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

Palestine refugees in the West Bank

Report of the Secretary-General

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 41/69 J of 3 December 1986, entitled "Palestine refugees in the West Bank", the operative paragraphs of which read as follows:

"The General Assembly,

"...

"1. Calls once again upon Israel to abandon those plans and to refrain from any action that leads to the removal and resettlement of Palestine refugees in the West Bank and from the destruction of their camps;

"2. Requests the Secretary-General, in co-operation with the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, to keep the matter under close supervision and to report to the General Assembly, before the opening of its forty-second session, on any developments regarding this matter."

2. On 21 January 1987, the Secretary-General addressed a note verbale to the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations, in which, inter alia, he drew attention to his reporting responsibility under the resolution and requested the Permanent Representative to inform him of any steps his Government had taken or envisaged taking in implementation of the relevant provisions of the resolution. In his reply dated 8 July 1987, the Acting Permanent Representative of Israel stated as follows:

"Israel's position on this resolution has been fully set out in statements by Israel's representative to the Special Political Committee on 20 November 1984 (A/SPC/39/PV.35), on 8 November 1985 (A/SPC/40/SR.26), on 15 November 1985 (A/SPC/40/SR.34), on 28 October 1986 (A/SPC/41/SR.14) and in the report of the Secretary-General (A/41/568) dated 3 September 1986."

3. The position of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA remains as set out in previous reports of the Secretary-General (see, for example, A/40/615 and A/39/372) that he would not object if refugees in the camps voluntarily sought better housing, whether by improving existing housing or moving into new housing. He would, however, strongly object if any pressure or coercion were used to make refugees move or comply with any scheme. As pointed out in earlier reports, refugees will not lose eligibility for UNRWA's services by the mere fact of relocation outside the camps. As at 30 June 1987, of the 373,586 registered refugees in the West Bank, 278,762 live outside the camps.
