UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE

GENERAL COMMITTEE

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SUMMARY RECORD OF A MEETING BETWEEN THE GENERAL COMMITTEE AND THE DELEGATIONS OF THE ARAB STATES

held in Lausanne on Saturday, 6 August 1949, at 11:45 a.m.

Present:	Mr. Rockwell (U.S.A.) Mr. de la Tour du Pin (France) Mr. Yenisey (Turkey)	- Chairman
	Mr. Milner	- Committee Secretary
	Mr. Abdel Chafi El Labbane	- Representative of Egypt
	Mr. Edmond Roch) Dr. Mussa Husseini)	- Representatives of the Hashemite Jordan Kingdom
	Mr. Mohamed Ali Hamade	- Representative of Lebanon
	Mr. Ahmad Choukairi	- Representative of Syria

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Mr. HAMADE (Lebanon) drew attention to an error in the text of document Com.Gen./SR.27, page 6, lines 9-11. It was not correct that the Arab Bank and the Al-Umma Bank were subsidiaries of Barclays Bank and the Ottoman Bank; what he had stated was simply that the assets of the Arab Bank and of the Al-Umma Bank were blocked by Barclays Bank and the Ottoman Bank.

Unblocking of Arab Accounts

The CHAIRMAN asked whether the representative of Egypt was now in a position to state the views of his Government on the Israeli proposal for reciprocal unblocking of accounts.

Mr. LABBANE (Egypt) recalled that at the last meeting his delegation had accepted in principle the Israeli proposal regarding the reuniting of families, and had asked to return later to the question of blocked assets. With regard to the reuniting of families, he now re-affirmed his delegation's acceptance in principle, while restating the reservations he had already made.

Those reservations were (a) that such acceptance did not affect the right of each refugee to return to his home if he so desired, (b) that the patriarchal definition of the family must be the basis of the measures taken for repatriation, and (c) that special compassionate cases must be submitted to the Commission for decision. He informed the Committee that his Government had already given instructions to the Ministries of War and the Interior to collaborate in the return of members of separated families.

With regard to the blocked accounts, he informed the Committee that his Government, as compensation, would agree to unfreeze funds held by banks in Egypt and belonging to Arabs in Israel, to the same amount that would be unfrozen by Israel from sums belonging to Arabs in Egypt.

To a question by the Chairman, who asked whether Egypt therefore accepted the principle of reciprocal unfreezing on the basis of compensation, one for one, Mr. Labbane replied in the affirmative.

Mr. HAMADE (Lebanon) recalled that his delegation, at the last meeting, had asked for unconditional unfreezing of assets. After discussing the matter with his colleagues and with technicians, however, his delegation would now support wholeheartedly the position stated by the Egyptian representative.

Mr. ROCH (Hashemite Jordan Kingdom) recalled that he had promised to obtain for the General Committee some information as to total amounts blocked. Subject to later correction, he could state tentatively that £ 1,900,000 were thought to be blocked by the Ottoman Bank, and £ 3,104,000 by Barclays Bank.

The CHAIRMAN recalled that the Israeli delegation had also suggested the possibility, as a humanitarian measure, of unfreezing Arab funds in Israel against the unfreezing of the value of such merchandise as might be held in the Arab States; this suggestion had been made in connection with cases where there might be no funds available for reciprocal unfreezing.

Mr. LABBANE (Egypt) specified that unfreezing on the basis of compensation should be to the amount at present in Israeli banks and belonging to Arabs in Egypt. Beyond that, if the Commission had technical suggestions to make, his delegation would be glad to study them and transmit them to the Government of Egypt. He insisted, however, that the question of unfreezing merchandise, if such merchandise indeed existed, was a technical

aspect of the question now under discussion and, as such, should be studied by a technical body.

In reply to a question from the Chairman, Mr. Labbane said he was not at present in a position to state the total amount of the funds frozen in Cairo banks.

Mr. HAMADE (Lebanon) requested more precise information concerning the quantity and value of such merchandise held in the Arab States.

The CHAIRMAN agreed to request such information from the Israeli delegation, and suggested also that the Governments of the Arab States must have some information on the subject.

Mr. ROCH (Hashemite Jordan Kingdom) insisted that all Arab assets in Israeli territory must be unfrozen; otherwise the reciprocal operation would be worthless.

The CHAIRMAN then asked for statements of position, to indicate whether or not the other three Arab delegations supported the position taken by the Egyptian delegation in the matter.

Mr. HAMADE (Lebanon), Mr. ROCH (Hashemite Jordan Kingdom) and Mr. CHOUKAIRI (Syria) agreed that although the present measure was a provisional one and that obviously the final unfreezing must be full and complete, their delegations could associate themselves at this stage with the Egyptian position, without prejudice to later discussion of the final settlement.

Reuniting of separated families

The CHAIRMAN observed that the Egyptian delegation had now reported its Government's intention to collaborate in the execution of the programme for reuniting separated families, and asked whether any of the other Arab delegations had received replies from their Governments on the matter.

Mr. HAMADE (Lebanon) observed that the Lebanese representative on the Mixed Armistice Commission had been instructed to receive applications for repatriation and pass them on through the Israeli representatives on that Commission. He thought the entire operation would move more quickly if that simple procedure were adopted, rather than the creation of new bodies of committees to deal with the matter.

Dr. HUSSEINI (Hashemite Jordan Kingdom) suggested that a central coordinating authority would be necessary, to check the lists of applications, since the Arabs applying for return of their relatives often did not know in which of the Arab States those relatives were living. He thought that one or all of the relief agencies operating in the field would be most competent

to determine the location of the refugees in question and forward the applications to the proper authorities.

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that technical details of procedure should be settled in the field, rather than in Lausanne.

For the information of the Arab delegations in connection with this problem, the Chairman reported that the Committee had submitted to the Israeli delegation for its consideration (see Com.Gen./SR.25) an alternative definition of the categories of refugees to be allowed to return under the terms of the present programme. The definition, drafted by Mr. Yenisey, the Turkish member of the Committee, was as follows:

> "Any refugee who was, before the date of the opening of hostilities, financially dependent upon the head of his family, shall have the right to rejoin his family in territory under Israeli occupation, with the exception of all persons who have borne arms against Israel."

Dr. HUSSEINI (Hashemite Jordan Kingdom) would have preferred the phrase "financially interdependent" rather than "dependent", since in many cases a father and his sons formed a financial unit together. Moreover, with regard to the provision concerning those who had borne arms against Israel, he pointed out that such a provision had already been suggested by the Red Cross, and that it had been determined to be impossible of implementation, since no registers existed.

Mr. YENISEY observed that Mr. Sasson of the Israeli delegation had indicated his willingness to support the definition in transmitting it to his Government for consideration. He explained that his intention, in drafting the definition, had been to enlarge the basis of operation and increase the number of refugees who might be allowed to return. The financial basis he had decided upon was a broader and more just concept than the present one concerning wives and minor children. With regard to the exception he had stated, it had seemed necessary in the circumstances to include that provision.

Mr. LABBANE (Egypt) expressed his appreciation of the effort at conciliation indicated by the drafting of the new definition. He would have preferred, however, that no exceptions should be included, and that the cases of those who had borne arms should be judged as special cases. He felt that the exception stated was an attack upon the indisputable

right of every refugee to return to his home if he desired, and that the Commission, in endorsing such an exception, would be recognizing the existence of a category of refugees who had not that right.

Mr. CHOUKAIRI (Syria) agreed that the point was an important one; he felt that the qualification of combatant was foreign to the concept of repatriation laid down in the resolution. The definition must be in general terms and without qualifications or exceptions. Moreover, there was the question of who should decide in case of disputes over the combatant status of a refugee. It was unthinkable that the Government of Israel should have the deciding voice in such a dispute.

Mr. YENISEY pointed out that the programme for reuniting of families was not an attempt to solve the whole refugee question, but merely a humanitarian measure to alleviate the suffering of a number of the refugees. It was possible that the combatant or non-combatant status of an applicant could be determined by the Mixed Armistice Commission or by some higher body. In any case, the role of judge in a dispute would certainly not be left to the Israeli Government.

Mr. CHOUKAIRI (Syria) thanked Mr. Yenisey for his explanations. He wished, however, to stress the fact that the programme was merely a provisional measure. He maintained that any refugee had the right to repatriation, even if he had been a combatant; that repatriation, if it did not occur as part of the present programme, must come later as part of the general settlement.

Mr. ROCH (Hashemite Jordan Kingdom) referring to the statement made at a recent meeting that 800 application for repatriation of relatives had already been received by the Israeli Government, asked how many of those applications had been granted.

The CHAIRMAN promised to request that information from the Israeli delegation.

In response to a question from the Chairman, the representatives of LEBANON, SYRIA and the HASHEMITE JORDAN KINGDOM said that their Governments had agreed to do all possible to facilitate the return of the refugees under the terms of the Israeli plan.

The CHAIRMAN repeated his hope that to a large extent technical details of the plan could be settled in the field; however, such points as were considered necessary could doubtless be discussed in the general Committee. He promised that as soon as a reply was received from the Israeli delegation regarding Mr. Yenisey's definition, that reply would be communicated to the Arab delegation.

With regard to the questions of the orange groves and Wakf property, Dr. HUSSEINI (Hashemite Jordan Kingdom) asked whether the Committee had received any report on the former question from the Technical Committee or any reply on the latter question from the Israeli delegation.

The CHAIRMAN promised that those two questions would be taken up in another meeting shortly.