



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 24th MEETING

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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

- (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)
- (c) REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE (A/37/497)
- (d) REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/37/425, A/37/426, A/37/427, A/37/488 and Corr.1, A/37/599)

1. Mr. RYDBECK (Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) said that the special report he had submitted to the Secretary-General (A/37/479) described the efforts the Agency had made in the period between 4 June and the end of August to respond to the needs of the thousands of Palestine refugees who had been victims of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Much of the work done by UNRWA in the course of three decades had been undone in three months and the future of the Agency was unclear.

2. As of June 1982, there had been 238,700 refugees registered with UNRWA, about half of them living in towns and villages among the Lebanese population and the other half in settlements which had grown up around the refugee camps. In the south, the territory invaded and currently occupied by the Israeli forces, about 111,000 refugees lived in Tyre and Sidon and the surrounding areas, 60,000 of them in camps. Another 73,000 registered refugees lived in the Beirut area, 20,000 of them in camps, and there were other concentrations of refugees in Tripoli and in the Beqa'a valley.

3. In the camps and in urban and rural centres, UNRWA had provided elementary and lower secondary education to 36,700 children and prepared 780 students for teaching and other vocations at its Centre in Sibliin, near Sidon. Health care had been delivered to 200,000 refugees in outpatient centres and three specialized units for the treatment of malnutrition. Two hundred and thirty-three hospital beds subsidized by the Agency had been made available to the refugees, basic food rations had been distributed to 97,000 refugees and 9,000 of them, mainly children and pregnant women, had received supplementary feeding.

4. In south Lebanon and Beirut, those services had been seriously disrupted and were only now operating again at a level approximating the normal. The six-month emergency programme which UNRWA had mounted for an estimated 175,000 refugees, registered and non-registered, was being extended for a further six months until the end of June 1983.

(Mr. Rydbeck)

5. The principal concern of the Agency, once the emergency assistance programmes had been set up, had been to rehouse before the winter the refugees who had lost their homes - over 71,000 persons representing over 14,000 families in the Sidon and Tyre areas, close to 1,000 more in Tripoli and the Beqa'a valley, and a further number, still being tallied, in Beirut. Until the necessary solid housing was built, housing in tents represented the only feasible alternative for the 1982-1983 winter. In July, UNRWA had sought clearance from the Israeli Government to import tents through Israel into south Lebanon, and on 23 August the Israeli and Lebanese Governments had said that tents could be erected, but only on the sites of the old camps.

6. The Agency had found itself in the position of having to wrestle with the resulting practical and political problems. The demolished and damaged camps had to be cleared, unexploded bombs and shells had to be removed by teams of experts, water supply and sanitation systems had to be repaired and roads restored; and the Agency had been made to wait until the new Government of President Gemayel had come into office before beginning to take action in early October.

7. Subsequently, the Israeli authorities had indicated that they wished to co-operate more actively with UNRWA and would no longer maintain their objection to the erection of more substantial shelters. They had offered to distribute to each family of refugees enough cement to construct a retaining wall around their tent and, where possible, to repair their former shelter for later re-occupancy. In recent weeks, significant progress had been made in clearing four refugee camps - Ein el Hilweh, Rashidieh, El Buss and Burj el Shemali - and tents had begun to be erected there.

8. Another deeply worrying concern for the Agency had been the security of the refugees living in the camps and the measures needed for their protection. The appalling massacre in Sabra and Shatila in September had underlined in the most tragic way the vulnerability of those people. Although the Agency had no mandate in that regard, he himself had been prompted to intervene from a strong sense of moral obligation and had taken the matter up with the Secretary-General and also with the Governments of Israel, Lebanon and other countries which were in a position to assist.

9. UNRWA staff in Lebanon, 2,373 of whom were recruited locally and were for the most part Palestine refugees, had themselves been caught up in the crisis. Some of them had disappeared, while others had been arrested by the Israeli army and detained in camps in south Lebanon and Israel. According to the most recent figures, 125 of them were still in detention. Representations on their behalf had been made to the Israeli authorities by the Agency and by the International Committee of the Red Cross.

10. He had been greatly impressed by the commitment of the UNRWA staff in Lebanon during the past five months, especially the internationally recruited staff who had had to carry a very heavy burden of responsibility through weeks when the entire refugee community, UNRWA staff included, had been paralysed by the turmoil around them. That experience had demonstrated quite emphatically the need to increase the number of international staff in the Agency's field operations.

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(Mr. Rydbeck)

11. As for the regrettable affair of the UNWRA Siblín Training Centre, the investigation he had ordered had revealed that, unknown to UNRWA's senior officials, military instruction had been given to the trainees in the Centre over a period of two years before the Israeli invasion. He had sent the report of those findings to the Advisory Commission, the Government of Israel and other interested Governments immediately after it had been presented to him; and copies were available for all members of the Committee.

12. There had been allegations that the report had been made public only after a major contributor had threatened to withhold its financial support from the Agency. He wished to make it clear that he had ordered the investigation on 25 June, four days before the official complaint from the Government of Israel. The United States Government, as UNRWA's largest financial supporter, had expressed its concern in a letter dated 16 July in which it had recalled the condition which had been attached to its contributions, that the Agency must ensure that no part of United States contributions should be used to furnish assistance to refugees receiving military training as members of a guerilla organization. The Agency had over the years given its assurance in good faith that the condition was being met and he had personally reiterated those assurances. It should at the same time be observed that the United States had taken the closest interest in UNRWA's emergency operations in Lebanon, to which it had pledged \$16.5 million, about half of the total response thus far to his appeal.

13. It was of course unacceptable that any UNRWA installations should be used, even clandestinely, for military purposes or any other purpose which infringed the political independence or neutral status of United Nations premises. Disciplinary measures had been taken against those who had knowingly acquiesced in what had happened. But it was important to recall the extremely complex situation which had prevailed in Lebanon for some years and the fact that the Lebanese Government's authority did not extend to south Lebanon and responsibility for law and order among the Palestinian community had been formally handed over to the Palestine Liberation Organization under the 1969 Cairo Agreement.

14. The Siblín Training Centre and 43 of the 87 Agency schools had re-opened their doors. Others would follow as repairs were completed and refugee squatters had found other accommodation. The health programme was being strengthened to permit a return to its pre-June level.

15. The cost of emergency assistance had been estimated at \$43.4 million for a 12-month period starting in July and would be covered by voluntary contributions. That amount, however, did not take into account the eventual cost of reconstruction and rehousing in more solid accommodation. At the end of October, the contributions received and pledges made had amounted to \$31 million.

16. The troubles, political tension, protest demonstrations of the population and repression exercised by the occupation authorities in the region had seriously impinged on the operations and services of the Agency and had created a climate of suspicion and general resistance among the refugees which did not lend itself to

(Mr. Rydbeck)

the establishment of the necessary co-operation with UNRWA. The frustrations of the refugees had focused on the decision to phase out the programme of basic food rations, which had been prompted by the need to concentrate the Agency's limited financial resources on the most important of its priorities, the education programme. Moreover, the basic ration, which had dwindled over the years and in 1982 had consisted mainly of a mere 10 kilograms of flour every two months, had had very little effect on the refugees living in an area of relatively full employment. The refugees who were in genuine need - between 60,000 and 70,000 of them - would continue to receive a food ration with a significantly higher nutritional value than the basic ration. In Lebanon, the emergency feeding programme and the distribution of the basic ration would continue for as long as necessary.

17. In 1981, nearly \$42 million of UNRWA revenues had been from contributions in kind, in the form of foodstuffs or in cash tied to the distribution of food. The conversion of the contributions in kind into cash would markedly improve the Agency's ability to finance its priority programmes and, above all, to save the school programme from the threats which had loomed over it year after year. Indeed, the school programme had been relieved in 1982 as a result of the decision of the European Economic Community to convert its contributions into cash.

18. Expenditures in the regular budget for 1982 had been revised to \$225.1 million from \$265 million. Revenues had been estimated at \$181.6 million, leaving an expected budgetary deficit of \$43.5 million. The regular budget for 1983, which had been prepared in the early summer of 1982, had also been revised. Estimated expenditure had been reduced from \$271.4 million to \$235.9 million, a reduction which took account of the decision to phase out the basic food ration. Revenue estimates, which were always difficult to calculate, had totalled \$175.4 million instead of \$185.3 million, the figure given in the annual report (A/37/13). A deficit of \$60.5 million was therefore projected.

19. Regardless of the actual budgetary deficit, the Agency would have to take measures similar to those adopted in previous years: forgoing programme improvements, postponing repairs, replacements and new construction and reducing cash balances. Because of the rate of inflation in the area and the growing number of children who had to be taught in Agency schools, revenues would have to increase year by year if bankruptcy was to be avoided.

20. The emergency programme in Lebanon was being budgeted and accounted for separately from the regular programmes. It had not yet been fully covered by contributions or pledges. He therefore reiterated his appeal for funds for both the regular and the emergency programmes and expressed the hope that, at the Pledging Conference to be held on 22 November, Governments would continue to express their generous support of the Agency by providing it with the means to carry out the mandate entrusted to it.

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21. Mr. KOLBY (Norway), speaking as Rapporteur of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA, introduced the report of the Group (A/37/591) and briefly outlined its four chapters.
22. Chapter I contained a brief description of the origin and background of the Working Group and an outline of its terms of reference. It also gave information on the consideration of the Working Group's report to the thirty-sixth session of the General Assembly and, in particular, of the special report of the Working Group (A/36/866) to the resumed session which had met in March 1982.
23. Chapter II summarized the activities of the Working Group during the past year. It stated that, during the first months of 1982, the Working Group had held a series of meetings in the course of which a detailed examination had been made of the Agency's budgetary situation and measures which might help to reduce expenditures and increase revenues. The Working Group considered that the recommendations made at those meetings were still valid.
24. At the beginning of October, the Working Group had met once again with the Commissioner-General, who had indicated that, as a result of the Working Group's recommendations, the Joint Inspection Unit had begun a study on the Agency's situation and would present a report in that connection to the thirty-eighth session of the General Assembly. The Agency had also welcomed the decision made by some donor countries to convert their contributions in kind into cash. Lastly, the Commissioner-General had once again affirmed that an increase in contributions was the only way of providing the Agency with the means to carry out its programmes. The Commissioner-General had also informed the Working Group of the Agency's emergency operations in Lebanon described in his special report.
25. Chapter III of the Working Group's report described the current financial situation of the Agency as presented to the Working Group by the Commissioner-General on 8 October. The Agency's budgeted expenditures for 1982 had been revised from \$265.6 million to \$225.1 million while estimated revenues had risen from \$181.6 million to \$185.3 million, leaving an estimated deficit for 1982 of \$43.5 million. The deficit would be totally liquidated by drastic cuts in expenditures for construction and planned programme improvement and by withholding some staff cost-of-living adjustments. For 1983, expenditures had been estimated at \$235.9 million and revenues at \$175.4 million, leaving a deficit of \$60.5 million. The cost of extending the emergency relief operations in Lebanon to June 1983 would require an additional \$21.9 million.
26. Chapter IV of the report, which contained the conclusions of the Working Group, stressed that 1982 had been another difficult year financially for UNRWA but that various measures taken by the Commissioner General, as well as additional cash contributions, had made it possible to continue the educational programme in all fields throughout the year. The financial outlook for 1983 gave cause for concern. During 1982, there had been no significant progress towards broadening the participation in the financing of the Agency. If the latter was to maintain its services at their present level, the international community must increase its financial support. The Working Group reiterated its call to Governments that had

(Mr. Kolby, Norway)

not yet contributed to UNRWA to start contributing and urged those that had made only relatively small contributions to contribute more generously. The Commissioner-General would have to continue to make the most effective and economical use of the resources available. The Working Group would continue to assist the Commissioner-General in securing financial support for the Agency.

27. UNRWA had been created to provide humanitarian assistance to the Palestine refugees pending a political settlement of the refugee problem. The General Assembly had repeatedly stressed the urgency of such a settlement and the Working Group shared that goal. In the meantime, the humanitarian services of UNRWA remained indispensable and should have the whole-hearted support of all the international community.

28. Mr. NUSEIBEH (Jordan) commended the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East for his tireless efforts during the period 1 July 1981 to 30 June 1982, which was the subject of the report submitted in document A/37/13 and had been marked by the suffering inflicted by the ruthless Israeli military machine on the Palestinians in the occupied territories and by the genocide that had cost the lives of tens of thousands of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and caused a further dispersal of hundreds of thousands more of refugees following the destruction of the refugee camps in southern Lebanon and Beirut. The Agency had already faced a colossal task in meeting the refugees' most elementary needs and the Commissioner-General now had to face the repercussions of a massive Israeli invasion which could only be described as an attempt at the physical liquidation of the Palestinian people. Tribute should be paid to the efforts made by the Agency staff under the guidance of the Commissioner-General, in the most excruciating circumstances.

29. His delegation hoped that a preliminary version of the special report on the emergency situation in Lebanon which the Commissioner-General was to submit to the next session of the General Assembly might be presented at the current session. That would not only alert the international community to what should be done in the aftermath of the conflict but also allay the fears of many Palestinians who had no news of members of their families. Although the number of registered Palestinian refugees (1,925,726 as of 30 June 1982) represented less than half of the Palestinian people, UNRWA would be able to provide a list of the dead, wounded or missing. His delegation hoped that the General Assembly would request UNRWA to make that information available as soon as possible.

30. The destruction of certain refugee camps had once again left the Palestinian refugees without shelter and they would have to face the rigours of winter in recently erected tents. Relief assistance must be provided as a top priority to refugees living in the devastated areas. The cost of emergency relief could not be met from the Agency's already limited resources since UNRWA's regular budget was estimated to face a deficit of \$42 million and there was a projected deficit of \$86 million for 1983. The cost of providing emergency relief for a period of six months after the start of the Israeli invasion had been at least \$39 million, and the cost of reconstruction and rehabilitation would far exceed that amount.

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(Mr. Nuseibeh, Jordan)

Israeli military savagery had in fact wrecked almost 32 years of work by UNRWA. In view of the urgency of the financing problem, his delegation deeply appreciated the constructive suggestions contained in the report of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA (A/37/591) and also eagerly awaited the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) which was currently seeking ways of identifying any redundant expenses that might be eliminated. In the interests of rationalization of the budget, his delegation had for several years been advocating the return of the Agency's headquarters to the Near East.

31. The hardships which the inhabitants of the occupied territories, particularly the refugees, had been facing, the harassment, prolonged curfews and numerous violations of basic human rights - such as the suspension of school activities, the protracted closing of university institutions on the flimsiest of pretexts and the interruption of the Agency's reconstruction projects as a result of interference by the Israeli authorities - were only one facet of Israel's relentless drive to seize all of the occupied Palestinian territories and must alert the international community to the awesome possibility of the Palestinians' mass expulsion from those territories in the near future. How could a peaceful settlement be negotiated when human rights, international conventions and international law were flouted?

32. The deterioration of the Agency's financial situation threatened the continuation of its activities in three areas: relief, education and basic health services. His delegation was grateful to those countries which, at the General Assembly's request, had converted their contributions in kind to cash contributions, a solution which would hopefully ensure that schooling was provided for Palestinian children until 1984. That arrangement had, however, led to the virtual termination of the relief programme, with the result that, of a total 250,000 refugees, only 12,000 - the so-called hardship cases - had continued to qualify for relief after 1 September 1982. Out of over 300,000 refugees in the Gaza Strip, a similar tiny proportion would continue to receive relief. Again, in the other areas of operations, which in all had nearly two million Palestinian refugees, only 43,000 refugees were receiving relief. The international community was thus abandoning one of its basic responsibilities, the other two being schooling and health, not to mention the other more fundamental obligation to enable the Palestinian refugees to exercise their inalienable right to return to their homeland. The international community's failure to live up to its commitments to the Palestinian refugees by failing to provide UNRWA with adequate financing compelled his delegation to voice the most vehement protest. It was the Powers which had been instrumental in bringing about the Palestinian tragedy in 1947 who were responsible for redeeming the rights of the Palestinian people, and, pending such redemption, ensuring their well-being. The history of the Palestinian question had been marked, inter alia, by the adoption of General Assembly resolution 302 (IV) of 8 December 1949, which was the founding charter of UNRWA, General Assembly resolutions 181 and 194 (III) and the Protocol signed at Lausanne on 12 May 1949. The question of Palestine, and the refugee question in particular, would not exist had Israel honoured its commitments.

(Mr. Nuseibeh, Jordan)

33. The Commissioner-General's report represented a turning-point, since it envisaged the abandonment of some of its most fundamental programmes. The progressive shrinkage of resources over the years had already led to the suspension of some relief operations. The original situation, namely, the responsibility of the international community to provide assistance to the Palestinian people pending the restoration of its rights, had thus been modified by an act of political will. That would increase the hardships of the Palestinians, as well as the burden on the host Governments whose direct and indirect contributions by far exceeded those of any other country in the world, even the major Powers.

33(a). Jordan's direct assistance to the refugees, in addition to its contributions to UNRWA had amounted to \$35 million, in addition to the fact that it had catered to the needs of 250,000 displaced persons from the West Bank since 1967. Taking into account the other services provided and the gainful employment offered to those able to work, the amount vastly exceeded the aforementioned figure, as well as the total contributions which UNRWA received from donor countries, without prejudice to the right of the Palestinians to return to their homeland.

34. When the Palestinian people had been struck that ignominious blow in 1947-1948, they had possessed at least 94 per cent of Palestine's land, they had constituted a two-thirds majority and, by corollary, they had possessed an equal proportion of Palestine's infrastructure, ports, railroads and the other resources legally owned by a people. The gross national product of Palestine, from which Israel benefited, was almost \$15 billion. The lawful owners, having been driven from their country, were now being told that the international community could no longer afford basic services for them. In that connection, he noted that the response to General Assembly resolution 36/146 C of 16 December 1981 entitled "Revenues derived from Palestine refugee properties" had been completely negative. That was an immoral, unjust and intolerable state of affairs, particularly since in August and September 1982, the General Assembly had discussed the economic and social inequities existing in the greater part of the world, with particular emphasis on the least advantaged. No one could contest that the Palestinian people were the most disadvantaged of all, having been brutally uprooted, dispersed and dispossessed of their possessions for three decades, transformed into refugees and deprived of their means of existence. Hunger or undernourishment, wretched lodgings and the interruption of schooling for their children would be their lot if UNRWA could not continue its programmes. Was that a fair deal when the usurping State, Israel, had received over the past three and a half years \$15 billion in official assistance from the United States, not to mention the billions of tax-exempt contributions made by the United States taxpayer. The Palestinian people would be the happiest people on earth if the UNRWA operations were to be terminated immediately provided that they could return to their homeland. The provision to UNRWA of the resources necessary for its activities was a moral choice which would have a serious bearing on peace and security, as well as on economic stability in the region and throughout the world. It was paradoxical that a State like Israel, which ignored and ridiculed the resolutions adopted each year by the General Assembly on the question of the Palestine refugees, should still be seated among the States Members of the Organization. The time had, perhaps, come to tell it that it was not the master of that community.

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(Mr. Nuseibeh, Jordan)

35. In conclusion, he expressed the hope that all the headquarters services of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East should be reconsolidated within the area of its operations as soon as practicable, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 33/112.

36. Mr. NISIBORI (Japan) said that UNRWA, which had been established in 1949 as a "temporary agency", still continued to provide humanitarian services to Palestinian refugees pending the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. Japan's annual contributions, which had been paid regularly since 1954, had increased at an average rate of 14 per cent over the past six years, the last amounting to approximately \$US 11 million.

37. It was regrettable that the Agency continued to be plagued by financial difficulties and that there was still a deficit of \$43.5 million to be liquidated by the end of the year. In view of that serious financial situation, Japan was increasing its cash contribution by \$1 million, bringing its total contribution for 1982 to approximately \$12 million.

38. The Working Group on the Financing of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which had been requested by the General Assembly in decision 36/431 to submit proposals on ways of meeting the deficit of the Agency's budget for 1982, had adopted by consensus recommendations which had subsequently received unanimous endorsement at the resumed thirty-sixth session of the General Assembly. His delegation reaffirmed its support for those recommendations, which it believed represented the best ways of meeting the Agency's budget deficit not only in 1983, but in subsequent years as well.

39. The Japanese Government believed that the only way to overcome UNRWA's financial crisis was to increase voluntary contributions and rationalize the programmes with a view to more effective utilization of existing funds. In that regard, it supported the Working Group's recommendation that the Agency's organization, budget and operations should be comprehensively reviewed by the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) and he looked forward to JIU's report and recommendations, which were to be presented to the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth session.

40. For its part, the Agency was expected to pursue stringent management policies by integrating or eliminating less important programmes and non-essential personnel and concentrating only on activities of the highest priority. However, the financing of the Agency's activities should not consist solely of the contributions of a small number of Member States, and his delegation strongly appealed to those countries which had not yet made any contribution or had contributed only a part of their share, as well as to those, which, although they were in a position to do so, had not increased their contribution to UNRWA.

41. As a result of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, large numbers of Palestinians were in need of emergency humanitarian assistance. The Agency must also reconstruct a number of its installations which had been damaged or destroyed. In view of the gravity of the situation, the Secretary-General had appealed to the international community to extend emergency humanitarian assistance to those

(Mr. Nisibori, Japan)

suffering people in Lebanon. In response to that appeal, the Japanese Government had contributed \$1 million in June 1982 through the International Committee of the Red Cross and had decided to contribute another \$1 million to UNICEF's assistance programme in Lebanon.

42. His delegation believed that relief for the Palestinians and the reconstruction of Lebanon should be examined within the framework of the restoration of Lebanon's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. It should be remembered that the peace and stability of Lebanon could not be achieved without a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Middle East problem, at the heart of which was the question of Palestine.

43. In conclusion, he reaffirmed his Government's intention to continue to co-operate fully with various international endeavours to solve the problem of the Middle East and to continue its co-operation with UNRWA.

44. Mr. HUSSAINI (Observer for the Palestine Liberation Organization) said that the Special Political Committee was once again considering the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, 33 years after the Palestinian people had first been forced to live as refugees. Israeli aggression and genocide against Lebanon were aimed at destroying the Palestinian refugee camps and dispersing millions of men, women and children who were currently without shelter in southern Lebanon. The Israeli enemy's aim was to expel the Palestinians by force and disperse them in the Arab States in order to deal a decisive blow to their legitimate cause and deny them their right to return to their homeland.

45. Several sources confirmed that aim. In a statement published in The Washington Post on 15 July 1982, Israel's Deputy Minister for the Economy had affirmed that the Israeli Government was opposed to the existence of the Palestinian camps in southern Lebanon and believed that the Palestinians should be expelled from them. The Jerusalem Post of 24 October 1982 had reported that the Palestinians would have to choose between permanent settlement in Lebanon or their expulsion from that country. Furthermore, as Yasser Arafat had recalled in his speech to the Meeting of Heads of State at Fez, the Zionist enemy had destroyed 14 Palestinian camps, 32 Lebanese villages and 3 Lebanese towns, then besieged and destroyed west Beirut.

46. Before seeking ways of helping the victims of that war of aggression, the Israeli criminals should be punished, expelled from the United Nations and prevented from justifying the murder of millions of civilians and the destruction of their towns, villages and camps. To cite only a few examples, The Sunday Star of Toronto (Canada) had on 27 July 1982 carried a report on Israeli attacks against a hospital at the Ein el Hilweh camp and The Christian Science Monitor of 15 July 1982 had reported on the violence and victimization, particularly the cutting off of the water supply, perpetrated by the Israeli authorities on inhabitants of that camp, causing the death of numerous civilians. According to the testimony of two American journalists stationed in Lebanon during the war, the

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(Mr. Hussaini, Observer, PLO)

Israeli Air Force had for ten days heavily bombed the camp, which housed 80,000 Palestinians, killing 750 people. Israel had also used incendiary and phosphorus bombs and, according to The Jerusalem Post of 6 November 1982, the camp had been totally destroyed. As The New York Times of 19 July 1982 had pointed out, the Israeli army had only increased the number of refugees, and their problems, by destroying their shelters and homes.

47. Over 250,000 Palestinians were living a precarious existence in southern Lebanon, exposed daily to arrest, torture and murder by the Israeli occupation forces. In September and October, the latter had rounded up thousands of Palestinians in the camps at Mieh-Mieh, Ein el Hilweh, Sidon and Tyre, arrested hundreds of children and young people and opened fire on women and children. The Egyptian press had also reported that, at the time of the massacre at the Sabra and Shatila camps, Israeli forces had killed 55 Palestinians and 25 Egyptians in southern Lebanon and thrown their bodies into the sea from helicopters.

48. The Agency staff in Lebanon had reaffirmed that the Palestinians needed protection, must receive all possible material assistance and were most of them without shelter. The Palestinian Press Agency had reported on 5 November 1982 that, as of that date, i.e., five months after the beginning of the war, over 250,000 Palestinians were living in the open air or in ruined buildings, at the mercy of the Israeli military occupation authorities. They were not allowed to travel unless they presented special permits and a demonstration by Palestinian women and children against the repression and injustice of the occupation authorities had been violently dispersed.

49. The question of the Palestinian people could not be reduced to merely a refugee problem and would not be solved by the provision of humanitarian assistance. It was a political question, that of a people which was being massacred because it struggled for its freedom and its right to return to its country of origin, Palestine, and aspired to live there under a democratic régime in which, as Yasser Arafat had reaffirmed, Moslems, Christians and Jews would coexist in equality, justice and peace.

50. As part of its self-help activities, the Palestine Liberation Organization had built hundreds of teaching establishments and medical-social centres in Lebanon. That had enabled Palestinians to work in freedom and dignity and feel that they were productive individuals and not refugees dependent on United Nations assistance. The PLO had built 25 hospitals and dispensaries in Lebanon and set up over 80 dispensaries in the Palestinian camps in that country. The Association for Assistance to the Families of Palestinian Martyrs and Detainees had given financial assistance to those families and the Palestine Liberation Organization had, under the auspices of the Union of Palestinian Women and in co-operation with UNESCO, build kindergartens and vocational training centres. The PLO had also built dozens of workshops in the camps, employing over 1,500 Palestinians, and had paid compensation to the victims of the war in Lebanon so that they could rebuild their

(Mr. Hussaini, Observer, PLO)

destroyed homes and restore their farms. The Israeli army had destroyed those teaching establishments, medical-social centres and workshops and arrested thousands of doctors, nurses, teachers and workers in its stated aim of asserting its domination.

51. During the butchery at Sabra and Shatila, the Israelis had authorized armed individuals to enter hospitals, thereby permitting the murder of numerous Palestinian doctors, nurses and wounded, as reported in The Washington Post of 20 September 1982 and The New York Times on 26 September 1982. Most press articles indicated that Palestinian children, women and old people in west Beirut and southern Lebanon had no access to medical care and that 15 per cent of Palestinian children living in southern Lebanon suffered from malnutrition. In Galilee, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the Israeli military occupation authorities were trying to destroy Palestinian health, school and social establishments. Thus, in Galilee, dozens of Palestinian villages had no doctors or hospitals and, on the West Bank, Palestinian hospitals and schools functioned under very difficult conditions. Palestinian towns faced such tremendous financial difficulties that they were unable to improve their villages and operate farms or industrial enterprises or build new roads.

52. All such attempts were aimed at terrorizing and starving the Palestinian people, yet, in the face of it all, the latter continued to build roads and schools with their own hands and by the sweat of their brows. During the war of aggression, the Zionist enemy had tried to undermine the Lebanese economy by dropping incendiary bombs on villages and farms, cutting down trees and flooding the Lebanese market with cheap Israeli agricultural produce. The Israeli authorities were now preventing Lebanese and Palestinian farmers from cultivating their land and selling their products in Lebanon or abroad.

53. In spite of the fighting, UNRWA had continued to provide the Palestinian people with the assistance indispensable to them, thereby fulfilling the responsibilities of the international community, particularly the United Nations, to assist the victims of Zionist war and aggression. Particular tribute should be paid to the Commissioner-General and the entire staff of UNRWA who had made every effort, in the most trying circumstances, to help the victims of the war. The Commissioner-General had visited the destroyed Palestinian camps in person and seen the extent of the refugees' suffering, reporting thereon in his annual report. The Palestine Liberation Organization had hoped that the Agency might have provided even more humanitarian assistance and regretted that lack of resources and the obstacles created by the Israelis had prevented it from doing so. In that connection, the PLO could only condemn the position taken by the United States Government in deciding to cut off \$15 million in contributions to the Agency on the pretext that the Sibliin Training Centre had been used for military purposes. The United States Government remained insensitive to the situation of Palestinian women and children who were dying of cold and hunger in southern Lebanon, and to the sufferings of the victims of the war. As Yasser Arafat had said, the latest American weapons had been tested on Lebanon and its children. United States citizens, particularly Jews, had shown their solidarity with the Palestinian people, however, and the PLO was grateful to them.

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54. During the war of aggression against Lebanon, the Palestine Liberation Organization had cared for hundreds of Lebanese and Palestinian victims in its hospitals. The Palestine Red Crescent Society had opened 15 new hospitals in west Beirut and, at the time of the massacres at Sabra and Shatila, doctors and nurses at the St. John of Acre and Gaza hospitals had been caring for hundreds of victims.

55. The PLO had also distributed foodstuffs to Lebanese and Palestinian civilians throughout the war and the terrible siege which had been inflicted on west Beirut. In anticipation of Zionist aggression, the organization had begun to store foodstuffs in April 1981, and the Union of Palestinian Women had supplied the Agency with thousands of cans of milk, which had been distributed to mothers and children. As was commonly known, the Israeli army had intended to starve the besieged city, and, accordingly, the organization had sought to conserve all the food supplies of the Agency and had opposed their removal. It was regrettable that the Agency had not sought to send food supplies through Syria or other channels in order to meet the needs of the populations of south Lebanon.

56. During the war, the Palestine Liberation Organization had also been obliged to protect all the schools and, in particular, the Training Centre at Sibliin, since schools, hospitals and other Palestinian institutions had always been the target of Israeli attacks. Furthermore, since 1970 the Israeli air force had continually bombed Palestinian camps, and tens of thousands of children, women and old people had been wounded or killed during those attacks. Confronted with those cruel attacks, the Palestinian people had had no choice but to arm themselves in order to defend their camps, and, for that purpose, the organization had considered it necessary to conduct physical training courses. However, it was false to claim, as is Israel did, that the PLO had used schools for military purposes. That was merely a pretext to justify the bombing attacks. The Palestinian military bases were located outside the cities, in the hills and valleys, sheltered from Israeli air attacks. During the Israeli invasion of south Lebanon, many Israelis had refused to fight when confronted with defenceless civilians, and thousands of them had demonstrated in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem against the action of their Government.

57. The Israeli army had not been content with confiscating the material found in the Training Centre at Sibliin. It had pillaged homes, banks, museums, research centres and even Arab embassies in west Beirut, Tyre and Sidon. The PLO had only protected the city of Beirut through the sacrifices of its fighters by preventing the Israeli army from entering it. The organization had agreed to withdraw only in order to save the lives of women and children.

58. The international press, particularly The Guardian, The Times, The Washington Post, The New York Times and The Jerusalem Post had testified throughout the war to the participation of the Israeli forces in the massacres at Sabra and Shatila. Those massacres were a part of the policy of terror conducted against the Palestinian people since 1948 for the purpose of driving them from their land. They provided clear proof that the aggressors had been unable to enter Beirut as long as the Palestinian forces were located there. In spite of the terrible

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bombing attacks, equivalent in force to the explosions in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the PLO fighters had remained at their posts. Seventy-two thousand Lebanese and Palestinians had been killed or wounded as a result of that aggression. Five thousand persons had been massacred at Sabra and Shatila as a result of an American-Israeli decision. In a letter addressed to the Prime Minister of Lebanon, Chairman Yasser Arafat had noted the determination shown and the sacrifices made by the Palestinian people and the Lebanese people.

59. It was now necessary to come to the aid of the victims of the war, and, to that end, the Palestine Liberation Organization would like, first of all, to have the headquarters of UNRWA transferred from Vienna to Beirut, so that relief operations could be better monitored and considerable savings effected by on-the-spot operation. Furthermore, the Agency should continue to provide financial support to all the victims of the war, and the Arab States should increase their contributions for that purpose. On the other hand, the PLO could only deplore the growing tendency within the Agency to reduce the number of Arab staff members and the quantities of foodstuffs distributed to the refugees. A committee representing the inhabitants of the camps on the West Bank and Gaza Strip had protested against the decision to stop the distribution of basic food rations as of 1 September 1982, a decision which, in their opinion, was contrary to the objectives of the Agency. A number of officials in the West Bank and Gaza Strip had considered that decision an attempt to undermine the Palestinian cause in order to force the Palestinians to accept an imposed solution. The Agency should continue, and should increase, its food aid and provide the medical aid and educational services which the PLO was no longer able to provide in Lebanon. Furthermore, the Agency should contribute to the reconstruction of the hospitals, clinics, schools and factories destroyed during the war. The camps should be rebuilt and the refugees should be permitted to manage their own affairs, as they had done before the war. In that connection, co-operation could be established with international organizations such as UNESCO and the Red Cross. Lastly, the Agency should guarantee the protection of the Palestinian refugees and the Palestinian staff of the Agency employed in Lebanon, who were carrying out a social and humanitarian task under conditions of terror. It should seek by all means to ensure the release of all its staff members who had been arrested by the Israeli authorities and should look into to the fate of the thousands of Palestinian prisoners detained in Israeli concentration camps. Approximately 10,000 Palestinians were detained in the El Ansar prison in southern Lebanon and 5,000 others in the Magdu prison in occupied Palestine, to say nothing of the hundreds of Palestinians held in various detention centres in occupied Palestine. Those prisoners were subjected to inhuman treatment by the Israeli authorities and their health situation was deteriorating. They were quartered out of doors and lacked food and water. The Red Cross had visited the El Ansar prison and had mentioned in its report cases of torture and other examples of maltreatment. Recently, thousands of Palestinians had demonstrated in order to demand an improvement in the conditions of detention. The reaction of Israel to those demonstrations had been to open fire on the detainees.

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60. The PLO was asking not for charity, but only for its due. It expected the Agency to provide the Palestinian people with the necessary aid to enable them to manage their own institutions and run their hospitals, schools and factories. The Palestinians would rebuild, with the sweat of their brows, the institutions which had been destroyed and would raise a new generation convinced of its right to life and to return to its homeland.

61. The Palestinian people was confident that the future belonged to them in the land of Palestine, the land of peace, justice and equality where the disgrace and infamy of Zionist terror and racism would have no place.

The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.