

relief would contribute to the moral degeneration of the refugees and might also militate against a swift political settlement of the problem. The greatest obstruction to the present programme was the persistent lack of an over-all political settlement for the Palestine area. Similar views had been expressed by the representative of France and other speakers, and also appeared in the report of the Economic Survey Mission (A/1106). The latter also stated that the continuing political stalemate in the relations between the Arab countries and Israel precluded any early solution of the refugee problem by means of repatriation or large-scale resettlement, and stressed that the prime object was the finding of temporary work. The report frankly admitted that the repatriation of refugees required political decisions outside the Mission's competence.

45. The Polish delegation thought that the General Assembly could, in the near future, ensure the survival of the refugees merely in conditions which would not contribute to a further deterioration of their morale, but for a permanent solution, it must look further ahead.

46. Mr. Drohojowski reserved his delegation's right to comment at a later stage on the joint draft resolution (A/AC.31/L.46). The sponsors

of the draft resolution, and particularly the representative of the United States, had implied that a permanent solution of the refugee problem could be found, without regard to the political situation in the Palestine area. The Polish delegation was convinced that it would be impossible to solve the problem of the refugees until peace was established in Palestine. Unless the United Nations put an end to the practice of interference by the imperialistic Powers in Middle Eastern affairs, a practice of which the refugee problem was an inevitable consequence, that problem would continue to exist as part of a wider situation constituting in itself a grave threat to peace.

47. The Polish Government, which knew from its own experience of all the implications of a refugee problem, was deeply concerned about the fate of the refugees in the Middle East. It also knew that any solution must take into account not only the welfare of the refugees themselves but also the interests of the States concerned. The Polish delegation strongly urged the Committee to recommend such measures as might be considered adequate for the purpose of liquidating a situation which threatened to become a permanent source of friction in an important part of the world.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.

FIFTY-SECOND MEETING

Held at Lake Success, New York, on Wednesday, 30 November 1949, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Nasrollah ENTEZAM (Iran).

Palestine (continued)

ASSISTANCE TO PALESTINE REFUGEES: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/1060, A/1060/ADD. 1, A/1106) (*continued*)

1. RAHIM Bey (Egypt) said that by a strange irony of fate the problem of the refugees, one of the most tragic aspects of the Palestine question, was a direct consequence of a movement, the Zionist movement, which had long been regarded as humanitarian. Although the Zionist appeal for the establishment of a refuge for oppressed European Jews had been based on humanitarian grounds, the methods they had employed to realize their aim had been no less cruel than those practised by the nazis against the Jews. The General Assembly was now confronted with the problem of the Arab refugees, a problem far more extensive and serious than the problem of displaced Jews, which the Zionists had prided themselves on having solved. The Deir Yasin massacre, perpetrated on 10 April 1948, i.e. well before the outbreak of hostilities in Palestine, was a typical example of the methods later employed in other places to drive the Arabs from their homes and country. In that connexion it should be stressed that the terrorist organizations responsible for the massacre had boasted of it in public, and had asserted that the same method used elsewhere had caused the flight of the Arabs. A million human beings, suffering from cold and hunger and in utter despair, had been driven from their homes, deprived of both property and means of livelihood, and were now on the borders of Palestine. A million human beings, Moslem and Christian, who were the rightful owners of Palestine, had been

expelled from their homes so that Jews from all over the world might take their place.

2. The Conciliation Commission, which had been appointed to bring about a settlement of the Palestine problem, including the refugee problem, had worked untiringly for many months with the sincere co-operation of the Arab States; its efforts had, however, proved unavailing. Rahim Bey referred in that connexion to the findings of the first interim report (A/1106) of the United Nations Economic Survey Mission for the Middle East, and submitted by the Chairman of the Conciliation Commission on 16 November 1949. It appeared from that report that the Arab refugees, who had been unable to return to their homes because Israel refused to admit them, had not succeeded in gaining a livelihood in the Arab States which had received them, on account of the limited opportunities of employment in those States. It was worthy of note that the State of Israel had announced its willingness to repatriate 100,000 Arab refugees on two conditions, first, that such repatriation should form part of a general settlement of the Jewish-Arab conflict and secondly, that the 100,000 Arabs to be repatriated should not be sent back to their original homes but should be resettled in areas especially designated by Israel, i.e. by the foreigners at that time in control of their country. Such a procedure would amount to the creation of Arab ghettos in an Arab country.

3. According to the report of the Secretary-General (A/1060), the number of Arab refugees exceeded one million, or four-fifths of the total Arab population of Palestine. Thus, 80 per cent

of the Arab population had been ruined or driven from their homes. The fate of the remainder was little better than that of the refugees. In fact, the armistice demarcation line separated many from their farmlands or from the areas with which they had traded, and, in addition, the influx of refugees to their towns and villages had had disastrous effects on their economy.

4. He quoted Gaza as an example. According to the last part of the report (A/1106) of the Economic Survey Mission for the Middle East entitled "Discussion of findings and recommendations", the population of Gaza, which was 70,000 before the outbreak of hostilities, had risen to 270,000, dispersed over an area of 150 square miles. Lying as it did outside the armistice lines, Gaza was cut off from the areas with which it traded. Furthermore, its farmers were separated by the demarcation line from the land they tilled and could only attempt to harvest their crops at the peril of their lives.

5. In the eastern part of Palestine, which was under the control of Jordan, the situation was no better. According to the same part of the report of the Economic Survey Mission for the Middle East, the original population of 460,000 had been increased by 60 per cent as a result of the influx of 280,000 refugees. The influx of refugees had had serious economic consequences in the Arab countries, particularly in those which had given them refuge. Moreover, as the second progress report of the Conciliation Commission (A/838) had shown, the moral and material situation of the refugees was deplorable, and the need to take measures towards a permanent solution of the problem became more pressing every day. Rahim Bey referred in that connexion to a letter dated 3 November 1949 from the American Friends Service Committee, which had been administering part of the United Nations relief programme, from which it appeared that the plight of the Arab refugees was wretched. After sixteen months of exile, their physical condition had deteriorated and their morale had declined from day to day, since no end to their troubles was in sight. Those members of the Commission who had worked in Gaza itself had been able to see the deplorable material conditions under which the refugees lived, their desire to return home at the earliest possible moment and the damage done to the family life and to the morale of the refugees by unemployment and the lack of educational facilities. The representatives of the American Friends Service Committee also expressed their concern in the letter over the eventual reduction in the rations issued by the United Nations.

6. The letter also showed that babies were not receiving the kind of nourishment that would give them the reserves of health for the winter, and that the refugees, while greatly appreciating the health services and freely making use of the camp clinics, were suffering greatly from lack of clothing, particularly with the approach of the cold season. The representatives of the American Friends Service Committee also told how those refugees, observing the refusal of the outside world to make decisions which would relieve their sufferings, were vainly looking round to see who were their real friends, and were giving way to bitterness. Lastly, they stated that the extraordinary urgency of the situation demanded extraordinary means for its solution.

7. Those quotations showed that if effective and rapid aid was not forthcoming, one of the saddest tragedies in the history of the world would take place.

8. The refugees were facing the rigours of winter with sapped vitality, lowered resistance to disease, and poor morale. The majority had had enough vitality and reserve vigour to pull through the first winter, but after nearly two years of under-nourishment their resistance to cold and disease was destroyed.

9. It was true that at its third session the General Assembly had voted to create, by its resolution 212 (III) a relief fund of 32 million dollars for the Palestine refugees, whose number was then estimated at 500,000. That fund was intended to last from 1 December 1948 to 31 August 1949. The number of the refugees was, however, very much greater, about a million, and it had proved necessary to issue daily rations to 940,000 persons. In addition, it had been decided that the sum voted should last until December 1949. In those circumstances, it had been necessary to reduce from 2,000 to 1,447 the calory content of the United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees (UNRPR) rations. Those rations, which did not contain meat, eggs or cheese, were obviously deficient in proteins and vitamins. Since, as stated in chapter IV of the Secretary-General's report (A/1060), the over-all cost of the UNRPR portion of the combined ration scale had never exceeded 1,400,000 dollars a month, it was clear that each refugee had received an amount of nourishment per month representing a value of 1.50 dollars, or of 2 dollars at most if account were taken of the distributions made by the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and various other organizations. In those circumstances, there could be no question, without condemning the great mass of the refugees to complete famine, of discontinuing the assistance or even, as proposed in the draft resolution (A/AC.31/L.46) submitted to the Committee by France, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States, of curtailing the amount of the rations distributed. On the contrary, assistance should be increased.

10. As was known, the Arab States had done all they could to relieve the refugees. They had been almost alone in assisting them until the end of 1948 and had continued their assistance even after the inauguration of the UNRPR. Of the 32 million dollars voted by the United Nations, the Arab States had contributed more than 6 million dollars.

11. If it had been within their power, the Arab States would certainly have continued to shoulder the load alone; but, as was pointed out by the Economic Survey Mission for the Middle East, in its first interim report (A/1106), in the section entitled "Guiding policies for administration of proposed programme", "No Government in the Near East, or any Government anywhere, can indefinitely provide special benefits to a particular group, transient in its domain, while there is substantial unemployment among its own nationals".

12. Moreover, the problem of the Palestine refugees should be solved on the international level, since it was partly the consequence of an international decision. The United Nations approval in resolution 273 (III) of the application for mem-

bership of the State that had created the refugee problem, without requiring the prior repatriation of the refugees, had undoubtedly tended to delay their return home. At the time, the Egyptian delegation had given warning¹ of the danger and imprudence of accepting the application of Israel for admission even before the provisions of the General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948 had been applied, particularly those relating to the repatriation of refugees and the internationalization of Jerusalem. Having, in spite of that warning, admitted Israel to membership, the United Nations could not now escape its responsibility for the Palestine refugees.

13. The United Nations should, however, solve the problem for still other reasons. The presence of so large a number of refugees was, in fact, a threat to peace and security in the Near East, and the United Nations, which was responsible for the maintenance of peace and security in the world, could not remain indifferent to such a situation.

14. But the solution of the problem should not be sought in a mere continuation of the present relief work. There would be no need for relief if justice was shown to the Palestine refugees. In other words, the Arab peoples in general, and the Palestine refugees in particular, considered that the distribution of relief, apart from the danger of moral degradation which it entailed in the long run, could in no case be regarded as a palliative for the wrongs inflicted on them or as a substitute for repatriation. The Arab peoples asked not for charity but for justice, and they preferred a just and expeditious settlement of the problem rather than a dole.

15. The *Ad Hoc* Political Committee now had before it the first interim report of the Economic Survey Mission for the Middle East (A/1106), the conclusions of which were repeated in the draft resolution submitted jointly by France, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States (A/AC.31/L.46). Thanks were due to the Economic Mission for its thorough and painstaking study of the problem and its understanding, not only of the material conditions, but of the psychological factors involved. The Egyptian delegation heartily endorsed the Mission's recommendations for the institution of a public works programme to provide employment for some of the refugees and thereby to "halt the demoralizing process of pauperization, outcome of a dole prolonged", as it was expressed in the "Guiding principles for administration of proposed programme". The projects contemplated by the Mission were of the greatest utility and merited the most careful consideration. The Egyptian delegation also supported the creation of an agency to administer the relief programme and to supervise the execution of the work programme in co-operation with the local authorities.

16. On the other hand, the Egyptian delegation noted with regret that the Economic Mission recommended a drastic reduction in the amount of rations to be issued from 940,000 to 652,000. In support of its recommendation, the Mission pointed out that some of the persons who were now receiving relief were not refugees or were not, in all cases, in need; and it arrived at the

number of genuine refugees by deducting the number of Arabs now in the territory controlled by the Jews, from the total number of the former Arab population of the area. In the opinion of the Egyptian delegation, that method of ascertaining the number was not satisfactory, for there had been no comparatively recent census of the Arab population of Palestine. In those circumstances, the conclusions of the Mission were based on a mere estimate. It would therefore be dangerous to accept them, the more so since, in fact, the number of refugees appeared to be very much higher, and the agencies administering the relief programme in Palestine had not been sparing in their warnings in that connexion.

17. In particular, the President of the International Red Cross Committee had put the *Ad Hoc* Political Committee on its guard against any arbitrary reduction in the number of rations distributed to refugees in a cable quoted in A/1060, annex I (A).

18. Rahim Bey recalled that the President of the International Red Cross Committee had appealed to the members of the *Ad Hoc* Political Committee and to the General Assembly not to decide, on a rigid and mechanical basis, to reduce, as from 1 January 1950, the rations which the United Nations had placed at the disposal of the International Red Cross. Mr. Ruegger had also said that the United Nations should not be bound by rigid instructions which would not allow the International Red Cross to continue the distribution of relief among several categories of sufferers in the winter.

19. The Egyptian representative also said that Mr. Pickett, the representative of the American Friends Service Committee, had declared that on 31 October 1949 the United Nations was able to give reasonable assurances in reply to his letter quoted in A/1060, annex I (C), "that adequate funds will be available to meet personnel and maintenance costs, and supply programmes, on the same scales which are minimal, as at present, and for the full period of the extension".

20. The Egyptian delegation considered that the agencies which administered the United Nations relief programme were in a better position to judge the exact number of refugees and of those who were still living at home but, as the result of hostilities, had become destitute. That question, together with the question of eliminating from the relief rolls those who were gainfully employed or who had independent means, should be left to the operating agencies.

21. In view of the foregoing considerations, the Egyptian delegation proposed that paragraph 6 of the joint draft resolution (A/AC.31/L.46) should be amended to increase the figure for direct relief and works programmes for the period 1 January to 31 December 1950 from 33,700,000 dollars to 40,900,000 dollars, which would bring the sum available for direct relief from 20,200,000 dollars to 27,400,000 dollars. The operating agency in the field would thus have the necessary funds to carry out the tasks entrusted to it. It should be clearly understood that any part of that amount which was not utilized for the purpose specified would be transferred to the work programme fund.

22. The Egyptian delegation could not support another conclusion of the report of the Economic

¹ See *Official Records of the Third Session of the General Assembly, Part II, 207th plenary meeting.*

Survey Mission for the Middle East: the Mission considered that the purpose of its recommendations was to abate the emergency by constructive action and to reduce the refugee problem to limits within which the Near Eastern Governments could reasonably be expected to assume responsibility. The Mission also considered that the work relief programme afforded the only possibility of putting an end to the need for international relief and of ensuring the rehabilitation of the refugees.

23. The Egyptian delegation thought that such optimism, which was also noticeable in the joint draft resolution, was unwarranted. Paragraphs 5 and 7 of that draft resolution should therefore be amended so as to rectify that unrealistic view of the problem and to reaffirm the refugees' right to return home in accordance with the General Assembly resolution 194 (III). No assistance or employment could make the refugees forget their homes; all the inquiries made on the subject showed that they wanted to go home again and that nothing could alter that desire. It would be showing little knowledge of the proud Arab character to believe that the offer of work, even permanent, might induce an Arab refugee to forget his home.

24. The Economic Survey Mission for the Middle East also raised the question why the refugees did not solve their own problem by going home, and replied forthwith that the great majority of refugees had no dearer wish, for they considered that, as a matter of right and justice, they should be permitted to return to their homes, their farms and villages, and the coastal cities of Haifa and Jaffa, of which many were natives.

25. He recalled, moreover, that the General Assembly in its resolution 194 (III) had recognized that right and the United Nations was responsible for ensuring respect for it. The refugees hoped that that resolution would be implemented without delay. In that connexion the programme recommended by the Mission should be carried out, and the Egyptian delegation would support any draft resolution to that effect.

26. The Egyptian delegation considered, however, that the only solution that was humane and just and likely to restore peace and security in the Near East was to repatriate the refugees; if that solution were not applied, the prestige and influence of the United Nations and the value of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as adopted in General Assembly resolution 217 (III) would be dangerously undermined.

27. Mr. BEINOLOU (Greece) said that his delegation associated itself with the tribute paid to the agencies which, under the auspices of the United Nations, had spared no efforts for the benefit of the Palestine refugees.

28. He recalled that, in the space of a single generation, Greece had twice had to face a similar problem.

29. A rapid solution of the problem of the Palestine refugees could only serve the interests of peace. Such a solution was possible if the question were separated from political matters, to which it was inevitably linked, and if it were considered solely in its social and humanitarian aspect.

30. A great deal of organization was, however, necessary and it would take many months. The Greek delegation therefore considered that the interim report of the Economic Survey Mission, the recommendations of which were contained in the joint draft resolution submitted by France, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States, was most satisfactory. Those recommendations emphasized the work to be done, rather than the relief to be given, and offered a constructive provisional solution.

31. The Greek delegation would therefore support the joint draft resolution (A/AC.31/L.46).

32. The CHAIRMAN said that he intended to close the list of speakers after all those listed for the meeting on the following day had spoken.

The meeting rose at 4.15 p.m.

FIFTY-THIRD MEETING

Held at Lake Success, New York, on Thursday, 1 December 1949, at 11 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Nasrollah ENTEZAM (Iran).

Palestine (continued)

ASSISTANCE TO PALESTINE REFUGEES: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/1060, A/1060/ADD. 1, A/1106) (continued)

1. Mr. ISSIDEEN (Yemen) remarked that the disastrous situation of the Arabs of Palestine was a fact unprecedented in modern history. Over 80 per cent of the original inhabitants of a country had been driven from their homes by force and denied the right to return to them even after the cessation of military operations. Their homes and property had been occupied by aggressors and their plight continued despite the General Assembly's resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948.

2. It was ironic indeed that those responsible for the distress of the Palestine refugees had themselves for many years been subjected to nazi oppression, from which they had been released by

the united efforts of the champions of democracy and human rights. More than that, they had been admitted to membership in the United Nations as a peace-loving State despite the legal objections of the Arab States. Mr. Issideen wondered whether the Member States, which had voted for the admission of that country, continued, in the prevailing circumstances, to regard it as peace-loving and willing to fulfil its obligations under the Charter for the maintenance of peace and stability in the Middle East.

3. The delegation of Yemen expressed its gratitude to the various Governments and organizations which had so generously responded to the appeal for assistance issued in the preceding year. The Arab refugees, now forced to rely on charity, had previously enjoyed a relatively high standard of living. Their present situation could not fail to injure their honour and self-respect. Mr. Issi-