



UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE
SUMMARY RECORD OF A MEETING BETWEEN THE CONCILIATION
COMMISSION AND THE DELEGATIONS OF THE ARAB STATES

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
Monday 30 January 1950, at 11 a.m.

Present :

Mr. PALMER	(United States)	Chairman
Mr. de BOISANGER	(France)	
Mr. ERALP*	(Turkey)	
Mr. de AZCARATE		Principal Secretary
Mr. ABDEL CHAFI EL		Representative of Egypt
LABBANE		
Mr. JAMIL MIKAOUI		Representative of Lebanon
Mr. HAFEZ ABDULHAI		Representative of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
Mr. AHMED CHOUKAIRI		Representative of Syria

* Alternate

The CHAIRMAN read out the following statement to the Arab delegations:

"As Chairman of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine at this time when the Commission is resuming its meetings with the Delegates of the Arab States now represented here and the Delegate of Israel, it has been my privilege, and I have been pleased to have the opportunity in company with my colleagues, to welcome each Delegate individually and separately at our recent informal meetings. In this official capacity at this formal inauguratory meeting with you, I now have much pleasure in extending a formal welcome to you in the name of the Commission.

But I do not wish to limit myself to a mere formal welcome. I feel that before we begin our work together in Geneva we might recall briefly certain important decisions taken during the recent session of the General Assembly in New York with regard to questions which had previously been entrusted to the Conciliation Commission by the resolution of 11 December 1948, and that it might be helpful if, in anticipation of the further meetings with you to which we now look forward, we were to consider briefly today the extent to which these decisions bear upon the Commission's mandate.

The Commission's general mandate, 'to take steps to assist the Governments and authorities concerned to achieve a final settlement of all questions outstanding between them,' remains in full force.

As regards Jerusalem, the responsibility of the Commission under the General Assembly's [resolution of 11 December 1948](#) was fulfilled by the presentation to the Assembly of the Commission's proposals regarding the establishment of an international regime for Jerusalem. By its [resolution of 9 December 1949](#) the General Assembly charged the Trusteeship Council with the elaboration of an international regime for Jerusalem which would be based upon the statute drafted by the Council itself in 1947.

By its [resolution of 8 December 1949](#) the Assembly created the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to deal with the relief, resettlement and rehabilitation aspects of the refugee question, and to carry out a specific programme, as approved by this [resolution](#), which through local works projects would provide for a considerable number of refugees a means of livelihood that would ensure their independence from direct relief.

With regard to resettlement, the Governments of Syria and Jordan have affirmed their readiness to accept the resettlement in their territory of refugees that may not desire repatriation. With regard to the repatriation of refugees, the Government of Israel has expressed its willingness to accept within the territory now under its control an Arab population of 250,000. The Government of Israel has accepted the principle of compensation of refugees for land abandoned by them. The principle of territorial compensation to the refugees has been advanced by the Arab Delegates.

The Conciliation Commission remains the organ seized with the problem of the return of the refugees to their homes and the problem of compensation according to the terms of paragraph 11 of the [resolution of 11 December 1948](#), which was reaffirmed by the [resolution of 8 December 1949](#). The Commission has had the question of compensation under study for some time and hopes that its continued consideration of various aspects of this question and their discussion in successive meetings with you and the Israeli Delegate may point the way to, and eventually result in, an equitable solution of this problem.

On the territorial question, the respective positions of the parties were made clear to the Commission in their notes of [29](#) and [31 August 1949](#). These positions were considered by the Commission to be too far removed from each other to offer a basis for effective conciliation, and in consequence both parties were invited to revise their positions.

In New York the Arab delegations conveyed to the Commission their desire that it should undertake, in conformity with the authority conferred upon it by the General Assembly's [resolution of 11 December 1948](#), the functions of mediator. They suggested that the Commission submit for the consideration of the parties proposals or suggestions of its own. The Commission has not yet determined how it can most helpfully undertake and effectively discharge the functions of mediator, but it hopes that with the essential collaboration of the parties it may succeed in working out an initially promising and ultimately fruitful method of procedure.

As the Commission has abundantly made clear in the past, it favours the establishment of direct contact between the parties. Such a course appears to the Commission all the more indispensable if it is to mediate effectively between them. The Commission is ready to assist the parties in reaching agreements, whether collectively or separately both on the larger issues and on questions of a more local character.

In conclusion, as the Commission meets with you for the first time in formal session at the beginning of another year, keenly conscious of the divergent views and conflicting interests which make its task under its general mandate such a difficult one, it hopes not only that you will sense how earnest is its desire 'to assist the Governments and authorities concerned to achieve a final settlement of all questions outstanding between them', but also that all Delegates meeting with the Commission will through timely suggestions and ready collaboration in successive steps afford it opportunities to be of assistance to all concerned as envisaged in the [1948 Resolution of December 11](#)."

Mr. CHOUKAIRI (Syria) wished to take the opportunity provided by the first official meeting to thank the Commission on behalf of his own Government and of the other delegations present for the welcome extended to them, and to express the hope that a detailed examination of the questions at issue, combined with untiring patience, would enable the Commission eventually to formulate in a report satisfactory solutions to those questions. He reminded the Commission that the most important of them was the refugee problem, of which the seriousness and dangerous potentialities both from the humanitarian point of view and with regard to local and perhaps international peace, had been stressed on numerous occasions.

He felt hopeful that the Commission would be able, before the end of 1950 or even prior to the 1950 Session of the General Assembly, to reach definitive conclusions at any rate on the fundamentals of the various problems, even if it should not be able to achieve final and satisfactory results. Hitherto it had only been possible to deal with generalities, and it was desirable that the various constituent elements of the Palestine question should now be examined in detail with a view to arriving at concrete decisions. The time had come to study the facts in detail.

Amongst the questions for consideration were: the territorial question, regarding which it would be desirable to know what progress had been made, so far as "the other side" was able to clarify the issue; the refugee question, a solution for which had often been suggested and which it would be interesting to discuss in the light of the actual facts and figures; the question of Arab property, which had not yet been discussed but which should be.

Whatever the final outcome of the Commission's work, it was at least to be hoped that all the questions involved would have been defined and submitted to a thorough and detailed study. The relevant documentation would in any case be of great value in the future.

As regards the mediatory powers of the Commission, it should be remembered that, whilst it did possess such powers, they had not been granted at the request of one or other of the two parties. The delegations concerned, though they had not entrusted those powers to the Commission, had nevertheless asked it to assume them. Mediation would be carried out within the framework of the General Assembly's [resolution](#). The Commission's procedure and the limits to its powers had been laid down and were to be found in the General Assembly's [resolution](#).

In conclusion, he again thanked the Commission. He was aware that it had no executive powers and could only act as a consultative body. It was only through its own patience and with the collaboration of the Arab delegations, which would be forthcoming until the end, that the Commission could make up for the lack of executive powers.

Mr. MIKAOUI (Lebanon) associated himself with the gratitude expressed by the Syrian delegate, and said that the Lebanese Government hoped that the work of the Commission would meet with success. He felt sure that sooner or later the United Nations would come to the assistance of all the governments concerned to help them restore order and justice in the part of the world in question.

The refugee problem, for which the General Assembly's resolution had already formulated a solution, was urgent and of primary importance and the Commission would be called upon to deal with it. All refugees wishing to be repatriated should be enabled to return to their country of origin at the earliest possible moment. Any delay would diminish the value of the [resolution](#) which had been adopted.

The Lebanese Government maintained its decision on the subject of the Protocol of 12 May which should serve as a basis for their labours. He was not in a position to modify this document, which in any case had been approved by the Commission, who had devoted a good deal of time and trouble to it.

Mr. ABDULHADI (Jordan) also thanked the Commission for the work it had undertaken, in which his Government took a real interest. He hoped that its labours would result in a peaceful, just and equitable settlement. His delegation reserved the right to express its opinion on the various points under examination at a later date.

Mr. LABBANE (Egypt) thanked the Chairman for his tribute, shared the hope of the other Arab delegates for the success of the Commission's work, and associated himself with the views expressed by them. He ventured to hope that the reluctance of the Commission to undertake the role of mediator would be overcome, and reserved the right to comment on the Chairman's statement at the next meeting.

The CHAIRMAN informed the delegates that the Commission proposed to communicate the text of his statement to the press. Without any mention of progress made, it listed the questions which would form the basis of discussion. He would also inform the Israeli delegation of that proposal.

In reply to a question by Mr. Labbane (Egypt) the CHAIRMAN said it would certainly be highly desirable from the point of view both of the delegations and the Commission to decide on the agenda for each meeting in advance, which would enable all concerned to brief themselves for the meetings.