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**Chairman:** Mr. Max JAKOBSON (Finland).

**AGENDA ITEM 32**

Report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (continued) (A/6313)

1. Mr. TARCICI (Yemen) said that the burning question of the Palestine refugees gave food for thought to anyone who believed that peace could not exist or endure unless it was based on right and justice. Far from being effaced by time, as were the majority of even the most appalling historical events, the shocking injustice committed against an entire people at a relatively recent date was like a gangrene which was daily becoming worse and would continue to pose a serious threat to that part of the world as long as the causes of the evil were not eliminated by appropriate means. If they were allowed to remain, it would be necessary to resort to drastic remedies whose consequences it would be difficult to foresee.

2. At the time when the plot against Palestine was carefully hatched in the great capitals of imperialism and colonialism with the support of Zionist funds, the great Powers had still been in a position to manage world affairs as they pleased, without taking public opinion into account. They had treated the fate of entire peoples like a game, played on maps covering the enormous area which was known today as the third world. All that mattered were the profits which could be made there in either the immediate or the more distant future. They had regarded the inhabitants of the area as scarcely more than an economic tool or as cannon fodder; they had blithely forgotten that peoples such as those of Palestine might have rights and aspirations and in some cases a history more glorious and a humanism more profound than those of the peoples who exploited them. The colonial Powers, fully aware of their material superiority, had felt they could afford to ignore a civilization which was sometimes superior to their own. The fact was that the architects of the process of dividing up the third world had decided to expel the legitimate inhabitants of Palestine and establish in their ancestral home, with the aid of Zionism, an outpost of Western imperialism. Palestine's Arab neighbours had at that

time been only just waking from a long sleep imposed on them by colonialism, and the rest of the third world was also beginning to rid itself of the yoke of oppression. The socialist countries had been in the process of working out a better organization of their societies. In the Western countries, public opinion often had been misled by brazen Zionist propaganda or by ignorance of matters relating to the third world. Now that public opinion was better informed and the countries of the third world were participating more and more actively in international affairs, the colonialist character of the Palestine drama was beginning to appear in its true colours.

3. In his well-documented report on the living conditions of the Palestine refugees (A/6313), the Commissioner-General of UNRWA showed that he had tried to understand the distress of the people under his care and to give them moral as well as material support. Thus in paragraph 5 of the report the Commissioner-General gave an indication of the feelings of the refugees with regard to what they considered to be their lawful right to return to their former homes, recalled the assurances given them, notably in paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III), of 11 December 1948, regarding repatriation or compensation, and noted the bitterness aroused in them by "their conviction that a grave injustice has been done to them". The Commissioner-General had reached the eloquent conclusion that "The implications for peace and stability in the Middle East of the continued existence of the Palestine refugee problem thus remain as grave as ever". The delegation of Yemen wished to pay a tribute to the Commissioner-General for the sincerity and devotion with which he was trying to alleviate the misery of the refugees as they waited for the restoration of their legitimate rights.

4. For those who were not convinced that colonialism and imperialism, allied with international high finance, were responsible for the situation, and that the imperialist bastion in Palestine posed a constant threat to the neighbouring countries, the 4,000-odd complaints which the latter had lodged with the United Nations against Israel should constitute irrefutable proof. For the benefit of those who still had doubts concerning the objectives of Zionism in the strategic zone constituted by the Middle East or who were the victims of unbridled propaganda, he recalled the Suez conflict and the Zionist and imperialist machinations and intrigues connected with it recently exposed in London in documents that would henceforth form part of the archives of history.

5. The goal of those who were interested solely in the riches and the strategic value of the region had, in fact, been attained, for the presence of that poisoned

arrow was a permanent threat to all that part of the world and was retarding its development. Instead of being able to devote themselves to rebuilding their economies and improving the living conditions of their peoples, the countries which were Palestine's neighbours were obliged to concentrate on defence and on the task of thwarting the designs of those seeking to create dangerous situations. The stability of all the countries of the Middle East was inevitably affected thereby. Moreover, that base had all the reactionary characteristics of neo-colonialism. At a time when the Arab countries were striving to eliminate certain obsolete structures, the Zionists in Palestine were pursuing a policy of the most flagrant religious intolerance and racial discrimination. In accordance with that policy, the Zionists found it quite normal that the Palestine Christians and Moslems expelled from their homes should be replaced by people mostly from Eastern Europe, simply because the latter were of the Jewish faith. But mankind had not forgotten the fate which the Palestine Jews had reserved for those inhabitants of Palestine who, under the Roman Empire, became converts to Christianity.

6. Subsequently, under Christian Rome and then under the Orthodox Byzantine Empire, the people of Palestine had embraced the Christian religion. Still later, with the advent of Islam, a large number of Palestinians had adopted the Moslem faith and the entire region, together with the Palestinian people had become Arabized. Yet in the mid-twentieth century, with Nero and the Middle Ages past history, Palestine was witnessing an extreme policy of religious segregation and racial discrimination no less odious than that practised by the Nazis during the Second World War. The massacre of Deir Yassin was now a part of the annals of the Palestine question. The evils of Zionism had condemned a whole people to lead the precarious existence of refugees for nearly twenty years. Yet their only crime was that they had embraced Christianity or Islam.

7. That religious discrimination was coupled with a despicable form of racial discrimination, as attested by Eric Rouleau in an article published in Le Monde on 9 March 1966 entitled "Israel: Land of Asylum and of Conflict". He quoted several passages from the article, which showed that there were very marked inequalities between the two principal groups, i.e., the European Jews (or Ashkenasim) and those from Africa and Asia (or Sephardim), whose numbers had been increased by successive waves of immigrants since the establishment of Israel. The clash between those two civilizations had given rise to mutual distrust which had various economic and social manifestations. The two groups called each other by pejorative names and had few contacts with each other. Mixed marriages were extremely rare. According to the article in Le Monde, the oriental Jews suffered discrimination, inequality and the humiliation of being treated as second-class citizens in a country where the laws were altogether democratic. The average income in the two communities was in most cases determined by ethnic origin, and housing conditions among the non-European Jews were inferior. In education the inequalities were even more flagrant. While at the primary level children of Oriental parents accounted for 60 per cent of

total enrolment, they accounted for only 38 per cent at the secondary level and 5 per cent at the university level. The Oriental Jews, together with the Arabs, continued to supply the bulk of unskilled labour.

8. Thus there was a very real question of social segregation in Israel. Certain statements made by Mr. Pinhas Sapir, Minister of Finance, and by Mr. Ben-Gurion, revealed the desire to resist the possible "levantinization" of the State of Israel and to westernize the Oriental Jews. Having in mind the advantages of a massive immigration of Soviet and western Jews, Mrs. Golda Meir had told the Zionist Federation of Great Britain that Israel needed immigrants of a higher level because the question of the future structure of the State caused it concern; if present conditions were to continue, a dangerous conflict between the Ashkenazi élite and the Oriental communities of Israel would result. In 1964, in a work entitled "The Ashkenazi Revolution", the writer Kalman Katznelson had maintained that the Ashkenazim, who were superior in heredity and education to the Sephardim, must at all costs retain control of the State.

9. The testimony of Le Monde was borne out by that of the United States publication Newsweek of 15 November 1965, which cited similar facts. The only significant difference was that the Newsweek article assessed the proportion of university students of non-European origin at 10 per cent. The United States publication noted that the gulf separating the two groups was not merely a matter of statistics but was to be found in the attitude of many Ashkenazim, who looked down upon the Orientals.

10. From the foregoing it could be seen that international Zionism, an accomplice of imperialism, had turned Israel into a bastion of modern colonialism and was thus threatening peace and stability in the strategic area constituted by the Middle East. It was preventing the neighbouring countries and those of the entire region from devoting all their efforts to their own development and to the material and moral progress of their peoples. The rightful inhabitants of Palestine had been driven from their country because at a given point in history they had embraced Christianity or Islam. The facts cited by Le Monde and Newsweek showed that racial segregation directed against the Oriental Jews was prevalent in Israel today: that being the case, it could easily be imagined how the non-Jewish Palestinians remaining in Israel were treated. The question which must now be answered was how Israel could be compelled to respect the resolutions of the United Nations and the rules of international law.

11. There were those who argued that the people of Palestine must accept the de facto situation because Israel was too powerful to be compelled to listen to reason. They pointed out that Zionism was backed by the money of international bankers, that it had the most highly developed information media, and that it was being supported by great Powers. The people of Palestine could retort that if peoples gave in to superior forces, none of the former colonies now represented in the United Nations as sovereign States would have achieved independence. He recalled the example of Algeria, where over a million French

settlers were officially established and the United Nations had not been competent to intervene because Algeria was then an integral part of the metropolitan country. The French Government had sent in a large army—some 600,000 men—but in the long run, right had prevailed and the leaders of the National Liberation Front, then living in exile, were now sitting in the United Nations. If the United Nations were to accept *de facto* situations and recognize military superiority in South Africa, Rhodesia, Angola and Mozambique, it would have to renounce the principles of the United Nations Charter. Once the people of Palestine recovered their property, their land and their homes, the present period when the United Nations, through UNRWA, was appealing for charity for the refugees and getting only \$1.20 per month per person, would be looked upon as a nightmare. It was very curious that the United Nations should be compelled to appeal for charity when the income from refugee properties now being exploited by the invaders was estimated at \$173 million a year. The yearly interest on those accumulated funds itself would substantially exceed the budget required to ensure the survival of the refugees.

12. The Palestine refugee question would continue to concern the United Nations so long as Israel continued to defy the Organization and until the legitimate rights of the people of Palestine were restored.

*Mr. Jimenez (Philippines), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

13. Mr. BEAULIEU (Canada) said that his delegation had examined with great interest the report of the Commissioner-General on the activities of the Agency during the period 1965–1966. The report drew the Committee's attention to several problems and difficulties confronting the Agency in carrying out its task. In examining those problems, the Canadian delegation based its position on two main considerations: the welfare of the Palestine refugees, for whom the Canadian Government had consistently shown its concern by substantial contributions since the establishment of UNRWA; and peace and stability in the Middle East. The Agency had an important role to play in that respect. The Commissioner-General, in his statement in the Committee (497th meeting), had effectively made that point in describing the life of the refugees and the anxiety they felt concerning rumours of a discontinuance or diminution of UNRWA's services.

14. A number of passages in the Commissioner-General's report merited careful examination by the Committee. As the question of the renewal of UNRWA's mandate had been settled in 1965, it was to be hoped that the Committee would now give due attention to the Agency's operations rather than engage in a lengthy debate on the origins of the refugee problem. Unfortunately, the General Assembly had not given the Commissioner-General specific instructions on how to deal with any shortfall which might occur in UNRWA's finances, and Mr. Michelmores had had to consider the possibility of curtailing its services for lack of funds. It was only through the efforts of the Commissioner-General and the devotion of his staff, as well as the generosity of a few countries and the

assistance extended by the host countries and some specialized agencies such as the World Health Organization and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, that the crisis had thus far been averted. However, there was one means by which contributing countries could help UNRWA to cope with its serious financial difficulties. During the past few years, its budget deficits had been offset by withdrawals from its working capital fund, but that fund had now fallen below the level required to finance normal operations during the first six months of each year, pending receipt of contributions. The difficulty would be considerably eased if Governments gave priority to the payment of their contributions to the UNRWA budget, so that the Agency could operate with a reduced working capital fund.

15. Another question which required special attention was the financial problem itself. The burden of financing UNRWA had been borne so far by a relatively small number of countries and, as the Commissioner-General had pointed out, that was the underlying cause of the major problem of financing the Agency's budget. Consequently, not only should all current contributors to the UNRWA budget be urged to increase their contributions, but in particular, those States which had not yet contributed should be urged to consider the possibility of doing so. A widening of the Agency's basis of financial support would appear to be the only practical way of solving its budgetary problem, since the maintenance of its programme at its present level involved rising expenditures which had not been matched by increased revenue. In the world of today, it should be borne in mind that a contribution to UNRWA was not only an expression of humanitarian concern, but a contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security, which was a collective responsibility.

16. Mr. GHAFAR (Malaysia) said that every year the Committee had been concerned with the plight of the Palestine refugees, but unfortunately it had come no nearer to a solution. On the contrary, the problem became increasingly complex from year to year because the number of refugees continued to grow. The human aspect of the refugee problem, which was sad enough when described on paper, was even more tragic in actual fact. Many Governments, private organizations and individuals had been moved by it and their generous contributions had enabled UNRWA to carry out its humanitarian task effectively. Nevertheless, the problem remained and his delegation believed that its two main aspects, the political and the financial, could be dealt with separately.

17. The political aspect was the more important and the more urgent. The respective positions of Member States on the issue had been repeatedly stated and strongly championed in the Committee, and there was no prospect of a political solution at the present juncture. The fact remained that the United Nations must discharge its responsibilities towards the refugees particularly under paragraph 11 of resolution 194 (III), in which the General Assembly had decided that refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so or that compensation should be paid to those choosing not to return. As the Prime Minister of

Malaysia had said, central to the issue was the full restoration of the legitimate right of the Arab people to their homeland and their inalienable right of self-determination. The problem was therefore to give the refugees back their homeland. Any other solution, whatever its merits, would tend to confuse the issue rather than settle it. The feeling of the Arab refugees that they had been unjustly treated had hardened rather than weakened with the passage of time. That was not surprising, considering that the Arabs had been driven from their homeland, dispossessed of their property and forced to live in the most extreme squalor. Consequently, they must be allowed to return to their homes; that right could not be denied them. Every year, the debate on the question evoked recriminations, but the plight of the refugees remained unchanged. His delegation noted that the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine, in pursuance of paragraph 7 of General Assembly resolution 2052 (XX) of 15 December 1965, had intensified its efforts to give effect to paragraph 11 of resolution 194 (III). In paragraph 3 of its twenty-fourth progress report (A/6451), the Commission had stated that it had examined various ways of giving effect to that provision and had concluded that there would have to be substantial changes in the situation before those ways could be applied and that there was no evidence that such changes were taking place.

18. The Agency's financial situation was such that it had to work still harder just to maintain its present level of operations; the Commissioner-General's report confirmed that fact. The position was most critical and he sincerely hoped that it would improve. Despite the commendable efforts of the Agency to economize, the cost of its services had increased, and even if its income remained at the same level, the number of refugees would continue to grow. The need for additional funds was therefore urgent, particularly since the very survival of the refugees depended on UNRWA assistance. Additional resources were essential if the Agency was to continue to provide assistance in all the areas with which it was concerned. Continuation of assistance at the present level would require an increase in expenditure of \$1.5 million in 1967 and similar increases in subsequent years. It was even more discouraging to note that income in 1966 was not sufficient to meet current needs and that, since some of the special contributions made in 1966 would probably not be made in future, it was very likely that income in 1967 would be \$3 or \$4 million short of the amount required. Should no sub-

stantial additional funds be forthcoming, serious curtailments in UNRWA's programme would have to be made in 1967 to the detriment of the health and welfare of the refugees, which had already reached a critical point. For that reason, the Malaysian Government was to consider the possibility of increasing its contribution. If every delegation did as much, a measure of increased comfort might be given to the refugees. In addition, the question of income from property which the refugees had been forced to abandon should be examined. If the income from that property could be utilized for the benefit of the refugees concerned, it would obviously alleviate their suffering and reduce their financial dependence on UNRWA, without prejudice, of course, to their right to be repatriated, if they so desired.

19. In his statement at the 497th meeting, the Commissioner-General had said that over the past two years, UNRWA's financial base had been broadened somewhat and that the number of contributing countries had also increased. That information was heartening. However, those countries still represented only about a third of the Members of the United Nations. His delegation shared the view expressed by other members of the Committee that more Member States should be persuaded to contribute to UNRWA, that those currently contributing should be induced to increase the amount of their contribution, and that those which for one reason or another had stopped contributing should be asked to resume participation in that humanitarian activity. The question of the Palestine refugees should not be regarded as one of primary, let alone exclusive, concern to the Arabs. It was a humanitarian cause and not a question of geography. The Commissioner-General might usefully issue further appeals for funds so that more individuals and private organizations would come to the aid of the refugees. Moreover, consideration of the refugee problem should not be confined to the annual debate in the General Assembly. Governments of Member States might form committees in their respective countries to consider how to provide further aid to the refugees. It would also be useful for representatives of Member States to be able to visit the refugee camps in order to gain a direct understanding of their plight. He concluded by repeating that the ultimate solution of the problem of the Palestine refugees was a political solution: that of ensuring the return of the refugees to their rightful homeland.

*The meeting rose at 12.5 p.m.*