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LETTER DATED 4 MAY 1949 ADDRESSED TO THE
CHAIRMAN OF THE CONCILIATION COMMISSION
BY DR. WALTER EYTAN, HEAD OF THE ISRAELI
DELEGATION ENCLOSING THE TEXT OF A STATEMENT
BY MR. AUBREY EBAN

I think you may like to see the full text, which I enclose herewith, of a statement issued in New York by Mr. Aubrey Eban, the Permanent Representative of Israel at the United Nations.

I am confident that this statement of the Government of Israel's position will go far to meet the views of the Arab delegations and will contribute to the creation of a favourable atmosphere for our present negotiations.

Yours sincerely,

s/ Walter Eytan

Walter Eytan
Head of Israeli Delegation

STATEMENT ISSUED BY MR. AUBREY EBAN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ISRAEL
AT THE UNITED NATIONS

1. The problem of the Arab refugees is the direct consequence of the war launched against Israel by the Arab States, and it is the Arab States that are therefore entirely responsible for this as well as for other forms of suffering inflicted by the war.

2. However, the consequent problem has raised a deep humanitarian issue and also serious implications for the future peace, development and welfare of the Middle East. The Government of Israel believes the solution of the problem to be inseparably linked with the solution of outstanding issues between it and the Arab States, and no satisfactory solution to be possible except by the restoration of peace in the Near East. The solution of the problem cannot be isolated from final settlement.

3. The Government of Israel is earnestly anxious to contribute to the solution of this problem, although it is none of its making. This anxiety proceeds from moral considerations and from Israel's vital interest in stable conditions throughout the Near East. Any rehabilitation of Arab refugees in any part of the Near East, whether in Israel or in neighbouring countries, involves intricate tasks of resettlement. In either case an entirely new start will have to be made, since as a result of the war the former economy of these people has been ruined. The two principles most widely advocated are: (a) resettlement of the refugees in places whence they fled, thus creating a large minority problem in Israel as well as a menace to internal peace and stability; also placing masses of Arabs under the rule of a non-Arab Government which, while committed to an enlightened minority policy, is not akin to the Arabs in language, culture or religion, nor in its social and economic institutions; (b) the resettlement of refugees in areas where they will live under a Government akin to them in spirit and tradition, wherein their smooth integration is immediately possible with no resultant political friction. Moreover, a study of the economic, irrigation and other potentialities of underpopulated and undeveloped areas in the Arab States reveals greater possibilities of a stable solution by this method than by

resettlement in Israel. For these reasons the Government of Israel contends that resettlement in neighbouring areas be considered as the main principle of solution. My Government will be ready to make its own contribution to the solution of the problem. At present, it is not yet ascertainable either how many wish to return under the conditions prescribed by the Assembly or how many Israel can receive in the light of political and economic considerations. The first objective at Lausanne will be to reach agreement by direct negotiation on the contribution to be made by each Government towards a settlement of this grave problem. The extent of my Government's contribution will, inter alia, depend on the formal establishment of peace and relations of good neighbourliness between Israel and the Arab States.

4. The Government of Israel has already announced its acceptance of an obligation to make compensation for lands abandoned and previously cultivated. The entire question of compensation may well be settled by negotiation at Lausanne, together with the question of reparations for war damage.

5. The Government of Israel reaffirms its obligation to protect the persons and property of all communities living within its borders. It will discountenance any discrimination or interference with the rights and liberties of individuals or groups forming such minorities. My Government looks forward to the restoration of peaceful conditions which might enable relaxation in the liberty of persons or property. It would be reasonable to expect the Arab Governments, now that armistice prevails and peace talks have begun, to contribute to an improvement in the atmosphere by a similar declaration of willingness to discontinue measures instituted against Jewish citizens of their countries and restore their full freedom and equality of status.

6. Deeply conscious of the humanitarian problems involved, the Government of Israel observes with sympathy the efforts of international, governmental and non-governmental agencies to alleviate the immediate plight of refugees suffering hardships as a result of the war. The Government of Israel is prepared to lend its assistance in these efforts.

7. The Government of Israel feels deeply that prolongation of this distress without alleviation and final settlement undermines the stability of the Near East, the maintenance of which is in its vital interest. While thus indicating its readiness to do everything possible to contribute to a solution, and while welcoming UN initiative in that regard, the Government of Israel hopes that the States which caused the problem by their initiative in proclaiming war last year will face squarely their responsibilities and the undeniable opportunities available to them for settling the problem in a manner beneficial to their own economic needs and those of development in the vast underpopulated areas of the Arab States. An immediate declaration by all Governments of their desire for an early peace settlement would create a favourable atmosphere for discussion of this problem.