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**SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE**  
**27th meeting**  
**held on**  
**Tuesday, 15 November 1988**  
**at 10 a.m.**  
**New York**

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**SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 27th MEETING**

**Chairman: Mr. NOWORYTA (Poland)**

**later: Mr. FASEHUN (Nigeria)**

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**AGENDA ITEM 76: UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES  
IN THE NEAR EAST (continued)**

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 76: UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (continued) (A/43/13 and Add.1, 702, 582, 652-655, 581, 656, 657, 408)

1. Mr. TANTEM SAPYA (Thailand) paid tribute to the Commissioner-General and staff of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) for continuing, over the past 12 months in particularly difficult circumstances, to provide approximately 2.2 million Palestinians, including a number of school-aged children, with assistance in the basic areas of health, education and vocational training.
2. The cost of such assistance had been high, not so much in money but in human lives. In Lebanon, since 1982, 33 UNRWA staff members had lost their lives while in service. As of 30 June 1988, 13 of them, including a Norwegian and a Swede recently kidnapped, had been declared missing, requiring the Agency to devise special security precautions. His delegation offered its heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families and called for the release of the missing staff members.
3. Security problems had also been prevalent in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, where the Agency's role was more important than ever because of the repressive measures applied by the occupying authorities.
4. The financial situation of UNRWA was a matter of concern. Expenditures required to maintain basic programmes at their present level would probably outpace the Agency's income over the next few years if donors did not increase their contributions to the General Fund. It was imperative that the international community should maintain its unswerving support for UNRWA to enable it to perform its humanitarian tasks. The Palestinians would need such assistance until a viable solution could be found, based on the exercise of the right of the Palestinians to self-determination and a homeland.
5. His delegation had followed with interest the changing situation in the Middle East and hoped that the recent announcement by the head of the Palestine Liberation Organization at the meeting of the Palestine National Council in Algiers would have a positive effect on the settlement of the problem of Palestinian refugees. Thailand, which had made contributions to the the Agency's General Fund every year as a concrete demonstration of its support for humanitarian relief operations, hoped to do so again in the current year.
6. Monsignor MARTINO (Observer for the Holy See) said that it was sad that in a year rich in promise, which had seen the end to bloodshed in certain conflicts and significant progress towards ending others, the spirit of peace had not affected the Middle East.
7. The Middle East was a region for which believers in the three monotheistic religions felt a strong historic, religious and cultural kinship. The Catholic Church had sought to express that kinship for the past 40 years through the

(Monsignor Martino, Observer, Holy See)

Pontifical Mission for Palestine. The Mission administered its own projects and programmes and co-ordinated the aid provided by other Catholic agencies in Europe and North America. A very large part of that commitment was made through Church-run primary and secondary schools and the Bethlehem University, and to libraries in Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Nazareth. The Church had also established clinics serving mothers and babies, as well as institutions for the blind, the deaf or infants with birth defects. It also supported the work of UNRWA, both by seeking in practical ways to collaborate in projects and by making a symbolic pledge annually.

8. Nor had the Church ignored the demands of the peoples of the region that their human and civil rights should be respected. Repeatedly, the Popes had reaffirmed Israel's right to exist within secure, internationally recognized borders. They had condemned the Nazi genocide and called on all peoples to take a solemn oath that such crimes would never be allowed to happen again. At the same time, they had affirmed with equal insistence the right of the Palestinian people to a homeland. The Holy See had continued to seek the recognition of the dignity of the Jewish people in the State of Israel and that of the Palestinian people, to call on the parties to demonstrate readiness of understanding in order to arrive at a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region.

9. Violence afflicted both Jews and Arabs. The Church suffered with the Palestinians who had raised two generations in refugee camps, and deplored the broken bones, detention without trial or formal charges and the deaths of several hundreds of them. It suffered also with the Jews, and deplored the tension under which they were living and the terrorism, which could not solve any problems and simply continued the spiral of violence, while striking at the innocent. The Church also recognized, however, the need to eliminate, by negotiation, everything that would hinder the satisfying of the just aspirations of peoples. Violence must therefore be replaced by a dialogue between Jews, Christians and Muslims in the search for solutions based on mutual understanding and fraternal living.

10. The Holy See further hoped that dialogue would lead to the reopening of schools in the West Bank, and of Arab universities and the Church-run Bethlehem University, which had been closed for all but one day since 29 October 1987.

11. With regard to the future of Jerusalem, the Holy See reaffirmed that the Holy City, which pertained to the three monotheistic religions and was therefore exceptional and unique, should be protected by an international statute, which would guarantee equality of rights and treatment to the three religions regarding worship and access to their holy places and would enable the three religious communities peacefully to pursue the spiritual, cultural, civic, economic and other activities necessary to their existence.

12. Mr. MUSTAPHA (Malaysia) noted with satisfaction that, despite the almost insurmountable problems and difficulties which it faced in carrying out its mandate, UNRWA had extended the necessary educational, health and welfare services

(Mr. Mustapha, Malaysia)

to the displaced Palestinian population, totalling 2.2 million. To carry out its multifaceted activities and meet changing circumstances, the Agency had considerably restructured its programmes, and the recommendations contained in the report of the Commissioner-General to enhance the effectiveness of its operations deserved the Committee's careful consideration.

13. Current events in the Gaza Strip, West Bank and Lebanon were of serious concern. The situation remained highly volatile since the beginning of the intifadah in December 1987, which had arisen out of the intransigence of the Israeli authorities, whereby clashes, curfews and travel restrictions had significantly disrupted the work of the Agency. The deterioration of the situation had led the Advisory Commission of UNRWA to propose not only to improve and expand its health, education and welfare services to the refugees but also to provide emergency humanitarian assistance to non-refugees, which imposed an additional burden on the Agency.

14. His delegation paid tribute to the devotion and great sacrifices of the UNRWA staff, who, despite being victims of kidnapping, torture and loss of lives, had fulfilled their mandate.

15. His delegation had acknowledged the stringent measures taken by the Agency in implementing its programmes with maximum efficiency. It was concerned, nevertheless, at the Agency's financial situation as reflected in its 1988 budget, and at the prospects for 1989. The construction programme, in particular, would be affected by the decline in contributions. His delegation therefore urged Member States and intergovernmental organizations to make generous contributions in order to revitalize the activities and programmes planned for 1989.

16. Mr. KHAN (India) expressed appreciation for the unswerving dedication of the Commissioner-General and his staff, who had continued to discharge their duties under particularly difficult conditions, especially in Lebanon. He noted that four employees of the Agency had been killed during the period under review, and that despite security precautions, two others had been kidnapped.

17. The Agency's services were vital in mitigating the sufferings of the refugees, but could be no substitute for the right of the Palestinians to live in freedom and dignity in their own homeland. The only way to end the Palestinian tragedy was to find a just and comprehensive solution to the conflict, which would include the withdrawal of Israel from all territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, and the recognition of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including its right to establish an independent and sovereign State in Palestine.

18. His delegation was deeply concerned to note that the Israeli occupation authorities, in disregard of the norms of international law, had resorted to harsh repressive measures - including administrative detention, demolition of houses, imposition of curfews, restrictions on travel, fines, confiscation of identity cards, closure of schools, disconnection of water and electricity services - in an attempt to quell the uprising. Such a situation brought to the fore the urgent

(Mr. Khan, India)

need to convene the International Peace Conference on the Middle East in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions and with the participation on an equal footing of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

19. His delegation was pleased to note that the Agency, through careful planning, austerity measures and the receipt of additional contributions, had been able to improve its financial position in 1987. However, the projections for 1988, which could well turn out to be a deficit year, particularly since the expenditures on regular programmes continued to rise year after year with the increase in the refugee population, underlined the importance of the Commissioner-General continuing his dialogue with Governments and non-governmental organizations in order to enlarge the donor community. The international community had a responsibility to assist the Agency in every possible way, and those countries and non-governmental organizations which were in a position to do so should contribute generously to such activities. His country, for its part, had made an annual contribution to the Agency since its inception and also provided a number of scholarships to Palestinians. In addition, some 2,000 Palestinian students were taking courses in his country under various self-financing schemes.

20. His delegation reaffirmed its solidarity with the Palestinian people in the present critical period of the uprising.

21. Mr. MOUSHAITI (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that his delegation appreciated the true value of the Agency's humanitarian activities; it was endeavouring, despite the many difficulties it had encountered, to alleviate the sufferings of the Palestinian people, which was oppressed by an entity consisting of bands of outlaws whose only common feature was their criminal and terrorist behaviour.

22. The international community was responsible for prolonging the suffering of the Palestinian people; for 40 years it had addressed only the symptoms of the problem instead of going back to the root causes. The United Nations also bore a share of the responsibility; indeed it was the United Nations which had legalized the Zionist entity.

23. For four decades, the Palestinian people had been striving in every way possible to draw the attention of the international community to the injustice done to it. During the preceding year, its resistance had taken on a new dimension. The heavy toll of the past 11 months (more than 450 dead, 10,000 injured and 50,000 arrested) was a good indication of the scope of the movement, which had the participation of an entire people.

24. In its desperate attempt to repress the heroic uprising of the Palestinian people, the Zionist entity had not shrunk from the most barbarous methods, allowing the occupation troops to use military weapons, toxic gases banned by the international community, collective punishments (such as demolition of houses and villages, destruction of crops, cutting off the supply of water and electricity and closing of schools), as well as beatings, deportations and other repugnant

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(Mr. Moushaiti, Libyan Arab  
Jamahiriya)

practices. The occupation forces had gone so far as to assault employees of international organizations, repeatedly infringing their privileges and immunities and preventing them from discharging their mission. A number of them had been killed; others had been kidnapped or arrested.

25. The Palestinian uprising had provoked an unprecedented crisis within the Zionist movement, seriously jeopardizing its strategy and preventing it from continuing a process which it regarded as vital: the establishment of settler colonies throughout the land of Palestine.

26. Despite the silence imposed by Zionist circles on the numerous information media under their control, the courage of certain free spirits had enabled world public opinion to learn about the atrocious racist practices of the Zionist entity. One might well ask why the international community continued to bury its head in the sand, instead of taking the necessary measures to deal with that barbaric entity which obeyed no laws.

27. The question before the Committee could not be reduced to a mere refugee problem. At issue was the fate of an entire people which wished to exercise its inalienable rights, including the right to determine its own future and to establish an independent State on its land, a people which rejected occupation in any form. The handful of dollars donated by those mainly responsible for the tragedy of the Palestinian people helped alleviate its suffering somewhat, but its wounds would not heal until it had recovered its rights. Moreover, there was no comparison between those contributions to the Agency's budget and the \$5 billion paid to the Zionist entity each year, not to mention the weapons, technical assistance, political protection, and where needed, the military assistance it received.

28. If the parties concerned truly wished to help the Palestinian people, they should further its return to its homeland, stop financing the establishment of settler colonies in the occupied Arab territories, refrain from encouraging immigration to Palestine and cut off all financial and military aid to the Zionist entity.

29. As the Zionist entity still refused to accept international fact-finding missions and to prevent journalists from entering the occupied territories, his delegation supported the proposal to ask the Agency to follow the evolution of the situation on the ground more closely, in order to make the international community aware of the true nature of the Zionist, militarist entity, which the international media had long tried to portray as a haven of democracy in the Middle East.

30. His delegation paid tribute once again to the Commissioner-General and his staff for their efforts and expressed its appreciation for their humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people. His country was convinced that, no matter what repressive methods the Zionist entity employed, the Palestinian people would

(Mr. Moushaiti, Libyan Arab  
Jamahiriya)

continue its struggle until it was able to recover all of its rights and to establish an independent State under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization, its sole legitimate representative.

31. Mr. IDRIS (Sudan) said that the Sudanese delegation wished to pay tribute to the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, who was making commendable efforts to respond to the situation created by the intifadah in the occupied territories. It particularly welcomed the measures taken with a view to co-ordinating the activities of the Agency with those of bodies such as UNDP and UNIDO, with a view to improving the quality of the services provided to refugees.

32. His delegation was convinced that, as the Commissioner-General had stated in his report, the difficult conditions under which the refugees were living, especially those in the Gaza Strip, and the growing bitterness and despair at the lack of a solution after more than 20 years of occupation, were the main factors which had led to the popular uprising in the occupied territories.

33. The tragedy that the Palestinian people was living out in its own land and the neighbouring Arab countries was the consequence of the creation of the Zionist State. Since 1948 that State had been bent on emptying Palestine of its population and occupying extensive regions of the Arab world with a view to creating living space for the millions of Jews whom it was seeking to attract from the four corners of the world.

34. The repeated acts of aggression perpetrated against the Arab countries and the expansionism that was the corollary of those acts, the invasion of Lebanon, the creeping colonization of the occupied territories, the genocide to which the Palestinian people was being subjected - as evidenced by the massacres at the Sabra and Shatila camps and the incessant attacks on refugee camps in Lebanon - deportations and the demolition of houses and villages were the instruments of that policy.

35. The statistics provided by the report of the Commissioner-General recorded the catastrophic effects of those activities on the Arab population. To give but one example, the number of Palestinian refugees had risen from 914,221 in 1950 to 2,268,595 in 1988.

36. The continued worsening of the refugees' problems since 1948 showed incontrovertibly that the question did not lend itself to half measures. His delegation thus considered that it was high time to put an end to the martyrdom of the Palestinian people by solving the problem once and for all. To that end, it fully supported the proposal that an international peace conference should be convened, under the auspices of the United Nations, bringing together the five permanent members of the Security Council and all the parties concerned, particularly the PLO, to enable the Palestinian people finally to exercise its right to self-determination and to establish an independent State.

37. Mr. TEEHANKEE (Philippines) said that, over the years, the Agency had considerably extended its activities to include the sectors of education, training and health, and it was now playing a stabilizing role in the region by protecting the future of the Palestinian refugees. It was regrettable that those results, attributable to the tireless efforts of the UNRWA staff, had been made necessary by the failure to settle a long-standing dispute.

38. Although the Commissioner-General had managed to improve the Agency's financial position, it was likely that income in 1988 would be insufficient, since a 5 per cent growth in expenditures would be necessary in order to maintain services at their current level. Member States must therefore increase their contributions to that humanitarian cause; the Philippines would do so, in so far as its limited resources allowed.

39. The Agency had to operate in extremely hazardous circumstances in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and in Lebanon, where 33 of its staff had been killed since 1982. His delegation hoped that the blockade of three refugee camps which had been in force since 1985 would soon end, and that the Agency would be able to return to its former headquarters within its area of operations, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 42/69 A of 2 December 1987. It noted that the Agency had been able to construct new schools, to improve education and training programmes, and to develop camp infrastructures and health facilities, all of which improvements, unfortunately, still fell short of the needs of the Palestinian refugees.

40. UNRWA officials had been killed in the occupied territories, and staff could no longer move around freely to carry out their work. The occupation authorities were violating the privileges and immunities of the Agency and misusing its premises and property.

41. Clashes between the occupation authorities and the population had resulted in more than 200 Palestinian dead and thousands of wounded. The measures taken by the occupation authorities to quell the uprising had had a significant impact on the Palestinian refugees, and consequently upon the Agency's activities. In that connection, his delegation had taken note of the plan to provide humanitarian assistance as far as practicable, on an emergency basis and as a temporary measure, to non-refugees who were in serious need of assistance because of current events.

42. A solution to the Middle East conflict could no longer be postponed, and peace would only be possible if a homeland was established for the Palestinians. Israel, of all nations, should be able to understand that. That solution must uphold the right of all States in the area to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries. The proclamation by the Palestine Liberation Organization of an independent Palestinian State, with the implicit recognition of the State of Israel, could be seen as a symbolic act aimed at realizing the aspirations of over 4 million Palestinians. It should lead to the implementation of Security Council resolution 242 (1967) and the convening of an international conference aimed at finally resolving the vexed question of Palestine. The Agency, which had been doing its share to alleviate the refugees' plight, must not be allowed to become a



(Mr. Teeharkes, Philippines)

permanent part of the Middle East landscape. A comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Palestine question was the only way to end the suffering of the Palestinian people.

43. Mr. ABOU-HADID (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his country was extremely concerned to see the Palestine problem perpetuated through Israel's refusal to implement the relevant United Nations resolutions and through its policy of expansionism. The United Nations must work to solve the problem, particularly in view of the fact that it was itself in some measure responsible for the tragedy.

44. His delegation considered that the Commissioner-General ought not to have shown the draft report to representatives of the Government of Israel and to have given consideration to their comments, while the host Arab countries had not been accorded the same privileged treatment. One could not help wondering whether he considered the Israeli viewpoint more important than that of the Arab States. The Syrian delegation again stressed that the viewpoint of Israel and its comments did not, in the final analysis, serve the cause of the Palestinian refugees, given that it was that same occupying Power which was at the origin of their tragedy.

45. His delegation noted with concern that the Chairman of the Advisory Commission of the Agency had exceeded his mandate when he had thought it appropriate to begin his letter of 2 March 1988 by stressing that all activities undertaken to alleviate hardship in the occupied territories should be carried out in a manner to support international efforts to reach a comprehensive and just solution of political issues based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), taking fully into account the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. He must surely be aware that the General Assembly had adopted many other resolutions based on the exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights, including the right of return, the right to self-determination and the right to create on its national territory an independent sovereign State, as well as on the total withdrawal of the Israeli occupying forces from all the occupied Arab territories. However, his delegation welcomed the reference, in the introduction to the report, to resolutions 194 (III) of 11 December 1948 and 212 (III) of 19 November 1948.

46. The report also failed to stress the importance of the financial sacrifices made by those Arab countries that took in Palestinian refugees, a burden that exceeded by far all annual contributions made by the international community to the Agency. Nor did it mention the financial burden placed upon the Arab countries by the massive exodus of the population after the aggression of June 1967.

47. The Agency's growing commitment to emergency operations called for corresponding support. In that context, the difficult situation in which the Palestinian refugees in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Lebanon found themselves required a new definition of the absolute poverty threshold in order to help the refugees derive greater benefit from the services of the Agency, particularly inasmuch as they were basic services.

(Mr. Abou-Hadid, Syrian Arab Republic)

48. As a host country, Syria shared the Commissioner-General's concern as to the need to allocate resources to the Agency to enable it to pursue its activities in the course of the coming year. A solution to that problem depended solely upon the political will of the international community. In that context, while fully appreciating the services provided to the Palestine refugees in the West Bank, Gaza and Lebanon, such services should not be expanded at the expense of the Agency's other areas of operation.

49. The report raised the possibility of making substantial changes in the nature of Agency operations to take into account the new situation prevailing in the occupied Arab territories. His delegation would like to know what exactly those changes would be. The report also mentioned that a new Programme Planning and Evaluation Office had been established in UNRWA headquarters. The mid-term plan (1989-1991), however, assumed that there would be zero growth and that the Agency would not be able to carry out all its operations. It was therefore necessary for the international community to assume its responsibilities so as not to increase the burden on the host countries. It would also be useful to reduce the number of international staff occupying posts that should be filled by local staff.

50. The report also referred to the attempts made by the Israeli occupation authorities to shirk their obligations with regard to UNRWA and the harassment measures directed against Agency staff. The international community must prevail upon Israel to put an end to those practices and to respect its obligations to the Agency.

51. Syria deeply deplored the death of Agency staff members in the course of their work. For its part, his Government was prepared to collaborate fully with the Commissioner-General and called upon the international community to make available to UNRWA all the resources needed for it to pursue its work.

52. Mr. Fasehun (Nigeria) took the Chair.

53. Mr. SY (Senegal) said that, at a time when the world could finally hope to see lasting peace and security, certain populations continued to be deprived of their legitimate right to live in freedom and to decide their own fate for themselves, and agenda item 76 was therefore of particular importance for his delegation. Senegal, which chaired the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and which was deeply committed to respect for the liberties and rights of the human individual, could not but denounce vigorously the flagrant and repeated violations of the rights of the Palestinian people. Moreover, if care were not taken, certain painful situations, like the one the Palestinian people was currently enduring, might well undermine the credibility of the United Nations.

54. As pointed out by the report of the Commissioner-General, the Agency, with the constant support of the international community, was making considerable efforts to alleviate the suffering of the Palestine refugees. But in light of the current events in the occupied territories, those tasks had grown considerably, so that substantial additional resources were necessary.

(Mr. Sy, Senegal)

55. In that context, his delegation noted with concern the difficulties that the Agency was encountering in carrying out its programme, not only because of the lack of financial resources, but also because of the attitude of Israel towards UNRWA and its staff. The report of the Commissioner-General showed that it had not been possible to carry out all the projects of the Agency's regular programme in the areas of health and education. That was particularly disturbing because the resurgence of violence in the occupied territories had given rise to growing numbers of refugees, whose living conditions had steadily deteriorated. His delegation therefore supported the recommendations contained in the reports of the Commissioner-General and of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA and hoped that the necessary efforts would be made to enable the Agency to discharge its mission as effectively as possible. His delegation was pleased to note that most developing countries had committed themselves to increasing their voluntary contributions or at least to maintaining them at their current level. It also welcomed the decision by the Commissioner-General to rationalize further the Agency's administration and to make better use of the means made available to it, as demonstrated by the establishment of the Programme Planning and Evaluation Office.

56. The documents submitted to the Committee showed that 30 UNRWA staff members had died in the course of their humanitarian work and that others had been kidnapped and detained without any cogent grounds. The sacrifice of those innocent victims should prompt the international community to redouble its efforts to help the Palestinian people recover its usurped rights. It was essential to work towards a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Palestinian question so that the Agency's work could finally be completed.

57. In closing, his delegation reaffirmed its full and entire confidence in the Commissioner-General of UNRWA and all his staff and encouraged them to persevere in their efforts.

58. Mr. AL-BOAININ (Qatar) said that, since its creation in 1949, the Agency had worked to meet the needs of refugees who had had to leave their homes following wars and other events that continued to maintain a climate of tension in the region. Under those exceptional conditions, UNRWA had, over the years, provided important services to the Palestinian refugees, particularly in the area of health and education. Those services would continue until a political settlement of the Palestinian problem was reached.

59. The uprising of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories clearly illustrated the determination of that people to preserve its identity, to pursue its cause and to exercise the rights for which it had been struggling for 40 years.

60. Although the state of war in Lebanon and the uprising of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories had had an impact on Agency operations, they had not prevented UNRWA from performing the tasks entrusted to it and showing that it was equal to the situation. That being the case, the international community's fundamental objective must be to achieve a lasting settlement of the Palestinian question, which could only be brought about by convening an International Peace

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(Mr. Al-Boainin, Qatar)

Conference on the Middle East with the participation of all the parties concerned, including the representatives of the Palestinian people. Mindful of the Agency's financial difficulties, his Government reiterated the need to reach a definitive settlement of the refugee question.

61. Mr. AL-ZAYANI (Bahrain) reviewed the main aspects of the question of the Palestine refugees, stressing Israel's responsibility for the continuation of the problem. The annual reports of the Commissioner-General reminded the international community of its responsibilities with regard to the tragedy of the Palestine refugees. 1988, however, had been marked by the heroic uprising of the Palestinian people, which thus demonstrated its determination to attain its legitimate rights. That resistance was all the more understandable because the occupation authorities had set up a system based on repression, violated the most elementary human rights in defiance of the provisions of the fourth Geneva Convention, expropriated Arab lands and continued their policy of colonization. That situation had furthermore been anticipated by the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Arab Territories in its 1987 report (A/42/650).

62. His delegation was concerned at the obstacles placed by Israel in the path of the Agency's operations in order to prevent it from carrying out its humanitarian mission. Mention should be made in particular of the arbitrary detention of staff members, restrictions on freedom of movement, the interruption of telephone connections between the Agency's headquarters in Vienna and its field office in Gaza, the refusal to allow entry of foodstuffs and medical supplies through the port of Ashdod, all of which were violations of the Agency's privileges and immunities.

63. In spite of those obstacles, the Agency had been able to expand and diversify the services which it provided to the Palestine refugees. Furthermore, thanks to its balanced-budget policy, the Agency had carried out its regular programme. Nevertheless, the contributions to the construction programme remained insufficient, which had forced the Agency to postpone numerous construction projects. It was hoped therefore that sufficient financial resources would be placed at the disposal of the Agency so as to enable it to construct schools, dispensaries and other facilities necessary to provide basic services to the refugees.

64. Although it had humanitarian aspects, the question of Palestine was primarily a political problem, which the refusal of Israel to implement General Assembly resolution 194 (III) had only perpetuated. Until a just and lasting settlement was reached, enabling the Palestinian people to exercise its legitimate and inalienable rights, including the right to return, the right to self-determination and the right to establish an independent State in its own national territory, his delegation would support the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report S/19443 of 21 January 1988 concerning the need to protect the Palestinian people and the populations of the other occupied Arab territories and of Lebanon.

65. Mr. GORDON (Israel) said that in 1988, as in the past, his Government had continued to extend its co-operation and assistance to UNRWA. Since December 1987, the Palestine refugees in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza district had been living in an area affected by riots, in which they sometimes played a significant role. However, his delegation believed that that question should be considered under agenda item 77.

66. In view of the attempts made to re-write history, he pointed out that the refugee problem was a direct outcome of the aggressive war waged by the Palestinians under the leadership of the Arab countries against the reborn State of Israel. The decision of some Arab and Palestinian leaders to throw Israel into the sea had inflicted terrible suffering on the people of Israel and had caused thousands of deaths among its soldiers and civilian population. On the Arab side, the main victims of that policy had probably been the Palestine refugees. They had said in 1948 that they had left their country at the instigation of the Arab Governments, which had unanimously opposed the partition and had declared their intention of waging a holy war against Israel. The Arabs in Palestine had then unleashed a campaign of terror and assassination against the Jewish community with the aid of the neighbouring Arab States.

67. The then United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Trygve Lie had himself borne witness to that situation, as had the United Nations Palestine Commission in a report of February 1948 to the Security Council. After the Governments of the Arab State had launched their regular armies to attack the State of Israel, the President of the Security Council had asked Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen about the presence of their armed forces in Palestine. Those Governments had replied that they had sought to suppress the armed insurrection of the Zionist terrorist bands, that they had been forced to enter Palestine, that the League of Arab States had not wanted to negotiate with the Jews as long as they persisted in their efforts to establish a Jewish State in Palestine, that the proclamation of a Jewish State in Palestine had blocked the way to any understanding between Arabs and Jews regarding a solution to the problem and that the establishment by illegal methods of a Jewish State in the midst of the Arab peoples endangered the peace in all the Arab States. The representative of the Arab Higher Committee to the United Nations had stated that the Arabs regarded Palestine as one unit, over which they claimed authority.

68. While the Arab armies had sought to trample Israel underfoot, the Security Council had held debates on the question, in the course of which the representative of the Ukrainian SSR had stated that the situation created threatened peace and security in the Near and Middle East. On 21 May 1948, Mr. Gromyko had expressed his delegation's surprise at the sending by the Arab States of troops to suppress a national liberation movement, zionism. Mr. Gromyko had stressed that Israel had in no case invaded the territory of other States, except in self-defence in order to repel attackers.

69. It was therefore the Arab States which had themselves created the problem of the refugees and had prevented them from being integrated, relegating them to the lowest class in a caste system from which they were not allowed to extricate

(Mr. Gordon, Israel)

themselves. Since then, the refugees had been living in overcrowded camps as wards of international organizations, in bitterness and frustration, and were kept in misery by the Arab leaders who held Israel responsible for their situation. Those leaders displayed the misfortunes of their brothers, refused them all aid that was not in accordance with the conditions that they laid down and refused to negotiate with Israel, which they refused to recognize.

70. Nevertheless, the United Nations had proposed a number of projects and plans for resettling the refugees. In June 1959, Mr. Hammarskjöld had made a number of de facto proposals to facilitate the integration of hundreds of thousands of refugees in the region. That plan had stated that it was quite possible to enable the Palestine refugees to lead productive lives and that they should be considered as a reservoir of manpower, not as a liability. On 7 October 1959, the representatives of 10 Arab States to the United Nations had submitted a document rejecting those proposals and refusing all economic projects aimed directly or indirectly at settling the refugees in their territories. It had been clear from then on that the Arab leaders had not been concerned about the humanitarian aspect of the problem, and the Hammarskjöld proposals had been the last put forward by the United Nations.

71. Previously, in 1949, the Gordon Clapp mission had laid the bases for the establishment of UNRWA and proposed projects for the employment of 100,000 refugees and their families. Those projects would have resettled about two thirds of the Palestinian refugees and given them an independent economic existence. The idea of resettlement of the Palestinian refugees had received new impetus on 26 January 1952 when the General Assembly, in resolution 513 (VI) had allocated \$200 million for the integration of the refugees over a period of three years, without prejudice to their rights or claims. No Arab State had voted against that resolution. In 1952, the Director of UNRWA had returned to the Middle East and resumed negotiations on specific projects for which he had received generous pledges of support. It was only seven years later that the representatives of 10 Arab States had revealed that their apparently positive attitude had only been a cover-up and that they had always been firmly opposed to those projects.

72. At the beginning of the rebirth of Israel, when thousands of Jews had arrived from Arab countries, Israel had welcomed them and facilitated their integration. That did not mean that they had renounced their rights but Israel would never have had the idea of deferring their settlement pending the satisfaction of those rights. What the Arab States had not done for their brothers, Israel had done by welcoming and settling Arab refugees in neighbourhoods not far from the camps in which they had been living in the Gaza district. The first refugees to take advantage of that project in 1972 had been persecuted and sometimes murdered as traitors by the Palestinian terrorist organizations. Subsequently, as a result of the success of the project, an increasing number of refugees - at present 15,000 families - had applied to the Israeli authorities. The role of the Israeli authorities consisted in developing the sites, creating the necessary infrastructure for community services and providing land for public services. Each family received a plot of land and a long-term loan and then built its own house

(Mr. Gordon, Israel)

itself. It was not a project imposed on the refugees but a humanitarian service, limited by the amount of available resources. Without those financial restrictions, it was clear that there would be no lack of families desiring to make the transformation from refugees to that of a family owning its own house.

73. Another project in Judea and Samaria had been well received by the refugees from the Gaza Strip. A sum of \$2 billion would be necessary to resettle the 40,000 families living in the refugee camps in the Gaza district, Judea and Samaria. The Arab leaders, if they were really sincere, could find that amount which constituted but a small percentage of the annual income from oil or the annual expenditure for military purposes of the Arab countries at war with Israel. However, the Arab leaders were exploiting the suffering of the refugees in order to intensify the violence in the camps and shifting the blame on Israel. That use of suffering for political purposes had led the General Assembly, in several resolutions, to demand that Israel desist from resettlement of the refugees and take steps immediately for the return of the refugees to the camps.

74. In enlightened societies, all would agree that the ghettos should be opened up and their inhabitants given a chance to improve their living conditions. To prohibit the departure of the refugees from the camps would certainly not help to increase the prestige of the United Nations. If the Arab leaders wished to spare their huge financial resources, the other Members of the United Nations should at least refrain from calling on Israel to adopt the same attitude. Israel would continue to work for peace and to assist the refugee families; it was confident that other Governments would help it, directly or in co-operation with the United Nations.

75. Mr. Noworyta resumed the Chair.

76. Mr. GIACOMELLI (Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) said that on the first anniversary of the beginning of the Palestinian uprising and while the political situation gave rise to increased attention by the international community, the discussion was being held in a relatively calm and pragmatic atmosphere. Although his mission required him to give primary consideration to the immediate future, he hoped that the climate of goodwill now prevailing over the consideration of world problems would also be helpful in the question of the Near East. A number of representatives had congratulated the Office on the success it had had over 40 years, but he himself stressed the negative aspects of the current situation. UNRWA's task would be even more difficult in Lebanon, in the Gaza Strip and on the West Bank, and the occupation authorities had announced that the beginning of the school year would be postponed once again. He called on all Member States to support his efforts and to give him more funds. He assured them that he would take due account of all the advice and comments made during the debate.

77. Mr. ABOU-HADID (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of his right of reply, said that the campaign of lies orchestrated by Israel to embellish the true situation in the occupied territories had been defeated by the international media

(Mr. Abou-Hadid, Syrian Arab Republic)

which had covered the heroic uprising of the Palestinian people. The same was true of Israel's attempts to project the image of an oasis of democracy. The General Assembly had rightly equated zionism with racism, one of the objectives of that ideology being to evict the original population from the occupied territories in order to install there millions of Jewish immigrants who were in no way different from the foreign settlers who were practising a most abhorrent form of discrimination in South Africa. The fact that the new generation was stoning Israel like the adulteress in the Bible was evidence of the vanity of Israeli claims concerning the improvement of the situation of Palestinians in the occupied territories. Even if it was assumed that the Israeli claims were justified, nothing replaced the homeland. To judge from what Israel had done with the aid sent by Iraq to help the Palestinian refugees, the demolition of homes, the severe beatings and the firing of real bullets, it was easier to understand what the Israeli representative meant by improvement in the situation of the Palestinian refugees. The representative of Israel had been kind enough to mention Dag Hammarskjöld; he would perhaps be good enough to say who had killed Count Bernadotte. Israel claimed to have welcomed the Jews from Arab countries. It was pertinent to recall the pressure exerted by Israel on some African countries to force them to return to it their citizens of the Jewish faith, such as the Fallashas. Everyone knew in what social category they had been placed. Proof of that was to be found in their attempts to return to Africa. It was the very same children who benefited from Israeli generosity who were at the head of the uprising.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.