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**PROGRESS REPORT OF THE ACTING MEDIATOR FOR PALESTINE
SUBMITTED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR TRANSMISSION TO THE
MEMBERS OF THE UNITED NATIONS**

(Supplement to [Document A/648](#) (Part Three))

Introduction

1. In the last paragraph of Part Three of his Progress Report to the Secretary-General for transmission to the members of the United Nations (A/648 Part III) the late Mediator, Count Bernadotte, wrote:

"The choice is between saving the lives of many thousands of people now or permitting them to die. The situation of the majority of these hapless refugees is already tragic, and to prevent them from being overwhelmed by further disaster and to make possible their ultimate rehabilitation, it is my earnest hope that the international community will give all necessary support to make the measures I have outlined fully effective. I believe that for the international community to accept its share of responsibility for the refugees of Palestine is one of the minimum conditions for the success of its efforts to bring peace to that land."

2. The situation which Count Bernadotte outlined in his report and the suggestions which he advanced to meet that situation require elaboration and, to some extent, modification in the light of developments and additional information acquired during the intervening period. This is the purpose of the present report.

3. The urgency of the need for assistance has been accentuated. The amounts contributed in response to the Mediator's appeal have been far from adequate to meet the need. The problem is far beyond the capacity of the Arab States and the refugees must therefore look to the generosity of the world.

The Present Situation

4. The situation of the Palestine refugees is now critical, and unless adequate and effective aid comes quickly, their position will become desperate within a few weeks. Indeed there is already a marked increase in preventable deaths, especially among children.

5. The rapid deterioration that has set in since the time of the Mediator's report is due mainly to three factors.

(a) In the first place, the refugees have been supported up to now, partly by their own resources of cash and of foodstuffs, and partly by the resources of the governments of the various territories in which they had taken shelter. Both these resources are now running dry. At the outset, as mentioned in the Mediator's report, an attempt was made by the governments concerned - Transjordan and Egypt undertaking the actual supply of foodstuffs to refugees in the northern and southern areas of Palestine respectively - to provide 500 grams of flour per person. In some areas this ration fell first to 300 grams and then to 150, and ultimately, in the Nablus/Jenin area, regular distribution entirely ceased and an acute crisis developed. Actual cases of deaths from starvation are being reported with increasing frequency.

(b) Secondly, the approach of winter has made the question of shelter a crucial one. During the summer and early autumn hundreds of thousands of refugees were able to live in the open air or under makeshift tents, but the onset of cold and rainy weather, particularly in the higher altitudes where large numbers are still concentrated, makes other arrangements essential. Approximately 95,000 of the refugees are living under trees, without shelter of any kind; while at least 120,000 are unprovided with blankets, since the bulk of the refugees left their homes on foot at short notice taking little or nothing with them. Owing to these conditions among others, the health situation, which in the early stages had not been serious, is now beginning to cause concern: malaria and typhoid are markedly on the increase, and other diseases have made an appearance.

(c) Thirdly, as a result of careful investigation of the numbers involved, the immense scope of the problem has now become more apparent. Part Three of the Mediator's progress report tentatively placed the total number of Arab refugees at 360,000; and the total of Jewish refugees within Jewish controlled territory at 7,000. The figure for Arab refugees must now be revised upwards to 472,000 (see Appendix A). This very substantial increase is partly due to more

complete registration and to the fact that any who were temporarily able to support themselves have exhausted their resources and are applying for relief. But it is also due to an increase in the actual number of refugees as those previously in hiding in Israeli-held territory filter through the lines. The present distribution is approximately as follows:

Palestine:	
North	154,000
South	83,000
Syria:	73,000
Lebanon:	61,000
Transjordan:	88,000
Egypt:	9,000
Iraq:	4,000
	<u>472,000</u>

This figure will inevitably be increased still further and is likely shortly to reach a maximum of slightly over 500,000. From this figure there will doubtless be some recession during 1949, but since this cannot be estimated exactly, a figure of 500,000 has been accepted here as a basis for calculation. The original figure of 7,000 for Jewish refugees quoted in the Mediator's report, representing Jewish women and children who have been evacuated from agricultural group settlements, has not been changed by any later representations by the Israeli authorities.

6. These figures for Arab and Jewish refugees do not include the large number of persons who have not left their own districts but who are, nevertheless, totally destitute as a result of military operations.

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