

UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE
GENERAL COMMITTEE

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8 September 1949
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

SUMMARY RECORD OF A MEETING
BETWEEN THE GENERAL COMMITTEE AND THE
DELEGATIONS OF THE ARAB STATES

held in Lausanne, on Thursday,
8 September 1949, at 10 a.m.

Present:	Mr. de la Tour du Pin (France)	-	Chairman
	Mr. Yenisey (Turkey)		
	Mr. Rockwell (U.S.A.)		
	Dr. Azcarate	-	Principal Secretary
	Mr. Abdel Chafi El Labbane	-	Representative of Egypt
	Mr. Edmond Roch	-	Representative of the Hashemite Jordan Kingdom
	Mr. Mohamed Ali Hamade	-	Representative of Lebanon
	Mr. Ahmad Choukairi	-	Representative of Syria

Mixed Committee of Experts on Blocked Accounts

The CHAIRMAN informed the Arab delegations that, following a meeting of the Committee the previous day, it had been decided to raise the question of the Mixed Committee of Experts on Blocked Accounts with the Arab delegations at the present meeting.

He recalled that the Mixed Committee of Experts, of which Mr. Labbane was the Arab member, had held several meetings as from 16 August, but that so far no Arab financial expert had been present. The Chairman of the Mixed Committee of Experts, supported by the General Committee, was of the opinion that, with expert assistance, the lines of technical procedure to be followed could be established within a week. In view of the fact that urgent humanitarian considerations were involved, he wished to take that opportunity of asking the Arab delegations for information as to whether the Arab expert were expected in Lausanne and on what date. The Israeli expert was at the Committee's disposal at 24 hours' notice.

Mr. LABBANE (Egypt) explained that when the Mixed Committee had been established, he, as Arab member, had communicated with his Government to request expert assistance.

He had since been informed that the necessary statistics had been prepared and that the expert himself, an under-Secretary of State eminently qualified for the task at hand, had been appointed. Meanwhile however, the Commission had envisaged changing its procedure and its seat very shortly and his Government had accordingly deemed it preferable to wait and judge the situation in the light of new circumstances.

Following conversations he had had with the Chairman of the Mixed Committee of Experts who had stressed the fact that only a very short time should be needed for the experts to decide upon technical procedures between themselves, Mr. Labbane had communicated with his Government, asking that the position be reconsidered and that an expert be sent immediately. He was at the moment waiting for his Government's reply.

The CHAIRMAN fully appreciated Mr. Labbane's efforts in requesting that the expert arrive as soon as possible, but pointed out that, in view of the forthcoming adjournment of the Commission's plenary meetings, he considered that unless the Arab expert arrived the following day at the latest in Lausanne, it would be preferable to agree to the resumption of the Mixed Committee's work at a place more convenient both to Mr. Labbane and the Arab expert.

Since the Chairman of the Mixed Committee of Experts would be proceeding to Jerusalem on 16 September, he suggested that a private meeting of that Committee should be held to determine the time and place the Committee would resume its deliberations.

Mr. LABBANE agreed that it was essential for the experts to be present before the Mixed Committee could continue its work to advantage, though much useful work had already been done in establishing the general principles. In that connection, he wished to express his particular appreciation of the valuable work done by Dr. Servoise of the Secretariat.

He agreed furthermore to the procedure suggested by the Chairman that members of the Mixed Committee should decide between themselves as to the seat of future meetings, specifying that he and his advisers would have no objections to meeting in Jerusalem.

Reunion of separated families

Mr. ROCKWELL, in the name of the United States delegation, and in view of the urgent humanitarian considerations involved, wished to raise again the question of the appointment of frontier

representatives with the Arab delegations.

He emphasised the fact that, as late as the previous day, the General Committee had been informed by the Israeli delegation that the Israeli representatives on the Mixed Armistice Commissions had still not been informed that the Arab representatives on those Commissions had been authorised to discuss the question of the administrative details for the reunion of separated families.

Israeli members of the Israeli-Egyptian Mixed Armistice Commission had informally approached the two Egyptian officers on that Commission and had been told that no instructions had as yet been received to that effect from the Egyptian Government.

Although he was not able to vouch for the accuracy of that information, he wished to register his delegation's astonishment, considering the human interests at stake, that such unwarrantable delay should take place in adopting a few simple measures.

Mr. LABBANE considered that the reservation made by the representative of the United States that he was not able to vouch for the accuracy of such information, was sufficient reply in itself.

Mr. ROCH (Hashemite Jordan Kingdom) wished to stress the fact that from the outset his delegation had always cooperated in measures for the repatriation of the refugees. In particular, Dr. Husseini had already informed the Committee that the Jordanian representatives on the Mixed Armistice Commission had already received instructions that they were authorised to receive lists of applicants for repatriation.

He wished however to draw the Committee's attention to an incident which had occurred at Wadi Fuqin where between 200 and 400 Arabs had been expelled. Moreover, when a United Nations observer intervened, he had been told by the Jewish authorities not to meddle in Jewish internal affairs. Such incidents were not of a nature to encourage refugees to return to Israel, and, in view of such events, he did not think the Arab delegations should be blamed for any delay.

The CHAIRMAN thought it would be appropriate to inform the Arab delegations of the action taken in that connection by the

Mixed Armistice Commission. The matter had been brought to the attention of the Mixed Armistice Commission, in which the neutral member had voted with the Arab representative, and it had been decided that a United Nations observer should be requested to investigate the circumstances of the incident. The Mixed Armistice Commission had therefore adopted an attitude which could only call for full approval on the part of the Arab delegations.

On the principle of the return of the refugees, he wished to reiterate his previous statements that all concerned should make every possible effort to work towards a solution of that problem, and associated himself with the views expressed by Mr. Rockwell.

Mr. ROCH wished to make it clear that he had not in any way intended to attribute blame to the Commission or to the United Nations. He had quoted the incident as typical of the attitude adopted in the matter by the Jewish authorities.

Mr. LABBANE (Egypt) expressed the view that incidents such as that at Wadi Fuqin had a close connection with the work of the General Committee, since they necessarily had an unfortunate effect upon the morale of the refugees eligible for repatriation. He personally felt that such incidents were part of a deliberate effort by the Jews to prevent the refugees from submitting applications for repatriation.

Mr. HAMADE (Lebanon) expressed his thanks to Mr. Rockwell for his appreciation of the humanitarian issues involved. Nevertheless, with regard to the statements made by the Israeli delegation, he wished to point out that in his own country three institutions were at present actively occupied with the question of repatriation of members of separated families. Mgr. Hakim, Archbishop of Galilee, representing the clergy, had arrived from Palestine and was working in Beirut on a census of women and children eligible for repatriation; secondly, the "Commission centrale libanaise" was also working on the taking of a census; and thirdly, the Lebanese representatives on the Mixed Armistice Commission had made it known that they were ready at any time to receive lists of names. No lists had as yet been handed over by the Israelis, however, and it seemed clear that the responsibility belonged to the Israeli authorities. In this connection, Mr. Hamade reiterated his previous statements that the

procedure being followed was an unfortunate one, since the Mixed Armistice Commissions were unable to exercise efficient control over the operation. However, his Government would continue to do its utmost to further the programme within the framework of that procedure.

Mr. ROCKWELL pointed out that there had been no denial of the fact that Arab representatives were authorised and prepared to receive lists of names; it had merely been stated to him that the Israeli Government had received no official information as to such authorisations.

Mr. HAMADE (Lebanon) did not know how the accuracy of such a statement could be verified; but he had definite information that the Lebanese representatives concerned had requested that lists should be submitted to them.

Mr. CHOUKAIRI (Syria) expressed his thanks to Mr. Rockwell for his sympathetic attitude. He thought it clear, however, that the Jews were conducting a "propaganda war" to prevent the refugees from returning to Israel and to stigmatise the position of the Arab States in the next session of the United Nations General Assembly; they wished to be able to state that the Arab Governments were unwilling to aid in the repatriation of Arab refugees to Palestine. The incident at Wadi Fuqin was a clear indication of the Israeli attitude in the matter. He did not feel that the part played by the Arab Governments in the matter warranted a formal statement by the United States member of the Committee to the Arab delegations; if it did, then the unpardonable attitude of the Jewish authorities called for an even stronger statement. The incident referred to cast doubt on the sincerity of the Israeli Government's official position regarding the reuniting of separated families. As regards the lists of names, he pointed out that no instance had ever been reported of such lists being handed by the Israeli authorities to the Arab members of the Mixed Armistice Commissions and being refused by the latter. It was no longer a matter for discussions, but for simple action.

Mr. ROCKWELL expressed the certainty that the Syrian representative, in his remarks, had not intended to imply a lack of impartiality on part of the United States delegation or of the General Committee. In any case, he wished it recorded that he rejected any such implication categorically.

Mr. CHOUKAIRI (Syria) denied emphatically that he had entertained any such intention.

Mr. HAMADE (Lebanon) asked who would exercise supervision over the repatriation programme during the Commission's recess.

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the Principal Secretary would be on duty in Jerusalem during the recess and would handle all such matters. In any case, the General Committee would have further occasion to meet with the Arab delegations before the recess.