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FOR PALESTINE

Reunion of families and re-occupation of lands situated

in No-Man's Land

The following information is contained in a telegram from Mr. Quimper dated 25 January on the subject of the reunion of families and the re-occupation of lands in the No Man's Land between Israel and Jordan:

1. Reunion of families

Since 13 December 1949 when the first column of members of broken families crossed back into Israel, 790 Arab refugees have been repatriated, 523 from Lebanon and 267 from Jordan. Several hundreds of other refugees whose names appear in the lists are at the moment under investigation by the competent authorities. So far it has not been possible to repatriate any of the refugees in Syria. The question is being studied by the Israeli-Syrian Armistice Commission. The same applies to refugees in Egypt and the first lists submitted by the Israeli authorities, comprising 250 names, are being examined by the Egyptian authorities at Gaza.

Owing, on the one hand, to the sometimes lengthy investigation made in each individual case, and on the other, to communication difficulties, the pace of repatriation is necessarily slow.

The 790 persons referred to above were repatriated as follows:

<u>LEBANON</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Number</u>
	13 December 1949	73
	27 December 1949	239
	28 December 1949	104
	3 January 1950	83
	10 January 1950	16
	17 January 1950	8
	TOTAL:	<u>523</u>

These refugees re-entered Israel via Naqura.

<u>JORDAN</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Number</u>
	22 December 1949	51
	11 January 1950	117
	25 January 1950	99
	TOTAL:	<u>267</u>

These refugees crossed the lines at Mandelbaum.

On crossing the lines the repatriates are vaccinated and provided with papers identifying them as Israeli residents. Although the procedure adopted by the Lebanese authorities is more expeditious than that of the Jordan authorities, the Armistice Commission has only been able to repatriate 523 out of the 921 refugees in Lebanon who are authorised to return to Israel. The remainder have either not been traced or refuse to rejoin the head of the family. As regards Jordan, the Israelis have forwarded seven lists containing the names of about 500 persons to the Jordan authorities, who have requested the persons concerned over the radio to report to the Jordan Liaison Officer at Jerusalem. The final lists so obtained are transmitted to the Israeli authorities, but the number of persons identified in this manner is lower than that originally fixed. In Jordan it takes two weeks to examine a list, whereas in Lebanon it only takes one week.

The question of widening the definition of a "member of a family" is at

the moment the subject of negotiation in the Israeli-Jordan Armistice Commission. The Jordan representatives propose that the definition be widened to include:

- (a) unmarried sisters and widowed sisters and daughters;
- (b) husbands in refugee camps with families in Israel;
- (c) male children under 18.

This proposal has not so far been accepted by the Israelis, who have stated that for the time being they are holding to the first definition which provides for the return of unmarried women and girls and male children under 15. There is reason to believe, however, that the Israeli authorities will eventually be ready to make concessions in the case of unmarried or divorced sisters, but will refuse to allow the return of heads of families whose members are at present in Israel, because of the relatively large number of persons affected. Similarly, it is doubtful whether the Israelis will agree to raising the age limit for male children. They may, however, agree to make exceptions in special cases of exceptional hardship. The Jordan representatives have drawn up a list of 113 persons falling within this category but have not been able to obtain any reply regarding them.

2. Lands situated in No Man's Land

The lands which are situated in the part of the triangle at present controlled by the Israelis belong to Arab cultivators living in 17 villages situated in the sub-prefectures 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 thousands of 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. It seems unlikely that any results can be achieved in this matter before peace is concluded.