

UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE

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Letter dated 23 June 1949 addressed by Dr. Walter Eytan,
 Head of the Delegation of Israel,
 to the Principal Secretary of the Conciliation Commission.

Dear Dr. Azcarate,

It was with great satisfaction that I learned, in the course of my meeting with members of the Commission on Monday, that my delegation's proposal for the establishment of five sub-committees was receiving serious consideration. I was troubled only by the fact that the Commission appeared to be contemplating the establishment at this time of some, but not all, of these sub-committees, and I should like now, before a final decision is made, to restate the reasons why my delegation considers that if the sub-committees are to be set up it is important that their number should be five.

You will recall that when I originally made this proposal on June 11th (cf. SR/LM/20, page 6), I suggested that the sub-committees should deal with the following subjects :

1. The general principles and the general terms and conditions of a peace settlement.
2. The territorial question.
3. The refugee problem.
4. Jerusalem (this sub-committee being already in existence).
5. Economic and allied questions.

Careful study of the General Assembly's resolution of 11th December 1948 led my delegation to the conclusion that all the matters treated in that resolution fell under one or another of the above heads. The simultaneous establishment of these five sub-committees would accordingly ensure that all matters comprised in the resolution would be discussed under the Commission's auspices.

I informed the Commission at the same time, and again last Monday, that my delegation would be happy to take an active part and cooperate in the work of all five sub-committees, without exception. I should like to repeat this assurance now, particularly in view of the doubts which have been expressed concerning my delegation's readiness to enter into study and discussion of the refugee question.

It was an essential part of my proposal that the five sub-committees should be set up by the Commission simultaneously and that work in all of them should proceed at the same time. This seemed, and still seems, to me to be the best, if not the only, way of ensuring that the resolution of 11th December 1948 should be discussed as a whole - a point upon which my delegation has always insisted. We have always held and expressed the view that the best chance of the Lausanne talks' succeeding lay in basing them upon that resolution in its entirety, and not in fixing upon this or that individual paragraph to the exclusion of the rest. It is for this reason that I sincerely trust the Commission will not content itself with setting up only two or three of the sub-committees suggested - a procedure which, while the Commission is of course fully entitled to adopt it, would run counter to the essence and intention of the proposal I made.

The basic principle of the resolution of 11th December 1948 is the duty, incumbent on all parties, to negotiate a settlement of all outstanding questions with the aim of achieving peace. My delegation, as I have frequently had the opportunity of explaining to the Commission, has consistently taken this fundamental position and set the achievement of peace as its principal aim. It has been a source of disappointment to us that the Arab delegations, since their arrival at Lausanne two months ago, have never once indicated that they accept this basic principle. When I proposed the establishment of five sub-committees, I did so in the hope that the Arab delegations might find it possible to cooperate in their work and so, for the first time, commit themselves at least implicitly to the achievement of peace as the aim of these negotiations.

The refusal of the Arab delegations, maintained unswervingly over the past two months, to meet the delegation of Israel, and so establish the "contact between the parties themselves" of which the resolution of 11th December 1948 speaks, has been a principal retarding factor in the Lausanne conversations so far. In making my proposal for the establishment of five sub-committees I hoped, and stated explicitly (cf. SR/LM/20, page 6 ad fin.), that the Arab delegations, who showed every sign of persisting in their refusal to meet the delegation of Israel in plenary session with the Commission itself, might yet agree to take part jointly with us in their

work and thus establish direct contact. My delegation hoped that this new procedure might constitute, to use the words of the Commission in its third Progress Report, a "development which would open the way to direct negotiations."

It was for all of these reasons - and we consider them compelling reasons - that my delegation proposed establishment of the five sub-committees. The Commission's remarks last Monday encouraged me to hope that this proposal might be adopted, but imposed upon me at the same time an obligation to explain why, in the view of my delegation, it is so important that these sub-committees be set up together, and not, as seemed to be in the Commission's mind, by stages.

Yours sincerely,

(S) Walter Eytan.