

UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE

GENERAL COMMITTEE

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27 June 1949  
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE SEVENTEENTH MEETING

held in Lausanne on Monday,  
27 June 1949, at 10:30 a.m.

Present : Mr. de la Tour du Pin (France) - Chairman  
          Mr. Yenisey (Turkey)  
          Mr. Wilkins ( U.S.A)  
          Mr. Milner - Committee Secretary

Letter from Mr. Bulos (ORG/19) and note by the Secretariat on separated families

The COMMITTEE SECRETARY summarised briefly the consideration given thus far to the question of reuniting separated families.

Mr. WILKINS said that to clarify his own ideas he had drafted a reply to Mr. Bulos' letter which embodied the following points:

First, with regard to separated families, he thought Mr. Bulos' views might be transmitted to the Israeli delegation, but not until the Committee had first ascertained (a) Mr. Bulos' definition of close family relationship, and (b) the agency which would handle the question. Mr. Wilkins did not feel that the Technical Committee was an operating agency for the purpose of such measures; he thought a joint Arab-Israeli commission under United Nations supervision might be proposed.

Secondly, it was not clear to Mr. Wilkins why the refugees could not return to areas not under Israeli occupation. In any case he pointed out that Mr. Bulos was already in contact with the relief organisations in an effort to ascertain whether they would reorganise their system of relief distribution; pending information on that point, it did not seem that the Commission or the Technical Committee should involve itself in a small repatriation plan outside of the eventual large-scale plan.

Thirdly, Mr. Bulos' proposal with regard to frozen assets should be communicated to the Israeli delegation; and at the same time it might be suggested that the British banks in question might approach the British Government, which in turn might deem it desirable to approach the Israeli Government with a view to possible unblocking of funds.

Mr. YENISEY felt that the question of degree of consanguinity was one which must be settled promptly. Israel had indicated that in its view a family, for the present purpose, must be considered as parents and minor children, while Mr. Bulos correctly stated that in Arab society the family was a much larger unit, embracing a wider circle of relatives, than in western society. Further, he considered it important that the Israeli delegation should be pressed to put into writing its definition of the degree of consanguinity to be recognised.

In reply to a question from Mr. Yenisey, the CHAIRMAN said that the resolution gave authority to consult the refugees; therefore Mr. Bulos's views could be transmitted to the Israeli delegation. If necessary, they could be communicated merely as a refugee opinion, without mentioning the name of the author.

In reply to a comment by Mr. Wilkins to the effect that time was important and action should be taken before the Commission dispersed, the COMMITTEE SECRETARY suggested that the Secretariat might draft, for approval by the Commission, a memorandum, perhaps in the form of a questionnaire, based on Mr. Bulos' letter, with the addition of the suggestion for establishment of a mixed commission to implement an agreed plan.

Mr. YENISEY approved the suggestion but thought the memorandum should not be drafted until after the Commission's meeting with the Israeli delegation the following day, since it was possible that Dr. Eytan might be able to furnish answers on some of the points at issue.

The CHAIRMAN thought it would be wise to have unofficial contacts with the Israeli delegation regarding the question of a mixed commission before approaching the Commission. He thought it essential, moreover, that firm definitions, first, of a "refugee", and secondly, of the "close degree of relationship", should be established.

Mr. WILKINS doubted the wisdom of trying to establish an agreed definition of a "refugee" at the present time, since it was probable that a long and protracted argument would arise on

the subject. He pointed out that during the drafting of the resolution of 11 December 1948, it was realized that it would be difficult to draw up a detailed definition at that time and accordingly only simple general terms had been used.

Mr. ERIM ( Secretariat ) agreed that the establishment of an exact definition would be a very difficult and lengthy matter; however, he considered it indispensable before individual cases could be dealt with.

Mr. YENISEY and the CHAIRMAN both advances possible definitions as alternatives to that proposed by the Secretariat in its note.

It was decided that the point need not be raised in connection with the memorandum to the delegations, but that it would be studied at a later moment by the Legal Adviser.

In reply to a question from the CHAIRMAN, Mr. YENISEY and Mr. WILKINS expressed the view that it was not necessary at the present stage to convene a meeting with Mr. Bulos, but that he should be informed of the memorandum to be submitted to the Commission in order that he might contribute his own views.

With regard to paragraph 3 of Mr. Bulos' letter, the CHAIRMAN pointed out that two questions were involved : first, a re-organisation of distribution of relief, which was within the competence of the United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees, and secondly, the matter of resettlement, which should be handled on a governmental level by the Arab States concerned.

After considerable discussion, the Committee agreed :

1. that the Secretariat should draft a memorandum, for approval by the Commission, to be submitted to the Arab and Israeli delegations, requesting (a) their precise definition of the degree of consanguinity to be recognised for purposes of reuniting separated families, and (b) their views regarding the possible establishment, by agreement of the parties, of a joint Israeli-Arab commission, under United Nations chairmanship, to facilitate the reuniting of such families;

2. that the Secretariat should draft a reply to Mr. Bulos, for approval by the Commission and signature by the Principal Secretary, (a) officially suggesting that Mr. Bulos contact the United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees with regard to his ideas for reorganisation of relief distribution, (b) informing him that his suggestions would be transmitted to the Israeli delegation, and (c) suggesting, as regards the frozen assets, that Arab depositors might approach their British banks with a view to eventual intervention by the British Government with the Israeli Government to effect the unblocking of funds.