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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
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Item 5 and 8 of the provisional agendaTHE RIGHT OF PEOPLES TO SELF-DETERMINATION AND ITS APPLICATION TO PEOPLES UNDER COLONIAL OR ALIEN
DOMINATION OR FOREIGN OCCUPATION
QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES, INCLUDING PALESTINE
Written statement* submitted by World Union for Progressive Judaism,
a non-governmental organization on the Roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[10 February 2003]

*This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

14 Fundamental Historical Facts on the Middle East: Israel/Palestine

Introduction

- a) Recalling Winston Churchill's speech at Zurich University on 19 September 1946 when he proposed the creation of a future "United States of Europe," the representative of the World Union for Progressive Judaism (WUPJ) -- speaking at the UNCHR on 6 March 1990* -- had proposed a similar Middle East framework, to be called: "A United States of Abraham." Based on the idea of a future Confederation, he declared on that occasion, thirteen years ago: " *The first step in the creation of the Family of Abraham must be a partnership between Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinians within that geographical area designated as 'Palestine' in the original 1922 Mandate of the League of Nations.* " (1)
- b) Considering that such ideas will remain utopian, unless democratic institutions and the respect for human rights and the rule of law become the natural bedrock of civil society in all Middle East countries. Without that common spirit and that guarantee of stability, any such vision of a Confederation -- leading to an even wider regional grouping -- will forever remain a barren dream. And today's Palestinian authority would only become a genuine partner in peace with Israel -- alongside Jordan and Egypt -- if a new spirit of mutual acceptance becomes the norm, and if there will be individual security and dignity for all throughout the whole region.
- c) Bearing in mind that the UN Security Council's recent reference to a Palestinian State (and the right of peoples to self-determination) necessitates recalling some fundamental geographical, historical, and diplomatic facts from the last century relating to the Middle East. Some facts were outlined by the WUPJ at both the Commission and the Sub-Commission on Human Rights last year.

Facts and Figures from the Twentieth Century

1. After the First World War, Great Britain accepted the 1922 Mandate for Palestine; then -- with League of Nations approval -- used its article 25 to create two distinct entities within the Mandate-designated area. The vast area lying between the Jordan River and the eastern desert boundary " *of that part of Palestine which was known as Trans-Jordan* " (nearly 78 percent), thus became the Emirate of Transjordan. This new entity was put under the rule of Emir Abdullah, the eldest son of the Sharif of Mecca -- as a compensation for his support in the war against the Ottomans, and of Ibn Saud's seizure of Arabia (Faisal, Abdullah's brother, later received the even larger League of Mandate territory of Iraq with immense oil reserves).
2. Turning a blind eye to article 15, Britain also decided that no Jews would reside or could buy land in the newly created emirate. This policy was ratified -- after the emirate became a kingdom -- by the Jordanian Nationality Law No. 6, section 3 (Official Gazette, N° 1171, of 16 February 1954), amended to section 2 (Official Gazette, N° 1675 of 1 April 1963), which states that a Jew may not become a citizen of Jordan. King Hussein made peace with Israel in 1994, but this ' *Judenrein* ' legislation remains valid in Jordan today.
3. The remaining area west of the Jordan river (comprising only 22 percent of the territory) was then officially designated 'Palestine' by Great Britain. The Palestine Royal Commission Report [Peel] of 1937 recalled: " Unquestionably, however, the primary purpose of the Mandate, *as expressed in its preamble and its articles, is to promote the establishment of the Jewish National Home.* " (2)
4. Twenty-five years later, UN General Assembly Resolution 181 of 29 November 1947 authorized a 'Partition Plan' of Western Palestine and delineated a separate Arab and a Jewish State, and also a *corpus separatum* in Jerusalem, all of which was totally rejected by both the Arab League

and the Arab-Palestinian leadership. Aided and abetted by neighbouring Arab countries, local armed Arab Palestinian forces immediately began attacking Jews, who then counterattacked. On 15 May 1948, the armies of five Arab League States joined these militias in the invasion of Israel, but failed in their goal of eradicating the fledgling State.

5. The rejection of 'international legality' since 1947 was confirmed in a recent interview with veteran PLO leader Farouq Al-Qaddoumi – still head of the PLO political bureau and secretary-general of Fatah's Central Committee – and quoted in Arabic: “ *The [Palestinian] problem was created by the United Nations when it decided on the partition resolution .*” (3)

6. The armistice boundaries (1949-67) left Israel with roughly 16.5 percent, or 8,000 ml² (20,000 km²), of the original 1922 Mandate area (roughly 48,000 ml² or 120,000 km²), while about five percent – less Gaza, then occupied by the Egyptians – was conquered and occupied in 1948 by General Glubb Pasha, the British commander of Abdullah's Arab Legion. These historic regions, referred to as Judea and Samaria on British mandate maps until 1948 were now annexed and occupied, and were then called the 'West Bank' of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. All Jews were expelled from the area and from the Old City of Jerusalem; their synagogues, and even tombstones on the Mount of Olives, were destroyed.

7. Until King Hussein attacked Israel on 6 June 1967, Jordan's unrecognized, de facto boundaries covered 83 percent of Greater Palestine (78 percent east of the Jordan River, and 5 percent to the west). Following its military defeat, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan lost its 'West Bank' (only the name survived), retaining only the 'Transjordan' portion (78 percent).

8. Of Jordan's current population of about five million, roughly two-thirds (over three million) consider themselves 'Arab Palestinians'. They are the descendants, either of the original Arab Palestinian inhabitants of the Trans-Jordan region, or the roughly 550,000 Arab refugees from west Palestine, who lost their homes after the Arab League armies failed to eradicate Israel, first in 1948 -- in defiance of 'international legality' -- and again in 1967 after the closure of the Suez Canal, and the forced departure of UN forces from the Sinai. Nearly two million Jordanian Bedouin citizens and others do not consider themselves 'Palestinians.'

9. Five months after the Six-Day War, an Arab League Summit Conference held in Sudan, Khartoum on 22 Nov. 1967 reacted negatively to UN Security Council Resolution 242 with these words: “ *No peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, no negotiations with Israel, no concessions on the questions of Palestinian national rights .*” This also remained the position of the PLO. Apart from Egypt's 1981 peace treaty with Israel, there was little change over the next 20 years in the general refusal to engage in peace negotiations, even after the 1973 War.

10. In those 'West Bank and Gaza' areas, designated by the Oslo Accords of 1994 to be initially placed under the administration of the Palestinian Authority, there is a population of over 3,000,000 (not counting Jerusalem), all of whom are Muslims, except 35,000 Christians.

11. The population of the State of Israel — a state envisaged in the 1922 League of Nations Mandate, and confirmed by the UN's 1947 Partition Plan decision — has now reached 6,500,000, of whom about 20 percent are Arab (120,000 indigenous Christians), Druze, and Bedouin citizens of Israel. Of the roughly five million Jewish citizens, about one-half are those Jewish refugees from Arab countries -- and their descendants -- who fled or left their ancient homeland when massacres, arrests, and ostracism made life impossible (a further 300,000 emigrated to Europe and the Americas, where they number over a million today). These are the forgotten Jewish refugees from Arab lands, countries that risk becoming totally cleansed' of Jews (' *Judenrein* ') as in Saudi Arabia, and Jordan since 1922. (4)

12. Now, in the 21st century, only a small vulnerable Jewish remnant from these ancient communities — scarcely 5,000 persons — remains in all the Arab world, less than half of one percent from the near million who were living there in 1948 (there are also about 50,000 in Turkey and Iran, down from about 200,000 in 1945).

13. 22 Arab League countries extend over more than 6,000,000 ml² (15,000,000 km²), ten percent of the world's land surface, in contrast with Israel (8,000 ml²/20,000 km²).

14. UN Security Council Resolution [242](#) has now become the media panacea for the Arab League, but the UN French translation of its key operative paragraph does not have the same significance in the original English, which has primacy. In March 2002, a Saudi 'Peace Plan' was approved by the Arab League in Beirut, but behind it lurks the former 1981 Fez 'Fahd Plan' — with a 21st century facelift — that would still leave Israel with indefensible borders.

Conclusions :

What is needed for a future 'Middle East Peace' is to make every effort along the lines of the former Mitchell plan, the newly-suggested ' Marshall Plan,' and the American ROAD MAP— to be negotiated in harmony with the "Quartet" (USA, EU, UN, Russia). It is now evident that a Palestinian Authority will only become a genuine partner with Israel if there is a radical break with its rejectionist agenda, and a new spirit of mutual acceptance prevails in the Arab world toward Israel. This might become feasible when new democratic institutions will prevail, and when the Arab League States finally recognizes the inalienable and legitimate, de jure existence of the State of Israel in a part of its historic homeland.

(1) UN recording and E/CN.4/1990/Sr.52*; the full text, in WUPJ, " Human Rights and Human Wrongs", No. 8 (1990), pp. 37-39; and, with later material, in: E/CN.4/2000/NGO/4

(2) The Palestine Royal Commission Report (Peel), London, 1937, Chapter II, (iv), p. 39). The italicized passage is in the original text.

(3) In the Arab-Israeli weekly, *Kul Al-Arab*, 3 January 2003. See also Qaddoumi's recent book, *The Way to Return and a State*, Zayid Center for Coordination and Follow-Up UAE. http://www.zccf.org.ae/a_PubDesc.asp?Pubid=227, trans. in www.MEMRI.org -Special Dispatch – PA/Jihad and Terrorism Studies, 28 January 2003, No. 462.

(4) Historical Background to the forgotten Jewish refugees: A tragic exchange of populations (E.CN.4/2003/NGO/222)

* With the author's permission, this written statement – with some cuts and additional material – is based on his *The Truth About the Middle East. Fourteen fundamental facts about Israel and Palestine* by David G. Littman (a representative of the WUPJ to the UNO in Geneva), published in *The National Review Online*, New York, 7 October 2002): <http://www.nationalreview.com/comment/comment-littman100702.asp>. The WUPJ's statement on 'A United States of Abraham' (6 March 1990 – cf. 'introduction' above) was prepared and delivered by him.