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LETTER DATED 24 JULY 1949
WITH APPENDICES
ADDRESSED TO THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE
BY MR. M. S. COMAY OF THE GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL

Dear Sirs,

My colleagues and I are now in a position to furnish you with the following replies to the various requests for information which have been made by your Committee.

1: Broken Families

As requested at your last meeting on July 18th, I attach hereto (Appendix A) the replies to the eight questions which were telegraphed to me on July 3rd, and which we fully discussed at our meeting on July 5th. Certain information was verbally made available to you at that meeting, but since then the Government has announced its proposals. The enclosed written replies must be taken as superseding previous statements by us.

2: Total of Arab Refugees

I attach (Appendix B) a 24-page document which shows the non-Jewish population which resided in that area within the boundaries held by the Israel Defence Army on May 1st, 1949, in accordance with the Palestine Government Village Statistics of April, 1945. It will be noted that the totals are as follows:

Moslems	621,030
Christians	92,060
Others	13,710
	<u>726,800</u>

assuming that this remained the figure in 1947/48 (as to which see below), and deducting from it a figure of 165,000 (the estimated present Arab population), one gets a figure of 561,800, which would be the theoretical maximum of non-Jews who could have left the territory in question. It cannot be surmised that the whole of this number would be Arab refugees. It would include a small proportion of non-Arabs, also non-

Palestinian Arabs who returned to their places of origin in surrounding countries. Under these circumstances, the "ceiling" of 550,000, given by us, would be, if anything, on the generous side, and can safely be accepted as a maximum. The actual figure is estimated by our experts to be about 520,000, for reasons set out below.

Two remarks must be made:

(a) By the term "Arab refugees" we refer to Arabs who are at present outside Israel territory, but whose places of origin are within that territory. We do not take into consideration those Arabs who may have been locally displaced in Arab areas or countries outside Israel territory, or Arabs who have not been displaced at all, but are receiving assistance from the various relief organizations. It appears to us that in the figure quoted by these organizations, no such distinction is made and that they therefore include a large number of Arabs who cannot be regarded as "refugees" in the sense stated above.

(b) No allowance has been made in our total for natural increase since April 1945. In our opinion, there is more likely to have been a net decrease than a net increase in the period from November 1947 when hostilities commenced. Such increase as may have taken place between April 1945 and November 1947 is more than off-set by the fact that the original figures, as recorded in April 1945, were inflated. This happened for various reasons, the chief of which was that, during the years of the World War, the Mukhtars of the villages often reported births but not deaths, because they received allocations of rationed commodities for their villages in proportion to the official number of their inhabitants. At the end of 1948, the Israel Census Department verified this fact by carrying out check surveys in certain villages, the populations of which had remained completely intact. I attach a list of such villages (Appendix C), showing the official Palestine Government figures in 1945, and next to them, the results of the check surveys at the end of 1948. It will be noted that the earlier figure is 4,290 and the later one 3,439, i.e., on the average, nearly 20% less, without even allowing for any natural increase between the two dates. In the view of our experts, when the theoretical maximum of 550,000 is corrected so as to allow for the natural increase between 1945 and 1947, and also for the inflation of the Village Statistics of 1945, the net total would be not more than

520,000. This figure will of course progressively shrink as more refugees are readmitted under the Broken Families Scheme or on other grounds.

3: Orange Groves

After the recent inspection of Arab orange groves by the Committee, assisted by its expert, Mr. Delbes, the latter submitted to us a list of points on which he wished for fuller information. The answers are in the course of preparation by our experts, and will be furnished shortly.

4: Economic Aspects of Resettlement

Arising out of our discussion at the meeting on July 18th, you requested an Aide Memoire dealing with certain broad economic principles guiding resettlement. This is being prepared, and it will be sent to you within the next few days.

5: Registration of Immovables

Your Committee asked us to give some indication as to the manner in which title to immovable assets was recorded in Palestine. The question you raise is a highly complicated one, with a history going back to Turkish times, and your Committee will find a discussion of it in "A Survey of Palestine, 1945-46", Vol. I, Chapter VIII:

- 1: "Land Tenure in Palestine" p. 225
- 2: "The Settlement of Title to Land" p. 233
- 3: "Land Registration" p. 237

You will note that the registration of land and immovable property was in a state of transition from the primitive Turkish system to a more modern system, and that, by the time the Mandate ended, the process was still incomplete.

6: Beyrouth Students

I refer to the note you handed to us at the end of our meeting on July 18th, regarding 15 Arab students at the American University in Beyrouth, who wish to visit their families in Israel during the University vacation. It appears to us that the grant of visas to Arabs outside Israel is a matter which would fall outside the competence of your Committee. As a matter of courtesy, it may be stated that (a) under the existing armistice arrangements between Israel and the Lebanon, there is no provision for visits from one country to the other: (b) in any case, for security reasons, the Government of Israel would not at present consider applications of this nature, for

a temporary visit and subsequent return; (c) it would of course be open to the families in Israel to apply for the permanent return of these students. In this connection, I would refer to the official Statement of July 7th (See Appendix A), which defines the categories of children admissible under the scheme. The Statement adds that "only in extraordinary cases will permission be given to other members of families who are dependent upon Arab breadwinners in Israel".

Yours sincerely,

M. S. Comay
for Israel Representative
to Technical Committee

PCC TECHNICAL COMMITTEE ON REFUGEES

Reply to Questionnaire on Broken Families, Submitted on 3.7.49

Question 1 What is the precise definition of those members of broken families who are immediately eligible for return?

Answer See official Statement by Ministry for Foreign Affairs, dated 7th July, 1949, and attached hereto. The relevant portion reads as follows:

"This general instruction granting entry applies to women and young children -- sons below the age of 15, and unmarried daughters. Only in extraordinary cases will permission be given to other members of families who are dependent upon Arab bread-winners residing in Israel."

Question 2 What is the number and addresses of known broken families in Israel?

Answer No statistics exist in respect of cases of families in Israel which have become separated under war conditions, and which are dealt with through local administrative channels.

Question 3 What is the number and location of broken families returned to date, and by what procedure?

Answer At least 25,000 Arab refugees have been allowed to resettle in Israel since the end of last year. This has been arranged through various channels -- relatives in Israel, local authorities, communal leaders and so forth. A certain proportion of these applications were granted on compassionate grounds and would fall within the category of broken families, but no separate statistics were kept under this head.

Question 4 What is the number of applications for reunion received to date?

Answer All preparatory steps have been taken by the Israel Government for the implementation scheme, but no examination and approval of applications has taken place pending agreement by the governments of the neighbouring Arab States to cooperate. No such agreement has been received to date from any of these governments. (The reported consent of the Lebanese Government has since been denied by it). It would therefore be premature to furnish information at this stage regarding applications.

Question 5 What is the organizational set-up for reuniting broken families, where members are located outside Israel?

Answer See attached official Statement.

Question 6 What are the rehabilitative or social service measures provided for broken families?

Answer On their admission, members of broken families are issued with identity cards and ration cards, and thereupon become lawful residents of Israel with the same rights, duties and social services as the rest of the population.

Question 7 What provision is made for protecting privileges of returning family members?

Answer See answer to Question 6.

Question 8 What is your opinion as to the best means of expediting the reunion of broken families?

Answer For the immediate purposes of the scheme outlined above, the full cooperation of the Arab Governments concerned is required.

As regards further measures, the official Statement reads:

"The overall solution to the problem of Arab refugees within the framework of a stable peace between Israel and its neighbours continues to exercise the mind of the Government of Israel."

Attached: Official Statement, 7th July, 1949:

INFORMATION SERVICES OF THE GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL
FOREIGN PRESS DIVISION

7th July, 1949.

Press Release No. 1

The following statement on Arab refugees was issued this evening by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs:-

"On the 15th of June the Foreign Minister announced in the Knesset that the Government would consider favourably the requests of Arab citizens of the State of Israel for permission to bring in to the country their wives and young children, and that special arrangements would be made to facilitate the entry of those who receive such permission.

"Appropriate arrangements to this end have now been completed, and are announced hereby:-

"Applications will be submitted to the offices of the District Representatives in Jerusalem, Jaffa, Haifa, Lydda and Ramle, and to the offices of the Military Governors in the zones under military rule. These offices will publish local announcements as to the times and place where such applications will be received in each district. At such times, special officials of the Ministry of Immigration will be present in these offices. After local examination, the applications will be submitted to a special committee in the Ministry of Immigration at Hakirya which will give the final review and issue the permission. Applicants will receive notice of the decision of this committee.

"The Government of Israel has applied, through the medium of the Mixed Armistice Commissions, to the Governments of Egypt, Transjordan and the Lebanon, inviting their cooperation to facilitate the speedy return to Israel of those who receive the necessary permission. These Governments have been requested to appoint special representatives with whom the representatives of the Government of Israel may discuss details of procedure.

"The Government of Israel suggests that at certain points in the armistice lines with Egypt, Transjordan and the Lebanon, special frontier stations shall be set up through which those receiving permission will enter on special dates, by agreement with the neighbouring Government. The three Governments with whom Israel has armistice agreements are requested to cooperate in locating the members of families whose names will be transmitted to them in advance, in bringing them to the transit stations and identifying them.

"Until now entry into Israel from abroad has been permitted only through the ports of Tel Aviv and Haifa, and certain air-fields. The opening of these transit stations on the armistice lines is now arranged in order to speed up and facilitate the entry of families of Israeli Arab citizens, who are at present in Arab refugee camps in the neighbouring states.

"This general instruction granting entry applies to women and young children - sons below the age of 15, and unmarried

daughters. Only in extraordinary cases will permission be given to other members of families who are dependent upon Arab bread-winners residing in Israel.

"The grant of the general privilege, details of which are published herewith, comes after many individual entry permits have already been given to members of families of Arabs resident in Israel. This is an additional and broad measure easing the lot of Arab families disrupted as a result of the war.

"The overall solution to the problem of Arab refugees within the framework of a stable peace between Israel and its neighbours continues to exercise the mind of the Government of Israel."

Press Release No. 2

The Technical Committee on Refugees of the Palestine Conciliation Commission again called at Hakirya today. Accompanied by Mr. Zalman Lifschitz and Mr. Michael Comay and three Israeli agricultural experts, they then toured orange groves, cities and villages in the Rehovoth - Tel Aviv area. By prior agreement with the Government of Israel, the Committee brought with them an independent expert. They will tour the northern areas tomorrow.
