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

held in Lausanne, on Wednesday,
24 August 1949, at 11:30 a.m.

Present: Mr. Yalcin (Turkey) - Chairman
Mr. de Boisanger (France)
Mr. Porter (U.S.A.)
Dr. Azcárate - Principal Secretary
Mr. M. Hawari - Delegation Chairman of
Refugees Congress of Ramallah
Mr. Said M. Beidas - Representative of the Jaffa
District Inhabitants Committee
Choukri Tasi Bey - Representative of the Land
Lords of the Palestine
Refugees.

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The CHAIRMAN welcomed the representatives of the Arab Refugee Organizations and said that the Commission would be glad to hear any comment or remarks they might have to make.

Mr. HAWARI recalled that he and his fellow representatives of the Arab Refugee Organizations had submitted a memorandum dated 5 August 1949 (ORG/26) to the Commission requesting that they be sent records of meetings held and allowed to be present at meetings. They wished to have full knowledge of all that was being done with regard to the refugees and to assist in the matter by making suggestions and recommendations whenever desirable. In that connection, he stressed the patience which the refugees had always shown and their readiness to accept whatever decision might be taken by the Commission. He also asked that the refugee organizations should be informed of the establishment of all working groups, such as the Technical Committee, the Mixed Committee on Blocked Accounts and the Economic Survey Group, allowed to attend their meetings and to accompany and assist them in the field.

Regarding the Technical Committee which had been established and had visited Palestine, he deplored the fact that representatives of the refugee organizations had not been invited to accompany that committee although the refugees

themselves had suggested in the past that a mixed committee, such as the Technical Committee, be set up to deal with the various questions concerning them, such as the orange groves.

The representatives of the refugee organizations had studied the report drawn up by the Technical Committee most carefully and considered it to be a decision taken against them, although they had not had the opportunity to make known their views, in spite of the fact that they were after all the parties best qualified to know the question and to ascertain whether the groves being shown to the Committee belonged in reality to Arabs or not. They had been astonished by the findings of the report since, contrary to the statements contained therein, many groves were still capable of cultivation. It was to be regretted that representatives of the refugees had not been present to show the Committee the various methods of cultivation, plantation and irrigation, as well as the differences between the old and the new methods.

Since therefore the representatives of the refugees considered that a completely one-sided report, prejudicial to their interests, had been made and since they had at no time been consulted, Mr. Hawari informed the Commission that a protest was being lodged with the Committee concerning their judgment in respect of the orange groves which were valued at not less than £ 150,000,000 and represented almost the sum total of refugee property. Referring to an extract from the Committee's report which stated that if no immediate measures were taken within the next two months, the groves would be irremediably lost, he urged the Commission to press for the necessary steps to be taken at the earliest possible date.

With regard to the recently established Mixed Committee of Experts on Blocked Accounts, he again deplored the fact that representatives of the refugees had not been consulted. It had been said that the refugees had every confidence in the Arab member of the Committee. That might well be, but the representatives of the refugees had not been given the opportunity of stating that fact. They had moreover not given anyone the power to negotiate for them. They considered that they were entitled to be represented as refugees and not by any member of a single Government.

Regarding the Economic Survey Group which would visit Palestine and the Arab countries, Mr. Hawari urged the Commission for representatives of the refugees to be allowed to assist the

Group in its work, which, after all, was being done in order to come to the aid of the refugees themselves.

Mr. Hawari then informed the Commission that the representatives of the refugees had had the opportunity of studying the memorandum addressed to the delegation of Israel and those of the Arab States on 15 August 1949 (IS/35 and AR/16). They had decided to submit to the Commission a written reply to the questions therein contained but he wished to comment further at the present meeting on some of the views held by the refugee organizations.

With regard to the first question in Chapter I, he said that the refugees would be willing to accept the principle unhesitatingly. They would however ask for certain reservations to be taken into consideration. Every refugee whose home was originally in Israel should have a free choice to return to his home. He would however undertake to accept fully Israeli authority, although it should be understood that no discrimination of any kind would be practised against him or any action taken to compel him to leave his home again at some future time. The remainder of the refugees should be given the choice between settling in the rest of Palestine or in the other Arab States where they would enjoy full citizenship rights. Many of the refugees had lost all their property in Palestine and, in that connection, he emphasized the fact that part or full compensation should be paid for movable and immovable property. He suggested that courts, consisting of one Arab, one Israeli and one neutral member, appointed by the United Nations authorities and with the refugees' approval, should be established to decide compensation, the price of immovable property being estimated on the basis of an equivalent price to that at the date when the refugee left his property. Such a system would be in accordance with the method practised when land was expropriated by the authorities in the public interest.

The refugee organizations were prepared to accept the principle of the establishment of a Survey Group as set forth in the second question, and were ready to cooperate with such a body, only on condition, however, that any decisions taken by that group should not be final or binding upon the refugees unless they had themselves been consulted and had agreed. If agreement were reached, for instance, with the organizations concerned before refugees were settled in certain localities, such a procedure might well avoid future difficulties.

With regard to the third question, he wished to make it clear that, in the view of the refugee organizations, the decision taken on the numbers of refugees to be resettled, once it had been agreed upon, should not be in any way affected by decisions reached subsequently on territorial questions or on any of the remaining questions in that chapter.

The refugee organizations were compelled to accept the fourth question. They wished to do everything possible to help themselves but, in the meantime, they were obliged to avail themselves of any assistance offered in order to alleviate the wretched plight of the refugees.

With regard to the question as to a provisional estimate of the approximate number of refugees which the respective Governments would be ready to accept, he considered that to be a dangerous principle for the Arab countries to adopt. In his view, the Arab States should state that they were prepared to accept the refugees with all the rights and obligations of full citizenship without mentioning any specific number.

As for the considerations with regard to a territorial settlement contained in Chapter II, Mr. Hawari said that the refugee organizations did not of course have any authority to deal with such a question. They wished to be repatriated at the earliest possible opportunity and would accept whatever sovereignty was imposed upon them in order to return to their homes.

He thanked the Commission for its attention.

The CHAIRMAN said that members of the Commission had heard the representative of the refugee organizations with the utmost interest. The Commission had always had the greatest sympathy for the unfortunate situation in which the refugees found themselves and was fully aware of the urgency of the matter. He hoped that some satisfactory solution to the problem would be reached at an early date.

He assured the representatives of the refugee organizations that their answers to the memorandum of 15 August would receive careful consideration and the Commission's views on those answers would be transmitted to them by the Principal Secretary.

He wished to thank Mr. Hawari for having explained to the Commission the views of the organizations he represented.

Mr. de BOISANGER wished to raise the point that Mr. Hawari's criticism of the Technical Committee's report was unjustified since that report had not as yet been circulated, even to members of the Commission. The only report which had so far been published was that of an expert who could not be taken to represent the views of the Technical Committee.