

United Nations
**GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**

TWENTY-THIRD SESSION

Official Records

**SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE, 621st
MEETING**

Monday, 25 November 1968,
at 3.30 p.m.



NEW YORK

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Chairman: Mr. Abdulrahim Abby FARAH
(Somalia).

AGENDA ITEM 33

Report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (continued) (A/7213, A/SPC/126, A/SPC/127, A/SPC/L.165)

1. Mr. TOMEH (Syria) expressed his delegation's appreciation of the fact that the Secretary-General, for the first time in twenty years, had addressed the Special Political Committee (612th meeting) on the plight of the Arab refugees.
2. As representative of one of the host Governments of the refugees and of an Arab State directly involved in a human drama unprecedented in the annals of history, he felt obliged to discuss in detail the report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA (A/7213) who, like his devoted staff, had to live daily with the tragedies of over a million people, see their sufferings and carry on his work under that stress.
3. Of the 1.3 million refugees registered in May 1967, 175,000 had become refugees for the second time after the June 1967 hostilities that had also added some 350,000 to their number. Those receiving rations in Jordan, for example, represented 40 per cent of the population of that country.
4. The many resolutions of the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Commission on Human Rights, the Economic and Social Council, the International Conference on Human Rights, the World Health Organization and the appeals by important personalities had gone unheeded.
5. Mr. Moïse Dayan had stated after the Karameh battle that the eastern bank of the Jordan would be made uninhabitable for Arab families. Not only had that been done but the demolition of houses and the eviction of the civilian population was continuing in the Syrian-occupied area despite Israel's claim that Arab families were being reunited. Israel military or police personnel had even entered UNRWA premises, and the Agency installations in the Jordan Valley had been damaged by shelling and raids by Israel forces.

6. A telling condemnation of Israel's inhuman acts was to be found in an open letter to the Israel Press, signed by eighty-five Israel intellectuals, saying that such methods would lead to an abyss of hatred, would strengthen resistance and the underground movement and would culminate in another war.
7. The total number of 1,364,294 registered refugees given in annex I, table 1, to the report was based on a five-year rectification of the ration rolls and should be reasonably accurate. Those receiving rations included many refugees who had become self-supporting before being displaced once again after the war of June 1967. In addition to the UNRWA-registered refugees in Jordan, that country's Government had registered 246,000 displaced persons from the West Bank and Gaza and, as stated in the report, the Syrian Government was caring for 100,000 new displaced persons. Such a burden was a great strain on a developing country's economy. The refugees' plight during the winter was illustrated by the fact that there was only one mention in the report of the provision of fuel. The number of registered refugees did not, however, reflect the total number of Palestine Arabs who had been driven out since early 1947, for about half a million were now living in Arab countries or had emigrated to other countries.
8. Half the registered refugees were aged eighteen or under, which explained why 40 per cent of the Agency's budget for 1968 was allocated to education. Annex I, tables 13 to 17, to the report provided details of the number and distribution of refugee students receiving education. The schools had been operating under the greatest difficulties. Attendance had been disrupted by mass movements of camp population, some schools could not be used for long periods because they were housing the newly displaced refugees, schools in Syria and Jordan had been operating on double shifts and some of the best schools, as well as camps and clinics, stood idle in the newly occupied areas. Teachers had been killed, deported, forced to leave their posts or not allowed to return to the occupied areas.
9. The problem of text-books had not yet been solved. The custom had been to use the prescribed text-books of the host nation in UNRWA schools since they were consonant with the linguistic and cultural tradition of the children and would enable them to pass entrance examinations to higher educational institutions. Those books had been banned in the occupied regions on the grounds that they would breed hate against Israel. The matter had been reported to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Executive Board of which had adopted at its seventy-seventh session, held in October and November 1967, resolution 6.8 authorizing the Direc-

tor-General to co-operate with UNRWA in accordance with the principles of international law regarding occupied territories and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 26 (3), and on the basis of resolution 7.81, adopted by the UNESCO General Conference at its ninth session in 1956, which required that measures should be taken to ensure that education should respect the national, religious and linguistic traditions of the inhabitants, and that its nature should not be altered for political reasons. The substance of resolution 6.8 had been reaffirmed in a note submitted to the Commissioner-General by the host Governments. The UNESCO Executive Board, by its resolution 7.4, adopted at its seventy-eighth session, held in May and June 1968, had provided for the designation by the Director-General, with the agreement of Member States concerned, of a commission of outside experts to examine the text-books used in UNRWA/UNESCO schools, and make recommendations to Member States concerning them.

10. Even Israel education authorities had criticized the banning of text-books. Amos Elon, in an article entitled "The Israeli Occupation" in the March 1968 issue of the magazine Commentary, said that the Israelis had explained that the text-books taught Arab students to hate, and that that was why the books had been banned. Yet hatred of the Arabs was the cornerstone of their own Zionist doctrine.

11. Both the Secretary-General and the Commissioner-General had referred to the existing and expected budget deficits. It had been suggested in paragraph 41 of the report that a partial solution might be the transfer of the Agency's administrative expenses to the assessed budget of the United Nations. His delegation thought that such a transfer would create a dangerous precedent for the regular budget of the United Nations and would gradually lead to the dispersal of the problem of the refugees. Furthermore, the statement of income from non-government sources given in annex I, table 21, showed that the Arabian-American Oil Company (ARAMCO) had contributed \$60,000 in 1967 and slightly more in the first six months of 1968, whereas the Iraq Petroleum Company had contributed \$13,846 in 1967 and nothing in the first half of 1968. In his statement to the present session of the General Assembly on 22 October 1968 (1702nd plenary meeting) he had pointed out that the total profits of oil companies operating in Arab countries were some \$3,000 million a year and that the total official United States bilateral assistance to the whole African continent for 1968/69 was less than one quarter of the profits of American oil companies derived from operating in one Arab oil-producing country. He could not help thinking that the companies making those huge profits should feel some sort of obligation towards the Arab refugees living on seven cents a day and made a further effort to contribute to the alleviation of the economic distress of the area.

12. Beginning in 1947, there had been a carefully calculated plan to drive the Arabs from Palestine. The lines of the 1947 partition plan, systematically destroyed by Jewish terrorism and the establishment of the State of Israel, had been replaced by truce lines which had become armistice demarcation lines following the signature of the General Armistice Agreements, that

had also established demilitarized zones. The gradual occupation of those zones had been followed by the aggressive war against the Arabs in June 1967. That had led to the establishment, on the territory of the United Arab Republic and Syria, of what Security Council resolutions referred to as cease-fire lines and to the occupation of the West Bank of the Jordan. Each stage had been marked by a new exodus from Israel of Arabs evicted from their own territory. As early as January 1948, the United Kingdom High Commissioner for Palestine had reported a steady exodus of middle-class Arab families. By March 1948, Zionist sources had reported that some 70,000 Arabs had left Jaffa and Haifa. After the massacres of Deir Yassin and Katamon, perpetrated by a terrorist gang led by a member of the present Israel Cabinet, 250,000 Arabs had fled in terror. All those events had been part of the Zionist "Plan D", implemented between the partition of 29 November 1947 and the establishment of the State of Israel on 15 May 1948. During that period the United Nations Palestine Commission, which should have been supervising the partition, had been prevented from functioning by the Israel underground.

13. The leader of the Zionist Palmach gang, now Israel's Deputy Prime Minister, had himself described the tactics used under "Plan D" in driving Arabs from Palestine. In his book The Revolt, Story of the Irgun,^{1/} another member of the present Israel Cabinet, Menachem Begin, had stated that Israel's objectives at the end of January 1948 had included Jerusalem, Jaffa and the Lydda-Ramleh plain. A member of the Israel Knesset, Uri Avnery had described how, by the time of its establishment, Israel had become a homogenous Jewish State with only a small Arab minority after hundreds of thousands of Arabs had left the conquered territories. With the war in June 1967, the total number of refugees and displaced persons had reached 525,000. Thus it was clear that the pattern and purpose of Israel-Zionist expansionism was that the Arabs should be driven into the desert to make room for new Jewish settlements.

14. The main theme of the twenty-seventh Zionist Congress at Jerusalem in 1968 had been a call for the immigration of Jews from all over the world to inhabit the newly "liberated" Arab areas and the Congress had been shown a map indicating thirty-five new Jewish settlements in occupied Arab territories. Moreover, on 17 October 1968, General Dayan had stated that Israel must actively prepare for a new war and, while waiting for it, must—without formally proclaiming the annexation of the occupied territories—create faits accomplis in those liberated regions. On 16 November 1968, Le Monde had reported a statement by a spokesman of the Israel Ministry for Foreign Affairs, issued after an extraordinary meeting of the Israel Cabinet, to the effect that if the new peace frontiers need not necessarily coincide with the present cease-fire lines neither would there be any return to the armistice demarcation lines of 1949 which constituted the de facto frontiers of 4 June 1967. Thus it was delusive to accept Zionist claims regarding, for example, the reuniting of families, which had led the representatives of the United Kingdom and the United States at the 616th meeting to comment on Israel's generosity.

^{1/} New York, Schuman, 1951.

15. The history of the previous twenty years and the uprooting of a whole people was sufficient proof that Israel and Zionist leaders had no desire other than to hoodwink the international community. The member of the Israel Knesset whom he had quoted earlier had said that the Israel Government's declaration that it was prepared to let refugees return was a tactical move designed to blunt criticism and that, in the end, less than 10 per cent of the refugees had been allowed to return.

16. As the Saudi Arabian representative had pointed out at the 617th meeting, the Arab point of view was always unpublicized and could never spread beyond the United Nations. The Secretary-General's unprecedented statement in the Committee on 11 November 1968 (612th meeting) had not received a single mention in any United States newspaper and had not been reported in the mass media, presumably because it was not to the liking of Israel and world Zionism. Furthermore, no publishing house in the United States would accept the book The Evasive Peace, a Study of the Zionist-Arab Problem,^{2/} written by a former Commissioner-General of UNRWA, because it told the truth about the plight of the Arab refugees and the criminality of Israel. Yet, at the same time, almost every week, a book appeared extolling the exploits and heroism of Israel and its acts of genocide against the Arabs, all of which contained nothing but hatred and defamation of the Arabs.

17. In fact, the Arab world was facing the results not only of twenty years of war waged by Israel and world Zionism or of the seventy-six year campaign of hatred initiated by the birth of the Zionist movement in 1892 but of 127 years of war waged by Western economic colonialism against the Arabs. As early as 1840, there had been a design to separate the Arabs of western Asia from the Arabs of northern Africa. The book Israel without Zionists; a plea for peace in the Middle East,^{3/} stated that the idea of a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine as an outpost for the British Empire was by no means new and that in 1840 the idea had been promoted by Lord Palmerston. On 17 August 1840, The Times of London had published an editorial recommending a plan to plant the Jewish people in the land of their fathers. The rights and privileges of the settlement were to be secured to them under the protection of a European Power, the Power being of course the United Kingdom. The arguments used by Lord Palmerston in 1840 were the same as those used by Herzl sixty years later, and still used by Zionist leaders fifty years after Herzl. In February 1967, the Israel Minister for Foreign Affairs had said in London that Israel was part of Europe and a part of its strategy and culture.

18. The widespread and powerful Zionist propaganda machine was so well organized that it had succeeded in creating at least five myths surrounding the flight and the plight of the Palestinian Arabs. The first myth, which his delegation had sufficiently exposed, was that the Arab States had themselves encouraged the Arabs to flee Palestine. The second was that the Arab Governments had been deliberately keeping the refugees in a state of destitution, dependent upon

international charity, as a weapon in the prosecution of their political designs against Israel. In that connexion, Mr. John Reddway, the Deputy Commissioner-General of UNRWA had said in London in November 1967 that the record of the Arab Governments in promoting the rehabilitation of the refugees had been notably humane and helpful, in spite of grave difficulties already confronting them in providing for their own populations. The third myth concerned repatriation. Israel spokesmen sometimes alleged that 40,000 Palestinians had been permitted to return home between 1948 and 1950. Those concerned were, in fact, Palestinian Arabs who had left their homes during the height of the 1948 conflict and had lived within the area that was now Israel. Moreover, Israel had completely disregarded all United Nations resolutions concerning the right of the refugees either to repatriation or to compensation. The fourth myth was the malicious allegation that refugees had left in order to obtain UNRWA assistance following the Israel blitzkrieg of June 1967; Mr. Peter Dodd, Professor of Sociology at the American University at Beirut, had commented that any visitor to the refugee camps recognized the bitter untruth of that allegation and had pointed out that the free rations and housing of the camps were a pathetic substitute for life in a West Bank village. The fifth myth was that of the fait accompli. His delegation had already quoted several Israel leaders in that connexion; persons brain-washed by such propaganda commented that the Arabs should accept the Israel fait accompli—although those same persons had never accepted the fait accompli of Hitler in Europe.

19. It was abundantly clear that only the general acceptance of an international rule of conduct could establish a precedent for an international rule of law and that the survival of humanity depended on substituting the rule of law for the rule of force. Therein lay the crux of the Palestine problem and the crises in the Middle East. The fact that the Arab people of Palestine had revolted against the imposition upon them of the rule of force was, by itself, a rejection of the fait accompli claimed by Israel. The Palestinian Arabs had fought a war of liberation against the Zionist-imposed British mandate between 1921 and 1939; they were continuing that war through their daily heroic resistance to the Israel occupation. The suffering Arabs of Palestine had never abandoned their sacred human rights, trampled underfoot by the Israel Zionist conquerors, which were: the right to self-determination as enshrined in the Charter; the right of sovereignty over Palestine; the right to nationality; the right to individual property and to compensation for property arbitrarily expropriated or taken by force; the right to return; civil and religious rights and the rights of Palestinians inside Palestine.

20. Count Folke Bernadotte, the United Nations Mediator on Palestine assassinated by Zionists in Jerusalem, had said in his report to the General Assembly that "no settlement can be just and complete if recognition is not accorded to the right of the Arab refugee to return to the home from which he has been dislodged by the hazards and strategy of the armed conflict between Arabs and Jews in Palestine."^{4/} That still held true and the international community surely

^{2/} John Davis, London, Murray, 1968.

^{3/} Uri Avnery, New York, Macmillan, 1968.

^{4/} See Official Records of the General Assembly, Third Session, Supplement No. 11, part one, chap. V, para. 6.

had the right to ask Israel what it had done about such rights. The answer was that they had been decimated by the rule of force. Palestine and its people had been a sacred trust of the mandatory Power but that trust had been desecrated and superseded by the facts accomplished by Zionist terror and Israel's wars against the Arabs. Nevertheless, the truth had at long last begun to dawn on the world community. In an address in Washington on 5 October 1968, Mr. Eugene Black, a former Director of the World Bank, had referred to the Arab refugees as millions of cases of individual tragedy whose plight was like a dagger in the heart of humanity. In his statement to the Committee, the Secretary-General had said:

"the international community which the United Nations represents cannot abandon this very large group of people, for whose plight the United Nations must bear a considerable measure of responsibility, without dealing a harsh blow to international morality and to the conscience of humanity . . .".^{5/}

In the introduction to his report to the General Assembly's twenty-second session, the Secretary-General had stated that "people everywhere, and this certainly applies to the Palestinian refugees, have a natural right to be in their homeland and to have a future . . .".^{6/}

21. The Zionist settler State, with its racist doctrine and apartheid practices, was in no way different from its great ally, South Africa, from whose people many

^{5/} This statement was made at the 612th meeting of the Committee, the official records of which are published in summary form.

^{6/} See Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-second session, Supplement No. 1A, para. 49.

Israel leaders came. The untold suffering visited upon the Arabs was a warning that the neo-colonialist onslaught was a danger which threatened not only the whole Arab world but Asia and Africa as well. The Arab martyrs killed or tortured and the thousands of Arab civilians who had perished had not died for Arab human rights only but for universal human rights. It was ultimately in the Near East, which had witnessed the birth of universal human values, that history would witness one of the greatest battles for the establishment of peace, truth and justice.

22. Mr. GAMERO (Spain), supported by Mr. OULD DADDAH (Mauritania), proposed that in view of its importance, the Syrian representative's statement should be reproduced verbatim and made available to all delegations.

23. Mr. COMAY (Israel) did not object to that proposal. He suggested nevertheless that the Bureau might consider the adoption of a standard procedure regarding the records of the Committee's debates with all statements either reproduced verbatim or reproduced on an equal basis in the form of summary records.

24. The CHAIRMAN said that the Israel representative's proposal would be considered by the Bureau. As regards the suggestion by the representative of Spain, in the absence of any objection, a verbatim record of that meeting would be circulated to all members of the Committee.

It was so decided.^{7/}

The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.

^{7/} A verbatim record of this meeting was circulated as document A/SPC/PV.621.