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UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION
FOR PALESTINE

Letter dated 10 April 1953 addressed by the Chairman of the Conciliation Commission for Palestine to the Permanent Representatives to the United Nations of Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Yemen and to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Jordan

Excellency,

The Palestine Conciliation Commission met today to consider how it can facilitate the prompt carrying out of the agreement reached with the Government of Israel for the release of bank accounts belonging to Arab refugees in banks located in Israel. The Commission took note of the reports that many refugees are reluctant to make application for the release of their accounts because of fears that by so doing they may prejudice other claims which they may have in Israel. The Commission is issuing a statement, a copy of which is enclosed, assuring the owners of the accounts that the agreement with Israel is unconditional and without prejudice to any other claims or to the claims for the entire balance of each account previously blocked.

It is the Commission's sincere hope that your Government will find it possible to afford wide publicity to the Commission's statement and to facilitate wherever possible the prompt submission of their applications by the refugees who own accounts. The Commission had endeavoured, over a considerable period of time and in the interest of the individual refugees, to obtain the agreement of the Government of Israel for release of the blocked accounts. In view of the fact that the fears of the refugees as to their claims are, in the opinion of the Commission, unfounded, it would be unfortunate if there were to be any further delay in the return of the accounts to their rightful owners.

Please accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

(Signed) SEMIH BARAN
Chairman
Conciliation Commission for Palestine

STATEMENT OF CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE CONCERNING
THE RELEASE OF THE ARAB REFUGEE ACCOUNTS BLOCKED IN ISRAEL

Under an agreement reached between the Palestine Conciliation Commission and the Government of Israel, the scheme for payment of the first instalment to Arab refugees of accounts blocked in banks in Israel came into effect at the beginning of March 1953. The payment of blocked accounts is being carried out through banking procedures arranged between the banks concerned and the Government of Israel. The Palestine Conciliation Commission is pleased to have played a part in initiating and assisting the Government of Israel and the banks concerned to reach this agreement, since it will benefit many refugees.

Applications for payment are being received and registered by Barclay's Bank in Nablus, Gaza, Cairo and Alexandria, by the Ottoman Bank in Amman, Nablus, the Old City of Jerusalem, Irbid, Cairo, Alexandria and Bagdad, and by the Banque de Syrie et du Liban in Beirut and Damascus. The agreement for the total release of all blocked accounts owned by refugees in banks located in Israel was unconditional, subject only to the availability of foreign exchange.

The Commission has taken note of recent allegations that the Government of Israel has imposed a 10 per cent levy on the accounts of refugees to be paid out, as well as allegations that accounts of refugees of more than £500 have been transferred to the Custodian of Alien Property which, it is alleged, constitutes confiscation.

The Commission has been officially informed by the Government of Israel that accounts of refugees have not been made subject to the 10 per cent levy on bank accounts over £50 in Israel, and that the transfer of accounts of over £500 to the Custodian of Alien Property was for the technical purpose of facilitating the release of funds to account holders.

The Commission regards the release of the blocked accounts as an important step towards the settlement of differences existing between Israel and her neighbours and believes that speedy implementation of the release and payment will have the immediate effect of alleviating the condition of the refugees.

It is the earnest hope of the Commission that applications will be promptly submitted by account holders so that needy account holders in particular may receive payments under this first instalment as rapidly as the technical work of verifying claims by the banks can be completed. By so doing the refugees will not, in the opinion of the Commission, prejudice whatever other claims they may

have nor will the payment of the first instalment in any way prejudice the claims of the owners of accounts to the balance of their accounts.

The Commission has decided to send Mr. John Reedman for a short period to the Middle East to observe and report on the progress of the release scheme. Mr. Reedman acted for the Commission in a consultative capacity during the technical discussions which preceded the agreement for release.

10 April 1953
