



SUMMARY RECORD (PARTIAL)* OF THE 26th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MUBAREZ (Yemen)

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The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 65: UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (continued)

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER-GENERAL (A/37/13, A/37/479)
- (b) REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (A/37/591)
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- (d) REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/37/425 and Corr.1, A/37/426, A/37/427, A/37/488 and Corr.1, A/37/599)

1. Mr. LEVIN (Israel) said that the report of the Commissioner-General deserved careful examination, although it reflected a bias against Israel. Firstly, there were major discrepancies between Israel's estimates of the number of refugees and the estimates given in the report. Secondly, Israel was not to blame for the delays in erecting tents for the refugees and had always encouraged UNRWA to speed up the implementation of its programme. Thirdly, Israel was satisfied with the results of the prompt enquiry into the Sibliin Training Centre but regretted that it had taken its note verbale of 29 June 1982 to have a decision taken on the subject. UNRWA should have noticed years ago that the Centre was being used by terrorists for military purposes.

2. He wished to recall the basic resolutions adopted by the General Assembly on the question of the Palestine refugees, namely resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947, resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948 and resolution 302 (IV) of 8 December of 1949, and retrace the history of the refugee question for the Palestinian refugees were the only refugees who, after 35 years, had not been relocated and integrated into their host countries. In 1947, following the adoption by the United Nations of the resolution on the partition of Palestine, armed bands from neighbouring Arab countries and from inside Palestine had attacked the Jewish community in Palestine. The avowed intent of that war had been to annihilate the Jewish community and prevent the establishment of the Jewish State. The initiative had failed but the war had had the side effect of causing the massive evacuation of Palestinian Arabs. The Arab Higher Committee, which had purported to represent local Palestinian leaders, and the Arab League had hoped for a swift and decisive victory which would terminate the Jewish presence, and had encouraged the Arab residents of Palestine to temporarily vacate their homes in order to leave the way clear for military operations. Thus, the Palestinian Arab population had left the coast and urban areas for the Arab-controlled hills in the east of Palestine. That sudden departure had startled the Jewish population and many Jewish leaders had appealed to the Arabs to persuade them to remain, but without success. Thus, even before the end of the British Mandate on 15 May 1948 and the declaration of independence of the State of Israel, some 200,000 Arabs had already left their homes. When the Arab Higher Committee's plan to annihilate the Jewish community in Palestine had failed, the Arab leaders of neighbouring countries had taken over that "mission". The invasion of the new-born State of

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(Mr. Levin, Israel)

Israel on 15 May 1948 by regular Arab armies had been announced officially on the same day by the Government of Egypt and on the next day by the Government of Transjordan in cables sent to the Secretary-General and the Security Council. The widespread fighting that had ensued had caused a third wave of 300,000 refugees to flee the war-torn areas. By the beginning of November 1948, however, the Arab armies had been defeated and the remnants of the Arab Liberation Army had been dispersed, signifying an imminent end to the fighting.

3. One could thus affirm, as former Syrian Prime Minister Khaled al Azm and Palestinian leader Abu Mazen had themselves recognized, that the mass exodus of the Palestinian Arabs, provoked and encouraged by the Arab leaders, had been the direct result of their intention of waging an all-out war on the Jewish community of Palestine and, later, on the State of Israel.

4. It was also important to note that the 1948 conflict had brought about another wave of refugees in the Middle East, that of the Jewish refugees from Arab countries. Jews had been living in the Near East and North Africa for over 2,500 years, at times enjoying peace and affluence and at others facing persecution, but events had been precipitated by the rise of nazism in Europe and by the contacts which many Arab leaders had established with the Nazis in the hope that they would help them to destroy the Jewish enterprise in Palestine and to definitively subdue the Jews in the Arab countries. Those leaders had actively promoted racial hatred against Jews in Arab countries and later the adoption of anti-Jewish legislation and pogroms throughout the Arab world. In Iraq, for example, there had been a whole series of violent outbursts against the Jews between 1946 and 1949 and a law had been enacted depriving Iraqi Jews of their nationality if they left, or tried to leave, Iraq illegally. That law had been expanded subsequently to include the freezing of the property of denationalized Jews. Similar situations had developed in other Arab countries during the years 1945-1950, with the inevitable result that the Jews had fled en masse. The hundreds of thousands of Jews who had sought refuge in Israel had been assimilated there through a major human, social and financial effort, for it would have been unthinkable for the Israelis not to integrate them and to leave them to live in tents as the Arabs had done with their Palestinian brethren.

5. Over the past 40 years, millions of people had become refugees and had always been relocated and integrated in countries with which they had affinities, whether it was in Finland in 1944, South Korea at the beginning of the 1950s, India and Pakistan at the time of the partition of the Indian subcontinent, Hong Kong for Chinese refugees or the two Germanies for Germans expelled from Eastern Europe. None of those refugees had been put in camps for 30 years or forcibly prevented from integrating into their host countries. They had not been recruited for acts of terrorism against their countries of origin and no international agency had been established and perpetrated to take care of them. The Palestinian Arab refugees were the only group of people whose status as refugees had been maintained for 34 years, due to Arab intransigence. One could justifiably ask whether the refugees of Africa, Latin America and Asia would face the same fate and whether they would benefit from the same assistance from the international community.

6. In considering UNRWA's future role, some criteria should be defined which would set new, more realistic and more constructive terms of reference. After all,

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(Mr. Levin, Israel)

great socio-economic changes had occurred in the countries where Palestinian Arabs now resided and the general framework of their existence had changed beyond recognition. First of all, one should determine who today was to be considered a Palestinian Arab refugee when objective observers agreed that the Palestinian Arabs still living in camps represented no more than 15-20 per cent of all Palestinian Arabs. One should also determine whether the Palestinian Arabs had not really been integrated into the societies in which they lived, which Palestinian Arabs still needed rehabilitation, how one was to assess their needs, what exactly the refugee camps were like today and whether a large-scale rehabilitation process organized from the outside was still necessary.

7. The rapid urbanization which most of the Arab world had undergone and the meteoric rise in the price of oil had increased the demand for manpower in all branches of the economy of the Arab countries of the Middle East. The Palestinian Arab refugees had adapted easily to those new opportunities: those with university degrees were now intricately involved in the social, economic and technological development of their host countries and, in the Gulf States, generally earned high wages. Despite the contribution which the Palestinian Arabs made to the economy of those countries, however, Governments considered them unreliable and subjected them to stringent scrutiny and legal harassment. Very few of them had been granted citizenship and the attendant rights. In other words, the Palestinian Arab refugee in those countries tended to resemble an immigrant worker.

8. Most of the refugees living in camps in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District had become integrated into the economic life of their environment. The more wealthy had moved out of the camps and into neighbouring areas but poorer people from outside the camps had moved in in the hope of receiving the aid extended to camp-dwellers, 23 per cent of whom were not refugees at all. A similar situation had developed in the camps in Syria and Jordan.

9. It was thus clear that a social and human problem had been exploited by the Arab leaders because of its political ramifications. Most Arab countries could easily have contributed to the complete integration of the Palestinian refugees had it not been for the terrorist organizations which they themselves had encouraged and financed for reasons entirely divorced from the well-being of the Palestinians. The Palestinians were not welcome in the countries in which they worked because of the latter's fear of the terrorists and also because of ongoing inter-Arab rivalry and warfare. The Arab world was beginning to realize that the Palestinian refugees could not and would not go back to Palestine, however, and it should, together with the international community, face that fact and find an equitable and peaceful solution to the problem.

10. In conclusion, it could be said that, since 1948, there had been an exchange of populations between Israel and the Arab countries: Jewish refugees from Arab countries had been integrated into Israel and many Palestinian Arab refugees had been resettled into the Arab world. A residual number of Palestinians still remained as refugees in camps, but they could easily be integrated into their host countries. The problem should not be unsurmountable. If the Arab States had recognized the State of Israel in 1948 and made peace with it, the problem of the

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(Mr. Levin, Israel)

refugees would not have arisen at all. The psychological barrier created by the continued rejection of Israel must be overcome and the problem of the refugees resolved.

11. Mr. KA (Senegal) said that the unsettling developments in the Lebanon between June and September 1982 had added another dimension to the financial crisis confronting UNRWA, which threatened to impair the smooth operation of the Agency seriously. Yet the Commissioner-General and his staff had managed to prevent the Agency from foundering and, despite some interference and restrictions on their freedom of action, had coped effectively with their mandate; his delegation congratulated them heartily.

12. To the extent that its resources would allow, his country would give UNRWA its total support and full co-operation; with that in view, his Government would announce on 29 November 1982 a contribution to the UNRWA budget 150 per cent higher than its contribution for the previous year had been.

13. On 6 June 1982, the Middle East region, and Lebanon in particular, had been set ablaze by the hostilities breaking out following the aggression by the Israeli military forces, which had penetrated deep into Lebanon, occupied the access routes to the capital, held up supplies to major cities, destroyed the homes of thousands of Palestinian refugees, attacked diplomatic missions, and enacted unlawful controls on the people living in the sectors under their control. The special report of the Commissioner-General (A/37/479), reflecting the alarming situation in the occupied areas, showed that the resources allocated were not commensurate with the extent of the needs there, despite urgent appeals by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. If the report had covered the macabre events of September in the Sabra and Shatila camps, it would have convinced sceptics of the need to turn their attention to the plight of the thousands of refugees living under perilous conditions because of the arrogance of a country that constantly infringed the legal and moral rules laid down in conventions it had undertaken to uphold.

14. Faced with that situation, the international community should redouble its efforts, take exceptional measures to put an end to Israel's chosen state of permanent lawlessness, and give UNRWA fresh confidence by helping it to correct its financial imbalance and cope with its mission more normally. That was the price of safeguarding peace and security around the world, in the Middle East especially.

15. He welcomed the decision, taken by the General Assembly in March 1982, to consider ways of showing the decline in UNRWA's financial situation. While it waited for the Joint Inspection Unit's conclusions, the General Assembly should issue another urgent appeal to Member States to make substantial cash contributions so as to permit UNRWA's priority programmes, which were urgently needed by the people living in the deprived regions, to go ahead.

16. The two reports of the Commissioner-General (A/37/13, A/37/479) also showed that the survival of the Palestinian refugees was as much of a problem as ever, and that UNRWA must be given the means to help the refugees more effectively. To that end, it would be appropriate for the Commissioner-General to continue his efforts to move the headquarters of UNRWA to the zone of operations.

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(Mr. Ka, Senegal)

17. The frequent movements of civilian Arab populations in the occupied Arab territories, the punitive sorties against Palestinian camps, the profanation of the Holy Places, the arrests and the detentions without charge, the repeated restrictions on the movements of UNRWA officers and the populations of some areas, and the uncompensated destruction of UNRWA facilities only made UNRWA's task more difficult. Because of the situation, the international community should not only demand the return of the refugees to their homes but also promote a just and lasting political settlement of the Middle Eastern question by, among other things, liberating the Arab territories occupied by force, including Jerusalem, and restoring their legitimate rights to the Palestinian people. The international community owed it to itself to respond to the hopes of the thousands of Palestinians scattered around the world, like their African brothers from Namibia and South Africa, who wanted to live in peace, in their own homes, with dignity and respect for their identity.

18. Mr. TERZI (Palestine Liberation Organization) said that the Israeli representative stood for a ruling party which had its origins in what was known as the Irgun, a party that, while claiming to be solving the so-called Jewish question, had publicly announced its intention of collaborating with Hitler and the German régime, and was known to have established relations with the Nazis.

19. The refugee problem, which dated back to before 1947, stemmed from the doctrines of a Zionist, racist philosophy whose originator, one Mr. Herzl, had called for the removal of the inhabitants of Palestine. The idea had been developed by another leader of the Zionist movement, Jabotinsky, who had said that the evacuation of the inhabitants of Palestine was a prerequisite for the creation of an exclusively Jewish State, and that if it could not be carried out peacefully, an "iron hand" policy should be adopted. That policy had indeed been put into effect, notably by the Irgun gangs, and the killings at Deir Yasin and other massacres were still remembered with horror.

20. Later, another Zionist leader had spoken of "thinning" the Palestinian population in Galilee. Not surprisingly, the term and the method had both been borrowed from none other than Eichmann, another leader of the Nazis, whether they were Christian or Jewish.

21. The Israeli representative advocated integrating the Palestinian refugees into society where they were; the refugees, however, were determined to continue to struggle until they were integrated with their own country, Palestine, and would continue to be a problem, as they had been for the past 35 years, as long as the Palestinians were prevented from exercising a right established in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: the right to return to their homeland.

22. In his statement, moreover, the Israeli representative had distorted historical facts. He had said that trouble had broken out in Palestine, 35 years previously, following the adoption by the United Nations, in November 1947, of the resolution dividing Palestine into a Jewish State and an Arab State. In actual fact, the Palestinian Arabs had risen against the British mandate as early as 1922, and the troubles and the struggle for independence had begun then, not in 1947. In 1936 the Palestinian Arabs had called a 180-day strike throughout Palestine to protest against the British mandate and support the creation of an independent Palestinian State.

(Mr. Terzi, PLO)

23. Another error: Sabri Jiryis, the Palestinian whom the Irgun representative had described as a research worker at the Institute for Palestinian Studies in Beirut, was in fact the director of the Palestinian Research Centre which had been looted by the Israeli army in September 1982.

24. In addition, the Israeli representative asserted that the Palestinian Arab refugees were the only ones who were still of refugee status, and that they lived in miserable ghettos. While he wholeheartedly endorsed that statement, he (Mr. Terzi) urged the international community to recognize that it was high time the ghettos were closed and the Palestinians were allowed to return to their homes, for nothing could justify their continuing to live in such conditions.

25. Those who spoke of "Judea", "Samaria" and the "Gaza Strip" instead of the occupied Palestinian territories alleged that the Palestinians had integrated themselves into the economic life of the areas in which they were living: but were those Palestinians really integrated? Were they not, rather, subject to harassment by the military governor and the arbitrary legislation forcing them to leave their homes? Was it not established fact that the Palestinians who had been driven from their homes were not allowed to send help to their families remaining in the occupied territories, so that they could live in peace and security?

26. The Israeli representative claimed that the Palestinian refugees would never return to their homes: that was the core of the problem, and peace would come about only when the Palestinians were allowed to return home, where they need not occupy anyone's territory. He had added that the Jewish refugees from Arab territories were now integrated into Israel, and that the Palestinian Arab refugees had resettled all over the Arab world. The Palestinian refugees had not resettled; they were living among their brothers, but their real home was Palestine. If Jewish refugees from Arab territories - or elsewhere - wished to go back there, the Palestinians would defend the right of those Jewish refugees to return to their homes, whether in Morocco, the Gulf region or Europe, and no Government, Arab or not, would deny them that right.

27. Mr. AL ZAHAWI (Iraq), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the Zionists' lies about the roots of the Palestinian refugee problem and the conflict between Israel and the Arab countries had been being repeated for the past 30 years: his delegation reserved the right to refute every one of them in a later statement.

28. Mr. CARLISLE (United States of America), speaking on a point of order, said that the Special Political Committee was supposed to discuss matters falling within its competence; statements of a personal nature did not advance its discussions. He appealed to the Chairman to urge speakers to limit their statements to the topics under consideration, since no member was required to tolerate personal attacks against either himself or the citizens of his country.

AGENDA ITEM 33: POLICIES OF APARTHEID OF THE GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH AFRICA (continued)

29. The CHAIRMAN announced that the discussion of agenda item 33, entitled "Policies of apartheid of the Government of South Africa", would be covered in a verbatim record.

The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 12.15 p.m.