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

Palestine refugees in the Gaza Strip

Report of the Secretary-General

1. The present report is submitted to the General Assembly in pursuance of its resolution 34/52 F of 23 November 1979 concerning Palestine refugees in the Gaza Strip. In that resolution, the Assembly called upon Israel to desist from removal and resettlement of Palestinian refugees and destruction of their shelters and requested the Secretary-General, after consulting with the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, to report to it at its thirty-fifth session on Israel's compliance with the resolution.
2. By a note verbale dated 21 February 1980, addressed to the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations, the Secretary-General drew attention to his reporting responsibility under General Assembly resolution 34/52 F and requested the Government of Israel to forward to him, as soon as possible, any relevant information on the implementation of the respective provisions of the resolution.
3. By a note verbale dated 2 September 1980, the Permanent Representative of Israel conveyed to the Secretary-General his Government's comments on resolution 34/52 F, which, as in previous reports on this matter, are reproduced verbatim below:

"The consistent position of the Government of Israel on this matter has been set out in detail in successive replies submitted on an annual basis by Israel to the Secretary-General since 1972. The last of those replies was contained in the report of the Secretary-General dated 16 October 1979 (A/34/517).

"In brief, the security and stability which have prevailed for a decade in the Gaza District are a direct result of measures taken in 1971 by the Israel authorities to curb Arab terrorism which had been rife in the area in general,

and in the refugee camps in particular. All local residents, including refugees, have greatly benefited not only from the enhanced public security but also from the concomitant and steady improvement in the economic conditions throughout the Gaza District.

"As their economic situation was transformed beyond all comparison with that existing between 1948 and 1967, many refugees were enabled to obtain better housing outside the squalid and cramped conditions in the camps. With the co-operation of the refugees, the Israel authorities have developed new housing projects, offering on very favourable terms modern dwellings and amenities, as well as individual plots for private building to the refugee family's own specifications.

"Over the five years until the end of 1979, 2,690 refugee families had taken possession of new homes in these housing projects. Another 636 refugee families had purchased plots and built their own homes. As noted in the report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East for 1978-1979, 1/ those refugees who have purchased houses in these projects or have built their own homes now have accommodations markedly superior to the shelters they formerly occupied.

"Hence, it is completely out of place to censure the promotion of housing projects designed to ameliorate the lot of the refugees in the Gaza District. The reality is that for the first time since 1948 refugees in the area have been given the opportunity to leave the untold misery of the camps. The refugees' demand for better accommodations outside the camps exceeds the present availability of such housing. It should be noted that in moving out of the camps, the individuals concerned retain their formal status as refugees entitled to the services of UNRWA.

"The resolution in question clearly does not stem from any genuine humanitarian concern for the refugees. Indeed, the only rational explanation for its annual repetition is that its initiators seek to perpetuate the misery of the refugees as a callous propaganda tool to deploy in their political warfare against Israel."

4. The following information concerning Israel's compliance with General Assembly resolution 34/52 F is based on reports received from the Commissioner-General of UNRWA.

5. In the year under review, there were two occasions of punitive demolition of refugee shelters involving six Agency-built rooms and two privately built rooms and affecting four families. The Agency has presented claims to the Israeli occupying authorities for compensation but has had no response; nor has the Agency secured settlement in respect of its claims for compensation for refugee shelters demolished on punitive grounds in previous years.

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/34/13), para. 125.

6. Reference has been made in earlier reports to the demolition by the Israeli occupying authorities of 7,729 shelter rooms for refugees in the Beach, Jabalia and Rafah camps in July-August 1971, affecting 2,554 refugee families comprising 15,355 persons. The Agency has continued its efforts since then to try to secure from the Israeli occupying authorities adequate housing facilities for refugees who were displaced by the demolitions and considered to be inadequately housed. In brief, a survey jointly made in 1973 by the Agency and the Israeli authorities of 942 families established that, of these families, 440 were inadequately housed and 266 were in serious hardship. 2/ As related in paragraph 7 of last year's report (A/34/517), these 266 cases of serious hardship were finally resolved by the middle of last year, after continued efforts over several years by the Agency.

7. The Agency is continuing its efforts to persuade the Israeli authorities to participate in a joint survey of the 440 families still inadequately housed, and whose condition was described in paragraph 8 of last year's report. 3/

8. As indicated in previous reports the Israeli occupying authorities generally require that refugees wishing to purchase new subsidized housing should first demolish their camp shelters. This requirement has remained in practice during the reporting period, except in two cases in the Rafah camp. In these two cases the shelters were used to rehouse two other families, one of which was not a refugee family.

9. In the year under review, a total of 239 families, comprising 1,440 persons, moved from their shelters in the camps in the Gaza Strip to new accommodations in the housing projects established by the Israeli authorities (they did so against

2/ The 942 families were selected on the basis of preliminary surveys made by the Agency of the conditions at the time of all the 2,554 families concerned. The developments in regard to this subject are referred to in the Commissioner-General's report to the Secretary-General, which was transmitted to the General Assembly at its twenty-sixth session (A/8383 and Add.1), and in the Secretary-General's reports to the Assembly at its twenty-seventh and subsequent sessions (Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-seventh Session, Annexes, agenda item 40, document A/8814; ibid., Twenty-eighth Session, Annexes, agenda item 40, document A/9155; ibid., Twenty-ninth Session, Annexes, agenda item 38, document A/9740; ibid., Thirtieth session, Annexes, agenda item 54, document A/10253; ibid., Thirty-first Session, Annexes, agenda item 53, document A/31/240; ibid., Thirty-second Session, Annexes, agenda item 55, document A/32/264 and Corr.1 and Add.1; ibid., Thirty-third Session, Annexes, agenda item 54, document A/33/285 and ibid., Thirty-fourth Session, Annexes, agenda item 50, document A/34/517.

3/ The Agency carried out its own survey of the condition of these 440 families in April-May 1979. Ninety-four families had to be categorized as cases of serious hardship, 146 families as unsatisfactorily housed and 151 families as adequately housed; 21 families had left the area and 7 families composed of single persons had died.

payment). Two hundred twenty-four other refugee families, comprising 1,306 persons, purchased plots of land in housing projects, built their own houses and moved into them. A total of 2,366 plots of land have been allocated to date. Out of this number, houses were built and inhabited by refugees on 313 plots; on 518 plots houses are under construction. The remaining 1,535 plots are still vacant, although it is understood that the majority of those have already been purchased by refugees. A total of 724 shelter rooms were demolished in the camps in this connexion during the reporting period. 4/

10. The two new housing projects in Beit Lahia (near Jabalia camp) and Tal-El-Sultan (near Rafah camp) are still being developed. To date, 48 and 16 new houses, respectively, have been constructed and occupied in the two projects. Construction of further new houses is under way in both projects.

11. The comments of the Government of Israel as set out in paragraph 3 above contain a reference to the "squalid and cramped conditions in the camps" and "the untold misery of the camps". As in previous years, the Commissioner-General of UNRWA has reiterated that such references are more generalized than is warranted by the facts.

4/ The figures given in the note verbale from the Permanent Representative for Israel, quoted at paragraph 3 above, are on a different basis and for a different reporting period to that used for the figures given in this paragraph.