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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON PALESTINE
VERBATIM RECORD OF THE THIRTY-EIGHTH MEETING (PUBLIC)
Held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Beirut, Lebanon, on Tuesday 22 July 1947 at 11 a.m.

PRESENT:

CHAIRMAN:

Mr. Sandstrom	Sweden
Mr. Hood	Australia
Mr. Rand	Canada
Mr. Lisicky	Czechoslovakia
Mr. Garcia Granados	Guatemala
Sir Abdur Rahman	India
Mr. Entezam	Iraq
Mr. Blom	Netherlands
Mr. Garcia Salazar	Peru
Mr. Fabregat	Uruguay
Mr. Simic	Yugoslavia
Mr. Hoo (Assistant Secretary General)	
Mr. Garcia Robles (Secretary)	

SECRETARIAT:

Statements by the representatives of the Arab countries.

CHAIRMAN: I declare the meeting called to order, and I call upon His Excellency, the President of the Council of Lebanon.

(H.E. the President of the Council of Lebanon spoke in Arabic).

CHAIRMAN: I understand that a translation has been prepared. I request that it be read.

H.E. (Vice President of the Council of Lebanon (Translation from Arabic):

Gentlemen, on behalf of the Lebanese Government and the other Arab Governments who have chosen to meet in Lebanon, I wish to extend to you a hearty welcome, and I sincerely hope that your brief stay among us will be very happy.

We lay before you a case in which we have borne many hardships. It is gratifying, however, to feel that the Arabs had no hand in creating this problem nor in inflicting it upon the United Nations and the rest of the world.

In passing through Lebanon, a sister State of Palestine and co-partner in the annals of history, you may have seen remnants of what in the past this of spiritual value. You must have observed signs of modern development in a people which has only recently begun to attempt to take an active part in one universal civilization after it had been liberated from the fetters that had constrained its activities in the attainment of possible territory.

You have been sent by the United Nations to look into a problem that continues to be a source of anxiety in a sensitive part of the world and to find for it a proper solution in accordance with the principles laid down by the United Nations as a base for international relations. The problem may seem complicated. It may seem impossible to find a final settlement. It is in fact very simple if settled in the light of right, as no doubt you will be doing. Much has been said about the rights of the Arabs and the claims of the Zionists. The Arabs never found it necessary to invent theories to supplement their rights. It suffices them to refer to conscience for the manifestation of their unmistakable right.

We often assume the position of those free peoples who look at our case in Palestine from a distance. We try to imagine whether we could refrain from helping the Arabs of Palestine without having first ignored the democratic feelings for which we have given great sacrifices. We often stand as Jews to compare the Zionist method of pressing their claims on the basis of religious grounds and that theory of the lords of races who caused the most terrible war in history.

In passing through Lebanon, a sister State of Palestine, you must have seen remnants of what in the past this country has contributed in the way of civilization. That which you have seen was not the product of foreign funds, bringing forth artificial prosperity. In order to maintain that prosperity; artificial sustenance must be continued. What you saw was the result of the efforts of this people, who do not discriminate between individual success, but unite in constructive work as they have united in the past for the achievement of independence and sovereignty.

Gentlemen, the Arab countries which have been together for thousands of years, free from anything which marred their harmony, will not allow the imposition of a home that will menace their close relationship. They will therefore defend themselves by defending Arab Palestine and by putting an end to Zionist ambitions. Thus they will destroy the home of evil in the Middle East, will serve world peace and will prove their loyalty to the principles of human rights.

CHAIRMAN: Your Excellency, I wish to thank you for the very kind words of welcome you have directed to us.

First, I wish to thank very sincerely the representatives of all the Arab States who accepted our invitation to come here to help us solve this very difficult problem. I now call upon His Excellency, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Lebanon.

Mr. FRANGE (Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Lebanon) (translation from French): Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, the Governments of the Arab States, though convinced that there is only one solution for the Palestinian problem, namely, cessation of the Mandate and independence for Palestine, and that any investigation of so obvious a question has become unnecessary, nevertheless warmly welcomed the invitation of your Committee, as representative of the highest international authority the world has yet known.

The Governments of the Arab States are persuaded that the Committee, desirous of establishing the conditions necessary for international cooperation, as the result of its investigation will adopt recommendations in conformity with the principles of self-determination and independence consecrated by the United Nations Charter. The Governments of the Arab States do not intend to enumerate in this Memorandum all the arguments in support of the Palestine case. They will confine themselves to drawing the Committee's attention to two main points:

1. Palestine's right to self-determination.
2. The need to maintain peace in the Middle East.

I. Palestine's right to self-determination.

When the Balfour Declaration was issued, envisaging the establishment of a Jewish national home and opening the way for Zionist immigration, the Arabs formed 93% of the population of Palestine. The Declaration, which cannot in any case be considered valid as regards Arab Palestine, ignored Palestine's right to self-determination both at the time it was issued and afterwards. Later, attempts were even made to silence the Arabs and bring them to an attitude of resignation. Far from stifling their claims, these attempts had the effect of strengthening their desire for liberation and their faith in the justice of their cause.

Their struggle for independence and for the safeguarding of their rights started at the beginning of this century with the natural awakening of the Arab peoples and the movement against Ottoman domination. They took part in this liberation movement and spared no effort or sacrifice. Together with the rest of the Arabs, they rose against the Turks, fighting alongside the Allies on all the battlefields of the Middle-East, in the Hedjaz, Palestine; Syria, the Lebanon, and Iraq.

As partners of the victorious Allies in 1918, they were entitled to enjoy the freedom for which the Allies had fought. But that freedom to which they aspired and for which they had fought was denied them; for reasons irrelevant to their case. Abruptly confronted by Zionist ambitions and Allied promises to satisfy them, the Arabs of Palestine were forced to turn their struggle against the Ottoman Empire into one against their own Allies.

The Allies renounced the promises they had made to the Arabs at the beginning of their struggle for independence, imposing a mandate system which is nothing less than colonization. And the strictest of the mandates was the one applied to Palestine.

In spite of the promises made in the course of hostilities, the mandate system imposed upon all the Arab countries which had formed part of the old Ottoman Empire was applied at the same time, in all its severity, to Palestine. Whereas by the texts of the Mandates for the Lebanon, Syria and Iraq, the Mandatory Power was under obligation to assist the mandated State and lead it towards independence, the principle of which had been recognized by Article 22 of the League of Nations.

Covenant, the text of the Mandate for Palestine provided for the establishment of a Jewish national home and opened the door to immigration and the settlement of foreign Jews in Palestine.

The Mandate thereby distorted the normal development of Arab Palestine and deflected the natural course of its history. In the attempt to recover their lost freedom and independence, the Palestinian Arabs found themselves compelled not only to throw off the yoke of foreign control but also to struggle against the inroads of a foreign population whose ultimate aim was to relegate them to a secondary position in their own country.

Whilst the people of Iraq were casting off the heavy burden of the Mandate and Syria and the Lebanon freeing themselves from foreign occupation and gaining full independence and sovereignty, the situation in Palestine became steadily worse. Wave upon wave of Zionist immigrants streamed into the Holy Land. National liberation became nothing more than a mirage.

The origin of Palestine's troubles is to be found in two documents, which are null and valueless, although it is upon them that Zionist claims are based: the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate.

In the first of these documents, the British Government undertook to facilitate the establishment of a Jewish National Home, thereby violating the principle of self-determination and the rules of international law. At the time when the undertaking was given, Great Britain had no legal relations with Palestine, which then formed part of the Ottoman Empire. Further, the Balfour Declaration violates the undertakings given by the British Government concerning the Arabs in the letters exchanged between Sherif Hussein and Sir Henry MacMahon, recognizing Arab independence within boundaries which included Palestine. Finally, the Balfour Declaration contravened the 1918 Declaration which stated that the British Army was entering Palestine not as a conquering but as a liberating army.

As for the Mandate, it contains the same redhibitory defects as the Balfour Declaration. It also violates Article 22 of the League of Nations Covenant. Whereas the Covenant states that the purpose of the Mandate is to serve the interests of the mandated territory and requires the Mandatory to lead it towards independence, the text of the Palestine Mandate envisages placing Palestine under such political, administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of a Jewish National Home.

The same article of the League of Nations Covenant provides for consultation of the inhabitants of the mandated territories. The inhabitants of Palestine were not consulted.

However, the American King-Crane Commission, which was sent to Palestine in 1919, expressed its views on the Balfour declaration in the following terms:

"For 'a national home for the Jewish People' is not equivalent to making Palestine into a Jewish State; nor can the erection of such a Jewish State be accomplished without the gravest trespass upon the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine...The fact came out repeatedly in the Commission's conferences with Jewish representatives, that the Zionists looked forward to a practically complete dispossession of the present non-Jewish inhabitants of Palestine by various forms of purchase...To subject a people so minded to unlimited Jewish immigration...would be a gross violation of the principles (for which the Allied Powers had fought the war).

"The Peace Conference should not shut its eyes to the fact that the anti-Zionist feeling in Palestine and Syria is intense and not lightly to be flouted. No British officer, consulted by the Commissioners, believed that the Zionist programme could be carried out except by force of arms. The officers generally thought that a force of not less than 50,000 soldiers would be required...

"That of itself is evidence of a strong sense of the injustice of the Zionist program on the part of the non-Jewish populations of Palestine and Syria. Decisions requiring armies to carry them out are sometimes necessary but they are surely not gratuitously to be taken in the interests of serious injustice. For the initial claim often submitted by Zionist representatives, that they have a 'right' to Palestine, based on an occupation of 2,000 years ago, can hardly be seriously considered...

"It is to be remembered that the non-Jewish population of Palestine — nearly nine-tenths of the whole — is emphatically against the entire Zionist programme. The tables show that there was no one thing upon which the population of Palestine was more agreed than upon this...It must be believed that the meaning...of the complete Jewish occupation of Palestine has not been fully sensed by those who urge the extreme Zionist programme. It would intensify...the anti-Jewish feeling both in Palestine and in all other parts of the world which look to Palestine as the Holy Land."

The Zionists, however, were not satisfied with the Balfour Declaration or the Mandate, in spite of the extent to which these documents violate the sacred rights of the Arabs. They took advantage of the ambiguity of the texts in order to extinguish the very life of Arab Palestine.

Great Britain recognized the abnormal situation created by the conflicting Allied promises to the Arabs and Jews. She also recognized that in fulfilling her obligations as a Mandatory Power she came into conflict with the rights of the Arabs in their own country on the one hand, and on the other with the promises given in the Balfour Declaration, the result being to make application of that Mandate impossible. That is why she has referred the Palestine question to the United Nations. In his concluding statement, after the failure of the last Conference on Palestine, Mr. Bevin said:

"We shall explain to the United Nations that the Mandate has proved to be unworkable in practice and that the obligations undertaken to the two communities in Palestine have proved to be irreconcilable."

That is proof that both the Balfour declaration and the Mandate were irregular and could not provide the basis for an acceptable legal situation; and that therefore the Arabs are entitled to reject them and to regard an interpretation of either as contrary to the elementary principles of justice and implying a threat to the most cherished of rights, their right to existence.

To sum up, the right to self-determination to which the Arab people of Palestine are entitled and which they should be able to exercise, has been continually violated and is still violated today. It is none the less a natural, absolute, inalienable right, which neither force nor "fait accompli" can remove; and it consecrates the Arab claims and condemns Zionist ambitions.

The Governments of the Arab States looking towards the democratic principles on which the United Nations was founded as the best defence and surest guarantee of that right, demand the full application of those principles in Palestine. They are convinced that the Special Committee would not envisage a solution violating that right or the principles of the United Nations.

II. Threats to peace in the Middle East

The attitude of the Arab Governments and peoples to Zionism is based, secondly, upon their anxiety to maintain peace in the Middle East. Peace there is threatened by the expansionist aims and terrorist methods of Zionism.

1) At the outset the Zionist movement was content merely to look to Palestine for a refuge. Then it demanded a National Home. Having obtained that, it sought to extend its domain and create a kind of state within the Palestinian State, with its own institutions and finances, its own economy and its own army. Now the Zionists are planning to establish a Jewish State on Palestinian territory, a State which will take in the whole of Palestine. And even before achieving that, they are already seeking to spread further at the expense of the neighbouring Arab States.

As far back as the 1918 Peace Conference, the Zionist Organization issued a memorandum, dated 3 February 1919, officially claiming the whole of Transjordan and part of Syria and the Lebanon, up to Saida, Jisr el-Karaon, Wadi-el-Tein and the Harmoun. In the course of negotiations which took place that same year between France and Great Britain, in their capacity of Mandatory Powers over the countries formerly belonging to the Ottoman Empire, the Zionist Organization demanded the extension of the northern frontiers of Palestine as far as the Litani River and the plains of Hauran and Jaulan in Syria.

These plans for territorial expansion have subsequently been supported in public. Every responsible Zionist leader, every Zionist doctrinaire and publicist has continually proclaimed that the boundaries of Palestine as drawn in 1919 were the "Mandate boundaries" which Zionism refuses to recognize and aims to extend considerably in the future.

Not long ago, on the occasion of the Histadruth elections at Haifa, in 1944, Mr. Ben Gurion publicly declared that the Jews who propose to settle in Palestine, by force if necessary, will not hesitate to extend the boundaries of the country, since the Jewish State demanded by the Zionists is not their movement's final goal but only a preliminary step thereto.

When at the beginning of 1946 the British Government made known its intention to recognize the independence of Trans-Jordan within its present boundaries, Mr. Shertok told the press, on 23 January 1946, that the Jewish Agency would make every possible effort to prevent the execution of this plan and that although the Zionists had not previously opposed the Mandate over Trans-Jordan, nevertheless they could not approve the final secession of Trans-Jordan from Palestine. This statement by one of the heads of the Jewish Agency was officially expressed in a note to the British Secretary of State for the Colonies protesting against the proclamation of the independence of Trans-Jordan and stressing the fact that Trans-Jordan, which formed part of the territory under British Mandate, could only be considered as the eastern part of Palestine.

The Zionists did not fail to reveal to your Committee their organization's real intentions as regards the boundaries of Palestine. These intentions were clearly evident from the statements made by Mr. Shertok and Rabbi Fishman, who recalled that God had promised the Jews a land stretching from the peninsula of Sinai to the Euphrates.

2) Zionism however does not content itself with mere propaganda in favour of the fulfilment of its expansionist projects at the expense of the Arab countries. Its plan involves recourse to terrorism, both in Palestine and in other countries. It is known that a secret army has been formed with a view to creating an atmosphere of tension and unrest by making attempts on the lives of representatives of the governing authority and by destroying public buildings. The assassination of Lord Moyne in Egypt, the attacks on the British Embassy at Rome, the incidents of the King David Hotel and the Officers' Club in Jerusalem, the St. John of Acre prison, the destruction of road and rail communications and the kidnapping and flogging of British officers, are all examples of the terrorist methods instituted by the Zionist organizations for the purpose of gaining possession of a country which is not theirs.

This aggressive attitude, resulting from the Mandatory Power's weakness in dealing with them, will not fail to give rise in turn to the creation of similar organizations by the Arabs. The responsibility for the disturbances which might result there from throughout the Middle East will rest solely with the Zionist organizations, as having been the first to use these violent tactics.

It is the hope of the Governments of the Arab States, however, that the situation of the Jewish communities in their country will not be affected thereby.

3) No State could tolerate mass immigration such as that to which Palestine is subjected. Immigration restrictions are established in all countries to protect the best interests of the country and the rights of the inhabitants. Thus the Canadian Government has just announced that it will admit only 5,000 foreign refugees to its vast territories. The Australian Government has also made known the fact that it will not permit the refugees admitted to its territory to form colonies and that they are to be distributed throughout the country in order that they may become assimilated. Similar measures have been taken in Norway and various other countries.

Your honourable Committee will surely have realized that the situation in Palestine is very unstable and contains within it the seeds of possible conflicts which may spread throughout the Middle East.

The Governments of the Arab States cannot remain indifferent to this state of affairs. The safety of their own country is at stake and this gives them the right to oppose Zionism by every means at their disposal and even makes it their duty to do so.

Moreover, Palestine has for centuries been an Arab country and its preservation as such is a prerequisite for the harmonious development of the peoples of the Middle East and for their co-operation in the work of world peace, and progress.

For ethnic, cultural, political and economic reasons, Palestine is in fact an integral part of this Arab world, which is organized into sovereign States bound together by the political and economic pact of 22 March 1945. This organization of States, which subscribes to the Charter of the United Nations, fulfils its aspirations in encouraging regional organizations and agreements.

Any breach in this union, any scission between the States of which it is composed, threatens to destroy it and to cause unrest and confusion in this particularly vulnerable part of the world.

4) The Jewish State which the Zionists are endeavouring to establish in Palestine is not moreover a viable State either from the political or from the economic point of view.

The Arab States could not, in fact, tolerate the creation of a State composed of foreign elements from so many parts, each with its own mentality, its insatiable desires, for the fulfilment of which they deliberately use violent and destructive means such as those we have mentioned.

Against a State established by violence the Arab States will be obliged to use violence; that is a legitimate right of self-defence.

Moreover, the foreign State on Arab territory will not in any case be able to count upon the establishment of economic or any other relations with the neighbouring Arab States.

A State created under such conditions could not but be doomed to failure.

Concluding remarks

The Governments of the Arab States firmly hope that the Committee will bear these considerations in mind and endeavour to propose such a solution as may put an end to the present unrest and ensure the triumph of justice and the establishment of peace. They feel sure that this solution could only be inspired by the democratic principles on which the United Nations is founded.

The first of these principles establishes respect for the independence of the peoples and their right of self-determination.

The Arab people of Palestine demand above all their recognized liberty and sovereign independence. The Arab States unanimously grant their unreserved support in the achievement of these claims. They have already submitted definite proposals in this sense and today wish to stress once more one of these proposals because they attach the greatest importance to it and because it constitutes a basic condition which will not admit of any compromise.

This proposal consists of the necessity of stopping immediately all Jewish immigration into Palestine, of maintaining the regulations now in force with regard to land transfer and of creating, without delay, an independent Arab Government based on democratic principles.

The Governments of the Arab States are of the opinion that any plan involving partitioning, far from solving the Palestine dispute would only aggravate it. Any Jewish State established in Palestine would inevitably become a centre of intrigue and a rallying-point for the Zionist forces, which are to be hurled against the Arab countries. The Governments of the Arab States will not under any circumstances agree to permit the establishment of Zionism as an autonomous state on Arab territory, towards which hundreds of thousands of foreign immigrants would stream.

They wish to state that they feel certain that the partition of Palestine and the creation of a Jewish State would result only in bloodshed and unrest throughout the entire Middle East. The proposal which the Royal Commission made in 1937 with regard to partition sufficed to provoke a national revolution which went on until the outbreak of the war. Moreover, in view of the country's geographical, economic and social conditions, no plan for partitioning can be feasible. This little country cannot be divided into two or three states which would feel only suspicion and hostility towards one another.

The only possible solution and the only one in the opinion of the Governments of the Arab States, be capable

of settling the dispute, would, as indicated in the draft submitted by the Arab delegation to the London Conference on Palestine in September 1946, be to form a free Government on the basis of proportional representation and to grant all the Jews who have acquired Palestinian nationality through legal channels the same rights as are recognized to Arab citizens. The Arabs who have always felt that the Jewish immigrants who had settled in Palestine since the beginning of the Mandate could not be considered Palestinian citizens, wish by these proposals to show proof of the conciliatory spirit by which they are motivated and their ardent desire to smooth

out the difficulties.

The result of this arrangement could not, as certain Zionist leaders claim, be that the Jewish citizens of Palestine would fail to enjoy their full rights because of the fact that they would remain a minority. The Jewish minority in the Arab countries have never been maltreated. On the contrary, they live in perfect harmony with the majority and enjoy equal rights. From earliest times, the Arabs have never practised any discrimination between their citizens as regards race or religion, and to the Jewish community in particular they have always shown fair treatment based on the principles of justice and equality. Far from oppressing them, they have offered a refuge to those fleeing from persecution in other countries and some of them, benefiting by their recognized rights to liberty and equality have even attained the highest positions in the world of politics, administration, finance and science.

The Zionists try to justify their claims by saying that they wish to save their fellow Jews from the persecution to which they are at present subjected. Nevertheless, thanks to the victory of the democracies, there is no longer any hotbed of anti-semitism anywhere in the world. The minorities have regained their full rights and are exercising them everywhere.

As far as the problem of refugees and displaced persons is concerned, it should be dealt with apart from the Palestine problem and settled on the basis of international co-operation and solidarity. There cannot be any question of transferring these refugees to Palestine en masse. The alleviation of the sufferings of one nation must not and cannot be sought in the aggravation of the sufferings of another nation and in its annihilation.

The Governments of the Arab States could not bring this statement to a close without again expressing the hope that your Committee, taking into consideration the views we have expressed herein, will adopt the only just solution to the problem, viz., recognition of the sovereign independence of Palestine and immediate discontinuation of immigration, which threatens to change the face of the country. For any solution which does not take into account the atmosphere of Palestine, i.e., the attitude of the peoples and of the Governments of the Arab States, would be doomed to certain failure. Moreover, it would only increase the dangers which now exist and hold dire threats for the future.

CHAIRMAN: We have before us an English translation. I wonder therefore whether it is necessary to have an oral translation of this speech. Does anyone wish that it be translated?

Sir Abdur RAHMAN (India): No, it is not necessary for me.

CHAIRMAN: We shall dispense with the translation.

Mr. HOOD (Australia): Arising out of your remark, I would like to enquire as to the exact status of these two texts. I notice at first glance that there are substantial differences between the two. Possibly we can have information as to which is to be regarded as the authentic text. May I just mention one example? In the English text I see the statement that the White Paper has, to all intents and purposes, been scrapped. So as far as I can see, that statement does not reappear in the French text. That is one example.

Mr. Hamid FRANGIE: We apologise. We did not have time to do that very carefully, and therefore we would like to ask the Committee to consider that the French text is the correct one.

Sir Abdur RAHMAN (India): Would it be possible for them to give us the differences so that we may correct our English copies?

CHAIRMAN: We have just been promised a modified English translation.

Mr. Garcia GRANADOS (Guatemala): I just noticed that there are certain differences between the French text which has been distributed to us and the text which has been read. I would therefore be very grateful if the exact text could be given to us.

CHAIRMAN: There may be certain typographical mistakes which will be corrected.

We shall do without an oral translation and shall wait until we get the correct translation into English.

Before closing this meeting I should like to say that if we find it necessary that another meeting should take place between this Committee and the representatives of the Arab States, we shall say so and we shall also say under what conditions this meeting should take place.

The meeting is closed.

(The meeting rose at 11:50 a.m.)

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