

UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE

RESTRICTED
SR/29
25 March 1949
Original: English

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE TWENTY-NINTH MEETING

held in Beirut on 25 March 1949 at 10:00 A.M.

Present: Mr. de Boisanger (France) - Chairman
Mr. Yalchin (Turkey)
Mr. Ethridge (U.S.A.)

Mr. Azcarate - Principal Secretary

Future Activities of the Committee on Jerusalem

The COMMISSION was in agreement that the Committee on Jerusalem should be asked to resume its work at the earliest possible moment, either in Beirut or in Jerusalem, on the drafting of a plan for an international regime in Jerusalem. The Committee should take account of the views expressed during the past few days by the representatives of the Arab States; it would now appear that those representatives were unanimous in offering no objection to internationalization on the condition that guarantees of the stability and durability of the regime could be given.

Mr. ETHRIDGE wished to clarify, for the Committee's guidance, the question of the role to be played by the Consuls of the United States, France and Turkey, as a committee of experts to work with the Jerusalem Committee.

It was the opinion of the CHAIRMAN and Mr. YALCHIN that the Consuls should be available as experts to advise the Committee concerning the lines to be drawn dividing the /municipalities

municipalities; they should not, however, act independently or carry on independent consultations with the authorities of the two sides.

Mr. ETHRIDGE wished it to be clear, nevertheless, that the Committee would be free to request the Consuls, as a committee of experts, to hold conversations on its behalf with the Jewish and Arab authorities, if it so desired.

Mr. Yalchin felt that clarification was needed of the General Assembly's intention concerning the last part of paragraph 8 and paragraph 9 of the resolution, which dealt with the appointment of a United Nations representative to co-operate with the local authorities in Jerusalem, and the reporting to the Security Council of any restriction on free access to Jerusalem.

The CHAIRMAN held the view that the appointment of such a representative was not incumbent on the Commission, but had been left to its discretion, and that the time had not yet come for any such appointment. Concerning the matter of free access to Jerusalem, he pointed out that Palestine was still in a state of war and that no action should be taken by the Commission until all the armistice agreements had been concluded. The existing restrictions might well be pointed out in the Commission's report to the General Assembly, but no report should be made to the Security Council at the moment.

Conclusions to be Drawn from an Exchange of Views with the Representatives of the Arab Governments

Mr. ETHRIDGE pointed out that a reply must be made to the questions of the Arab representatives regarding the proposed duration of the present talks. He felt that the

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conversations should not be brought to an end until some agreement had been reached on preliminary peace talks. He agreed with the CHAIRMAN that such talks should again be referred to as "exchanges of views," and that the phrase "peace negotiations" should be avoided.

Before such talks could be contemplated, however, certain preliminary steps must be taken. The Commission was now in a much better position to talk with the Israeli authorities and to insist upon a firm reply concerning the refugees. The Commission should inform the Arab representatives that it intended to hold such talks and to obtain such a reply. The Commission should also sound out the Arab Governments on the possibility of their sending representatives to participate in preliminary peace talks, and on what type of representative they would send. As regards the possible meeting-place for the talks, he agreed that Geneva would be more acceptable to the Arab States than Rhodes; in view of administrative difficulties, however, he considered Geneva acceptable only if the representatives sent were senior officials with authority to conclude peace agreements.

Mr. Ethridge also felt it should be made clear to both Arabs and Jews that the Commission intended to report to the General Assembly on the attitude of both sides concerning the refugee problem, the question of Jerusalem, and the idea of preliminary peace talks.

The CHAIRMAN did not feel that the Arab Governments were prepared at present to accept an official invitation to attend peace talks; the Commission must simply suggest new and broader exchanges of views directed toward a possible opening of discussion on the general subject of peace.

Memorandum from the Government of Israel on Refugees

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the Commission had not replied to the Israeli Government's memorandum on the refugee question. He agreed with Mr. ETHRIDGE that the matter must be discussed at Tel Aviv, but felt that a written reply was necessary in the meantime.

Mr. YALCHIN held the view that the memorandum virtually constituted a rejection of the General Assembly's resolution and was highly unsatisfactory. He favored a brief and exact reply stating that the memorandum conformed neither to the spirit nor the letter of the resolution. The refugee problem was a question involving the rights of humanity; the Commission must not take a materialistic stand and indulge in bargaining on the question, but must adhere strictly to principle.

Mr. ETHRIDGE repeated his view that the Commission should go to Tel Aviv and press for the fullest acceptance by the Israeli Government of the terms of the resolution, and for a definite commitment regarding the number of refugees who would be allowed to return. The memorandum under discussion was clearly unsatisfactory and the Commission must take firm action on it. He had no objection to a written reply of the type suggested by Mr. Yalchin.

The CHAIRMAN requested the Principal Secretary to draft a reply, following the same informal procedure used in the covering letter from the Israeli Government.

He further asked the Principal Secretary to prepare a draft text of a possible letter to the Arab and Israeli Governments on the subject of further exchanges of views. The letter might follow a formula similar to that used in the letter of invitation to the Beirut talks. The Chairman felt that the

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Commission's next immediate task should be to discuss that draft letter with each delegation separately, in order to ascertain the views of the delegations and form a more definite idea of the form the talks should take -- whether the Governments should be invited together or separately, or whether the Commission should act as intermediary, etc.