

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY



Distr.
RESTRICTED

A/AC.25/SR.324
1 April 1955

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 324th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on 11 February 1955, at 3 p.m.

CONTENTS

1. Adoption of the agenda
2. Question of blocked accounts
 - A. Current status of payments
 - B. Release of safe custody and safe deposit items: correspondence with Barclay's Bank; report of the Liaison Representative
3. Identification of Arab property
 - A. Report by the Acting Principal Secretary
 - B. Consideration of plan of work for the coming year
4. Consideration of draft Fourteenth Progress Report to the Secretary-General

PRESENT:

<u>Chairman:</u>	Mr. BARCO	United States of America
<u>Members:</u>	Mr. ORDONNEAU	France
	Mr. ASIROGLU	Turkey
<u>Secretariat:</u>	Mr. CHAI	Acting Principal Secretary
	Mr. LADAS	

1. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The agenda was adopted.

2. QUESTION OF BLOCKED ACCOUNTS

A. Current Status of Payment

The Commission took note of a cable from General Burns describing the present situation with regard to the distribution of forms: in view of the refusal of the Jordan Government to permit UNTSO to transport the forms across the Armistice line, it had been agreed that the forms would be sent via Cyprus to Beirut, where UNRWA would handle their distribution to the refugees. The Director of UNRWA had agreed to this procedure. The Commission also took note of the fact that one million pounds, or one-third of the total outstanding amount, had been released for payment by the Israel Custodian of Absentees' Property.

B. Release of safe custody and safe deposit items

Mr. LADAS (Secretariat) outlined the present situation with regard to the arrangements being worked out for the transfer of safety deposits and the contents of safe deposit lockers from the banks in Israel to their refugee owners. Mr. Ladas reported that he had discussed the matter with Barclay's Bank in London and as a result there had been an exchange of correspondence which he summarized for the Commission. In brief, the problem was, since the Jordan Government had apparently rejected the three alternative methods of transfer which had been set forth in the announcement of 16 November, to determine the procedure to be adopted. The question was of some urgency, since the banks were being subjected to legal actions and were therefore anxious to move ahead quickly on the distribution of the forms, even if it meant the adoption of a procedure which might prove unacceptable to some or all of the Arab Governments.

The Commission decided to examine further the exchange of correspondence and the draft reply proposed by the Secretariat before reaching a final decision on the course it would adopt.

3. IDENTIFICATION OF ARAB PROPERTY

A. Report by the Acting Principal Secretary

Mr. CHAI (Acting Principal Secretary) stated that the Israel Ministry for Foreign Affairs had informed the Commission's Representative, prior to his return to New York, that Mr. Hadawi, the Commission's Land Specialist, had addressed a letter to the Israel Custodian of Absentees' Property asking that his own property in Israel be released. His request was based on the fact that he was a British subject and that he was aware that his property could not be included in the list of Arab refugee property on which a settlement might eventually be reached. The letter was written on stationery bearing the Conciliation Commission's letterhead. The spokesman of the Israel Foreign Ministry, in imparting this information to the Commission's Representative, had expressed his surprise at the action, and had felt that it was something on which the Commission should be informed. Before reporting the matter to the Commission, Mr. Chai had asked for and received from Mr. Hadawi a copy of the letter in question which he then read out, as well as a memorandum from Mr. Hadawi explaining the circumstances surrounding his action. Mr. Chai concluded by asking for the views of the Commission. His personal feeling was that Mr. Hadawi had committed an error of judgment, through not having thought out with sufficient care the possible implications of his action.

Mr. ORDONNEAU (France) thought that it was possible that there had been some provocation, a conclusion he was led to by personal knowledge which he would impart privately to the other two members of the Commission.

The CHAIRMAN agreed that the act was imprudent, but that it had probably been perpetrated in good faith. The question involved was whether he had used knowledge gained through his official position to further his personal interest. On that point the Chairman felt sure that the Secretariat would have its own views. The Commission's problem was to determine the extent to which Mr. Hadawi's action would affect its work. It was the Secretariat's responsibility to decide how it viewed such a step on the part of one of its employees.

Mr. ASTROGLU (Turkey) agreed and added that if Mr. Hadawi had committed an unwise act the Commission would have to be so informed by the Secretariat before taking any action of its own.

Mr. CHAI (Acting Principal Secretary) pointed out that the reason he had raised the matter with the Commission was because the Israel Government had thought the Commission should be informed. It was therefore in his opinion more than just a Secretariat problem and he would welcome the Commission's views as to the consequences of the action.

The CHAIRMAN continued to believe that it was essentially a matter for the Secretary-General to deal with, under the codes and regulations of the Secretariat.

It was agreed to request the Acting Principal Secretary to furnish the Commission with the views of the Secretariat before the Commission could judge the possible effects on its work of Mr. Hadawi's action.

B. Consideration of plan of work for the coming year

Mr. CHAI (Acting Principal Secretary) recalled that at the Commission's last meeting it had requested the Secretariat to submit its views regarding the possibility of amalgamating in Jerusalem the two sections of the property identification work. He had therefore requested the Land Specialist and the Commission's Representative to prepare papers on the subject, which had been circulated to the Commission. The principal question raised by Mr. Hadawi was whether or not the microfilms were to be transferred to Jerusalem. If so, their safety might become a factor. Mr. Chai thought that this objection could be met by returning the microfilms in batches to Headquarters for safekeeping, once work on them had been completed. Mr. Ladas, who had made a careful analysis of the question, had concluded that the disadvantages of such a transfer tended to counterbalance the advantages. However, Mr. Ladas felt that if the operation as a whole were to be accelerated to any considerable degree, the disadvantages would disappear. Mr. Chai drew attention to the fact that the Director of UNRWA had on several occasions expressed an interest in seeing the

work accelerated; a cable had been received from him on 7 February reaffirming that interest and expressing the view that the work should be transferred to the area. Mr. Chai was of the opinion that without a serious increase in expenditure it would be possible, by concentrating the work in Jerusalem and increasing the locally-recruited staff, to double the present output to 800 parcels per day.

The CHAIRMAN, speaking as the representative of the United States, then reported that his Government was interested in seeing the Commission undertake a reappraisal of the whole project, its activities to date, the over-all worth and thoroughness of the work and whether or not the work should be continued as at present, accelerated slightly, or finished within a year, which would involve larger expenditures. The Commission had reached a ~~crossroads~~ on the question and the United States delegation felt that the Secretariat might be asked to prepare a broad, intensive study which the Commission could consider before deciding as to the future of the property identification work. There were certain specific questions which the United States delegation thought should be covered: (a) a full survey of the particulars already extracted and at present being extracted from the microfilms; (b) the status and availability of the necessary records; (c) the time needed for the completion of the work; and (d) did the information so far obtained tend to support or refute the global estimate of property value reached by John Berncastle?

The Chairman noted that the draft Fourteenth Progress Report contained a summary of the previous year's work on compensation; perhaps it would be desirable to defer that section of the report until the full survey could be completed. At the same time the Commission could state that a supplementary report on the compensation question would be forthcoming at a later date.

Mr. OFDONNEAU (France) agreed fully as to the usefulness of preparing a complete survey of the question. Paragraphs 6-13 of the draft Progress Report could be replaced with a note indicating the Commission's intention to issue a supplementary report.

Mr. ASIROGLU (Turkey) shared the views of his colleagues and added that in connexion with any acceleration of the Commission's work on compensation, the financial implications should be carefully explored.

It was agreed to request the Secretariat to proceed with a full study of the Commission's work on compensation.

4. CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT FOURTEENTH PROGRESS REPORT TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

After a brief discussion it was decided to delete the annex dealing with the detailed aspects of the blocked accounts question. Certain minor drafting changes in the body of the report were agreed to and the Secretariat was requested to circulate a revised text for final approval by the Commission.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.