



PALESTINE REFUGEES TODAY

An UNRWA Newsletter

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Nahr El Bared Refugee Camp as it is today.
Do you recognise it as it was at the start?

(See back cover)

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The photograph on our front cover, and other photographs of Arab refugees, may be obtained from the Public Information Office, UNRWA, UNESCO Building, Beirut, Lebanon.

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY ADOPTS
RESOLUTION ON PALESTINE REFUGEES

Following further discussion in the Special Political Committee, the United Nations General Assembly on 21 April adopted, by 37 votes to 17 with 38 abstentions, a resolution on the subject of assistance to Palestine refugees.

A draft paragraph calling for the safeguarding of the refugees' property rights in Israel failed to secure the necessary two-thirds majority.

The resolution recalls the Assembly's previous resolutions on assistance to Palestine refugees, and notes the annual report of the Director of UNRWA for the year ending 30 June 1960. The operative part of the resolution reads as follows:-

"The General Assembly

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"Noting with deep regret that repatriation or compensation of the refugees as provided for in paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) has not been effected, that no substantial progress has been made in the programme endorsed in paragraph 2 of resolution 513(VI) for the reintegration of refugees either by repatriation or resettlement and that therefore the situation of the refugees continues to be a matter of serious concern;

1. Notes with regret that the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine has not yet been able to report progress on carrying out the task entrusted to it in paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 1456(XIV), and again requests the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine to make efforts to secure the implementation of paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) and report thereon not later than 15 October 1961;

2. Directs attention to the precarious financial position of the Agency and urges Governments to consider to what extent they can contribute or increase their contributions so that the Agency can carry out its programmes;

3. Expresses its thanks to the Director and the staff of the Agency for their continued faithful efforts to carry out the mandate of the Agency, and to the specialized agencies and the many private organizations for their valuable and continuing work in assisting the refugees."

UNRWA DIRECTOR DECLARES
SOLUTION TO REFUGEE PROBLEM MUST ARISE
FROM MIDDLE EAST

A solution to the Palestine refugee problem must "evolve rather than be imposed," .. and it "must evolve from within the Middle East itself," UNRWA Director John H. Davis told the Middle East Institute in Washington, D.C. in an address this April.

Observers outside the Middle East had generally tended to treat too lightly, he said, the deep feelings of both Arabs and Israelis arising from the creation of Israel.

And thus, he pointed out, "All of the numerous past plans and special efforts to bring about a solution have failed ... The fact is that the people of the Middle East do not just look at any given proposal merely to assess what it might do to solve the refugee problem per se: rather they look to see what its effect might be on inter Arab-Israeli relationships -- particularly from the standpoint of ultimate effect. More specifically, the Arab asks himself, 'Will this make Israel more permanent?' and the Israeli considers, 'Will this weaken the country's ability to defend herself?'"

UNRWA should not try to bring about a solution, he added, but should continue its job of administering relief to the refugees, educating them, and giving as many as possible of the young men and women vocational training.

IN BRIEF

Federal German World Refugee Year Committee helps UNRWA's Vocational Training Programme

UNRWA has received from the World Refugee Year Committee of the Federal Republic of Germany a donation of DM.950,000 (\$237,500). Of this, the sum of DM.850,000 is to be used for an extension of the Vocational Training Centre at present being built outside Damascus with funds given by the United Kingdom Committee for World Refugee Year, while DM.100,000 will be spent on equipment for UNRWA's vocational training programme, to be purchased in Federal Germany.

World Refugee Year Donation from Viet Nam

Viet Nam, a country which has itself had a problem of over 800,000 refugees on its hands, has announced a donation of \$28,282 for assistance to Palestine Arab refugees. The funds were raised by the Viet Nam National Committee for World Refugee Year.

UNRWA Director is received by Queen Juliana and President Lübke

On his way back from New York, where he had been attending the resumed fifteenth session of the United Nations, UNRWA Director John H. Davis visited The Hague and Bonn in early April and had the honour of being received by H.M. the Queen of the Netherlands and the President of the Federal Republic of Germany. Both Queen Juliana and President Lübke assured Dr. Davis of their warm personal interest in UNRWA's work and in the welfare of the Palestine refugees.

Visitors

Dame May Curwen, Vice-Chairman of the United Kingdom Committee for World Refugee Year and Chairman of the British Council for Aid to Refugees, visited the Middle East in April at the invitation of the World Y.W.C.A. During her visit, Dame May reviewed progress on the projects to be carried out with the WRY Committee's donation to UNRWA of \$1,239,000, which is to be used to set up vocational training centres in Syria and Jordan and for loans and grants to refugee families.

Walter S. Kirkpatrick, Director of the World Council of Churches' Division of Service to Refugees, made his first visit this April to UNRWA installations in Jordan, Lebanon and the

Gaza Strip. The World Council of Churches has been a major contributor to projects of assistance to Arab refugees over the past 13 years, through voluntary agencies.

Another visitor to the area this April was Dr. Offergeld, a representative of "Miserior", a voluntary agency in the Federal Republic of Germany through which the Roman Catholic Bishops of Cologne, Freiburg, Eichstaedt, Aachen and Essen raise and allocate funds for development and educational projects in many parts of the world.

Swedish Troops Aid Gaza Play Centre

The officers and men of the Ninth Swedish Battalion, just before the close of their six-month service with the United Nations Emergency Force in the Gaza Strip, gave \$576 to UNRWA for operating costs of a play centre for refugee children in Jabalia Camp. Several of the seven UNEF contingents have financed construction or rebuilding of play centres in the Strip, an item for which UNRWA's regular budget has no funds. Many of the 630-man Swedish battalion had visited Jabalia camp, which harbours some 28,700 refugees.

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ELEVEN YEARS OF UNRWA

UNRWA this month has been in existence 11 years. It began work in May 1950, replacing the International Committee of the Red Cross, the League of Red Cross Societies, and the American Friends Service Committee, the three agencies which had previously administered United Nations relief funds for the Palestine Arab refugees.

UNRWA's story over the past eleven years is a broad one and is best told by those refugees among the 11,000 on the Agency's staff who have worked for UNRWA since its beginning and with voluntary groups before, giving their services to their countrymen.

Below, four Arab refugees, one from each of the four host countries, tell the story of the four spheres of UNRWA's work which most directly affect the daily lives of the refugees themselves - shelter, health, education and social welfare.

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This June, Omar Asad will have spent ten years as leader of the refugee camp shown in our cover pictures - located on the wind-swept Mediterranean coast in northern Lebanon. He has watched while the inhabitants, today numbering some 7,700, worked together to transform the camps from a bare settlement of tents into a community of simple huts, protected from the sea by tall, leafy castor trees. He recalls his first winter when near disaster hit the area as winds buffeted and tore thousands of tents, leaving 56,000 refugees shelterless.

Shortly thereafter, Asad saw the refugees reinforce their tents with mudbrick walls. The winter of 1954 brought more bad storms, and the refugees began replacing their tents with mudbrick huts, roofed with tin supplied by UNRWA, and later with more substantial concrete-block shelters. Today, three concrete-block makers are working in the camp. But even now, Asad sees much that needs -- but cannot -- be done without a complete preliminary razing: the replacement by proper roads of the maze of narrow winding sandy paths riddling the camp and relief of over-all congestion.

Although originally most of the Palestine refugees housed in camps lived in tents, today all tents have been replaced by huts.

Meantime, many refugees, unable to find or afford other kinds of shelter, have applied for admission to camps, and the total camp population has increased from 30 to 40 percent.



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In September 1948, Dr. Mohammed Muzayyin knelt in a tent beside a borrowed straw mat, tending to a never-ending stream of his fellow countrymen from Palestine, all suffering from cold and exposure. Today he is in charge of UNRWA's entire medical services for the 117,000 refugees living in the Northern (Syrian) Region of the United Arab Republic and is the only Palestinian among UNRWA's four Field Health Officers.

Dr. Muzeyyin, a refugee from Acre, was only two years out of medical school that first September. He volunteered for one of the toughest assignments -- to go alone to a camp of some 4000 refugees in Lebanon's high Beqa'a Valley, although he had no medicine to give them at first. Later, the League of Red Cross Societies sent a Danish woman doctor and supplies, and together the two doctors did operations in a tent, boiling their instruments in a pot over a primus stove.

Later, Dr. Muzayyin was transferred to Syria, where he is known and beloved by refugees and local inhabitants alike for his generosity and quiet ways. It was only with the aid of the Government -- which offered free hospitalization, laboratory

work, and vaccines -- and the help of private Syrian persons and societies, he said, that the Agency got over the first hurdles of the huge public health problem that confronted it. It has gone a long way since then, he added.

Tuberculosis control, in Dr. Muzayyin's eyes, is the Agency's biggest contribution. "Previously", he said, "cases were detected by chance alone, and in Aleppo we had only one 12-bed detention post in a barrack. Today, we have a systematic search for TB victims, and can offer them all kinds of opportunities for care."

In maternity care, he said, the Agency at first could help only at times of difficult deliveries. Now, the drive -- very successful -- is to supervise women throughout their pregnancy, to recommend hospitalization for difficult cases, and to provide infant care after birth.

As far as staff goes, auxiliary medical workers were at first virtually non-existent, he said. Now, many have been trained on the job, relieving doctors for more specialized work.

Meanwhile, the refugees themselves have learned more about how to care for themselves through health education, he added.

"Both our services and the refugees health have noticeably improved over the years," said Dr. Muzeyyin. "Most striking of all, despite the congested conditions in which they live, the refugees have remained free from major epidemics all this time."

A school - without books, without pencils, without desks, without a building! This is what Abdul Fattah Nouneh took upon himself to establish in the spring of 1949 for the hundreds of barefoot youngsters who were running ragged about a refugee camp of more than 20,000 persons in the Jordan Valley. Eleven other former teachers agreed to help, and the camp "crier" announced publicly that classes would begin the next day. The following morning, hundreds of boys and girls appeared and, seated in circles on the ground, watched as the teachers wrote the lessons on the sandy soil with sticks. So began the first refugee school in Jordan.

Nouneh, who is today principal of one of Karameh Camp's five schools, recalls how help came, bit by bit, in the early days; tents from the League of Red Cross Societies; 1,000 slates; school rooms built by UNRWA in 1952, and later equipped with desks.

Meanwhile, over the past ten years, the number of refugee children receiving education in the four host countries has doubled from 93,000 at the end of 1951 to an estimated 185,000 at the end of this year.

Nouneh pointed out that the progress is striking when one compares the refugee youngsters today with their parents in Palestine. "In the old days," he said, "the children used to be kept at home to help work on the farms. Now we have no more land, so the youngsters are free to go to school.

"And also, when we became refugees, most of those who had had schooling found work and became self-supporting, while those who were illiterate ended up without work and in refugee camps. So all the parents want their youngsters to go to school today."



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Adnan Alami had just graduated from the American University of Cairo when UNRWA hired him in the summer of 1950 to act as "driver, translator, guide, and philosopher" for the American Quaker in charge of social welfare in the Gaza Strip

during the months when the Agency was taking over from the American Friends Service Committee. It was to have been merely a summer job to tide him over until his departure for graduate study in social work in the United States.

But Alami found himself faced with an emergency situation. The Gaza Strip, an area five miles wide and 25 miles long, had suffered a population explosion almost overnight of from 80,000 to 280,000 persons. Idleness was endemic. The only mass palliative seemed to be opening social centres which offered night classes, reading rooms, films, sports. "It's better to give them something to do, even though it's only recreation," said Alami.

Alami, caught up in the work, stayed on and was put in charge of the programme the next spring. Today, as UNRWA's

Field Welfare and Placement Officer in Gaza, responsible for doing what he can to alleviate the most acute personal problems of the Gaza refugee community, Alami is a quiet, easy-going man whose door is never closed to anyone and who feels lost when there is no afternoon or evening work to be done.

The Welfare Division, Alami pointed out, has approached its central aim from a dozen different directions - from aid to handicapped children to film showings, from embroidery centres to job placement. This central aim, as Alami sees it, is "to try and bring everyone as close as possible to a normal social life in a situation which is abnormal." The recent programmes which have had most success among the refugees in Gaza, he says, are sewing and carpentry courses for adults and a stepped-up youth activities programme. Through this programme, the young refugees not only learn to enjoy sports and other recreational activities, but also to carry on spontaneously social work among their own people. And thus Alami now sees a something take effect that he had always felt to be necessary. "Our problem is too big to handle from the top" he says. "UNRWA can best help by giving guidance. The people must do something to help themselves and each other."

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LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION AID
FOR ARAB REFUGEES

The trim brown van bumped along the dusty track, overtaking a white-painted jeep.

"Where are you from?" shouted the driver of the van.

"Copenhagen!" came the smiling reply. For this was a United Nations jeep, on a routine patrol for the U.N. Truce Supervision Organization in Jerusalem and the setting was one of the strangest and most forlorn landscapes in the Middle East -- mile upon mile of rolling, barren uplands, with one lonely Arab village perched on a hill, overlooking the foothills and plains of Israel, not two miles distant.

The van sped on towards Jerusalem, its mission accomplished, carrying its team of doctor, nurse, dispenser and health educator. It was one of the three mobile clinics operated in Jordan by the Lutheran World Federation, two of them in cooperation with UNICEF and the Jordan Ministries of Social Affairs and Health. The team had spent the morning in two Arab frontier villages, examining some 140 desperately poor patients, giving injections to tiny, dishevelled children with broncho pneumonia, handing out liniments and cough medicine to elderly folk, carefully examining expectant mothers. Above all, it had brought a note of cheer and an atmosphere of calm efficiency to people living on the margins of destitution. For the inhabitants of the two remote villages are "economic refugees", ineligible for UNRWA's help because they have not lost their actual homes, but cut off by the Armistice demarcation line from 70 percent of their agricultural lands - their only source of income.

The mobile clinics are one of the many ways in which the Lutheran World Federation helps Jordan and its more than 623,000 refugees. High on the Mount of Olives, just outside Jerusalem, stands the "Augusta Victoria Stiftung", a massive Wagnerian-looking building originally intended to symbolise the interest in the Holy Land of the Imperial German family. Now, transformed into a hospital and run since 1950 by the LWF with support from Lutherans in Germany, Sweden, the United States and other countries, it serves the poor and needy of Jerusalem and its surrounding countryside, and particularly the refugees. Of its 312 beds, 284 are reserved for refugees and UNRWA contributes a substantial financial grant. The hospital is one of the largest in the Middle East and has a modern clinical laboratory, an X-ray department, and six major sections: surgery, internal medicine, pediatrics, gynaecology and obstetrics, infectious diseases and pulmonary tuberculosis. It is hoped to re-start soon, in co-operation with UNRWA, a training school for refugee nurses.

Also on the Mount of Olives are two remarkable institutions for Arab boys, operated directly by LWF's Department of World Service. One is a School for Apprentices, where trades such as

carpentry, shoe-making and blacksmithery are taught. Over 65% of the pupils are refugees and almost all the apprentices are able to support themselves on leaving the School. Vocational training is also given in the second institution, a home and school for blind boys, where the pupils are taught handicrafts which will help them to support themselves.

In addition to its mobile clinics, the LWF operates seven static clinics in Jordan. Since the LWF began its medical work in Jordan in 1949, over a million and a quarter patients have been treated. Roughly half of them are refugees.

Refugees, too, form half of the children who line up for daily hot meals at the LWF soup kitchen in Beit Sahur, a village not far from Jerusalem. Part of the expenses of the soup kitchen are paid for by UNRWA, while a second soup kitchen in Jericho is a joint Lutheran - Mennonite venture. In addition, LWF runs eight milk centres which serve nearly 10,000 beneficiaries in 11 frontier villages.

Quite early in World Refugee Year, the Lutheran World Federation was able to announce that it had already reached its WRY target - a million dollars. The WRY funds allocated to Jordan are to be used for an expansion of vocational training at the Trade School on the Mount of Olives, for vocational training scholarships to enable refugee apprentices to work and study in Europe, for sewing centres for refugee women and girls, for two additional static clinics, for the rebuilding of the nurses home at the Augusta Victoria Hospital and for part of the cost of a rehabilitation centre for crippled children, to be set up and run jointly by several voluntary agencies.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is a special, temporary, non-political body established by the General Assembly of the United Nations in December 1949. In co-operation with the host governments (Jordan, Lebanon and the United Arab Republic) it carries out its two-fold task: immediate: to provide food, health services, education, training and shelter for the refugees; long-term: to assist the refugees to become self-supporting.

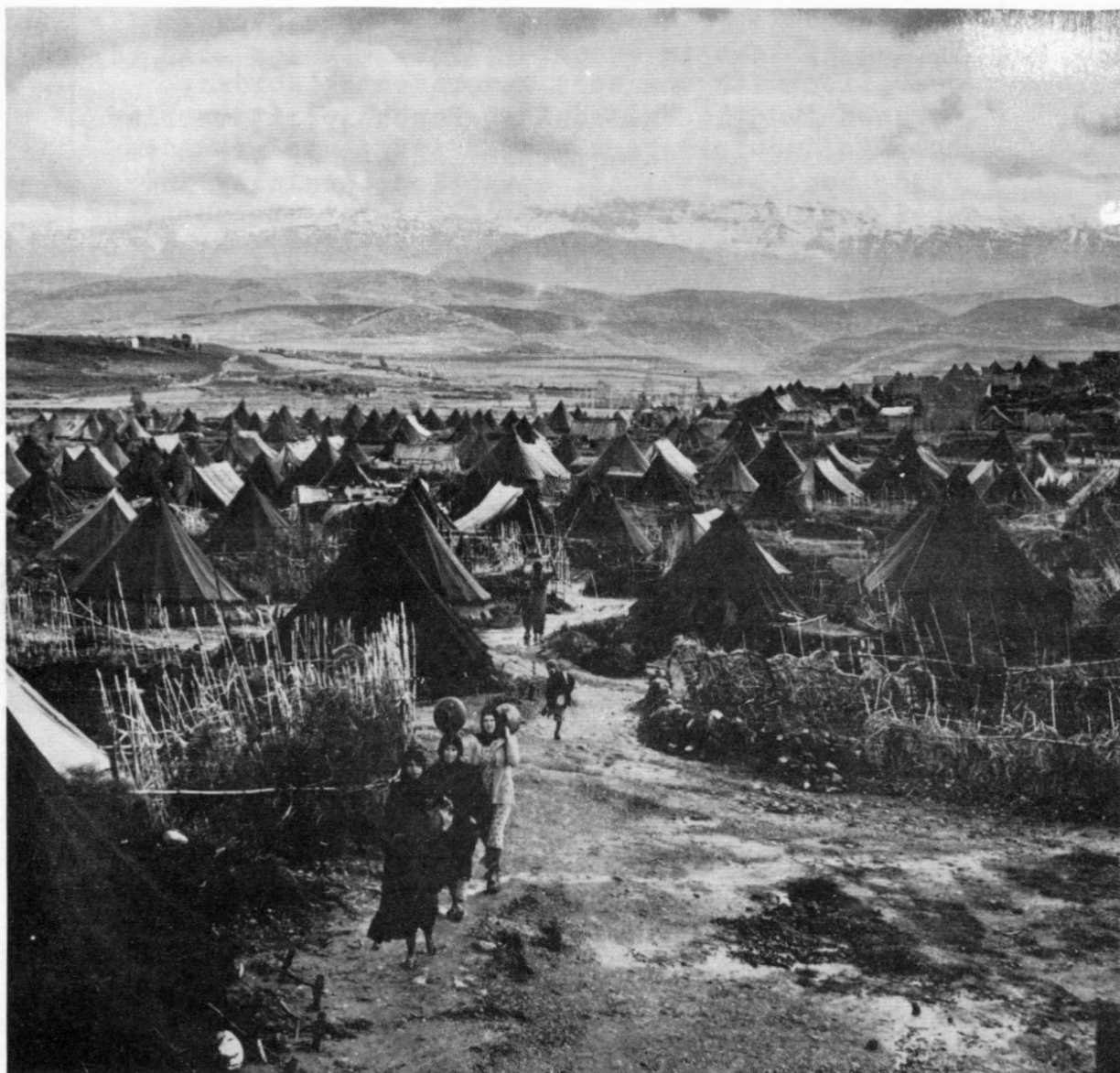
UNRWA began work in May of 1950 and its present mandate expires on 30 June 1963.

All inquiries for information should be addressed to:

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(For information purposes - Not an official record).



Nahr El Bared Refugee Camp as it was
in the early days of UNRWA