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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 5 of its resolution 35/13 E of 3 November 1980 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-sixth session on Israel's compliance with paragraph 4 of the resolution. In paragraph 4 of that resolution, the Assembly reiterated its call upon Israel (a) to take immediate steps for the return of all 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 to 3 of the resolution, the Assembly reaffirmed the inalienable rights of all the displaced inhabitants to return to their homes or former places of residence in the territories occupied by Israel since 1967, and declared once more that any attempt to restrict, or to attach conditions to, the free exercise of the right of return by any displaced person was inconsistent with that inalienable right and inadmissible; considered any and all agreements embodying any restriction on or condition for the return of the displaced inhabitants as null and void; 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 12 January 1981, addressed to the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations, the Secretary-General drew attention to his reporting responsibility under paragraph 5 of General Assembly resolution 35/13 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 20 August 1981, the Permanent Representative of Israel conveyed to the Secretary-General his Government's comments on resolution 35/13 E which, as in previous reports on this matter, are reproduced verbatim below:

"The primary objective of the above-mentioned resolution is to obstruct the ongoing peace process in the Middle East and to serve the aims of those Arab States which harbour hostile and destructive intentions toward Israel. Paragraph 2 of the resolution in question, which was first included in General Assembly resolution 34/52 E of 23 November 1979, further illustrates those unrealistic aims. It must therefore be totally rejected.

"Israel's consistent humanitarian policy towards the persons who left the area of hostilities as a result of the Arab-instigated Six Day War of 1967, remains unaltered. The Government of Israel has set forth this humanitarian policy in the successive replies it has submitted to the Secretary-General annually since 1969. The report of the Secretary-General issued on 8 October 1980 (A/35/472) contains the latest of those replies.

"Israel's policy of facilitating the reunification of families, and of ameliorating hardship cases among residents and refugees of the territories administered by it, carries with it certain security risks for itself and its people, as well as for the inhabitants of the administered territories. For instance, while Israel scrupulously adheres to the 'open bridges' policy which allows free, unrestricted movement of people, including refugees, and goods in both directions across the Jordan River, the terrorist PLO takes advantage of this freedom by attempting to infiltrate its operatives, as well as arms and explosives into Israel.

"The PLO adamantly rejects Israel's right to exist and unceasingly pursues its terroristic aims. As recently as 30 July 1981, in an interview with the West German weekly Der Stern, Farouk Kadoumi, one of Yasser Arafat's henchmen, declared not only that the PLO will 'never recognize Israel', but also that:

'We shall never allow Israel to live in peace. We shall never allow it total security. Every Israeli will feel that /from/ behind every wall there might be a guerrilla who is aiming at /him/.'

"If further evidence were required as to the destructive intentions of the PLO, one need only have witnessed the atrocities perpetrated by the PLO against civilian centres in northern Israel during the month of July 1981. The indiscriminate attacks on numerous civilian targets in Israel had but one goal: to inflict on Israel civilians as many casualties as possible.

"Yet, notwithstanding the security risks involved, which inevitably result in some constraints on the return of persons displaced in 1967, Israel remains committed to its humanitarian approach to the question which is the subject of this note. In keeping with this approach, the Israel authorities admitted no less than 55,993 persons to the territories administered by Israel for purposes of family reunification from the Six Day War of 1967 to the end of June 1981."

4. In connexion with paragraph 4 (a) of General Assembly resolution 35/13 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 for the return of refugees; nor is it involved in any arrangements for the return of displaced persons, none of whom is registered as a refugee. 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, between 1 July 1980 and 30 June 1981, 135 displaced registered refugees returned from eastern Jordan to the West Bank, and 77 returned to the Gaza Strip, of whom 69 were from eastern Jordan and 8 from the West Bank. 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. No reports were received by UNRWA of displaced registered refugees returning 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 9,800. 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.

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 document A/10253, para. 4; ibid., Thirty-first Session, Annexes, agenda item 53, document A/31/240, para. 4; ibid., Thirty-second Session, Annexes, agenda item 55, document A/32/263, para. 4; ibid., Thirty-third Session, Annexes, agenda item 54, document A/33/286, para. 4; ibid., Thirty-fourth Session, Annexes, agenda item 50, document A/34/518, para. 4; and ibid., Thirty-fifth Session, Annexes, agenda item 53, document A/35/472, para. 4.