

UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE

RESTRICTED
CCP-RWA/3
19 April 1950
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Information requested by U.N.R.W.A
Relating to the Possibility of
Reducing the Number of Refugees

(Prepared by the Secretariat)

I. GAZA (under Egyptian control)

A. The inhabitants of this area, including the refugees are not considered as Egyptian citizens by the Egyptian authorities.

B. On 20 and 29 May 1949 the Israeli delegation requested the CCP to transmit a proposal to the Egyptian delegation, according to which the "Gaza Strip" would be incorporated into the State of Israel and the inhabitants of this area as well as the refugees resident in it would become citizens of that state. The normal inhabitants of the "Gaza Strip" amount to about 60,000; the refugees resident in the area to about 200,000. This proposal was not accepted by the Egyptian delegation but has not been formally withdrawn by Israel.

C. On 24 October 1949 the Egyptian delegation made the following proposals to the Commission for submission to the Israeli delegation:

1. That inhabitants of areas falling within the no man's land in the north of the Gaza region be allowed to return as soon as possible to their lands to cultivate them.
2. That refugees at present in the Gaza area under Egyptian control and possessing land in the hinterland of this

zone be allowed to undertake as soon as possible the cultivation of these lands.

3. That refugees at present in the Gaza zone originating from the Beersheba area be allowed, provisionally and pending a final settlement, to establish themselves in that area.

With regard to (1), it is estimated that permission to cultivate their land in the whole no man's land in the North of Gaza would involve principally the inhabitants of four villages (Beit Lahiya, Beit Hanun, Deir Suneid and Dimra) and would affect about 4,000 persons.

The exact figures from Quaker estimates are 4,328 persons of 708 families.

The Mandatory Administration estimate for 1947 is 4,854 persons.

With regard to (2):

a) Repatriation of refugees now in the Gaza strip to their villages of origin in the whole of the Gaza sub-district would involve about 70,000 inhabitants of 46 villages (minus the 4,000 mentioned in (1) above whose problem may have been settled previously).

The exact figure from Quaker estimates are 71,363 minus 4,328 or 12,199 families minus 708.

The Mandatory Administration estimates for 1947 are 69,800 persons minus 4,854.

b) Repatriation of refugees now in the Gaza strip to their villages of origin located north of Gaza and falling within the partition boundaries of that section of the Arab State would involve about 43,000 inhabitants of 18 villages (having in mind the reservation in 3 a) above).

The exact figures from Quaker estimates are 43,528 persons or 7,842 families.

The Mandatory Administration estimates for 1947 are 39,549 persons.

With regard to (3) the return of refugees now in the Gaza area to the Beersheba sub-district would affect mainly nomads (Beduin) and would involve about 35,000 persons.

The exact figure from Quaker estimates are 34,665 persons or 5,702 families.

There are no figures of the Mandatory Administration for this category.

The complete operation envisaged by the Egyptian proposals as a whole would involve an estimated maximum of about 105,000 persons, i.e. more than half the total refugee population in the Gaza strip as estimated by the Quakers.

An agreement between Israel and Egypt signed on 22 February 1950 and known as the modus vivendi authorized the cultivation by refugees of about half of the no man's land in the north of Gaza and a small area around the village of Abassan in the South. The remaining points are still under consideration by the Commission.

II. THE TRIANGLE (under Jordanian control)

A. The inhabitants of this area, including the refugees, are considered by the Jordanian authorities as being Jordanian citizens.

B. The Commission has proposed to the Israeli delegation in Lausanne that arrangements be made to permit Arabs living in Arab-controlled territory to cultivate their lands which were situated within Israeli-controlled territory. This matter involved a few thousand Arab Palestinians mainly in the Tulkarm area. It was decided that the best solution would be to submit the question to the Special Committee created by the Armistice Agreement which had not met for some months.

According to information recently received from the Commission's Secretariat in Jerusalem, the lands in question belong to Arab cultivators living in 17 villages situated in the sub-districts of Jenin, Tulkarm and Ramleh. The discussions

on this subject in the Special Committee set up under the Israeli-Jordan Armistice Agreement, with a view to enabling the owners to cultivate these lands, have been abortive. The Israeli representatives maintain that there are other more important questions, such as those concerning Mount Scopus, Bethlehem and Latrun, which should receive prior consideration as laid down in Article 8 of the Armistice Agreement. The Jordan representatives are believed, nevertheless, to have pressed the matter, pointing out that the harvesting of the crops sown before the Armistice was involved and that the return of the owners would provide effective protection against marauders and permit the sowing of winter seed. The Israelis are said to have rejected these proposals on the grounds that the question was one affecting the security of the country, and that it was not possible to allow several thousand Arabs to cross the lines at points of strategic importance. These points are near the railway line from Tel Aviv to Haifa and at a distance of only 15 kilometres from the sea.

C. Jordan has expressed its willingness to resettle refugees in its territory with international financial assistance.

III. SYRIA

A. The Syrian Israeli Armistice Agreement authorized the return of approximately 3,000 Arab refugees to their homes in the demilitarized zones. These people have in fact returned but having no assistance are finding it very difficult to maintain themselves on the land and the Commission is informed that they are drifting back to the refugee camps in Syria.

B. Syria has expressed its willingness to resettle refugees in its territory with international financial assistance.

IV. ISRAEL

A. Israel has stated in the past that it was prepared to accept within its present borders an Arab population of 250,000 Arabs. Israel states that it already has an Arab population of about 170,000 who are considered as Israeli citizens. Israel reserved the right to resettle any returning refugees wherever it saw fit. This Israeli offer was rejected by the Arab States and though it has not been explicitly withdrawn, it is doubtful whether it is still operative.

B. Under an agreement reached in Lausanne under the auspices of the Commission, Israel has admitted, up to the present, about 1,000 members of Arab families separated by the war.
