

21 DEC 1950



RESTRICTED

SR/IM/2
27 April 1949

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE

SUMMARY RECORD OF A MEETING BETWEEN THE CONCILIATION
COMMISSION AND THE EGYPTIAN DELEGATION

held at Lausanne on 27 April 1949 at 3 p.m.

Present: Mr. Ethridge	(United States of America)	- Chairman
Mr. de Boisanger	(France)	
Mr. Yalcin	(Turkey)	
Mr. Azcarate		- Principal Secretary
Mr. Abdel Shafi El Labbane	}	- Representatives of Egypt
Mr. Mahmoud Ramzy		

The CHAIRMAN thanked the Egyptian delegation for coming to Lausanne, and hoped that the present discussions would constitute a fresh and perhaps a final stage in the conversations arranged by the Commission, which had invited the Arab States and the State of Israel to Lausanne. The ultimate aim of the conversations was to negotiate the peace which it was hoped would prevail throughout the Middle East. The negotiations might be conducted either directly between the States concerned, or through the Conciliation Commission. The Egyptian delegation could either meet the Commission as a whole, or hold private discussions with its members individually. Apart from the general task of adopting measures to assist the Governments to reach a final settlement of disputed questions, the General Assembly had assigned the Commission two more specific functions: to deal with the questions of Jerusalem and the refugees. The Commission, which had been instructed to prepare detailed proposals for a permanent international regime for the Jerusalem area, would be glad if the Egyptian delegation would inform the Jerusalem Committee of its views.

With regard to the refugees, Egypt occupied a special position in view of the number of Arab refugees in the Gaza area, and the Commission would find any information extremely valuable. He hoped, in conclusion, that the Egyptian delegation would express its views on all the territorial questions which would undoubtedly arise in the course of the ensuing conversations.

The EGYPTIAN REPRESENTATIVE, after thanking the Chairman for his welcome, said that the presence in Lausanne of the Egyptian delegation was itself proof of his Government's goodwill; a quality which it had consistently displayed from the outset. The questions of Jerusalem and the refugees were of prime importance for the Egyptian Government, and it had voiced its opinion on them both at Cairo and Beirut. On the other hand, he was unable at present to make any statements, even of a general character, on questions of territorial settlement which the Commission was raising for the first time. In the absence of the Chairman of his delegation now on his way to Lausanne, he could not give a definite reply on that point. He could, however, state that in his view, no territorial question proper existed between Israel and Egypt. Egypt had entered Palestine as defenders of a cause, and the actual armistice delimitation lines were temporary in character.

In reply to the Chairman, who asked him whether the Egyptian delegation visualised a peace settlement between Israel and Egypt, Mr. ABDEL SHAFI EL LABBANE said that two preliminary questions would need to be settled first - those of Jerusalem and the refugees. Egypt was ready to comply with the General Assembly resolution of 11 December 1948 and would study any proposals drawn up by the Conciliation Commission both as regards Jerusalem and the refugees. The return of the refugees to their homes and lands, and the payment by Israel of compensation for all lost or damaged property, was, he reaffirmed,

one of Egypt's essential conditions for peace.

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the Commission's terms of reference with regard to the refugees were fairly wide, whereas those with regard to Jerusalem were more specific and required the Commission additionally to prepare detailed proposals and to formulate recommendations on that point. It would therefore be desirable for the Egyptian delegation to establish contact with the Jerusalem Committee.

Mr. de BOISANGER observed that, although the Commission was already aware of Egypt's position, it would be useful at the present stage of negotiations if the Commission could have more detailed proposals on certain technical aspects. He stressed the difficulties in the way of preparing internationalisation proposals and hoped accordingly that contact would be established between the Egyptian delegation and the Jerusalem Committee. On the question of the refugees, he considered it difficult to separate the question of their repatriation from that of territorial settlement. The resolution provided that refugees wishing to return to their homes should be permitted to do so, and it would appear to be beyond doubt that the refugees' decision would largely depend on certain political considerations and that their choice would be facilitated if they knew whether their homes would be in Israeli or Arab territory.

The EGYPTIAN REPRESENTATIVE repeated that Egypt was prepared to examine the internationalisation proposals to be drawn up by the Commission. He felt, in the case of the refugees, that they should return to their original homes regardless of the question of the sovereignty exercised over the territory in which their homes were situated. Once they had returned, the refugees could decide which part of Palestine they wished to make their permanent home.

Territorial adjustments and repatriation were, he claimed, two separate questions.

Mr. YALCIN pointed out that if the General Assembly had decided that refugees wishing to return to their homes should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, it was desirable, in the interests of reaching a peaceful agreement, that the Arab delegations and the Jewish delegation should show goodwill. Peace was not an indivisible entity but a compromise and had both economic and political facets. If one of the parties adopted an intransigent attitude at the outset, it not only risked alienating world opinion, but might also induce the other party to stiffen its attitude. He hoped for the sake of the refugees themselves that the Egyptian delegation would not stand firm on a position of absolute principle by making the question a pre-condition for any further discussion. The refugee problem was only one element of the general problem of peace in the Middle East, all aspects of which should be examined simultaneously.

The EGYPTIAN REPRESENTATIVE contended that the State of Israel wished to use the refugees as a lever for exerting pressure on the Arab countries. It was most painful to observe that the refugees were a pawn in a kind of "bargaining" process by Israel. If it was hoped to achieve lasting peace in the Middle East, the parties must be able to act freely and not under pressure of any kind. The return of the refugees to their homes would allow the situation to be clarified and would provide proof of goodwill on the part of the Government of Israel. Egypt's attitude was based on purely humanitarian reasons. The State of Israel should strive to conform to certain humanitarian and moral principles if it wished to see negotiations reach a successful conclusion. In conclusion, his delegation urged the Commission to

draw up settlement proposals on the problem of refugees and that of Jerusalem alike. His delegation would study the proposals with the utmost care and goodwill. Any proposals prepared by the Commission would, in fact, form a basis for later discussions, which would be facilitated by the existence of concrete proposals.

The CHAIRMAN thanked the Egyptian delegation and assured it once again that the Commission and its members were entirely at its disposal.