

UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE

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Letter dated 15 June 1949  
addressed by Mr. Nassib Bulos

Delegation Secretary Arabs Refugee Congress  
to the Principal Secretary of  
the Conciliation Commission

Sir,

With reference to our meeting of June 8th, I should like to make the following observations and proposals :

1. Separated Families: On the question of separated families, regarding which the Israeli Delegation has given a positive answer, it seems to me that the quickest way of giving effect to such a measure would be :

- (a) for the Jewish authorities to conduct an immediate inquiry among the Arabs still living in Israeli held territory as to absent members of their families, and
- (b) for the Arab authorities in the respective Arab countries and the Relief Organisations, to advertise by all means possible the fact that members of families still living in Israeli held territory could rejoin their families, and to call for applications to that effect from persons concerned; such applications to be submitted to the respective Relief Organisations operating in the various areas.
- (c) It would be best if these applications are then forwarded to one centre, preferably to the Technical Refugee Committee recently constituted, to whom the whole question could be delegated.
- (d) The information so gathered could then be pooled with the information furnished by the Jewish authorities, on the basis of which a practical plan for the implementation of this measure could be formulated by the Technical Committee in consultation with Arab and Jewish authorities.

It would still be necessary, however, to ascertain the degree of relationship which would bring a member of a family within the category of separated families. The view of the Israeli Delegation on this point should perhaps be ascertained. In this connection I should like to point out that the social structure of Arab families differs fundamentally from that in western society. In

Arab society, which in many respects is still patriarchal in character, the family is a much larger unit and embraces a wider circle of relatives than is otherwise the case in western society. Financial dependence is a factor which should also be taken into consideration. It would also be necessary to ascertain the conditions upon which such people could return, i.e. whether they would be allowed to work, or whether their movements would be restricted to limited areas etc..

2. Repatriation and Resettlement of Certain Refugees : It is difficult to ascertain with exactitude the number of refugees from Jewish held areas. Nonetheless it can fairly be assumed that at least a hundred thousand refugees come from localities which are not under Jewish occupation, but which were formerly either "no man's" territory or too near to danger zones. The Armistice agreement between Transjordan and Israel has eliminated the "no man's" zones. Presumably it should also be assumed, despite past and recent evidence to the contrary, that Israel will respect its commitments under the Armistice Agreements. Consequently this may be the moment when attention could be given to the repatriation and resettlement of Arab refugees in those areas referred to above. The manifold advantages of such a step are self evident:

- (a) It would relieve the refugee problem by reducing the number of refugees.
- (b) It would help to revive Arab confidence in the United Nations and would act as a check on the alarming process of social and spiritual deterioration among the refugees generally.
- (c) The U.N. Relief Programme could be used in actual resettlement.
- (d) It would provide a practical basis for experimentation which would prove invaluable in the resettlement of Arab refugees generally.

Consequently, my Delegation proposes that :

- (a) The recently constituted Technical Refugee Committee conduct a survey of such localities in Palestine that were either no man's zones or dangerous zones, and examine the possibilities of resettlement with particular reference to needs and requirements, and,
- (b) The Technical Refugee Committee, with the assistance of the local authorities, ascertain the exact number and present whereabouts of those refugees who could be repatriated forthwith to above mentioned localities, and make an estimate of costs that would be entailed in their repatriation and resettlement.

- (c) The Palestine Conciliation Commission request the General Assembly or someother Government or authority for an allocation of funds, by way of loan against future allocations for resettlement, or otherwise, to meet the costs of such immediate resettlement.

In making use of the U.N. Relief Programme, a system of distribution would have to be worked out. This could perhaps best be done if a number of distribution centres, conveniently located, to which refugees could come themselves and receive their rations on a weekly or fortnightly basis, are established, while on the other hand a roving medical unit would be required to handle the medical side.

3. Frozen Assets : On the question of frozen assets, on which the Jewish authorities have as yet given no answer, I should like to put forward an alternative proposal, should the Jewish reply be in the negative. The Commission is no doubt aware of the fact that the Arabs of Palestine have large sterling balances to their credit in London. It might be possible, therefore, subject of course to agreement by the British Government, to induce a favourable reply from the Jewish authorities, if in return for the release of the whole or a part of Arab frozen assts, they could have the benefit of a sterling release by the British Government. Such a transaction would involve a double agreement : first agreement by the British Government to release sterling for the use of Israel, and secondly a further release of sterling equivalent to such part or the whole of the Arab frozen assets as may be released by Israel, to make it possible for Arab refugees, wherever they may be, to draw on their deposits at present frozen in Israel.

My Delegation would be most grateful, if in the meantime, the Commission would approach the British Government for its views on the matter. Such an arrangement, if agreed upon, would benefit all parties concerned : the Jews, because it would provide them with much needed sterling, the Arabs because it would help to alleviate their present desperate condition, and the British Government, in that it would provide them with an opportunity to make a friendly and positive gesture without imposing too heavy a burden on their economy.

I have the honour to be, Sir  
Yours faithfully,

S/  
Nassib Bulos  
Secretary  
Delegation  
Arab Refugee Congress