

## 881st meeting

Friday, 9 November 1973, at 11.15 a.m.

*President:* Mr. Károly SZARKA (Hungary).

A/SPC/SR.881

### AGENDA ITEM 43

**United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (*continued*) (A/SPC/163, A/SPC/164, A/SPC/L.273, A/SPC/L.274):**

- (a) Report of the Commissioner-General (A/9013);
- (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/9231);
- (c) Report of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (A/9187);
- (d) Reports of the Secretary-General (A/9155, A/9156)

### GENERAL DEBATE (*continued*)

1. The CHAIRMAN announced that draft resolution A/SPC/L.274 sponsored by the United States of America and dealing with the activities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East had been distributed that day. He reminded the Committee that the general debate on the agenda item under discussion was to end on 13 November 1973.
2. Mr. SINGH (India) said that a solution to the problem of the Palestine refugees did not seem any nearer than it had done 25 years ago, and that those who had perpetrated the tragedy were no longer even trying to give the impression that they were seeking a settlement to the problem. The whole problem had been put out of focus by the resumption of hostilities on 6 October 1973; the statements made by the Israeli authorities had further distorted the picture.
3. But the Committee must devote all its attention to the fate of the refugees. In view of the deficiency of resources, a decision must be taken to reduce the refugees' already insufficient food ration, to cancel three out of nine years' education for the children in the camps, or to abandon the health programme. The Commissioner-General had told the Committee (877th meeting) that it was not for him to take such a decision, and he had warned against the possible collapse of the Agency in chaos if programmes were maintained in full regardless of the financial situation.
4. India was not only a regular contributor to UNRWA; it also provided scholarships and educational facilities to the Palestine refugees directly. It would continue to do so and hoped that the countries which were in better circumstances and which had been directly involved in the creation of the problem would increase their assistance and accept their responsibility realistically.
5. The deficit for 1973 reported by the Working Group on the Financing of the Agency, and the short-fall estimated for 1974, caused his delegation profound disquiet. Since the Agency's programmes were not short-term projects, it was impossible to economize by refusing to start new projects or by terminating existing ones. To avoid disaster it was necessary to assist the Commissioner-General and the Working Group, whose dedication was praiseworthy.
6. While it felt that the refugee problem should not be lost in the larger perspective of the Arab-Israeli conflict, his delegation emphasized, as it had done consistently, the importance of the political ramifications of the problem, which had begun with the creation of the State of Israel by the United Nations. The solution lay in the return of the refugees to the country from which they had been expelled; the responsibility for that return fell entirely on the State that had forced them to flee.
7. Mr. FACK (Netherlands) said that as his country had contributed to UNRWA for a great many years, his delegation was particularly worried by the situation described by the Commissioner-General. He was therefore doubly gratified to be able to announce the intention of the Netherlands to double its contribution for 1974, and its wish that the amount of the increase should be used to meet the expenses of the educational centres under the combined auspices of UNRWA and UNESCO.
8. As the Chairman of the Working Group had observed, UNRWA must not be allowed to fail because of

the indifference of States Members of the United Nations. He paid a tribute to the Commissioner-General and his colleagues, and hoped that the fund-raising activities under way would be productive and would allow the Agency to continue its work.

9. Because of the recent events in the Middle East, his delegation did not wish, for the time being, to pursue the suggestion made by the Netherlands Minister for Foreign Affairs before the General Assembly on 26 September 1973 (2128th plenary meeting) that the Agency's activities might be reorganized. Although the Committee was not the appropriate place to speak of the Middle East conflict, the question of UNRWA could not be dissociated from the Middle East situation. He hoped that the recent conflict would be the last, and that it would be possible to reach a peaceful settlement in accordance with Security Council resolution 242 (1967), which would make the Agency superfluous.

10. The Netherlands had concerned itself with the problem from the very outset. More recently, immediately after the six-day war, the Netherlands Minister for Foreign Affairs, in his statement before the General Assembly (*ibid.*) had called for a final settlement in which both the interests of the States concerned and the fundamental rights of the refugees would be respected. In accordance with the declaration issued recently by the nine member States of EEC, including the Netherlands, his Government hoped that the political aspirations of the Palestinians would be given due place in any peaceful settlement in the Middle East.

11. An era of peace was dawning and the solution of the Palestine problem was part and parcel of it. Until that settlement was achieved, his country would not be found wanting in its support, unilaterally and multilaterally, for the activities of the Agency.

12. Mr. ZÁDOR (Hungary) said that the situation of the majority of the Palestine Arabs had not changed since their expulsion in 1948. The problem was essentially a political one, and no humanitarian or financial measures could solve it. It was true that the short-term problem was to keep the Palestine refugees alive but, unlike some members of the Committee, his delegation did not think that was the only problem. It had to be admitted that the Agency's task was extremely difficult and that the Government of Israel did not make it easier by sparking new conflicts.

13. Some countries thought that multilateral assistance was the best approach, and wished to impose it on others. His country felt that all avenues were of equal value; it was for each Member State to decide what form of assistance suited it best. He could not but agree with the representative of Kuwait that the delegations which were the strongest advocates of contributing hard cash to the Agency were the same delegations that systematically evaded taking hard decisions on the inalienable rights of the people of Palestine.

14. It had to be remembered that the Committee was the Special Political Committee and not the Fifth Committee or the International Red Cross. The United Nations was essentially a political organization which had to find political solutions to political problems. Temporary financial arrangements might perhaps be necessary and provided some respite to the troubled conscience of those who had opposed every effort to bring about a settlement since the General Assembly had

decided 25 years previously in its resolution 194 (III) that the refugees wishing to return to their homes should be permitted to do so and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return. By stressing so-called "now problems" for the past 25 years, some States had been putting off indefinitely the solution of the fundamental problem, thereby allowing the Israelis to push the cease-fire lines further forward. The effect was to increase the number of refugees and at the same time the "now problems", in order to satisfy Israel's expansionism.

15. His delegation hoped that, after the adoption of Security Council resolution 338 (1973) calling for the implementation of Council resolution 242 (1967), all the parties concerned would heed the voice of the United Nations. It was time to find a solution that would satisfy the legitimate aspirations of the people of Palestine and guarantee the territorial integrity and political independence of all States of the region. It was in that hope that his delegation would vote for the draft resolution.

*At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Issa Nakhleh (Palestine Arab Delegation) took a place at the Committee table.*

16. Mr. NAKHLEH<sup>1</sup> (Palestine Arab Delegation) said that the worst tragedy for a people was to leave its homeland and to be forced to live in exile, like the Palestinians. A part of the Arab nation, they had been in Palestine for 13 centuries when the invaders had usurped their lands and their property and their seat in the United Nations. And none the less the representative of those usurpers, a Khazar Jew who had been born in the Soviet Union and emigrated to Palestine, had the impertinence to make reservations about the participation of Palestinians in the Committee's debates. The representative of the war criminals, he did not wish to be reminded of the genocide committed by the Khazar Jews against the Palestinians. It was regrettable that the United Nations of 1947 and 1948 had participated in that genocide. The present membership would never have accepted the partition of Palestine or have admitted the counterfeit State of Israel. And there would not have been the constant bloodshed in the Middle East or the danger of world war.

17. The creation of UNRWA had not been an act of charity but an admission of guilt and of moral obligation. As long as the Palestinians were unable to exercise their right to self-determination in their own country and remained dispossessed of their property, it was the duty of the United Nations to maintain the services of UNRWA, particularly since out of 3 million Palestinians 1,540,694 were registered with the Agency and only 820,000 received food rations. The Palestinians should be given back their lands and properties or, pending their return, the income from those properties; then they would not need the services of the Agency, since that income was six times greater than UNRWA's projected budget.

18. The Palestine Arab Delegation wished to express its gratitude to Sir John Rennie, the Commissioner-General, and its appreciation of his dedication and that of the Agency's staff in carrying out their threefold and difficult task: dealing with the Governments of the host

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Nakhleh took the floor in accordance with the decision taken by the Committee at its 878th meeting to authorize members of the Palestine Arab Delegation to address the Committee without such authorization implying recognition of that organization.

countries and with the Zionist criminal gang in Tel Aviv, caring for 1.5 million Palestine refugees and raising funds to cover the Agency's deficit. It was to his credit that Sir John had raised the annual contribution of the European Economic Community from \$2.5 million in 1972 to about \$7.5 million in 1973. The Palestine Arab Delegation also wished to express its gratitude to the Working Group, and in particular to Mr. Olcay, its Chairman.

19. The refugees and the problems were numerous and the Agency's resources were meagre. The Commissioner-General had summed up the situation in paragraph 46 of his report (A/9013): the estimated deficit was over \$3 million in 1973 and \$10 million in 1974. If it was not covered, services would have to be reduced in 1974 and the Commissioner-General had pointed out the dangers of such a step. The Working Group had recommended (A/9231, para. 24) that Governments which had not contributed in the past or had contributed inadequately should reconsider their position. The Palestine Arab Delegation held the opinion that UNRWA's budget should be met collectively by all the States Members of the United Nations and that it should be increased to a sufficient level to enable it to provide more services for the Palestinians. There were three methods of solving the financial difficulties of the Agency: by making UNRWA's budget an item of the regular United Nations budget, by forcing the Zionist invaders to pay the income and rents of the properties exploited by them (over \$600 million a year), or by making it obligatory for each Member State to contribute to UNRWA *pro rata* to its share of the United Nations budget.

20. It was appalling to see the United States of America reduce its contribution to UNRWA from \$24 million in 1972 to \$23 million in 1973, at a time when the Congress was giving the Jewish Agency \$50 million to help it to transport Jews to Palestine from the Soviet Union and build settlements for them in Arab territories occupied since 1967. The United States Congress gave annually \$500 million to the Zionist invaders for the purchase of aircraft and tanks; by means of tax exemptions, it provided them every year with a further \$1,000 million. In October 1973 the United States Government had requested authorization to allocate \$2,000 million to dispatch weapons to the Zionist invaders to enable them to kill more Arabs. Had it not been for the political, financial and military support which the United States of America had given the Zionist invaders for the past 25 years, the Palestine refugees would have returned home long since. Since 99 per cent of the responsibility for the Palestine refugee problem rested on the United States, it had the duty to contribute 99 per cent of the UNRWA budget.

21. With regard to the refugees in the Gaza Strip, he reminded the Committee that the problem had been dealt with by the Commissioner-General in paragraphs 27 and 74 to 78 of his report (A/9013) and by the Secretary-General in a special report (A/9155). The Zionist war criminals were determined to displace and destroy the Palestine refugees in the Gaza Strip, against whom, since 1967, they had perpetrated every imaginable crime. He quoted paragraphs 7, 9, 11, 13 and 14 of the Secretary-General's special report and stated that in 1972 the Israelis had displaced over 16,000 Palestine refugees by destroying their dwellings at a juncture when the United Nations had been calling on the Jewish authorities "to desist forthwith from all measures that

affect the physical structure and the demographic composition of the Gaza Strip" (General Assembly resolution 2963 C (XXVII), para. 3). He recalled that at the twenty-seventh session (831st meeting) he had drawn attention to a letter concerning the nine concentration camps established by the Jewish war criminals in the Sinai desert in which 75,000 Palestinians from the Gaza Strip had been detained by way of collective punishment. Situated near Jewish army barracks, the camps were surrounded by electrified barbed wire and the 50,000 persons still being detained in them were allowed no contact with the outside world. The Zionist war criminals were the only people, other than the Nazis, who had confined whole families in concentration camps.

22. With regard to the problem of displaced persons, he reminded the Committee that 750,000 Palestinians had been expelled as a result of the 1967 war. In 1973 more than 3,000 Palestinians had been displaced from Jerusalem and more than 5,000 from various parts of the West Bank. The Jewish war criminals continued to refuse to allow the return of displaced persons, disregarding United Nations resolutions, including General Assembly resolution 2963 D (XXVII), in conformity with which the Secretary-General had submitted another report (A/9156). Though it was a report on the implementation of that resolution, more than half of its lines only reproduced the lies of the Israeli representative. According to that report, by June 1973, about 6,200 refugees had returned to the West Bank and about 1,220 to the Gaza Strip. If the report represented all that the efforts of the United Nations could achieve, it was useless for it to go on adopting resolutions. Moreover, the Jewish war criminals had a reason for preventing displaced persons from returning home: they wanted to get rid of all the Palestinians from the West Bank and annex it permanently.

23. Many people wished to see in the Palestinian problem merely a refugee problem, a problem of hungry stomachs, as the United States representative had said. But for the Palestinians, it was a problem of their homeland, of their right to self-determination, a problem involving their freedom and dignity as a people. In 1918 Palestine had had 700,000 Moslem and Christian Arab inhabitants and 50,000 Jews who had immigrated there during the nineteenth century. Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations had recognized that the Palestinian people was an independent nation guided and assisted by a Mandatory Power. The Balfour Declaration of 1917 on the establishment in Palestine of a Jewish national home had affirmed that nothing should be done which might prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine. But instead of leading the Palestinians to self-determination, the British Government had kept Palestine open to Jewish immigration, despite five revolts by the Palestinians between 1920 and 1947, in the course of which over 50,000 persons had been killed and more than 100,000 had been detained in prisons or concentration camps. In 1947, when the United Kingdom had brought the question before the United Nations; there had been in Palestine 1,350,000 Moslem and Christian Arabs and 650,000 Jews (including 450,000 immigrants) who had owned less than 6 per cent of the land. It was under pressure of the great Powers that the United Nations had recommended the partition of Palestine into two States: a Jewish State and an Arab State. The British armed forces had disarmed the Palestinian ma-

jority and armed the alien Jewish minority and, when the neighbouring Arab States had entered the war in 1948, the great Powers had used their influence to frustrate the Arab war effort. The Jews had occupied over two thirds of Palestine and had expelled over 1 million Moslem and Christian Palestinians. That was how the tragedy of the Palestine refugees had come about. The usurpation of Palestine was one of the ugliest forms of colonialism, since even the South African and Southern Rhodesia minorities had refrained from expelling the indigenous population. In view of the fact that the United Nations had abolished colonialism, the Palestinians were entitled to the support of all its Member States to put an end to the inhuman racist colonialism established in Palestine by the Zionists.

24. The representatives of the Zionist war criminals repeatedly claimed that Zionism was a liberation movement, and that by occupying Palestine in 1948 the Zionists had liberated the country from Arab domination. According to an article published in 1967 in *The New York Times*, they had made the same claims with regard to the West Bank of the Jordan, the Golan Heights and Sinai. The Zionists had convinced themselves that God had promised them all the Arab lands from the Nile to the Euphrates, including Syria and the Arabian peninsula, as was shown by an article in *The Jewish Missionary Magazine* of January 1923 (No. 25, vol. 3). In order to show the racist nature of Zionism and to reveal the Jewish claims to racial superiority, he quoted texts taken from a number of Jewish publications, including *Torah-Judaism and the State of Israel* by Uriel Zimmer (London, 1961, p. 12) "Israel's Law of Return" by David Cohen (an article published in *Middle East International* in July 1973), *The Meaning of Jewish History* by Jacob Bernard Agus (London, pp. 218 and 219) and *The Babylonian Talmud* (London, 1938, p. 300). The Jewish State wished to be one hundred per cent Jewish in order not to be defiled by the presence of Christians and Moslems. In *Voice of Dissent*, William Zukerman reported that, according to David Eidelberg (*The Morning Journal*, 7 April 1950), the fact that certain Jews had settled in Palestine with their Christian wives was a horrifying scandal because such "goyim" could be a spiritual poison and the Jewish land could not be built on the assumption that a Christian who lived in Israel was just as good as a Jew. The Palestine Arab Delegation considered that it was a disgrace for the United Nations to have among its Members a Zionist racist State. Hitler, who had been of Jewish origin, had also adopted the Zionist philosophy of dividing human beings into categories and grades on the ladder of humanity.

25. The principles of international law regarding military occupation and conquest were clear. Moreover, the Covenant of the League of Nations had outlawed war and conquest. Military occupation of a Territory did not confer sovereign rights on the occupant. The invasion of Palestine by alien Jewish immigrants and their use of force to expel the inhabitants constituted the crime of genocide. The occupation of 80 per cent of Palestine by a Jewish minority was illegal. Their so-called "Declaration of Independence" in 1948 had been illegal and it had no effect. It was the Palestinians who had the right of sovereignty in Palestine, just as the Governments-in-exile of the European States occupied by the Nazis had retained their sovereignty. The Security Council had condemned the usurpation of

power by the settler minority in Southern Rhodesia; if the same principles were applied to Palestine, then there had never been a Jewish State either *de facto* or *de jure*. The principles of international law and of the Charter required Members of the United Nations to refrain from recognizing any new State or any new Government created by war, violence, massacre or the crime of genocide. Jurists maintained that acts contrary to international law could not constitute a source of legal rights for those who had committed them. Whether they based themselves on the principles of international law or on those of the Charter, the General Assembly and the Security Council were bound to affirm that so-called Israel was not a State and that its admission to the United Nations had been illegal and was invalid. The people of Palestine retained sovereignty over their ancestral homeland and the seat that the Fascist and illegal Zionist régime occupied in the United Nations was theirs by right. The Palestinian people therefore had every right to free their country from Zionist military occupation and it was the moral duty of the United Nations to assist them in that task.

*Mr. Nakhleh withdrew.*

26. Mr. MEHIRI (Tunisia) congratulated the Commissioner-General and the Working Group on the Financing of the Agency on their dedication and the quality of their work. The reports of the Secretary-General (A/9155 and A/9156) provided evidence of the obstruction to which the Israeli occupation authorities were subjecting the activities of the Agency.

27. Whether in the matter of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 2963 D (XXVII), concerning the return of the refugees, or in respect of resolution 2963 C (XXVII), designed to safeguard the physical structure and the demographic composition of the Gaza Strip, the occupation authorities, faithful to their policy of expansion, not only had failed to comply with the orders of the international community but had intensified the destruction of shelters and had displaced more and more refugees.

28. During the current discussion, the Committee had heard a great deal about the extent and the merits of the generosity, perhaps somewhat too showy and condescending, that had been displayed.

29. Although the truth was veiled under the many euphemisms used by Israel in its replies, in which there was no such thing as "deportation" but only "transport of displaced persons" and no "destruction of shelters" but "civil engineering operations", the two reports by the Secretary-General provided evidence, if such was needed, of the crimes committed by Israel. The peoples and Governments who had been deceived by propaganda were now enlightened on the nature of the Israeli régime. Since an appeal had been made to the conscience of the international community for the creation of the Zionist State, in complete disregard both of the intentions of that State and of the results of such a measure, it was the international community which, by giving the champions of an archaic ideology the right to settle in an Arab land, had made itself responsible for the situation of the Palestine refugees.

30. The Palestinian people demanded the restoration of their rights. They could not be content with a life of inaction. The food rations distributed to them could be cut down, but nothing could derogate from their right to self-determination. For that reason the Palestinians

went on hoping to survive as a people and soon as a State.

31. Mr. MACRIS (Greece) said that he was sorry to see that the efforts made over the past 25 years, in particular General Assembly resolutions 194 (III) and 513 (VI) and Security Council resolution 237 (1967), had remained a dead letter. Those who have been refugees or displaced persons since 1948 and 1967 had been neither repatriated, nor reintegrated or compensated. No tangible progress had been made in that direction and the situation was still a matter of serious concern, as the Commissioner-General indicated in the introduction to his annual report (A/9013). His delegation fully supported the conclusions of the Commissioner-General set forth in paragraph 2 of the report, namely, that the passage of time had not made action less urgent and that the General Assembly's resolutions on respect for the rights of the refugees and the rights of the people of Palestine as an element in any just and lasting peace showed how the problem of the refugees had been further complicated and the political dimension enhanced since the hostilities of 1967. The prolongation of a state of active or stagnant belligerence in the Middle East was not to the advantage either of the Arab countries or of Israel but was prejudicial to international peace and security, and the first victims were the Palestine refugees and the hundreds of thousands of displaced persons.

32. All the countries concerned and all States Members of the United Nations should discharge the obligations that they had assumed under the Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council. His delegation feared that the United Nations would disappoint the hopes that the peoples of the world had placed in it if it continued to confine itself to pious statements which had no effect instead of showing, by practical action, its collective determination to help towards the solution of the problem of the Palestine refugees.

33. His delegation considered that the first task of the international community was to provide the Agency with the material means to enable it to carry out its mandate. It was a disturbing fact that UNRWA was obliged, through lack of funds, to consider a reduction, or even the suspension, of its services, in particular its education and training services. It was true that the education programme accounted for 47.3 per cent of the budget, but it was the greatest educational enterprise undertaken under the auspices of the international community. It must not be thought that a reduction of expenditure in that sector could be made without immediate risk. His delegation agreed with the Canadian delegation (878th meeting) that the continuation of the education and training activities of the Agency for a reasonable period was likely to help considerably towards the solution of the refugee problem.

34. His delegation endorsed the conclusion of the Working Group on the Financing of the Agency that, as long as a just and lasting settlement of the problem of the Palestine refugees had not been achieved, UNRWA's services in the form of relief assistance, health care and education must be maintained at least at their current minimal level by voluntary contributions from Governments (A/9231, paras. 21 and 23). That was not a matter of international charity but a require-

ment of justice and a practical act of joint responsibility. Greece had contributed a total of more than \$600,000, in cash and in kind, since 1 May 1950 (A/9013, annex I, table 19) and would continue to show its concern for the fate of the Palestine refugees and the importance which it attached to the efficient functioning of the Agency. It would accordingly support any initiative and any means of action that the Committee might deem appropriate to help the Agency to discharge its mission. It would like to say how much it appreciated the efforts of the Commissioner-General and his collaborators, who had helped to prevent the collapse of that humanitarian enterprise of the United Nations. It hoped that the Working Group would continue its work, in co-operation with the Secretary-General and the Commissioner-General, to ensure the satisfactory financing of the Agency, the cost of which should be apportioned among all countries, without exception.

35. Mr. DORON (Israel) noted that once again the consideration of the Commissioner-General's report was producing the same acrimonious and sterile debates, the same abuse of Israel, and would probably culminate in the adoption of resolutions which would leave the problem exactly where it stood. Apparently the latest war had done nothing to teach Israel's Arab neighbours that war, aggression and hatred were not a solution to the problems of the Middle East, including the problem of the refugees. That being so, UNRWA would have to continue its activities, although they were far removed from what they had been supposed to be at the start. He recalled the circumstances in which the Agency had been created and pointed out that the relief had been meant to be temporary and that the main task had been to reintegrate the refugees into the economic life of the Near East. Owing to Arab political resistance and obstruction, all integration and rehabilitation projects had been abandoned many years earlier and UNRWA had become a permanent relief agency, the word "works" in its title having ceased to have any meaning. There was general agreement that it was the duty of the international community to help the refugees, on humanitarian grounds. The question was whether that help over a long period should concentrate on their rehabilitation or keep them on relief. The time had come to take a fresh look at the problem and to prepare the way for a constructive settlement, in the framework of peace and regional and international co-operation.

36. Since 1967 Israel had shown what could be done when the approach was constructive. For example, in the Gaza Strip, under the Egyptian military régime, the Egyptian attitude had drawn some sharp criticism even from Arab countries, whereas Israel's approach had been to promote well-being and development. The local population, as well as the refugees, had been eager to obtain gainful employment and to return to normal life. At that point the Egyptian Government had unleashed a campaign of terrorism to cow the people, and particularly the refugees, into submission and to force them to refuse employment and to continue to huddle in the camps. Between June 1967 and August 1971, 239 innocent local residents and Arab refugees had been killed by Arab terrorists and more than 1,300 had been wounded. As was its duty under international law and Security Council resolution 237 (1967), Israel had taken action to ensure "the safety, welfare and security of the inhabitants". The local residents and the refugees were

grateful to Israel for saving their lives and enabling them to become useful members of society once again.

37. With regard to the shelters that had been demolished so that access roads could be built through the overcrowded refugee camps, he had already explained on previous occasions that every possible care had been taken to avoid undue hardship to the inhabitants concerned. Most of them had accepted the new alternative accommodations offered them and compensation had been paid to those who had made improvements to the shelters provided them. Cash grants had been given for the cost of moving into new housing and assistance provided in connexion with employment. When it had appeared that some of the arrangements had not proved satisfactory to the refugees, the competent Israeli authorities and representatives of UNRWA had carried out a joint survey which had recently been completed and as a result of which appropriate action was now being taken. In any event, the situation of the great majority of the refugees concerned had greatly improved.

38. The report of the Commissioner-General (A/9013, paras. 74-77) mentioned the very substantial plan for the construction of family dwellings that had been carried out in the Gaza Strip. The refugees had the possibility of purchasing housing, even on the instalment plan if they so desired. The purchase price of a unit was about \$700, of which \$250 was a down-payment, while the balance was to be paid off at about \$12 a month. Roads had been built and resurfaced, a second jetty for the Gaza port had been completed, and work would soon begin on a breakwater so that ships of up to 10,000 tons could anchor in the harbour.

39. Consequently terrorist acts in the Gaza Strip had become a thing of the past. There was full employment, freedom of movement, no curfew, and there had been a significant rise in the standard of living. In addition, vocational training centres had been built or expanded by Israel. With the rise in the number of industrial workshops in Gaza and the progressive development of the new industrial centre in the northern part of the Gaza Strip, more and more opportunities were presenting themselves for local employment for the trainees of the vocational sectors. While on leave, he had been able to visit a citrus packing plant, built and financed by Gaza residents, which provided employment for hundreds of workers. He had also talked with an electrician who had studied in Cairo and at the Haifa Technion.

40. What he had said of the positive trends in the Gaza Strip also applied to the West Bank. Conditions in the camp had considerably improved (*ibid.*, paras. 30, 72, 73 and 121) and there was no unemployment. Well over 50,000 Arabs, including a high percentage of refugees, had full employment in Israel. There were signs of development and progress everywhere, in particular the extensive building activities to be seen everywhere. It was true that the cost of living had increased, but the standard of living of the population had undoubtedly improved. The detractors of Israel who claimed that the economic conditions of the refugees were of no importance showed how little they cared for the fate of the refugees. That was the attitude of the Arab Government. The political aspects of the question, in particular the right to self-determination, would find their solution within the framework of the peace settlement.

41. In addition to Israel's contribution to the UNRWA budget (*ibid.*, annex I, table 19) and to its contributions made directly to the refugees (*ibid.*, table 21), the refugees benefited from a substantial part of Israel's annual budget for the administered areas, which during the current year amounted to \$84 million and the bulk of which was borne by the Israeli taxpayer. The education budget for the administered areas had been considerably increased, as had the number of students, including the children of refugees. In addition to the 6,999 candidates who had sat for the Egyptian secondary school-leaving certificate examination (Tawjihi), 137 candidates had sat in 1973 for the special examination for entry into Al-Azhar University, which had for the first time been held under UNESCO supervision (A/9013, para. 142). In that connexion it should also be noted that on 22 August 1973, after the period covered by the report, 186 students from Gaza had gone to Syria to pursue their university studies there. However, not every student from the administered areas was able to continue his studies in an Arab university. Consequently local intellectuals in West Jordan had formed a preparatory committee and had established an association under the Jordanian Law of Charitable Institutions, with the formal approval of the Israeli authorities, for the purpose of setting up an Arab university in Ramallah.

42. Israel had also shown its goodwill in other fields. In spite of the continued enmity towards Israel shown by the Arab Governments and the support they gave to terrorist organizations, Israel had permitted the return of over 50,000 refugees of the 1948-1949 hostilities and had also resettled 50,000 Arabs in Israel. Furthermore, hundreds of thousands of Arabs had been able to visit the administered areas and Israel, and to see the true situation for themselves. The number of such visitors had been over 200,000 in the summer months of 1972 and that figure should be exceeded in 1973 since such visits had now been authorized throughout the year. In addition, Israel had granted permits for the return of 5,429 West Bank and Gaza inhabitants between 1 September 1972 and 31 August 1973, bringing the total since 1967 to 49,605. He wished to point out in that connexion, as was borne out by foot-note (a) to table 1 in annex I to the report headed "Total registered population according to category of registration 1950-1973", the number of persons referred to as "displaced" by the 1967 war had been vastly exaggerated, as had also the numbers of the original 1948 refugees.

43. It was well known that the Arabs were anxious for political reasons to keep the refugee problem alive and to prevent more and more refugees from being absorbed into the population of the region, or in any case to conceal such integration, so that it was not surprising that they did not permit UNRWA to rectify its lists by carrying out the necessary field checks, as reported in paragraphs 52 to 54 of the report. It was stated in paragraph 52 that in Gaza and in the West Bank, checks on the existence and presence of refugees continued and that in addition to the routine removal from the rolls of absentees and previously unreported dead, the rations of a number of refugees whose economic status had substantially improved were reallocated to needy families. He wished to point out in that connexion that, in view of the fact that there existed no unemployment in either the West Bank or Gaza, the importance of the rations in the life of the refugees had progressively



diminished. The process of absorption of refugees had been accelerated in the areas administered by Israel and the refugees, with the exception of welfare cases, did not have to rely on rations for their subsistence.

44. With regard to the impossibility of carrying out the field checks he wished to draw the attention of the Committee to the situation prevailing in many of the camps in Lebanon, where UNRWA installations had been occupied for many years by the terrorist organizations referred to euphemistically in the report as "Palestinian organizations". The problem was not restricted to the occupation of some buildings by terrorists. The fact of the matter was that a large number of the refugee camps had been practically taken over by the terrorist organizations. Furthermore thousands of foreigners, some Lebanese and some Palestinian refugees registered in other host countries, who had come to seek work in Beirut, also lived in "the agglomerations loosely referred to as the 'refugee camps'" which consisted in fact of "official camps, interspersed land and the peripheries", as reported in paragraph 16. That showed how intermingled the "refugees" had become with the ordinary population of the host countries.

45. Already in 1959-1960 the relevant UNRWA report<sup>2</sup> had pointed out that hundreds of thousands of refugees had established themselves in the Arab countries, most of them remaining in the area that had been Palestine under the British mandate. It should not be forgotten that after the 1948-1949 war, more than half a million Jews had left Arab countries to take refuge in Israel, leaving behind their property which had been confiscated and for which no offer of compensation had ever been made. What had taken place at that time, therefore, had been a spontaneous population exchange, of the kind that had often happened in history. However, the United Nations had never been seized of the problem of Jews displaced from Arab countries. Most of them had been resettled in Israel and had been absorbed into the life and economy of the country. That had required a considerable national and financial effort to which the Jews of the free world had made a substantial contribution. No comparable efforts had been made by the Arabs to absorb their own displaced kinsmen.

46. What had attracted hundreds of thousands of Jews to the State of Israel was that no Jew could dwell in Israel as a stranger, for it was there that the Jewish people had enjoyed its national independence, which it had lost and regained and lost again in the perpetual struggle against the great colonial empires of ancient times. The present era was one of liberation movements, and Zionism was perhaps the oldest of them all. That movement had been launched in the late nineteenth century as the national liberation movement

of a persecuted people and it expressed the longing of that people to regain its freedom and nationhood. Thus, the re-establishment of Jewish independence in Israel, after centuries of struggle, was a vindication of the fundamental concepts of equality of nations and of self-determination. To question the Jewish people's right to national existence and freedom was to deny the central precepts of the United Nations. Furthermore, throughout history only the Jewish people, and none other, had seen the land of Israel as a distinct political entity, whereas all the other inhabitants who had settled there, after the Jews had been uprooted by foreign invaders, and that included the Arabs, had regarded themselves as integral parts of larger entities, political, national and religious.

47. Within the area of Palestine itself, the aspirations of the Arab people to sovereignty had been met twice by the international community. In the period of the League of Nations, Transjordan had been cut off from the West Bank and established as a separate Palestinian Arab entity. The United Nations had, in its turn, called for the establishment of a second Arab State in Palestine, alongside the Jewish State. Had it not been for the invasion by the neighbouring Arab States, there would today be two Arab States in Palestine. In any case, the Arab population of Palestine exercised its right to political independence within a sovereign Palestinian Arab entity, namely Jordan. In 1963 King Hussein had declared that "Jordan is Palestine and Palestine is Jordan".

48. It was therefore clear that the rights of Jews and Arabs in Palestine to national existence were not irreconcilable. The Arabs exercised those rights in the Arab States, and the Jews in the State of Israel. The Arabs could not claim that only their rights were valid, that equal rights should be denied to the Jewish people in its historic homeland, and that instead of finding accommodation between the two peoples, the rights of the Arabs should supplant the rights of the Jews. The solution of the question of the Palestine refugees should find its proper place within the effort that had to be made by all concerned to achieve peace in the Middle East, as laid down in resolution 242 (1967) of the Security Council. Israel's aim was a just and durable peace with, as an integral part of it, a just settlement of the refugee problem.

49. The CHAIRMAN suggested that, in view of the late hour, representatives who were to speak on the item in the general debate, or to speak in exercise of their right of reply, should do so at the following meeting. He asked delegations that wished to submit draft resolutions to do so as soon as possible and no later than at the following meeting.

<sup>2</sup> Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifteenth Session, Supplement No. 14.

*The meeting rose at 1.45 p.m.*