramis Hotel incident had been carefully prepared military operations designed to terrorize the Arab population. The Government of Israel was responsible for those acts. And yet—he could not express himself too strongly on the matter—the Israel Government was still receiving moral and material assistance from the entire world after misleading a number of Western Powers who were thereby supporting the wrong cause. Thus, almost a million innocent people had been expelled from their country to make way for immigrants from all parts of the world. That was a gross injustice of which the United Nations had itself

been guilty when it had brought about the partition of Palestine.

23. Several persons of note as well as organizations had recognized that injustice, and in that connexion, Mr. Tannous quoted passages from statements made at the conference held at Beirut on 4 May 1951 by the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches.

24. Moreover, in order to correct, to some extent, the injustice of which the Arabs had been the victims, the United Nations had adopted decisions for the repatriation of the Palestine Arabs and the payment of compensation to those who did not wish to return to their country. Those decisions had, however, been taken in vain, for not a single Arab refugee had been repatriated or had received compensation. That was why the Arab refugees wished to place on record their doubts as to the sincerity of the United Nations intentions.

25. If the *Ad Hoc* Political Committee had discussed the report of the Conciliation Commission for Palestine at length and had carefully scrutinized the terms of the resolution it had adopted in order to make sure that they conformed to the principles of justice, that was because it had meant the resolution to be put into effect. What was the use of the United Nations adopting resolutions if it was incapable of ensuring their application? The refugees saw with dismay that the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly in 1948 and 1950 on the Palestine refugee question had remained a dead letter. They were bewildered at finding that whereas the United Nations had succeeded in implementing General Assembly and Security Council resolutions to halt aggression in Korea, it had been unable to do so in the Holy Land.

26. It was not that the United Nations was unwilling to apply the resolutions on the Palestine refugees, but that the great Powers did not sincerely wish to restore peace in the Middle East. If they did, they could apply the necessary sanctions to Israel, and the United States, in particular, could cease to give Israel its powerful moral and material support.

27. The present situation of the Arab refugee from Palestine was that his home had been occupied, his money in the banks frozen, his income confiscated, his means of livelihood destroyed and he was obliged to have recourse to United Nations aid to obtain shelter and food on a bare subsistence ration. In an era of democracy, could the fundamental human rights be more completely disregarded?

28. The property abandoned in Israel by the Arab refugees had been evaluated by the Conciliation Commission at a global figure of 100 million pounds, which was hardly a twentieth of its real value. Besides, a country and a people could not be bought and sold wholesale like a herd of cattle. A sacred mission of civilization could not be measured in terms of money.

29. The refugee assistance programme, which proposed to expend \$200 million on resettlement, would of course be received with gratitude by the Arab refugees who were suffering from cold, hunger and disease, but also

with a certain apprehension. The programme provided for the resettlement of the Arab refugees not on their own lands but in other countries in the Near East. For three years, however, the Arab refugees had been waiting to return to their homes in accordance with the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and they firmly believed in their rights thereto. It was not only their mosques they longed to see again, but their country, the land of their fathers, their spiritual as well as their material past. A man's country was a beloved sanctuary which all the riches of the world could not buy.

30. True, the Director and the Advisory Commission of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency had given assurances that the implementation of the resettlement programme would not prejudice the rights of the refugees to repatriation or compensation in any way. But the refugees had lost all faith in the United Nations and could not be satisfied with the assurances they had been given until they had tangible proof that the Organization was in a position to ensure observance of the resolutions it had adopted on the Palestine question.

31. In conclusion, the Palestine Arab refugees believed that it was incumbent upon the United Nations, firstly, to put into immediate effect all the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly, especially those on the repatriation of the refugees, and, secondly, to prevent the Relief and Works Agency from undertaking any programme to resettle the refugees in countries other than their own. Moreover, the United States should withhold all moral, financial or political support from Israel until the latter had decided to comply with the United Nations resolutions.

32. The Palestine Arab refugees were disillusioned; they were restless and desperate and had lost all faith in the United Nations. The honour and prestige of the United Nations were therefore at stake and if it failed in its obligations, the consequences would be incalculable.

33. In the name of justice, Mr. Tannous addressed an urgent appeal to the General Assembly to find an equitable solution to the Palestine problem during the current year.

34. The CHAIRMAN said that, as there were no more speakers on the list, the general discussion was closed.

Organization of the work of the Committee

35. Mr. LEITAO DA CUNHA (Brazil), speaking on a point of order, proposed that the Committee should consider one or two of the other items on its agenda, while awaiting the result of conversations that were taking place between the sponsors of the joint draft resolution and the delegations of the Arab States. For instance, the Committee might take up the question of the repatriation of Greek children, item 19 (b) of the

General Assembly agenda, and the report of the Security Council, which was item 10.

36. Mr. KYROU (Greece) agreed to the Committee taking up the Security Council's report. Conversations on the repatriation of Greek children were, however, currently taking place between the Standing Committee and the Czechoslovak Government and it would doubtless be advisable to await the outcome of those conversations.

37. Mr. HOOD (Australia) thought that, in order to be able to take an informed decision on the Brazilian representative's proposal, the Committee should be acquainted—at any rate, semi-officially—with the position of the conversations being held between the Standing Committee and the Czechoslovak Government.

38. Mr. JESSUP (United States of America) announced that the sponsors of the joint draft resolution (A/AC.53/L.34) would possibly be able to submit on Monday, 21 January, a revised draft which would enable the Committee to take a speedy decision.

39. Mr. LOPEZ (Philippines) confirmed the Greek representative's statement. The Standing Committee would complete its conversations with the Czechoslovak Government's representative in about ten days. It would therefore be better to wait until then to take up the question of the repatriation of Greek children.

40. The CHAIRMAN observed that it was for the Committee to decide whether to take up at once item 10 of the agenda, which was the Security Council's report. The report had been circulated to members at the beginning of the session. The usual practice was for the Committee merely to take note of the report and it could adopt a resolution to that effect without delay.

41. Mr. SOLDATOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) pointed out that the Security Council's report was not on the agenda of the current meeting. Although he thought it preferable to hold it over for another date, he would not object to it being taken up immediately. In that event, however, his delegation would reserve the right to speak later on any draft resolution that might be submitted.

42. Mr. KYROU (Greece) proposed, as a compromise solution, that the Security Council's report might be placed in second place on the agenda of the meeting on Monday, 21 January. Thus, if the Committee were unable to reach a decision on the four-Power joint draft resolution, it could take up that item.

43. The CHAIRMAN withdrew his proposal. On Monday, 21 January, the Committee would consider the revised text of the joint draft resolution to be submitted by the four Powers.

The meeting rose at 12.5 p.m.