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UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE
REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST

Population and refugees displaced since 1967

Report of the Secretary-General

1. The present report is submitted to the General Assembly in pursuance of paragraph 4 of its resolution 32/90 E of 13 December 1977, concerning population and refugees displaced since 1967, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General, after consulting with the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), to report to it at its thirty-third session on Israel's compliance with paragraph 3 of the resolution. In paragraph 3 of that resolution, the Assembly reiterated its call upon Israel (a) to take immediate steps for the return of the displaced inhabitants and (b) to desist from all measures that obstructed the return of the displaced inhabitants, including measures affecting the physical and demographic structure of the occupied territories. In paragraphs 1 and 2, the Assembly reaffirmed the right of the displaced inhabitants to return to their homes and camps in the territories occupied by Israel since 1967, and deplored the continued refusal of the Israeli authorities to take steps for the return of the displaced inhabitants.
2. By a note verbale dated 15 March 1978 addressed to the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations, the Secretary-General drew attention to his reporting responsibility under paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 32/90 E and requested the Government of Israel to forward to him, as soon as possible, any relevant information on the implementation of the respective provisions of the resolution.
3. By a note verbale dated 15 September 1978, the Permanent Representative of Israel conveyed to the Secretary-General his Government's comments on resolution 32/90 E which, as in previous reports on this matter, are reproduced verbatim below:

"The Government of Israel has pursued a consistent policy vis-à-vis the persons who left the area of hostilities as a result of the war instigated by Arab Governments in 1967.

"Israel has been fully conscious of and has given due weight to the humanitarian aspects of the problem. It has accordingly made special arrangements for the reunification of families and the amelioration of hardship cases among residents of the areas administered by Israel since 1967 and refugees alike. It has also continued its liberal policy of 'open bridges' across the ceasefire lines, which has permitted in the past year the movement of about one million incoming and outgoing residents of those areas and visitors from the neighbouring Arab countries.

"At the same time, given its responsibility for the security of its own citizens, as well as for the safety and well-being of the population in Judea, Samaria and the District of Gaza, the Government of Israel has been guided by certain security considerations. In particular, it has been mindful of the undisguised attempts of the organization known as the PLO to exploit for its own nefarious purposes Israel's 'open bridges' policy.

"As is well known, the organization in question, which deals in indiscriminate terror against both Arabs and Jews, is committed to the destruction of the State of Israel. That objective was reaffirmed in 1977 by the central bodies of the said organization, and has been proclaimed openly by it since then, despite the efforts in progress to achieve a genuine and lasting peace between Israel and its Arab neighbours.

"Over the years, the situation has been exacerbated by the actions of certain Arab Governments which have also tried to abuse the freedom of movement into the administered areas and Israel proper with a view to assisting the infiltration of Arab terrorists, arms and explosives.

"These subversive activities have inevitably placed serious limitations on the return of persons displaced in 1967. Nonetheless, through a balanced policy based on both humanitarian and security considerations, the Government of Israel has facilitated the family reunion of significant numbers of the persons concerned. In the decade from 1967 to 1977, 47,558 persons were permitted to rejoin their families in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District. Over the past year, the special arrangements for family reunion and hardship cases have been maintained, and the co-operation of the local Arab authorities in this respect has continued."

4. In connexion with paragraph 3 (a) of General Assembly resolution 32/90 E, the Secretary-General has obtained from the Commissioner-General of UNRWA the information available to him on the return of refugees registered with the Agency. As indicated in earlier reports, 1/ the Agency is not involved in any arrangements

1/ A/9156, para. 5; Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-ninth Session, Annexes, agenda item 38, document A/9740, para. 4; *ibid.*, Thirtieth Session, Annexes, agenda item 54, document A/10253, para. 4; *ibid.*, Thirty-first Session, Annexes, agenda item 53, document A/31/240, para. 4; and *ibid.*, Thirty-second Session, Annexes, agenda item 55, document A/32/263, para. 4. /...

for the return of refugees; nor is it involved in any arrangements for the return of displaced persons, none of whom are registered as refugees. Its information is based on requests by returning registered refugees for transfer of rations to the areas to which they have returned and subsequent correction of Agency records. The Agency would not necessarily be aware of the return of any registered refugees who did not request the provision of rations or services but believes they would be very few in number. So far as is known to the Agency, 204 displaced registered refugees returned from east Jordan to the West Bank and 29 from east Jordan to the Gaza Strip between 1 July 1977 and 30 June 1978. It should be noted that some of these may not be displaced registered refugees, but rather members of the family of a displaced registered refugee who accompanied him on his return or joined him there, but who were not themselves displaced in 1967. In the same period, 18 displaced registered refugees returned to the Gaza Strip from Egypt. Thus, taking into account the estimate given in paragraph 4 of last year's report, the number of displaced registered refugees who are known by the Agency to have returned to the occupied territories since June 1967 is about 9,250. The Agency is unable to estimate the total number of displaced inhabitants who have returned. It keeps records only of registered refugees and, as pointed out above, even those records, particularly with respect to location of registered refugees, may be incomplete.
