



Thursday, 28 November 1957,
at 10.40 a. m.

NEW YORK

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Agenda item 26:	
Report of the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (continued)	139
Organization of work	142

Chairman: Mr. Emilio ARENALES CATALAN
(Guatemala).

AGENDA ITEM 26

Report of the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (A/3686 and Corr.1, A/3735, A/SPC/20/Rev.1, A/SPC/21) (continued)

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Tannous, Director of the Palestine Arab Refugee Office, took a seat at the Committee table.

1. Mr. TANNOUS (Palestine Arab Refugee Office) thanked the Special Political Committee for allowing him to speak. He congratulated the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) on the devotion with which they were carrying out their duties. The Director of UNRWA, who had been in close contact with the refugees for three years, was in a position to know their feelings and their aspirations, and his statements were accordingly of the greatest importance.
2. The announcement that the Agency's programmes would have to be curtailed for lack of funds was grievous news for the refugees. The cutbacks would be felt most, perhaps, in the field of education. It would be a sin to close the schools which gave the young refugees an opportunity of playing a useful part in society, just as it was no less a sin to have left an entire people homeless for more than ten years, a prey to hunger and ignorance. The situation caused by the lack of funds might have the most serious political repercussions.
3. Every year, the Director repeated that the Agency could not be expected to make any real progress unless the refugees were given a choice between repatriation and compensation, or unless there was some political settlement between the parties. As early as 1951, President Truman had realized the threat which the refugee problem represented from the point of view of world peace. Many statesmen and writers and other leading figures had also stressed that aspect of the question. Nevertheless, no political settlement was in sight.
4. The Arab peoples, weary of the old sterile policies, longed for a solution of their problems. They did not

understand how the Western Powers to which Israel owed its existence could continue to assist that country and yet be incapable of compelling it to alter its position. The lack of statesmanship and courage on the part of the Western Powers, and of the United States in particular, placed the Arab peoples, humiliated and disappointed as they were, in a difficult position between East and West; the resultant tug-of-war between the two greatest Powers in history might end in a world-wide calamity which would mean the end of civilization.

5. The Middle East had become a powder keg that might at any moment explode. The aid which the Agency furnished the refugees was the easiest way to stave off, though not to prevent, an explosion. Arab refugees did not want to live on the charity of others; they had no choice but to do so. But, until they were allowed to resume possession of their property, it was the duty of all nations to contribute to the Agency's activities not only for humanitarian purposes but in the interests of peace.

6. Assistance to refugees was a palliative, not a cure. Man did not live by bread alone. It was not enough to diagnose illness and anaesthetize the patient; an operation must be performed to prevent death. The Holy Land had been a sick country since 1917. By cutting it in two the United Nations had mutilated it, and the wound had remained unhealed for ten years.

7. The Director of UNRWA had suggested a remedy—to permit refugees to return to their countries. That solution had already been recommended by Count Bernadotte, who had said in 1948 that it would be an offence against the principles of elemental justice if the innocent victims of the conflict were denied the right to return to their homes^{1/}. The General Assembly itself had stated in resolution 194 (III) "that the refugees wishing to return to their homes ... should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return". The Assembly had reaffirmed that position on many occasions, but had never been able to ensure that that resolution or of any of its resolutions on compensation, boundaries and the internationalization of Jerusalem, was carried out. In the circumstances it would be only fair to regard all resolutions on Palestine, especially that which had established the State of Israel, as null and void.

8. There were three main reasons which explained the refusal of Israel to carry out the resolutions of the United Nations. First, those resolutions were contrary to the Zionist programme of making Palestine an exclusively Jewish country; the Arabs expelled from Palestine had to live in the host countries or die

^{1/}See Official Records of the General Assembly, Third Session, Supplement No. 11, chap. V, para. 6.

in the desert. Those who had been able to remain in Israel were considered "gentiles" and treated as such. The Government and Parliament of Israel persisted in a humiliating policy of discrimination against those Arabs, making foreigners out of them instead of winning their respect and securing their loyalty. All administrative and legislative measures were deliberately designed to expel the Arabs from their native land. One of the provisions of the Act of 1953 on the acquisition of land allowed the Jews to expropriate, at little cost and allegedly for reasons of "public utility", the land of Arabs established in Israel. In order to put the finishing touches to that operation, the Israel Parliament was now considering a new draft law the iniquity of which had given rise to protests from the Arabs of Israel and even from some Jews.

9. Moreover, not content with opposing the repatriation of the refugees, the Israel Government was contemplating territorial expansion, the limits of which would depend on the armed forces at Israel's disposal. The Sinai peninsula and the two banks of the Jordan had frequently been claimed as parts of Israel; even the area from the Nile to the Euphrates was coveted by the Zionists. It had to be borne in mind that Mr. Ben-Gurion had stated that Israel would have to admit a further 2 million immigrants in order to ensure its security. A programme based on such principles could certainly make no provision for the repatriation of the refugees or for the protection of their property.

10. In disregard of General Assembly resolution 181 (II), granting international status to Jerusalem, and in disregard of Trusteeship Council resolution 232 (VI), establishing the status of Jerusalem, Israel had made that city its capital.

11. The second reason for the intransigence of Israel was the unusual support that country had found in the United States, especially in Zionist circles. The United States had played an important part in the creation of Israel, and without its continued aid Israel would collapse. The United States was therefore the only country which could compel Israel to comply with the United Nations resolutions.

12. The Arabs were by no means opposed to a country receiving foreign aid but, in the case of Israel, that aid was detrimental to Arab interests and it was not inspired by humanitarian motives alone. There was no doubt that party politics had guided United States foreign policy in that matter. Notwithstanding the warning given by the newspaper New York World-Telegram and The Sun, on 4 November 1955, the United States Government had continued to furnish aid, thereby encouraging Israel to pursue its aggressive policy. The key to the whole situation, which could only be remedied by just and equitable means, was therefore in the hands of the United States.

13. Finally, there was a third reason—the attitude of Israel. By its inaction, the United Nations itself had reinforced Israel's determination not to yield. The United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine, established by the General Assembly eight years previously (resolution 194 (III)), had shown itself to be ineffective, though it had persuaded Israel to sign the 1949 Lausanne Protocol. Subsequently it had been revealed that Israel had only done so to facilitate its admission to the United Nations, and once admitted to

the Organization Israel had repudiated its commitments. Ever since, the Conciliation Commission, which had been entrusted to look after the interests of the refugees, had remained deaf to their demands.

14. It was sad to observe some Members of the United Nations, because of misinformation or prejudice, supporting Israel's ambitions at the expense of the rights of the refugees. Those who argued that the return of the refugees was impossible because it would not be practicable, were sacrificing justice to politics; such an attitude was full of danger because any sovereign country could create conditions so that it would be impossible to exercise justice, and if that situation became general the world would be plunged into anarchy. If, on the other hand, it was argued that repatriation would jeopardize the existence of Israel, it should be recognized that Israel constituted a danger for the Arab States.

15. The statement of the Israel representative (70th meeting), which distorted the truth and treacherously branded the Arabs as the aggressors, showed that a solution was still far off. There was no hope of peace until Israel renounced its plans of aggression. Judging by the statement of the representative of Israel, it seemed that the gap separating Arabs and Jews had widened.

16. A piecemeal solution would however be possible if the United Nations would take effective measures. The Greek representative had rightly asked (69th meeting), if it were true that the refugees had to be helped and if it were true that they had considerable property in Palestine, why the income from those properties was not used for their maintenance. That question was all the more to the point since the United States representative had stated (70th meeting) that because the pledges of funds were not sufficient, the Committee would not be able to recommend that the General Assembly should approve the Agency's budget for 1958. It was therefore even less possible to increase that budget and allow the refugees to live under decent conditions. Perhaps the refugees would not have enough to eat next year, or enough clothing to wear, or shelter over their heads, but nothing would shake their determination to return to their homes.

17. The CHAIRMAN said that Mr. Tannous should have limited himself to discussing the fate of the refugees without discussing political questions at length and without being discourteous towards some members of the Committee. He had hesitated to interrupt because of the practice followed in the past when statements of that kind had been made and because none of the countries directly concerned had raised a point of order. Nevertheless, he regretted the words spoken by Mr. Tannous.

18. Mr. RODRIGUEZ FABREGAT (Uruguay) thought that all parties concerned had the right to speak before the Committee if they wished. Mr. Tannous had been especially worried by the announced reductions for education, and had also dealt in detail with serious political questions. He reserved the right to present the views of his delegation at length at the following meeting.

19. The CHAIRMAN assured the Uruguayan representative that, like any member of the Committee, he would have an opportunity to comment on Mr. Tannous' statement. Though the general debate was closed,

he said that if the Committee had no objection, and without thereby constituting a precedent, he intended to call on several members of the Committee who had not been able to make their statements before the closing of the general debate and had therefore lost their turn to speak.

20. Mr. KURA (Turkey) thanked the Chairman for permitting him to speak late. The Turkish delegation thanked the Director of UNRWA for having presented the different aspects of the refugee situation and the current state of affairs in lucid terms. During the debate, several delegations had stressed the political aspects, while others had stressed the humanitarian and financial features of the matter. The Turkish delegation, for its part, thought that humanitarian and financial considerations should come before all others. All the factors involved, however, should be taken into account in seeking a solution of the matter.

21. There was no point in stressing that the difficult question of the Palestinian Arab refugees at the present time were a source of concern to the countries of the Middle East and disturbed the atmosphere of peace that those countries greatly needed. Turkey was in the first rank of those concerned with peace in the Middle East and thought that no effort should be spared in seeking a solution. It was the task of the United Nations to bring the parties to the dispute together and to try to reconcile their views, so that the measures adopted for the refugees could be applied as soon as possible and the refugees would thus be enabled to enjoy all their recognized rights. It was distressing to think that, after so many years, almost 1 million human beings continued to live in deplorable circumstances.

22. Before making some brief observations on the annual report of the Director of UNRWA (A/3686 and Corr.1), the Turkish delegation wished to pay a tribute to the Agency for the services it furnished to the refugees. In his annual report the Director had pointed out that the financial resources of the Agency were insufficient to meet the needs of the refugees and that if the situation did not improve the Agency would have to decrease rather than increase its services to the refugees. As to the rehabilitation of the refugees, it was clear that the situation was most urgent; the only hope was that all Member States would respond to the appeal addressed to them by the Director of UNRWA. The plan for 1958 proposed by the Director was a minimum that could not be reduced but should, on the contrary, be expanded. With respect to the finances, a tribute had to be paid to the countries which were generously contributing to the Agency's budget, and particularly to the United States, whose example should inspire the Member States who, for one reason or another, had not yet paid any contribution. Turkey itself had continued to support the Agency and had regularly contributed the modest amount permitted by its limited financial resources, and it would continue to furnish such support. The Turkish delegation reserved the right to speak again when the Committee dealt with draft resolutions on the question.

23. Mr. AZKOUL (Lebanon) thanked the Chairman for giving him an opportunity, although the general discussion was closed, to present a few brief observations on the question of Arab refugees from Palestine. There was no necessity to go into details for, as the representative of Saudi Arabia had remarked (66th meeting), everything had already been said. Neverthe-

less, some delegations still displayed surprising ignorance about the matter, and gave it the merest superficial consideration. Accordingly, the Lebanese delegation thought it necessary to recall certain facts.

24. First of all, it must be noted that international charity, in the form of voluntary contributions, had not given the anticipated results and the Arab refugees continued to live in wretched conditions. When confronted with that situation, some delegations had pressed for the permanent solution which seemed to them the simplest and quickest; the resettlement of the refugees in their host country. The sincerity of those delegations was of course beyond question; however, he could not but observe that their attitude was based upon a complete misunderstanding of the facts, and the solution they advocated bore in it the seed of serious dangers.

25. The representative of Israel had in fact stated that, if the Arab refugees returned to Israel, it was very unlikely that it would be possible for them to live in an essentially Jewish state dedicated to the historic mission of Zionism. Those were words fraught with meaning and consequence, which called for meditation. What did they really mean? That in order to live in Israel, one must be a Jew first of all and, second, one must be won over to Zionist ideology. Logically, therefore, access to Israel was forbidden to all who were not Jews, and all the non-Jews living in Israel would at some time in the future be expelled.

26. That avowed policy of the Israel Government represented a racial and ideological exclusivism which might have the most serious consequences not only for the Arab population still remaining in Israel but for Israel itself as well; for such a policy would merely result in increasing Israel's isolation in the Middle East. Moreover, it would incite Israel to expand through conquest in order to make room for the Jewish immigrants who shared the Zionist ideology and were dedicated to its historic mission. Thus the policy of racial exclusivism and the expansionist pressure resulting from it would of necessity leave Israel to stifle in isolation or explode in a fatal outburst which would necessarily provoke a reaction on the part of the Arab countries. Those misinformed delegations who urged resettlement of the Arab refugees in the host countries as a permanent solution of the problem would do well to keep that dangerous aspect of the question in mind and join in support of the only solution which was in accordance with the expressed wishes of the General Assembly: the return of the refugees to their homes.

27. Mr. MURAYATI (Yemen) did not intend to make a detailed study of the question. He would limit himself to stating that the delegation of Yemen completely shared the views expressed by the delegations of the Arab nations. But a few brief observations must be made. The financial difficulties which had beset the Agency, as set forth in the Director's report, had caused deep concern to all those who were sincerely interested in the peace and stability of the Middle East. Although the Palestine refugees were still living in deplorable circumstances, the Israel Government refused to pay them the income from the property they had abandoned in Israel—an income which was four times greater than the budget of the Agency.

28. The United Nations was therefore faced with the following alternatives: either to provide the Agency with the funds necessary to carry out all its activities or to compel Israel to pay the refugees the income from their properties. Furthermore, Israel continued to ignore the decisions taken and the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly. The Assembly should therefore call upon the Member States to take the necessary measures to enforce its decisions and resolutions, including economic sanctions against Israel if necessary. It should be noted that the economic and financial assistance provided to Israel by some Member States was encouraging Israel in its attitude of opposition and defiance. There was no doubt that the problem of the Palestine refugees was one of the factors contributing to international tension in the Middle East and to the current disagreement between the Arab nations, on one hand, and the United Kingdom and the United States on the other. The encouragement given to Zionism, which was creating animosity and hatred between peoples of different race, could only make the situation worse. The only possible solution of the problem had been indicated by the Assembly, namely, the repatriation and compensation of the refugees. It lay with the United Nations to take the necessary measures to put that solution into effect.

29. Mr. AL-ASKARI (Iraq), availing himself of his right of reply, regretted that the controversy over the question had provoked bitterness and rancour on the part of some delegations. The speech made by the representative of Tel-Aviv at the 70th meeting and the attacks against the Arab States were regrettable. It seemed that an orderly and courteous exchange of views would facilitate deliberations on that very grave situation.

30. Mr. EBAN (Israel) raised a point of order; he requested the Chairman to ask the representative of Iraq to use a term which was in accordance with the sovereignty of Israel and its position as a Member of the United Nations, rather than inappropriate terms, when he referred to the representative of Israel.

31. The CHAIRMAN replied that he could not take a position with regard to the terms used by members of the Committee, but he could request the delegations, in line with the rules of procedure, to abide by the required standards of courtesy.

Organization of Work

32. The CHAIRMAN requested those delegations which had expressed the intention of submitting a draft resolution to do so that same day, so that the Committee might begin consideration of the draft at the first meeting the following day, 29 November. It was important that the Committee should complete discussion of the problem within the week, in order to begin consideration on Monday, 2 December, of the next three items on the agenda.

33. Mr. CROSTHWAITE (United Kingdom) remarked that the final preparation of a draft resolution required negotiations, which took time. It would serve no useful purpose to submit to the Committee a draft resolution which had not been sufficiently reflected upon. On the other hand, it was not certain that the Committee would be able to take up other items included on its agenda, which were highly important and required careful consideration by the Committee members.

34. Mr. MITRA (India) suggested a procedure which, although unorthodox, might nevertheless surmount the difficulty which was causing the Chairman concern. Without waiting until a draft resolution was submitted on it on the question it was then studying, the Committee might perhaps begin consideration on the following day of the next three items on its agenda, which were of great interest to some delegations.

35. The CHAIRMAN doubted that the members of the Committee would be ready to begin consideration of the next three items on the agenda on the following day, 29 November. He hoped that the Committee would have before it a draft resolution on the question it was then considering and might devote the two meetings the following day to consideration of the draft. It would then take up discussion of the next three agenda items on Monday, 2 December.

36. Mr. MALOLES (Philippines) suggested that, in view of the short time available for completing the Committee's agenda, the Chairman should invite the delegations to limit speeches to, say, fifteen minutes.

37. The CHAIRMAN said that that was in accordance with article 115 of the rules of procedure, and that he would do his best to put the Philippines representative's suggestion into effect.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.