

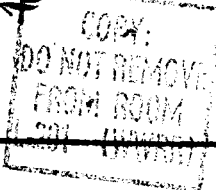
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**GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**

THIRTY-SEVENTH SESSION

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SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
29th meeting
held on
Monday, 15 November 1982
at 10.30 a.m.
New York

UN/SA COLLECTION

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 29th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MUBAREZ (Yemen)

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A/SPC/37/SR.29
24 November 1982
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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

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

- (a) REPORTS 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 and Corr.1, A/37/426, A/37/427, A/37/488 and Corr.1, A/37/599)

1. Mr. HANSEN (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the Ten Member States of the European Community, reiterated that the problems of the Palestinian refugees could be solved only within the political framework of a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The position of the Ten had been set out in the Venice Declaration of 13 June 1980 and in subsequent statements. Most recently in their statement in Brussels on 20 September 1982, the Ten had said that such a settlement should be based on the principles of security for all States in the region, including Israel's right to exist, justice for all peoples, including the right of self-determination for the Palestinian people; and mutual recognition by all the parties involved. The Ten would be discussing that political dimension of the problem in the forthcoming debates in the plenary on the question of Palestine and on the situation in the Middle East.

2. The Ten were deeply appreciative of the devoted manner in which the Commissioner-General and his staff had carried out their mandate, especially since June 1982 when the difficulties facing them had increased enormously as a result of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and continuing tensions in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The annual report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA (A/37/13) and his special report on UNRWA operations to assist the Palestine refugees affected by the hostilities in Lebanon (A/37/479) brought home the seriousness of the situation.

3. The Ten commended the Commissioner-General on his decision not to limit the provision of emergency assistance solely to Palestine refugees registered with the Agency. They stressed the urgent need to provide adequate shelter, before the winter, to refugees who had lost their homes, and called upon all concerned to assist UNRWA in that task.

4. With regard to the Siblín Training Centre, the Ten agreed with the Commissioner-General that it was unacceptable that UNRWA installations should be used for military training or any other purpose which infringed the political independence or neutral status of United Nations premises. They took note of the measures which the Commissioner General had taken in that regard.

(Mr. Hansen, Denmark)

5. The Ten were fully aware of the vital importance of the Agency's services in the fields of education, health and social welfare. As a result of the extensive devastation in Lebanon, the Palestinian people needed those services now more than ever and the enormous cost of restoring such services, in addition to the cost of providing emergency relief, would be totally beyond the Agency's means unless governments gave additional help. The ten had therefore decided to continue their support in the form of both direct contributions and contributions from the Community budget. The total amount of those contributions represented one third of total confirmed and expected pledges from governments in 1982. The Ten noted with satisfaction that the Commissioner-General's decision to convert a substantial portion of their assistance from food aid into cash had contributed decisively to the continuation of the school programme during 1982.

6. The Ten supported the conclusions of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA as contained in its two reports of 10 March and 3 November 1982 (A/37/866 and Corr.1 and A/37/591). It was clear that, to ensure the continuation of UNRWA services at their present level, the international community must increase its financial support. The continuing shortfall in income emphasized the urgent need for more stable financing. It was not that the present system of voluntary financing was inappropriate but rather that the response of the international community had been inadequate. No significant progress had been made in 1982 towards broadening participation in the Agency's financing and a relatively small number of countries continued to shoulder the main financial burden. States which had expressed their concern at the plight of the Palestinian people and had the means to contribute had not yet done so. The Ten appealed to all States to respond urgently to the Commissioner-General's appeal and provide the prompt financing necessary to ensure the continuation of the Agency's effective operations.

7. The Ten felt that the difficult decision taken by the Commissioner-General to phase out the programme of basic rations was justified in view of continuing financial restraints and the need to concentrate the Agency's limited resources on the education programme.

8. The report which the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) was to submit on the Agency's organization, budget and operations should make it possible to ensure the most effective and economical use of the Agency's resources. UNRWA's services remained indispensable and should have the wholehearted political and financial support of the international community.

9. Mr. OVINNIKOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) observed that the question of the Palestinian refugees had been on the agenda of the General Assembly and various United Nations organs for over 30 years, even though everyone knew that it could be solved only within the framework of a just and lasting settlement of the Middle East conflict at the heart of which lay the Palestinian problem. General Assembly resolutions adopted by the overwhelming majority of Member States set forth the terms of such a settlement. The four million Palestinians must first be given the opportunity to exercise their inalienable national rights, including the right to create their own independent State. Only then would it be possible to

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(Mr. Ovinnikov, USSR)

find a lasting solution to all the problems created by the dispersion of hundreds of millions of Palestinian refugees throughout the countries of the Middle East.

10. The Palestinian problem was clearly a political one. It resulted directly from the expansionist policy being conducted by Israel vis-à-vis the Arab States and peoples, notably the Arab people of Palestine. The savage aggression that Tel Aviv had unleashed against Lebanon in June 1982 was nothing more than the next phase of that policy. During the Israeli operations thousands of Lebanese and Palestinians had been killed or wounded with American weapons of an especially destructive and lethal nature. Tens of thousands of people had been left without shelter or the means to survive. Many Lebanese towns and villages had been destroyed during the bombardments. The Palestinian camps had been systematically wiped off the map. The tragedy in Lebanon had culminated in massacres of defenceless civilians in Beirut. Israel was pursuing the same policy of terror in the occupied territories so as to sow panic among their Arab inhabitants and coerce them into abandoning their country.

11. The Soviet Union never ceased to stress the need to implement the General Assembly's resolutions on the problem of the Palestine refugees in particular, resolution 194 (III) of 1948, paragraph 11 of which stipulated that refugees wishing to return to their homes should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid to those choosing not to return. In accordance with that resolution, reparation for all losses of or damage to property should be made by the Governments or authorities responsible - in the present case, Israel. It was also up to Israel, and those who supported it, to provide the funding for UNRWA. But not only was Israel doing nothing to improve the situation of the refugees, it was preparing to annex further Palestinian land and thus reduce hundreds of thousands of additional Palestinians to the level of refugees.

12. He drew attention to the fact that although his country, like some other States, did not participate directly in the funding of UNRWA, it did help to finance a number of programmes for the Palestinians that were being carried out by such specialized agencies as UNESCO. It also contributed to the salaries of UNRWA's international staff. And, finally, the Soviet Union was recognized as giving substantial aid to the Palestinians and other Arab peoples that had fallen prey to Israeli aggression.

13. Mr. DIMITRIJEVIC (Yugoslavia) expressed his delegation's condolences to the Soviet Government and people upon the death of President Brezhnev.

14. Referring to the tragic destiny that the Palestinian people had endured for 34 years since being driven out of their homeland and robbed of their property and fundamental rights, - a destiny which the international community should increase its efforts to bring to an end - he said that the report under consideration (A/37/13) testified to the sufferings of the refugees, which had been aggravated still further by Israel's aggression in Lebanon. In the face of numerous problems, UNRWA had continued to provide assistance; the Commissioner-General and his associates should be commended for the manner in which they had accomplished their

(Mr. Dimitrijevic, Yugoslavia)

tasks. UNRWA's determination in completing its assignments was an expression of the will of the international community to meet the basic needs of the refugees. The situation confronting UNRWA was the result of Israel's policies of force and fait accompli and its attempted genocide of the Palestinian people. There were those who had forgotten, or wished to forget, that the refugee problem was not a technical issue of "integration". The ethnographic, geographic, economic, religious and cultural identity of the Palestinian people was such that the notion that it could be erased by force was an illusion. The continuing activities of UNRWA were a stabilizing and calming element in the Middle East, since they helped to create a climate more conducive to negotiations on a comprehensive, just and lasting solution. His delegation therefore welcomed efforts to overcome UNRWA's budgetary problems, which were threatening some of the Agency's health and education programmes, especially since the war in Lebanon had created new needs. The number of Palestinian prisoners had reached several thousand, and the sick and wounded lacked attention. UNRWA must, therefore, be helped to restore its services and find ways of improving the situation in the occupied territories. Joint efforts by UNRWA, WHO and UNICEF should be encouraged, as should the relocation of UNRWA headquarters in the zone of operations, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions. Such a relocation was, in fact, a condition sine qua non for enhancing UNRWA's activities.

15. The non-aligned countries had always been concerned with all aspects of the protection of the Palestinian people, and had sought to preserve that people's identity and support the just campaign being waged by the PLO, its legitimate representative. As the question of Palestine was at the core of the Middle East conflict, the exercise of the Palestinian peoples' legitimate rights to determine their own future, return to their lands and establish their own State, Israel's withdrawal from all the Arab territories occupied since 1967, and the recognition of the right of all States in the region to live in peace within secure frontiers was the only way to resolve the problem of the Palestinian refugees.

16. His country was prepared to support any action allowing UNRWA to continue its work.

17. Mr. SHEHATA (Egypt) said that UNRWA's longevity was no reason for rejoicing but, rather, a cause of concern, since it testified to the years of suffering endured by the Palestinian people. Nevertheless, UNRWA was indispensable and, since the United Nations had been unable to enforce its resolutions on the question, represented the only real contribution that the United Nations had made to the Palestinian cause. Any assessment of UNRWA's work must take more account of the human element than of economic or political factors. UNRWA was still a vital stabilizing factor in a region where the situation was becoming more and more involved. The Palestinians were not regarded as mere refugees, but as a people under the guardianship of the international community that was responsible for their plight and their expulsion; they were entitled to UNRWA aid. The refugee problem, therefore, was basically political. So far UNRWA had been able to deal only with the effects of the Palestinian problem, not its causes. The time had come to redefine its role. Henceforward, UNRWA should treat the Palestinians not as refugees but as a people that was going to regain its homeland in Palestine.

(Mr. Shehata, Egypt)

18. Israel's aggression against Lebanon only confirmed the true intentions of the Zionists in the region. As a recent book, Israel's Sacred Terrorism, indicated, one of the greatest Israeli political figures, Moshe Sharett, had made no bones about Israel's intention of driving the Palestinians out towards Jordan. The Zionists' designs on Lebanon were revealed in a famous letter sent by Moshe Sharett to Ben-Gurion on 17 February 1954, one of the most important documents in modern history. In that letter, Moshe Sharett had described Lebanon as being clearly the weakest link in the Arab League, and said that the establishment of a Christian State accordingly seemed entirely natural. Those designs had been more clearly expressed by Moshe Dayan, when he said that all that was necessary was to win or buy the favours of a Lebanese officer and induce him to proclaim himself the saviour of the Maronite people, and after that the Israeli army would enter Lebanon, occupy the necessary territory and install a Christian régime that would ally itself with Israel. Dayan had even stated that the land in the south of Lebanon would be totally annexed to Israel. That was the real long-term plan that Israel had been putting into practice, bit by bit, since 1954. An Israeli scholar teaching at Ben-Gurion University in Tel Aviv, Meir Zamir, had gone so far as to draw a map of a new, confederated Lebanon comprising a Christian and Muslim section in Mt. Lebanon, a Shi'ite region in the south and the Beka'a, and a Sunn region in the north of Lebanon and Tripoli. The capital would be under Muslim and Christian control. Mr. Zamir seemed to be echoing Ben-Gurion in stating that the Christians now had a unique opportunity to correct the fatal mistake that their forbears had been suffering from for 50 years. The hypothesis was also confirmed by Mr. Michael Curtis, Professor of Political Sciences at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, in the September 1982 issue of the Review of the American Academic Association for Peace in the Middle East. In an article entitled "Lebanon Past, Present and Future", Mr. Curtis reached the same conclusion as Ben-Gurion and Zamir, predicting the establishment of a federal régime permitting the co-existence of autonomous religious communities or, in other words, the creation of two small, separate States. The similarity between Mr. Curtis's and Zamir's views was not surprising when one learned that Mr. Curtis was a member of the advisory body overseeing research by the Jerusalem Quarterly, for which Mr. Zamir had written his article on the partition of Lebanon.

19. It was true that Israel disclaimed any territorial pretensions to Lebanon, but as Michael Adams had pointed out in The Guardian of 28 June 1982, Levi Eshkol had also denied any territorial ambitions at the start of the Six-Day War, but that had not prevented Israel from annexing Jerusalem, then the Golan Heights and finally the West Bank of the Jordan. Those who sought to justify Israeli aggression should recall that Nahum Goldman, the former Chairman of the World Jewish Congress, had told The Guardian's correspondent in June 1982 that Israel was pursuing an impossible objective: the elimination of 4 million Palestinians.

20. All those considerations fell squarely within the scope of the question under consideration, because the plight of the refugees was directly affected by Israel's aggression against Lebanon, which itself had been a direct application of the long-term plan of expansion drawn up by Ben Gurion. It was that policy which had led to the unjustifiable massacres in Lebanon, which had aroused indignation among all men of conscience. The genocide inflicted on the Palestinian people,

(Mr. Shehata, Egypt)

which was reflected in the reports of the Commissioner-General (A/37/13 and A/37/479) inevitably brought to mind the fate of the victims of the Nazi concentration camps. It was regrettable that the reports of the Secretary-General did not mention every aspect of the Lebanese tragedy and that, in particular, they failed to specify that it was for Israel to assume full responsibility for the destruction and damage suffered by the Agency. That aggression manifestly jeopardized the efforts made by the Agency to ensure security and stability in the region. The factual descriptions in document A/37/479 portrayed inhuman suffering caused by air attacks and bombardments by Israeli artillery. His delegation was astonished that the report of the Commissioner-General had not named the party responsible for the tragedy. It could scarcely contain its indignation or reading in the report of the Secretary-General (A/37/479, para. 20) that the Israelis had stated their opposition to the reconstruction of the refugee camps in southern Lebanon. The horror of the siege of west Beirut, referred to in paragraphs 40 and 42 of the report, and the tragedy of the destruction and dispersal of the population aroused consternation.

21. With regard to the Sibli Training Centre (paras. 57-59), his Government hoped that the Organization would show the same zeal that had been evident in that case when it came to requesting Israel to reimburse the Agency for all the damage and destruction caused to it. Moreover, UNRWA itself had reputedly requested the Palestine Liberation Organization to provide armed troops (some 15 men) to maintain order at the school. The information disseminated about the Centre suggested that it had been transformed into a military base or an arsenal equipped with artillery and tanks. How could anyone justify the bombardments while condemning a self-defence effort?

22. Seventy-five thousand Palestinians had been made homeless as a result of that aggression (para. 80), not including the refugees in west Beirut. It was the Agency and the international community which were paying for Israel's ceaseless crimes.

23. His delegation disapproved of the manner in which the report of the Commissioner-General (A/37/13) described the events which had taken place in the West Bank of the Jordan (paras. 56, 58 and 59) and which had led to the closing of the Agency schools and centres. Those events had not been the result of disturbances but of the policy of aggression and persecution of the Israeli authorities (see paras. 31, 34, 60 and 67 of the report). Reference was made in paragraphs 86, 88 and 89 to the collapse of the Agency's operations and services owing to disturbances caused by Israeli policies and practices in Lebanon, the West Bank and Gaza. Israel was conducting a consistent policy of cultural oppression by banning dozens of syllabuses and imposing collective punishments, including the demolition of dwellings (paras. 60 and 70). Egypt also protested against the Israeli authorities' invoking an Egyptian law to hamper construction work which the Agency wished to undertake in the camps in the Gaza Strip. The Israeli authorities had also prevented the execution of another project for handicapped refugees living in the Khan Younis camp. It was hard to see how a camp of that kind threatened Israel's security. That attitude demonstrated blatant ill will on the part of the Israeli authorities.

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(Mr. Shehata, Egypt)

24. It was clear from paragraphs 102 and 136 of the report of the Commissioner-General (A/37/13), concerning destruction of UNRWA installations in Lebanon and the direct effect of the invasion on relief services, that the destruction caused by Israel had been total.

25. With regard to the situation of refugees in the occupied Palestinian and Egyptian parts of the town of Rafah, following the Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai, as described in paragraph 10 of the foreword to and paragraph 75 of the report of the Commissioner-General (A/37/13), his delegation wanted to clarify the facts and eliminate all ambiguity. Egypt had formally requested, at the time of the talks on the procedures for the final withdrawal from the Sinai, that the Israeli authorities should take the necessary measures to resettle in the Gaza Strip the refugees in the Rafah camp, to which they had been removed by Israel following the 1967 war. It had been Egypt's purpose, by such a measure, to preserve the Palestinian character of Gaza. An agreement in principle on the matter had been concluded, and Israel had set aside land for the Palestinian families in the Tell-es-Sultan region and had provided it with the necessary public utilities. It had also been agreed that the resettlement of the families would take place gradually and that Israel would grant them a loan, while Egypt would provide them with financial assistance. Nevertheless, Israel had raised a number of obstacles to the resettlement, in particular by making it conditional on the departure of 400 Egyptian families which were said to have settled in the Gaza Strip following the 1967 war. That figure was exaggerated, because there were only 100 families, most of them living in the village of Dahnieh. In addition, Israel had refused to enrol Palestinian pupils in schools in the Palestinian part of Rafah, demanding that they should attend school in the Sinai. Egypt had thus taken almost 1,300 Palestinian pupils at the primary and elementary level in schools in the north of the Sinai. Moreover, as Israel had not wanted the majority of the Palestinians to work in their occupations in the Palestinian part of Rafah, Egypt had provided them with means of subsistence in the Sinai. Again, the Chairman of the Egyptian Council of Ministers had authorized assistance payments totalling 4 million Egyptian pounds to the refugees. Israel had, however, announced that that amount was insufficient, but Egypt had made it clear that payment of assistance to the Palestinians had been agreed upon directly between the Egyptian Government and the refugees, and that it was not for Israel to interfere in the matter. Finally, the Agency having raised doubts as to whether the Israeli authorities would authorize UNRWA staff to deliver food aid to the Palestinians or to allow them the benefit of educational assistance in connection with the "Canada" housing project, Egypt had done its utmost to overcome those difficulties.

26. As far as the reports being considered by the Committee were concerned, he endorsed the statement in paragraph 2 of the report of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (A/37/497) that the implementation of paragraph 11 of resolution 194 (III) presupposed substantial changes in the situation; it was his belief that no change would come about without the implementation of the pertinent General Assembly resolutions. With respect to the report of the Secretary-General on revenues derived from Palestine refugee properties (A/37/488), Israel, in his view, was still legally responsible for those properties and the revenues from them. In connection with paragraph 11 of

(Mr. Shehata, Egypt)

the report of the Secretary-General on Palestine refugees in the Gaza Strip (A/37/425), his delegation had already made it clear that since the establishment of the new international frontier line between Egypt and the Gaza Strip in occupied Palestine, his country had made every effort in co-operation with UNRWA, to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinians, in response to the wishes of the Palestinians living in the Egyptian part of Rafah, and that it would continue to provide them with the educational and social services which they required until an appropriate solution was found to the problem. It emerged from the report of the Secretary-General on population and refugees displaced since 1967 (A/37/426) that the Agency was not in a position to know how many refugees had in fact returned to their homes. The Secretary-General's reports on offers from specialized agencies of scholarships and grants for higher education for Palestine refugees (A/37/427), on the one hand, and the question of the establishment of a university at Jerusalem (A/37/599) on the other, attested to the practical efforts being made in that area, and his delegation paid a tribute to all those who were helping to prepare the Palestinian people, in the scientific, cultural and technological fields, to exercise its right to self-determination and to lay the foundations of the future Palestinian State.

27. His country supported the specific recommendations made by the Working Group on the Financing of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in its report (A/37/591) and concurred in its view that the Agency should continue its operations until a political settlement was reached on the question of Palestine. However, it believed that the wording of paragraph 23 should have made it clear that the elements of that settlement had been laid down in the pertinent General Assembly resolutions.

28. He referred to the massacres at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps and noted that the correspondent of the Washington Post in Beirut, in an interview published on 20 September 1982, had affirmed that Israel had undoubtedly assisted and supported the operation by training and equipping the soldiers who had murdered defenceless civilians. He called on the enemies of peace, law, justice and the Palestinian people to remember John Kennedy's warning that those who made peaceful change impossible made violent revolution inevitable.

29. Mr. EL SHEIKH (Sudan) said that once again the Special Political Committee was meeting to consider the report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, a body which, at the time of its creation more than 30 years ago, had been intended to be temporary.

30. When the United Nations had created Israel, it had not been foreseen that that entity would try to exterminate another people, but Israel, in accordance with its racist tenets, was apparently proceeding systematically to destroy the Palestinian people, after having occupied its territory. In reality, the massacres had not started in Sabra or Shatila. The Palestinian people and a large part of the Lebanese people had since 6 June 1982 been exposed to murder and terrorism at the hands of Israel's war machine which, using the most modern methods of extermination,

(Mr. El Sheikh, Sudan)

had destroyed the camps in southern Lebanon, massacred whole sections of the civilian population and subjected detainees to unprecedented brutality and humiliation. Those barbarous acts had been condemned even by Israel's friends. Israel's behaviour was described in paragraph 50 of the special report of the Commissioner General of UNRWA (A/37/479). Furthermore, paragraph 51 of the report indicated that Ein el Hilweh Camp, which had housed over 30,000 Palestinian refugees, had been largely destroyed and that UNRWA's installations, such as schools, clinics, distribution centres and warehouses had been destroyed, damaged or looted. West Beirut, subjected to the most terrible bombing, had itself been a victim of the attempt to exterminate the Palestinian people. Those bloody events had been the subject of an article in the New York Times of 24 July 1982 under the heading "Beirut's Smell of Death", in which the author, an American doctor, described how the innocent victims of that war, which had made refugees of them, were left with only their dead and maimed to fuel their hatred and their determination. The Commissioner-General of UNRWA had himself eloquently summed up the situation created by the Israeli invasion of Lebanon when he had stated that the work of three decades had been largely wiped out in three months and that the future of UNRWA's services to the Palestine refugees in Lebanon was uncertain. Furthermore, as the representative of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) had pointed out, the Israeli invasion forces had not been content with massacre but had destroyed the whole of the infrastructure including schools and hospitals, established by the PLO in Beirut and elsewhere.

31. The fact that UNRWA's activities had been impeded, Palestinian structures destroyed and Palestinian leaders forced to leave Lebanon had placed the refugees in a dangerous situation and made it necessary for the international community to take urgent measures to secure safety and supplies for more than 200,000 refugees at the mercy of the elements and their fellow-men. It was also important for the Agency's headquarters to be re-established as soon as possible within its zone of operation. A tribute was due to the Commissioner-General of UNRWA and his staff, who were continuing their work in the difficult conditions created by the Israeli occupation authorities.

32. He referred to the 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). He urged members of the Committee to examine, in conjunction with the Joint Inspection Board, ways and means of providing UNRWA with reliable funding through contributions to the regular budget of the United Nations.

33. The solution of the refugee problem must be based on the recognition of the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination and to the establishment of an independent State in which it could live in its own land in security, freedom and dignity in the same way as other peoples throughout the world.

34. Mr. KIRTON (Guyana) said that it was the task of the international community to ensure the restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to establish its own State, rights of which it had been deprived by Israeli expansionism and aggression. He spoke of his country's concern at the increasing disregard for fundamental norms and principles of international law and the widespread tendency to resort to violence and intervention.

35. In June 1982 the suffering of the Palestinians had been further compounded by Israel's ruthless invasion of Lebanon, which had caused widespread death and destruction. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East had already been facing increasing difficulties, affecting its education programme, among other things, and the war had severely disrupted the provision of essential humanitarian services to a people robbed of its right to live in peace and dignity.

36. His delegation was not unaware of the great burden that the invasion of Lebanon and the slaughter of innocent men, women and children in west Beirut had placed on the Agency and wished to pay tribute to the Commissioner-General and his staff, particularly those serving in the field, for the courage and dedication with which they had gone about their task despite Israeli attacks.

37. In spite of the Agency's precarious financial situation, as revealed in the report (A/37/13), his delegation felt that the basic needs of the Palestinians must be met and that the education and training programme must remain a priority. The work done by UNRWA, which was a factor for peace and security in the Middle East, must continue.

38. However, because of the severe effects of the current structure of the international economic system on all States and, in particular, on small countries like his own, many would be unable to maintain their contributions to the Agency at their current level. It was therefore imperative to achieve promptly the only possible solution to the Palestine problem, namely the restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people including its right to establish an independent State. Peace in the Middle East depended upon it.

39. Mr. SYDER (Portugal) said that the tragic situation of the Palestinian people, which the invasion of Lebanon had made even worse, was a matter of concern to the international community. The tragedy of that people, with all its human, social and economic consequences, was a political problem which required a just and equitable political solution. For that reason, Portugal had always maintained that only a comprehensive and lasting solution would lead to a dignified and equitable settlement of the Middle East problem, at the heart of which was the question of Palestine. Such a solution should be based on the restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, in particular its right to decide its future, and the right of every country, including Israel to live in peace and security within internationally recognized boundaries. If those two complementary conditions were met, the tragic situation of the refugees would be ended and they would be able to return to their national home.

(Mr. Syder, Portugal)

40. With reference to the report of the Commissioner-General (A/37/13) and that of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA (A/37/591), his delegation welcomed the fact that the Agency had been able to continue to perform its humanitarian function in conditions which were often difficult. The Agency was carrying out a task which would remain vital and indispensable as long as a definitive solution was not found. The budgetary constraints encountered by the Agency in facing up to its manifold responsibilities were set out in the aforementioned report. His Government, conscious of the need to ensure that UNRWA had sufficient means to enable it to maintain the health services and the education programme, to provide shelter and to cope with various humanitarian needs, had decided to increase by 50 per cent its contribution to the regular budget of the Agency for 1983.

41. He paid a tribute to the Commissioner-General and his staff for the manner in which they were carrying out a task of such prime importance, and expressed the hope that a climate of conciliation could be established in that troubled region.

42. Mr. NOORANI (Pakistan) said that his delegation was grateful to the Commissioner-General and staff of UNRWA for the efforts they had made in the course of the year to mitigate the suffering of the Palestinian refugees.

43. The Agency, already faced with financial and administrative problems, had had a particularly difficult year in 1982 because of the massive Israeli invasion of Lebanon, which had subjected the Palestinians to acts of cruelty rarely paralleled in human history. To be sure, the General Assembly had taken prompt action and world public opinion had condemned those brutalities. The organizations of the United Nations system had, moreover, made efforts to come to the aid of the Palestinians. It was nevertheless distressing to see that while the Zionists went ahead with their premeditated acts of savagery, the world had stood by almost helpless in the face of the contempt with which Israel treated the resolutions of the United Nations.

44. Confronted with the damning evidence of the atrocities committed against the Palestinians, the aggressor had posed as an innocent babe and had shifted the blame onto the victims, who had lost their homes, land and relatives. It had, moreover, tried to draw a comparison between the Palestine refugees and the refugees who had migrated to Pakistan at the time of its establishment. That comparison was totally false since those who had migrated to Pakistan had settled of their own free will in the homeland they had chosen, while the Palestinian refugees had been forcibly driven from their homeland with the aim of destroying their identity.

45. As the Commissioner-General had stressed in introducing his report, the humanitarian work done by the Agency over three decades had been undone in three months and the very future of UNRWA was unclear. The Agency was currently facing the prospect of a deficit of \$60 million in 1983. If the additional cost of reconstruction and rehousing was taken into account, the figure would become astronomical. In order to make up the deficit, it was intended to curtail the distribution of basic rations and to allocate the meagre resources thus made available to the education and health programmes. His delegation fully understood the reasons which had motivated the decision of the Commissioner-General and did

(Mr. Noorani, Pakistan)

not underrate the importance of those programmes. The question was, however, to whom such programmes would be directed and whether it would be to people dying of hunger and cold. His country considered it essential that basic rations should be provided to all Palestinian refugees who needed them and that they should be assured of at least one meal a day.

46. The UNRWA education programme had been constantly faced with crisis situations and, even before the recent Israeli invasion, it had been decided to close a number of schools at the end of 1982, thus depriving more than 340,000 pupils of education and more than 10,000 teachers of their means of livelihood. Rather than closing the schools and raising a generation of ignoramuses, school buildings should be reconstructed and conditions created of a kind to guarantee the security of teachers and pupils. In that regard, it was heartening to see that 43 of the Agency's 87 schools had been reopened, a matter which was greatly to the credit of the Commissioner-General and his staff. A heavy burden had been imposed, moreover, on UNRWA health services by the destruction of hospitals, the disappearance of doctors and nursing staff, lack of equipment, the danger of epidemics and the onset of winter.

47. With regard to the security of the refugees, the rehousing of registered refugees in tents placed them in an extremely vulnerable position and it was of paramount importance to provide security to those defenceless people and to protect them from all calamities, whether natural or man-made.

48. As for the financing of UNRWA, it was essential to supply the Agency with all the resources necessary for it to continue providing basic services to 2 million Palestinian refugees. In that connection, Member States should pay particular attention to the various recommendations made by the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA. His country, had been extending all possible assistance to its Palestinian brethren even though, like other developing countries, it was facing severe financial constraints, made worse by the heavy burden of looking after the 3 million Afghan refugees on its soil. Apart from contributing regularly to UNRWA, his country had been providing facilities for the Palestinians at its educational and training institutions. Nevertheless, the primary obligation for ensuring the financial solvency of UNRWA rested with those who had been instrumental in the creation of Israel and had since failed to restrain that country from following the policies responsible for the initial uprooting of the Palestinians and their dispersal.

49. Finally, the necessity of maintaining UNRWA's operations should not make people forget the imperative need to find a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian people's tragedy. As the General Assembly had repeatedly affirmed, the Palestinian people must be able to exercise their right to return to their homes and live as an independent nation; the recent tragedy experienced by Lebanon would at least have emphasized with even greater force that the Palestinians must be allowed to exercise their right to self-determination in Palestine.

50. Mr. SUAREZ (Philippines) said that recent events in the Middle East, whose instant retransmission on television screens had aroused both horror and despair at man's inhumanity to man and the seeming impossibility of restoring peace, had once again focused the attention of the world community on that troubled region.

51. The report of the Commissioner-General for 1981-1982 (A/37/13) was one of the saddest ever presented. It bore witness to the repercussions of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and spoke of massacre and destruction: of the tragic plight of thousands of people who would have to endure hunger and the rigours of winter in tents; of continuing unrest in the occupied territories; of repressive measures taken in the name of security; of violations of the status of UNRWA installations and arrests of its staff members; and of the deficits anticipated in UNRWA's budget for 1982 and 1983. The Commissioner-General had captured the mood of anguish prevailing in the region perfectly when he had said that much of the work of three decades had been undone in the previous three months and that his organization's services to the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon had been jeopardized.

52. At the same time, the report was a testament to the remarkable devotion of UNRWA staff, who had continued to provide relief and services to the Palestinian refugees during the hostilities, and to the generous response of Governments and institutions to calls for assistance. It was therefore right that the Commissioner-General should have paid tribute to the spirit of initiative, the energy and the endurance which UNRWA staff in Lebanon had shown since June 1982.

53. Convinced of the need to restore UNRWA's services to the Palestinian refugees as quickly as possible, a task which required the co-operation of all countries and, in particular, of those in which UNRWA worked, his own country was prepared to continue extending its support to the Agency as it had done for the past three decades, and would announce the amount of its contribution at the appropriate time.

54. Although it was possible to ask, as one delegation had done at an earlier meeting, why the question of the Palestinian refugees and the monies to be provided for their relief still continued to arise after 35 years, his delegation could not agree that the problem might have been solved, as in other instances in the past, by integrating the refugees into the societies of the host countries. A definitive solution required the establishment of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

55. That was why his country's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Carlos P. Romulo, head of the Philippine delegation to the thirty-seventh session, speaking in plenary meeting, had welcomed the initiatives by President Reagan and by participants in the Pan-Arab meeting at Fez, and had approved the positive elements of the United States proposal, based on the Camp David accords ratified by the Knesset, notably the immediate freeze on the establishment of Israeli settlements and opposition to permanent control by Israel over the West Bank and Gaza. The full autonomy envisioned for those areas should entail the exercise of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State coexisting with Israel.

56. Mr. LEVIN (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that his country had no lessons to learn from a Power whose policies had caused the displacement of millions of people, ranging from the hundreds of thousands of Crimean Tatars who had been forced to leave their land in haste to the 3 million Afghans who had abandoned their homes following Soviet aggression. Hundreds of Afghan villages had been destroyed, and thousands of patriots had been killed or maimed. The Soviet Union appeared not to fear ridicule when it had the effrontery to conjure up the tragedy of the Palestinian refugees. In any case, all the aid the Soviet Union had ever given the Palestinians had amounted to nothing more than the provision of arms and the training of terrorists.

57. As for Egypt, that country was in no position to speak of Israeli expansionism, since it had recovered a Sinai which had been developed by the Israeli occupation. Moreover, it was not so long since Egypt had not hesitated to operate outside its own frontiers: one only had to ask the Syrians and, more especially, the Yemenis, of whom almost 250,000 had been killed or "gassed". People might wonder what efforts Egypt had made to help the Palestinian refugees when they considered the poverty and unemployment which had prevailed in the Gaza Strip in 1956 and 1967, after prolonged periods of Egyptian occupation.

58. The situation of the Palestinian refugees had in fact improved considerably under Israeli administration. Lastly, Egyptian protests had scarcely been heard when Lebanon was under the PLO and Syrian yoke. Had not Egypt welcomed that situation when it imposed the Cairo Accords on the Lebanese people? As for the comment made by the representative of Egypt at the end of his statement, he should ponder upon recent events nearer home.

59. Mr. AKWAA (Yemen) reserved his delegation's right of reply to the statement by the representative of Israel.

60. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the fact that the representatives of India and Iran had asked to be added to the list of those who wished to speak on item 65. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee acceded to their request.

61. It was so decided.

62. The CHAIRMAN asked delegations to conclude consultations as soon as possible on draft resolutions for submission on the question under consideration, so that they could be submitted to the Secretariat before 18 November, on which date the Committee hoped to be able to complete its consideration of item 65.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.