



UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE
GENERAL COMMITTEE
Report to the Conciliation Commission
on the Establishment of Joint Committees

1. At the request of the Commission, the General Committee has considered, in connection with the procedure at present under consideration by the Commission, the possibilities of establishing joint committees to consider all questions outstanding between the parties.

The General Committee is of the opinion that the formation of such committees should not be undertaken piecemeal but that, on the contrary, a definite plan should be approved setting forth the procedure to be followed in their establishment, taking into consideration the relative priority to be allocated to each one.

Having in mind the failure of the attempt to establish a limited ad hoc committee on the Egyptian proposals concerning Gaza and the attitude of mind prevailing among the parties concerned which this failure indicates, the General Committee believes that only by an overall plan can the Commission accommodate the divergent views of the parties, who on the one hand demand comprehensive direct peace negotiations and on the other the mediation of the Commission.

2. Having surveyed the questions outstanding between the parties, the General Committee has concluded that these can be divided into those that interest Israel, and a single Arab State only and those that may interest more than one Arab State and which therefore offer the alternative of being treated in committees with the Arab representatives sitting singly or collectively. The General Committee has instructed the Secretariat to make a study of all questions on the Committee's agenda, as well as any others that it might consider suitable, in order to elucidate the nature of the problem involved in each case and in consequence to permit their classification among the above categories.

3. From the information already at the General Committee's disposal, it is evident that two main kinds of committees could be established to deal with the various questions outstanding between the parties: Bilateral Committees, whether comprehensive or specific, and Multilateral Ad Hoc Committees. (It should be noted that the latter might easily shrink to Bilateral Ad Hoc Committees if their establishment is accepted by only one Arab State.) The difference between these two types of committee is that in the former by definition the exclusive interest of two States determines the extent of the subject under discussion, whereas in the latter the extent of the subject determines the interest of the parties and consequently the membership of the committee.

4. The General Committee is of the opinion that in principle all discussions outstanding between the parties, except for those to be treated in Ad Hoc Committees, should be dealt with in Bilateral Committees. Thus, four committees would be formed to deal with questions outstanding between Israel on the one hand and Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Egypt respectively on the other. Should it be necessary these committees could subdivide their subject matter further as required and also appoint special working groups to study particular questions.

5. The General Committee, pending the completion of the study entrusted to the Secretariat, considers that a number of ad hoc committees should be established to deal with questions of interest to two or more of the Arab States, such as an Economic Committee to deal with matters affecting commercial relations and related questions, a Technical Committee to deal with land communications, telecommunications, water supply and other such matters, and a Committee to settle urgent questions, a temporary solution of which is desired pending the final settlement. The memberships of these committees might vary considerably in accordance with the particular subject under discussion.

6. On the matter of compensation, which falls within a category by itself since it is mainly an issue between the Israeli Government and the Commission itself, the General Committee suggests that the negotiations be carried out directly by the Commission in consultation with the Arab refugee organizations, the Arab delegations and other interested parties.

The General Committee is of the opinion that a survey group should eventually be established for the purpose of carrying out an evaluation of the property involved in the question of compensation as well as a study of the best methods of payment. It would be desirable for the Commission to inform the Israeli representatives in the course of its discussions concerning the creation of the committees under the new procedure that it envisages the establishment of such a survey group and that it requests the collaboration of the Government of Israel in the execution of this group's task. The Government of Israel could also be informed at that time that the Commission is considering the appointment of a trustee through whom the actual payments would be made. The Commission could also, if it considers it desirable, request the Government of Israel to consent to make, as soon as possible, an initial token payment to the trustee. The Commission could at this stage decide whether it would serve a useful purpose to establish a joint committee to discuss this question further.

7. In connection with the establishment of the joint committees enumerated in paragraphs 3 and 4 above, the General Committee is of the opinion that the Commission should be prepared to submit the question of their establishment to the consideration of the parties upon the acceptance by one or more of them of the Commission's recent proposals.

It should be noted that the creation of each of these committees is dependent neither on the formation of others nor on the acceptance of all the Arab States. It is quite possible for the Commission to progress in its work through one bilateral committee and through the ad hoc committees with restricted membership.