

UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE

RESTRICTED
ORG/36
21 March 1951
ORIGINAL : ENGLISH

MEMORANDUM DATED 24 JANUARY 1951
SUBMITTED TO THE CONCILIATION COMMISSION
BY Dr. IZZAT TANNOUS
GENERAL SECRETARY, REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
PALESTINE REFUGEE COMMITTEES IN THE LEBANON

Gentlemen,

The Representatives of the Palestine Committees in Lebanon, desire to submit this memorandum to you in respect of the mission you have been entrusted with under the United Nations decision of December 14, 1950.

1. Refugees Disappointment in the United Nations :

The refugees wish to place on record their bitter disappointment, doubts and fears in the earnestness of the United Nations to carry out their decisions and redress a small part of the great wrong done to them. For, despite the lapse of about three years since their compulsory exodus, the United Nations decision of December 11, 1948, decreeing the return of the refugees to their fatherland, has not been executed, and appears to have been a mere anaesthetic. This apathy on the part of the United Nations has led the refugees to believe that due to the great influence the Jews have on some Great Powers, the U.S.A. and Great Britain in particular, the United Nations has become a tool in the hands of the Zionists.

2. The Gravity of the Situation:

For three years, the great majority of the refugees have been living on their own resources and on advances from relatives and friends, the UNRWA's assistance being only symbolic. In Palestine they were enjoying a high standard of living equal to that enjoyed by Europeans. It is therefore inhuman that the UNRWA should offer this meagre ration worth only one dollar per person per month on which an animal can hard live. Even this insignificant ration has been the subject of many

complaints by the refugees, being of a poor quality and is being distributed by a very elaborate and extravagant administration which is incompatible with the nature of the work and services rendered.

Now that the refugees have drained all their resources and are on the verge of starvation, humiliation and annihilation, they have become the prey of desperation that would soon drive them to embrace and follow political ideas that are adverse to the principles of the Democracies and thus become a dangerous element in this part of the world. The refugees therefore, request you to consider this grave situation before it is too late. The manner in which the United Nations is handling this problem is dangerous. In our opinion, it is only covering a burning furnace with a thin layer of ashes.

3. Repatriation to Palestine is the aim of refugees :

The return of every person to his fatherland, home and property, is fundamental and is his natural indisputable right. Moreover, this principle has been decreed and guaranteed by the Charter of the "Rights of Man" sponsored by the Democracies. In our case, it has been affirmed by two United Nations decisions of December 11, 1948 and December 14, 1950. Though the first decision has been neglected for two years, the refugees still hope for the last time that the United Nations will show at this critical hour some of the determination and courage it has shown in Korea. The refugees emphatically insist on their return to their homeland. They believe that this is the only natural solution for their problem. They would warn you that artificial solutions will not survive but would only breed chaos and disturbances. It was such artificial solutions imposed on certain parts of Europe that had partly contributed to the ruin of the League of Nations and the break out of World War II.

4. Reintegration :

The idea of reintegrating part of the refugees in some of the countries in which they now live temporarily is fantastic and impractical. The refugees insist on their return to their homeland, and the Arab countries, for social, economic and political reasons, look forward to the day when all refugees will return to their homes. The refugees will never surrender their heritage, nor will they sell their sacred historic trust for any price. There is nothing in International Law or usage that would permit any authority in the world to expel a peaceful nation from its own country where it had lived for thousands of years in order to be

replaced by sheer force, by a foreign **people**, whatever the reason may be. And what impression can a refugee have of "Democracy" when the major Democratic countries were responsible for his dispersion. And what kind of a democracy are we living under, when a refugee, only a few yards away from his home cannot go back to it to live a peaceful and a free life, the life of the "five freedoms" broadcast by the President of the U.S.A. not long ago. And how can the refugee in the Camps suffering the pangs of hunger, cold and disease, after having lost home, property and country, refrain from hoping for a better mode of life under any other regime.

5. Compensation :

The refugees understand the term "compensation" mentioned in the United Nations decisions of December 11, 1948 to mean as follows :

(a) Compensation for the loss of career and loss of income from established industry, trade, profession, vocation and other business undertakings that were practiced by the refugees in Palestine.

(b) Compensation for loss and damage to holdings and properties caused by **aggression**, and through the enforced absence of the owners.

(c) Compensation does not apply to properties and holdings, movable or immovable, since these have actual values that can by no means be included within the term compensation.

6. Refugees hate Charity :

The refugees whose income from their properties in Palestine is about twenty million pounds sterling per year, look with disdain upon living on charity. Therefore, pending the adoption of the necessary measures for their immediate repatriation, they earnestly request the following :

(a) The immediate payment of the balances frozen in banks, and the accumulated proceeds of their properties administered by the Jewish Custodian of "Absentee Property".

(b) The immediate abrogation of discriminate legislation enacted by the Jewish Authorities in respect of their properties inasmuch as such legislation is incompatible with the provision of the present truce and the natural rights of the property owners. This is all the more so, since the said Authorities themselves treat those owners as absentees.

(c) Since refugees are absentees, the duties of the Jewish Custodian of "Absentee Property" be terminated and replaced by a committee composed of the refugees themselves under the auspices of the United Nations. The proposed committee will administer the properties and pay the income therefrom to the owners wherever they may be, and advise your Commission and any other competent body on all matters relating to the refugees.

7. Personal contact with your Commission :

The refugees have become very tired of commissions and memoranda. Their patience has been exhausted. Three years have elapsed and their case has not advanced a single iota. The refugees believe that memoranda have failed to contribute towards the solution of their problem. We, therefore, request to have a personal contact with you in accordance with the United Nations decision of 14 December 1950, to discuss this important case which affects the destinies and fates of hundreds of thousands of innocent people. As we are the people most concerned, we believe we should have a decisive say in the matter, and this can only be done effectively through personal contact to exchange views as to the best means to arrive at a fair and just solution.

8. Summary :

Our claims may be summarized as follows :

- (a) The speedy return of refugees to their fatherland, homes and properties.
- (b) Compensation for all losses and damages sustained by the owners as explained in para. 5.
- (c) The immediate release of all blocked balances and accounts.
- (d) The abrogation of all legislative and administrative measures adopted by the Jewish Authorities against the refugees and their properties.
- (e) The constitution of a committee to replace the Jewish Custodian as proposed in para 6 (c).
- (f) Due to the general complaint of the refugees to arrange for an investigation into the machinery and operation of UNRWA.
- (g) Arrangements for our contact with your Commission as explained in para. 7.

9. Conclusion :

In conclusion, the refugees feel that they have been the victims of a wrong policy, favouritism and aggression. Never in history has such an aggression been inflicted upon a small body of people like us by such a large and a responsible group as the United Nations. To expel a small and a helpless nation out of its homeland and replace it by "chosen people from all parts of the world" has not been heard of even in the dark ages. The damage done, moral, social and material is truly great. Consequently, we realize that the United Nations will encounter great difficulties in settling this problem as the magnitude of the problem is proportionate to the magnitude of the aggression.

However, there is only one way open to that World Organization to restore peace in the Middle East. It is by ending favouritism and resolving courageously to redress the wrong that has been done at any cost. For the United Nations to take this right step, it has to be, not only guided by you, but stimulated to realize what amount of human suffering is allowed to continue by their indifference and delayed action. They will have to see that the Palestine Case is a catastrophe in which humanity itself has suffered. Therefore, the task before you, Gentlemen, is difficult, but very great. You share the responsibility with the United Nations to find an equitable solution, and whatever line you take will be recorded in history. It is a unique opportunity offered to only three chosen men to say the truth and stand for justice regardless of the consequences.

The refugees, therefore, firmly believe that if the United Nations will, without fear or favour, deal with the case, with all fairness and firmness, our problem will be solved and justice will prevail.

General Secretary,
(signed) Dr. Izzat Tannous.