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New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 12th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. AL-KAWARI (Qatar)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 79: UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (continued)

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER-GENERAL (continued) (A/42/13 and Add.1)
- (b) REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (continued) (A/42/633)
- (c) REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE (continued) (A/42/515)
- (d) REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/42/309, 445, 446, 480, 481, 482, 505, 507)

1. The CHAIRMAN drew the Committee's attention to three draft resolutions pertaining to the item, contained in documents A/SPC/42/L.6, L.7 and L.8.

2. Mr. IDRIS (Sudan) said that the steady increase in the number of Palestine refugees between 1950 and 1987, reflected in annex I, table 1, of the Commissioner-General's report (A/42/13), could be attributed to the policies pursued by the occupying authority in Palestine ever since 1948. Between the late 1940s and 1982, the Zionist State had brought to the region an unbroken series of wars. Waves of terrorism had been directed against the Palestinian people and against all individuals and groups opposed to Israeli policies. Israeli settlements had been established on land belonging to Palestinians whom terrorism and violence had forced to flee and Zionists had been brought into the country from all parts of the world.

3. The situation of the refugees in the occupied territories remained a matter of concern. The uncertain future had contributed to an increasing number of demonstrations and acts of defiance against the occupying authorities.

4. The report of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (A/42/515) and the report of the Secretary-General on revenues derived from Palestine refugee properties (A/42/505) reflected clearly a spirit of negativism and arrogance on the part of the Zionist Government and a disdain for United Nations resolutions, even though the Zionist State had itself been established by virtue of a United Nations resolution. Instead of acknowledging the right of the refugees to repatriation or compensation, the Israeli authorities persisted in their policy of expulsion in order to clear the country of its inhabitants and replace them with Zionist immigrants.

5. The issue was primarily a political one, and a just and lasting solution could be found only if all parties acknowledged the legitimate right of the Palestinian people to establish an independent State in Palestine under the leadership of its sole legitimate representative, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Such

(Mr. Idris, Sudan)

a solution could be found only by convening an international conference under United Nations auspices, with the participation of the permanent members of the Security Council and all parties to the conflict, including PLO. Only within such a comprehensive political framework could a solution be found to the problem of the Palestine refugees.

6. Mr. IRTEMÇELİK (Turkey) said that in order to understand and address the problems facing the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), it was first necessary to recognize that the Palestine question was the heart of the matter and that the Palestinian Arabs were the most unfortunate victims of the Middle East conflict. Hence, humanitarian concern for the Palestine refugees was unavoidably bound up with the political aspects of the problem. So long as the Palestinian homeland remained occupied, the international community would continue to have to deal with the refugee problem. A viable and genuine peace in the Middle East would not be forthcoming until all Arab territories occupied since 1967 had been returned to their rightful owners, the Palestinian people was able to exercise freely its inalienable rights, and the right of all States in the region to a secure existence within recognized boundaries was acknowledged.

7. During the tragic events that had occurred around UNRWA camps in Lebanon earlier in 1987, his Government, thanks to its good relations with the parties concerned, had helped to ensure the unimpeded flow of supplies to the camps and had donated several large shipments of food, clothing and medicine. His delegation paid tribute to the efforts of the Commissioner-General and his dedicated staff during that emergency and expressed sorrow over the casualties suffered by UNRWA personnel.

8. The United Nations had a collective responsibility towards the Palestine refugees and UNRWA was the basic instrument available to alleviate their plight. Therefore, it was necessary to stand united in supporting the Agency, both morally and financially. The Organization's inability to eliminate the root causes of the problem should not be used as an excuse for any lack of concerted efforts to heal some of the Palestinian people's wounds. While UNRWA must not be considered a substitute for a comprehensive settlement, without its continued ability to discharge its humanitarian duties both the ordeal of the Palestine refugees and political instability in the region might well become explosive.

9. His delegation, while pleased to note the improvement in the Agency's financial situation, agreed with the Commissioner-General that there was no room for complacency. His Government would continue to contribute generously, as it had done in the past, and urged the international community to do likewise.

10. Mr. SMIRNOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that Israel's actions towards the Arabs of Palestine were aimed at undermining their economic activities, infringing their political, social and civil rights, destroying their cultural heritage and, ultimately, displacing them from their land. Israel's policies were in blatant violation of the Charter of the United Nations, universally accepted

(Mr. Smirnov, USSR)

principles of international law, and basic human rights. Without the assistance of UNRWA, the fate of the Palestine refugees would be even harsher. In that regard, his delegation commended the Agency's multifaceted operations and the selfless work done by its staff. The Soviet Union provided assistance to the Palestinian people through official channels and public organizations.

11. It would be possible to bring about a radical improvement in the lot of the Palestinian people and guarantee its political and civil rights only within the framework of a comprehensive settlement of the Middle East problem through the implementation of the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions which made up the generally recognized international basis for establishing a just and lasting peace in the region. The debate on that item confirmed that the Arab-Israeli conflict would be settled only if all the peoples of the Middle East were guaranteed the right to an independent existence and to development. That, of course, also included the exercise of the right of the Palestinian Arab people to self-determination and the establishment of its own State.

12. The Middle East problem could be solved by convening an international conference with the participation of all the parties directly concerned, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. In order both to enable the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable national rights and to ensure lasting peace, it was necessary to adopt a new type of political thinking and base policies on mutual interests, equality and equal security. That was the way to solve the Middle East conflict and other regional conflicts.

13. Mr. RADENKOVIC (Yugoslavia) said that his Government attached the greatest importance to the Agency's activities. Assistance to the Palestine refugees was a moral and political obligation for the international community and an expression of solidarity with their suffering. It was also a factor of stability in the Middle East, an area fraught with the danger of conflict. The number of UNRWA staff killed and wounded was sad proof of the difficult and dangerous conditions in which Agency personnel had been working in the last year.

14. While the improvement in the Agency's financial situation was encouraging, the needs of the Palestine refugees were far from being met. The situation of the more than 2 million refugees in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip was deteriorating further because of Israel's refusal to abandon the so-called "security zone" in southern Lebanon, its programme of new settlements in the occupied territories, and its confiscation of Arab lands and banishment of the rightful owners. Such policies exacerbated the situation in the Middle East and violated international conventions regulating Israel's rights and duties as the occupying Power.

15. His country was in favour of strengthening the Agency's role as long as the Palestinian question remained unresolved. It was high time to find a just and lasting solution to the Middle East crisis, a solution that must be based on

(Mr. Radenkovic, Yugoslavia)

self-determination, independence and freedom for all the peoples of the Middle East, including the Palestinians. Such a solution also required Israel's unconditional withdrawal from all Arab and Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem.

16. His country supported the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to a State of its own. Like many other countries, Yugoslavia was in favour of convening an international conference on the Middle East under United Nations auspices, with the equitable participation of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

17. Mr. AL-JUNAIBI (United Arab Emirates) said that, although UNRWA had resolved its immediate financial crisis, it was still in urgent need of increased financial resources in order to complete basic construction projects. The Agency depended on voluntary contributions and when there was a shortfall in such contributions an increased burden was placed on the Arab host countries. Those countries provided direct services to the Palestine refugees and also incurred indirect costs. The spirit of co-operation and the initiative shown by the refugees themselves should also be borne in mind.

18. General Assembly resolution 194 (III), calling for the repatriation or compensation of the refugees, had still not been implemented. The problem would persist as long as Israel continued to ignore the will of the international community and the resolutions of the United Nations.

19. Instead of co-operating with the Agency in the performance of its humanitarian task, Israel had obstructed its operations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, had harassed Agency staff, had made serious incursions into Agency premises and had caused damage to its property.

20. Israel was a unique phenomenon in the history of nations. It was the only State the vast majority of whose citizens had been born outside its borders. Over a 40-year period, it had transformed the character of an entire country, changing it from a historically Arab country into a Jewish, racist country based on settlement and expansion.

21. The Zionist incursion had not come about by chance or merely through the efforts of Zionist organizations, but was the result of a political decision taken by the British Government and some European States. If European colonialism had not sponsored the Zionist movement, Israel would never have come into being and there would have been no refugee problem. Without the support it received from the Western countries, in particular the United States of America, Israel would not have persisted in its disdain for the international consensus.

22. According to the Agency's registration records, there were more than 2.2 million Palestine refugees, and many others were not registered. They had not only been deprived of their homes but suffered daily at the hands of official and unofficial Israeli terrorism. The situation was further aggravated by the

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(Mr. Al-Junaibi, United Arab Emirates)

harassment of camp residents by the Israeli army, the establishment of Jewish settlements in close proximity to the camps and acts of aggression committed by Israeli settlers against refugees.

23. The issue of the refugees was essentially a political one. The creation of Israel had led to the uprooting of an entire people as a result of the deliberate decision by the Zionist leadership to clear Palestine of its Arab inhabitants and establish a purely Jewish State. The representative of Israel had claimed that the Arabs of Palestine had left their homes voluntarily or at the instigation of the Arab Governments. That claim was false, as was proved by documents in British and Israeli archives. If the representative of Israel had in his possession recordings of Arabic broadcasts instructing the Palestinians to flee their lands, he should produce them. Official documents, studies and the memoirs of Zionist leaders themselves demonstrated that the Arabs of Palestine had been expelled by force of arms and by Zionist terrorism. Even if it was assumed, for the sake of argument, that the Arabs of Palestine had indeed left voluntarily or at the instigation of outside parties, that would not have deprived them of their right to return to their homeland. International law and the principles of the United Nations acknowledged the right of all refugees to repatriation.

24. The representative of Israel had claimed that his country was prepared to negotiate with the Arabs without any pre-conditions. In so doing, he had wished to give the Committee the impression that Israel actually wished to negotiate and that it was the Arabs who refused. In that connection, the statement made by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic should be reaffirmed: the Arabs had agreed to the convening of an international conference to solve the Middle East problem, and the representative of Israel was invited to inform the Committee of his Government's position on participation in such a conference.

25. Until such time as the consensus of the international community embodied in General Assembly resolutions could be translated into reality, the humanitarian aspect of the question of Palestine should be given the attention it deserved. To that end, the Agency should be given increased support, particularly by those countries which had contributed to the creation of Israel and thus to the creation of the refugee problem.

26. Mr. KA (Senegal) said that, despite its limited means, his country had supported UNRWA programmes consistently. In view of the immense needs of the Palestine refugees, the international base of financial support for the Agency should be widened and consolidated to allow construction programmes and the provision of essential services to proceed as a matter of priority.

27. Although the situation in Lebanon forced the refugees and the civilian population to live in almost constant fear and insecurity, that did not deter the Arab people of Palestine in their efforts to regain their fundamental rights, nor the Agency, which was the only hope for more than 2 million people.

(Mr. Ka, Senegal)

28. The international community must take urgent action to solve the problem of the refugees' return to their country in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III). All the Palestinians who had gone into exile had left their occupied native Palestine as a result of force or fear and wanted to return there to live in dignity and with their own national identity. The conditions must also be created for a comprehensive political settlement of the Middle East question, with the participation of all the parties concerned, to redress the political and moral injustices from which the Palestinian people had suffered for nearly 40 years.

29. Mr. SILILO (Zambia) said that his country had experienced refugee problems first-hand, having hosted large numbers of refugees from areas within its own region and beyond. If his country had so far not given any financial assistance to the Palestine refugees, that was not because it did not appreciate the gravity of the problem but because it was itself being assisted by the international community in meeting the needs of the refugees in its own region. The President of Zambia had often expressed concern for the plight of the Palestine refugees and had appealed to all parties to find a speedy and amicable solution to the conflict. Having listened to the representative of Israel and the Observer for the Palestine Liberation Organization, he could only conclude that, with good will on all sides, the problem could be solved by sitting down at the negotiating table. In any conflict, there was more to be gained by consultation than by confrontation.

30. In 40 years, no meaningful solution had been found to the Middle East conflict. It was only fair that an end be put to that conflict without further delay, so that the misery of innocent people might cease and the valuable resources now being wasted might be put to better use.

31. Mr. RAMIN (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the representatives of the Sudan and the United Arab Emirates had referred to only one side of the refugee problem. A study published by the United Nations Department of International Economic and Social Affairs, entitled Trends and Characteristics of International Migration since 1950, dealt with the Palestine refugees as part of the broader phenomenon of international migration. According to that study, as a result of the partition of Palestine, about 700,000 Palestinian Arabs had left the territory that now constituted the State of Israel, while a large proportion of the Jewish population of the Arab States of Asia and North Africa had moved to Israel, the latter migration extending well into the 1960s. The study indicated that 578,000 Jewish immigrants from Arab-speaking nations had been received by Israel. Both the Palestinian Arabs and the Jewish refugees from Arab countries were dealt with in the study under the same heading.

32. In an article published in May 1975 in the Lebanese daily paper Al-Nahar, a well-known Palestinian Arab scholar had stated that the Jewish refugees from the Arab States had been displaced in the most brutal manner after their property had been confiscated, and that their migration to Israel had had a very direct impact on the Palestinian problem. Lastly, in his memoirs published in Beirut in 1973, a former Prime Minister of the Syrian Arab Republic had admitted that the Arab leaders themselves had encouraged the Palestinians to leave their homes and lands, something which had had disastrous results for 1 million Palestinian Arab refugees.

33. Mr. IDRIS (Sudan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, reiterated his delegation's position that the Jews who had left the Arab States had done so voluntarily. Furthermore, the people and Government of the Sudan accepted any Jews who had left that country and wished to return to it.

34. Mr. AL-JUNAIBI (United Arab Emirates), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the representative of Israel had raised the question of refugees in general in order to distract the Committee's attention from the real issue. The Arab exodus from Palestine had not been emigration but the forcible displacement of an entire people from their homeland. That was the crux of the matter on which the representative of Israel must focus in order to understand that the Palestinian people had not left its land voluntarily. Moreover, he should consult the British and Israeli archives for further information attesting to the fact that the Palestine refugees had been driven out of their country by armed force. Yigal Allon, a former Deputy Prime Minister of Israel, had once described how Jewish village chiefs had spread rumours among the Arabs about the arrival of Jewish armed units, in order to encourage them to flee. Lastly, he wished to know why the Government of Israel was opposed to the convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East if, as the Israeli representative claimed, it was ready to negotiate with the Arabs.

35. Mr. RAMIN (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the representative of the United Arab Emirates had failed to mention the question of the integration of Palestinian refugees into Arab countries. In 1972, the King of Jordan had spoken of the unity of Palestinians and Jordanians, which had first manifested itself in 1948 when the inhabitants of the East Bank had welcomed the immigrants from Palestine and given them food and shelter. The Palestinians were well integrated into all areas of life in Jordan. The other Arab Governments should treat their Palestinian brothers and sisters in the same manner.

36. Mr. FARTAS (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that his delegation had listened to the deliberate falsehoods and distortions put about by the representative of the Zionist entity. The Zionist leaders had spoken repeatedly of emptying Palestine of its original Arab inhabitants, and of the right of Jews to settle any part of the territory of Palestine. Yitzhak Shamir had said that nothing could alter Israel's policy of settling all parts of the territory of Palestine up to the Jordan river, and that the Golan Heights were an integral and inseparable part of Israel. Golda Meir had even denied the very existence of the Palestinian people. It was unfair to compare the plight of the Palestinian people to the exchanges of population between Turkey and Greece or Pakistan and India; the question of Palestine was the question of an entire people forcibly displaced from its homeland. The right of the Palestine refugees to return to their homeland had been recognized clearly in paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III). The Palestinian people was struggling for its right to self-determination in accordance with the principles of the United Nations and the norms of international law, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



37. Mr. HILMI (Iraq), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that it would be useful to know why the representative of the Zionist entity had used Arabic, and not his mother tongue, to address the Committee, and why he denied his origin. It would be interesting to learn why his country deprived Palestinians of the right to establish a university where they could study the Arabic language and Arabic literature. He should convince his country to spare the Committee the burden of having to submit a draft resolution regarding "Al-Quds" University.

38. It would be useful to know whether Israel arrogated to itself the role of protector and patron of Jewish affairs, and whether he believed that there was a difference between a Jew and a Zionist. The representative of the Zionist entity should differentiate between the two, as the Arabs did.

39. In his own country, the Chief Rabbi of Iraq had said that the Jewish community did not regard itself as distinct one from the rest of the population in Iraq and enjoyed the same rights and privileges. The representative of the Zionist entity had shed crocodile tears about Arab Jews on more than one occasion. It would be useful to have more information about Latin American Jews, especially the situation of Jews in Mexico and Uruguay. When the Jews of Latin America, particularly Uruguay, had refused to pay the 2 per cent tax on their capital, they had found themselves without a rabbi to perform the rites of marriage and burial. A country should talk about its own Jews, not about Jews in other countries. The Jews in Iraq were Iraqi Jews. Iraq was opposed to Zionist activities, not to the Jews. Even the Koran said that the Jews were the people of the Scriptures.

40. Mr. MANSOUR (Observer, Palestine Liberation Organization), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the Zionist representative had again tried to prove to the Committee that the Israeli Zionist leadership had not had anything to do with creating the Palestine refugee problem. By raising the question of the source of that problem, Israel hoped that the Committee would not deal with the situation of the Palestine refugees in the occupied Palestinian territories and adjacent territories, or the actions of the Israeli armed forces against the Palestine refugees in Lebanese camps. However, the Committee was well aware of Israel's role in creating the refugee problem. That was why it reiterated annually its call to Israel to allow the Palestine refugees to return to their homes and property pursuant to General Assembly resolution 194 (III). Year after year, resolutions on that subject had been adopted almost unanimously. In 1986, Israel alone had abstained in the vote on a resolution introduced by the United States of America, which was a closer friend of Israel than of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Palestinians; no one had voted against the resolution.

41. It would be interesting to know whether it was PLO, the international community, the Arab countries or Israel which refused to implement such resolutions and to participate in an international peace conference under United Nations auspices in order to find a comprehensive, just solution to the conflict. It would be useful to learn which country did not allow the Palestinians to exercise their national rights, refused to implement hundreds of United Nations resolutions and oppressed the Palestine refugees daily in the occupied territories and the refugee

(Mr. Mansour, Observer, PLO)

camps. It would also be interesting to learn which country arrested young children and, according to independent Israeli researchers, had arrested some 500,000 Palestinians since 1967. Moreover, it would be useful to know which country attacked the Palestine refugee camps in Lebanon continuously and tried to determine for the Palestinian people what they should or should not be. The colonialists and imperialists held the cavalier view that Palestinians should become Jordanians, Canadians, Americans - any nationality except Palestinian. They were trying to tell the Palestinians that they could not exercise their right to self-determination and that they did not exist. Self-determination of peoples was one of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, however. Only Israel and its friends in Washington did not allow the Palestinians to exercise that right. It would be useful to know which group was isolated, the Palestinians or the Israelis and their supporters in the White House.

42. The road was clear for an international peace conference in which all parties to the conflict would participate, including the Palestinians, independently and on an equal footing, in order to find a comprehensive and just solution to the question of Palestine on the basis of all relevant United Nations resolutions and not just one. Israel was fixated on a particular resolution and it was impossible to know on which resolution it would be fixated in a few months or years. Israel and its supporters in the White House were not serious about a comprehensive, just solution.

43. Mr. BURAYZAT (Jordan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the representative of Israel had spoken as if to pay tribute to the Jordanian position regarding the Palestine refugees and the Palestinian people. Jordan deserved to be praised for its role regarding the Palestinians, but not for the reasons alluded to by Israel. He was sure that the representative of Israel was unable to understand the close historic ties that existed between the Arab countries and peoples. He would be mistaken to ignore those ties, however, because that would show that he wished to rewrite history to serve Israel's interests and objectives in its practices and pursuits in the region.

44. It was no secret that Jordan was committed to the Palestine refugees and to Palestinian rights. It was an historic fact that Jordan had shared its food with the refugees, as well as the results of Israeli aggression against them. Such sharing was a duty until the Palestinians could return to their homeland and was provided for in the 1950 agreement on Palestinian-Jordanian unity. However, it should not be seen as a substitute for the historic right of the Palestinians to return to their property and homeland in Palestine, should not jeopardize their right to that homeland under international law, and did not mean that Jordan accepted the resettlement of Palestinians outside their homeland. It was that Jordanian role and position which were praiseworthy. Paragraph 11 of resolution 194 (III) must be implemented, including the right of compensation and the right of return.

45. The representative of Israel had once again presented his peace plan, extending his hand and trying to engage in an Israeli-Jordanian dialogue. Peace was an integral part of Arab culture, and the Arabs had expressed their readiness

(Mr. Burayzat, Jordan)

to discuss peace on more than one occasion. However, they would like to know what had been contained in the outstretched Zionist Jewish hand. They would like to know what type of peace Israel was offering. They knew from past experience that when Israel extended its hand, they might find a dagger in it; they wondered whether that was still the case. Years ago, the Palestinians had opened their hearts and homes to Jewish immigrants who claimed to be fleeing persecution in Europe, only to discover later that those immigrants had come to expel them.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.