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UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE

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SUMMARY RECORD OF A MEETING  
BETWEEN THE CONCILIATION COMMISSION AND  
H.E. WAJIB RUSTOM BEY, MINISTER OF EGYPT TO LEBANON

held in Beirut on 28 March 1949

Present: Mr. de Boisanger (France) - Chairman  
Mr. Yalcin (Turkey)  
Mr. Ethridge (U.S.A.)  
Mr. Azcarate - Principal Secretary  
H.E. Wajih Rustom Bey - Minister of Egypt to  
Lebanon  
Abdul Monhem Mostafa Bey

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The CHAIRMAN recalled that the Commission had already discussed the refugee problem with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt. It appeared that the point of view of all the Arab States was practically identical. The Commission had taken note of this standpoint and would press the Government of Israel to accept the provision of the General Assembly's resolution relating to refugees. The Commission, however, was deeply anxious about the present situation of the refugees, since the limited funds at the disposal of Mr. Griffis's organisation were running out.

The MINISTER declared that it was in the interest of the whole world that the refugees should return promptly to their homes and that the Commission should obtain guarantees concerning the protection of their lives and property.

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The CHAIRMAN was in full agreement on this point. He pointed out to the Egyptian Delegation that in addition to the questions of Jerusalem and of the refugees, which had been discussed during earlier conversations, the Commission wished to continue exchanges of views with the Arab States. He recalled that in accordance with the General Assembly's resolution, the Commission's task was to endeavour to bring the interested parties together. The Commission would like to continue the conversations in progress and hoped to be able, in its report to the Secretary-General, to indicate what progress had been achieved in all fields, including that of conciliating the viewpoints of the parties concerned. The Commission intended to proceed to Tel Aviv with a view to seeking an area of agreement, but it was aware that such journeys between Beirut and Tel Aviv, for example, caused a loss of time, and it wished to find a more practical solution. The Commission had accordingly considered the possibility of a meeting of representatives of the Arab States and of the State of Israel in a neutral territory. This solution would enable it to hear the points of view of the different parties. The Chairman asked the Egyptian delegation to help the Commission in its task and to indicate whether it had any suggestions as regards the date and place of such a meeting.

Mr. ETHRIDGE defined the Commission's task as laid down in paragraphs 5 and 6 of the General Assembly's resolution. He pointed out that time pressed, and invited the parties concerned to take part in direct or indirect negotiations.

The MINISTER asked to be allowed, before replying, to refer the Commission's invitation to his Government. He said that in

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his understanding the meeting would not be a peace conference and would aim primarily at solving the problem of refugees.

The CHAIRMAN asked the Egyptian Delegation to communicate with the Commission as soon as possible on the subject; since it wished to receive a reply to its invitation before leaving for Tel Aviv. He then inquired whether the Egyptian Delegation approved the draft communiqué which had been submitted to it.

MOSTAFA BEY felt that the communiqué should be shortened and stated that he would prefer that it should stress the unanimity of the Arab States concerning the return of the refugees.

In Mr. YALCIN's opinion, it would be a mistake for the Arab States to adopt an attitude of intransigence; they would run the risk of their position being interpreted as a manoeuvre to prevent the continuation of the conversations. Mr. Yalcin felt that it would be preferable that the communiqué should not be limited to the refugee question, which however should be mentioned in it, and that it should point out that the parties had felt that future conversations would serve a useful purpose.

The MINISTER agreed with Mr. Yalcin's suggestion.