



UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE
GENERAL COMMITTEE
SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FORTY-NINTH MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 1 February 1950, at 3.30 p.m.

Present:	Mr. BARCO	(United States of America)	Chairman
	Mr. TOUSSAINT	(France)	
	Mr. ERALP	(Turkey)	
	Mr. de AZCARATE		Principal Secretary

REUNION OF SEPARATED FAMILIES

The CHAIRMAN told the Committee that the [report](#) of the Commission's representative in Jerusalem, reproduced as [Document COM.GEN.W/9](#), showed that for the first time members of separated families had actually returned to Israel. A question to be decided was whether a press release should be issued drawing attention to the significance of these first repatriations which, though not very extensive, could be attributed to the Commission's efforts. The Secretariat had drawn up a draft press release for the Committee's consideration.

Mr. ERALP (Turkey) was of the opinion that the contents of the [report](#) should be communicated to the delegations of the Arab States. While recognizing the desirability in principle of issuing a press release, he thought that as the number of repatriations was so small; it was essential to emphasize that further repatriations would follow.

Mr. TOUSSAINT (France) would have liked the press release to be worded less emphatically in view of the fact that the operation referred to covered only a small proportion of refugees.

The CHAIRMAN expressed the view that the General Committee should not confine itself to a mere statement of fact but should make it clear that the results achieved were the first fruits of long standing efforts and had come at an opportune moment in that they might provide a favourable atmosphere at a time when there was a possibility of negotiations being resumed.

It should also be made clear that not all of those entitled to benefit by the scheme had taken advantage of it.

The PRINCIPAL SECRETARY expressed the opinion that the Committee would be well advised in the course of its deliberations (1) to take official cognizance and express its appreciation of the [report](#); (2) to decide whether it should be communicated to the Arab representatives. If it so decided, the private comments of the Commission's representative in Jerusalem and quite a number of points not suitable for publication should first be taken out of the text. In that connection he thought that it would be best to instruct the Secretariat to draw up a memorandum in which only the factual parts of the [report](#) would be included; (3) to study the question of publicity. He himself was of the opinion that the press should be informed. It was true that if the figures for repatriated refugees were compared with those for refugees not repatriated the result was not a flattering one, but it should be pointed out that only separated families were affected, and possibly the total number of separated families was not very large in which case the repatriations effected might represent a not inconsiderable proportion.

The CHAIRMAN expressed his agreement with the various proposals made by the Principal Secretary, but observed in regard to the first point that the Committee had already taken cognizance of the report, the author of which was to be congratulated.

The PRINCIPAL SECRETARY suggested a meeting with the Arab and Israeli delegations but, after discussion, *the Committee decided* to confine itself to the transmission of a memorandum together with a covering letter.

Mr. LADAS (Secretariat) suggested that after receiving the memorandum the delegations might express a wish to meet the Committee.

The CHAIRMAN, replying to a question by Mr. Ladas, said that in his opinion identical covering letters should be sent to each of the Arab delegations and that a similar communication might be transmitted to the Israeli representative as well.

The General Committee then gave careful consideration to the draft press release prepared by the Secretariat and, after some amendments had been made, approved the following text:

“The General Committee of the Conciliation Commission in a meeting held yesterday afternoon considered a [report](#) received from the Commission’s secretariat in Jerusalem, on the progress achieved in the plan for the reunion in Israel of Arab refugee families separated by the recent war in Palestine. Although this plan was agreed upon last summer in Lausanne and the Commission has closely followed the subsequent administrative arrangements between the parties, the actual operation has only started coming into full swing during the last few weeks.

In December and January a total of 790 dependents from Lebanon and Jordan have rejoined their families in Israel. The reunion of refugee families is being carried out under an agreement reached between Israel and the Arab States under the auspices of the General Committee, according to which certain persons dependent on Arab breadwinners resident in Israel were entitled to rejoin them, as a preliminary measure of humanitarian nature.

The Israeli authorities transmit to the Arab States lists of those applications from Arab breadwinners in Israel for the return of their relatives which have been approved as falling within the framework of the agreement. The number of refugees in Lebanon thus far authorized to return by the Israeli authorities amounts to 921. Of these, 523 have actually rejoined their families. The number of refugees in Jordan authorized to return up to now amount to about 500 of whom 267 have crossed into Israel.

Negotiations are in progress in Jerusalem between Israeli and Jordanian authorities for the widening of the formula governing the return of Arab dependents to Israel. Though no crossings have yet taken place from Syria, the competent Syrian authorities are discussing the details of the repatriation plan with representatives of Israel. The Egyptian authorities in Gaza are at present engaged in processing the first list of 250 dependents submitted by Israel for refugees in that area.

In its meeting yesterday the General Committee decided to communicate the information at its disposal to the Arab and Israeli delegations.

The General Committee intends to pursue negotiations here with all the parties concerned for the purpose of extending the plan for repatriation of separated refugee families.”

CULTIVATION OF LANDS SITUATED IN ISRAELI CONTROLLED TERRITORY AND BELONGING TO ARABS RESIDENT IN ARAB CONTROLLED TERRITORY IN THE TULKARM AREA

The CHAIRMAN said it seemed unlikely that there would be any progress in regard to this question until peace was signed. That was a very unfortunate state of affairs for Arabs separated from their lands.

On the Chairman’s proposal the General Committee *decided to report to the Commission on the matter* .

FROZEN ARAB ASSETS

The PRINCIPAL SECRETARY reported that in accordance with the General Committee’s decision at its last meeting when it advocated an increase in the amounts to be unfrozen by Israel, he had informed the Israeli representative, Mr. Rafael, of the General Committee’s decision at an interview also attended by Dr. Servoise. He had told Mr. Rafael that in the event of the Israeli representative taking a favourable view of the scheme the Mixed Committee of Experts would be convened to report to the General Committee on the steps to be taken. If, on the other hand, the reply of the Israeli representative should be unfavourable, the impossibility of arriving at the arrangement proposed would be reported to the General Committee which in its turn would in due course report to the Commission.

Mr. Rafael had appeared personally to be interested in arriving at a satisfactory solution and to comprehend the political significance which might lie in an act of acceptance, but had naturally adopted an attitude of extreme reserve pending the receipt of instructions from his Government.

The CHAIRMAN thanked the Principal Secretary for his statement and added that the General Committee would continue to follow developments,

The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.