

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 Monday,
15 August 1949, at 12 noon

Present : Mr. Yenisey (Turkey) - Chairman
Mr. de la Tour du Pin (France)
Mr. Rockwell (U.S.A.)
Dr. Azcárate - Principal Secretary
Mr. Abdel Chafi El Labbane - Representative of
Egypt
Mr. Edmond Roch - Representative of
the Hashemite
Jordan Kingdom
Mr. Ahmad Choukairi - Representative of
Syria

Reunion of separated families

The CHAIRMAN observed that at its last meeting with the Israeli delegation the Committee had transmitted the agreement of the Arab delegations to request the sending of representatives by their respective Governments to points on the frontiers in order to assist with administrative arrangements for the repatriation of members of families. The Israeli delegation had replied that although the agreement in principle had been transmitted by the Arab Governments to the Mixed Armistice Commissions, no representatives had actually been appointed as yet. He therefore requested the Arab delegations to contact their Governments once more in an effort to expedite the appointment of the necessary officials. The matter was an urgent one, since according to the Israeli delegation, 800 applications had so far been received; although none had as yet been rejected, those accepted could not be processed without the assistance of the

Arab officials in question:

The Chairman then informed the Arab delegations that the Committee's proposal for an enlarged concept of the family, for purposes of repatriation, had been rejected by the Israeli Government. The latter had stated that when further repatriation took place as a part of the final settlement of the refugee question, it would accord priority to other members of separated families, but for the present it could do no more. The Chairman added that the three members of the Committee had individually urged the Israeli delegation to press for acceptance of the Committee's definition. He himself had expressed the view that the Israeli position was illogical, since the number of refugees repatriated at present would be deducted from the total number that Israel would eventually accept, and there seemed no reason why the number repatriated at once could not be increased as a humanitarian measure to alleviate suffering.

To a question from Mr. LABBANE (Egypt), who inquired whether his Government had been specifically mentioned by the Israeli delegation in connection with the absence of representatives at the frontiers, the CHAIRMAN replied in the affirmative.

Mr. LABBANE (Egypt) then assured the Committee that the Egyptian representative on the Mixed Armistice Commission would contact his Government and endeavour to have the necessary officials appointed forthwith. He himself, in the meantime, would take the same measures from Lausanne.

Mr. ROCH (Hashemite Jordan Kingdom) gave the same assurances in the name of his delegation.

Mr. LABBANE (Egypt) expressed his thanks to the Committee for its efforts to obtain a wider concept of the family, and in particular to the Turkish member for his interventions. He could only continue to hope that the Government of Israel would in time be persuaded to alter its attitude.

Blocked Arab accounts

The CHAIRMAN explained that following the agreement in principle on the question of unfreezing of Arab accounts on a one for one basis, the Committee had proposed to the Israeli delegation the establishment of a mixed committee of experts

to deal with the matter. The committee would be composed of one Arab member and one Israeli member under the chairmanship, provisionally, of the Principal Secretary of the Commission and would establish the procedure to be followed in order to obtain the unfreezing of the accounts. The Committee should begin its work at the earliest possible moment; it would report to the General Committee, which, if it deemed necessary, would instruct it to proceed to the Middle East, either to Jerusalem or elsewhere, to implement the decisions taken. The Committee had obtained the agreement of the Israeli delegation to the constitution of such a committee; and he now asked whether the Arab delegations also would agree to appoint a representative. The Arab member should represent all the Arab delegations and should also have the support of the refugee organisations.

Mr. CHOUKAIRI (Syria) affirmed that he and his colleagues gladly accepted this working proposal of the Committee. He proposed that the representative of Egypt should represent the Arab delegations on the new Committee.

Mr. ROCH (Hashemite Jordan Kingdom) felt that the Arab delegations were unanimous in supporting the nomination of Mr. Labbane. He would be free to choose the experts he would need to assist him. Mr. Roch felt confident also that the nomination would have the support of the refugee representatives, some of whom, he understood, had already signified their agreement.

The CHAIRMAN, in the name of the General Committee, took note of the agreement of the Arab delegations to the constitution of the mixed committee, and of their nomination of Mr. Labbane as their representative. Although there was no Lebanese representative present, the head of the delegation of Lebanon had affirmed to the Chairman that his colleagues of the other three Arab delegations spoke for his delegation also; the Chairman therefore considered the agreement and the nomination as unanimous.

Mr. LABBANE (Egypt) expressed his thanks to his colleagues for their gesture of confidence. As regards the constitution of the new committee, he felt that the refugees should be directly represented, for three reasons; first, they were the

party most directly concerned; secondly, they possessed information which would be of great value to the committee; and thirdly, any objections which they might have to the committee's procedure could be raised and dealt with immediately.

The CHAIRMAN agreed that the refugees must certainly be heard; it was in an effort to simplify procedure that the General Committee had decided that the new committee would include only one representative of each side. Those representatives, however, would be free to enlist the aid of as many advisers and technical experts as they considered necessary.

Mr. ROCH (Hashemite Jordan Kingdom) raised the question of certain sums of money, representing payment for citrus crops, which had been frozen. These sums amounted to approximately 124,000 pounds in checks in the names of several proprietors of groves. If immediate measures could be taken for the unfreezing of these funds, a great service would be rendered to the proprietors and exporters.

Mr. CHOUFAIRI (Syria) associated himself with the request made by Mr. Roch. He explained, further, that the sum in question represented part of a larger amount held in trust by the Citrus Board under the mandatory regime, which had included checks in favour of both Arab and Jewish exporters. The amounts owing to Jewish exporters had been paid out in due time, but those owing to Arabs had been frozen. This was obviously inequitable; he therefore stressed the fact that the sum in question should be unfrozen as a separate operation outside the terms of the one-for-one reciprocal arrangement agreed upon.

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the matter would fall within the competence of the new mixed committee and suggested that the Arab representative of that committee should raise the question at the first meeting. In any case, the General Committee would raise the matter with the Israeli delegation at its next meeting.

The Chairman expressed his thanks to the Arab delegations for the spirit of cooperation and conciliation they had shown; he hoped that concrete results would be attained very soon.

He asked whether the Arab delegations had any objection to the issuance by the Commission of a press communique on the subject of the new mixed committee; such a communique might be issued immediately after the first meeting of the committee.

The Arab delegations agreed to the Chairman's request.