

UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-FIRST MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 1 March 1950, at 4 p.m.

Present:

Mr. de BOISLINGER (France)

Chairman

Mr. PALMER (United States of America)

Mr. YALCIN (Turkey)

Mr. de AZCARATE

Principal Secretary

Draft Resolution on the establishment of a Joint Committee on the
Egyptian proposals concerning the Gaza Refugees (continued)

The CHAIRMAN stated that he had had a not very encouraging interview with Mr. Mostafa, at which he had informally outlined to the Egyptian representative the Commission's proposal for a Joint Committee. The Egyptian representative had put forward the view that it would be necessary to make certain in advance that the Israeli delegation agreed in principle to the proposals made by Egypt. He had also seemed to fear that if any mention of related questions were made in the text new problems would promptly be brought before the Joint Committee. He was anxious that the terms of reference of that Committee be not extended. He (the Chairman) had replied to Mr. Mostafa that he did not see how it would be possible to avoid touching on related questions. Whereupon, Mr. Mostafa had said he would shortly hand him (the Chairman) a note giving his personal views on the question.

All that had, however, been rendered out of date by the statement in a letter from the Israeli representative, Mr. Rafael, to the effect that the Israeli delegation considered that the Egyptian proposals had already been settled by a recent arrangement between the Israeli and Egyptian delegations to the Mixed Armistice Commission. Before it could judge to what extent that assertion was correct, the Commission would have to know the details of the agreement.

He proposed that, in the meantime, a copy of Mr. Rafael's letter should be sent to Mr. Mostafa. The Commission should also write to Mr. Rafael himself to acknowledge a receipt of his letter, and at the same time to inform him that it expected shortly to receive the text of the agreement in question together with the relevant maps and would come to a conclusion as to whether the first Egyptian proposal was completely settled or not after examining the documents. It should further be pointed out to him that two other points remained nonetheless outstanding and that the Commission maintained its proposal to set up a Joint Committee.

Mr. RALMER (United States of America) informed the Commission that he also had had occasion to raise the question of the Joint Committee with Mr. Mostafa, who had emphasised the need for first obtaining an agreement in principle from the Israeli delegation and had said he intended to submit to the Commission a draft proposal which he himself considered satisfactory.

He had also had an interview with the Israeli representative. The communication addressed by the latter to the Commission was undoubtedly based on an incomplete knowledge of the recent arrangements between the Egyptian and Israeli delegations to the Mixed Armistice Commission.

He thought the Israeli delegation had no grounds for thinking that points 2 and 3 of the Egyptian proposals had been settled but was using the recently concluded arrangement as a pretext to set the proposals on one side without actually refusing to consider them. The Israeli delegation considered points 2 and 3 too limited in scope.

He agreed that a letter on the lines indicated by the Chairman should be sent to Mr. Rafael.

The CHAIRMAN said he had understood from his conversation with Mr. Eban that the Israeli Government wished to propose to the Commission the addition of further questions to the Joint Committee's terms of reference. Such a request might be acceptable and, in order to give an opening to the Israeli delegation, he felt that it should be informed that the Commission still held to its proposal to establish a Joint Committee.

Mr. YALCIN (Turkey) considered that any anxiety shown by the Egypt delegation might be allayed, if the Israeli delegation proposed further questions for addition to the terms of reference, since the former would then have advance knowledge of the questions that would be raised.

The Commission unanimously agreed that the Chairman should send Mr. Mostafa a copy of Mr. Rafael's letter and that a letter in the terms outlined by the Chairman should be sent to the Israeli representative. The draft of that letter would be submitted to the Commission at its next meeting for its approval.

The CHAIRMAN, replying to Mr. PALMER (United States of America), said that, in his opinion, the Egyptian representative's answer would not be in the form of a letter and the Commission would not therefore be obliged to communicate it to the Israeli delegation.

Examination of possible future movements of the Commission

Mr. PALMER (United States of America) thought that the time had come to consider what the Commission planned to do after the end of April. When the Commission had moved to Geneva, it had informed the European Office of the United Nations that it would like to be provided with offices until that date.

The CHAIRMAN remarked that it was difficult to make any final plans at that stage since the Commission's programme depended to a certain extent on the attitude of the parties concerned.

The PRINCIPAL SECRETARY pointed out that when the Commission had established itself at Geneva it had informed the Secretary-General that it expected to stay there for three months. Should it wish to stay longer it would

be advisable to inform the Director of the European Office as soon as possible that the Commission contemplated extending its stay and would like to retain the use of the offices it occupied beyond the end of April.

The CHAIRMAN agreed.

Mr. PALMER (United States of America) considered that if the Commission continued its activities beyond the end of April, its members might spend some time in the Near East, and leave the secretariat behind in Geneva. Two places had already been suggested as possible temporary headquarters, namely, Istanbul and Beirut.

Mr. YALCIN (Turkey) declared that, at Istanbul, excellent accommodation would be provided by the Turkish Government.

Mr. PALMER (United States of America) suggested that the accommodation question was not the only one to be considered. The question whether the stay of the Commission in the Near East would be long enough to justify moving the secretariat and the archives would also have to be examined.

The CHAIRMAN observed that it was difficult to come to a decision at that stage. If a new temporary headquarters had to be contemplated, Istanbul had the advantage over Beirut that delegations from all the parties concerned could come there.

Mr. PALMER (United States of America), said that, even if Istanbul were chosen as the Commission's headquarters, he himself before going anywhere else would have to go to Beirut to take over the diplomatic post to which he had been appointed.

Mr. ERALP (Turkey) said that he had gathered from the observations just made by the United States representative that the latter seemed to be in favour of a brief stay at Istanbul, whereas previously the Commission had contemplated staying there for some time.

Mr. YALCIN (Turkey) thought that the secretariat might accompany the Commission to Istanbul but leave the archives at Geneva and retain reduced premises there.

Mr. PALMER (United States of America) asked what were the new factors likely to emerge in the next four or six weeks, and which would enable the Commission to arrive at a decision.

The CHAIRMAN replied that if the Commission succeeded in getting the Joint Committees under way which it was endeavouring to establish, it would be difficult for it to move in the near future. Should the contrary be the case, it would be necessary for members of the Commission to return to the Near East to resume contact with the Governments of the parties directly concerned. The Commission would be able to decide on the spot and during the tour whether it should remain at Geneva or go to Istanbul.

Whatever decisions might then be taken, it would be advisable either to notify the Director of the European Office of the United Nations straightaway that the Commission might have either to prolong its stay in Geneva or else to leave some of its secretariat behind, so that it could retain its present offices.

Mr. PALMER (United States of America) agreed that the choice of the Commission's temporary headquarters could be made during the Commission's visit to the Near East.

Mr. YALCIN (Turkey) pointed out that the geographical situation of Istanbul would assist the work of the Commission. He asked to be warned sufficiently in advance to enable the Turkish authorities to make the necessary arrangements.

The PRINCIPAL SECRETARY said he would abide by the instructions of the Commission and that the Commission's secretariat, provided the approval of the Secretary-General of the United Nations was forthcoming, would make whatever arrangements were best suited to the Commission's needs.

Date of the next meeting.

The next meeting of the Commission was fixed for the following day,
Thursday 2 March, at 11 a.m.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.