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Chairman: Mr. SIARCEVIC (Yugoslavia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.50 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 73 (continued)

UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST
(continued)

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER-GENERAL (A/38/13)
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Mr. GONZALEZ (Chile) (interpretation from Spanish): As has been stated by my country as a matter of tradition, only a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine - a central element which must be resolved in order to bring about a constructive outcome to the Middle Eastern crisis - would contribute to a decisive and definitive settlement of the future of thousands and thousands of Palestinian refugees, as well as the stability and peaceful development to which all nations of the area aspire. In order for this to happen, Israel will have to withdraw from all territories occupied since 1967, and we will have to respect the right of all States of the region to live within secure and recognized boundaries, with the possibility of exercise of the right to self-determination by the Palestinian people.

Among the main palliatives designed to decrease the problems of the Palestinian refugees, we must refer to the most relevant and most effective work carried out by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

In this connection, we should like once again to express our grave concern with regard to the financial problems affecting that body. We reiterate our point that it is most important and urgent for the General Assembly to ensure a stable basis for this financing. In the meantime, we support the study on the possibility of covering part or all of the deficits by means of funds from the regular budgetary organization. The report which has been submitted to us at this session by the Secretary-General clearly reflects the extremely important work carried out

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by this body, particularly in view of the difficult situations that exist. We must emphasize the efforts that this body has made in order to establish a certain degree of normalcy in the situation in Lebanon, which is in a state of upheaval at present.

In this connection, the food plan must be recognized as one of the most positive steps in that direction. We must also recognize that the report of the Secretary-General, which emphasizes the priority to be given by this body to health services in Lebanon, despite the material and other destruction suffered, is extremely important. There are also other areas. Despite the destruction which has occurred in various schools, and despite the fact that many of these schools have been occupied by refugees in the first few months of the armed conflict in Lebanon, this document refers to the fact that satisfactory progress has been achieved in reactivating the school system. By the end of 1982, more than 31,000 schoolchildren were in attendance.

There have been serious financing problems and these have been further aggravated by the invasion of Lebanon by foreign troops last year, as well as by the continuing presence of military forces which are the focus of new conflict.

We are also impressed by the figures in the report I have referred to, which point to the fact that 185,000 refugees, of whom 30,000 are very poor, require social assistance, at least until the spring of 1984. In our view this may be true, assuming that at the time the report was drafted no change was to occur in what had happened and the political deterioration would not further continue.

With regard to the occupied territories, Chile views this problem with great concern as one of the potential hotbeds of successive and varied conflicts in the Middle Eastern region. We are particularly concerned with regard to the denunciation formulated by the High Commissioner of this organization to the effect that the Israeli civilian administration in Gaza continues to interfere in the smallest projects, including building, and so on.

We believe that this attitude in no way favours the establishment of more just conditions of life for the Palestinian refugees of the area. In fact, this action runs counter to the activities of the bodies which function and deserve respect at the international level.

This denunciation, which we share, also applies to those who have preferred the course of confrontation in the Middle Eastern crisis and have not co-operated in the least, thus making the work of the organization much more difficult. We

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should like at this time once again most fervently to appeal to States to contribute, in accordance with their means, financial support to this UNRWA body and to extend to it all the other kinds of support they can give.

Chile has traditionally always been prepared to contribute to this United Nations body and the important work it carries out in trying to safeguard the most fundamental of human rights. But its means and instruments must also be given adequate financial support as well as other kinds of support. This requires real political will on the part of Member States of the United Nations and a clear vision which will make it possible for these bodies to be an effective tool of assistance to achieve the final objective - peace in the Middle East.

Mr. SHEHATA (Egypt): Allow me first to express our appreciation of and support for the commendable efforts of the Commissioner-General, Mr. Olof Rydbeck, in fulfilling his extremely difficult responsibilities, particularly under the present conditions. We also extend our appreciation and gratitude to all those unknown soldiers representing the international community in their humanitarian assistance for the Palestine refugees in the occupied Arab territories in Gaza, the West Bank, the Golan Heights and in Lebanon.

In one year, the Palestinian people has endured invasion, killing, displacement and destruction. In one year, the invasion by Israel of southern Lebanon has epitomized the tragedy that has been going on in the Middle East since 1948: invasion, killing, expulsion and the displacement of one people by another people. Despite severe losses, it becomes clear, day after day, that the Palestinians will not be forced to the sidelines in the ongoing Middle East conflict, nor will the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) fade away as the legitimate and sole representative of the Palestinian people.

Allow me to stress some aspects of the tragic life in refugee camps resulting from the Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon and Beirut - first, as to living conditions. The massacre of the Palestinians in the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila was only one manifestation of the plight of the Palestinians who remained in Lebanon after the war. In the vicinity of Sidon there are at least 20,000 homeless Palestinian refugees who are forced to face the winter months without adequate shelter.

In the words of a member of the Knesset, Yair Tzaban, in an interview with John Goldberg, published in New Outlook, in the issue of January-February 1983,

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"The sight was hard to bear. There was a sense of wretched misery. It was an immense tragedy and hard to confront. To epitomize the tragedy, I would like to tell the following story.

"At Rashidiye, we entered a school in which refugees were living. In a room on the first floor we found four families, 34 people. In the corner lay a middle-aged woman dressed in black. Her arm had been amputated. Her legs were covered with bandages. That woman embodied the entire Palestinian tragedy."

In the South, where Israeli troops bombarded the refugee camps to rubble, Palestinians have nowhere to live, no shelter to cover them. Also, in the Shatila and Sabra camps, where the most heinous massacres took place, a programme to clean up after the killings has turned into a wholesale levelling of areas around the camps. In three official camps serviced by UNRWA - Shatila, Burj al-Barajneh and Mar-Elias - housing 16,800 refugees, 418 homes have been demolished, and 857 badly damaged. Outside the camps, the destruction has even been worse. In Sabra, 32 houses were blown away; 652 were damaged. The lack of housing, the fear of arrest and official harassment, have had their effect.

Secondly, with regard to health conditions, in October 1982, three British Jewish doctors visited Lebanon on behalf of the Peace in Lebanon and Israel Movement. They spent most of the time in six of the 15 Palestinian refugee camps, where some 400,000 people struggle to survive. They reviewed the collapse of the medical services provided by the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) and the brutal treatment in the El-Ansar Camp. The group of three British Jewish doctors were: Dr. Martin Birnstingel, Consultant Surgeon in St. Bartholomew Hospital in London, Dr. Pamela Zinkin, Consultant Pediatrician, and Professor Steven Rose, a biologist. Their main conclusions were summarized as follows.

First, the climate of personal danger and insecurity and the constant harassment of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society and UNRWA staff have frightened patients away from seeking medical help and left few community workers to care for them. UNRWA, with the help of voluntary agencies such as Christian Aid and OXFAM, has excellent, though not sufficiently experienced, health workers in many of the camps. But foreign relief workers, however skilled and motivated, cannot replace personnel born and trained in the settlements. The underground health care delivered mainly by the Palestinians themselves was the main achievement of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society. An early release of medical detainees seemed an

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essential condition for the effective delivery of the massive relief and medical aid available through the agencies.

Secondly, the primary need is elementary security, with freedom from harassment and arbitrary arrest. The other essential need is the restoration of proper primary health care and a 24-hour ambulance service.

Thirdly, at present the massive international disaster relief converging upon Lebanon is unlikely to reach the people who need it. The Israelis have already destroyed their housing and their possessions, bulldozed their camps and dismantled medical and educational services. They still refuse to allow the Palestinians' own medical and social machinery to be re-established, security protection and survival of the Palestinian refugees.

These issues of living and health conditions are interrelated with the overriding issue of protection and safety of the Palestinian refugees, to which I will address myself. The Palestinians have lost everything - the land, jobs, homes, furniture, property - and have been painfully pushed together in 35 years of exile in Lebanon. One has to ask if life is bearable when one has been deprived of running water, electricity and toilets, and when one subsists from day to day on food rations, occasionally distributed by UNRWA. The answer is no.

But still the Palestinians have to survive. Survival is now the key word in the vocabulary of a people pushed around from country to country by armed conflicts, massacres and persecution. Ask a teacher, a doctor or a nurse looking after the bombed-out Palestinians in Lebanon what his or her problem is. The answer will always be the same: security.

The insecurity of the Palestine refugees in Lebanon combines a fear of the day ahead with a deeper fear of the future. The Palestinian refugees, not knowing what the future will bring to them, take few chances. Usually jobless and moneyless within the camps, they are trying to disguise even their Palestinian accent if they ever do venture out.

In Israeli-occupied southern Lebanon the intimidation is really sinister. Anonymous masked men use methods ranging from warnings to corpses mutilated beyond recognition. Palestinians in Lebanon are living in a dark age of distrust. The key to the cage has been thrown away. There are some 350,000 Palestinians in Lebanon; 240,000 of them are refugees with UNRWA. Until the Palestinians have their own Palestinian homeland - and the prospect of this has now receded further - Lebanon, unfortunately, will be their sanctuary, or rather their prison.

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Uri Avneri wrote in Haolam Hazei on 15 December 1982:

"When the army and the secret services entered the Palestinian refugee camps and the mixed cities, particularly all the male population beyond the age of 14 or 16 were arrested: fathers, sons and grandsons. Those who watched the Israeli TV report made by Mordechai Kirschenbaum about the occupation of Sidon, the only truthful report broadcast during the war, can remember the long row of men and boys taken to detention with their hands over their heads.

"This week I visited the refugee camps in Sidon and the picture was very clear. There are no adult males there. Almost all men of the ages of 14 to 60 were held at Al Ansar camp. Maybe the mass detentions of the first days of war were supposed to pressure the Palestinians in South Lebanon into fleeing away, according to the Israeli explicit policy. The idea was to drive the Palestinians eastwards, in the direction of the Syrian lines. Up to a certain point they succeeded. It seems that 50,000 to 100,000 refugee men, women, old people and children escaped eastwards, but the relatives of those held at Al Ansar camp, wives, sons, daughters and patients and parents did not run away, because they did not want to leave their men. Why are they still detained? They say they are terrorists. Who is a terrorist? One may as well ask who is a Jew. A Jew is one born to a Jewish mother or converted to Judaism. A terrorist is one born to Palestinian parents, just like that, and is a member or sympathizer of the PLO. At present there are 400,000 of them, 5,000 of them are in Al-Ansar camp only."

Avneri went on to say:

"There were régimes which detained Jews because they were Jews. In Al Ansar Palestinians are detained just because they are Palestinians. This detention camp is a cancer in our body, in spite of the fact that it is located in a different land. It was set up in order to bypass Israeli or international law. Sooner or later an international scandal will arise. How long it will take for international attention to focus on it? What do we need it for? Why are thousands held there? For what reason? What are we doing in Lebanon at all and at the Al Ansar camp in particular? It is a stain. It should be wiped out, and at once."

I shall now address myself to some remarks on the documents being considered under this item.

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Document A/38/13, the report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, in its foreword refers to the deteriorating situation in Lebanon and the tragic developments afflicting Palestinian refugees, which should have been attributed to their perpetrators - I mean the invasion of south Lebanon by Israeli military forces. This has been obliquely approached in the whole report. This should have been streamlined with the language used in the letter from the Chairman of the Advisory Commission of UNRWA to the Commissioner-General on 25 August.

In paragraph 13, on the situation in occupied territories, an erroneous equation is made between the Palestinians and Israeli settlers, putting the invaders, the illegal occupants and the legitimate owners of the land on the same level. This should, indeed, be redressed.

On the emergency operations in Lebanon, paragraphs 15 to 20, efforts by the authorities and the non-governmental organizations in Denmark, Sweden and Norway in alleviating the ordeals of the Palestinian refugees are to be noted with appreciation.

Paragraph 23 highlights the systematic depletion of manpower of the refugees through indefinite detention in concentration camps.

This raises the issue of the safety and protection of the Palestinians in refugee camps. As the occupying Power, Israel is bound to abide by the provisions of the Geneva Conventions. At the same time, UNRWA itself, as the only manifestation of the presence of the international community servicing the Palestinian refugees, should not stand idle on the issue of ensuring the protection and physical safety of the Palestinian refugees.

Paragraph 43 highlights an ongoing process of evaluation and re-evaluation by UNRWA of its emergency relief operations. This is fully warranted and should be encouraged and welcomed.

In chapter 2, regarding the regular operations of the Agency, particularly in the field of education, in paragraphs 48, 54, 55, 57 and 58 we witness the phenomenon of systematic closures of schools, disrupting the education process, which is yet another hardship adding to the ordeal of the refugees.

On section C, on the relief services - paragraphs 117, 133, 134, 135 and 137 - my delegation would like to make some specific comments on the following points. First, on the western side of the international borders between Egypt and Israel, in the Egyptian sector of Rafa', live about 516 Palestinian refugees' families, registered with UNRWA, totalling 5,500, originally from the Gaza sector

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before 1967. They were deported by Israel to the Egyptian side - that is, to the Egyptian Rafah.

However, Egypt and Israel have agreed to repatriate those Palestinians to the Gaza sector and the Tel El-Sultan area, allocating to each family 200 to 250 square metres, in the light of an evaluation to be made of the real estate and property.

Israel agreed to make a loan for those repatriated, while the Government of Egypt was to provide cash subsidies. This agreement never materialized, due to obstructions created on the Israeli side in repatriating these families.

Palestinians living in the Egyptian Rafah are prevented from crossing the border line to visit their families or to find job opportunities with foreign concerns. All Palestinian refugees were summarily dismissed from their jobs, just because they were Palestinians. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is itself encountering difficulties imposed upon its services in transporting food rations and providing relief services.

Egypt has agreed to pay subsidies to those Palestinians totalling \$2 million, to be increased to \$4 million, to facilitate their repatriation whereas the Israelis promised only to offer loans, even rejecting all Egyptian proposals and thus frustrating the process of repatriation.

The delegation of Egypt cannot but express its deepest concern and frustration over the obdurate position adopted by the Israeli authorities in interfering with the construction activities of UNRWA to repair its installations inside the refugee camps.

It is indeed ironic that at a time when Israeli settlement activities are in full swing, demolition activities as collective punishment measures are also in full swing. It is indeed both politically and legally anomalous to invoke an Egyptian law - No. 2, 1960 - which is intentionally misinterpreted by the Israeli authorities in Gaza to obstruct the reconstruction and repair activities of UNRWA.

It is sufficient to recall the reply of the Commissioner-General in this regard that there has never been interference by the Egyptian authorities by virtue of this law in the activities of UNRWA in the Gaza sector.

Chapter II, entitled "Legal Matters", paragraphs 156 to 173, spells out the practices of the occupation forces in detentions, harassment, arrests and interrogations directed against UNRWA staff members and Palestinian refugees in a predetermined systematic policy of intimidation, expulsion and dehumanization,

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reminiscent of the concentration camps of the Second World War. The wholesale process of intimidation, expulsion and collective punishment is well-substantiated by reports in the Israeli as well as the Arab press in the occupied Arab territories.

The following quotations from the Arab and Israeli press give examples of Israeli practices directed against the Palestinian refugee camps in Gaza and the West Bank:

"Israeli Government against the development of refugee housing on the Gaza Strip and the West Bank:

"The military Government of the Gaza Strip met with the representatives of the refugees on 25 January and ordered delivery to the refugees of written instructions signed by Rafi Sadah, the military officer in charge of refugee rehabilitation and welfare affairs.

"The instructions forbid the refugees to construct new buildings, the adding of new parts to old ones, or the demolishing of old buildings in order to build new ones, without written permission from the military Government. The instructions also forbid the selling or renting of apartments or any building within the refugee camp areas."

That is from Al-Fajr of 27 January 1983.

Here are other examples from The Jerusalem Post and Ha'aretz, 5 June 1983:

"Security forces seal off refugee camp's main gate:

"The Israeli security forces sealed off Friday, 3 June, the main gate of the refugee camp at Dheisheh, near Bethlehem. This is the only gate to open onto the main Al-Khalil-Bethlehem road."

"There were angry scenes at the Dheisheh camp, where residents demonstrated and threw stones at workers blocking the gate, before police officers fired - it was reported, into the air - and the demonstrators dispersed. According to the security authority, the gate was closed following incidents in which stones had been thrown at passing Israeli vehicles."

Here is a further example, from Al-Fajr, 27 May 1983:

"In the Al-Khalil area, the military authorities slapped a curfew on the Arab refugee camp on 21 May and rounded up all men between 15 and 45 years of age after the demonstration. It was reported that the Israeli soldiers also cemented and closed the two roads which lead from the camp to the main Al-Khalil-Jerusalem road." (Al-Fajr, 27 May 1983).

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As for document A/38/143, containing the Joint Inspection Unit's report, my delegation has thoroughly studied this important report on the programmes, operations, management problems and institutional questions.

While fully appreciating the effort, scrutiny and depth evident in the recommendations in this report, I should like to state the following on the institutional questions, particularly the protection of the refugees by UNRWA.

First, General Assembly resolutions should be taken as the framework and context within which this issue is approached and assessed. These resolutions reflect the collective wisdom of Member States, and they should be accepted in their entirety. Such an approach in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit merits encouragement. However, a more precise reformulation is required.

Secondly, the composition of the Advisory Committee should be scrupulously adhered to. This composition determines, in unequivocal terms, the terms of reference and responsibilities. It should be maintained until such time as the Palestinian refugee problem is resolved.

Thirdly, the question of relocating the headquarters of UNRWA from Vienna is becoming even more urgent under the present circumstances.

Fourthly, all voluntary activities in assisting UNRWA in its role should be appraised and appreciated.

With regard to document A/38/420, "Protection of Palestine refugees," my delegation views this issue as the key task now to be discharged by the United Nations through its presence in all occupied Arab territories wherein UNRWA performs its activities. Challenging the legality or effectiveness of such UNRWA tasks would not in any way absolve the United Nations - or the Secretary-General, for that matter - from according to that vital issue the utmost attention and concern. Survival and physical safety come before education, food and rations or even health care.

I should now like to turn to documents A/38/419 and A/38/418, "Population and refugees displaced since 1967" and "Palestine refugees in the Gaza Strip". The right to return is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, just as it is enshrined in United Nations resolutions, particularly General Assembly resolution 194 (III), operative paragraph 11. This right has been systematically denied the Palestinians and even more hardships and ordeals have been added to their living conditions in the Gaza Strip, particularly in the wake of the demarcation of border lines between Israel and Egypt.

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Document A/38/558 contains the report of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA. This report merits both our appreciation and our support. However my delegation still holds the view that the chronic deficit in the UNRWA budget should be and could be covered by the United Nations regular budget. In this regard, we urge the Working Group to explore further ways and means of increasing the financial resources of the Agency.

On the question of the establishment of the university in Jerusalem, which is covered by the report contained in document A/38/386, my delegation feels that this is still an aspiration and an unfulfilled dream and that the Arab community in Jerusalem is thus being deprived of equal opportunity to enrich its culture and to contribute to the advancement of enlightenment and of initiatives for peace and development.

In document A/38/397, the report of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine, we again find classic testimony of the inability of the Organization to implement in full one of its resolutions, General Assembly resolution 194 (III), and particularly operative paragraph 11 of that resolution. What still remains and should not be frustrated is the hope, the will and the determination to redress the injustices inflicted upon one people in an attempt to rectify and remedy the injustices suffered by another people.

My last remark on the documents under consideration has to do with the contributions of Egypt to UNRWA's activities. I shall refer only to table 13 (b) of the detailed statement of income of the Lebanon Emergency Relief Programme and table 14, "Direct Government assistance to Palestine refugees," both of which appear in document A/38/13; they adequately reflect the contribution of Egypt to the activities of UNRWA in its emergency as well as in its regular operations.

There are those who claim that war in Lebanon has opened new options for the furthering of the peace process. On the contrary, what has been furthered is deeper animosity, greater risks of conflagration and hostilities. But does this mean that the option of peace is already dead? It would be a haunting nightmare even to think of that eventuality. Peace options cannot be dead even with generations of bloodshed and conflicts. We have to give peace and the peace options a renewed lease on life for ourselves and for our future generations.

In conclusion, let me say that nothing sounds to me more eloquent than the lucid words of Arie Eliar in The New York Times of Thursday, 13 October 1983. With very prophetic foresight worthy of appreciation, he wrote:

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"It is not too late to reverse the process. To do so we must take a sharp ideological, political and economic turn. We must declare our readiness to repartition Greater Israel. We Jews have memories, ties and rights to all of that land, but so do the Palestinians. We must, therefore, do with half a loaf so that we can one day live as normal twins. Such a solution requires major surgery. It will be long and painful. There will be many obstacles along the way. But if we don't take steps in this direction we may become a living monstrosity caught in endless war.

"The lights in Israel are dim today. But we have a choice. We can choose between a curse and a blessing. Let us choose life." (The New York Times, 13 October 1983, p. A27)

To this choice we rededicate ourselves. It is the choice of life, life in dignity, life in honour, life in peace, for the Palestinians and for all the peoples in the region.

Mr. Al-SHAWKANI (Yemen) (interpretation from Arabic): Since this is my first statement, I should like to take this opportunity to extend to you, Sir, on behalf of my delegation and myself, our congratulations on your assumption of the chairmanship of the Special Political Committee for this year. Your known competence, abilities and wisdom will have a great impact on the success of the Special Political Committee's work. We would also like to express our appreciation to the Vice-Chairmen, the Rapporteur and the other officers of the Committee.

The issue now under consideration in this Committee, agenda item 73, "United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East", is not a new one. It will continue to appear on the agenda of this Committee and of the United Nations so long as the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people are not restored and so long as their right to return to their homeland, to exercise self-determination and to establish their own independent State on their national soil under the leadership of their sole legitimate representative, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), is not given them. Until that is achieved, this question will still be before us.

We listened to the statement of Mr. Olaf Rydbeck, the Commissioner-General of UNRWA. We have also considered his report in document A/38/13. We would like to thank him for his efforts, but we would also like to make the following observations.

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First, the report disregards the main issue, which is that of the Palestinian refugees, a people that have been forcibly and violently displaced from their homeland because of the killing and murder practised by Israel against a people that hopes to restore its inalienable national rights in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Secondly, the report disregards any reference to the fact that the resolutions concerning Palestinian refugees have not been implemented, among them those emphasizing the right to return and the establishment of a special fund to receive the income from the properties in their homeland. Nor has the report referred to the Agency's efforts to implement those resolutions.

Thirdly, the report does not refer to Israeli practices in the occupied West Bank and Gaza aimed at putting an end to the camps in which Palestinian refugees live in an attempt to obfuscate one of the manifestations of the Palestinian question - UNRWA, which should be stopped because of its direct contact with those camps which supply services to them.

Fourthly, we are surprised that in paragraph 5 of the report reference is made to such a thing as the "desirable effect" of Israeli patrols in Palestinian camps in southern Lebanon because the report refers elsewhere to the fact that 93 per cent of the camps were demolished by the invading Israeli force. We still remember the massacres of Sabra and Shatila and all the other atrocities and brutalities.

Fifthly, we do not believe it is part of the Commissioner-General's duty to say that the PLO infrastructure in Beirut and southern Lebanon has collapsed, as appears in paragraph 15 of the report.

We declare that Israel must bear full responsibility for the deteriorating conditions in all areas in which the Palestinian refugees live. The United Nations must fully shoulder its responsibility to put an end to the Israeli acts of aggression and repressive practices against the Palestinian Arab people.

The report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA refers to the fact that, as a result of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon on 6 June 1982, the lives of Palestinian refugees were destroyed and UNRWA's achievements in Lebanon during the previous 30 years were brought to an end. Israel, by its invasion of Palestinian and Lebanese peoples in June 1982, is responsible for the damage caused and the reconstruction necessary, as well as for paying compensation for all the damage inflicted on the Palestinian refugees, on Lebanese civilians, and on UNRWA

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facilities and operations, estimated at \$52 million in the Commissioner-General's report. The international community is called upon to see to it that the aggressor assumes full responsibility for its crimes and all the losses caused by its acts of aggression.

We understand the dimensions of the financial crisis confronting UNRWA. However, the negative attitude of dealing with it by reducing the basic services provided the Palestinian refugees will in the end result in the liquidation of UNRWA or its being turned into a symbol. We are surprised by the reference in the Commissioner-General's report to the restoration of rations allocation as called for by the General Assembly in its resolution 37/120 of 16 December 1982. That makes us question attempts to reduce or abolish those rations.

The Arab States which host Palestinian refugees bear a huge responsibility of direct and indirect financial burdens much greater than those which the international community bears. Moreover, the Palestinian refugees, owing to repeated Israeli acts of aggression against their camps and properties, do not feel any sense of stability and their means of livelihood are continually threatened.

The losses inflicted upon the Palestinian refugees, in addition to the lives lost owing to the Zionist invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and the Israeli aggression of 1967, prove this. In moments, their economic condition was changed into nothing, so that they had to start life over. UNRWA has therefore allowed for those among them not registered in Lebanon to make use of all its services.

We believe that the giving of the Commissioner-General's draft report to the Zionist occupation authorities - authorities which have been condemned by the international community for continued flagrant violation of United Nations resolutions - for consideration is an unacceptable procedure. It is inadmissible that the occupying authorities should be placed on an equal footing with the host countries.

We believe that UNRWA's headquarters should be transferred from Vienna to the field of operations in the Middle East, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 36/146, as an urgent necessity that would lead to a reduction of the Agency's expenses. We must increase the local staff who have been commended by the Commissioner-General in his report for their perseverance and efforts, which resulted in the martyrdom of many of them during the invasion of Lebanon.

We have considered the Secretary-General's report in document A/38/386, on the establishment of a university at Jerusalem, which shows the importance of setting

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up an Arab university at Jerusalem in order to cater to the increasing needs of the Palestinian refugees in that area.

With reference to paragraph 3 of that report, by inference Israel deals with the issue of establishing an Arab university in Jerusalem as though it were not an occupying authority which must comply with the norms of international law, the Geneva and The Hague conventions regulating the obligations of an occupying Power. My delegation would like to ask why the Secretary-General did not make an explicit reference in paragraph 2 of his report to Israel's position against the establishment of an Arab university in Jerusalem and the fact that it has not implemented General Assembly resolutions 36/146 and 37/120. The General Assembly should during the present session take the necessary steps to implement its resolution on an Arab university in Jerusalem, because its establishment under the auspices of the United Nations will nourish Arab knowledge in the occupied Arab territories. That university would also make use of the religious and historic importance of that Holy City which is held sacred by many millions of Arabs and Moslems.

Israel's policy of continued aggression and occupation of Palestinian Arab territories is the source of the crisis in the Middle East and the reason why the difficulties and hardships faced by UNRWA have increased. It is well known that the undermining of UNRWA is a political objective that Israel is trying to achieve, because that Agency and the services it supplies reflect the international community's recognition of the tremendous injustice inflicted on the Palestinian people and remind us all of the reality of the continued Israeli acts of aggression against the Arab Palestinian people for the last 35 years.

The tragedy of the Palestinian refugees will continue to recall to the world's conscience the displacement of the Palestinian people, the killing, the massacre and the denial of that people's rights. The solution to the Palestinian refugee problem cannot be found except through a permanent, comprehensive and just answer to the question of Palestine that will secure implementation of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people on its national soil.

The CHAIRMAN: I call on the Observer of the Palestine Liberation Organization, who would like to address a question to the Commissioner-General.

Mr. MANSOUR (Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)): The Secretary-General and United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) are mandated to undertake effective measures to guarantee

(Mr. Mansour, PLO)

the safety and security, the legal and human rights of the Palestinian refugees in the occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories. I refer to the Geneva Convention and United Nations resolution A/SPC/L.24 of 29 November 1982. In connection with that mandate, as we debate this item on UNRWA, we should like to inquire of the Commissioner-General about the present explosive and critical situation of the refugees in the camps in the light of the following developments during the past few days.

First, in Nablus, Israeli soldiers have besieged the Balata refugee camp and applied strict measures. Secondly, Dheisheh refugee camp is still under curfew for the fifth consecutive day, and during the fifth day Israeli forces ordered the inhabitants to gather in the camp's main square as a collective punishment. Today we understand that three refugees were injured in Dheisheh refugee camp. Thirdly, Aida refugee camp near Bethlehem is also under curfew. Fourthly, two days ago the Israeli occupation forces killed three students and wounded two others in Tol Karem in the occupied West Bank. A curfew has been imposed on Tol Karem refugee camp and many civilians arrested because those killed and injured were residents of that refugee camp.

The Israeli military authorities have reportedly decided to demolish several houses in Dheisheh refugee camp near Bethlehem in the next few days. That decision is in the context of a wider Israeli plan to demolish all the refugee camps in the occupied West Bank, thus forcing the Palestinian refugees to settle in a war area on the Jordanian border, and later expel them from the West Bank. The inhabitants of the camp are preparing for a mass demonstration to protest that Israeli decision. That plan was reportedly designed by Israeli Minister Ben Porat, who will put before the Israeli Government a report about this matter within four days. Ben Porat claims that demolition of the refugee camps is very important, because they are situated on the main road used by Israeli military vehicles and settlers' cars. The Israeli daily Haaretz has today said that the Israeli military authorities will soon discuss plans to demolish the Palestinian refugee camps in the West Bank which recently witnessed violent demonstrations.

The CHAIRMAN: I understand that the reply to the question of the representative of the Palestine Liberation Organization will be given in due time.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.