

UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE

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SUMMARY RECORD OF A MEETING BETWEEN THE CONCILIATION
COMMISSION AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ARAB STATES

held in Beirut on 5 April 1949 at 10.30 a.m.

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

Mr. Azcarate - Principal Secretary

Their Excellencies the Representatives of Egypt, Iraq,
the Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Transjordan

The CHAIRMAN thanked the Arab representatives for attending this last plenary meeting of the Beirut talks. The Commission had listened with the greatest interest to the views of the delegations. It was now making its plans to proceed to Tel Aviv to explain those views, particularly with reference to the refugee question, to the Government of Israel; the delegations might be sure that their opinions would be transmitted faithfully.

Concerning the continuation of the conversations, he observed that it was essential for the Commission's primary task of conciliation that the talks should be resumed at the earliest possible moment, and in a neutral city where contact with both sides could be quickly established and maintained. He would now ask the delegations in turn whether they agreed in principle to continuing the talks, and if so, what their preference would be regarding the time and place.

The REPRESENTATIVE OF EGYPT stated that his Government agreed to continue the exchange of views for the purpose of conciliation of the opposing points of view. As regards the location, the Egyptian Government would favour Italy or Brussels.

The CHAIRMAN explained that the Commission would have to take the final decision, but that it was anxious to choose a location to which no representative objected.

The REPRESENTATIVE of IRAQ said that his Government was unable to accept the invitation to resume conversations on a broader scale, since it believed that prior to any such conversations the Commission must carry out its clear and specific mandate to find a solution of the refugee problem. There could be no question of the urgency of that problem, and his Government could see no reason for further delay. With over 800,000 refugees now homeless and living in the open, the Government of Iraq did not feel that more time should be spent in negotiations of any kind at the present. The return of the refugees to their homes was the Commission's first and foremost charge, and it was its responsibility to see that the Jews accepted the terms of the resolution.

The CHAIRMAN said that the Commission fully understood the importance of the refugee question and would do its best in Tel Aviv to obtain a modification of the Jewish attitude. The Government of Iraq would be kept informed, and it was hoped that that Government would eventually re-examine its position in the light of results obtained by the Commission in Tel Aviv.

The REPRESENTATIVE of TRANSJORDAN said his Government agreed to resume the conversations in a neutral city. His instructions did not include any suggestions as to location, but he would support the Egyptian preference for Italy or Brussels.

The REPRESENTATIVE of LEBANON said his Government also would accept the Commission's invitation. The choice of location was a secondary matter, but taking into account the Commission's wish to be near its Secretariat, he would have suggested a neutrality other than Geneva but not far from Geneva, such as Evian.

In reply to a question from the CHAIRMAN, who asked how the Egyptian delegation would look upon the choice of Evian, the REPRESENTATIVE of EGYPT thought his Government would not object.

The REPRESENTATIVE of SAUDI ARABIA reported the agreement of his Government to resumption of the conversations. He could offer no suggestions at present concerning the location, but would ask the opinion of his Government's representative in Cairo.

The REPRESENTATIVE of SYRIA accepted the Commission's invitation on behalf of his Government, with the understanding that the General Assembly's resolution, in so far as it concerned the refugees, remained unchanged by the plan to resume exchanges of views. With regard to ^{the} location, he would accept any proposal agreed to by the other delegations, such as Evian, Brussels or Italy; his Government did not favour the choice of Geneva.

He appreciated the Chairman's statement that the views of the Arab delegations would be faithfully transmitted to the Government of Israel. He hoped, however, that the Commission would go further and ask the Jews clearly for definite and immediate action to remove the obstacles which now prevented the return of the refugees.

The CHAIRMAN replied that it was the Commission's intention to discuss the question of guarantees of security for the returning refugees and suppression of certain measures taken by the Government of Israel.

The Chairman then asked the opinion of the delegations on the revised draft communiqué, which had been circulated.

No objections being raised to the text, the Chairman announced that it would be released to the press without delay.

The Chairman then thanked the delegations for their help in facilitating the Commission's task. He hoped that the conversation now ending would prove to be only a step toward more decisive ones,

and that the Commission might continue to count upon the sympathetic attitude of the Arab States as in the past. He expressed the Commission's appreciation to the Government of Lebanon for its hospitality during the meetings.

The REPRESENTATIVE of LEBANON acknowledged the Chairman's thanks and said he was sure everything would be done to attain a just solution of the problems at issue.