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Letter and Memorandum from Mr. Jamal Hamad,
addressed to the Conciliation Commission

(The following communication, transmitted through the Secretary of the American Legation in Bern, is circulated for the information of the members of the Technical Committee)

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4 Midan Tewfik,
Cairo, Egypt.

May 8th, 1949.

Hon. Chairman and Members,
Palestine Conciliation Commission
of the United Nations,
Lausanne, Switzerland.

Hon. Sirs:

I beg to transmit herewith copy of "Short Note on the Settlement of Palestine Arab Refugees". This note was prepared by me early in February 1949, and copies have now reached the Foreign Office, London, and the State Department, Washington, apart from the Food & Agriculture Organization of the U.N.O. and other interested bodies in the welfare of the Palestine Arab Refugees.

The Foreign Office, London, have intimated to me that I should furnish you with a copy of these notes as you are directly concerned with this dilemma, the Refugees are in.

I wish to point out that the views expressed therein are my own views, and that I cannot see that anything but a realistic approach to the problem would help to solve it - in the absence of "International Force" to mete out justice and to enforce United Nations' decisions.

I humbly beg to point out that these notes are tentative - and have been elaborated upon by me to facilitate execution as soon as a resettlement and a rehabilitation program is decided upon.

I beg to include herewith further notes on the subject recently prepared by me, elucidating further the condition of the refugees, the possibility of their resettlement, the attitudes of the Arab Governments as I have sensed them, with suggestions regarding procedure of resettlement work.

I do not wish to discourage or belittle the efforts your commission is displaying in trying to get the refugees repatriated, but I believe, in spite of all that, great numbers will remain outside Palestine, and these must be suitably looked after, resettled, and properly compensated.

I am,

Hon. Sirs,

Respectfully Yours,

(S) Jamal Hammad.

A SHORT NOTE ON THE SETTLEMENT OF
PALESTINE ARAB REFUGEES

THE PALESTINE ARAB REFUGEES

The dilemma into which the Arab population of Palestine have fallen is too well known to require much further elucidation. The inadequate supplies in the form of foodstuffs and clothing that are trickling, at a very slow rate, adding to instead of ameliorating the sufferings are in many instances ineffective in stemming the high rate of mortality among the refugees.

It is quite clearly realised that the Arab countries, with their small budgets, are unable to share for much longer the bigger part of the burden which they have carried up till now, although their resources if properly administered and developed could within a short period of time absorb these people with little or no difficulty.

The Arab refugees in question are both rural and urban. The rural element were hard-working farmers from the Coastal Plain of Palestine, adept and expert in citrus, banana, vegetable, potato and cereal cultivation. They may be classed as amongst the best farmers in the Mediterranean Basin in skill and hard work. They are by all means superior to the Syrian, Iraqi or Transjordan farmers. The farmers who come from the hills of Palestine are skilled in the growing of olives, figs, grapes, apples etc., a part of them being expert in land reclamation - constructing stone walls, embankments and building of hill terraces - which are equally important as soil conservation practices in the hilly and mountainous parts of any country.

The urban element is composed of labourers, skilled and otherwise, craftsmen, mechanics, carpenters, builders etc., apart from merchants, small traders, shop-keepers and a few professionals such as doctors, lawyers, engineers etc. These are a vital element in any urban or semi-urban community and may be absorbed gradually. Many of these people have begun to adjust themselves to their new environment in Syria and Transjordan.

These refugees are scattered in Transjordan, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and Iraq, in addition to those who are congesting the remaining parts of Palestine not in Jewish hands. As stated earlier, these refugees - most of whom were well to do, respectable and hard-working citizens - have now been transformed to paupers.

They have left their property and belongings behind. Many of them may never wish to return to Palestine. It is unlikely that the Jews will withdraw from all their villages or towns, and still more unlikely that the Jews will allow and welcome all of them to return, when it is too well-known that the Jews want to make room for more and more immigrants to replace the Arab population; moreover, what kind of a life would these Arabs live, in a totalitarian Jewish Socialist State with a leftist tendency or with a people who have a grudge against the world as having been persecuted for the last 2,500 years and feel they are victorious over seven Arab States.

These refugees are fast losing their morals and self-respect. They are in refugee camps or loafing around in towns, idle and unproductive for the most part, but as yet have not turned to criminals or anarchists - but might do so - if left

in their present state for long. This state of affairs is undermining their character, morale and general behaviour. They are counting days of misery in a gloomy future with no beam of light apparent, and are content to eat, drink and sleep. This state of affairs is demoralizing and thus an otherwise active people are being wasted.

As regards the remaining small section of Palestine not occupied by the Jews, this is already too thickly congested and can hardly support the existing population, even at a much lowered standard of living, except in a small portion of the Jordan Valley where intensive agriculture can be undertaken at a very great expense.

Resettlement and rehabilitation in Arab countries,

This being their unfortunate lot, it is incumbent to settle and rehabilitate them in the countries in which they are, as far as possible. Land development schemes might be embarked upon with quick results in certain parts of Transjordan and Syria - while in Iraq schemes envisaged cannot absorb these people immediately, nor give quick returns in production, so badly required for their continued existence, it being understood that international aid is slow in arriving and is meant for a short period only. In Egypt, the government could not offer much in the form of land for immediate agricultural settlement. The climate and agricultural practices are also different.

The areas available for development in Syria are the Jezireh in the north and the Ghab in the west of Homs where irrigated farming would bring quick returns. These areas have a scanty population and new settlers should be a welcome asset. In Transjordan, the eastern bank of the Jordan river presents the easiest and quickest area to give response to immediate needs. In all those areas the main problems present themselves in housing, pumping, supply of machinery and farm requisites - since feeding is already being taken care of.

Housing:

With the winter season almost half over at this juncture, it is envisaged that the tents which house refugees now in many parts, might be suitably used during the spring and summer of this year; by autumn, sun dried brick houses may be put up similar to the existing houses in those areas.

Pumping:

Since there are abundant water supplies for irrigation and no developed irrigation schemes to provide a free flow of water, it is necessary to install a number of pumping plants to supply these schemes with the necessary water requirements.

Agricultural Equipment:

The manpower available in the past was amply supplied with animal power in the form of working animals; this must of necessity now depend on machine power. The necessary tractors, ploughs, harrows, threshers, etc. will have to be provided, and these would have to be operated on a cooperative basis.

Selection of Refugees:

Refugees and their families, suitable and willing to settle and gradually own a small holding will not now be difficult to find, after the experiences they have had. Village units containing 200-300 families should be set up.

To each village unit land should be allotted, area varying between 10,000 - 15,000 dunums giving each family approximately 50 dunums as a lot viable.

New settlements would be set up, composed of tents at the beginning to be later replaced by well spaced more or less standard, simple and sanitary brick houses, built by the refugees themselves.

There are vast areas of State Domain lands in Syria and Transjordan suitable for such projects to be acquired on long lease or for good, at a nominal price.

Every settlement would operate its machinery on a cooperative basis and settlers at harvest time would be debited from their produce for the upkeep expense, cost of irrigation water, seed fertilisers and the use of machinery. Cooperative purchasing of all their requirements and marketing of all their produce should be instituted.

If the areas selected fall within an area where the rainfall averages 400 mm. during the winter rainy season, then one-third to one-half of the area can be devoted to irrigated cultivation, such as vegetables, cotton, rice, sesame, and irrigated fodder crops, while the remainder would be put under cereals and winter legumes in a properly worked out crop rotation.

Every settlement would require the installation of the necessary motors and pumps to ensure the delivery of 2,000 cubic metres of water per hour approximately.

Settlement lands would require one high powered track type tractor for heavy jobs with two wheeled tractors, one of which should be equipped with rubber tyres to cart trailers and perform light duties, while the other should be equipped with steel wheels and cleats. The other items of equipment would be worked out in detail to ensure maximum efficiency and to avoid waste.

A scheme of this nature presents a golden opportunity for effecting the first cooperative settlement of its kind among Arab farmers in the whole of the Middle East. It would attract a great deal of sympathy and attention and may very likely be copied in other parts of the Arab world.

The present condition of the refugees is in such a desperate state as to enable their moulding into any form, shape or colour. It is feared that if left unattended to, unhealthy and destructive ideas may easily creep into their heads; and their present disgust with the Arab regimes in power as well as the democracy as practiced in their case might lead to unpleasant consequences.

It is earnestly prayed that if this part of the world is to be saved from misery and spared from anarchy and unrest, urgent steps be taken to settle and rehabilitate the biggest number possible. Funds spent in this scheme would be amply rewarded by giving honest employment and social security to the refugees; besides, the crops harvested would to a considerable extent guarantee the food supply for these refugees who would have thus contributed valuably to the increase of food production in their newly adopted country.

If funds can be provided immediately as an advance from the projected scheme for Assistance to Backward Countries a great saving in time would be effected.

A committee of experts with considerable experience might be drawn up including truly representative Arabs from Palestine with no political affiliations, to advise on the setting up of these settlements; its recommendations would be implemented by another executive undertaking to carry out, supervise, and run these groups in a democratic manner in some manner of self government.

I would as an Arab be too pleased to cooperate with any group or committee, with my agricultural experience and knowledge of the operation of the Italian Settlement in Lybia and the Jewish Settlements in Palestine. Mr. Sami Dajani lately of the Palestine Government Department of Statistics, who is now at Damascus, and with whom I have discussed this note, would welcome the opportunity to serve his countrymen in such an emergency. His brilliant work on the "Survey of Social and Economic Conditions in Arab Villages" and other memoranda prepared for the Anglo-American and other U.N. Commissions on Palestine, are well known.

The operation, management and supervision of these settlements, would require the engagement of a number of experts with first-class agricultural knowledge as well as men with a cooperative and sociological training and experience.

It is earnestly hoped that these victims would never be allowed to drift away from democracy through neglect and that a few million dollars now spent judiciously and without delay will surely save many times that amount in peace, healthy living, productive work and political tranquility in the disturbed corner of the Earth.

Jamal Hammad B.Sc.Agr.
Late Senior Agricultural Officer
Palestine Government.

10th February 1949

N.B.- The writer of this note is a Palestinian Arab, educated in Agriculture in the U.S.A. He has given 21 years of service in the Department of Agriculture, Government of Palestine. He has travelled extensively officially and in his private capacity in Cyrenaica, Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Transjordan, the United Kingdom, the U.S.A. and much of Europe studying agricultural development in all its phases and aspects.

FURTHER NOTES ON THE SETTLEMENT AND REHABILITATION OF PALESTINE REFUGEES

The condition of the Palestine refugees and relief deserving people since my first note on the subject, the 10th of February, has considerably worsened.

Their numbers, though severely decimated by the rigours of the last winter coupled with disease, malnutrition and over-exposure, have however been increased by the addition to their numbers of two hundred thousand, composed of farmers and townspeople from border areas that have been or are to be handed over to the Jews in accordance with the Armistice, as well as by unemployment of a large number of people who have spent all their savings and are as deserving to be included in relief schemes similar to the bulk of the refugees.

The measures I have advocated at the time - namely agricultural settlement for the rural element - and a system of absorption for the urban element, are more keenly wanted now than any time before.

Refugees are drifting aimlessly. There is no organised effort at present for their relief save the temporary and inadequate food, clothing, and medical treatment given to a big number but not to all needy and deserving by the three organizations under United Nations auspices.

This attention and care has been far from perfect unfortunately, and has been the cause of criticism in a number of places. The present relief measures are of an emergency nature and of temporary duration as was conveyed to me by Mr. Stanton Griffis. This, however, is no excuse why this relief work should not have been extended to include refugees embarked in a settlement scheme as long as these temporary funds existed.

I have through private efforts managed to obtain the approval of Saudi Arabia to employ a number of technicians, craftsmen and professionals from among the Palestine refugees in Egypt. These efforts are also extending to include a number of Middle East countries; but this will be far from absorbing more than a small fraction of the urban and professional type of employees.

An organized effort is required to investigate possibilities of absorption of the refugees in all Arab countries in the Middle East and in all walks of life. This plight of the Palestine Arabs is a golden opportunity for the Arab countries to benefit from, in helping them to build up their own countries.

I shall comment on each country separately.

Tripolitania and Cyrenaica

These two provinces until 1940 depended entirely on Italian technicians, craftsmen, doctors, educators, and the like. Natives were generally discouraged, or did not avail themselves of higher and advanced education. The country can well benefit by the employment in Civil Service and in private practice of dentists, doctors, pharmacists, teachers, mechanics - telephone, telegraph; as well as business men, clerks and ex-government officials, etc.

Egypt

This country is thickly populated. The refugees in Egypt do not exceed 12,000, part of whom are in the refugee town at El Kantara. The remainder are living on their own, and have not received any form of relief measures whatsoever. A voluntary

committee of which I am the Chairman is at present engaged in trying to procure relief measures and employment for as many of the needs as possible.

Special legislation has been enacted against their engaging in any occupation while in Egypt. This legislation is to be found nowhere else in Arab countries directed at Arab refugees.

Their number in Egypt is very small and they could all be absorbed amongst the 20,000,000 Egyptians easily and more easily melted within the community than any other foreign element in Egypt.

Again, settlement would be difficult as there is land hunger amongst the Egyptian rural community and all government efforts are directed towards increasing the area of arable land, by reclamation, and water supply.

The Arab refugee element in Egypt is mainly urban or semi-rural and could well be engaged as laborers, artisans, craftsmen, professionals, clerks, shopkeepers, etc.

Lebanon

This country is small. It has a comparatively dense population. Its absorptive capacity is limited. Agriculturally there are a few schemes that might carry a part of the refugees, but the bulk should be moved where the potential is greater.

The Lebanese authorities prevent refugees from engaging in any form of work except that of trading and farming.

Severe restrictions exist against their employment by companies, banks or public institutions. Doctors, dentists and lawyers are prevented from practicing.

Syria

This country has exhibited the friendliest reception, both people and Government, towards the refugees. Special legislation was enacted to find employment and give preferences in employment to Arab refugees.

Doctors and lawyers were welcomed to practice. The Government employed a few hundred school teachers and other technicians from amongst the refugees who were previously with the Palestine Government.

The country is under-populated and shows great possibilities for development, both in agriculture as well as industry.

Vast areas of arable land await organized effort for development.

Iraq

Vast areas of land exist in this country. It is under-populated. There is considerable room for absorption of refugees in towns and in the country. Their number at present is small. Government and people are sympathetic.

The climate in central and southern Iraq is malarial and unfriendly. Soil is generally unfertile and in many parts saline due to lack of drainage.

Transjordan and Arab Palestine

These two territories, if and when annexed to each other, are complementary. Both are poor and will remain so for some time to come. Water resources are limited and irrigatable areas are consequently not large. Agriculture on a very intensive

basis and close settlement are necessary corollaries. The Government has exhausted its resources in trying to help refugees.

The Jordan Valley on both banks will have to depend on expensive pumped river water, in some cases from 2-4 miles and an elevation of 300 to 400 feet before it can flow by gravitation to supply an appreciable amount of suitable land. A certain amount of soil washing will have to be done to render the soil suitable for the production of crops. Area is malarial.

In the south of Transjordan, namely to the west of Maan, the shallow water table would provide irrigation water for small patches of land.

The climate is reported to be good - but it is far away from any civilization and communications are difficult.

Saudi Arabia

This country has vast undeveloped potential. Little can be done before this potential is properly explored. There are, however, areas known as Wadi Sirhan, Krayyat El Milh and El-Jauf across the borders of Syria and Transjordan within Saudi Arabia. These are oases in that area with abundant springs and wells where very primitive agriculture is practiced by a sparse population. The Saudi Arabian authorities would I am informed welcome a denser population in that border area.

The Yemen

Little is known about this country and although there are great possibilities for development - the rate at which progress is being made is not encouraging.

The possibilities in this country where the climate is suitable at high elevation, should be explored so that every Arab country might share the burden of their plight.

I must not forget to mention that much can be contributed by the British and American Oil Companies as well as other large contracting bodies (Railway contractors, Saudi Arabia) mining companies, who all require large numbers of skilled workers of all trades, accountants, surveyors, etc., to give preferences in employment to Palestine refugees. When housing accommodations can not be provided to them and other families, other suitable bonuses might be given to them to compensate.

Settlement and rehabilitation of refugees in the Arab countries in agricultural or urban life must of necessity be closely tied with financial compensation, for assets and property both movable and immovable left behind as well as for displacement and homelessness.

Should funds under any scheme such as Aid to Backward Countries and so forth be extended to the Arab countries for building up a bulwark of democracy - thousands of these refugees might be given employment in Public Works, factories, and all other occupations pertaining to the assistance granted.

Immediate Procedure

It is assumed that in the not distant future, funds will be set aside for resettlement of refugees.

It is of utmost importance at present to set up the necessary machinery and staff (1) to collect detailed information about all the refugees and to record all data concerning each individual family and its ultimate wishes and preferences regarding settlement, alternative choice, information as to

numbers of members of family, age of men, women and children, health, profession, and all other pertinent information.

- (2) Study of the different areas suggested by the Arab countries to embody :
- a. Area to be allocated.
 - b. Carrying capacity i.e. number of families, and optimum lot viable per family. (Sufficient area to give decent income for support of family).
 - c. Water supply for agriculture.
 - d. Health and sanitation.
 - e. Nature of housing to be constructed.
 - f. Other contributions and amenities by the local government, i.e. roads, telephone, public security, etc.
 - g. Schooling for children as well as social and religious recreation.

The team of workers recruited for this work will have to be accorded special facilities for travel and access to refugees in all Arab countries.

These workers should be recruited mainly from amongst the Palestinian Arab refugees, many of whom have had past experience in social welfare, agricultural extension, labor problems, and cooperative societies. These persons abound. The Voluntary Relief Committee in Cairo, of which I am voluntary chairman, has a long list of ex-Palestine Government officers with considerable experience and proper training and discipline for this kind of work.

When this work is duly completed, lists will be drawn up of every class of refugees, urban and rural, showing their aptitudes and desires.

A supreme council might be appointed including British, American, Palestine, Arab, and U.N. representatives as well as representatives of the Arab Governments concerned. This council will act as a coordinator of the work in each of the countries participating, in each of which there would be a council for refugee placement and relief; credit facilities to help small traders, doctors, dentists, etc. to get on their feet again may be furnished.

The Agricultural settlements should all be operated on similar lines and with as little difference as possible except in so far as climate and agricultural practices might differ and dictate.

The reason is that fewer blunders will be committed. Fortunately there have been a number of settlement schemes instituted in the Middle East during the last 30 years viz:-

1. The Italian settlements in Libya under the Ente Della colonizzazione della Libia and the Istituto Nazionale Fascista della Provvidenza Sociale (both institutions showed satisfactory results with the settlers before that country was lost to the Allies).
2. In the Sudan, the Jezira Scheme, the Alternative Livelihood Scheme, and the Gash Board Scheme, are good examples for a backward country where farmers have a low standard of living and have to be spoon-fed.

3. The Kibutz system in Jewish Palestine is rather too bold and leftist - while the Jewish small holding settlements are essentially cooperative settlements; each family independently runs its own farm with a well developed cooperative system for its products and requirements. This group includes a group of independent farmers who operate as free little businesses, bound together by common safeguarding interests of a cooperative nature, and mutual insurance for livestock, plants, etc.

It should be carefully noted that any settlement scheme that neglects as an object, the permanent settlement of each farm family on land that will some day become their own, will not be readily accepted. Security of property is vital. Of the settlement schemes mentioned above, all of which I am familiar with, the Italian schemes of Libya and the Jewish small holding settlement schemes of Palestine with certain adjustments would be the most welcome to the average refugee farm family.

The main point is to get started before the advent of autumn as far as the Agricultural work is concerned so that emergency housing (if necessary pre-fab houses) machinery, pumps, engines, seed, fertilizers, could be made available and the wasting of another agricultural season as the last one could be avoided, especially when emergency relief is not expected to stretch but for a short duration.

Conclusions

1. An immediate set up of staff should be constituted to collect and record complete data concerning refugees.
2. Exploration of all Arab countries and their capability as well as desire to absorb Arab refugees. Capacity in numbers as well as types of refugees.
3. Exploration and study of areas for agricultural settlement as suggested in Arab countries as well as other contributions and facilities to be provided by these countries.
4. Negotiation regarding absorption of other than agricultural refugees.
5. Tentative planning and estimating of necessary equipment, and machinery and requisites for settlement schemes on the assumption of settlement of 100,000 refugees out of the estimated figure of 1,000,000 or 20,000 families out of 200,000.
6. Planning and organization of the operations of settlement schemes and the coordination of their work.
7. Preparing all the ground work necessary for the scheme, so as to enable immediate implementation, the moment decision is taken to put the scheme through.

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Cairo, 8 May 1949.