



UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL
ASSEMBLY



Distr.
GENERAL

A/34/518
16 October 1979

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Thirty-fourth session
Agenda item 50

UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE
REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST

Population and refugees displaced since 1967

Report of the Secretary-General

1. The present report is submitted to the General Assembly in pursuance of paragraph 4 of its resolution 33/112 F of 18 December 1978, concerning population and refugees displaced since 1967, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General, after consulting with the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), to report to it at its thirty-fourth session on Israel's compliance with paragraph 3 of the resolution. In paragraph 3 of that resolution, the Assembly reiterated its call upon Israel (a) to take immediate steps for the return of all the displaced inhabitants and (b) to desist from all measures that obstructed the return of the displaced inhabitants, including measures affecting the physical and demographic structure of the occupied territories. In paragraph 1, the Assembly reaffirmed the inalienable right of all the displaced inhabitants to return to their homes and former places of residence in the territories occupied by Israel since 1967, and declared that any attempt to restrict, or to attach conditions to, the free exercise of the right of return by any displaced person was inconsistent with that inalienable right and inadmissible. In paragraph 2, the Assembly deplored the continued refusal of the Israeli authorities to take steps for the return of the displaced inhabitants.

2. By a note verbale dated 6 March 1979 addressed to the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations, the Secretary-General drew attention to his reporting responsibility under paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 33/112 F and requested the Government of Israel to forward to him, as soon as possible, any relevant information on the implementation of the respective provisions of the resolution.

3. By a note verbale dated 12 September 1979, the Permanent Representative of Israel conveyed to the Secretary-General his Government's comments on resolution 33/112 F which, as in previous reports on this matter, are reproduced verbatim below:

"The policy of the Government of Israel vis-à-vis the persons who left the area of hostilities as a result of the Six Day War in 1967 has been consistent, and it remains unchanged.

"Although that war was instigated by Arab Governments, Israel has been fully cognizant of, and has given due weight to, the humanitarian aspects of the problem. It accordingly made special arrangements for the reunification of families and for the amelioration of hardship cases among residents and refugees alike in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District. Over the past year these arrangements have remained in force, and the co-operation of the local Arab authorities in respect of them has continued.

"In parallel, Israel has maintained its liberal policies in the areas concerned. In particular, the policy of 'open bridges' across the River Jordan has continued.

"This policy, which was inaugurated immediately after the Six Day War and which was not suspended even during the Yom Kippur War of 1973 (also initiated by Arab Governments), allows freedom of movement of people and goods in both directions across the cease-fire line. As a result, Arab residents of the areas concerned, including refugees, have been enabled to visit Arab countries, while citizens of those countries have been able to visit the areas in question and Israel as well. In 1978 alone, about one million incoming and outgoing residents of the areas, as well as visitors from Arab countries, took advantage of this policy. Indeed, in the last four years, almost three quarters of a million persons from Arab countries which consider themselves at war with Israel have crossed the bridges. For the period of June 1975 to March 1979, they included 372,414 visitors from Jordan, 93,480 from Kuwait, 52,244 from Saudi Arabia, 11,503 from Lebanon, 8,329 from Libya, 7,408 from Qatar, 7,313 from Abu Dhabi, 2,750 from Algeria and 1,186 from Iraq.

"This policy, however, carries with it certain distinct risks. Given the responsibility of the Government of Israel for the security of its own citizens, as well as for the safety and well-being of the inhabitants of Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District, it has been guided by certain security considerations. In particular, it has been obliged to take into account repeated attempts by the terrorist organization known as the PLO to exploit Israel's 'open bridges' policy for criminal purposes.

"The organization in question engages in indiscriminate acts of terror against both Jews and Arabs and openly avows its determination to destroy the State of Israel. That aim is grounded in the PLO's so-called 'covenant', which was reaffirmed as recently as last month by the central body of the

/...

said organization. It has also made no secret of its intention to try to subvert the ongoing peace negotiations, which have led to the first real progress in thirty years towards peace in the Middle East.

"In this, the PLO is a pliant tool in the hands of certain Arab Governments which are also opposed to the peace process and which have likewise tried in the past to abuse the freedom of movement into the areas concerned and into Israel proper in order to infiltrate terrorists, arms and explosives.

"These subversive activities have seriously affected the return of persons displaced in 1967. Between June 1967 and July 1979 PLO terrorists have killed over 350 Arabs and injured almost 2,000 others in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District. Nonetheless, the Government of Israel has facilitated the family reunion of significant numbers of persons. In the twelve years from 1967 to 1979, 50,467 persons were permitted to rejoin their families in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District.

"Despite the PLO's ongoing campaign of terror and intimidation Israel remains committed to its humanitarian approach to the problem which is the subject of this note. In 1978, 1,511 persons were admitted for purposes of family reunion and from January to July 1979, 1,008 applications were approved within this framework."

4. In connexion with paragraph 3 (a) of General Assembly resolution 33/112 F, the Secretary-General has obtained from the Commissioner-General of UNRWA the information available to him on the return of refugees registered with the Agency. As indicated in earlier reports, 1/ the Agency is not involved in any arrangements for the return of refugees; nor is it involved in any arrangements for the return of displaced persons, none of whom is registered as a refugee. Its information is based on requests by returning registered refugees for transfer of rations to the areas to which they have returned and subsequent correction of Agency records. The Agency would not necessarily be aware of the return of any registered refugees who did not request the provision of rations or services but believes they would be very few in number. So far as is known to the Agency, between 1 July 1978 and 30 June 1979, 131 displaced registered refugees returned from east Jordan to the West Bank, and 28 returned to the Gaza Strip, of whom 23 were from east Jordan and 5 from the West Bank. It should be noted that some of these may not be displaced registered refugees, but rather members of the family of a displaced registered refugee who accompanied him on his return or joined him there, but who were not themselves displaced in 1967. In the same period, no reports were received by

1/ A/9156, para. 5; Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-ninth Session, Annexes, agenda item 38, document A/9740, para. 4; *ibid.*, Thirtieth Session, Annexes, agenda item 54, document A/10253, para. 4; *ibid.*, Thirty-first Session, Annexes, agenda item 53, document A/31/240, para. 4; and *ibid.*, Thirty-second Session, Annexes, agenda item 55, document A/32/263, para. 4; and *ibid.*, Thirty-third Session, Annexes, agenda item 54, document A/33/286, para. 4.

A/34/518

English

Page 4

UNRWA of displaced registered refugees returning to the Gaza Strip from Egypt. Thus, taking into account the estimate given in paragraph 4 of last year's report, the number of displaced registered refugees who are known by the Agency to have returned to the occupied territories since June 1967 is about 9,400. The Agency is unable to estimate the total number of displaced inhabitants who have returned. It keeps records only of registered refugees and, as pointed out above, even those records, particularly with respect to location of registered refugees, may be incomplete.
