



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 13TH MEETING

Chairman: Mr. DIALLO (Guinea)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.50 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 75: UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (continued)

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER-GENERAL (continued) (A/39/13)
- (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/39/575)
- (c) REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE (continued) (A/39/455)
- (d) REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/39/372, 375, 411, 457, 464 and Add.1, 528 and 538)

1. Mr. SUN Yixian (China) said that, since its establishment in 1950, UNRWA had continuously provided relief, education, training, health care and other services to the Palestine refugees. In the last few years, however, the Agency's work had encountered great difficulties because of Israel's policy of aggression and expansion. The budget deficit was also a very serious problem. The reports of the Secretary-General (A/39/372, 375, 411, 457, 464 and Add.1, 528 and 538) and the report of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (A/39/455) showed that the deplorable situation of the Palestine refugees had not improved. Israeli authorities in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were continuing the destruction of refugee shelters under various pretexts, in clear violation of General Assembly resolution 38/83. The report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA (A/39/13) showed that the security of the Palestine refugees living in south Lebanon was still seriously threatened and that the situation was very disturbing. His delegation expressed its profound sympathy with the plight of the Palestine refugees.

2. Since 1967, Israel had used all means to change the territorial configuration and demographic composition of the occupied Arab territories. The number of Israeli settlements had risen to 267. In the West Bank, Israeli settlements occupied 50 per cent of the land and controlled 80 per cent of the water sources. Israel resorted even to terrorist methods to force the Palestinians in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights to emigrate. It was clear that the aggressive and expansionist ambitions of the Israeli authorities were increasing. The question of the Palestine refugees, therefore, was not only a humanitarian question, but, more important, a political question. The solution to the problem was to put an end to Israeli aggression and expansion, force Israel to withdraw from the occupied Arab territories and restore the national rights of the Palestinian people. If Israel wanted peace, it must renounce its policy of aggression and expansion and withdraw from the occupied territories. The Chinese Government and people would continue to support the Palestinian people in their just struggle to return to their homeland and establish their own State.

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3. Mr. OKI (Japan) noted with satisfaction the work carried out by UNRWA in providing assistance to the Palestine refugees. The activities of the Agency were of great importance for the maintenance of stability in the Middle East. His Government's contributions to the Agency had increased steadily over the years. In view of the continuing need for emergency relief in Lebanon, Japan, in spite of budgetary constraints, would again increase its contribution by half a million dollars, bringing its total cash contributions for 1984 to \$8.5 million. His Government also intended to contribute food to the emergency relief programme in Lebanon and other relief programmes, as it had done in 1983. He stressed that his country would continue to do its utmost to give concrete support to UNRWA.
4. UNRWA was clearly faced with severe financial problems. His delegation appreciated the Agency's efforts to economize. Such efforts in themselves, however, would not solve the problem. It was essential that Member States should make the necessary financial contributions to ensure the continuation of the Agency's humanitarian assistance to the Palestine refugees. In that regard, it was particularly gratifying to note that the Government of Saudi Arabia had substantially increased its contribution in 1984. Lastly, he urged all delegations to consider the action suggested in paragraph 20 of the report of the Working Group on the financing of UNRWA (A/39/575) when making contributions.
5. Mr. SHEHATA (Egypt) said that the Palestine refugee population was increasing by about 50,000 annually and currently numbered 1.9 million people. The Palestine refugee issue remained at the heart of any future settlement in the Middle East. The question of Palestine had been transformed over the years from a refugee question to one of self-determination. The implementation of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination was a prerequisite for peace in the region.
6. In the 36 years since the first Palestinian refugees had been forced to flee their homes, a just and peaceful settlement of the question of the refugees had still not been reached. The movement of the Palestinian people for self-determination, however, continued unabated. Paradoxically, Israel's invasion of Lebanon had increased international support for the Palestinian cause. The Agency's continued activities were essential to maintain stability in the region. The Agency was a symbol of the United Nations support for the Palestinian people, and its work would be completed only when a Palestinian State was established. The strong determination of the Palestine refugees to return to their homeland had not diminished and should not be underestimated.
7. The report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA (A/39/13) provided a gloomy picture of the plight of Palestine refugees in Lebanon, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The refugees lived in an atmosphere of fear and intimidation and had to endure the Israeli policies of harassment. In the Gaza Strip, the Agency had fought a protracted battle over the right to construct buildings. In the West Bank the Israeli authorities had encouraged UNRWA to dismiss employees, particularly teachers, not for objectionable behaviour, but for their beliefs. The Israelis had arrested innocent students and had imposed curfews at random on camps and villages.
8. Despite the disruption of school activities, the closing of schools, and a general adverse educational atmosphere, Palestinian pupils had continued to perform

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(Mr. Shehata, Egypt)

remarkably well. That attested to the determination of the Palestinian people and their long tradition of excellence. The UNRWA schools had strengthened Palestinian nationalism by preserving the Palestinian refugee identity and culture within the wider context of Arab culture.

9. The Israeli resettlement plan currently under consideration by the Government of Israel was very disturbing. Its objective was to sever the link between the economic and social well-being of the refugees in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and their political aspirations. It was hoped that better living standards would divert the Palestinians from their national goals. Such a plan, however, was doomed to failure because the real historical, political and national problem of the Palestinian people would remain. The only choice was to pursue a policy of peace and reconciliation allowing both the Jews and Palestinians to live in conditions based on justice and dignity.

10. Mr. FERM (Sweden) said that UNRWA was an important stabilizing factor in the Middle East as a whole. Failure to continue its programmes would have incalculable humanitarian, economic and political repercussions.

11. The Commissioner-General and his staff performed their duties in very frustrating conditions. The field staff faced the same dangers as the refugees, and their physical safety was often directly threatened. That was the case in Lebanon, and all parties concerned should respect their professional integrity and let them pursue their important tasks without undue interference. The Swedish Government was deeply concerned at the high level of violence in Lebanon and the lack of security in the area under Israeli occupation. If Israel finally complied with Security Council resolutions 508 (1982) and 509 (1982) and withdrew its troops from south Lebanon, the responsibility for the safety of the refugees would rest with the Lebanese Government. The international community must be ready to respond effectively if that Government appealed for help in its endeavours to protect the Palestinians.

12. It was most unsatisfactory that the financial situation should continue to be a major problem for the Agency. Some important programmes had been cut to provide funding for even more essential activities, and it was particularly disturbing that much-needed construction and maintenance had been postponed indefinitely. His delegation therefore strongly urged all Governments to face up to their responsibilities by contributing more generously to the financing of UNRWA. Pending a comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian question, a more stable basis of financing the Agency must be agreed upon. The Swedish Government would be prepared to participate in such an agreement, an essential feature of which must be a more equitable sharing of the financial burden. Sweden would continue to give substantial support to UNRWA in the years to come.

13. Mr. ALSHAWKANI (Yemen) said that the problem under consideration was, in essence, one of a people expelled from its usurped homeland by force more than 37 years ago. The fundamental solution to the Palestine refugee problem lay not in humanitarian assistance but in the attainment of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to return, to exercise self-determination and to establish an independent State in its own land under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization, its sole legitimate representative.

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(Mr. Alshawkani, Yemen)

14. In paragraph 6 of the foreword to his report (A/39/13), the Commissioner-General had stated that UNRWA promoted stability in the Middle East region. While appreciating the efforts of the Agency, his delegation felt that even a cursory glance at developments in the region since 1949 showed a history replete with war, tragedy, murder and displacement to which the Palestinian people had been subjected as a result of persistent Zionist aggression against the Arab nation. An end to such aggression and the removal of its consequences would be a practical and genuine solution promoting stability and peace.
15. In a number of places, the Commissioner-General's report used the terms "the Israeli Defence Force" and "the Israeli authorities" when referring to the occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories. The report itself acknowledged that Israel was the occupying Power in those areas and his delegation therefore requested that the proper nomenclature should be used, namely "the Israeli occupation forces" and "the Israeli occupation authorities".
16. Israel bore full responsibility for the deteriorating living conditions of the Palestine refugees. The United Nations must put an end to Israeli coercive practices and aggression against the Palestinian Arab people. The persistent refusal of Israel to implement General Assembly resolution 194 (III) had led to a continuing exile which was now being passed on to a new generation.
17. Israeli wars of aggression against the Arab nation, particularly that of 1967, had caused the displacement of further large number of Palestinians and Arabs. The Israeli aggression against south Lebanon was one more link in a chain of aggression against the Palestinian people. The massacres of Sabra and Shatila remained unforgettable in their barbarity.
18. The Commissioner-General's report and the reports of the Secretary-General contained in documents A/39/372 and 457 gave examples of Israeli actions against Palestine refugee camps, including the destruction of shelters, the murder of children, the disruption and closure of educational institutions, the interrogation of schoolchildren, the imposition of curfews, the blocking of camp entrances and the arbitrary arrest of refugees.
19. The report of the Secretary-General on the protection of Palestine refugees (A/39/538) contained details of acts of aggression against Palestine refugee camps in south Lebanon. One such incident, in Ein-el-Hilweh camp, had resulted in serious injury to a number of inhabitants and the destruction of their property by Israeli soldiers in spite of the appeals made by the Commissioner-General to the Israeli occupation authorities to put an end to such acts.
20. Other Israeli practices included harassment of UNRWA, interference with its activities and destruction of its property. The occupation authorities had imposed restrictions on the duty travel of UNRWA staff to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, had summoned some staff for interrogation on several consecutive days and had arrested members of its staff in violation of the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations and the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.

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(Mr. Alshawkani, Yemen)

21. While it recognized the financial difficulties of UNRWA, his delegation considered that the tendency to correct the deficit situation by reducing basic services to Palestine refugees could ultimately mean the liquidation of the Agency or its operations continuing at a merely symbolic level. An attempt should be made to seek stable and assured sources of funding.

22. The burdens borne by the Arab host States exceeded by far the amounts provided annually by the international community to UNRWA. In the view of his delegation, the responsibility for funding the Agency and remedying the recurring and increasing deficit in its annual budget devolved on the international community. The United Nations, representing the international community, had played a part in creating the tragedy of the Palestinian people and had thus far failed to ensure for it the exercise of its inalienable rights. His delegation therefore called for the amalgamation of the UNRWA budget with the regular United Nations budget.

23. It was clear from the report of the Secretary-General on the University of Jerusalem "Al-Quds" for Palestine refugees (A/39/528), that Israel was responsible for the non-implementation of the resolution on the question. His delegation condemned the Israeli position and called on the General Assembly to take the necessary steps at its present session to bring the University into existence.

24. The persistent Israeli policy of aggression and occupation was the source of the Middle East crisis and the reason for the increasing aggravation of the problems facing UNRWA. The liquidation of UNRWA was, clearly, Israel's goal since the Agency and the services it provided represented the recognition of the international community of the grievous wrong done to the Palestinian people and was a constant reminder of Israeli aggression against that people over a period of more than 37 years. The Palestine refugee problem could only be solved through a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the question of Palestine in general, guaranteeing the legitimate and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

25. Mr. DIRAR (Sudan) said that there was no doubt that the tragedy of the Palestinian people was one of the greatest in human history, as indicated by the fact that a third generation of refugees had now been born in exile. The continuance of the Agency's work over 35 years without the prospect of a radical solution to the refugee problem was another indication of the extent and cruelty of the tragedy. It was truly saddening to know that Israel had not been satisfied with expelling the refugees from their homes and depriving them of the right to live in dignity but had gone on to commit repeated crimes against them, such as those reported in the international press and described in the report of the Commissioner-General. Israel should therefore be condemned for the most heinous forms of aggression and the violation of basic human rights.

26. There was no doubt that the persistence of the Palestine problem in its present form was one of the main sources of danger to world peace and security. His delegation differed with the Commissioner-General when he said that UNRWA promoted stability in the Middle East. The existence of the Agency had not prevented three wars over its lifespan. The basic reasons for tension in the region were the persistence of Israel's expansionist policies, its denial of the

(Mr. Dirar, Sudan)

national rights of the Palestinians and its refusal to comply with United Nations resolutions. The Agency could do nothing to affect that situation, in spite of general acknowledgement of its role in ensuring a minimum level of dignity for the Palestine refugees.

27. Given that Israel refused to do anything to solve the root causes of the problem, the efforts of the international community were in vain. The fact that Israel had ignored General Assembly resolution 194 (III) had made it impossible to reach a reasonable solution. The international community, which had given its agreement to the establishment of Israel, was responsible for the conduct of Israel towards the Palestinian people and for its denial of Palestinian rights.

28. In the light of those facts, the international community could not evade its responsibility towards the Palestine refugees. The least it could do was to ensure that UNRWA could fulfil its role in ensuring their welfare. That naturally involved providing it with the necessary financial resources to avoid a further deterioration in services. No solution to the Agency's financial crisis should come at the expense of services to refugees. A radical solution must be sought to the funding problems so that the Palestine refugees would not be under continual threat of deprivation of basic services.

29. The responsibility of the international community towards the Palestine refugees did not exonerate Israel from its own responsibility. It had been the aggressor force, and the aggressor must not profit from the fruits of its aggression but must pay the price. That was, however, far from being the case. Israel, in demolishing Palestine refugee camps on the pretext of wishing to provide the refugees with better housing, was in reality destroying the Palestinian identity and annihilating the Palestinian people both morally and materially.

30. A Member State was denying the right of an entire people to live. Not content with its continued aggression against the Arab countries and the Palestinian people, Israel's harassment of UNRWA confirmed its rejection of civilized modes of behaviour. If the international community wished UNRWA to play its valued role, it must provide it with adequate protection against Israeli harassment and interference.

31. It was not possible to leave the Palestine refugees without assistance pending a political solution which, because of Israeli obstinacy, showed no sign of being close. UNRWA must therefore continue its operations in order to ensure that the refugees had a minimum level of services. The international community must make every effort to compel Israel to abandon its inhuman practices against the Palestine refugees and must strive for the implementation of United Nations resolutions on the refugee problem.

32. Much had been said of Israel's refusal to establish the University of Jerusalem "Al-Quds" for Palestine refugees. That was symbolic of its denial of Palestinian identity. Israel must learn that all the suffering of the Palestinian people had not destroyed its will. Its adherence to its just rights and its insistence on their restoration was the most eloquent proof of the fact, repeatedly confirmed by history, that a people's will could not be broken by force of arms.

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33. Mr. BARROMI (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, expressed distress at the blatantly partisan nature of the Egyptian representative's account of the events of 1948. He seemed to have forgotten Egypt's invasion of the newly-born State of Israel. Although that action had been a flagrant violation of the Charter, the Egyptian Government had even informed the Security Council of the invasion on 22 May 1948.
34. That representative's account of Lebanese problems had been equally biased and inaccurate. He had not mentioned the infamous Cairo agreement in 1969, which had bestowed upon the PLO the right to use south Lebanon as a launching pad for attacks against Israeli territory.
35. Israel had hoped that Egypt had embarked upon a different course aimed at dialogue and peace, in which case it would be easy to solve all human problems in the Middle East, including that of the Palestine refugees. His delegation still hoped that that would happen.
36. In his statement at a preceding meeting, the representative of Syria had demanded that UNRWA headquarters should return to the Middle East. He had apparently forgotten that that headquarters had moved from Beirut to Vienna in 1976 as a result of the Syrian invasion of Lebanon and the ensuing fighting. It had returned to Beirut in 1977 but owing to increasing violence in the Lebanese capital, had again been transferred to Vienna in 1978 and had remained there ever since. That transfer had certainly complicated the Agency's work, but was entirely attributable to Syria.
37. The Syrian representative had also seemed concerned about the state of the Agency's finances. It would certainly be a welcome gesture if Syria would offer to compensate the Agency for the expenditure it had caused.
38. Mr. SHEHATA (Egypt), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that his delegation fully understood the awkward situation in which the representative of Israel found himself. He himself had confined his statement to data quoted from the Commissioner-General's report (A/39/13) as well as from a report by a United States citizen who had recently visited the Middle East and interviewed the Commissioner-General. He had not been rewriting history as the Israeli representative was trying to do. Had he gone further into recent history, he could have recalled the Sabra and Shatila massacres, the Kahan report and terrorism by the followers of Rabbi Kahane, but he would do so at a subsequent meeting.
39. For the moment, he hoped that the Israeli representative would reflect on some statements by eminent Israelis published in various newspapers, including one by Rabbi Kahane, reported in Hadashot of 18 June 1984: "I favour democracy for Jews, but not Arabs. A Zionist cannot be a democrat."
40. He was prepared to correct any other misconceptions still harboured by the representative of Israel.

41. Mr. ABOUCHAER (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that he wished to reply to two points raised by the representative of the Zionist entity. The first was the responsibility for the Palestine refugee question, which lay completely with the aggressive Zionist entity, which had usurped the homeland of the Palestinians and systematically displaced and expelled them. The Zionist leaders did not hesitate to acknowledge that fact. It was hypocrisy for the representative of the Zionist entity naively to claim before the United Nations that the Arab States were responsible for the displacement of the refugees. That representative's repetition of the age-old allegation that Arab States had waged war on Israel was proof of the bankruptcy of his arguments and his disregard for logic and for the international community.

42. The representative of the Zionist entity had also alleged that the Syrian invasion of Lebanon had caused the transfer of UNRWA headquarters to Vienna. Syria had not invaded Lebanon either before or after 1976. Its role in the Lebanese crisis had been aimed at serving and consolidating peace in the area, ending the fighting and preserving Lebanon's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. Its presence in Lebanon was in implementation of the Arab League Joint Defence and Economic Co-operation Treaty of 1950 and was in response to a request by the legitimate constitutional authorities in Lebanon.

43. He did not recall any request for compensation by anybody. In any case, Syria was not responsible for any damages to UNRWA premises in the theatre of operations.

44. Mr. BARROMI (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that he had expected the representative of Syria to try to play down his country's sinister role in the Palestinian question. However, history could not be so easily erased. The Syrian invasion of Lebanon had taken place six years before Israel had been compelled to act in self-defence, and that invasion had led to the massacre of Palestine refugees at Tal al Zaatar, after which there had been demonstrations in front of Syrian embassies all over the world by angry Palestinians accusing Syria of murder. In September 1976, two Palestinian members of the PLO, referred to by President Assad as traitors and criminals, had been publicly hanged in a central Damascus square. Later, Syria had supported the PLO and, had allowed it to take over large parts of Lebanon and transform refugee camps into fortresses from which to launch attacks on Israeli territory. In 1983, Syria had again changed sides and its army had ruthlessly attacked Palestinian refugee camps Beddawi and Nahr el Bared near Tripoli.

45. The Committee must be aware of Syria's ominous record and its responsibility for the present turmoil in Lebanon and for most of the evils plaguing the Middle East.

46. Mr. MANSOUR (Observer, Palestine Liberation Organization), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that he wished to put an end to the hypocrisy of a speaker who pretended concern about the situation of the Palestine people, omitting to indicate that their misery had started at the hands of Zionists and their imperialist supporters before 1948 and that Zionist gangs in Palestine had been responsible for innumerable massacres of the Palestinian people including

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(Mr. Mansour, Observer, PLO)

Deir Yassin, Sabra and Shatila. If the representative of the Zionist régime was so concerned about what happened to the Palestine refugee camps, he should remember that, in the summer of 1982, Ein-el-Hilweh refugee camp and those around Tyre had been totally destroyed, as stated in the Commissioner-General's report of the preceding year (A/38/13), and thousands of Palestinians had been killed or injured or forced to move to other areas.

47. Palestinians in the occupied territories in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were suffering daily incidents of oppression at the hands of the occupying authorities.

48. If the representative of the Zionist régime was interested in the plight of the Palestinian people, his régime should implement General Assembly resolution 194 (III), particularly paragraph 11, as well as all relevant United Nations resolutions, particularly the call for an international peace conference on the Middle East, in which all parties to the conflict, including the PLO, would participate and the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to return to their homeland, exercise self-determination and establish their own independent State would be upheld. Experience over the past 35 years had taught the Palestinians not to believe the lies of the Zionist representatives; the truth was expressed in their deeds.

49. Mr. HAMADNEH (Jordan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that, if the Israeli representative felt such concern and sympathy for the plight of the Palestine refugees, he should advise his Government to respect and implement United Nations resolutions on the question of Palestine and allow them to return to their homeland and exercise their legitimate right to self-determination on their national soil.

50. Mr. CHAMMAS (Lebanon), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, congratulated the representative of Israel on his performance at the current meeting. If he had merely exercised his right of reply to the statement by the representative of Egypt, many other statements in exercise of the right of reply, including his own, would not have been made.

51. His delegation, which represented a country which had been suffering, for many years and hoped to see an end to that suffering, would restrict its remarks to points directly concerning Lebanon. The Israeli representative had omitted any reference to the invasion of 1978, although it had been the subject of decisions by the Security Council and resolutions 425 (1978), 426 (1978) and 427 (1978). If Israel had fully implemented those resolutions, the invasion of 1982 might not have occurred.

52. The representative of Israel had also referred to "the infamous Cairo agreement". He did not think that such an agreement was mentioned in the archives of the United Nations but for all practical purposes, had such an agreement existed, what the Israeli representative called a benevolent occupation rendered it nonoperational.

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(Mr. Chammas, Lebanon)

53. The Syrian forces were in Lebanon at the explicit request of the legitimate authorities of that country, and the President of the Syrian Republic was on record as saying that he would withdraw them whenever requested by those authorities. The constitutional authorities in Lebanon would make such a request when they considered the time was ripe and he appealed to the international community to be patient and not to inject elements which might add to the burdens of his unfortunate country.

54. No occupation could be benevolent and if Israel was ready to withdraw from south Lebanon, as he had heard, he hoped its Government would undertake an orderly withdrawal and thus enable the Lebanese constitutional authorities to extend their effective authority over their own territory.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.