



**Thursday, 17 November 1955,
at 3.10 p.m.**

New York

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Chairman: Prince WAN WAITHAYAKON (Thailand).

AGENDA ITEM 22

**Report of the Director of the United Nations
Relief and Works Agency for Palestine
Refugees in the Near East (A/2978 and Add.1,
A/3017) (*continued*)**

1. Mr. SAID (Egypt) said that the human aspects of the Palestine refugee question were a heavy weight on the conscience of the civilized world, while its political consequences threatened the future and the prosperity of all the Arab States concerned.

2. The expression "Palestine refugees" was misleading, for the whole people of Palestine had been dispossessed and driven from their country. History showed examples of small groups persecuted by hostile majorities, but the present case was unique in that a fanatical minority, supported by influential groups in certain large States, had imposed its will on the majority. In history, there were many examples of the elimination or domination of one race by another, but the dominating race had always been superior; that was not the case in Palestine.

3. In 1917, over 600,000 of the 650,000 inhabitants of Palestine had been Arabs, yet in the regional arrangements made after the First World War the rights of the Arab majority had been flouted. A vast plot had been set on foot to place Palestine under United Kingdom mandate and to open it to massive Jewish immigration, so that the Zionist groups in the country could gradually obtain control of the administration and drive the Arabs from their native land. Massacres had occurred even before the end of the United Kingdom mandate and a peaceful population had been persecuted and ultimately expelled. There was abundant testimony to show that the Arabs had fled in the face of large-scale looting and destruction.

4. Zionists had never had any rights in Palestine and were therefore aggressors. Professor W. T. Stace, an American philosopher, had stated that the mere existence of Israel as a State in the middle of Palestine was a crime and the result of naked aggression, and that the fact that Palestine was the Holy Land of the Jews gave them no right to set up a state there, any more than the British had had a right in 1917 to dispose of Palestine contrary to the wishes of its inhabitants.

5. Nevertheless, the General Assembly, in resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947, had recommended the

establishment of a Jewish State in Arab Palestine, and the neutralization, demilitarization and internationalization of Jerusalem. It had also recommended in other resolutions that refugees who wished to return to their homes should be permitted to do so, and that compensation should be paid to those not wishing to return.

6. Israel, although a Member of the United Nations, had steadfastly refused to implement any of the Assembly's numerous resolutions concerning the refugees. Even after 1948 Israel had seized land reserved for the Arab State in the partition plan adopted by the General Assembly, and those occupying the land had been robbed and driven off. In August 1950 the Azazmeh Bedouin had likewise been expelled from territory under Israeli control in the Negev and the demilitarized zone of El Auja and driven to seek refuge in Egypt. The Arab populations of a number of cities had been driven into the Gaza strip. Those acts of aggression had been discussed by the Security Council, the Mixed Armistice Commission and its Special Committee, and Security Council resolution of 17 November 1950 (S/1907 and Corr.1) had said that decisions permitting the Arabs' return should be given immediate effect. Not only had Israel expelled the Arabs from their country; it had even attacked them in Agency camps, as at El Bureij on 28 August 1953.

7. It was difficult in the circumstances to see how the Agency could accomplish its task. As the Director stated in paragraph 65 of his report (A/2978), unless a real opportunity was given to the refugees to choose between repatriation and compensation pursuant to paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948, it would not be feasible to carry out fully the intent of paragraph 4 of resolution 393 (V), and related resolutions concerning the reintegration of the refugees into the economic life of the Near East.

8. It must in any case be recognized that the relevant General Assembly resolutions concerning relief and rehabilitation were mere palliatives and did not represent an effective solution of the problem that largely depended on the goodwill of the aggressor. Nevertheless, his delegation deeply appreciated the Agency's work.

9. In paragraph 2 of his report the Director had shown that the economic, political and social obstacles to rehabilitation were more serious than had been anticipated and that there would be a need for relief services for a long time. The report also showed that the quantity of basic food supplies amounted to about 1,600 calories a day (the calorie allowance for Korean and German refugees was 2,000). The Arab refugees' ration was inadequate and was, moreover, dietetically unbalanced. If it were not increased, the refugees, whose strength was sapped by years of privation, would become an easy prey to epidemics.

10. The Egyptian Government and a number of voluntary organizations were helping the refugees in the Gaza strip. It must be remembered, however, that the

winter climate in Palestine was rigorous; the refugees needed additional supplies which could be provided only if the relief fund was increased.

11. Conditions in the Gaza strip were described in paragraphs 36 and 41, in particular, of the Director's special report (A/2978/Add.1), while paragraph 46 of that report described the Egyptian Government's efforts on the refugees' behalf. Another conclusion of the special report was that many thousands of the non-refugee population of the Gaza strip were in need of additional assistance and, particularly, of opportunities for work (para. 49). In that connexion, the Azazmeh Bedouin, who should have been repatriated long ago and whose situation was precarious, were in urgent need of help. Additional funds should be provided to assist them in their desperate plight. Egypt was continuing to help them, but would welcome Agency assistance.

12. Passing on to section III of the report (A/2978) devoted to projects for assisting the refugees to become self-supporting, he pointed out that General Assembly resolution 513 (VI), approving the three-year programme of relief and reintegration proposed by the Director of the Agency, had made it clear that that approval was without prejudice to the provisions of resolutions 194 (III) and 393 (V) relative to reintegration by repatriation or resettlement. The host countries, which had been urged to co-operate in the elaboration of projects, had been careful, when signing the necessary agreements, to make it clear that such projects were only provisional, and that acceptance of a project would not affect the rights of refugees to repatriation or compensation. In that connexion, the Director of the Agency had stated in paragraphs 34 and 65 that there could be no satisfactory solution except at the political level and that the refugees themselves were beginning to have doubts as to the sincerity of the Agency's efforts to help them. In any case it was clear that the proposed projects in the Jordan Valley and the Sinai desert could benefit only 200,000 out of nearly one million refugees. A satisfactory solution must be found for the remainder, and that solution could be none other than repatriation or compensation, in accordance with the General Assembly resolutions on the subject.

13. Despite its heavy financial responsibilities as a host country, the Egyptian Government had continued its direct contributions to the inhabitants of Gaza, the Bedouin of Azazmeh and the refugees in Egypt. The Government's expenditure for the past year on administration, education, hygiene, transport and clothing had been about \$3.5 million.

14. One most important conclusion stood out from the Director's report, and that was that, although relief had to be provided for them, the Arab refugees must in no way be considered as objects of charity. They were the lawful owners of the larger part of the land in Palestine, and although they had been arbitrarily driven from

their homes, their legitimate rights could not be disputed. The distressing impression that the refugees were asking for charity must be dispelled, and some effective means found to restore them to their traditional dignity.

15. No partial relief, no charitable contribution, could provide a final solution to the problem. It remained to be seen how long justice would continue to be withheld from the hapless thousands of refugees who were appealing for it to the civilized world. The crime which had rendered the refugees homeless had been perpetrated at a time when peoples had been hoping to find security through the lofty principles of the United Nations and Atlantic Charters. The aggressor remained defiant and in possession of the booty. It might be wondered how long that state of affairs would be allowed to continue, and how long the forces of aggression were to masquerade as a peaceful State. If might was to triumph over right, it might be wondered why any effort should be made to secure disarmament. He would call on the conscience of the civilized world to answer those questions.

16. The United States representative had said (15th meeting) that an equitable solution must be found at the political level, and that efforts must be made to achieve it both inside and outside the United Nations. But that purpose might well be hampered by the bad faith of the opposing side.

17. The Egyptian Government's policy was based on the principle that might should be in the service of right, and, whatever the final outcome of the question, it was determined to rally all its forces on the side of law and justice.

18. Mrs. DOMANSKA (Poland), recalling the provisions of the General Assembly resolutions on the subject under discussion, said that repatriation or compensation had always been the central theme. Her delegation did not believe that any permanent solution could be achieved through the Agency, despite its admirable work, but the United Nations undoubtedly had a heavy responsibility in the matter.

19. The problem was both political and humanitarian; political in that it was contributing to the tension prevailing in the Near East, and humanitarian in that so many thousands of unfortunate refugees, many of them quite young children, had to continue living in most deplorable conditions for an indefinite period. Matters were growing worse, as the numbers of refugees were increasing, and it had been possible to transfer only a few of them. She agreed with the representative of Syria that neither relief nor the projects for assisting the refugees to become self-supporting could finally solve the problem. The only satisfactory solution lay in the implementation of the General Assembly's recommendations on the subject, particularly resolutions 194 (III) and 818 (IX). The United Nations could not evade its responsibility.

The meeting rose at 4 p.m.