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**United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine
Refugees in the Near East**

Palestine refugees' properties and their revenues

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [75/95](#). On 24 May 2021, the Secretary-General sent a note verbale to all Member States and the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine, drawing their attention to the relevant provisions of the resolution and requesting the submission of any pertinent information concerning any action taken or envisaged in relation to its implementation. Replies were received from Bahrain, Ecuador, Japan and the State of Palestine and are reproduced in the present report.

* [A/76/150](#).



I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 6 of resolution [75/95](#) on Palestine refugees' properties and their revenues.
2. On 24 May 2021, the Secretary-General sent a note verbale to all Member States and the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine, drawing their attention to the relevant provisions of the resolution and requesting the submission of any pertinent information concerning any action taken or envisaged in relation to its implementation.

II. Replies received

Bahrain

[Original: Arabic]
[10 June 2021]

- We affirm that the Palestinian refugee issue is at the heart of the Palestinian cause. We uphold the inherent and inalienable right of generations of Palestinian refugees and their descendants to return to the homes from which they were displaced, in accordance with international resolutions, and in particular General Assembly resolution [194 \(III\)](#) and the Arab Peace Initiative.
- We condemn and reject any attempts by any party to nullify Palestinian refugees' right of return or to distort the refugee issue by attempting to resettle them, dismantle the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), stop its funding or deprive future generations of their right of return through a so-called redefinition of their legal status.

Ecuador

[Original: English]
[27 May 2021]

Ecuador has reiterated its support for the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as the principle of international law that determines that no one may be arbitrarily deprived of his or her property, a matter that was reflected in resolution [394 \(V\)](#) of 14 December 1950, in which the General Assembly instructed the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine, in consultation with the parties concerned, to prescribe measures designed to protect the rights, property and interests of Palestine refugees. In this context, Ecuador has maintained the need to respect the right of Palestine refugees to claim their property and the income accruing therefrom, in accordance with the principles of equity and justice.

Japan

[Original: English]
[21 July 2021]

Japan stresses the need for all parties concerned to continue their efforts to achieve peace based on a two-State solution and to enhance the momentum towards confidence-building between Israel and Palestine. On this basis, Japan has been extending assistance to Palestinians focusing on three pillars – political approaches

to the two sides, assistance for Palestinians' State-building efforts, and confidence-building measures between the two sides – through the initiatives mentioned below.

The “Corridor for Peace and Prosperity” initiative is Japan's medium-term and long-term effort to support the coexistence and co-prosperity of the Israelis and the Palestinians. It aims at promoting economic and social development in Jericho and the Jordan Valley area through regional cooperation among Palestine, Israel, Jordan and Japan.

As a flagship project of this initiative, the four sides have worked towards the establishment of the Jericho Agro-Industrial Park, which is expected to lead to the development of the Palestinian private sector. As of June 2021, 28 tenants had signed an agreement to operate in the industrial park and 17 factories were in operation.

In 2009, Japan started cooperating with other East Asian countries in order to mobilize the knowledge, experience and economic resources of those countries that have succeeded in achieving economic growth for the development of Palestine's institutions and human resources. In collaboration with Indonesia and Malaysia, Japan has offered training courses for Palestinians in the fields of agriculture, finance and small- and medium-sized enterprise support.

In February 2013, the first Conference on Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development, co-chaired by Japan and Palestine, was held in Tokyo, with a view to pursuing the possibility of further increasing cooperation among East Asian countries. Since then, the senior officials' meeting has been held three times.

Two informal working-level online meetings of the Conference were held in June and December 2020. In addition, two virtual business-to-business events with the participation of the Indonesian and Malaysian private sectors were held in March 2021. In total, 15 Indonesian companies and 14 Malaysian companies met with Palestinian counterparts from various industries, including dates, stone and marble, and food products.

Japan's basic aid policy for the Palestinians is to build peace through promoting economic and social self-reliance. Japan's assistance to the Palestinians since 1993 amounts to \$2.1 billion.

In the latest examples, in June 2021, Japan decided to extend emergency grant aid of \$10 million to the Gaza Strip, where the recent clash between Israel and Palestinian militant groups has caused massive damage. The same month, Japan decided to provide cold-chain equipment and related assistance amounting to approximately \$8.1 million to Palestine to counter the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

Japan also provides assistance to Palestine refugees through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). This year, Japan has already disbursed around \$31.86 million to UNRWA.

The realization of Middle East peace remains one of the top priorities for Japan's diplomatic efforts. Lasting peace and stability in the region cannot be realized without finding a political solution to this issue. Japan has been and will continue to be committed, both politically and economically, to supporting progress in the peace process in cooperation with international partners.

State of Palestine

[Original: English]
[13 July 2021]

The question of the Palestine refugees and displaced persons remains among the highest national priorities for the State of Palestine. The prolonged injustice borne by the Palestine refugees is central to the Palestine question, which remains the longest issue on the United Nations agenda, whereby an entire people continue to be deprived of the freedom, rights, equality, dignity, peace and security to which all peoples are entitled. The right of return of Palestine refugees is an inalienable right that cannot be nullified, and their plight must be justly resolved, in conformity with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, in order for a peaceful and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine to be achieved.

Since the Nakbah of 1947–1948, countless General Assembly and Security Council resolutions have been adopted, reaffirming the rights of the Palestine refugees, foremost among which are the rights to return to live in peace in their homes and to just compensation for their losses and prolonged suffering, as called for in General Assembly resolution [194 \(III\)](#) of 11 December 1948 and in accordance with the relevant provisions of international law.

However, Israel continues to deny and violate their rights in direct and deliberate breach of international law. The protraction of this injustice is what has kept the Palestine refugees, 5.7 million of whom are registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), away from their ancestral homes and lands, the majority still living in refugee camps established as temporary shelters in 1948 in the host countries of Jordan, Lebanon and Syria and in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, namely the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Denied the right to return to their homes and the villages, towns and cities where they had peaceably resided before the Nakbah, they continue to endure exile, dispossession and immense hardship owing to the continual deterioration of political, security, socioeconomic and humanitarian conditions in the region, which has depleted their coping capacities and intensified their vulnerability.

Despite near-unanimous support expressed for UNRWA in the renewal of its General Assembly mandate in 2019 by an overwhelming majority of States and broad support for the relevant Assembly resolutions at the seventy-fifth session, namely, on assistance to Palestine refugees (resolution [75/93](#)), on the operations of UNRWA (resolution [75/94](#)) and on Palestine refugees' properties and their revenues (resolution [75/95](#)), the challenges confronting the Palestine refugees and UNRWA operations continue to mount, with instability, financial fragility, the global pandemic, movement restrictions, poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, repeated displacement and protection crises exacerbating the Agency's resource deficit and the humanitarian hardships experienced by the Palestine refugee community.

Their suffering is alleviated only by the assistance provided to them by UNRWA in the areas of education, health care, relief and social services, as well as emergency aid in times of crisis and conflict, in accordance with the Agency's mandate to ensure the well-being, development and protection of the Palestine refugees pending the achievement of a just solution. Moreover, UNRWA has made strides in its programmes to promote several Sustainable Development Goals among the Palestine refugees, including with regard to promoting gender equality, assistance for persons with disabilities and psychosocial support and protection for children. We therefore remain deeply grateful for the international community's steadfast political and financial support for UNRWA and the host countries' long-standing cooperation with the Agency in its efforts to assist and meet the basic needs of the nearly 6 million

Palestine refugees, including over half a million children who are registered in UNRWA schools and learning and thriving in spite of the grave injustice that continues to prevent the realization of their rights and to mar their lives, generation after generation.

However, the annual reaffirmation of international support for UNRWA is incomplete without directly addressing its growing and emerging challenges. As cynical attacks attempting to negate the rights of Palestine refugees and undermine UNRWA persist, in particular by Israel, which has made clear its desire to terminate the Agency's mandate, the international community must act to protect UNRWA and shore up political and financial support to ensure the continuity of its operations until a just solution for the Palestine question is achieved, including justice for the Palestine refugees.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has exacerbated the fragile socioeconomic and humanitarian situation of Palestine refugees in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and beyond, deepening hardships in the period 2020–2021. Socioeconomic deprivation and high levels of unemployment in the midst of a global pandemic, compounded by the brutal effects of the occupation and rising instability and want across the region, have made Palestine refugees more vulnerable. This vulnerability has been especially worsened in the Gaza Strip, which remains under both Israeli occupation and a 14-year blockade, in collective punishment of the entire Palestinian civilian population and where yet another Israeli military aggression has caused widespread casualties, including the killing of 66 Palestinian children, among them students at UNRWA schools, as well as the vast destruction of homes and infrastructure, including health-care facilities and schools, that has forcibly displaced thousands, the majority Palestine refugees who fled in fear to shelter in UNRWA schools and installations as they sought protection under the United Nations flag, and has further undermined access to water, food, sanitation, electricity, fuel and life-saving medical care. Israeli military raids, the killing and injuring of civilians, the demolition of homes and properties, forcible transfers and the expropriation of land in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, also continue to have a severe impact on and harm Palestine refugees, in particular the Bedouin community.

We commend all UNRWA staff, both national and international, for their efforts and commitment to carry on operations uninterrupted, in spite of Israel's 11-day military bombardment of Gaza in May 2021 and the tightening of its blockade of Gaza, and in spite of continuing aggression and restrictions against Palestinian civilians in the occupied West Bank, in particular refugee families in the Shaykh Jarrah and Silwan neighbourhoods of occupied East Jerusalem, where hundreds are under threat of expulsion from the homes that they have lived in for generations and are faced with secondary expulsion, following their uprooting from their homes in historic Palestine in the Nakbah of 1948. The extremely negative implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for the host countries of Jordan, Lebanon and Syria and the consequent decline of the socioeconomic conditions for the Palestine refugees there also cannot be underestimated.

UNRWA has been stalwart in upholding its mandate despite these challenges and persistent financial shortfalls, delivering critical humanitarian and development assistance to the Palestine refugees in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and in all other fields of operation in an exemplary manner, providing sustenance and protection to the Palestine refugees, a salve for the repeated traumas that they continue to experience, as well as, crucially, hope, which is especially vital for young people in these precarious times. This is a testament to the Agency's efficacy, the strength of its management under the leadership of its Commissioner-General, Philippe Lazzarini, and its Deputy Commissioner-General, Leni Stenseth, and the dedication and courage of its field directors and staff in every field of operations. It is also a reflection of the

international community's strong support for its mandate and what can be realized when collective responsibility is upheld.

Regrettably, each passing year has witnessed the protraction and deepening of this injustice, yet UNRWA is expected to do more with limited resources that match neither the scope and scale of its mandate nor the needs. Despite such constraints, and since it began operations in 1950 following the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 302 (IV) in 1949, UNRWA has been resourceful, providing high-quality education, health, relief and social services and emergency assistance and making a tangible difference in the lives of the Palestine refugees. But the quality of those services and the contributions of UNRWA to the well-being and development of the refugee community and to regional stability – contributions duly recognized by the international community, as reaffirmed in Assembly resolutions 75/93, 75/94 and 75/95 – are in jeopardy if the necessary financial resources are not mobilized to support the Agency and the effective implementation of its mandate.

This has necessitated constant outreach, taking up an inordinate amount of the time and efforts of the leadership of UNRWA, and has included the cyclical convening of high-level ministerial conferences by Jordan, Sweden and the United Nations, along with other partners, in addition to the annual pledging conference, aimed at galvanizing funding, including by traditional donors, most of whom are members of the Advisory Commission of UNRWA, as well as contributions by new donor countries. Moreover, the call for predictable, sustained and sufficient funding of UNRWA remains consistent, across United Nations resolutions and in repeated affirmations of support by States individually and collectively in the declarations of regional and political groups such as the League of Arab States, the European Union, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Group of 77 and China and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, which established an endowment specifically in support of Palestine refugees and UNRWA, pursuant to the report of the Secretary-General issued in March 2017 and recommendations to the General Assembly regarding UNRWA following the broad international consultations mandated by the Assembly.

Unfortunately, however, this standing call remains unfulfilled, and the Agency continues to struggle with a serious and recurrent financial deficit, relying solely on voluntary contributions for the provision of its core programmes and receiving United Nations funding only for its international staffing. As humanitarian resources become more stretched and scarce, a phenomenon accelerated by the global pandemic and the economic crisis that has ensued, this reliance on voluntary contributions is disadvantaging UNRWA and threatens the continuity of its operations, the interruption or suspension of which would have immense repercussions for Palestine refugees. Averting such an outcome must be a priority. The State of Palestine therefore reiterates the call for renewed and expanded support by the international community for UNRWA, including through a larger and more sufficient assessed contribution from the United Nations regular budget to help in covering essential operating costs and more effectively addressing its structural underfunding, providing a modicum of stability to UNRWA and thereby to the Palestine refugee community in these unstable, uncertain times.

Without the core services and programmes of UNRWA, one can only imagine the grave humanitarian impact on the Palestine refugees, in particular the most vulnerable, including children, older persons and persons with disabilities. As long as the plight of Palestine refugees remains tragically unresolved, UNRWA remains necessary and indispensable. Without UNRWA support, many refugee families would no longer be able to cope and would be living in greater despair, and millions would be living without the hope that sustains them as they await justice and a better, more stable future.

The State of Palestine therefore remains grateful to all States, organizations and institutions supporting UNRWA, politically, financially and as a matter of humanitarian principle and responsibility, and stresses the importance of international consensus in this regard. We call for enhanced support for the mandate of UNRWA, including continued generosity, the timely fulfilment of pledges, the resumption of suspended assistance, multi-year contributions and increased funding where possible, to help in ensuring budgetary predictability and the continuity of services to address needs, alleviate hardships and restore hope. In this regard, we welcome the decision by the new United States Administration to resume assistance for the Palestinian people, including for the Palestine refugees through UNRWA, and urge the full restoration of assistance in the light of the immense needs.

Palestine pledges to continue to actively engage within all relevant mechanisms, including the General Assembly and the Advisory Commission of UNRWA, bilaterally and in international and regional meetings, in order to mobilize the needed support for UNRWA. We will continue our political and humanitarian outreach and advocacy aimed at ensuring support and solidarity for the Palestine refugees through support for UNRWA while simultaneously continuing to call for and foster efforts to realize a just and lasting solution in line with international law and United Nations resolutions.

In this regard, the resolutions of the General Assembly on UNRWA remain necessary, and we urge strong support for them during the seventy-sixth session. The international community must continue to stand with and assist the Palestine refugees, an integral part of the Palestinian people, and continue to support their legitimate quest for the realization of their rights, justice, equity and peace. This requires serious efforts, in line with the Charter of the United Nations, international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, to hold Israel accountable for its continuing denial and violation of Palestinian rights and to compel respect for its legal obligations, including an end to its illegal occupation of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and its obstruction of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and independence. It must likewise be compelled to end its apartheid policies against the Palestinian people, by which it continues to deny, inter alia, the rights of the Palestine refugees to return and to restoration or just compensation for their properties, solely on the basis of their ethnicity as Palestinians and religion as Muslims and Christians.

Justice for the Palestine refugees constitutes a central pillar of a just and peaceful settlement of the Palestine question. There can be no lasting solution without a just solution to their plight in accordance with resolution 194 (III). Action based on international law and the principles of shared responsibility, solidarity and humanity can and must lead the way to that long-elusive yet much-desired just solution.