

**UNITED**



**NATIONS**

# **ASSISTANCE TO PALESTINE REFUGEES**

**Special report of the  
Director and Advisory Commission of the United  
Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine  
Refugees in the Near East**

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**OFFICIAL RECORDS : SIXTH SESSION**

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## LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

LETTER DATED 29 NOVEMBER 1951 FROM THE DIRECTOR OF THE UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST AND THE CHAIRMAN OF THE ADVISORY COMMISSION OF THE AGENCY, ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Paris, 29 November 1951

We have the honour to submit for the consideration of the General Assembly a special report on assistance to Palestine refugees.

The General Assembly recently has received the Director's report on the operations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for the period ending 30 June 1951.<sup>1</sup>

This special report, jointly prepared by the Director and the Advisory Commission of the Agency, faces forward and proposes major measures for the improvement of refugee living conditions.

(Signed) J. TARBÉ DE ST. HARDOUIN  
*Chairman*

(Signed) John B. BLANDFORD, Jr.  
*Director*

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<sup>1</sup> A/1905 (See *Official Records of the General Assembly Sixth Session, Supplement No. 16*).

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## NOTE

Symbols of United Nations documents are composed of capital letters combined with figures. Mention of such a symbol indicates a reference to a United Nations document.

## **ASSISTANCE TO PALESTINE REFUGEES**

### **Special report of the Director and Advisory Commission of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The Director has submitted to the General Assembly a report on the operations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East for the period 1 May 1950 to 30 June 1951.

The Director and the Advisory Commission now join in a special report with recommendations for the consideration of the General Assembly. This report is based upon a review of the full operating experience of the Agency and upon extensive consultations with the governments of the area.

Last year in response to a similar joint report with recommendations, the General Assembly, with the governments of all Near East Members concurring, gave the Agency the following instructions :

Direct relief was to be continued to refugees in need in an amount of approximately \$20 million for the fiscal year ending 30 June 1952.

A reintegration fund was to be established and contributions of not less than \$30 million were proposed.

The Secretary-General and the specialized agencies were urged to use the Agency's facilities as a point of reference and co-ordination for technical assistance programmes in the area.

The Director and the Advisory Commission offer the following summary comment on these three assignments :

1. Relief has been channelled to refugees who have lost their homes and who are in need. Initially, ration lists were substantially reduced by elimination of irregular registrations and by withdrawal of assistance to refugees who had become self-supporting. Over this same period the pressure upon the Agency to provide relief has steadily increased as refugee personal resources have been exhausted. A point has been reached when further sizeable reductions in the relief rolls cannot be made except as refugees are helped to become self-supporting, principally in new locations. Costs of relief supplies have increased more than 25 per cent. Relief expenditures are presently at the rate of \$27 million annually.

2. Reintegration opportunities have been persistently explored. In Jordan, valuable experience has been

gained on a variety of projects. In Egypt, there has been full co-operation on an exploratory project in the Sinai. If water is found perhaps as many as 50,000 refugees may find decent homes and self-support. Elsewhere in the Near East governments, public opinion and refugees have hesitated because of concern as to the political implications of reintegration. Recent consultations with these governments, however, have provided the outline of a new formula of co-operation and constructive action.

3. Technical assistance is an important element in Agency operations. It will become more important as the programme of economic assistance to refugees expands and as the Agency moves out of operations into a role of financial and advising assistance to governments. This should require close integration with the technical assistance activities of the United Nations and its specialized agencies. The Technical Assistance Division of the Agency is now reporting on activities in the area. An effective working relationship with the United Nations Technical Assistance Board and also with the Technical Assistance Administration of the United Nations is being developed. Cordial relations also exist with the specialized agencies and extended working relationships are being sought. Close liaison is maintained with the bilateral programmes of technical assistance in the area.

As to the future, the Director and the Advisory Commission feel there is urgent need for a comprehensive and conclusive proposal. They are fully cognizant that the General Assembly instructed the Agency "to consult with the interested Near Eastern governments concerning measures to be taken by them preparatory to the time when international assistance for relief and works projects is no longer available". A special effort must be made to agree upon a formula which will promise the refugee an end to camp life and ration lines ; promise the governments a termination of social and economic dislocation ; and promise contributors a definite time when large relief expenditures will stop.

This is the central conclusion and purpose of the following findings and recommendations.

#### **I. FINDINGS**

1. There must be a firm goal of terminating relief operations. Sustained relief operations inevitably contain the germ of human deterioration. The personal resources of refugees are becoming exhausted as well as their opportunities for employment. Cost of

relief supplies has sharply increased. Voluntary contributions for relief are becoming increasingly difficult to obtain.

2. There is now considerable agreement among governments that refugees cannot continue indefinitely

in their present conditions. Recent conferences with governments have helped to identify a political and economic framework within which new measures may be carried out.

3. The Agency has acquired knowledge as to opportunities and approaches which can provide the basis for a new programme and its execution.

4. The new programme must be squarely one of economic co-operation which does not intrude into existing political issues between the Arab States and Israel or between refugees and Israel. Specifically, the refugee interests in repatriation and compensation must not be prejudiced by any Agency programme.

5. Near East governments and others should help refugees to understand that the new programme is designed to give them homes and jobs without political entanglement, self-support and respect with full freedom of personal choice.

6. The new programme should be wide in scope and flexible in operations so that it may be adapted to widely different refugee needs and great variations in economic opportunity.

7. The refugees should be helped to find employment, be offered training, or have the use of facilities which will make them self-supporting. Refugees, citizens of the countries, and governments of the area should be fully convinced that refugees and projects constitute economic assets.

8. Governments should be encouraged to grant to refugees adequate rights of citizenship and work within individual countries and to facilitate their freedom of movement among countries.

9. Governments, fully reassured as to political and economic implications, should whole-heartedly co-operate, assume responsibilities and completely identify themselves with programme.

10. The Agency, as rapidly as feasible, should move out of operations into a role of financial and technical assistance to sovereign governments.

11. The Agency should have the facilities and as requested should co-operate with local governments in the co-ordination of the programme of economic assistance for refugees with the larger programme of general economic development.

12. The Agency should not be given assignments involving it with negotiations of issues pending between Arab States and Israel.

13. The Agency, the United Nations Headquarters and the specialized agencies should be urged and encouraged by the General Assembly to arrange for maximum teamwork in the interest of their respective programmes in the field of technical assistance and economic development.

14. In summary, there is urgent necessity that contributing governments and Near East governments, through the medium of the United Nations, agree on a fresh approach and express an intent to follow it to a conclusion. Adequate contributions should be matched by convincing opportunities to spend them. Firm and generous financing needs a counterpart of specific projects and effective co-operation. Otherwise, there can be no progress on improving refugee living conditions.

## II. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *The General Assembly is requested to endorse and urge contributions for a 250 million dollar programme of assistance to Near East governments for the relief and reintegration of Palestine refugees to be carried out over a period of approximately three years starting 1 July 1951, composed of \$50 million for relief and \$200 million for reintegration, with local governments assuming the maximum possible administrative responsibility at the earliest possible date. Every effort should be made by the Agency and the governments to arrange for the transfer of relief administration to the governments not later than July 1952. Further, it is intended that relief expenditures be reduced in suitable proportion to reintegration expenditures with both ceasing at the end of the period.*

An outline of such a three-year programme as referred to above is given in an annex to the present report. Under the programme, Near East governments would recommend to the Agency allocation of funds over the three-year period as among countries and as to types of projects. Governments would also recommend specific projects, contribute in so far as possible land and services. Governments would co-ordinate the

refugee reintegration programme with their respective programmes for general economic development.

The Agency would make available funds, contractual services, technical assistance and contributions in kind to governments and other instrumentalities approved by governments for the refugee programme. The Agency would also continue to be available for the facilitation of United Nations and bilateral technical assistance programmes designed to assist general economic development.

2. *The amount of \$20 million provided in the resolution of December 1950 should be increased to \$27 million for direct relief for the fiscal year ending 30 June 1952.*

The figure of \$27 million is exclusive of the direct aid and services of local governments, which are indispensable to the Agency in keeping within this limit.

There has been no increase in the number of ration recipients nor in the level of relief. There have been world-wide price rises which have increased the Agency's food bill by more than 25 per cent over the estimate of a year ago. The present level of relief is at the annual rate of \$27 million. Through strict mea-

tures an attempt will be made to hold relief expenditures below the \$27 million figure.

3. *Consequent upon the first recommendation, the amount of \$30 million provided in the resolution of December 1950 should be increased to not less than \$50 million for the reintegration fund for expenditure and commitment during the fiscal year ending 30 June 1952.*

On the promise that the present session of the General Assembly will show convincing agreement among all Members of the United Nations concerned with the refugee problem to move rapidly ahead on constructive measures, the Agency should be in a position to programme, review projects, make allotments, organize and staff in such a setting; and on such a scale.

4. *The General Assembly is requested to approve a budget of \$118 million for the fiscal year 1 July 1952 to 30 June 1953, composed of \$18 million for relief expenditures and \$100 million for expenditures from the reintegration fund.*

Approval now of a budget of \$118 million for the fiscal year 1 July 1952 to 30 June 1953 by the General Assembly will provide a firm basis for co-operation by Near East governments and for contributions by the governments of other Members of the United Nations. On this setting, the Agency can confidently make detailed plans, negotiate agreements and start projects.

5. *The Agency and the specialized agencies, the Technical Assistance Board, the Technical Assistance Administration and other United Nations Headquarters activities should be requested to negotiate arrangements whereby the basic relief and reintegration programme of the Agency is strengthened and supplemented and, further, that the total assistance of the United Nations to the governments of the Near East in connexion with general economic development be made with a maximum of co-ordination and efficiency.*

Presently, large co-operation exists among United Nations agencies in the area; the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Agency have close working relationships. Each of these agencies importantly contribute financial and technical assistance to the UNRWAPRNE programme. Discussions are underway whereby UNRWAPRNE might directly serve TAA in the area. There is informal exchange of technical assistance information among all agencies, and a reporting service is provided by

UNRWAPRNE. Further, there is a co-operative programme of economic research between the United Nations Secretariat and UNRWAPRNE. Also relevant is a co-operative relationship which exists in the field of bilateral technical assistance because of the association of the United States and French members of the Advisory Commission of UNRWAPRNE with the technical assistance activities of their respective governments. The Agency is also in close touch with the British Middle East Office. It is hoped, with the encouragement of the General Assembly, to strengthen all these relationships.

The fundamental purpose of all such co-operative efforts is to eliminate confusion, simplify relationships and generally promote and facilitate co-ordination of technical assistance by local governments.

6. *The General Assembly is requested to authorize temporary advances to the Agency from the United Nations Working Capital Fund when justifiable need exists.*

Since the Agency is financed by contributions from the governments of Member States which in turn must appeal to their legislative bodies for the necessary annual appropriations, the flow of funds for the support of the Agency's work is subject to frequent delays. In such instances the Agency has in the past been obliged to borrow from the Working Capital Fund and it is therefore necessary to request an extension of this facility for the future.

7. *The General Assembly is requested to express its thanks and those of the Agency to the numerous religious, charitable and humanitarian organizations whose programmes have afforded valuable supplementary assistance to Palestine refugees, and again to call upon them to continue and expand to the extent possible, the work which they have undertaken on behalf of the refugees.*

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The above recommendations are herewith submitted by the Advisory Commission and the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. In joining with the Director in these recommendations, the members of the Advisory Commission point out that the present report expresses the unanimous views of the Commission, which are submitted for the consideration of the General Assembly. Implementation of the above recommendations will require the support and the co-operation of the governments participating in the programme.

*The Advisory Commission*

(Signed) J. TARBE DE ST. HARDOUIN (France)  
Chairman

(Signed) Refet BELE (Turkey)

(Signed) H. F. KNIGHT (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)

(Signed) R. B. MACATEE (United States of America)

*Director*

(Signed) John B. BLANDFORD, Jr.  
*Director*

Paris, 28 November 1951.

## ANNEXES

### A. Elements of a three-year programme of economic co-operation for improving refugee living conditions

#### OUTLINE

##### *Political premise*

The refugees will be re-established principally in Near East countries.

Ultimate political possibilities in terms of countries of re-establishment are not yet known or predictable.

But a start may safely be made in preparing needy refugees and providing facilities.

Facilities may be utilized on a temporary basis.

All services and facilities are to be offered without prejudice as to rights to repatriation or compensation.

##### *General objectives*

To help refugees obtain adequate housing and employment.

Refugees will move from camps and temporary shelter to suburban housing projects and rural villages.

They will move from ration lines to self-supporting employment.

The general intention is to make refugees economic assets of Near East countries.

##### *Specific programmes*

The Near East governments and the Agency will co-operate in the following activities :

(a) Helping refugees find employment where their services are needed and which does not conflict with employment needs of nationals ;

(b) Training refugees for service in fields where there is a shortage of trained personnel ;

(c) Making loans to refugees to establish them in gainful enterprises ;

(d) Building houses in and near cities, villages or industries where jobs may be available ;

(e) Creating rural villages in areas where land is available for cultivation ;

(f) Developing agricultural lands through well-drilling, irrigation works, access roads and similar small works.

##### *General procedures*

Governments will propose or authorize projects.

Governments will contribute principally in the form of public lands and services.

Governments will have planning or development boards to approve projects.

Governments, through ministries or construction authorities, will be encouraged to assume maximum responsibility for construction.

Governments through local authorities, or refugees through local co-operatives, will be expected to operate projects and programmes of assistance to refugees.

Governments will be expected to take necessary measures for refugees to work and to move from one country to another.

The Agency will have experts and services to assist governments and refugees in the performance of these activities.

##### *Financial procedures*

The Agency, after approval of projects, will finance projects through direct expenditures or grants to governments or other authorities.

As expenditures are made on the programme and as refugees are sheltered and employed, appropriate reduction will be made in relief expenditures.

##### *Project procedures*

Occupation of houses, lands and other facilities will be offered on a temporary basis for a small rental.

If a refugee chooses to acquire ownership, special arrangements may be made.

Payments by refugees in connexion with project facilities or loans can be accumulated in a special fund for loans to refugees or investment in new project facilities.

##### *General economic development*

It is assumed that the three-year programme of homes and jobs for refugees will be paralleled by large-scale development programmes of benefit to citizens of the countries. Governments, therefore, will need to examine refugee projects within the framework of their national development plans.

In so far as governments wish, the Agency will be prepared, through its facilities for technical assistance and economic research, to facilitate this co-ordination of programmes.



## B. Programme budget

The Agency has acquired over the last year a knowledge of refugee needs and of economic potential of the area. From this material it is possible to sketch out an appropriate programme and estimate reasonable total costs.

The estimates of \$50 million for relief and \$200 million for reintegration over a three-year period have therefore a foundation of fact and experience. These facts include the number of refugees, their background of skills, the costs of different types of services, training, construction and development. The Agency also has information on economic opportunity in the various countries. From such facts it is possible to sketch out the dimensions of an adequate programme and estimate its probable cost. The breakdown of the broad programme and the global figures among countries and into projects must come from sovereign governments. Furthermore, there must be a large measure of inter-governmental co-operation in such a progress. This next step of programming can be taken quickly once general agreement is reached. Given assurances as to financing, it is reasonable to assume that projects will be forthcoming and justification for allotments will be prepared.

Meanwhile, some elements underlying a financial plan are presented.

### *Refugee characteristics*

The present number of refugees being assisted by the Agency, and their distribution among Near East countries is as follows:

Syria .....	83,000
Lebanon .....	107,000
Jordan .....	467,000
Egypt (Gaza) .....	200,000
Israel .....	21,000

TOTAL 878,000

There are not yet available firm figures as to the number of refugee families. However, it is a safe assumption that a programme designed to help 150,000 families to become self-supporting will meet the need.

These families are clearly mal-distributed as among the countries from the viewpoint of economic opportunity and a chance for homes and jobs which will make them self-supporting. There is, however, absorptive capacity in the area. The refugee needs freedom of movement and access to investment capital.

With expected capital imports and known large plans of economic development the absorptive capacity

of some of the countries undoubtedly will rise much faster than the normal increase in local population during the next decade. On reasonable expectations of foreign loans and grants within the area during the next few years, it is clear that there will be room for immigration in several countries concurrently with a rising local standard of living.

The age distribution of the refugee population is favourable to work but the large age group 0-15 will require governmental programmes of education and health. The occupational distribution of the population is not known with certainty. It is estimated that approximately 50,000 families were formerly in non-farming occupations. Many more than this number were estimated in 1944 to have been employed in non-agricultural occupations in Mandatory Palestine, largely owing to war conditions. It is entirely possible that more than 50,000 could be fitted in non-agricultural occupations given the requisite training facilities. In an expanding economy the availability of such skills should be considered an economic asset for Near East countries. This consideration explains the emphasis given to training in the categories of assistance proposed and in the illustrative financial plan which follows.

### *Typical costs*

The Agency has acquired experience as to the cost of helping a family to become self-supporting. Refinement of these figures awaits wider application of the various features of the programme. The following should serve as present guides:

	Dollars (US)
Placement in a job .....	50
Training for such positions as motor mechanic, laboratory technician, teacher, etc. ....	100- 350
Establishment in gainful industrial and agricultural enterprises .....	150-2,500
Construction of housing units, both urban and rural .....	550-2,000
Development of agricultural schemes on rain-fed land or land partly rain-fed and partly irrigated .....	850-1,500
Development of agricultural schemes on mainly irrigated land .....	2,000-3,500

### *Illustrative financial plan*

Bearing in mind the characteristics of the refugee population and the absorptive capacity of countries which may reasonably be expected to offer opportunities, the following three-year programme covering a total expenditure on reintegration of \$200 million is considered adequate:

### REINTEGRATION PROGRAMME

(In millions of dollars US)

	1951/2		1952/3		1953/4		Total	
	Commitments	Expenditures	Commitments	Expenditures	Commitments	Expenditures	Commitments	Expenditures
Placement, training and enterprises ..	5	5	10	10	5	5	20	20
Urban housing .....	5	5	5	5	—	—	10	10
Agricultural projects rain-fed lands or partly rain-fed and irrigated .....	15	10	35	30	20	30	70	70
Agricultural projects mainly irrigated.	25	5	50	20	25	75	100	100
TOTAL	50	25	100	65	50	110	200	200

Broadly speaking, the first category of placement, training and enterprises is expected to provide self-support for some 50,000 families—one-third of the total number. Since most of this group may expect to find employment in urban areas where housing is already congested, an "urban housing" programme providing for houses averaging in cost \$1,000 for some 10,000 families is included.

The second group of 50,000 families would be taken care of in various agricultural developments, partly irrigated, partly rain-fed, and the final group of 50,000 families in mainly irrigated agricultural developments. The last two groups would include a proportion of families in non-farming occupations, who would furnish the craftsmen, shopkeepers and others needed in rural areas.

It would not be possible to spend at a uniform rate throughout the three-year period. In the early years commitments or earmarking of funds for specific projects would undoubtedly exceed expenditures in a manner similar to that shown in the table above.

#### *Relief expenditures*

Assuming reintegration expenditures as above, total relief expenditure might be distributed as follows under a ceiling of \$50 million :

	1951/2	1952/3	1953/4	Total
Relief totals in millions of dollars (US) .....	27	18	5	50

As expenditure on reintegration increases, expenditure on relief would be expected to diminish, but there might be a lag due to the fact that full self-support might not result immediately upon completion of the project. It would be desirable to relate reintegration expenditure to reductions of the relief roll by some simple formula, making appropriate allowance for the varying conditions in different countries.

It should also be noted that administrative expenditures of approximately \$3 million a year are assumed to be distributed over the above figures for reintegration and relief.

#### SUMMARY OF FINANCIAL PLAN, RELIEF AND EXPENDITURES AND REINTEGRATION COMMITMENTS

(In millions of dollars US)

	1951/2	1952/3	1953/4	Total
Relief expenditures ....	27	18	5	50
Reintegration commitments .....	50	100	50	200
TOTAL	77	118	55	250