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SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
9th meeting
held on
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at 3 p.m.
New York

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 9th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. NEUGEBAUER (German Democratic Republic)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 55: UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (continued)

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER-GENERAL (continued) (A/32/13)
- (b) REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (continued) (A/32/278)
- (c) REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE (A/32/238)
- (d) REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/32/263; A/32/264 and Add.1 and Corr.1)

1. Mr. KAMEL (Observer, Palestine Liberation Organization) said that he had followed with interest the Commissioner-General's presentation of his report on the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, and the report itself, all the more so as the lives, health and education of a major part of the Palestinian people were concerned. In that connexion, he renewed the expressions of the deep gratitude of the Palestine Liberation Organization to the new Commissioner-General and his predecessor, and to all the Governments, organizations and persons who had participated in the Agency's work in such difficult circumstances. The Palestine Liberation Organization had always given its full co-operation to the Agency, as the Secretary-General had acknowledged in his report on Palestine refugees in the Gaza Strip (A/32/264) which stated that "As pointed out in paragraph 19 of last year's corresponding report of the Secretary-General, the activities of UNRWA in Lebanon have not been paralysed at any time during the conflict. Far from paralysing UNRWA activities, PLO has continued to assist the Lebanon Field Office in meeting specific operational needs" /para. 14 (d).

2. In paragraph 2 of the introduction to his report, the Commissioner-General recalled that the refugee problem "has dimensions which go far beyond the purely humanitarian" and he added that "the Agency is keenly aware of the essentially political nature of the problem ... and knows that the only solution is a just settlement in the Near East". The PLO unreservedly endorsed those observations. The refugee problem was inextricably linked with the problem of the Palestinian people, exposed as they had been to aggression by colonialism and world zionism, uprooted from their lands, stripped of their property, deprived of any means of existence and forced to live in deplorable and inhuman conditions. Moreover, the Zionist armed aggression had prevented the Palestinians from enjoying what all other peoples of the world enjoyed, the right of sovereignty, freedom and self-determination as established by the United Nations Charter. The Palestinian people had therefore been unable, as part of a peaceful development, to establish its own institutions and create an independent State on its native soil, under the leadership of the PLO, its legitimate representative. The international community represented by the United Nations had acknowledged in many resolutions that the problem was at the very heart of the Middle East question and that no

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(Mr. Kamel)

just and lasting peace would be possible without a solution, in other words, without the Palestinian people being able at last to exercise its legitimate and inalienable rights. As long as Israel persisted in depriving the Palestinian people of those rights, in flouting the Charter and violating United Nations resolutions while unremittingly pursuing policies of aggression and territorial annexation, and establishing colonies for repopulation and plunder, the Palestinian people would be condemned to heavy sacrifices and more suffering. But it would be none the less determined to continue the struggle until it recovered its rights and its native land.

3. The international community must not forget that it was not only the Middle East that was gravely threatened by Israel's expansionist and racist policies. The peace and security of the whole world were at risk. It was high time to say "No" to the neo-Nazis.

4. The refugee problem had originated even before the establishment of the State of Israel, with terrorist acts by Zionist gangs led by Begin, today the Prime Minister but yesterday guilty of the atrocity of Deir Yassin. That the birth of the Zionist State had been accompanied by the dispersal of the Palestinians and the destruction and seizure of their property was confirmed by a report by Dr. Shahak, President of the Israeli League of Human and Civil Rights, who had stated that of 475 Arab villages in Palestine, the Zionists had destroyed 385 so that it was not surprising that the Palestinians had become homeless refugees. Still Israel obstinately refused to implement the resolutions in which the United Nations called on it each year to recognize the right of the Palestinian people to return to their homes, and instead showed an aggressive and expansionist spirit which had been more pronounced since 1967 and which had as its ultimate object the total liquidation of the Palestinian people and the usurpation of its lands.

5. In paragraph 15 of the Commissioner-General's report it was stated that the Agency was "the instrument of an international community that has decided to provide services to Palestine refugees, presumably until the community removes them from the refugee category by arranging a general settlement in the Near East". Both in the statements of its leaders, particularly its Foreign Minister's recent statement in the General Assembly, and in practice, Israel continued to oppose any such settlement and it did therefore seem that unfortunately the Agency's services would continue to be required. However its financial situation was so unsound that it had to divert part of its activity to fund raising. Paragraph 11 of the Commissioner-General's report stated that "if additional contributions are not received for 1977, the Agency will have to reduce the deficit ... by ... temporary suspension of certain services and further deferment of ... capital ... improvements ... [which] ... would mean a continued decline in the quality of the Agency's education and health services, which are already at a minimum". At the same time, the Agency had been obliged "to plan ... to terminate the services of virtually all staff members" (para. 8). The tragedy which the refugees would suffer by being deprived of the Agency's services in the field of education, affecting about 330,000 young people, and health, covering nearly 1.5 million refugees, would therefore be compounded by the dismissal of some 16,000 locally recruited

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(Mr. Kamel)

officials, the majority of whom, particularly the 10,700 teachers, were themselves refugees. The PLO considered that the best way of dealing with the perpetual deficit would be to include the UNRWA budget as part of the regular budget of the United Nations.

6. He reserved the right to go more fully into the question of Israeli racist practices in occupied territories during the consideration of agenda item 57 and would confine himself for the present to mentioning certain facts referred to in the report, though they represented but an infinitesimal part of the crimes perpetrated against the Palestinian people. Paragraph 80 of the report, for example, referred to the destruction of Nabatieh camp during an Israeli air raid in 1974; paragraph 86 referred to the demolition by the Israeli occupying authorities in 1971 of the shelters of over 2,000 families, who were at present housed in "accommodation ranging from substandard shanties to housing purchased in government housing projects" although, "no families have been provided with free housing"; on the contrary, "138 families are recorded on the hardship list and 422 families are recorded as living in unsatisfactory housing". Paragraph 152 of the report described incidents arising from disturbances involving trainees in two training centres in western Jordan, which had called forth strong protests by the Agency to the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. At Ramallah some trainees had been beaten, some of them inside the centre, and had received severe injuries including fractures and shock. Tear gas bombs had been exploded in the dormitories and Israeli authorities had entered United Nations premises and taken "indiscriminate action both in and outside the centres".

7. Moreover, the health conditions of the Palestine refugees under Israeli occupation gave cause for concern. The World Health Assembly on 18 May 1977 had adopted resolution 30.37, quoted in annex III of the Commissioner-General's report, in which the World Health Assembly expressed its deep concern at the "continuation in the occupied Arab territories of Israeli practices such as ... the eviction and deportation of Arab populations and the resettlement in their homes of non-Arab inhabitants; the destruction and demolition of Arab houses and the confiscation and expropriation of Arab lands and properties; detention and ill-treatment of persons, resulting in numerous deaths". The World Health Assembly had denounced "the procrastination and obstinacy of the Israeli occupying authorities and their obstruction of the mission of the Special Committee of Experts" set up to study the health conditions of the inhabitants of the occupied territories in the Middle East, who had been refused permission to visit the occupied Arab territories.

8. In conclusion he repeated that the Palestinian refugee problem was only one aspect of the problem of the Palestinian people as a whole. The problem could not be equitably solved until the Palestinian people could exercise their legitimate and inalienable rights to regain possession of their homes, sovereignty and freedom, and their right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent State on their national territory. Israeli expansionism was the main obstacle blocking the road to a just and lasting peace in the Middle East and until such peace had been established the international community would have to discharge its responsibilities for the Palestinian refugees. Its duty was to join

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in the battle alongside all the forces of peace, justice and legality until the final defeat of the forces of aggression, expansionism and racism.

AGENDA ITEM 129: SAFETY OF INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION (continued)

9. Mr. ALARCON de QUESADA (Cuba) made an official protest regarding the way in which the Office of Public Information had presented the discussion at the Committee's 7th meeting in the press release dated 26 October 1977 (GA/AH/1403).

10. The press release quoted the Cuban representative as saying, referring to an attack on a Cuban aircraft on 7 October 1976, that the aircraft had been "stolen in mid-flight" and "completely destroyed" and that 55 persons had been killed in that attack. Although the journalists, cameramen and photographers who had been at the Committee's 7th meeting were no longer on hand, he would repeat that the aircraft had exploded in mid-flight and that 73 persons (57 Cubans, 11 Guyanese and 5 Koreans) had been killed in the attack, and not 55. The press release also stated that that act of terrorism had been denounced by the Cuban delegation and "some other States" but it nowhere pointed out that the deed had been condemned by two heads of State, the Prime Minister of Barbados and the President of Venezuela.

11. It was most regrettable that the staff of the Office of Public Information, paid from the United Nations budget with the contributions of Member States, should be so incompetent and should show less respect to the Heads of sovereign Member States of the Organization than to persons such as those whom the Committee had agreed to hear at its 7th meeting; in that, they had reflected the attitude of the press in the developed capitalist countries.

12. He added that it was all the more difficult to gain an accurate idea of what he had said, as his statement was not in the summary record issued by the Secretariat. In conclusion, he regretted that at its 7th meeting the Committee had had to put up with the stage effects which had surrounded the consideration of agenda item 129.

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13. The CHAIRMAN said that the attention of the United Nations Office of Public Information would be drawn to the Cuban representative's remarks. He proposed to close the list of speakers on agenda item 55 at the end of the Committee's morning meeting on Monday, 31 October.

14. It was so decided.

15. The CHAIRMAN reminded Members that at its 11th meeting the Committee would consider the organization of its work in relation to its consideration of agenda item 129.

The meeting rose at 3.55 p.m.