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**GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**

TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION

Official Records

**SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE, 727th
MEETING**



Thursday, 19 November 1970,
at 10.55 a.m.

NEW YORK

*Chairman: Mr. Abdul Samad GHAUS
(Afghanistan).*

Organization of the Committee's work

1. The CHAIRMAN announced that the President of the General Assembly had informed him on the previous day, in a letter which had been circulated as document A/SPC/137/Add.1, that the Assembly had decided to allocate to the Special Political Committee agenda item 101, entitled "Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories". It was therefore imperative that all members of the Committee should do everything they could to avoid waste of time and that no meetings should be cancelled or curtailed for lack of speakers.

AGENDA ITEM 35

**United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine
Refugees in the Near East: report of the Commissioner-
General (continued) (A/8013, A/8040, A/8084 and
Add.1, A/SPC/140)**

2. Mr. TOMEH (Syria) said that he hoped that the international community's compassion for the misfortune which had befallen Pakistan would find practical expression in immediate assistance to that country.

3. On behalf of the four host countries—Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the United Arab Republic—he wished to commend the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East for the manner in which he had carried out his mission under exceptionally difficult circumstances. He stressed that consideration of the item now before the Committee must be based on a thorough study of the Commissioner-General's report (A/8013).

4. He cited several passages in the report which illustrated the difficulties encountered by the Agency in its relations with the Israeli authorities, especially in connexion with the latter's demolition of shelters and other buildings, particularly in Gaza, where the Israeli authorities had considered it necessary to widen the roads through some refugee camps in order to facilitate the movements of their motorized patrols. That raised the question of compensation. In several cases, the Israeli Government had refused any compensation. As for the losses sustained during the hostilities of June 1967, apparently the claims were still under consideration. It should also be noted that a number of claims for damages sustained since then could not be

assessed or formulated because of the Agency's shortage of staff.

5. All those financial losses merely added to the budgetary difficulties of the Agency; yet such a body was essential in order to fulfil needs which could not be met by the host countries alone. The situation was so critical that the Commissioner-General had had to consider substantial reductions in the Agency's programmes. In what areas could those reductions be made? An item-by-item examination of the main sections of the budget for 1971 showed that, in view of the current level of relief and health services, it was inadvisable, if not impossible, to make any appreciable cuts.

6. There were now almost a million and a half refugees, exclusive of the persons displaced since the 1967 hostilities, but only 58.7 per cent of them had received rations in June 1970. Even though many refugees had been removed from the rolls during the past two years, having achieved a measure of economic independence through employment by the Agency or graduation from UNRWA-sponsored training centres, the fact remained that 268,000 children had received no rations in 1970. The Agency's nutrition and supplementary feeding services included regular and careful surveillance of the nutritional status and requirements of the specifically vulnerable refugee groups, because the Agency's basic ration was barely sufficient and nutritionally unbalanced. Cuts had already been made in that area, but the maintenance of those services at their current level was vital to the refugees.

7. The very inadequacy of the relief programme made the health programme all the more essential. Over 15 per cent of the infants and young children who had died in hospitals in 1969 had been suffering from nutritional deficiencies, and in another 8 per cent those deficiencies had been aggravated by diarrhoea. UNRWA's medical services had, of course, made great efforts and achieved significant progress, but the needs were tremendous and much remained to be done. How could the Agency reduce such essential services?

8. The educational programme involved over half of the Agency's staff and accounted for 45 per cent of its budget expenditure. There again, he commended the Agency for its work, which included teacher training, vocational and technical education and general education. In 1969-1970, UNRWA had awarded 1,101 scholarships to Palestinian refugees for university-level study in the neighbouring countries of the Middle East—the majority for specialization in medicine or engineering. In many localities, it had been necessary to double-shift all classes, and the only capital costs planned for 1971 were for the purpose of avoiding triple shifts. Allocations for scholarships had been

drastically curtailed, and the budget estimates for vocational and technical training in 1971 were \$100,000 less than the amount actually spent in 1969. However, the number of students was increasing and they were remaining longer at their studies. Where, then, could cuts be made in the education budget?

9. The Commissioner-General stated that in his report “even more than general education, vocational and professional training is sought by refugee families. It is one of the few avenues by which Agency services can lead them to be economically independent of direct relief and permanently equipped for a successful future life” (A/8013, para. 233). If the UNRWA education programme was cut, the repercussions would be devastating.

10. Direct contributions to the refugees by Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the United Arab Republic during the year ending 30 June 1970 had amounted to more than \$17 million. That amount was in addition to the Arab countries' contributions to the UNRWA budget, the cumulative total of which, for the period from 1 May 1950 to 31 December 1970, exceeded \$18 million.

11. What, in contrast, was the attitude of the Israeli authorities? Refugee students in Lebanon and Syria and on the East Bank of the Jordan could not attend the Agency's training centres on the occupied West Bank; Israel refused to implement resolution 4.2.3 of the Executive Board of UNESCO, which called on it to remove immediately any obstacles to the importation and use of textbooks approved by the Director-General in the UNRWA/UNESCO schools in the occupied territories (see A/8013, annex III). As evident from paragraph 132 of the Commissioner-General's report, university scholarships on the West Bank were almost non-existent. During the period covered by the report, 71 UNRWA officials had been arrested and detained by the Israeli authorities, and 20 of them had still been under detention on 30 June 1970. Paragraphs 165 to 168 of the report described the demolition of shelters and other buildings by the Israeli authorities. In that respect, the Israelis were imitating the Nazi occupiers of Europe.

12. In the case of refugees registered with the Agency prior to the June 1967 hostilities, Israel had disregarded the right to repatriation and compensation which had been given them in General Assembly resolution 194 (II) and had since been reaffirmed at every session. With regard to persons who had been displaced after the outbreak of the June 1967 hostilities but had not been registered with the Agency, Israel took no notice of Security Council resolution 237 (1967) or of General Assembly resolution 2252 (ES-V), which had called upon the Government of Israel to ensure the safety, welfare and security of the inhabitants of the areas where military operations had taken place and to facilitate the return of those inhabitants who had fled the areas since the outbreak of hostilities. The same was true of General Assembly resolution 2452 A (XXIII), adopted by 100 votes to 1—Israel's—asking for the return without delay of the displaced persons. If international law and human rights were respected, the Arab refugees would not need international charity and would no longer be living under conditions which revolted the conscience of mankind.

13. As the Commissioner-General could confirm, Syria had received 100,000 Arab refugees—a fact which did not appear in the statistics given in the report.

14. It was often alleged that the Arab countries had refused to integrate the refugees in their territories in order to keep the Palestine problem alive. He rejected that assertion, and pointed out that refugees with occupational skills, who had come mainly from urban areas, had found employment immediately in 1948. On the other hand, the rural population had been hard put to find employment in an area where there was already a surplus of labour, and the situation had thus become steadily worse. It was the second category of refugees who had become most dependent on assistance from the Agency.

15. Taking into consideration the economic realities, the fact was that up to the time of the great spoliation of 1948 the Zionist settlers, in spite of colonial domination, had not been able to acquire more than 6 per cent of the land; the Palestinians had still taken 70 per cent of the agricultural income and 40 per cent of the revenues from trade and services. In 1948 the Zionists had forcibly appropriated Arab land and property worth more than \$2,000 million. Thereafter, they had needed large subsidies to consolidate their usurpation and enable them to achieve a higher level of social, economic and technological development than the rest of the region. That consolidation had steadily decreased the chances of non-violent decolonization.

16. During the period from 1949 to 1967 alone, Israel had received foreign aid totalling \$7,000 million—which was officially registered in its balance-of-payments statistics—or approximately the aggregate of the 1966 national income of Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon. Since the creation of Israel, the foreign aid received annually by each citizen of the Zionist State had been greater than the average gross income of each Egyptian and three or four times higher than that of most Africans; since the early 1960s, Israel had cornered approximately 10 per cent of all aid given to countries of the third world by the rich nations. The United Nations had its share of responsibility in that situation, since in General Assembly resolutions Israel was classified as a developing country, although its average *per capita* income was double the figure set by economists as the criterion of under-development. As an example of that partiality, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development had, up to the end of 1966, granted Israel loans in excess of \$100 million as against a total of \$170 million to the thirteen Arab States, and since the war the Zionist State had been granted further loans, although a \$75 million loan to Egypt had been withdrawn and all requests for loans from Lebanon and Jordan had been rejected.

17. That injustice appeared even more glaring in the light of the debate on the UNRWA budget, the aim of which was to induce the rich nations to undertake not to reduce their contributions. The Agency's expenditure since its establishment until the 1967 war was practically the same as the foreign aid received by Israel in a single year. While foreign aid varied from between \$200 and \$300 for each Israeli citizen annually, UNRWA spent between \$29 and \$30 for each refugee every year. Furthermore Israel's only contribution since 1948, made with a fanfare of publicity, had

been a sum of \$250,000 in the 1950s and a similar amount after the 1967 war.

18. Those who were dazzled by the so-called Israeli miracle would do well to remember that that miracle was characterized by the greatest dependence on foreign aid in the world. Without foreign aid Israel would be obliged to reduce its domestic consumption by approximately 30 per cent or to halt its investments, which would condemn the country to economic regression. The Zionist leaders were well aware that it was only by maintaining a climate of hostility and playing on the good or bad conscience of Jews and Gentiles that they could tighten the bonds between various communities and the occupants of Palestine and thus sustain the flow of foreign aid. The convening of annual conferences of Jewish millionaires in Israel should be viewed against that background.

19. While endeavouring to consolidate the structures of colonization, Israel did not conceal its ambition to dominate the region. In July 1965 Mr. Abba Eban had stated in the quarterly *Foreign Affairs* that economic co-operation in agricultural and industrial development could lead to supranational arrangements like those of the European Economic Community. In the same article, he had gone so far as to predict the 1967 hostilities between Israel and its neighbours. The Zionist settlers were well aware that the only solution for them was armed expansion and the total spoliation of the people of Palestine.

20. He welcomed the postponement of the meeting of the *Ad Hoc* Committee of the General Assembly for the Announcement of Voluntary Contributions to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, since that would give delegations time to grasp the full gravity of the situation.

21. Mr. THYNESS (Norway) recalled that the Commissioner-General, when introducing his report at the preceding meeting, had expressed the hope that the members of the Committee would concentrate their attention on the financial crisis confronting the Agency and on how it could be solved. His delegation, which was concerned about the plight of the almost 1.25 million refugees whose existence was largely dependent on the Agency's resources, fully shared the Commissioner-General's view that UNRWA's financial situation must be remedied as a matter of urgency.

22. Not only had the Agency been forced to reduce relief services and health and sanitation services for the refugees; it would also have to seriously curtail its educational and training programmes, which were the only programmes that prepared the refugees for the future. The Committee was not called upon to find a solution to the political problems of the Middle East, but merely to raise \$5 million more for the Agency than had been contributed in 1969. Any further reduction of the Agency's activities would have serious humanitarian consequences and, indeed, political repercussions, making it even more difficult to achieve a peaceful settlement of the Middle East conflict. If declarations of international solidarity were not to be a hollow

sham, the only solution was for Member States to increase their contributions substantially.

23. His delegation therefore whole-heartedly supported the appeals of the Commissioner-General and the Secretary-General. The Norwegian Government intended to increase its contribution for the following year, and the exact amount would be announced at the pledging conference.

24. His delegation also felt that a new look might well be taken at the note¹ in which the Commissioner-General at the previous session had suggested several ways of relieving the Agency's financial situation. Those proposals and suggestions should be given serious consideration by the members of the Committee. A form of financing that would prevent financial crises must also be found.

25. Mr. PAL (Pakistan) proposed that, in view of its importance, the Syrian representative's statement should be circulated in full.

26. Mr. BÂ (Senegal) supported that proposal.

27. The CHAIRMAN said that, if there was no objection, he would take it that the Committee decided that the Syrian representative's statement would be transcribed from the sound recording and circulated.

*It was so decided.*²

28. Mr. VREELAND (United States of America) asked whether, in view of its importance, the full text of the statement made at the preceding meeting by the Commissioner-General of UNRWA should not also be circulated. He would also welcome information on the financial implications of the circulation of such verbatim texts.

29. The CHAIRMAN said that, if the Committee so wished, the Commissioner-General's statement would be circulated. The General Assembly had authorized the Special Political Committee to have transcriptions made from the sound recordings of its meetings.

30. Mr. HOLDER (Liberia) proposed, further to the remarks made by the representative of the United States of America, that the text of the Commissioner-General's statement should be circulated in full.

31. The CHAIRMAN said that, if there was no objection, he would take it that the Committee decided that the Commissioner-General's statement should be transcribed and circulated.

*It was so decided.*³

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.

¹ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-fourth Session, Annexes*, agenda item 36, document A/SPC/134.

² Subsequently circulated as document A/SPC/PV.727.

³ *Idem*, document A/SPC/PV.726.