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ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

OBSERVATIONS REGARDING THE MEETINGS  
BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION  
COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE AND THE ARAB  
GOVERNMENTS, TO BE HELD IN BEIRUT ON  
21 March 1949

I. OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETINGS

A. To obtain the agreement of the greatest possible number of Arab States, either jointly or individually, to enter into political negotiations without waiting for a solution of the refugee problem.

(During its visits to the various Arab Governments, the Commission received the impression that the Arab Governments would wish the refugee question to be settled, at least in principle, before they entered into political negotiations with a view to peace. The Commission, however, did not feel that the Arab States intended to make the prior solution of the refugee problem a condition sine qua non for the opening of political negotiations, but that they would consent to enter into political negotiations provided that the refugee question figured as the first point on the agenda of these negotiations. The Commission might undertake to obtain an explicit confirmation that this impression is correct. It might wish to ask for an assurance that the Arab States would agree to enter into political negotiations on the subject of Palestine, it being understood that the first point on the agenda of such negotiations would be the refugee question. This, however, would not exclude the possibility, if it were considered advantageous for the success of the negotiations,

of passing to the examination of other points of the agenda before the first one was finally settled).

- B. To obtain the agreement of the greatest possible number of Arab States, either jointly or individually, to accept the implication contained in paragraph 11 of the General Assembly's resolution that those refugees not wishing to return to their homes will have to be resettled and rehabilitated in Arab Palestine or in certain Arab States.
- (a) It would be most helpful if the Commission were in a position to present to the Arab Governments a statement of the Israeli position with respect to the converse implication that those who wish to return will be permitted to do so. This would tend to pose the problem in concrete terms.
- (b) In the event that the Government of Israel is not prepared to accept this proposition, would the Conciliation Commission consider that its action should be limited to reporting this fact to the Assembly, or should it continue its work with a view to resettling as many refugees as possible in the Arab States?
- C. To obtain the agreement of the greatest possible number of Arab States, either jointly or individually, to submit or accept concrete and practicable proposals:
1. for determining which refugees wish to return;
  2. for absorbing those refugees who do not wish to return.
- (a) It will be essential to bring the Arab States to a realistic appraisal of the practical difficulties, economic, social and otherwise, which will confront Arabs returning to Israeli territory.

(b) It should be borne in mind that the most feasible method of returning refugees to Israel might be by incorporating their return within the framework of the general land settlement plans of the Israeli Government, possibly under United Nations supervision.

(c) The Commission might wish to ask individual Arab States to indicate the measures they would contemplate in absorbing a proportion of these refugees.

(d) The Conciliation Commission might find it useful to ascertain the attitude of the other Arab States towards the measures adopted and proposed by Trans-jordan as regards refugees.

(e) Would the Arab States grant the necessary facilities for a technical mission to be sent by the Conciliation Commission to ascertain on the spot, with the collaboration of the competent authorities, the number of refugees (by category) that would wish to return to Israel, that each country could absorb, and what financial assistance would be necessary?

3. For compensating those refugees who do not return.

(The question of the form that indemnities should take would have to be considered - i.e. whether they should be paid to individuals, or collectively into a special fund, or from Government to Government).

D. To obtain the agreement of the greatest possible number of Arab States to discuss questions other than the refugee problem during the Beirut meetings, should the talks develop in such a way as to make this advisable. It might be useful in this connection to emphasize the close relationship of the solution of the refugee question

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with the territorial settlement. This is particularly true in view of the fact that the refugee problem will not be liquidated by the return to Israel of those refugees originating from Israeli territory proper (as defined by the partition plan) and that the fate of a considerable number of refugees will be dependent on the final political and territorial settlement.

- E. To obtain the agreement of the greatest possible number of Arab States, either jointly or individually, to begin direct discussions with Israeli authorities:
1. on the refugee question;
  2. on other questions outstanding between them and Israel.

## II. PROCEDURAL TACTICS

In order to facilitate the Conciliation Commission's task and to avoid certain developments that might obstruct the progress of its peace efforts, the following procedural tactics might be useful:

- A. It should be made quite clear at the outset that the various Arab States were invited to Beirut for the purpose of holding meetings with the Conciliation Commission. These meetings should not be permitted to assume the character of an official conference but should be conducted on the basis of a continuation of the conversations held between the Arab Governments and the Commission during its tour of the Arab capitals. The Arab Governments were invited to send representatives to Beirut merely because it was impracticable for the Commission to continue its discussions with them individually in each capital. Therefore it is desirable that the word "conference" should be avoided in pro-

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nouncements or communications of the Commission, and the point should be made clear to the press. The Chairman of the Commission might also wish to make this point clear in his opening statement.

B. The meetings are intended to be between the Conciliation Commission and the Arab States, either collectively or individually, and not between the Arab States under the auspices of the Conciliation Commission or otherwise.

To this end it is suggested that:

1. measures be taken to avoid any confusion or misunderstanding tending to associate the Conciliation Commission with any meeting that the Arab States might hold among themselves, e.g. a convocation of the Council or Political Committee of the League of Arab States.
2. the press be kept informed of meetings of the Conciliation Commission with individual Arab States.

C. The meetings will be conducted under the chairmanship and active direction of the Conciliation Commission. In order to convey this intention as an accomplished fact, it is suggested that at the first meeting the Chairman of the Conciliation Commission will assume the chair automatically. (Place cards marking the chairman's seat as such might be used as a device).

D. The Conciliation Commission should carefully maintain the principle of "exchanges of views", as set forth in the official invitations. If it should become apparent that agreements are possible, these should be pursued, but the success of the conversations must not depend on such agreements.

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- E. As regards the substance of the questions to be discussed, the conversations should not be allowed to become a detailed and exhaustive study of the various possible formulae for ensuring the resettlement and economic and social rehabilitation of the refugees. Political agreements on principle and along general lines should be aimed at, leaving the details for later settlement.

### III. NOTES

- A. It is almost certain that the Conciliation Commission will be confronted during the Beirut meetings with the concern of the Arab States in the immediate fate of the refugees. Although, strictly speaking, the relief aspect of the refugee problem is not a concern of the Conciliation Commission, it might be useful for the creation of a favourable atmosphere if the Conciliation Commission were to show an interest in the matter and give assurances that it will lend its full support to any measures intended to provide relief to the refugees during the interim period.
- B. It might also be helpful if, at the appropriate time, the Commission were to convey to the representatives of the Arab States its overall view of the refugee problem as a whole and the general scope of the measures which would appear to be necessary for its solution.
- C. Although the questions of re-installation and rehabilitation of the refugees will not in themselves be a subject of discussion, inasmuch as their solution will not be among the purposes of the consultations, there is no doubt that in the course of the meetings the Commission will be in a position to acquire much valuable information on the views held by

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the Arab Governments on these questions. It is very likely that on the basis of such information, augmented by that which may be obtained from the Government of Israel, it may be possible to draw up the general outline of a possible solution of the question, at least as regards its political aspects.

- D. Excessive importance should not be attached to the apprehension aroused in certain quarters that the Beirut meetings might contribute to a re-establishment of unity among the Arab nations. Even if this were the case, and if such a re-establishment of unity were considered undesirable, it is difficult to see how the Commission could have continued its conversations with the different Arab Governments under favourable conditions. Since one of the obstacles in the way of obtaining concessions from the Arab Governments, when approached separately, has been the fear of each that it might be accused by the others of weakness and even of treachery, it seems probable that if such concessions could be decided upon in joint discussions, with no one nation being forced to take the initiative, they might be more easily obtained.