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MEMORANDUM SUBMITTED

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LEADER,

REFUGEES CAMP, JERICHO

At the request of the two Commission Members Mr. de Boisanger and Mr. Yalcin I put forward this my report on the wretched condition of Arab refugees in Jericho.

INTRODUCTION - There are in Jericho four central camps for refugees situated in various places. There are Bedouins from Beersheba and other places scattered here and there, aside from a considerable number of refugees in the town itself, some of whom live in houses while others are housed in small camps in the suburbs of Jericho. Their situation on the whole is rather bad in all respects. Food is insufficient, while great numbers of them are still homeless, and in need of cover and clothes. The distribution of food to them is being controlled by the Swiss International Red Cross Committee. Everybody believed that it would satisfy the refugees' need of the necessary food, refuge and clothing. But unfortunately the Committee washed its hands of all responsibilities except for food, owing to its limited resources. The local Refugee Committee, on the other hand, has recently been reformed, and despite its meagre resources, is offering its utmost help in co-operation with the International Red Cross, for the purpose of securing some sort of amelioration to the refugees. But lack of funds stands in the way of executing any effective help. I was personally nominated by the Military Governor of Jerusalem and Jericho to look after the refugees in Jericho and facilitate the task of the Red Cross. It is hoped that the present co-operation of all concerned would lead to good results.

The following are some remarks on the situation of the Arab refugees in Jericho, whose total number, in the camps and the town, is from 50-60 thousand : -

1. HEALTH SITUATION

All camps greatly lack hygienic care; what is being provided in this respect to the refugees is very little. Refugees are badly

in need of quite a good number of doctors and of abundant quantities of medicines. There are only two Arab doctors operating in all camps assisted by a certain number of Arab and Swiss nurses. Notwithstanding all efforts and energy put by them they can in no way satisfy the refugees' need of hygienic care, in view of their great numbers and of the various diseases spreading amongst them as a result of mal-nutrition, lack of cover and clothing, and of the filthiness of the drinking water as well. It is sufficient to note that the average death cases amongst them amount to five daily. Medicines are nearly non-existent, and what is available does not exceed the needs of first aid. A Swiss doctor has arrived in Jericho recently, he seems to be very tangibly energetic. He put forward to his Headquarters reasonable and substantial demands urging more medical care and medicines as well as the use of D. D. T. and the cleaning of water closets; the latter being completely ignored.

Infants are being provided daily with milk, the distribution of which is supervised by young men and women who volunteered for this human task a long time ago. They have of late shown disinterest and might give up their work shortly for the mere fact that they are not paid while most of them are supporters of big families. This question should necessarily be taken into consideration by the bodies concerned and met by allotting salaries for those volunteers, thus increasing their interest in and care for these infants and their nourishment.

2. ADMINISTRATIVE ASPECT

About a fortnight ago I have been charged with the administration and supervision of the camps. I felt then happy to seize the opportunity to offer the wretched refugees all services and help possible. I know nothing of the administrative position there, and believed like everybody who has no connection with the refugees' camp that there was an administrative machinery which controlled the camps administration. But I was shocked when I found no trace at all of administration; no officer in charge of administrative machinery power. The question of creating some sort of administrative machinery in every camp and a central office supervising all camps, was agreed upon by the Red Cross representative at my previous conference with him. But he expressed his regret that due to financial reasons he was unable to accede to my demand. The local committee apologized too for being unable to bring into force

my proposal, merely because 90% of the population in Jericho are refugees who can in no way pay taxes. The same difficulty stood in my way when I sought the help of the cultured and educated persons among the refugees, for they too cannot perform their duties well unless they are compensated. The question of administration is extremely vital for the organization of the camps. I drew the attention of the bodies concerned to this problem, but nothing can be done without the allocation of a special fund.

3. SOCIAL ASPECT

Social care is lacking completely in the camps. Education has no trace at all, notwithstanding the fact that amongst the refugees there is a number of educated teachers and students enough to form several schools, should budget be found. To keep those children and youngsters schoolless is very demoralizing. They feel bitter to have their valuable time so wasted.

4. SHORTAGE OF TENTS

It is really painful that among the refugees there are about 400 families who have been spending their nights for the last month in open air and without cover. All earnest efforts to find tents for them have so far failed. One weeps at seeing the sufferings and painful state of affair of those wretched people. During the nights the weather of Jericho is very cold and that causes various diseases. Any further continuance of this state of affairs would mean that we housed the refugees in camps not to look after them but in order to make them die slowly.

5. CLOTHING AND COVER

Barefootedness, nakedness and ragged filthy clothes are unfortunately a familiar sight in the camps; families, some consisting of more than seven persons, have sometimes only one blanket among them. Undoubtedly these families are happy if they are compared with those who sleep in the open air and without cover.

6. FOOD

It has been clear to me since I started my work with the refugees that all were gradually starving, and that most of them feed on herbs. This compelled them to attempt fraud through reporting wrong numbers in order to get larger quantities of food-stuff. A natural outcome of this was the incredible number arrived at, resulting in the disappointment of the refugees themselves. The Red Cross delegate has apportioned a fixed quantity

of foodstuffs which has fallen short of the minimum need of the refugees on the consideration was their actual number was given to the Red Cross by the refugees representatives. In this enumeration they were supported by the refugee representatives who submitted lists of their people. Through the help of the local committee, the Jericho District Officer, the Area Commander, and a number of youthful volunteers it was possible to arrive at approximately reliable figures. There is no doubt that our success in this field will benefit the refugees substantially, and they will discover the wrong course they have followed in giving high false numbers. Fifteen days ago 1 1/2 kilogram of flour have been distributed by the Red Cross delegate for every refugee. When the real figures were obtained, that quantity was doubled, and each refugee had three kilograms of flour. But this quantity will be insufficient without the addition of further kinds of foodstuffs, as long as the refugees cannot hope for more than this fixed amount. Additional quantities of foodstuffs are expected at Jericho, according to information by the Red Cross representatives here. I can only hope that those responsible will expedite despatch of same before it will become too late and before the widespreading of diseases owing to hunger and bareness among the refugees.

Foodstuffs supplied by the Red Cross Committee are limited in quantity and quality while the need is badly felt for other items, e.g. soap which is considered a principal item of sanitation and an indispensable aid for the resistance of epidemics. The list of requirements include many other items which are worth supplying by the Red Cross.

7. THE SITUATION OF REFUGEES NEXT SUMMER

Within three months time heat would be so intense that staying in Jericho would become unbearable and when the inhabitants will be subject to malaria and similar feverish attacks. Under the circumstances the refugees would become an easy prey for contagious diseases. Some may succumb to this lot while others may desperately look for a fresh habitation. But danger could not be avoided on both ways. It is in this connection that I write to invite the attention of those responsible to the necessity of early arrangements and the selection of localities before it would become too late to heal the effects of an inhuman blunder.

The following proposals are set hereunder which constitute my opinion on the subject : -

- 1) Quantities of foodstuffs should at least be increased by 50% to obtain the minimum nutrition requirements.
- 2) The best solution to the problem would be the return of refugees to their homes.
- 3) The Refugees are to be divided into two groups :
abled and disabled. The first group is to get one half of the share of ration together with wages, equivalent to the monetary value of the other half, for work done. The second group is to get full share of ration.

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