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CONTENTS

	Page
<i>Agenda item 26:</i>	
<i>Report of the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (continued)</i>	117

Chairman: Mr. Carlet R. AUGUSTE (Haiti).

AGENDA ITEM 26

Report of the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (A/4478, A/SPC/48) (continued)

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. John H. Davis, Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, took a place at the Committee table.

1. Mr. SHUKAIRY (Saudi Arabia) quoted statements from the report (A/4478) of the Director of the Agency to the effect that the Palestine refugees were embittered because General Assembly resolution 194 (III) had not been implemented, that no quick solution to the Palestine problem was in sight, and that UNRWA alone could not solve it.

2. Zionist imperialism, not the war of 1948, was the cause of the refugee problem. It was a colonial problem. The Zionists contended that the Jews had been in exile from Palestine for 3,000 years and that the immemorial possession of that territory by the Arabs was not worthy to be respected and protected. Many Jews had been deceived into migrating to Palestine against the will of its people. The ingathering of the Jews was aggression, since for every one who immigrated an Arab must be displaced.

3. For centuries there had been very few Jews in Palestine, but under the British Mandate 700,000 had entered the country openly or clandestinely. There were now about 2 million. That was not immigration but invasion.

4. Nowhere else in Asia and Africa had imperialism caused an exodus of the native peoples. The problem of the Palestine refugees could not be compared with any other. As long ago as 1840 Lord Shaftesbury had proposed Jewish colonization in a backward country. Later, in 1903, the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Lansdowne, had offered the Zionists land in East Africa. In 1920 Mr. Churchill had called for a Jewish State in Palestine, under the protection of the British Crown, as a scheme which would be in harmony with the truest interests of the British Empire. Such a scheme was impossible without the expulsion of the Arabs. Israel had been conceived as an imperialist enterprise and had been established because Palestine was important to imperialism. That was the real

meaning of the conclusion reached in the Director's report that any general solution to the Palestine problem, of which the refugee problem was a part, would be brought about largely by forces outside the Agency.

5. The first in the chain of official acts giving rise to the refugee problem had been the Balfour Declaration of 2 November 1917. Although it provided that the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine would not prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities, it should have been obvious that the very fact of establishing a Jewish home in a land already occupied by another people without the consent of the latter would be a flagrant injustice which could not but prejudice those rights. The obligation to establish a Jewish national home and the obligation to protect the rights of the people of Palestine were contradictory. Hence when the United Kingdom had committed itself to the establishment of a Jewish national home it had made the development of the refugee problem inevitable. Indeed, the Palestinian Arabs themselves had foreseen that their country would be usurped and their national existence endangered if the United Kingdom plan was carried out and had accordingly opposed it. The United Kingdom had persisted for thirty years thereafter in its refusal to acknowledge the incompatibility of its two professed aims. It was obvious, however, that the deliberate vagueness of the wording of the Balfour Declaration had covered a policy which from the start envisaged the establishment of a Jewish State at the expense of the Arab inhabitants. In his latest report (A/4478) the Director of UNRWA had requested the Assembly to make its decision on the matter in the broad context of world peace. The Balfour Declaration itself, however, had been an instrument of a policy of war aimed at winning the support of the Jews at a time when the Allies had been in a critical situation in the First World War, and when the United Kingdom had had no title whatever to make decisions in regard to Palestine. Thus the refugee problem had been in the making for thirty years when the adoption of General Assembly resolution 181 (II) providing for the establishment of Israel had brought it to a head in 1947. The United Nations of 1960 was not the same as the United Nations of 1947 and if it was to succeed in preserving world peace, it must be prepared not only to secure the triumph of justice in the present and future but also to undo the injustices of the past. The resolution in question, providing for the establishment of a Jewish State in an Arab Country where Jews had constituted a minority, had been the direct and immediate cause of the refugee problem. The Zionists, realizing that the Jewish State could not be established as long as the Arab inhabitants refused to give up their land, had resorted to a campaign of terror to compel them to flee. He recalled in that connexion the attacks by Jewish forces on Arab communities

in April and May 1948, in which hundreds of civilians, mostly women, children and old men, had been massacred. Israel's spokesmen had either denied that those atrocities had been committed or had attributed them to certain dissident groups. Yet an Israel court had expressed the belief that the Deir Yasin operation of April 1948 had been ordered by the Jewish Minister of War, and many commentators, including Jews, had attested to the deliberate use of terror by the Jews as a means of driving the Arabs out of Palestine. One of the leaders of the terrorist operations had in effect acknowledged that they were a deliberate instrument of policy when he stated that the political and economic significance of the flight of the Arabs could hardly be over-estimated. In other words, the massacres had facilitated the establishment of Israel and enabled the Jews to seize all Arab land and property.

6. For the past twelve years, the Palestine refugees had lived on United Nations charity while their possessions were seized and enjoyed by Israel. The revenue from those possessions amounted to millions of dollars. He proposed that a United Nations General Administrator should be appointed to look after the property of the refugees and collect the revenue from it on their behalf. Mr. Davis, the Director of UNRWA, could be authorized to act in that capacity, or the Saudi Arabian delegation would agree to any other arrangement which would assure the refugees of the income from their property. It would even consider the possibility of defraying the expenditure of the Administrator and his organization out of the income from the property, thus relieving the United Nations of further financial outlay. The Administrator's first act would be to collect the whole of the refugees' revenue for the past thirteen years from Israel. Thousands of refugees would then become self-supporting and the financial responsibility of the United Nations would be reduced to a minimum.

7. The plight of the refugees was tragic in the extreme. The conscience of the whole world had been aroused by their bitter fate but, not surprisingly, Israel remained immune to moral pressure. After all, defiance and aggression were bound up with its very existence.

8. He laid those facts before the Committee not in order to arouse indignation and resentment against Israel but in an endeavour to arrive at a peaceful solution to the problem. The United Nations had, of course, pointed the way to such a solution and established the machinery for implementing it in resolution 194 (III) setting forth the principle of repatriation, with compensation for those who did not wish to go back to their homes. By this same resolution, in order to facilitate the repatriation of the refugees wishing to return, the General Assembly had established the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine. However, the Commission had as yet been unable to persuade Israel to act on the resolution. It had submitted a long series of progress reports to the General Assembly, all indicating no progress. At the same time, the General Assembly had confirmed resolution 194 (III) at each succeeding session. The most recent example, resolution 1456 (XIV), had been adopted unanimously, with only Israel abstaining.

9. Israel's persistent refusal to obey the resolutions of the General Assembly and repatriate the refugees

was a violation of the principle of the Charter. Indeed, it made Israel liable to expulsion from the Organization under Article 6. Nevertheless, the right of the refugees to return to their homes did not arise out of the resolutions of the United Nations or even out of the Charter. It was inherent in their being. All that the United Nations could or should do was to recognize and defend that right.

10. In essence, the people of Palestine had been denied the right to self-determination. The United Nations Special Committee on Palestine had recognized as much in 1947 (A/364).^{1/} In view of that right, the refugees had clamoured ever since their exile to return to their homeland. Operative paragraph 4 of resolution 1456 (XIV) requested the Conciliation Commission to make further efforts to bring about the repatriation of the refugees. However, there was no report of any such effort having been made. The problem involved not only the destiny of a whole people but also a great financial responsibility for the United Nations. In the circumstances, it was appropriate to inquire into the reasons for the Commission's failure to act. He suggested that the chief reason lay in its composition. The choice of the United States, France and Turkey had been a blunder on several grounds. It did not provide for equitable geographical representation and it did not reflect general trends in the United Nations. The Commission was Western in composition and it was mainly the West which had supported the partition of Palestine and the creation of Israel.

11. It was time for the General Assembly to decide whether the Conciliation Commission should be maintained, abolished or expanded. To maintain it as it stood was clearly a mockery. Its abolition would have the advantage of alerting world public opinion; on the other hand, there was much to be said for expanding it. He suggested that six other nations might be added to the present Commission, three representing the Eastern bloc headed by the Soviet Union and three representing the uncommitted nations, one from Asia, one from Africa and one from Latin America. The nine-member Commission would then represent all shades of opinion in the United Nations.

12. The reform of the Conciliation Commission would be a start towards solving the Palestine refugee problem within the framework of the United Nations—for if the United Nations failed to act as it should, a solution would be sought outside it. The refugees were determined to return to their country and time served only to intensify that determination. So far, their demands had not been met. Israel remained defiant and the United Nations stayed silent. Under the British Mandate, the people of Palestine had been a so-called sacred trust of the League of Nations. Since 1947, that trust had devolved upon the United Nations, and the United Nations would not be absolved of its responsibility until the refugees returned to their homes. In the Congo, the United Nations had shouldered a vast responsibility. Yet the plight of the Arab refugees was even more grievous than the situation in the Congo, since it involved the exile of a whole people. If the United Nations would not enforce the law, the refugees would take the law into their own hands, and that would inevitably mean

^{1/} See Official Records of the General Assembly, Second Session, Supplement No. 11, vol. I.

war. A reorganization movement was starting among the refugees. If they were to rise up in arms, the United Nations would be responsible. Under the Charter the United Nations had a duty to remove all causes of war and the threat of war. Thus, it was in duty bound to prevent the possibility of war occurring

through the denial of the dignity of man. It must restore their dignity to the people of Palestine. He urged that action be taken within the United Nations before it was too late.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.