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CONTENTS

Page

Annual Report of the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (A/2171 and Add.1, A/AC.61/L.1, A/AC.61/L.2) (<i>continued</i>)	23
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Chairman: Mr. Alexis KYROU (Greece).

Annual Report of the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (A/2171 and Add.1, A/AC.61/L.1, A/AC.61/L.2) (*continued*)

[Item 20]*

1. The CHAIRMAN read a letter from the representative of Iraq, requesting permission for Mr. Tannous, a representative of the Arab refugees of Palestine, to attend the meetings of the Committee, and to address it on behalf of the refugees. In the absence of any objection, he announced that Mr. Tannous would address the Committee on the following morning.

2. Mrs. DE LOZADA (Bolivia) said that her country, an enthusiastic participant in the work of previous General Assemblies when they had righted an age-old wrong by establishing the State of Israel, was equally anxious to find a solution to the refugee problem which that step had created.

3. Since there was no purely political nor purely humanitarian solution, her delegation recommended the economic solution as the most practical. The vast sum of \$100 million was reported available for rehabilitation work during the present year; a good part of that sum might be made over to the host countries to facilitate the necessary adjustment of the refugees within their economies. She wondered if the sponsors of the joint draft resolution before the Committee (A/AC.61/L.1) would consider a possible amendment to the draft in that sense.

4. All refugees able to return to their homes without creating serious upheavals should do so. Mrs. de Lozada stressed the importance of providing adequate social services meanwhile, in order to maintain the morale of the refugees, and thought that a speeding up of UNRWA's current programme was the most practical way to alleviate the condition of the refugees and the

possible undesirable political effects of their presence in the Middle East. The Bolivian delegation would support the four-Power draft resolution.

5. Mr. ARDALAN (Iran) thanked the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for his comprehensive report, which provided the basis for enough comments to justify postponing the discussion of other aspects of the question which would be taken up under other agenda items. The way in which the Agency had already tackled the task before it raised hopes of obtaining better results in the future.

6. The Iranian Government could not remain unmoved before the spectacle of nearly one million homeless human beings, and he felt that the United Nations, whose task it was to maintain international peace and security, should appreciate the possible gravity of the situation and take steps to implement its own decisions, which in some quarters were not being treated with the respect due to them.

7. Despite the aid forthcoming from the United States and from the Arab countries, the material situation of the refugees was far from satisfactory. The Agency, which had been set up in order to improve that situation, had not so far achieved signal success, and the standard of living provided to the refugees was below that of civilized human beings. Mr. Ardalan was happy to note, however, that the Agency was neglecting neither the political nor the economic aspects of the problem, and had stated that its programme was without prejudice to repatriation and compensation for the refugees. He hoped that in the second year an improvement might be achieved in standards of living and an advance made towards enabling the refugees to earn their own living instead of depending entirely on relief.

8. The Iranian delegation hoped that the sum for relief might be increased to \$27 million, but was prepared to vote in favour of the joint draft resolution before the Committee since it would enable the Agency to continue its work and some flexibility in the use of the funds proposed appeared to be possible.

* Indicates the item number on the agenda of the General Assembly.

9. Mr. MARAMIS (Indonesia) thought that Mr. Blandford's report and the speeches already made in the Committee had painted a vivid picture of a tragic situation, which might have very far-reaching political consequences. His delegation wished to express its regret anew that the right of the Palestine refugees to repatriation and compensation had not been implemented; it had nevertheless supported the Agency's programme for relief and works. That programme might not meet all the wishes of those concerned, but it did at least offer a possibility of temporarily providing for the needs of the refugees. In that belief, the Indonesian Government was prepared to contribute the sum of \$60,000 to the programme for the current fiscal year. That was not a very considerable sum in itself, but from Indonesia at the present time, it was quite substantial. His delegation appealed both to Members and non-members of the United Nations to contribute or even to increase their contributions to that humanitarian cause.

10. Mr. Maramis fully sympathized with all those representatives who had advocated an increase in the funds allocated for relief purposes, but was prepared to vote for the joint draft resolution in its present form because he had understood from the United States representative's explanation of the text (4th meeting) that the sums mentioned therein would be adjusted according to the needs. He felt that the implementation of large-scale works projects would shortly enable the refugees to become self-supporting.

11. In conclusion, the Indonesian representative paid a tribute to the Director and staff of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, and to all the specialized agencies and voluntary organizations which had worked to alleviate the plight of the refugees. He expressed appreciation to the governments of the host countries for their assistance, and hoped that the current year would see progress made in the solution of the problem.

12. Mr. COATON (Union of South Africa) hoped that the fact that he had hitherto refrained from participating in the debate would not be construed as meaning that his delegation was not concerned with the fate of the Palestine refugees. It would support the joint draft resolution of the Union of South Africa.

13. Mr. SALAZAR (Dominican Republic) said that his delegation had, the previous year, supported the three-year programme for the relief and reintegration of Palestine refugees approved by General Assembly resolution 513 (VI). It would, therefore, support the joint draft resolution before the Committee, which was in line with previous General Assembly resolutions and which merely proposed certain adjustments in the light of the experience gained.

14. The Government of the Dominican Republic would, in due course, give its full attention to the request for contributions and would give its full co-operation and support to the programme, as it had done in the past.

15. The Palestine refugee problem, which affected the lives of almost a million persons, should be considered as an emergency situation and therefore as a temporary one. It was a problem which did nothing to relieve the existing tension in the Near East. It was to be hoped

that the United Nations, the Relief Agency, its Director, Mr. Blandford, and the States which bore the main burden would find a solution which would create an atmosphere of understanding and good-neighbourliness in that area.

16. Mr. SCHELTEMA (Netherlands) complimented the Director and staff of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency on the energy and devotion they had put into their work in providing direct relief and developing long-term projects for the settlement and employment of Palestine refugees, work which deserved the fullest co-operation and support.

17. The problem facing the Agency and the entire area of the Near East was a very serious one not only because of its many local implications but also because of its essentially humanitarian aspects.

18. The Netherlands delegation agreed with those who had laid special emphasis on the development of economic works and projects. The Agency's aim should be, and indeed was, the ultimate transfer of as many refugees as possible from relief to employment rolls. Unfortunately, the experience gained during the programme's first year had shown that substantial sums were still required for direct relief. Although the refugees would doubtless welcome more direct relief, Mr. Scheltema was sure that short-term measures would not provide a solution to the problem which was essentially a long-term one. To increase relief funds to \$27 million was not the real answer to the problem; the answer lay in an increased effort to employ the refugees in large-scale projects and to reduce relief in favour of self-help and economic reintegration.

19. The Netherlands representative said that he would therefore support the joint draft resolution and that his Government would contribute to the Agency the same amount for the current fiscal year as it had done the previous year.

20. Mr. SIRI (El Salvador) said that his Government considered a final solution of the refugee problem essential, since the present relief to the refugees was only a temporary, emergency measure and would not provide an effective solution of the problem which could only be achieved through the reintegration of the refugees by repatriation or resettlement.

21. Since his country was not a contributor to the fund, it would refrain from expressing any opinion on the proposal to increase the relief budget for the fiscal year ending 30 June 1953.

22. The delegation of El Salvador warmly supported the joint draft resolution but wished to make it clear that El Salvador continued to recognize the refugees' right to be repatriated and to claim the compensation to which they were in justice entitled. As the draft resolution omitted any expression of gratitude to the voluntary organizations, most of them religious, which had generously co-operated with the Agency, he was submitting the following amendment to the draft resolution (A/AC.61/L.2):

"At the end of the operative part add the following new paragraph 4:

"4. *Reiterates* its gratitude to the numerous voluntary agencies, mostly religious agencies, of various

countries, and especially of the United States of America, which, on their own initiative, have co-operated and continue to co-operate with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, and urgently requests them to continue to grant their effective, eminently humanitarian assistance, which the civilized world needs, profoundly appreciates and whole-heartedly commends."

23. Mr. DE TATTEMBACH (Costa Rica) announced that his delegation, which hoped for an early solution of the Palestine refugee problem, would vote for the joint draft resolution with the reservation that the amount of his country's contribution must be limited by its fiscal and constitutional law and its economic resources.

24. Mr. DEJANY (Saudi Arabia) said that there were no Palestine Arab refugees on relief in Saudi Arabia. The few thousands who had gone to his country had been employed either by the Government or in local industries. He could not, therefore, speak with any authority about the living conditions of refugees on relief.

25. It was both unfair and misleading to compare the standards of living of refugees with those of the local populations in the host countries. In assessing the deplorable conditions in the refugee camps the analogy should rather be made with the comparatively fair standard of living which the Palestine Arabs had enjoyed before they had been driven from their homes. Unemployment had been negligible, the farmers had been prospering—and most of the Arab population had been farmers—and medical and educational facilities had been adequate. According to the latest Government statistics, the daily wages in agricultural employment had been from 300 to 500 mils, or from \$1.25 to \$2.00. Eighty-five per cent of the Arab children in towns and 60 per cent in villages had attended school and there had been approximately one doctor to every 500 inhabitants. That had been the standard of living of the Arab refugees before their communities were disrupted by the United Nations and the Zionist forces. It was therefore inconceivable that the refugees' entire basic needs, including food, could be met by the Agency's meagre *per capita* allowance of \$2.62 per month, which the labourer used to earn in two days. One was forced to assume that the services provided were no more than token services. There was therefore no justification for further reduction in relief, since the present food ration provided 700 calories less than the minimum recommended by FAO.

26. It had been repeatedly said that relief would end next year and that the work projects would provide employment for a considerable number of refugees. It was the constant hope of the Saudi Arabian delegation that the lot of the refugees would be improved. The experience of the past two years, however, was not very reassuring. Even were the projects and programmes successful they would, at best, solve the problems of a few thousand refugees only, and with regard to the rest, who would then be in their seventh year of exile, the position in two years' time would be what it had been at the start. The only permanent solution of the problem was therefore to return the refugees to their homes.

27. Mr. Dejany then cited the views expressed in a number of Jewish publications, in particular, that the Israeli Government's order banning the return of the Arab refugees to their homes when the war was over was an act of cruel injustice; and that no amount of excuses and extenuating circumstances, not even the dire need of the homeless Jews, could justify the refusal to re-admit the Arab refugees to the homes in which they and their forbears had lived for centuries. Even if, for the sake of argument, it were assumed that the Jewish refugees had a prior right to the Arab homes over their Arab owners, it should be pointed out that according to Radio Israel the era of mass Jewish immigration was over and was not likely to be renewed unless there was a new calamity. The total Jewish immigration in the preceding year had been about 30,000 and it was not expected to be higher next year. It was therefore clear that the homeless Jews, the refugees in displaced persons camps and any other Jews wishing to settle in Israel, had already done so.

28. Another important fact in the argument, according to those publications, was that the return of the Arab refugees to their homes, far from having an adverse effect on the country's economy, would in fact benefit Israel. That had been brought out in a series of articles by Mr. Tsanin, correspondent of the Jewish *Forward*, who had, in effect, said that the basic cause of the food shortage with which Israel's entire economy was bound up was the sharp decrease in agricultural production caused by the exodus of the predominantly agricultural Arab population. Neither the *Kibbutzim* nor the new colonists had been able to fill the vacuum created by the loss of the Arab population. Not only were the *Kibbutzim* not turning out as much agricultural produce as they might, but the Arab fields which were allotted to them were largely left uncultivated; the new colonies formed by the immigrants could not replace the Arab food producers.

29. The Israeli arguments to justify their barring the return of the Arab refugees were therefore untenable even on the assumption that the Jewish refugees had prior right to the homes of the Arabs.

30. In the light of those facts Israel, or those who condoned its policies, had no right to prolong the sufferings of the Arab refugees. Much of the relief and works programme would have been unnecessary had all efforts been concentrated on the only just solution—repatriation. The Saudi Arabian delegation had no doubt as to the outcome of the short-cut solutions as far as the interests of the refugees and the peace and stability of that area were concerned.

31. It agreed with the delegations of Lebanon, Egypt and Syria that the relief budget should be increased as a matter of principle, even at the expense of the works projects. Future benefits from the works projects would lose much of their effectiveness and worth if many of the beneficiaries came to be in poor health as a result of the enforcement of rigid economy in relief. The Saudi Arabian delegation supported the joint draft resolution as a matter of necessity and on the express understanding that the projects envisaged under the draft resolution would in no way prejudice the right of the refugees to repatriation and compensation, as defined in paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

32. Mr. RIBAS (Cuba) agreed that the plight of the refugees was indeed sad. It was to be hoped however that the continuation of the programme would improve their present situation and that a way might be found, in co-operation with the host countries, to reintegrate them into normal communities. The Cuban delegation would support the joint draft resolution but regretted that it was not in a position to commit its Government to a definite contribution to the Agency's relief fund.

33. Mr. AL-JAMALI (Iraq) said that the situation of the Palestine refugees was a tragedy far greater than those precipitated throughout history by wars and tyranny, precisely because it had been brought about by the very Organization which had been created to protect human rights and promote justice and democracy. The cruel fate which had befallen nearly one million persons and which was forcing them to live in degradation and wretchedness, deprived of the bare necessities of life, was the direct result of the unjust and illegal decision of the General Assembly to partition Palestine—a decision taken, not in accordance with the Charter principles, but under pressure of power politics. The Assembly had acted despite the warning given by the Arab States that the Palestine Arabs would rise up to defend their ancestral land. Although they were unprepared and did not have the adversary's advantages of arms and military training, they defended their homes valiantly against the Jews. But Zionist terrorism and wholesale massacres, such as that of Dir Yasin, spread panic among them and forced them to flee the country. A recent book by the head of the *Irgun Zvai Leumi*, a terrorist organization, provided conclusive evidence that the objective of the Zionists had been to expel the Palestine Arabs. Moreover, the Haganah, the official Israel army, had concurred in the plan to exterminate the population of Dir Yasin before any Arab troops had entered Palestine.

34. The Member States which had voted for the General Assembly resolution 181 (II) on the partition of Palestine and the great Powers which had persuaded reluctant delegations to do likewise would not be absolved of their responsibility to the Palestine refugees until the rights of the latter had been honoured in accordance with the principles of self-determination and until they had been restored to a normal, decent life in freedom. Yet, certain Powers, unable to deny the repeatedly recognized right of the refugees to repatriation and compensation, were furthering the Zionist plan to keep them from their homes and countenancing the misery inflicted upon them without legal or moral justification. The Committee had failed to acknowledge squarely the conflict between the views of the refugees and the Zionists. The refugees were determined to secure implementation of their rights to repatriation now and in future and to reject all schemes to weaken that right. UNRWA's job was a thankless one primarily because the refugees felt that the Agency was liquidating their right to repatriation. The Zionists, supported by the great Powers represented in the Conciliation Commission for Palestine, thought that they could make the refugees forget their desire for repatriation by initiating works projects. The substantial material contributions to the relief and resettlement programme, however, could not resolve the basic problem of the refugees, which would continue to threaten peace and stability in the Middle East and to saddle the United

Nations with responsibility for a crisis of its own making.

35. The only effective way to discharge that responsibility was to ensure that United Nations resolutions on the question were fully implemented within the framework of the broader issues dividing Israel and the Arab States. In particular, the General Assembly must compel Israel to yield territory it had occupied beyond that authorized under the partition plan for settlement by the refugees, and to carry out the specific provision for refugee repatriation and compensation contained in General Assembly resolution 194 (III). Until Israel had complied with those obligations, it could not legitimately claim reparations for the injuries inflicted on the Jews by Hitler Germany; for the Jews of Palestine had forfeited all moral and material claims by perpetuating the miserable status of the Palestine refugees.

36. UNRWA should have confined its activities to relief alone, while reintegration should have been dealt with as part of the broader political issue from which it could not properly be separated. The Agency's schemes for resettlement and rehabilitation had evoked suspicion and lack of confidence among the refugees and the Arab States.

37. Mr. Al-Jamali then read passages from a report on the status of the refugees by the World Truth League in Jerusalem. The report emphasized below-minimum nutritional levels, appalling inadequacy of housing accommodation, insufficient clothing and shocking health conditions and services. It pointed out that UNRWA was contracting rather than expanding its services and abandoning certain initiatives as, for instance, training in weaving clothing, which would have helped to ease shortages. Welfare measures and educational facilities had also been limited or curtailed and were wholly inadequate for the increasing needs of the growing refugee communities. In order to obtain necessities or supplement daily allocations, refugees often had to sell part of their rations provided by the Agency, or to take part-time jobs for very low wages, thus adversely affecting the daily wages of unskilled labour in the area. All those factors, according to the World Truth League's report, contributed to poor morale, a feeling of defeat and betrayal, the degeneration of morals and general mental deterioration.

38. The representative of Iraq called upon the Director of UNRWA to correct or refute the facts he had cited and, in the light of those facts, to state whether he considered the proposed \$23 million relief budget was adequate. He also drew attention to the disparity in *per capita* relief allocations between the Palestine refugees and persons in the same category elsewhere in the world and appealed for an increase which would satisfy the minimum requirements of a decent standard of living. As to the cost of the administration of UNRWA, Mr. Al-Jamali believed that most of the 150 non-refugees drawing relatively high salaries could be replaced by refugees. It remained essential for UNRWA to organize the refugees so as to enable them to express their views regarding their living conditions and political destiny. Most important, they should be consulted concerning any plans for local employment or repatriation or resettlement, for neither the United Nations nor any Arab Government could usurp their inalienable right to determine their own economic and political future.

39. While the efforts of the Director of UNRWA and his staff merited appreciation, no decision taken by the Committee could constitute a definite solution of the refugee problem if it failed to implement the refugees' right of repatriation and compensation. The intransigent attitude of Israel in the latter respect was proof of the weakness which characterized the manner in which the United Nations and the great Powers were dealing with the problem.

40. Mr. LOURIE (Israel) observed that the remarks of the Iraqi representative were notable for their distortion of the facts. The comparison he had drawn between the plight of the Arab refugees, which was the consequence of a war of extermination launched by the Arab countries against Israel, and the slaughter of the Jews of Europe by Hitler, was a measure and a condemnation of the moral standards of the statement. It was the first time that the voice of nazism had been heard in the United Nations from one whose admiration for nazi principles in the thirties had been notorious.

41. The CHAIRMAN asked the members of the Committee to confine their remarks to the agenda items

and to endeavour, as far as possible, to deal with the refugee question from the humanitarian point of view.

42. Mr. SEVILLA SACASA (Nicaragua) stressed the significance of the work undertaken by UNRWA towards the solution of a problem of universal concern, notably through the negotiation of agreements with the Governments of the Middle East countries for the initiation of projects designed to absorb increasing numbers of refugees and to remove them from relief rolls. It was the duty of the United Nations to exert every effort to satisfy their basic needs with a view to ensuring decent living conditions, and to act with justice towards those thousands of unfortunates whose survival and future well-being depended almost wholly on United Nations assistance. Accordingly, Nicaragua would support the joint draft resolution and contribute to the relief and resettlement programme within the limits of its economic capacity. It would likewise support the amendment to that proposal submitted by El Salvador.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.