



UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE

REPORT DATED 4 JULY 1949
SUBMITTED BY THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE
TO THE CONCILIATION COMMISSION

The following is a report of a preliminary survey during which contacts were made with the Governments of Israel, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. The Committee will make contact with the Egyptian Government at the end of the week beginning 4 July. Discussions were held with the League of Red Cross Societies and the International Committee, other private organizations and UNICEF. Refugee camps visited include Jericho, Homs, Wavell, Gouraud and Anjar. Israeli authorities who were contacted on 24 June stated that large scale repatriation is out of the question because of security reasons and large scale Jewish immigration (two hundred fifty thousand immigrants during the past year). The Israeli authorities do not agree to accept Arab refugee orange grove workers on a migratory basis. Under these conditions it is difficult to envisage effective conservation measures. The Israeli authorities stated that the number of Arabs legally resident in Israel increased from ninety-two thousand in nineteen forty-eight to one hundred fifty thousand at present. This increase has resulted from the Armistice conventions and the return of Arabs from adjacent territory.

Governmental contacts in Amman made on June twenty-six indicate great interest in finding work of an agricultural road-building, and housing nature as interim measures. The Technical Committee has been confidentially advised that the Jordan Government would provide land for small scale agricultural settlement if outside funds were made available and would also meet a portion of the total expenses of such projects. The Jordan authorities wish to conduct a census of refugees if funds are provided. The Technical Committee is unfavourable to this proposal. The authorities have agreed on a confidential basis to create an Arab-Israel working group to inquire on the spot and estimate property damages. The authorities have promised to submit plans for work projects on a small scale but the Technical Committee envisages some delay before plans will be available because of conflicting views among Cabinet Ministers as to the type of project and its location.

Syrian authorities are non-committal, but have agreed to consider an interim plan for small scale work projects and to submit ideas re a mixed working group on damaged property. The present situation of integrating returning soldiers plus some unemployment prevents substantial employment of refugees at the moment. The Syrian situation is undergoing reorganization and the Technical Committee expects that the Government could be more cooperative in future if economic plans develop favorably.

Lebanese authorities are sceptical about the results to be expected from now committees set up to deal with the refugee problem. They promised cooperation but stated that limited resources prevent them from assisting refugees and keeping them in the country.

Relief organizations, the International Committee and the League of Red Cross Societies, in preliminary contacts have given assurance that they could with small added staff make a census of refugees, including their places of origin and a good deal of information on their occupations, within a six weeks period. The Technical Committee is holding a meeting with the three relief organizations, UNRPR and UNICEF in the near future.

The five refugee camps visited indicate that living conditions in summer are worse in barracks than in tents. Due to overcrowding, lack of privacy and poor or non-existent ventilation, it is difficult to isolate contagious cases, especially tuberculosis. The Technical Committee suggests that the Commission approach the Arab Governments to admit contagious or other serious cases to their own hospitals and permit small operations in existing installations where necessary to improve ventilation and sanitary conditions. The basic calory diet in the camps visited is about twelve hundred per day, held too low to maintain resistance to tuberculosis. A general school program is under way, but lack of materials prevents development of general education and especially vocational training. A need for social service exists. Morale is deteriorating due to camp life, lack of work, and an extremely strong desire to return home, expressed at every hand.

Conclusions: The Technical Committee considers it important to establish a definition of the different categories of refugees. This would help make more precise refugee statistics. It is extremely important to continue direct relief until adequate repatriation or resettlement is made possible. Interim small scale village settlements or Public Works with outside funds and the cooperation of the Governments of Jordan and Syria should be undertaken as soon as possible. We have requested from many sources available plans of economic development. It is most important somehow to secure a technical working basis between Arabs and Jews on outstanding questions, including property compensation.

Jerusalem
4 July 1949

S. Herbert E. Kunde
A.N. Lucas
Rifki Zorlu