

# PALESTINE REFUGEES TODAY

UNRWA NEWSLETTER 57 SEPT - NOV 1968



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

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**COVER CAPTION:**

Children from a refugee family at the Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem. Bethlehem has two refugee camps for Palestine refugees from the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict.

**Further information may be obtained from:**

UNRWA Public Information Office, Museitbeh Quarter, Beirut,	UNRWA Liaison Office, United Nations, New York,
Lebanon.	U.S.A.
UNRWA Liaison Office, Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland.	

## **"PRECARIOUS" FINANCIAL SITUATION STRESSED IN ANNUAL REPORT**

The Annual Report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA was published on 15 October, 1968. It covers the period 1 July 1967 to 30 June 1968 and describes the Agency's activities and services with regard to both Palestine refugees and the newly displaced.

A summary of the report is given below.

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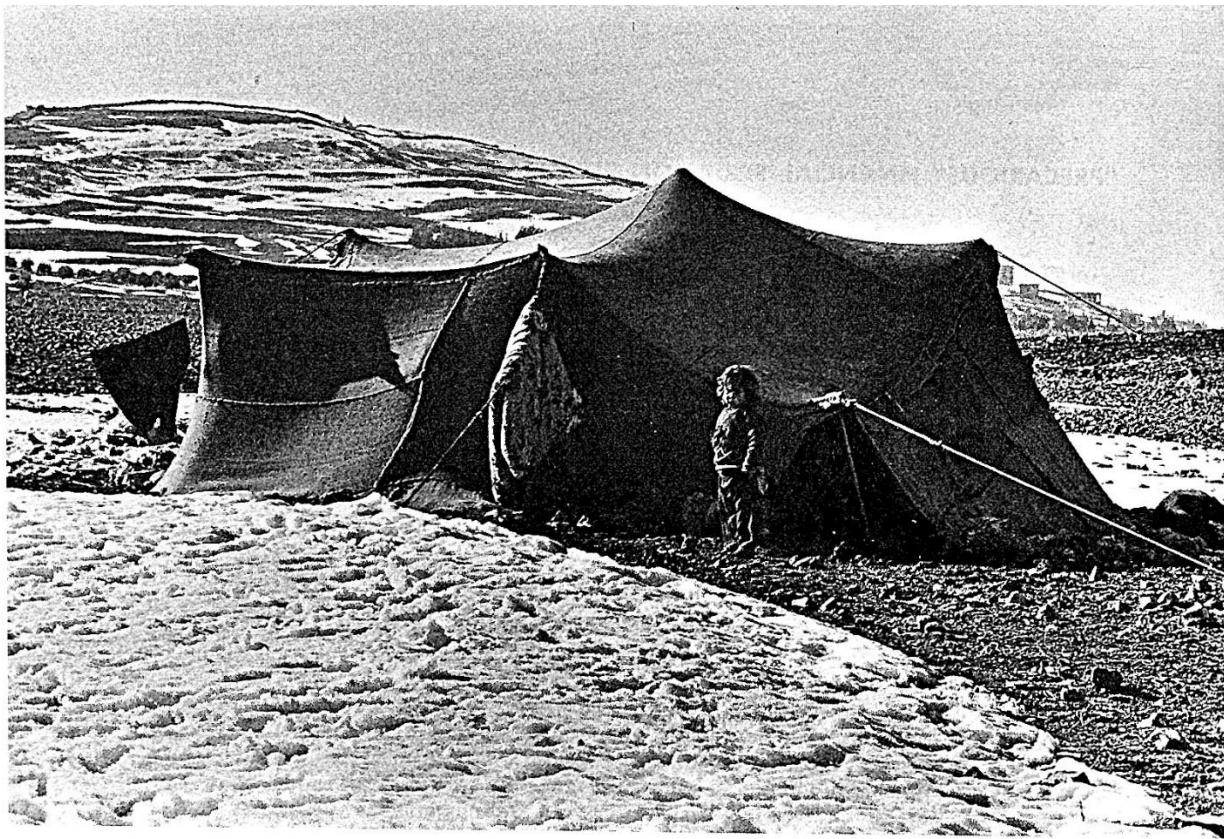
Unless the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) received 10% additional contributions, a reduction in services to the refugee population would be inescapable, with resulting human hardship and suffering and the likelihood that the efforts of the Secretary-General's Special Representative appointed under Security Council Resolution 242 of 22 November 1967 would be jeopardized, the Agency's Commissioner-General, Laurence Michelmore, warned in his annual report to the General Assembly.

UNRWA's financial situation continued to be "precarious" and the outlook for the future was "even more alarming", the Commissioner-General stated. In his view, in the event that the General Assembly should decide to prolong UNRWA's mandate beyond 30 June 1969, the situation of the refugees required the Agency not only to maintain but also to expand its health and education services, and it would do so to the extent that the availability of funds permitted.

In his report (Document A/7213), the Commissioner-General estimated that the Agency would require \$42.5 million in 1969 to carry on present programmes but income was not expected to exceed \$37.6 million; consequently, the prospective deficit was \$4.9 million.

The report covers the period 1 July 1967 to 30 June 1968, gives an account of the Agency's activities and the measures taken in endeavouring to overcome the operational difficulties arising from the June 1967 hostilities in the Middle East, and includes information about the Agency's efforts to carry out the wider mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly under Resolution 2252 (ES-V).

The Agency began work in 1950. Until June 1967 the assistance which it provided was directed exclusively to the Arab refugees from Palestine who were living in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Gaza Strip.



Severe winter weather meant fresh hardship for the newly-displaced.

Since June 1967, UNRWA has also been providing assistance "on an emergency basis, and as a temporary measure, to other persons in the area who are at present displaced and are in serious need of immediate assistance as a result of the recent hostilities", to the extent that its resources permit, in accordance with the wider mandate given to it by the General Assembly in July 1967 and reaffirmed in December 1967.

#### Situation following the June 1967 hostilities

The Commissioner-General reported that the year which followed the hostilities of June 1967 in the Middle East was one of new hardships and anxieties for the Palestine refugees, as they lived under the shadow of dangers and uncertainties. Those who became refugees for a second time (about 175,000), together with most of the 350,000 or more other persons newly displaced from the occupied areas of southern Syria, the West Bank of Jordan, Gaza and Sinai, were in need of the very essentials of physical survival - food, water, shelter, blankets, clothing, and health care - and, scarcely less important, the education of their children. For many, these needs could be met only in tented camps, where winter cold and storms brought additional suffering.

It was a matter of satisfaction, the Commissioner-General reported, that, by concerted efforts on the part of Governments, inter-governmental organizations and voluntary agencies, the "immediate and essential physical needs" of the



thousands of persons displaced by the June 1967 hostilities and their aftermath had largely been met. At least it could be said that, while human suffering abounded among those displaced, neither famine nor epidemic had been added to their plight.

However, the report stated, while help from many quarters came immediately and generously after the hostilities, with the passage of time interest and aid would almost inevitably begin to dwindle - yet the situation of those thousands of displaced refugees and other persons "is likely to worsen rather than improve". The Commissioner-General pointed out that UNRWA's capacity to help was reduced by the fact that some of its best camps, schools, clinics and other facilities stood idle in Jericho, on the West Bank, while the former inhabitants eked out a bare subsistence in tented camps or other temporary accommodation in east Jordan. However, UNRWA had been prepared, and was still prepared, to improve the conditions within these emergency tented camps to the best of its ability. But, the report stated, the incongruity of having to improvise and expend limited resources while decent permanent camps and facilities lay idle on the West Bank was striking.

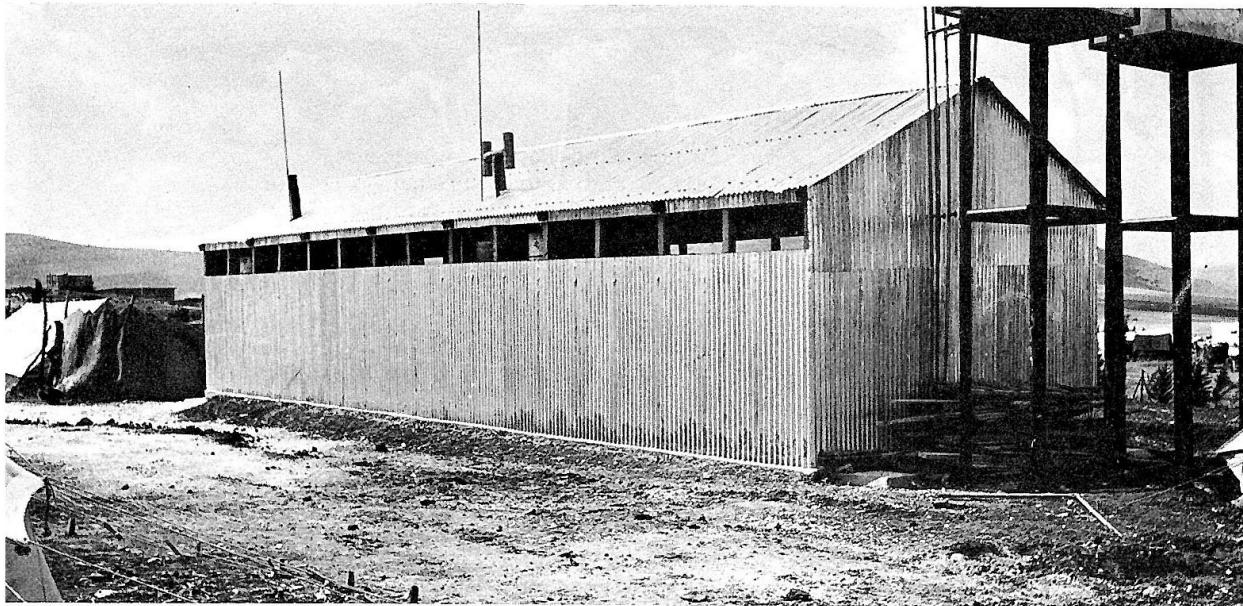
In July and August 1967, some 14,000 displaced persons returned to the West Bank. Between 30 September 1967 and 30 June 1968, the report noted, some others had been able to return on grounds of special hardship or family reunion; their numbers had been given as 2,000 by Jordan and 3,000 by Israel. Some easing of the difficulties faced by the refugees and other displaced persons in east Jordan had resulted from the greater freedom of movement permitted in recent months across the river Jordan in both directions. Nevertheless, the Commissioner-General felt he should reiterate once again that UNRWA's capacity to help would be much greater if, in accordance with the Security Council's resolution 237 (endorsed by the General Assembly) the inhabitants who had fled were allowed to return to the places where they were living before the hostilities and where UNRWA's installations and facilities already existed.

#### UNRWA Services

The Commissioner-General reported that the Agency's services to the 166,000 Palestine refugees in the Lebanon had continued to function normally during the past year. The Agency had completed its revision of the ration rolls, with effective co-operation from the Lebanese authorities.

In the Syrian Arab Republic, the report stated, the most urgent task confronting the Agency had been the provision of temporary shelter and other essential services for those Palestine refugees uprooted from the Quneitra area in the south-west, occupied by Israel. The total number of those refugees was 17,500, and tented camps had been established to care for 7,746 persons unable to find other accommodation. Syrian displaced persons, estimated at 100,000, were provided for by the Syrian Government.

In the period directly following the hostilities, the report stated, UNRWA faced the greatest demand for its services in east Jordan. The number of Palestine refugees increased to 455,500, plus some 38,500 from Gaza. In addition to these refugees, the Jordan Government also registered some 246,000 other persons displaced from the West Bank and Gaza Strip. At the Jordan Government's request, UNRWA had accepted responsibility for the six tented camps (population 78,400) now established on the uplands of east Jordan, and the Agency had also undertaken the whole responsibility for ration distribution against reimbursement



Bathhouses are an essential part of sanitary services in emergency camps.

The Commissioner-General warned that it would neither be feasible nor realistic to attempt a solution by reducing services to the refugees - services provided at an average cost of less than \$40 per refugee per year - as any such attempt would have "a disastrous effect" on people already suffering severe hardships and psychological tensions as a result of the previous year's events. The Commissioner-General, therefore, urgently requested the General Assembly to assure UNRWA "adequate" financial resources to carry out the humanitarian mandate which it had entrusted to the Agency.

#### Educational Problems

The Commissioner-General noted that difficulties had arisen regarding the use of textbooks in UNRWA/Unesco schools. Under a Unesco Executive Board resolution, a Commission of outside experts was being established to examine these textbooks and to make recommendations thereon to the Director-General for the assent and cooperation of the Member States concerned. UNRWA's report also referred to the problem of securing recognition for examinations held in occupied areas from the Arab countries to which students from Gaza and the West Bank might proceed for higher education.

#### UNRWA's Future Programme

The Commissioner-General stated that, whatever progress might be achieved by the Secretary-General's Special Representative in the Middle East, it was "more than likely" that an extension of UNRWA's mandate beyond the present limit of 30 June 1969 would be essential.

In education, the Agency would wish to continue its efforts to improve the quality of the teaching in the UNRWA/Unesco schools. Another priority was the replacement, over a period of years, of the many thoroughly unsatisfactory school buildings still in use. The Agency also intended to expand and improve its training programme, both for teacher-training and vocational courses, by 50 per cent, and a considerable beginning has been made in this latter respect.

by the Jordan Government for rations issued to Government-registered recipients. A notable advance had been made during the year in improving the system of ration distribution as a result of measures taken by the Government to curtail trafficking in ration cards and commodities.

On the West Bank, the report stated, UNRWA's services had recovered quickly from the disruption caused by the hostilities and had functioned in a regular and effective way throughout the year. In both education and health matters, the Agency had been left to carry on its work with little restriction or interference, and in general the cooperation between UNRWA and the local authorities continued to be effective. Consultations had been held with the Government of Israel on the reconciliation of UNRWA statistics with those produced in the Israeli census of September 1967. The Agency's current estimate of the number of refugees remaining on the West Bank is 245,000 of whom 140,000 are ration recipients.

In Gaza, the Commissioner-General reported, the aftermath of the hostilities had been painful and prolonged. The Agency's services felt the effects of the succession of incidents and security measures, such as curfews, interrogations, detentions, and on some occasions the subsequent demolition of houses. In addition, economic activity, always precariously based in Gaza, had slumped and the demand for the Agency's services, particularly supplementary feeding, had increased. The full range of the Agency's services was quickly re-established after the hostilities, and had been maintained for the refugees remaining in the Gaza Strip, estimated at about 265,000. UNRWA had had to undertake a considerable amount of replacement or repair of refugee shelter and other UNRWA installation which had been demolished or damaged. Attendance at UNRWA/Unesco schools had been below normal, even allowing for those who had left the Gaza Strip. The schools were also handicapped by a shortage of experienced teachers, but many of those stranded in the United Arab Republic were allowed to return during the spring of 1968, which largely resolved the problem.

In the United Arab Republic, the report stated, UNRWA had met the cost of relief support provided by the U.A.R. authorities for some 3,000 registered refugees from Gaza. The Agency had also provided additional scholarships for stranded refugee students from Gaza in the U.A.R.

#### Increasing Financial Burden

The Commissioner-General stated that UNRWA was determined to carry out its present mandate from the General Assembly "to the maximum limits possible within its budgetary capabilities". Although the "exceedingly generous" response of contributors to the Agency's appeal for funds to meet the 1967 emergency more than covered those needs in 1967, the excess would quickly be absorbed in meeting those same needs in 1968. Even allowing for this carry-over, there would still be a deficit of \$1.2 million in 1968, and UNRWA's "working capital" would fall to its lowest point ever.

For the year 1969, he continued, a further increase in expenditure appeared inevitable. To carry on the present programme would cost \$42.5 million, while income, on the basis of present indications, was not expected to exceed \$37.6 million. The prospective deficit was thus \$4.9 million. Nor could any further deficits be covered by the remaining working capital, which would probably be reduced by 1 January 1969 to \$13 million, a considerable part of which would consist of supplies "in the pipeline" (about \$6 million).

In health, the Agency also hoped to replace unsatisfactory buildings and improve facilities, as well as make a "determined effort" to improve living conditions in the UNRWA camps, particularly by providing better water supplies and sanitary services.

UNRWA believed, the report stated, that in the event that the General Assembly should decide to prolong its mandate, the situation of the refugees required it "not only to maintain but also to expand" its services - and it would do so to the extent that funds permitted.

However, the report pointed out that unless the Agency in one way or another received additional contributions, amounting to 10 per cent of its prospective income for the current year, a reduction in services to the refugee population would be inescapable, "with resulting human hardship and suffering and the likelihood that the efforts of the Secretary-General's Special Representative appointed under Security Council Resolution 242 of 22 November 1967 will be jeopardized".

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Nursing training is a limited but important aspect of UNRWA's health programme.





Commissioner-General Laurence Michelmore says good-bye to Hania (left) and Zakiya.

### REFUGEE CHILDREN FLY TO EUROPE FOR PLASTIC SURGERY

Thanks to the generosity of "Terre des Hommes", three young Palestine refugee girls in need of plastic surgery to repair facial injuries suffered during the 1967 hostilities in the Middle East have been flown to Europe for operations.

"Terre des Hommes" was founded in 1960 in Geneva, Switzerland, originally for the benefit of Algerian children who had suffered during their country's struggle for independence. It was soon able to offer its aid to children of all countries, and to date has treated more than 1500 children, from Gambia to Vietnam.

The organisation approached UNRWA early in 1968 about the possibility of providing facial surgery for refugees who had suffered the previous June. The three children selected - Hania Abu Murad (10 years), Zakiya El-Rashaida (11 years) and Muyasser Kahlout (10 years) - have now flown to Geneva, and from there Hania and Zakiya have been taken to the Netherlands where they will receive the necessary skin grafts and special treatment at the "Oud-Bossum" Hospital in Huisen. Muyasser, who has lost the sight of one eye, will be staying in Switzerland for ophthalmic treatment.

Apart from providing treatment, "Terre des Hommes" have also paid the air fares of two of the girls; the fare of the third girl has been donated by the Friends of Jerusalem Committee, Beirut.

The girls were wounded during the shelling of Jabalia Camp in the Gaza Strip on 7 June 1967. Despite the injuries she suffered (see photograph) Hania recovered quickly although the scars could not be hidden. She worked even harder and tried even harder at her school the UNRWA Girls School in Beit Hanoun, Gaza, and finally came top of her class this summer. Zakiya and Muyasser also received their injuries in the military action taking place around the camp - little Muyasser was orphaned at the time and has been looked after by her aunt. Thanks to the skilled surgery arranged by "Terre des Hommes", these girls can hope to go through life without the psychological handicap that disfigurement of this type so often inflicts.

## IRANIAN HELP BUILDS NEW CAMP FOR REFUGEES AT ZIZIA (TALBIYA)

On the morning of Monday 16 September 1968, H.M. King Hussein of Jordan, accompanied by H.R.H. Princess Shams Pahlavi of Iran, formally opened the new "Talbiya Camp" at Zizia in east Jordan.

This ceremony set the seal on a continuing story of close co-operation between the Governments of Jordan and Iran and UNRWA, over the long months since the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict.

Talbiya Camp (formerly Zizia Camp) lies about 20 miles south of Amman, the capital of Jordan, along the aptly named "Desert Highway" which follows the old Hejaz railway down to Ma'an, then splits off and winds down to the port of Aqaba on the Red Sea.

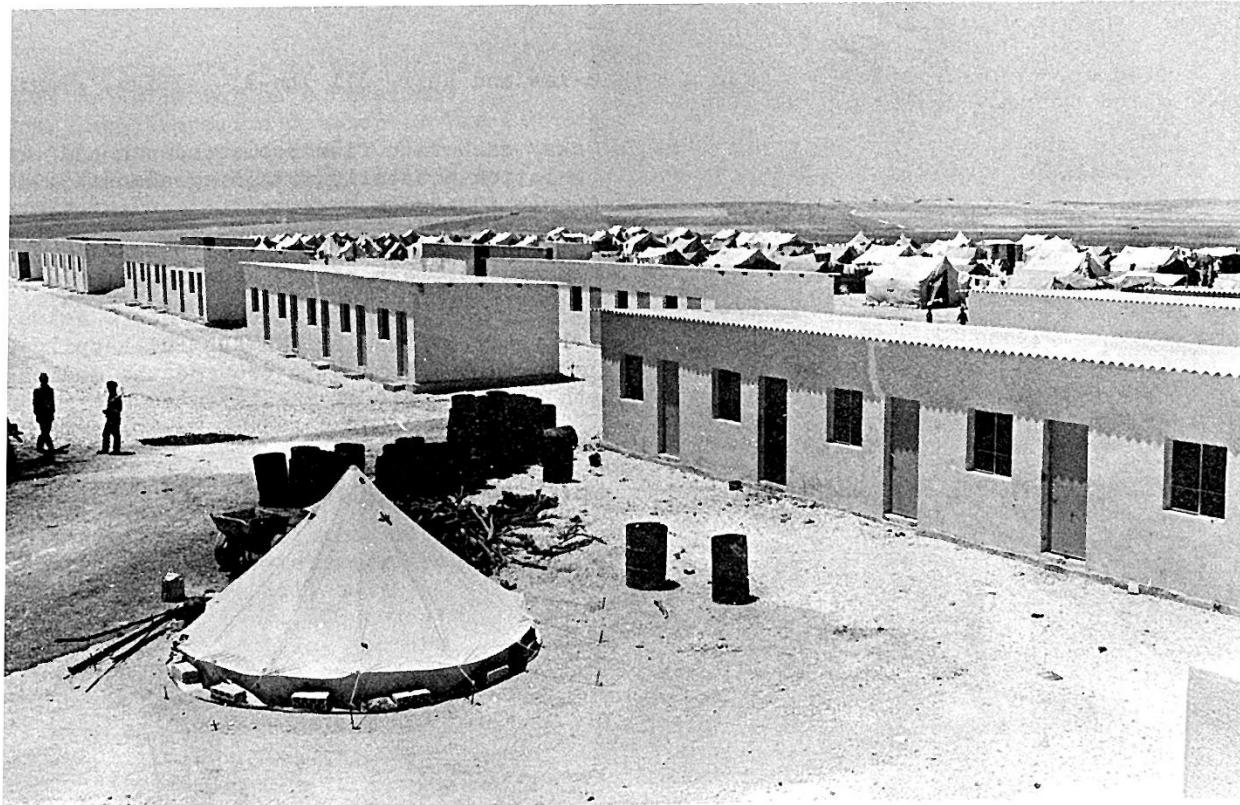
It was one of the emergency camps originally established at the beginning of July 1967 to help shelter the streams of Palestine refugees and other newly-displaced people then crossing the Jordan from the territory occupied by Israel after the June hostilities.

At that time, seven other emergency camps were operating in the area, run by either UNRWA or the Jordan Government. However, very early in the emergency the Iranian Government, (through its embassy in Amman), generously offered to establish and run a camp through the medium of the Iranian Red Lion and Sun Society (Red Cross). With their wide experience of earthquake disasters, the Iranians brought immediate practical help to the task in hand. They set up tents, built feeding centres and installed electricity.

But the Iranians also wished to help the new refugees in a more positive manner and offered to finance the construction of a new village on an adjoining site, in place of the tented camp.

The camp leader, Sheikh Abdul Majid El Azzeh - who had been loaned by UNRWA to the Red Lion and Sun Society - immediately took the matter up with the Jordanian authorities and consulted the "mukhtars", (the elders of the camp) and the people themselves to determine their attitude to the idea. Many of them feared that a move into permanent housing would imply that they no longer wished to return to their homes on the Jordan's West Bank. But it was agreed with the Red Lion and Sun Society that the refugees would occupy the buildings only until such time as they were able to return: the village could then be handed over to the Jordan Government for other purposes.

The Sheikh himself is 60, a man well accustomed over the years to dealing with the particular problems of Arab village life. His own village was Beit Jibrin, in Palestine, some 20 miles south-west of Jerusalem. In 1948, during the widespread conflict which followed the partition of Palestine and the creation of the State of Israel, he led his villagers to seek refuge in Bethlehem. This part of Palestine was joined with the Kingdom of Jordan, and the refugees from Beit Jibrin were given shelter and other assistance by UNRWA. Wishing always to keep the memory of their village and homeland fresh in their minds, they called the refugee camp "Beit Jibrin".



With the outbreak of hostilities in June 1967, Sheikh El Azzeh was approached by many of the camp inhabitants, who wished to take refuge in east Jordan. For a second time, he led the people of Beit Jibrin away from the battle zone, to seek temporary shelter on the barren Jordanian plateau near Zizia.

#### A THIRD MOVE: TO THE JORDAN VALLEY

The building programme had started at Zizia, and the tented camp had been occupied just six months when winter set in with severity. Rain turned the ground to mud and harsh winds often blew down the light tents for which few replacements were available.

The Government of Jordan accordingly decided to move the inhabitants down to the milder climate in the Jordan Valley, where the other 70,000 refugees in emergency camps had been re-located by UNRWA, and on December 22 the 4,000 inhabitants of Zizia Camp were taken to Ghor Kabed - some 5 miles back from the river. There their camp was administered by UNRWA, but the Iranian connection continued with the presence of the Red Lion and Sun Society's medical team.

Their stay in this camp was a short one. Renewed military action along the Jordan River brought increasing hazards from shell-fire and bombing and, in mid February 1968, the refugees in the Valley camps again sought safety in the hills.

The former Zizia inhabitants all returned, with their tents, to the windswept site - and there they awaited completion of their shelters and the new facilities. The Iranian camp administration team having gone home in December, UNRWA agreed to operate their camp thereafter.

On the occasion of the opening of the newly built camp on 16 September, the Government of Jordan decided to change the name of the camp from Zizia to Talbiya, to honour

the memory of the Prophet Mohammed's son-in-law and heir, Ali Ibn-Al-Talbiya, greatly revered by the Shia Muslims of Iran.

There are altogether 160 residential blocks, each with five rooms and a small patch of ground for vegetables. With the camp population presently totalling almost 5,000, there will be an occupancy rate of some 6 people to a room.

Boys' and girls' schools have been built for Talbiya Camp, together with fine roads, a youth activities centre, a clinic, a mosque, bath houses and a small slaughter-house.

The completed Camp is being operated and largely staffed by UNRWA. But happily the link with the Iranians is still preserved: they continue to provide the medical services in the camp and safeguard the health of its grateful inhabitants.

#### **SWEDEN'S RÄDDA BARNEN TO CHANNEL AUTUMN CAMPAIGN FUNDS TO MIDDLE EAST**



Dr. L. Eriksson (right) is in charge of medical care at the UNRWA/Swedish Health-Centre in Gaza.

Sweden's Rädda Barnen, or Save the Children Federation, has decided to donate a major part of the proceeds of its autumn fund-raising campaign throughout the country to help Arab refugees, through UNRWA.

This will be the largest and most important donation Rädda Barnen has given to UNRWA, and comes at a time when funds are badly needed to maintain essential services to the refugees, thus avoiding an increase in the hardship and suffering already borne by the refugee population. If Rädda Barnen's campaign target is realized, it will channel funds into a significant UNRWA/Unesco programme of urgently required school construction in east Jordan, as well as cover the operating costs of various projects vital to the well-being of the refugees.

These plans follow on a series of contributions made by Rädda Barnen to the Agency since 1962, with a cost value amounting to \$285,557. Rädda Barnen has made annual donations to the baby layette programme and the Rashidieh Rehydration and Nutrition Centre (constructed in 1965 with funds also provided by Rädda Barnen). Rädda Barnen has also given vocational training scholarships, vaccines, tents, grants for medical services in a Jordan emergency camp totalling \$30,000, and a grant for supplementary feeding in Syrian emergency camps amounting to \$90,198 immediately after the June 1967 hostilities.

Following visits to the Middle East by Rädda Barnen's President, Mrs. Inge Kempe, in October 1967, and by the Secretary-General, Colonel Magnus Ehrenstrom, in April 1968, projects for funding were proposed and targets agreed upon. It is hoped that three new schools are to be built: the Ashrafiyah and Joufeh Girls' Schools in Amman itself and the Madaba Girls' School at Madaba, south of Amman. The boys' school at Madaba is also to be extended.

If this programme can be carried out, 84 new classrooms, three science laboratories, arts and crafts rooms, administrative rooms and new equipment will be made available for some 4,000 young refugee boys and girls, who are presently studying in overcrowded and unsuitable rented premises, largely as a result of the June 1967 hostilities and the influx of the newly displaced.

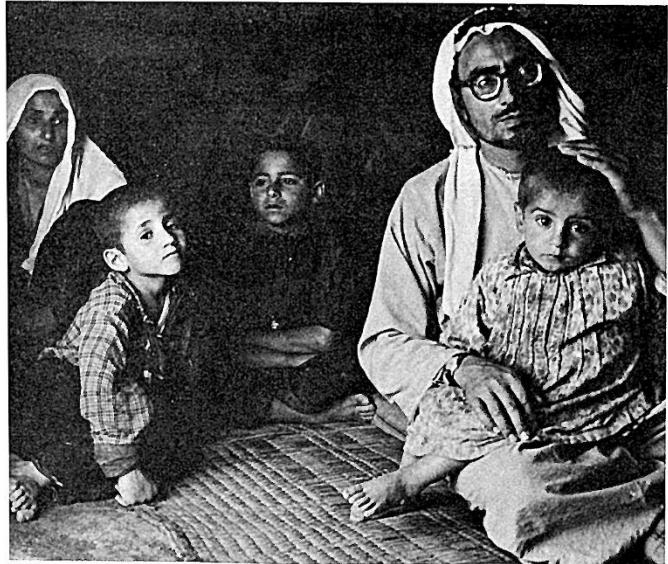
Rädda Barnen has always been interested in UNRWA's medical programmes for the refugees, which are conducted under the technical guidance of the World Health Organisation. It now hopes to be able to meet the complete running expenses (some \$80,000 a year) of the UNRWA Swedish Health Centre in Gaza Town over the two-year period 1969-70, including staff costs, medical supplies etc. The centre was established with a technical assistance grant from the Government of Sweden and began to function in 1965 - serving some 30,000 refugees, providing in-service training for medical and nursing staff, advice and health education for refugee mothers and children. In charge of the medical care is a Swedish doctor, assisted by a Swedish nurse.

It is also hoped that Rädda Barnen will continue to pay nursing costs, amounting to some \$15,000 a year, and covering the same two-year period, for UNRWA's Rashidieh Health Centre in south Lebanon, where in 1965 it financed the building and first year's operations of the Rehydration/Nutrition Centre for dehydrated babies. The Health Centre includes a general and out-patient clinic, maternal and child health centre and clinical laboratory, serving 10,000 refugees.

It is thanks to the dedication, hard work and sustained generosity of voluntary agencies like Rädda Barnen, of many governments, business corporations and private persons, that UNRWA has had the means to carry out its task over the years to 1968, and particularly since the emergency created by the June 1967 hostilities in the Middle East began. It will be thanks to the humanitarian concern of all of UNRWA's many contributors and supporters that vital services to the needy refugee population will be continued as long as they are required, despite the grave financial problems that loom ahead.



## LIFE IN AN EMERGENCY CAMP



Nu'eimeh emergency tented camp in the northern part of east Jordan existed for only three months - from the beginning of March to the end of May 1968. But Khalil Abdallah Salman and his family will never forget their stay in this camp - nor the equally hard conditions under which they live now at the camp's new site: Husn, near Ramtha.

Khalil is one of a new category of persons to whom UNRWA has given assistance since the June 1967 hostilities in the Middle East; he is "newly-displaced". A Palestinian by birth, he did not become a refugee after the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict; he lived in a small village near Hebron (i.e. in that part of Palestine annexed to Jordan) - later moving to the village of Kraymeh in the east

Jordan Valley. Here he married Wajihah, and brought up his family of five sons and three daughters, while teaching Islamic religious knowledge to children at the village school.

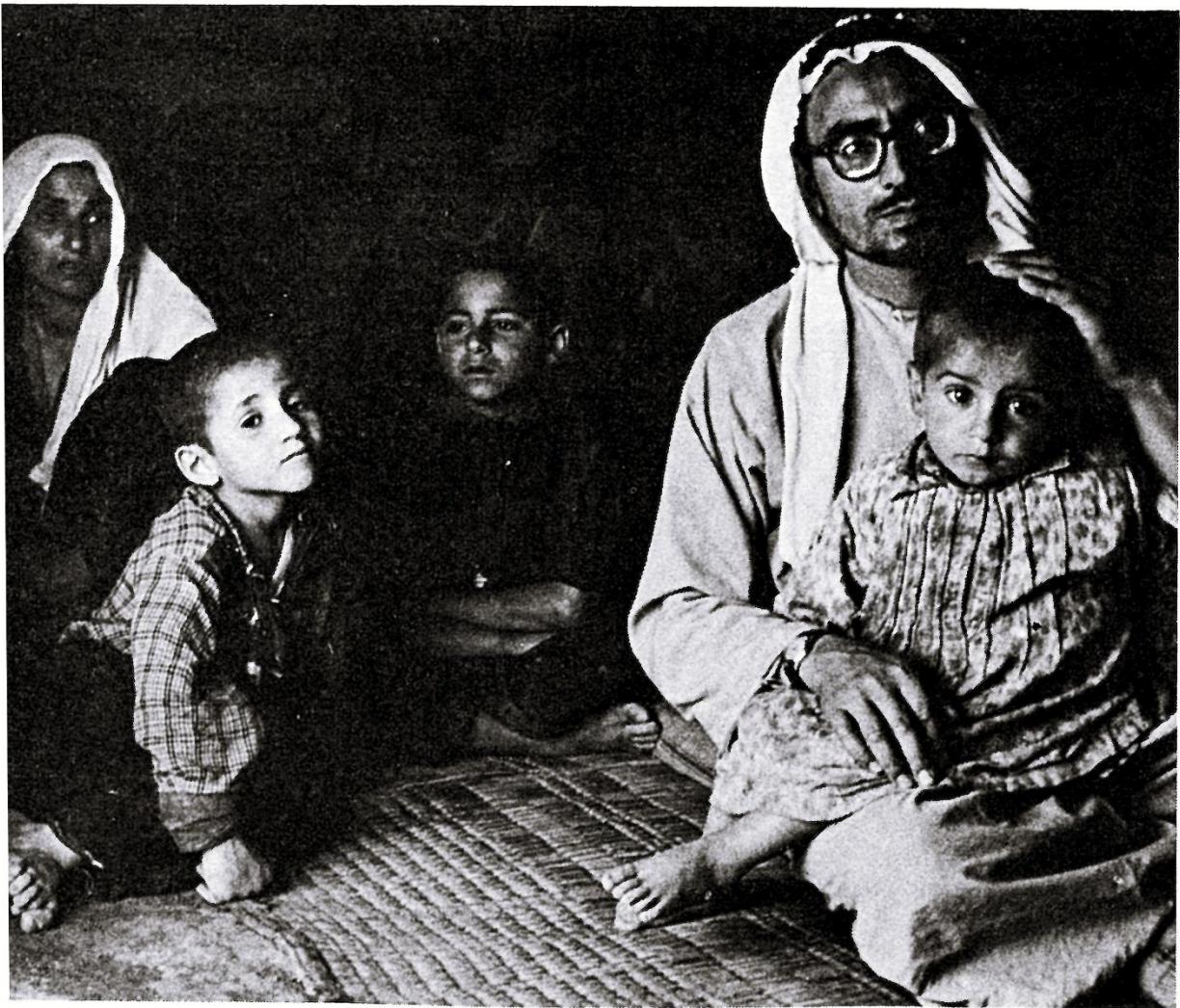
Khalil did not become "displaced" until the middle of February 1968. At this time, renewed military action along the Jordan Valley brought destruction to much of his village, and the people decided they would have to evacuate and seek refuge in the hills away from the fighting.

With his family, Khalil travelled north to a newly established UNRWA emergency camp at Nu'eimeh. Here ten thousand people lived on the dusty, windy plain - their shelter: simple "picnic" tents, designed for holiday camping and rushed in from overseas in the immediate aftermath of the 1967 hostilities to provide some protection for refugees. Khalil and his family had one small, blue picnic tent, faded now and patched at the edges, while the window "zips" had long since broken.

UNRWA provided a clinic and large marquee tents for school-lessons, which the children were all eager to attend. Rations were provided by UNRWA (for the Palestine refugees) and the Jordan Government (for the newly-displaced persons not registered with UNRWA), with UNRWA making the actual food distribution.

Khalil decided to make known to the mukhtars or elders of the camp his interest in and wide knowledge of religion, and was invited to become spiritual leader of the community.

At the end of May 1968, the refugees moved to a new and better site at Husn, some miles away. Here, in a tented camp on the Jordanian plateau, they face a bitter winter, hoping that one day soon they can return to their homes. Khalil's immediate wish is even more modest. He wants a marquee tent which can be used as the camp mosque.



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