



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 9th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. AL-KAWARI (Qatar)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 79: UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (continued)

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER-GENERAL (continued) (A/42/13 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/42/633)
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- (d) REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/42/309, 445, 446, 480, 481, 482, 505 and 507)

1. Mr. VRAALSEN (Norway) said that his delegation was highly impressed by the ability of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to continue to provide services to the refugee population in spite of the extraordinary difficulties and dangers facing it. The situation of the Palestine refugees and the tragic situation in Lebanon were a matter of grave concern to Norway. His Government strongly supported the efforts of the Commissioner-General to alleviate the serious problems facing innocent civilians in the refugee camps. His delegation was particularly concerned that many of the refugees might remain homeless in the coming winter months and hoped that UNRWA would be able to assist them in that regard.

2. He commended the Agency and its staff for their dedicated efforts under difficult circumstances and paid tribute to those staff members who had been killed or wounded in the line of duty. Norway reiterated its appeal to all parties to respect the Agency's facilities and employees and support its activities. It was imperative that UNRWA should be able to continue providing assistance in spite of the disruption in Lebanon. It was gratifying to note that the financial situation had improved in 1986 and that the projections for 1987 were encouraging thanks to the measures taken and additional contributions from Member States. The construction programme, however, was sadly lacking in funds. That would have a serious impact on construction work and the maintenance of facilities.

3. He appreciated the efforts of the Agency to economize and rationalize its activities. UNRWA services and activities, however, should not be further reduced. The Agency must obtain sufficient contributions to cover the education and health programmes for the poorest sections of the refugee community. A further reduction in humanitarian activities would have grave consequences for the Palestine refugees in the area. It is essential, therefore, to ensure sufficient financial support for 1988.

4. In response to the Commissioner-General's request for additional contributions, Norway had announced a special contribution to the construction programme in 1987. Its total contribution to the Agency in 1987 was approximately \$9.4 million. His country would continue to support the Agency in the future.

(Mr. Vraalsen, Norway)

5. Norway supported the conclusions reached at the informal consultations held in Vienna in July 1987 and welcomed, in particular, the revised version of the three-year medium-term plan for 1988-1990. He stressed that the plan should continue to be revised annually and emphasized the useful role played by the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA. His Government fully supported the recommendations put forward by the Working Group in its report (A/42/633). Lastly, in view of the responsibility of the entire international community to help finance the Agency, he urged Governments that had not yet done so to contribute to UNRWA and Governments that had made only small contributions to increase their support.

6. Mr. GLAIEL (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the humanitarian concern expressed by the Commissioner-General for the tragic situation of the Palestine refugees in Lebanon and for the damage caused to the refugee camps and to Agency premises by Israeli aggression was commendable. His delegation considered that the importance of the issue involved went beyond its humanitarian aspect and the financial difficulties encountered by UNRWA. It was a matter of deep concern that none of the United Nations resolutions on the question of Palestine had been implemented because of Israel's refusal to acknowledge the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The United Nations had contributed to the creation of the problem, and it must therefore strive to correct the mistake it had made at the outset.

7. His delegation was pleased that UNRWA had managed to survive its difficult financial problems and that in 1986 there had been a small excess of income over expenditures in the Agency's General Fund. It noted with satisfaction the gratitude of the members of the Advisory Commission of UNRWA for the valuable services that the Arab host Governments continued to provide for the Palestine refugees.

8. That operational difficulties persisted and that sporadic incidents and pervasive tension created a difficult atmosphere within which to conduct operations, as stated in paragraph 1 of the report, should not be taken as a mere description of the situation but should provide an incentive for identifying its true causes. It was no longer sufficient merely to enumerate, describe or allude to such difficulties, and emphasis should be placed on the fact that they would continue to exist as long as the root problem did not receive the attention it deserved and was not addressed in the proper manner.

9. Paragraph 2 of the report stated that, by its resolution 41/69 A, the General Assembly had reaffirmed the commitment of the international community to the Palestine refugees and assured them of continuing assistance for the next three years. The Commissioner-General went on to say that the Assembly's decision had also been a reminder that, after almost 40 years, the problem of the Palestine refugees was still not solved, despite the fact that the principle upon which it was to be solved had been set out by the Assembly at the very outset in 1948. While his delegation welcomed the reaffirmation of the commitment of the international community, it wondered what was the true meaning of that commitment if it had not returned a single refugee to his homeland, restored a single right or

(Mr. Glaiel, Syrian Arab Republic)

prevented the continuation of occupation and aggression. Such commitment must stem from a conviction of the justice of the cause and must be constant and unwavering.

10. His delegation agreed with the view expressed in paragraph 3 of the report that the General Assembly had emphasized the close relevance of paragraph 11 of its resolution 194 (III) to the Agency's mandate. As long as the problem remained unsolved, the international community would be obliged to assist the Palestine refugees and provide for their basic needs. His delegation would like to ask the Commissioner-General for clarification of the last sentence of paragraph 3, particularly the statement to the effect that it seemed "Appropriate to re-examine the elements of the mandate and their meaning for the Agency's operations".

11. With regard to paragraphs 3 and 4 of the report, his delegation wished to announce that resettlement and integration would never be among the basic objectives of the Palestine refugees or the Arab States. They adhered strongly to the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to a homeland to which to return and in which to exercise self-determination. His delegation shared the view that attacks on the Agency for not seeking a durable solution could not be justified; it was no part of the Agency's mandate to seek such a solution. The perpetuation of the problem was a matter that involved political considerations and would be discussed by the Assembly under the item "Question of Palestine".

12. His delegation shared the view of the Commissioner-General, expressed in paragraph 5 of the report, that the misconceptions about the Agency and the grossly unfair portrayal of the Agency and of the refugees must be corrected. With the passage of time, with scientific and technical developments and as a result of the economic and demographic situation of the refugees, the demands and pressures on the Agency would increase.

13. While sharing the optimism of the Commissioner-General in the light of increased contributions, improved management, the effect of the austerity measures taken and the relations established with donors through the UNRWA External Relations Division, his delegation wished to stress the need to address the situation of the Agency in a proper and definitive manner. Voluntary contributions were subject to political considerations and to the changing political will of donor countries. Those countries which provided hundreds of millions of dollars in assistance to Israel and supplied all of its financial, military and economic needs could not be incapable of providing tens of millions of dollars to the Agency in order to extricate it from its crisis and enable it to continue its humanitarian work.

14. In paragraph 12 of his report, the Commissioner-General referred to the tragic situation in Lebanon which had brought further suffering to the people of Lebanon as well as to Palestine refugees residing there. Air raids had caused deaths, injuries and damage to property. His delegation considered that explicit reference should be made, throughout the report, to the identity of those responsible for such actions, namely Israeli forces and Israeli aircraft.

(Mr. Glaiel, Syrian Arab Republic)

15. His delegation wondered what source had been used by the Commissioner-General for his statement, in paragraph 17 of the report, that there were reduced employment opportunities for refugees in neighbouring Arab countries. Palestine refugees in the Syrian Arab Republic enjoyed all the rights and duties of Syrian citizens, and stress should have been placed on what the host countries were doing for the refugees and the burdens they assumed in order to alleviate their plight.
16. His delegation was pleased to note that, in paragraph 75 of the report, it was stated that the Syrian authorities had decided to compensate those affected by a road construction project. The families affected had been paid compensation and had found alternative accommodation in areas where the Agency was able to provide normal services. In a similar context, his delegation would like to call the attention of the Committee to paragraph 74 of the report, which gave a blatant example of the practices adopted by the Israeli occupation authorities in order to force refugees to leave. Their shelters were destroyed and they were forbidden to repair them or to live close by.
17. Chapter II, section E.2, of the report contained a description of the acts committed against the Agency and the local inhabitants by the Israeli occupation authorities in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip for reasons characterized by the report as "punitive". As stated in paragraph 83 of the report, the Geneva Conventions of 1949 applied to the Palestine refugees. Such acts were part of the Israeli scheme to demolish the camps, expel young families, disperse the Palestine refugees and integrate them into the societies in which they lived.
18. With regard to the information on the three Agency staff members kidnapped in Lebanon, contained in annex I, table 11, of the report, his delegation would like to reaffirm the statement it had made on the matter at the forty-first session and the reply then given to the Commissioner-General.
19. In the light of the information contained in paragraph 13 of the report, the Agency must move its headquarters and its offices to its area of operations, thereby acquiring increased freedom of action, flexibility and effectiveness.
20. His country was a small developing country with limited natural resources, and the tragedy of Palestine had placed upon it responsibilities and burdens which far exceeded the most generous contributions made to the Agency. It also had to bear the burden of the persons displaced from the Syrian Arab Golan Heights as a result of the aggression of 1967. There were, nevertheless, more than a quarter of a million Palestine refugees living in the Syrian Arab Republic, to whose support UNRWA contributed very little, while his Government ensured them of a standard of living equal to that of its own citizens.
21. At the Committee's 8th meeting, the representative of the Zionist entity, speaking in exercise of the right of reply, had made references to humanitarian feelings and international law in an attempt to distort the facts. In his introduction to a history of the Haganah published by the World Zionist Organization in 1954, David Ben-Gurion had written that, just as England belonged to the English and Egypt to the Egyptians, Judea belonged to the Jews, there was

(Mr. Glaiel, Syrian Arab Republic)

room there only for the Jews, and the Arabs would be told to leave; if they resisted, they would be expelled by force. That policy had been pursued by the Zionist gangs even before 1948, and it had continued to be applied ever since. It was impossible to reconcile such statements with the claim made at the Committee's 8th meeting that the Palestinians had fled at the order of the Arab leadership.

22. At the same meeting, the Zionist representative had stated that there was nothing in international law that obliged a country to permit the entry of any particular person. The Charter of the United Nations and its resolutions were, however, part of international law. The admission of Israel to the United Nations had been conditional on its undertaking to accept and implement such resolutions. It was by virtue of that undertaking that Israel was obliged to permit refugees to return to their homes and property, and the failure of the Organization to assume its responsibilities had lent support to Israeli arrogance.

23. Mr. SADATIAN (Islamic Republic of Iran) expressed satisfaction at the report of the Commissioner-General and the valuable activities carried out by the Agency. The health and education programmes, particularly vocational training and relief services, were commendable. The Zionist entity had perpetrated endless crimes against the Palestinian people, of which only certain extreme examples were mentioned in the report.

24. Although mere good will and superficial measures would not solve the problem of the Palestinian people, his country supported UNRWA activities and the services offered to the victimized Palestinians living in Lebanon or elsewhere. Nevertheless, his delegation could not conceal its serious concern at the fact that those services might help make the status quo acceptable. His Government's appreciation of the valuable measures taken by the Agency should not be construed as support for the perennial extension of the mandate of UNRWA. On the contrary, the United Nations should mobilize all its resources in order to eliminate the cancerous tumour of the Zionist occupation of Palestine and solve the problem once and for all. Only the liberation of Palestine would solve the problems of the Palestinian refugees. If the international organizations did not ensure conditions for the administration of justice, the Muslims, Christians and true Jews of Palestine, together with the rest of the peoples of the Middle East, would establish a just situation themselves.

25. Mr. AL SABAH (Kuwait) said that, while pleased with the improvement that had taken place in the Agency's financial situation, his delegation shared the view of the Commissioner-General that the endeavour must be made to obtain the necessary resources for the capital Construction Fund as soon as possible so that the services provided to refugees would not be affected. It was prompted by the hope that the international community would find the political will to fulfil its obligations towards the Palestinian people.

26. The Committee was once again faced with the problem of the non-implementation of paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III), concerning the right of the Palestine refugees to return to their homes, or for those not wishing to do so,

(Mr. Al Sabah, Kuwait)

to receive compensation. As a result, the Palestine refugees were either living in exile or under the domination of the Israeli occupation forces.

27. Discussion of the question of Palestine at the United Nations had established the dimensions of the problem and had clearly identified the aggressor and the victim of aggression. The humanitarian and political aspects of the problem could not be separated since they together formed its core. The Palestine refugees had not left their homes voluntarily or as a result of a natural catastrophe but had been obliged to leave as a result of the expansionist ambitions of a foreign aggressor. The continuing plight of the Palestinian people was the result of Israel's policy of expulsion, and some had been displaced three or four times in the course of a single lifetime. Israel had not, however, been content with expulsion and had persisted in its pursuit of the refugees in order to eliminate them wherever they might be. The proof of that lay in the statements made by senior Israeli officials and in the inhuman Israeli practices in the occupied Arab territories, of which there was abundant evidence in United Nations documents, Israeli and foreign newspapers and other information media.

28. To restrict the rights of the Palestine refugees to the right merely to survive or to receive the minimum necessary to sustain life would be an injustice to them. The assistance provided by UNRWA to the refugees was only a temporary, palliative measure enabling them to subsist until such time as they could return to their homes. As long as Israel prevented that from taking place, the international community had an obligation to ensure that the Agency could continue its work. It could do little in comparison with the dimensions of the tragedy, but it would continue to be an important part of the international effort to alleviate the plight of the refugees and a symbol of the responsibility of the international community for them.

29. It was the view of his country that a radical solution to the problem of the Palestine refugees required that its root cause and its true nature should be addressed. Its origin lay in the schemes of the Zionists, who had come from all parts of the world in order to settle in a country that was already inhabited. They had set about expelling the Palestinian people from its homeland and eliminating it as an undesirable element. Zionist strategy continued to be based on three objectives: the expulsion of the Arab population; the prevention of any return; and the encouragement of Jews to migrate to Palestine in order to fill the void left by the expulsion of its Arab inhabitants. Such was the substance of the Palestine refugee problem, created by Israel and aggravated as a result of Israel's obstinacy and persistent rejection of any solution based on international law as embodied in the resolutions of the United Nations.

30. Even before its admission to the United Nations, his country had always unhesitatingly fulfilled its responsibilities towards the financing of the Agency. It had repeatedly responded with supplementary contributions in emergency situations in addition to its annual voluntary contributions. It had, moreover, contributed some 5 million dollars to the support of the universities in the occupied Arab territories.

(Mr. Al Sabah, Kuwait)

31. Kuwait acted as host country to large numbers of Palestinians and provided them with the means necessary for a life of dignity, so that they had no need for the services provided by the Agency. In its support for the Palestinian people, Kuwait acted out of a sense of national duty and responsibility, shared the tribulations of that people's plight, considered its cause its own and believed in its just struggle for the restoration of its rights.
32. Ms. KALKKU (Finland) said that the political aspect of the Agency's work was as important as its services for the promotion of political stability in the region. It was clear that a negotiated peace was the only way to solve the problems of the area and, in particular, those of the Palestine refugees. Her delegation reiterated its full support for the work of the Commissioner-General and welcomed the measures to improve the Agency's financial situation and overall efficiency.
33. Finland fully shared the view concerning the need to broaden the base of financial support for UNRWA. In that connection, she appealed to all Member States to pay their share of the Agency's financing. Finland had increased its regular contribution in 1987 and had also made two additional contributions amounting to a total of 7 million markkaa. Her Government would continue to increase its contributions and was currently considering an additional contribution for 1987.
34. It was essential to ensure that the Agency was able to carry out its humanitarian operations without interference. Finland noted with satisfaction that, in spite of the extremely difficult circumstances, UNRWA had been able to continue to provide its services to the Palestine refugees and once again appealed to all parties to respect the neutral status of the Agency's officials and facilities and provide all necessary assistance. The frustration caused by an uncertain future, increasing unemployment and the deteriorating economic situation underscored the urgent need for a just, lasting and comprehensive political settlement in the Middle East. Accordingly, her Government supported the convening of an international conference to achieve that objective.
35. Mr. FASEHUN (Nigeria) commended the Commissioner-General and the staff of UNRWA for their selfless devotion to a worthy humanitarian cause and paid special tribute to the staff members of the Agency who had died in the line of duty. He noted with satisfaction the Agency's training activities, health services, relief services and general welfare programme. The tragic situation in Lebanon made the provision of assistance to the refugees very difficult. Nigeria was deeply concerned about the acts of violence directed against the refugee camps and also the draconian measures taken by the Israeli authorities in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. His Government deplored the repressive measures taken against the staff of UNRWA and called upon Israel to halt them. The kidnappings and violence directed against the staff of UNRWA constituted an attack on the Agency itself. Accordingly, Nigeria asked all parties that hindered UNRWA staff in the performance of their duties to desist.
36. He noted with satisfaction the improved financial situation of UNRWA and urged continued assistance to the Agency. The existence of UNRWA almost four decades

(Mr. Fasahun, Nigeria)

after its establishment reflected the failure to find a just and equitable solution to the Palestinian problem. It was time for Israel to give peace a chance and allow the people of Palestine to return to their land.

37. Mr. SHAH (Pakistan) said that he strongly supported the conclusion of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA that special additional contributions should be made for construction projects without affecting regular contributions. Pakistan would continue to contribute, within its limited resources, to the financing of the Agency's activities. In spite of the serious deterioration of security conditions in Lebanon and the occupied Arab territories, UNRWA carried out its duties in an exemplary manner. The Agency's activities in the field of relief operations, health, education and vocational training were praiseworthy. He expressed his delegation's appreciation for the courage and dedication with which UNRWA staff members had worked in very dangerous circumstances and conveyed Pakistan's condolences to the families of the staff members who had been killed in the line of duty.

38. UNRWA was of crucial importance to the survival and welfare of the Palestine refugees. Since there was no hope for an early and just solution to the problem, the Agency played an indispensable role and must continue its humanitarian assistance programmes.

39. While his delegation commended the extension of UNRWA's mandate for another three years, its continued existence was a constant reminder of the injustices done to the Palestinian people and underscored the failure to address the fundamental problem in the Middle East. Israel was the root cause of the sufferings of the Palestinian people. The extension of the conflict to Lebanon had brought further suffering to both Lebanese and Palestinians. It was necessary to find a just solution to the problem that would ensure the return of the Palestine refugees to their homeland and the restoration of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and a Palestinian state. Until such a solution could be found, UNRWA was playing an important role.

40. Mr. DANUS (Chile) said that his country applauded the improvements in the Agency's financial situation and would continue its financial contribution to the Agency's work. It was essential to find a way of financing the construction programme to replace inadequate facilities.

41. The fate of the Palestine refugees and the stability of the region were closely linked with finding a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine. Such a solution would require Israel's withdrawal from all of the occupied territories and a guarantee of the right of all of the States in the area, including Israel, to live within secure and internationally recognized boundaries, as well as the exercise by the Palestinian people of its legitimate right to self-determination.

42. Mr. OKUDA (Japan) said that genuine peace would not prevail in the Middle East until a just and comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian question had been

(Mr. Okuda, Japan)

achieved through the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and through respect for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. Until that time, the Agency's activities would be essential. His Government's concern for the Palestinian question had been reflected over the years in generous financial support to UNRWA, amounting to a total of \$74 million in cash and \$50 million in food aid. Despite a strict austerity policy, it had decided to increase its cash contribution by half a million dollars in 1987. It was also considering food assistance and would continue its technical co-operation by providing vocational training in Japan for Palestine refugees and by providing personnel and equipment to an UNRWA training centre in Jordan.

43. Mr. KATRA (Lebanon) said that the most positive aspect of the Commissioner-General's report was the improvement shown in the financial situation of the Agency. At the same time, it was to be hoped that that improvement and the decision to renew the Agency's mandate for a further three years would not preclude the possibility of reaching a political solution to the question of Palestine at an early date. His country's interest in UNRWA and its activities stemmed from its concern for the fate of the Palestine refugees, many of whom resided in its territory, and from its conviction that a peaceful, just and lasting solution must be found to the issue in accordance with repeated United Nations resolutions.

44. His delegation registered its satisfaction at the efforts made by the Agency to clarify the nature of its work and its objectives as a body concerned with improving the situation of the refugees and encouraging them to undertake productive activities.

45. Another positive aspect of the report as it concerned the situation in Lebanon was its avoidance of any accusatory tone or one-sidedness, a matter in which previous reports had been at fault. The current report had rather adopted a descriptive approach and had shown concern for the humanitarian situation of the refugees without ignoring that of the Lebanese people.

46. There were nevertheless certain negative elements, for which UNRWA was not responsible, which were of great interest and concern to his delegation. The Palestinian problem remained unsolved, the Israeli occupation continued, and the situation in Palestine itself had worsened, while the report of the Commissioner-General and his statement before the Committee had made only brief reference to the situation of the Palestine refugees in the occupied Arab territories. A large part of the report had been given over to the situation of the Palestine refugees in Lebanon as a result of the tragic circumstances there, a matter on which his delegation felt obliged to make a number of observations.

47. The violence affecting Palestine refugees in Lebanon was part and parcel of that violence with which the country had been afflicted for more than 12 years, and it encompassed all of its inhabitants. It was to be hoped that the efforts to seek an appropriate solution to the Lebanese problem in general and to that of the clashes in and around the Palestinian camps would have results in keeping with the spirit of justice, sovereignty and law.

(Mr. Katra, Lebanon)

48. As in the case of the Palestine issue, it was of fundamental importance to find a specifically political solution to the Lebanese problem. Such a solution was being sought, since it would put a definitive end to the human tragedy afflicting the country and all of its inhabitants and would circumvent the need for useful but inadequate piecemeal approaches.

49. While his Government supported the humanitarian activities undertaken by UNRWA, called for the strengthening of its capabilities and its programmes and acknowledged that political considerations should not impede the proper functioning of humanitarian institutions, it was, in its view, difficult to address the problem of the Palestine refugees in Lebanon without taking note of the wider humanitarian context of the environment in which they lived, beset as it was by violence, poverty and oppression.

50. His Government acknowledged that the Agency's task was restricted to addressing the humanitarian situation of the Palestine refugees. It nevertheless felt obliged to point out that UNRWA was part of the United Nations system. While UNRWA was constantly being called upon to co-operate closely with the Governments of the host countries, its work also became difficult when there was insufficient support for its activities and its programmes from the people of those countries. Such support had become somewhat flawed in Lebanon in recent times, a matter that should be explored, understood and remedied.

51. The activities of the Commissioner-General had contributed to a greater understanding of the Lebanese problem and had led to the provision of humanitarian assistance to Lebanese nationals living in the environs of the refugee camps by the World Food Programme and UNICEF. In its concern for the smooth functioning of UNRWA, his Government called upon all of the United Nations bodies concerned with the issues of Lebanon and Palestine to recognize the need for a co-ordinated programme of assistance for Lebanon, in accordance with paragraph 15 of the Commissioner-General's report.

52. His delegation would like to call attention to the scale of the humanitarian problem affecting all of the inhabitants of Lebanon and to make a number of suggestions of a non-political nature in order to facilitate the Agency's work there. The humanitarian problem had been outlined by the Under-Secretary-General for Political and General Assembly Affairs in introducing the item on assistance for the reconstruction and development of Lebanon to the Second Committee on 15 October 1987. He had said that United Nations efforts paled in comparison to the overwhelming needs of the people of Lebanon; inflation continued to have a devastating effect on the economy; health and sanitation had been found to be in a state of radical decline; housing needs required urgent assistance; and there was a need for immediate assistance to the education sector.

53. Practical and speedy measures must be taken by the various United Nations bodies concerned. They must heed the calls made to them in the relevant General Assembly resolutions to intensify and strengthen their programmes of assistance to Lebanon in keeping with its needs. A United Nations Co-ordinator of Assistance for the Reconstruction and Development of Lebanon should once again be appointed in

(Mr. Katra, Lebanon)

accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions and in response to the repeated appeals made by Lebanese officials on the matter. The decision to evacuate most United Nations staff members from Lebanon, with the exception of those working for UNRWA, should be reviewed in order to facilitate implementation of the General Assembly resolutions calling for increased assistance to Lebanon. Small countries whose security and whose very existence were in jeopardy were in even greater need of United Nations assistance in time of war than they were in time of peace.

54. The improvement of the living conditions of the Lebanese and Palestinian peoples within the framework of an effective co-ordinated programme of assistance involving the various United Nations bodies, including UNRWA, was an urgent humanitarian task. The establishment of such a programme should not, however, in the view of his Government, be a pre-condition for the functioning of UNRWA but should rather be a means of facilitating its work in the light of the distressing situation prevailing in the country.

55. His delegation wished to express anew its regret at the violence that had cost the lives of a number of UNRWA staff members and that had caused others injury in the performance of their humanitarian duty. It deplored the kidnappings of which some had been the victims and which had been carried out by groups not subject to the authority of the Lebanese State. The Lebanese Government and the overwhelming majority of the Lebanese people were anxious that United Nations staff members in Lebanon should be safe and were committed to providing them with the necessary protection.

56. His delegation wished to stress once again the need for adequate international assistance to the Lebanese Government in order to help it, at an early date, to extend its authority to its entire territory so as to ensure security, safety and protection for all.

57. His Government hoped that the financial problem pending between it and UNRWA concerning Bayssarieh camp would soon be solved.

58. Mr. RAMIN (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that he wished to enlighten the Committee concerning the relationship between Syria and the Palestine refugees. Syria had been recruiting Palestinians from the refugee population to its terrorist organizations, such as the Abu Musa, Al-Sa'iqah and Abu Nidal groups, whose activities were known throughout the world. It was ironic to hear the Syrian representative speaking as a protector of the Palestine refugees. Kamal Jumblat, in his 1978 book Pour le Liban, had reported that Hafez al-Assad had told Yasser Arafat that Palestine was an integral part of Syria and that the Syrian leaders were the real representatives of the Palestinians. An Arab newspaper had quoted Khalil Wazir ("Abu Jihad") as saying that the Syrian régime had taken part in killing and evicting Palestinians from the Tripoli and Beddawi camps. Yasser Arafat, in Al-Ahram of 26 July 1985, had stated that Palestinians had been killed and wounded in fighting with Syrian Government forces. With reference to the previous day's statement that many refugees had left on instructions from their leaders, he could cite a former Syrian Prime Minister, who in 1973 had written that it had been the Syrians who had encouraged the Palestinians to leave.

59. Mr. GLAIEL (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that, rather than proving that the Palestine refugee problem did not exist, the Zionist representative had increased the Committee's awareness of the Palestinians' need for assistance. The tragedy of the Palestine refugees would continue unless Israel abandoned its aggressive policies.

60. Mr. RAMIN (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, referred to his statement of the previous day concerning the problem of Jews in Arab countries. In 1948, the Jewish population of Syria had numbered 50,000; only 5,000 now remained. They could not vote or run for public office, and their religion was stamped on their identity cards. The murder of a Jewish woman and her two children in Aleppo in December 1983 had increased the Jewish community's concerns for its safety. Other members of the community had received threatening phone calls. The Syrian representative had been invited to refute those charges, but would not do so because he was afraid to answer them.

61. Mr. GLAIEL (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that he and other Syrian representatives had more than once referred to reports written by Jewish journalists concerning the situation of Syrian Jews. Turning to the murder of the Syrian Jewish woman in Aleppo, he pointed out that he had already addressed that issue in the Third Committee and was prepared to do so again. The woman concerned had been among those who frequented nightclubs. Moreover, similar incidents against Jews occurred everywhere in the world. It would be interesting to know why the representative of Israel had not mentioned how many Jews were killed daily in the United States and why he did not consider such murders there to be a problem.

62. Mr. BURAYZAT (Jordan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that he had asked to take the floor because of Israel's insistence on distorting the issues before the Committee and confusing its members. With regard to the charge made by the representative of Israel concerning Arab leaders' responsibility for the evacuation of Palestinians, reliable historical evidence could not be found to show that the Palestine refugees had fled their homes and property in response to a call from their leaders. Instead of raising that issue, it would be more relevant to know whether the refugees were entitled to return to their homes and property and whether the principles of international law, to which the representative of Israel had referred, guaranteed the right of return.

63. Israel should report to the Committee whether it was allowing the refugees to return to their property and territories. The question of Palestine refugees was not only an important political issue, but also a humanitarian one. He expected the representative of Israel to see that distinction and to be more constructive and forthcoming in dealing with the question. It was well known that Israel bore the responsibility for the dispersion of the refugees and was currently prolonging the problem.

64. Mr. MANSOUR (Observer, Palestine Liberation Organization), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the Zionist representative of Israel had tried to give the impression that the Zionist rulers of his country were truly

(Mr. Mansour, Observer, PLO)

concerned about the plight of the Palestine refugees, but occurrences in the occupied territories proved otherwise. At least 25 Palestinians had recently been wounded by Israeli troops in the Gaza Strip, including a boy and a young labourer. Israeli soldiers had killed three Palestinians there at the beginning of October. Moreover, a young Palestinian mother and six students had been shot in Ramallah during demonstrations. Israel had launched air attacks over refugee camps in Lebanon in September, killing more than 50 Palestinian men, women and children, and had even dropped time-bombs in the form of toys. All of the refugee camps around Tyre had been previously smashed or destroyed by Israel, and around 3,000 Palestine refugees had been killed in cold blood during the infamous massacre at Sabra and Shatila. Subsequently, 400,000 Israelis had demonstrated in Tel Aviv, accusing their leaders of complicity in those massacres, and Israeli Defence Minister Sharon had been demoted for his role in them.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.