

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON PALESTINE

COMMUNICATION FROM THE DELEGATE OF INDIA TO THE CHAIRMAN

The following letter has been sent by the Delegate of India to the Chairman.✕

UNITED NATIONS

Special Committee on Palestine

July 2, 1947

Dear Mr. Chairman,

The problem in regard to which we have been asked to make our recommendations is, as you are aware, a very complex one and defies an easy solution. The task has been made more difficult by the attitude that the Arabs have adopted during our stay in Palestine. This is not the occasion to say anything about the correctness of their attitude, but it seems to be hardly possible to do our duty with any degree of satisfaction to ourselves unless the Arab case is explained to us by those who have studied the problem and are vitally interested therein.

Since any suggestion by us to the Arab Higher Committee seems destined to meet with failure, the only solution appears to me to have some help from the adjoining Arab states in this connection. Knowing how near this question of Palestine is to the heart of the neighboring countries and how materially they would be affected by any solution in regard to Palestine, I do not see how it is possible for the Committee to avoid requesting them to explain their point of view. If this is not done, it may lead to further serious complications. Moreover, any conclusion arrived at in their absence and without listening to their points of view would be open to serious objection and might justifiably be considered not to be complete by the General Assembly of the United Nations.

This is not the first time in which the collaboration of the Arab States is being sought before coming to a decision. They were, as you know, invited to the London Conference in 1946-47 and that apparently for the same reasons which are compelling me to make this request. Moreover, as neighboring countries they are bound to be affected by the decision, and it is only fair that before forming our final views their welfare, and in any case, their desires, are borne in mind. It must not be forgotten that, in all probability, without the help of these countries in the first World War, the question which we are...

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called upon to consider might never have arisen.

You will remember that I raised this question once before, although perhaps informally, and it was not seriously considered as an attempt was made at the time to link it with the question of visits to displaced persons' camps in Europe. There is none who would have no sympathy with these unfortunate persons who have without any justification suffered untold misery. But the question of finding a home for them is already engaging the attention of the International Refugee Organization and is primarily the concern of that Organization. Moreover, in my view, Palestine can only be interested on humanitarian grounds to the same extent and in the same manner as other countries of the world are or should be interested. The question in regard to which the Committee is called upon to make its recommendations appears to me to have nothing to do, at least directly, with the displaced persons' privations and sufferings, and a decision to make a visit to these camps may give rise to misapprehensions and may be taken by some as an indication of the Committee's view that the problem of displaced persons is connected or even relevant to the question of Palestine. To what extent foreigners can be allowed to settle down in a country against the will of the majority of its inhabitants who may be directly affected both politically and economically should depend on such people themselves, if democracy and self-determination are to have any meaning in international law. It must also not be overlooked that the number of displaced persons, if I remember correctly, is about two million, of whom roughly one-tenth alone are Jews. At the bar of humanity, all these displaced persons are entitled to equal consideration and it is not possible to single out one group of persons for preferential treatment.

Since the question which I am raising is of very great importance, I hope you will not object to sending copies of this letter to all the members of the Committee beforehand for their careful consideration at a meeting to be held as soon as possible.

Sincerely yours,

(signed) Abdur Rahman
Delegate of India

Mr. Emil Sandstrom,
Chairman of U.N.S.C.O.P.
Jerusalem.