



# General Assembly

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## Fifty-eighth session

Item 84 of the preliminary list\*

**United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine**

**Refugees in the Near East**

## **Persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities**

### **Report of the Secretary-General**

#### *Summary*

In its resolution 57/119 of 11 December 2002 the General Assembly reaffirmed the right of all persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities to return to their homes and endorsed the efforts of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to provide humanitarian assistance, as far as practicable, on an emergency basis and as a temporary measure, to such persons. The Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to report to it, after consulting with the Commissioner-General of the Agency, on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

The present report refers to correspondence between the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representative of Israel regarding actions taken by the Government of Israel in implementing the relevant provisions of the resolution. It also presents the information made available by the Commissioner-General to the Secretary-General on the return of refugees registered with the Agency to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip from places outside the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

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\* A/58/50/Rev.1 and Corr.1.

1. The present report is submitted to the General Assembly in pursuance of paragraph 5 of its resolution 57/119 of 11 December 2002, entitled "Persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities", the operative part of which reads as follows:

*The General Assembly,*

...

1. *Reaffirms* the right of all persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities to return to their homes or former places of residence in the territories occupied by Israel since 1967;

2. *Expresses deep concern* that the mechanism agreed upon by the parties in article XII of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements of 1993<sup>1</sup> on the return of displaced persons has not been effected, and stresses the necessity for an accelerated return of displaced persons;

3. *Endorses*, in the meanwhile, the efforts of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to continue to provide humanitarian assistance, as far as practicable, on an emergency basis and as a temporary measure, to persons in the area who are currently displaced and in serious need of continuing assistance as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities;

4. *Strongly appeals* to all Governments and to organizations and individuals to contribute generously to the Agency and to the other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations concerned for the above-mentioned purposes;

5. *Requests* the Secretary-General, after consulting with the Commissioner-General, to report to the General Assembly before its fifty-eighth session on the progress made with regard to the implementation of the present resolution.

2. On 19 June 2003, the Secretary-General addressed a note verbale to the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations, in which he drew attention to his reporting responsibility under the resolution and requested the Permanent Representative to inform him of any action his Government had taken or envisaged to take in implementation of the relevant provisions of the resolution.

3. In a note verbale dated 1 July 2003, the Permanent Representative of Israel replied as follows:

"The position of the State of Israel on these resolutions has been set forth in successive annual replies submitted to the Secretary-General in recent years, the latest of which being Israel's note verbale of 15 August 2002. In the light of the desire of the State of Israel to bring an end to all acts of violence and terrorism in the region and achieve a negotiated settlement, as well as the efforts currently underway to restart the peace process, Israel wishes to express its regret that the aforementioned resolutions, concerning the efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), continue to be rife with irrelevant politicized rhetoric that detracts from the important efforts at hand.

Accordingly, Israel abstained on resolution 57/120, and voted against resolutions 57/117, 57/119, 57/121, 57/122, and 57/123.

“Israel fully supports the humanitarian mission of UNRWA and believes that UNRWA contributes to the alleviation of the suffering of the Palestinian refugees. We remain concerned, however, regarding a number of issues related to the politicization of UNRWA operations. As a humanitarian agency, it is incumbent upon UNRWA to refrain from any actions or statements concerning political questions beyond its mandate. On several occasions, UNRWA has issued irresponsible anti-Israeli statements that ignore the right and duty of Israel to defend its citizens from the campaign of terror being waged against it for close to three years. Israel believes that such statements and, in particular, certain public comments made by the current Commissioner-General exceed the UNRWA mandate, are counterproductive and are not conducive to a productive working relationship. Furthermore, such statements are contrary to the obligation of UNRWA and especially its management to work in an impartial and non-political manner.

“Israel is also concerned that UNRWA has failed to address the problems caused to the fulfilment of its mandate by the extensive terrorist infrastructure that has taken root in Palestinian ‘refugee camps’. While Israel recognizes that UNRWA does not have a mandate to enforce security and public order, Israel urges UNRWA to draw attention to the misuse of these ‘camps’ by armed elements that violate Security Council resolutions and international law, and pose a clear danger to the safety and security of the civilian population and the safe fulfilment of the UNRWA mandate.

“Israel looks forward to continuing its cooperation and working relationship with UNRWA. Accordingly, Israel urges the Secretary-General and UNRWA to consider, together with the parties concerned, ways in which the organization can enhance the fulfilment of its mandate in an accountable and responsible manner in the best interests of those whom UNRWA has been charged to serve.”

4. In connection with paragraph 2 of General Assembly resolution 57/119, the Secretary-General has obtained from the Commissioner-General of UNRWA the information available to him on the return of refugees registered with the Agency. As indicated in previous reports on the subject, the Agency is not involved in any arrangements for the return of refugees nor is it involved in any arrangements for the return of displaced persons who are not registered as refugees. Its information is based on requests by returning registered refugees for transfer of their entitlements for services to the areas to which they have returned and subsequent correction of records. The Agency would not necessarily be aware of the return of any registered refugees who did not request the provision of services. So far as is known to the Agency, between 1 July 2002 and 30 June 2003, 879 refugees registered with UNRWA returned to the West Bank and 154 to the Gaza Strip from places outside the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It should be noted that some of these may not themselves have been displaced in 1967, but may be members of the family of a displaced registered refugee. Thus, taking into account the estimate given in paragraph 4 of last year’s report (A/57/338), the number of displaced registered refugees who are known by the Agency to have returned to the occupied territories since June 1967 is about 23,930. The Agency is unable to estimate the total number

of displaced inhabitants who have returned. It keeps records only of registered refugees and, as pointed out above, even those records, particularly with respect to the location of registered refugees, may be incomplete.

5. In connection with paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 57/119, the Secretary-General refers to the report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA for the period 1 July 2002 to 30 June 2003<sup>2</sup> and to the previous reports of the Commissioner-General for accounts of the continuous and ongoing assistance provided by UNRWA to persons displaced and in need of continued assistance.

*Notes*

<sup>1</sup> A/48/486-S/26560, annex.

<sup>2</sup> *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/58/13)* (to be issued).