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PROBLEMS OF ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES

Communication from the General Council of the  
International Refugee Organization

Note by the Secretary-General: The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the Members of the General Assembly resolution No. 97 of the General Council of the International Refugee Organization, adopted at its 93rd meeting on 27 October 1951, together with the communication to which it refers.

TEXT OF RESOLUTION NO. 97 OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

The General Council of the International Refugee Organization,  
Bearing in mind

the invitation of the General Assembly of the United Nations, contained in Assembly resolution 430 (V) of 14 December 1950, to transmit to it a communication on the problems of assistance to refugees,

Having reviewed

the residual problems which will remain at the termination of the activities of the International Refugee Organization,

Resolves

to request the Director-General to transmit the attached communication on its behalf to the General Assembly of the United Nations, for consideration at its sixth session.

COMMUNICATION TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS

1. The General Council of the International Refugee Organization, in response to the invitation contained in paragraph 2 of resolution 430 (V) adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 14 December 1950, transmits the following communication. This communication does not constitute a final report of the Organization, but aims solely to supply information to the General Assembly for the purpose of assisting the Assembly in its examination of the problem of assistance to refugees.
2. The General Council of the International Refugee Organization at its eighth session (October 1951) determined that it had sufficient funds available to continue operations until 1 January 1952, and that if additional assets arising out of operations are realized, it may prove possible to assist and to re-establish several additional thousand refugees in January and February, 1952. The Organization has already repatriated and resettled in excess of a million refugees, and will have made reasonably satisfactory provision for approximately 47,000 refugees and their dependants, by the end of 1951, who, because of age or infirmity, require permanent institutional or other forms of care. The problem of assistance to refugees in all territories where they have been established, both in Europe and overseas, has been satisfactorily solved, thanks either to good conditions of employment in those countries or to the willingness of the receiving governments to help the refugees.
3. It can now be anticipated, however, that in spite of all efforts which the Organization has made or will make before termination, limited numbers of refugees will remain in certain areas whose problems, in the judgment of the General Council, will not have been satisfactorily resolved.
4. The Organization has devoted special attention to the resolution of the problems of refugees in the areas described in this communication, but, because of limitations of time and resources and the presence of other factors in the situations set forth in this communication, must report that certain refugees will remain in their present areas of residence, facing doubtful prospects of achieving assimilation or self-maintenance in the immediate future. Generally speaking, the conditions under which they remain do not offer opportunities for the future; in some areas the level of economic activity is inadequate to meet the requirements of the indigenous population, and in consequence refugees presenting claims for

/assistance

assistance on purely humanitarian grounds cannot be integrated in the local economies; in other areas the refugees are unwelcome where they now are on political grounds but unable to depart, or local measures for their relief or institutions for their care are unavailable or inadequate.

## EUROPE

### Germany

5. In Germany the presence and continuing influx of large numbers of refugees of German ethnic origin, the shortage of housing necessitating the residence of substantial numbers in camps, unemployment and unbalance in the local economy make the assimilation of refugees formerly under IRO care difficult. Of 140,000 IRO refugees remaining in that country, 60,000 may be considered to be satisfactorily established, while the remaining 80,000 desiring emigration, have been unable for various reasons to qualify for resettlement and must, therefore, seek assimilation in Germany. The indigent among the latter group not only constitute a burden upon public relief rolls but present a problem which strains the capacity of voluntary agencies to meet. Although the situation of refugees in general tends to improve, with the rising level of the German economy, progress in this direction is slow and consequently the conditions under which the refugees live are not considered to be wholly satisfactory.

### Austria

6. Approximately 24,000 refugees heretofore under the care of IRO will remain in Austria, some of whom will desire emigration. Austria has also received large numbers of refugees of German ethnic origin and suffers from over-population, a shortage of housing and unemployment. The refugees remaining in Austria will, therefore, face great difficulties in achieving assimilation and self dependence.

### Italy

7. The presence in Italy of 24,000 refugees within the mandate of the IRO presents a very serious problem on account of the already existing considerable excess of manpower due to the natural increase in the population. The Italian Government, which has to face the unemployment of its own population, is, consequently, not in a position to offer either assistance or employment to these refugees who, therefore, would prefer to emigrate if they were offered the possibility of doing so.

/Trieste

Trieste

8. The International Refugee Organization has made intensive efforts to resettle refugees entering the Free Territory of Trieste, but some 7,000 will remain awaiting disposition after the Organization ceases operations. Of these, 900, including persons suffering from tuberculosis and other serious illnesses, present problems of continuing care. Some of these refugees are housed in Allied Military Government Camps and others are living in over-crowded private housing. These refugees are under the administration of the Allied Military Authorities, but the expense of their care is borne by the Italian Government. Moreover, the flow of refugees into Trieste continues at a rate slightly in excess of departures from the area.

Greece

9. In Greece, although the IRO has endeavoured during the year to resettle as many as possible of the refugees within its mandate, it has not been possible for these resettlement operations to keep pace with the rate of arrivals of new refugees. The Government of Greece is doing everything in its power to improve conditions for them, but it already has to provide for the refugees of Greek nationality or Greek ethnic origin whose presence in the country in large numbers is the result of the disturbed conditions prevailing on its northern frontiers. In view of the country's very limited resources and the difficult economic situation it has to face, Greece will be unable to absorb political refugees of foreign origin. It is therefore expected that some 4,500 refugees registered with the IRO will still not have been established by the time the Organization ceases to exist, and will consequently find themselves in a very difficult position.

Turkey

10. The situation of approximately 300 refugees in Turkey will continue to be one of insecurity. Internal resources for their care are unavailable, and Turkey is already beset by the influx of large numbers of refugees of Turkish origin from Bulgaria.

Spain and Portugal

11. The Organization has been unable to negotiate with the Spanish Government satisfactory living arrangements for approximately 500 refugees in Spain. Of these, fifty have been receiving assistance from the IRO which will be discontinued on its termination.

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12. The Organization has also failed to make satisfactory arrangements with respect to 100 refugees remaining in Portugal. They will be unable to secure work and residence permits and will face an uncertain future.

#### New Refugees

13. It is estimated that from 1,000 to 1,500 refugees are entering Germany, Austria, Turkey, Greece, Trieste and Italy from Eastern European countries monthly. Their impact is felt also in nearly every country of Western Europe, where political asylum is an established tradition. In all of the areas of initial reception resources for their care are inadequate and many of these refugees must move on westward to find opportunities for a livelihood. This continuous influx underlines the permanent character of the refugee problem, particularly in Europe, which has been a matter of concern to international bodies ever since the end of the First World War.

#### MIDDLE EAST

14. In spite of the best efforts of the Organization with the assistance of selection missions sent to the area by three countries of reception, 250 refugees within the mandate of the IRO remain in the Middle East, of whom 90 are receiving maintenance assistance from the IRO which will be discontinued by 1 January 1952. The countries of the Middle East already overburdened with problems of Palestinian refugees are unable to assist IRO refugees, and local facilities for their relief are unavailable.

#### FAR EAST

##### China

15. The situation of refugees in China causes the greatest concern. There remain there about 5,000 refugees of European origin, 2,000 of whom are at present receiving care and maintenance from the IRO. Four hundred of these will require continuing institutional care because of their age, illness or other disability. The number of refugees requiring assistance will inevitably increase as the present resources of the persons concerned are diminishing. In spite of the efforts of the Organization no authority or private agency or group has so far accepted responsibility for the assistance of these refugees when the IRO will have disappeared. If no assistance is given to them they will undoubtedly be in a most desperate situation.

/Philippine Islands

Philippine Islands

16. In 1949 the Philippine Government, at the request of the IRO, offered temporary asylum to 5,500 refugees from Shanghai on the condition that the Organization would eventually remove them to other areas. The IRO has succeeded in resettling 5,350 refugees from this group. There will remain 150 refugees on the Island of Samar, many of whom require institutional care. The Organization has found it impossible to place this residual group elsewhere. In view of its previous commitment, the Organization will endeavour in the time remaining to make the best arrangements possible, but the success of this effort remains in doubt at this time.

## CONCLUSIONS

17. It must be borne in mind that in most of the countries mentioned above the situation of refugees coming within the mandate of the IRO is rendered precarious by the large numbers of refugees or other persons entering these areas, who, while outside the scope of the competence of the IRO, at the same time reduce considerably the opportunities of housing and employment available to refugees under the protection of the Organization.

18. In considering these residual problems for which it is not expected that satisfactory solutions will be found before the termination of IRO operations, the representatives of the Member Governments at the Eighth Session of the General Council were not prepared to present the position of their Governments as to measures which might be taken, in further efforts to resolve those problems by the General Assembly.

19. Nevertheless, they are agreed that, although the problems inherent in the situation as here set out are clearly not of sufficient magnitude to justify the maintenance of the IRO, they are so grave in terms of human suffering that they call for urgent consideration by the United Nations.

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