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UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES
IN THE NEAR EAST

Report of the Secretary-General under General Assembly
resolution 3089 C (XXVIII)

1. The present report is submitted to the General Assembly in pursuance of its resolution 3089 C (XXVIII) of 7 December 1973, which dealt with the displaced persons who had fled the Israel-occupied areas since the outbreak of hostilities in June 1967 and with the refugees who had been removed from their camps in the Gaza Strip. In paragraph 4 of the resolution, the General Assembly called upon Israel immediately to take steps for the return of the displaced inhabitants, to desist from all measures that obstruct the return of the displaced inhabitants, including measures affecting the physical and demographic structure of the occupied territories, and to take effective steps for the return of the refugees concerned to the camps from which they were removed in the Gaza Strip and to provide adequate shelters for their accommodation. In paragraph 5 of the same resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General, after consulting with the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), to report as soon as possible, and whenever appropriate thereafter, but in any case not later than the opening date of the twenty-ninth session of the General Assembly, on Israel's compliance with and implementation of paragraph 4 of the resolution.

2. By a note verbale dated 29 January 1974 addressed to the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations, the Secretary-General drew attention to his reporting responsibility under paragraph 5 of the resolution and requested the Government of Israel to forward to him, as soon as possible, any relevant information on the implementation of the respective provisions. In a second message to the Permanent Representative, dated 27 June 1974, the Secretary-General requested the Government of Israel to make the required information

* A/9700.

available to him not later than 30 August 1974, as he planned to submit the report that had been requested of him before the opening of the twenty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

3. By a note verbale dated 20 August 1974, the Permanent Representative of Israel, on instructions from his Government, conveyed to the Secretary-General the following comments:

"For years the annual debates in the General Assembly on the reports of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA have been exploited by Arab and other delegations for political and propaganda purposes, in a manner which complicates and confounds the issues and hinders efforts to deal with the reports in a way which would promote the real interests and well-being of the refugees and displaced persons. It is against this background that General Assembly resolution 3089 C (XXVIII) was adopted. This resolution failed to take into account the actual conditions prevailing in the area. Instead, it contained a variety of untrue allegations against the Government of Israel. For this reason, the Israel delegation was among those who cast their votes against it.

"Nevertheless, as stated on previous occasions, the Government of Israel is conscious of the humanitarian aspects of the problem of the displaced persons who fled as a result of the hostilities of June 1967. At the same time, it should be noted that the conditions prevailing in the area are not such as to permit a large-scale return of these persons. Certain Arab Governments continue to give aid and support to terrorist organizations as well as to other subversive activities. Moreover, the willingness of the Government of Israel to permit, on humanitarian grounds, the return of a number of displaced persons has been exploited for infiltrating trained terrorists and saboteurs. Pending a peace settlement, it is therefore necessary to reconcile the return of displaced persons with the Government's responsibility for the safety, welfare and security of the local population and the security of the State itself.

"Thus, during the last year, as in previous years, the Government of Israel has continued to facilitate the return of persons who were displaced in 1967. The arrangements for family reunion and hardship cases have been maintained, and co-operation in this respect with the local Arab authorities has continued. The total number of displaced persons who have returned to their homes since 1967 is now over 53,000. During the debate on the report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA at the forthcoming session of the General Assembly, the Israel delegation will provide more details on this matter.

"As to the security measures taken by the Israel authorities in refugee camps in the Gaza area in 1971, the extreme gravity of the situation that made these measures necessary is well known. Terrorist organizations based in the Arab States, and supported by them, had

conducted in that area a campaign of indiscriminate murder and sabotage. The main victims of that criminal campaign were the local Arab inhabitants, including refugees. The purpose of that activity was to create an atmosphere of violence and insecurity in the Gaza area and to prevent, by intimidation and fear, all efforts to improve the situation.

"The measures taken by the Israel authorities in refugee camps were designed to put an end to the reign of terror and murder, in pursuance of their responsibility, as stipulated also in Security Council resolution 237 (1967) of 14 June 1967, to ensure the safety, welfare and security of all the inhabitants in the area under their control. In view of the conditions obtaining in the refugee camps, it was necessary to lay out access roads there, and this unavoidably involved the demolition of a number of shelters.

"Those measures have met with considerable success and the security situation in the Gaza area has greatly improved ever since. Violence and terror have been virtually eliminated and the local inhabitants, including refugees, have been enabled to engage in work and other normal activities without fear of terrorist attacks on their lives.

"As explained on several previous occasions, every possible care was taken to avoid undue hardship to the inhabitants whose shelters had to be demolished. Alternative accommodation was provided and accepted by most of these people, but some refugees preferred arrangements of their own choice. It has subsequently transpired that some of the arrangements made at the time by a number of refugees did not prove satisfactory to them. Consequently, a joint survey of these cases was conducted in 1973 by the Israel authorities in Gaza and representatives of UNRWA and, during the last year, further action has been taken by the Israel authorities to provide suitable housing for those still in need of it."

4. The Secretary-General has obtained from the Commissioner-General of UNRWA such information as is available to him regarding the return of refugees registered with the Agency. As indicated in paragraph 5 of the report submitted by the Secretary-General last year pursuant to General Assembly resolution 2963 D (XXVII) (A/9156), the Agency is not involved in any arrangements for the return of the refugees and its information is based in the main on Agency records relating to requests by returning refugees for retransfer of rations to the areas to which they have returned. The Agency would not be aware of the return of any refugees who did not ask for the provision of rations or services. So far as is known to the Agency, between 1 July 1973 and 30 June 1974, 455 displaced refugees returned from east Jordan to the West Bank and 142 from east Jordan to the Gaza Strip. In addition, 19 refugees returned to the Gaza Strip from Egypt. The Agency does not operate in the occupied Golan Heights, but knows of no cases of refugees returning there from among those displaced in Syria. Taking into account the figures given in this connexion in last year's report (A/9156), the information available to the Agency, based on requests for the retransfer of rations, accounts for about 8,000 displaced refugees as having returned to the occupied territories of the

West Bank and the Gaza Strip between July 1967 and July 1974. This number is a small proportion (15 per cent) of the total number of displaced refugees and displaced persons reported by the Permanent Representative of Israel, in his note of 20 August 1974 to the Secretary-General, as having returned.

5. The following report on developments concerning the matters relating to refugees in the Gaza Strip referred to in the resolution is based on information received from the Commissioner-General of UNRWA.

6. Since the publication of the Secretary-General's report of last year, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 2963 C (XXVII) (A/9155), there have been 12 cases of punitive demolition of refugee shelters in the camps in the Gaza Strip. The Agency has continued to protest to the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs against such demolitions and has asked for their cessation. Appropriate claims for compensation have also been made to the Israel military authorities, but, as in previous cases of punitive demolition, these claims have not been paid.

7. Reference was made in last year's report (A/9155, paras. 5, 6 and 7) to the joint survey, conducted by the Agency and the Israel authorities in 1973, of families considered by the Agency to be still unsatisfactorily housed as a consequence of the large-scale demolitions in 1971 in the Gaza Strip (described in documents A/8383 and Add.1 and A/8814). ^{1/} This survey had shown that, of a total of 942 families surveyed, 706 families were still inadequately housed, of whom 266 were considered to be serious cases of hardship (A/9155, para. 7). The Agency's claim for compensation, of approximately \$417,000, payment of which would have enabled it to construct new housing, has not been met, and the Agency has continued to press the Israel authorities at various levels for urgent action to provide adequate accommodation for these refugee families. Eventually, it was formally confirmed to the Commissioner-General, by letter of 11 August 1974 from the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, that, as a first step in a programme of rehousing, 56 of the hardship cases, from the Rafah Camp, would be given free accommodation in a nearby housing project established by the Israel authorities. This housing project is the same one in which the refugees who were affected by the Israeli road construction in 1972/1973 in Rafah Camp were offered new housing for purchase (see A/9155, paras. 9, 10 and 11).

8. The Israel authorities have also declared their intention, as the next step in the programme, to make available in new housing in the Bureij area 100 houses (or residential units) free-of-charge to other hardship cases from the Beach and Jabalia Camps. Discussions are taking place between the Agency and the Israel authorities in Gaza on the arrangements for the construction of this new housing.

9. There is therefore an assurance from the Israel authorities of housing for 156 of the 266 hardship cases. The Agency is pursuing with the Israel authorities

^{1/} Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-seventh Session, Annexes, agenda item 40, document A/8814.

the housing of the balance of the hardship cases, as a first priority, and also of the other families unsatisfactorily housed.

10. There were further demolitions in the Rafah Camp, the reason for which given by the Israel authorities was security considerations. By 30 June 1974, 149 Agency-built shelter rooms, 6 shelter rooms built with the Agency's assistance and 160 privately-built shelter rooms were demolished, affecting 148 families. The demolitions were carried out by the refugees concerned in order to salvage materials (see A/9155, para. 11). The refugees affected are being given the option by the Israel authorities of purchasing housing, on the instalment plan, in a housing project constructed by the military authorities in the vicinity of the camp (and of the international line between the Gaza Strip and Sinai), or occupying Agency shelters in the camp vacated by other refugees opting for the new housing whose shelters were not affected by the demolitions. Compensation is paid to the refugees by the Israel authorities only for demolished privately-built rooms and additions.

11. Of the 148 families who demolished their shelters, 132 opted for new accommodation in the housing project constructed by the Israel authorities. Of the remaining 16 families, 6 have been allocated vacated shelters in the camp, 4 have moved elsewhere and the remaining 6 are believed to be in temporary accommodation.

12. In view of the different contexts in which demolitions have taken place and the new housing schemes which have been established in the Gaza Strip, it may be useful to distinguish the various categories. One category is that in which the Israel authorities, in response to a protest by the Agency in 1969, have given advance notice to the Agency of their intention to demolish shelters in order to construct or widen roads through a camp for security reasons, and have refrained from actual demolition in order to give the Agency time to construct alternative accommodation at the expense of the Israel authorities. Reference may be made to the Commissioner-General's annual reports to the General Assembly for 1969-1970, 2/ 1970-1971, 3/ 1971-1972, 4/ and 1972-1973. 5/ In this case, the new housing offsets the demolition of the shelters.

13. A second category is constituted by the large-scale demolition of shelters in the Jabalia, Beach and Rafah Camps in July/August 1971, in which adequate alternative accommodation was not provided in advance of demolition and the consequences of which for the refugees have been brought out in preceding reports (A/8383 and Add.1, A/8814 and A/9155).

2/ Ibid., Twenty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/8013), paras. 13 (last sentence) and 58.

3/ Ibid., Twenty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/8413), para. 64.

4/ Ibid., Twenty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/8713 and Corr.1 and 2), para. 60.

5/ Ibid., Twenty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/9013), para. 74.

14. A third category consists of the demolitions which began towards the end of 1972 and affected the Rafah and Khan Yunis Camps. In this case, the refugees affected are given the option of purchasing new government housing (generally of a higher standard than the shelters demolished) or of moving into shelters vacated by those who have opted for the new Israel Government housing, and whose shelters were not affected by the demolitions. Compensation is paid only for privately-built shelters and additions. It should be explained here that the Israel authorities have undertaken three new housing projects in the vicinity of Rafah and one in Khan Yunis, with a second project near Khan Yunis apparently now under consideration. In addition, there are schemes for the sale of plots of land to Gaza inhabitants, including refugees. Accommodation in these housing projects can be acquired only by purchase, but may be effected on an instalment plan. These projects were not intended to provide free accommodation in replacement of demolished shelters and the Agency has not been involved in their planning or construction. It is only very recently that (as indicated in paragraph 7 above) the Israel authorities have agreed to make available some accommodation in one of the projects, free-of-charge, for refugee families in hardship as a result of demolitions unrelated to the projects.

15. The fourth and final category consists of the punitive demolition of shelters. No alternative accommodation is provided in such cases and compensation is paid only for any accidental damage caused to adjacent structures and not for the demolished shelters.

16. Certain pertinent figures have been provided by the Commissioner-General and are given below relating to the demolition of refugee shelters and the provision of alternative accommodation.

17. Between July 1967 and 30 June 1974, 11,473 shelter rooms (falling within one of the four categories mentioned above) were demolished in the refugee camps in the Gaza Strip by or at the instance of the Israel authorities, affecting 4,209 refugee families. Of these families, 878 have been provided with free alternative accommodation in new housing constructed by the Agency at the expense of the Israel authorities (category 1, para. 12 above) and a further 25 families have also been provided with new housing constructed by the Agency with funds derived from the settlement by the Israel authorities of a claim for the demolition of the original shelters. An additional 429 families have purchased new housing in one of the new Israel housing projects (category 3, para. 14 above); 43 families affected by the large-scale demolitions in July/August 1971 (category 2, para. 13 above) have also purchased such housing. Sixty-eight other families have obtained alternative accommodation in the shelters in the camps vacated by those who have opted for the new Israel Government housing and whose shelters were not affected by the demolitions. In brief, of the 4,209 families affected, 1,443 have found alternative accommodation in a total of about 3,190 rooms (averaging about 3 rooms per family) in new housing or in shelters vacated in connexion with new housing. As reported earlier (see A/9383 and Add.1 and A/8814), some alternative accommodation was provided, rent-free for a period, within the Gaza Strip and in El Arish, for families whose shelters were demolished in July and August 1971, but a large number remained inadequately housed (see para. 7 above).

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18. It should be added that the construction of more new housing by the Israel authorities is in progress, as indicated in paragraph 14 above. The Agency understands that the construction projects in the vicinity of Rafah should, when completed, provide about 530 residential units of two or three rooms each, in addition to the units already completed and allotted. It is not clear, however, whether, as in previous cases, this new housing will be available only for purchase.
