



PALESTINE REFUGEES TODAY

An UNRWA Newsletter

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Refugee Mother and Child at an Experimental Health Centre

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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, or from the UNRWA Liaison Office, Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland.

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A CHRISTMAS REUNION?

If 72-year-old Nicola Musa Salameh from Bethlehem has a Christmas present this year, he will receive it by the Mandelbaum Gate.

The Mandelbaum Gate, on the outskirts of "Old" Jerusalem, is the only official border crossing between Israel and Jordan. And once a year, at Christmas time, some 2,000 Arab Christians are permitted to pass through it -- to come from Israel and join members of their families in Jordan, so they may go and celebrate Christmas together in the town where Jesus was born, in Bethlehem. They may stay for 36 hours, and then the borders are sealed to them for another year.

Nicola Musa Salameh will be waiting this year for his wife Nazira or his son Elias. He will not know which, if either, until two or three days before Christmas, when the list agreed upon first by the Government of Israel and then by the Government of Jordan is published in all the newspapers in Jordan.

Nazira Salameh lives in Jaffa, only an hour's bus drive from the Mandelbaum Gate. But the last time her husband saw her was nearly two years ago, and at that time she was crippled with arthritis. Since then, there has been no word about her. Nicola does not know if he will ever see her again.

When Nicola and Nazira parted on 9 May, 1948, it was to have been for 15 days. They had been warned that troubles resulting from the United Nations Partition decision were expected to come to a head during the two weeks around the expiry on 15 May of the British Mandate for Palestine. Nicola preferred to take the children out of harm's way, but his wife said she would stay in Jaffa and one of the sons remained by her side. So Nicola left behind all his possessions and the roomy house where he and his wife had watched their children grow up. He also left his bakery which he and his brothers had worked hard to make the most up-to-date of its kind in Jaffa.

"We left for 15 days," said Nicola, "and now it is going on for 15 years."

If Nazira or Elias are permitted to see Nicola this Christmas, the old man will bring them to his brother's house in Bethlehem. This is where he lives now, for he is no longer able to work. For years, he made and sold boxes from scrap wood, until the doctor advised him to stop. He lived for a while with his son Musa in Libya. But then he returned, to be taken in by his brother in Bethlehem, in a house where 22 persons live. Nicola must sleep in the children's room, with seven youngsters.

Nicola hopes his wife will come this Christmas. But he wishes more that a government arrangement could be made so that he might go back to her and to his home in Jaffa.

"I am an old man, now," he says, "and sick. And I am alone. Who is there to take care of me? No one, no -- there is no one better than my wife."

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IN BRIEF

Vocational Scholarships

UNRWA is seeking contributions towards the cost of training young refugees in its vocational and teacher training centres. These contributions take the form of "vocational scholarships" of \$500, which covers the cost of training one young man or woman at a centre for one year. The drive was launched in the United Kingdom with a gift of \$14,000 from the United Nations Association for Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The money has been allocated to cover a year's tuition for 28 trainees at the Agency's Wadi Seer Vocational Training Centre near Jordan's capital city of Amman. UNRWA hopes to raise money for 2,000 of these \$500 grants in each of the next two years.

In our last Newsletter we reported on a gift of medical supplies from American Middle East Relief Inc. (AMER) which had resulted in vocational scholarships for one year for ten refugee youths. AMER had agreed that the money the Agency would otherwise have spent on supplies should be used for the scholarships. Another generous gift of medical supplies from AMER has just been announced and it is expected that it will result in savings to UNRWA sufficient to finance the training at Wadi Seer Vocational Training Centre of a further twelve young refugees.

Visitors

Senator Hubert Humphrey (Minnesota), Assistant Majority Leader and Member of the United States Senate Foreign Relations Committee, visited UNRWA installations in Jordan and Lebanon at the end of October. He was on an official fact-finding tour of the Middle East.

In mid-November, U.S. Congressman William T. Cahill, Republican from New Jersey, toured UNRWA installations in Jordan. Also in mid-November, U.S. Congressman Lawrence Curtis, Republican from Massachusetts and a Member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, visited UNRWA camps in Lebanon; while a third congressman, Robert Barry, Republican from New York, conferred on the problem of the Palestine refugees. The Congressmen were here to acquaint themselves with the situation in the Middle East.

Mr. R.A.D. Ford, Canadian Ambassador to the United Arab Republic, made an official trip to the Gaza Strip to visit the Canadian-donated maternity clinic at UNRWA's Khan Yunis camp. The Ambassador arrived just in time to congratulate the mother of the first baby born in the new clinic. On 28 October, he presented Fatmi Abdullah Hamdan with a layette for her two-day old son Abdul Rahman. The money needed to build the 12-bed clinic, some \$6,000, was given by the officers and men of the Canadian contingent in the United Nations Emergency Force, as a Christmas present last year.

Hugh Downs, well known television personality familiar to millions of Americans who view the nightly Jack Paar Show, took a trip through Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, and Jordan in mid-November, to see the historical sites. En route he visited an UNRWA camp and vocational training centre

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YWCA's New Success Story

When two months ago the World YWCA and the Jordan YWCA jointly announced that they would open a "pre-school class" for just over a dozen small children in Aqabat Jaber camp near Jericho, they were taken by surprise by the immense popularity of the new venture. Almost immediately, the class had to be expanded to take in fifty small refugees aged four to six, and many hundreds more would like to attend if they could. The class is in the charge of a trained nursery teacher, herself a refugee, and UNRWA supplies milk and daily hot meals for the children. The emphasis is on health, manners and cleanliness and twice a week the mothers of the pupils themselves attend a hygiene class.

The effect of the new class is already very striking. The children are brighter, healthier, and more responsive than they used to be.

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Contribution from the Government of Kuwait

UNRWA has been informed that the Government of Kuwait has decided to make a contribution the equivalent of \$120,000 to the Agency's budget for the year 1962. UNRWA has expressed to the Government its "heartfelt thanks" for the donation, which represents the Kuwait Government's first contribution to the ordinary budget of the Agency. A special donation of 50,000 Jordan dinars (\$140,000) was received earlier this year through the Government of Jordan for the extension to the Wadi Seer Vocational Training Centre.

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Moroccan Donation

A royal gift from Morocco -- a clinic for Palestine refugees in the Syrian Arab Republic -- is now in use. King Hassan of Morocco, while he was on a tour of the area two years ago, made a donation of \$22,454 in the name of his father the late King Mohammed V for a clinic for the refugees. Another \$6,600 has been given towards it by the Palestine Arab Refugee Institute, the office of the Syrian Government which is concerned with the Arab refugees. The clinic, spacious and well-equipped, has a staff of 12. It is for use by refugees in Yarmouk camp, just outside Damascus.

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UNRWA VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTRE

OPENS IN DAMASCUS

Another large UNRWA vocational training centre has opened, this one in the Syrian Arab Republic.

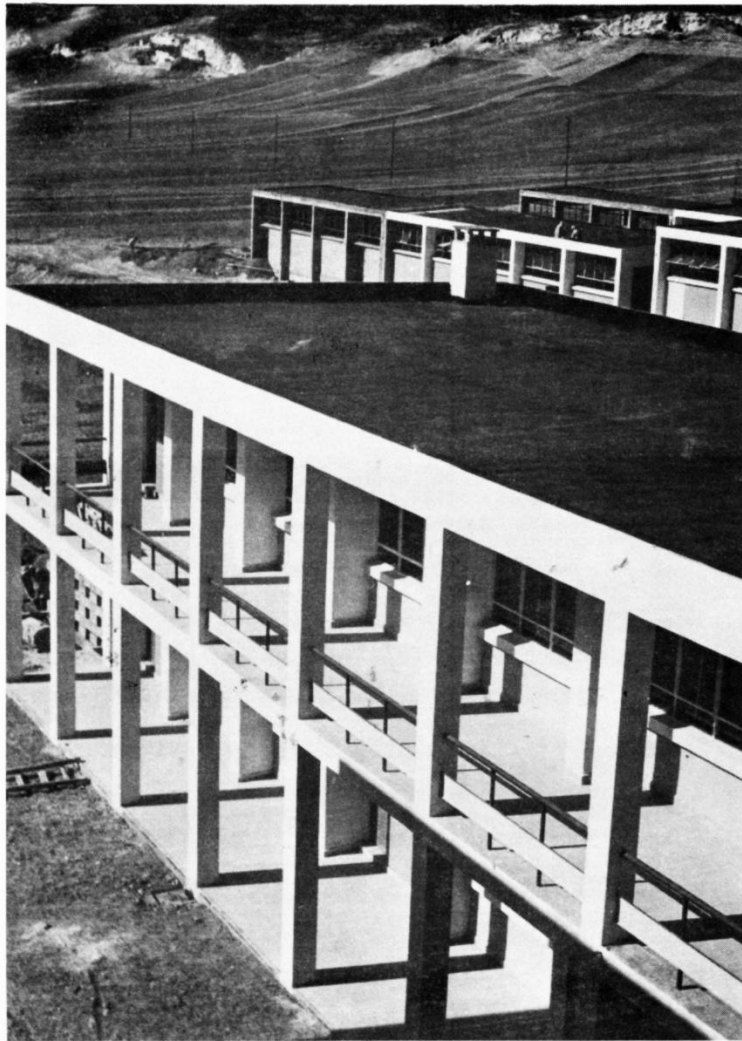
And now Palestine refugee youth in three of the four host countries where the Agency operates have the opportunity to learn a trade in school. A centre is scheduled to open in the fourth country, Lebanon, in 1962.

The Damascus Vocational Training Centre, a short distance outside the capital city, opened its doors to 180 students from all over the Syrian Arab Republic on 4 November. Eventual capacity will be 392 trainees.

Their instructors, who come not only from Syria but from Jordan, the Gaza Strip, and Lebanon as well, had all undergone a special preliminary six-month training course before the school opened, at the "father" of all the vocational training centres -- Kalandia school near Jerusalem, Jordan. Supervising the training programme in Damascus are four international specialists, loaned to UNRWA from UNESCO.

The Centre principal is Mahmoud Hamad, a Palestine Refugee himself. Hamad, who has his

master's degree in agriculture from the University of Kansas in the United States, was chief of the department of pomology (the science of fruit-growing) in the Syrian Ministry of Agriculture.



Funds to build and equip the centre, some \$798,500, came from the United Kingdom Committee for World Refugee Year (\$586,000) and the Federal German World Refugee Year Committee (\$212,500).

Nine industrial trades are being taught: in the electrical field for electricians, wiremen/cable jointers, and radio-TV mechanics; in the building field, for carpenter/wood machinists and plumbers; and in the mechanical field for fitter/machinists, sheetmetal workers, diesel plant site mechanics, and auto mechanics.

Two semi-professional trades are also offered -- for architectural draughtsmen and in business and office practice. The proposal is to transfer these trainees next year to a second UNRWA centre planned for the Syrian Arab Republic, this one to the north in Homs.

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UNRWA TO RELEASE COLOUR FILM

UNRWA will shortly release a documentary film in colour on the Palestine refugees, entitled "Tomorrow Begins Today". It has been directed by Canadian film director Terence Macartney-Filgate, 1960 Grand Prix winner at the Cannes Film Festival.

The film, which runs about 15 minutes, places the Palestine refugee problem in the context of a Middle East which has seen conflict since the beginning of time. It goes on to picture the life of the refugees in their camps, to show how UNRWA eases their lot through relief services, and concludes by emphasizing the problems faced by the younger generation of refugees who, with the aid of UNRWA education and, for some, vocational training, must adapt themselves to the fast-changing world of today.

The 35 millimeter colour film has been shot in Eastmancolor and processed by Technicolor. The film will also be available in colour in 16 mm. and in a black and white 16 mm. version for

television programmes. The original commentary is in English, but other language versions will be available at a later date.

Inquiries should be addressed to:

UNRWA Liaison Office, United Nations, New York, U.S.A.

UNRWA Liaison Office, Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland.

UNRWA Public Information Office, UNESCO Building, Beirut,
Lebanon.

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WORLD REFUGEE YEAR GIFT FROM
NORWAY

A World Refugee Year donation of \$100,000 has been received by UNRWA from the Norwegian Refugee Council. Twenty thousand dollars of this gift represents a Norwegian Government contribution to the Council of the proceeds of the sale of World Refugee Year stamps.

The donation will cover the cost of construction of an extension to the Agency's seven-year old Vocational Training Centre in Gaza. Seven new classrooms will be added, as well as two new staff houses, dormitories, a common room and library, while the dining, kitchen and laundry facilities will be expanded and certain improvements made to existing installations. The capacity of the centre will be increased by 176 trainees, bringing the total up to 368.

New courses added as a result of the Norwegian donation will include refrigeration mechanics (the first to be given in any of UNRWA's vocational training centres), plumbing, architectural and mechanical draughtsmanship, business and office practice. Further, additional courses will be given in one trade already being taught: radio-television mechanics.

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EXPERIMENT IN SAVING LIVES

UNRWA, this past summer, introduced to the Middle East a new method to combat the season's number one infant killer -- infantile diarrhea.

Since mid-August, it has been running a simple Out-Patient



Rehydration Centre in Maghazi Camp in the Gaza Strip. Mothers bring their ailing infants here on a daily basis for treatment. And though the Agency will not be able to assess results until after mid-December when the experiment winds up, senior UNRWA medical staff have already commented:

"It is clear that here we are saving lives. If only we had the funds, we could use these centres on a wider scale."

Gastro-enteritis, or diarrhea and vomiting, is a common occurrence

during the hot summer months in the Middle East, especially under conditions of poor sanitation and poverty. Continued attacks of diarrhea frequently result in dehydration or, more simply, a lack of water and other substances, known as electrolytes or minerals, in the body.

Since these materials are necessary to absorb food intake and to maintain all other body functions, their loss can result in death.

The most severe cases — perhaps ten percent of those requiring treatment — are hospitalized. But the less severe cases can also be dangerous. To cope with as many of these as possible the Agency decided to open the Rehydration Centre. In preparation, UNRWA doctor Adib Jabra and two nurses were sent for ten days to the American University Hospital in Beirut to study the technique to be employed.

This is called the intra-nasal gastric drip method. It involves using a tube to introduce the remedial liquid directly into the baby's stomach, through the nose. The liquid is a solution, including glucose, to restore the blood volume and tissue fluids, and salts, to correct the electrolyte balance in the body. The liquid is administered very slowly, drop by drop, and thus the baby will not vomit it, as he would if it were given orally. On the other hand, the regular treatment in UNRWA clinics is to give a liquid solution through subcutaneous injections, but obviously the amount which can thus be assimilated is far less.

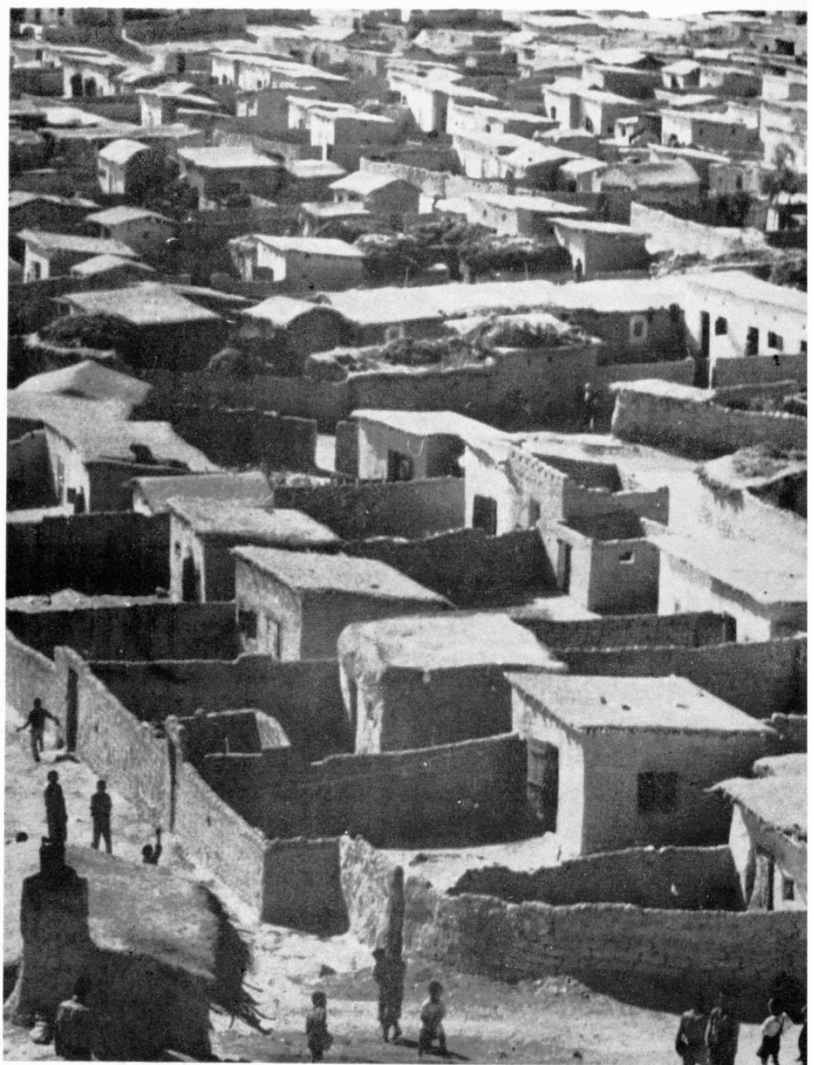
After the infants show some improvement, they are given food --- UNRWA's time-tested "post-diarrhea menu" --- consisting of lebneh (cottage cheese made with a kind of thick yoghurt) with a little olive oil, and small amounts of carrot puree, mashed bananas and rice, all with high nutritional value and easily digested.

Medicine --- in most cases sulphaguanadine --- to combat infection is of secondary importance, for by the time the baby reaches the centre, dehydration is the urgent problem.

So far, the cases treated in the Rehydration Centre are responding well to this treatment, and thus the Centre appears to suggest an answer to a serious area-wide problem. Meanwhile, the mothers of Maghazi Camp have gratefully welcomed the treatment, as they see their babies, who might otherwise have died, beginning instead to regain their appetites, put on weight and look alive again.



Basketball game
in Jericho Camp



NEW LOOK IN THE CAMPS ROUND THE WORLD'S OLDEST CITY

When the United States Cultural Centre in Amman, Jordan, offered to arrange for their travelling attraction -- the "Phillips 66ers" -- to play an exhibition basketball game at a refugee camp, the idea seemed a first rate one. The camp chosen was Aqabat Jaber, just outside Jericho, which dating back 9,000 years, is often described as the oldest city in the world.

It's rare that the refugees in this camp, or indeed that any camp dwellers, have a chance to break the monotonous round of their daily lives -- especially with a novelty such as this top-flight U.S. amateur basketball team, representing Phillips Petroleum Company of Bartelsville, Oklahoma.

But there was one major drawback -- no basketball court. And the offer came only two weeks before the big game was set.

The time was short but the time was ripe. Things had been happening in Aqabat Jaber and its three sister camps in the Jordan Valley over the past year, which had had no precedent or counterpart anywhere in UNRWA's field of operations.

Galvanized by Area Officer Antranig Bakerjian and an enthusiastic office and field staff -- all of them refugees themselves -- the camp inhabitants are beginning to develop a feeling of civic responsibility towards these unwelcoming camps where they must live.

And each camp has been working since last January on a set of "targets" for 1961, which, as the year draws to a close, are showing a surprising degree of success.

One of the targets for Aqabat Jaber camp was to set the young men at the Youth Activities Centre to make 10,000 mudbricks needed for fencing in the camp. Another was construction of an asphalted road into the camp. Towards this, the refugees themselves collected \$1,260 -- a large sum in total, though it represented an outlay of only four cents per refugee in this large camp of nearly 30,000 persons.

Then came the problem of the basketball court. The road contractor offered his services to level the ground for the court. The youths hauled and carried the bricks they had made during the year to the masons who constructed a wall around the court. And the nearby YMCA Vocational Training Centre made the stands and back-boards for the nets.

With everyone working, by the time the big day arrived -- the 29th of October -- the court was ready. The Phillips 66ers gave a coaching session to the basketball teams from the Jordan Valley camps and, after an exhibition game which was watched by a standing audience of some 5,000, the players donated \$75 from their own food allowances as a "thank you" to the camp.

The Phillips 66ers have toured many underprivileged areas and have seen how poverty breeds listlessness. But their unanimous comment, on hearing a basketball court had been erected for them almost overnight, was:

"Here are people who are doing something for themselves."

Could such an event have taken place 10 years ago -- or even five? Opinions differ among the Jericho staff, but everyone remembers that in the beginning, the refugees often refused to give up their tents for simple mud-brick huts. They felt that this, and any other attempt to improve their environment, was an indirect way to make them accept as their permanent homes these camps where they had to congregate. They did not forget that the United Nations General Assembly, in its resolution 194(III) of December 1948 recommended that "the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live in peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return." Though recalled by the Assembly each year, the resolution has never been implemented.

Commenting on the more sanguine approach to life which is emerging in the Jericho camps today, a refugee doctor explained:

"At first after the tragedy our society was in a state of shock. Now it is awakening. Our youngsters are going to schools and some of those who have left school are already working. Our conditions are improving."

The success of the 1961 "targets" shows that the refugees are themselves today doing what they can to improve these conditions. Small camp gardens and "model" gardens in front of schools are being cultivated, partly through refugee labour, partly through refugee contributions, partly through money brought in by selling composted garbage. A camp doctor is receiving cooperation from mothers of 637 under-nourished infants in a drive to bring as many babies in the camp as possible up to standard weight. School youngsters in one camp are helping to control traffic congestion; in another, they are inspecting the cleanliness of the food sold by peddlers. The staff, as their own special project, have built a nursery where 30,000 seedlings will shortly be ready for distribution to camp residents.

And as 1961 draws to a close, attention is being diverted from these projects, for the time has come to plan -- and start to work on -- the targets for 1962.

But beneath the surface, there still lies the hard fact that a substantial majority of the 70,000 refugees in camps in the Jordan Valley do not find enough work to make a living and must rely on their UNRWA rations for their daily bread.

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THE LAST FLIGHT OF THE
UNRWA PLANE

Captain Ralph E. Shorter piloted the last flight of the UNRWA plane, a round trip to the Gaza Strip, on 31 October and thus wound up nearly seven years and three-quarters of a million accident-free miles flying for the Agency.

The 50-year-old veteran pilot, who counts historian Arnold Toynbee, U.S. Vice President Lyndon Johnson, publisher Henry Luce, and the late Dag Hammarskjöld among his passengers during his tour with UNRWA, is now based in Bombay.

He left Beirut for India at the controls of the white two-engined DC-3 "UNRWA plane", which has carried countless sick refugees needing special treatment, untold hundreds of Agency employees, and made manageable the wide-spread operations of the Agency.

Born "with a love for flying" in Melbourne, Australia, Captain Shorter worked his way through a university education and flight training with a job clerking for a local merchant.

"I learned to fly in single-engined World War I planes", he said, "and nearly every day we had to come down for a forced landing."

He left for England and the RAF in 1934, served as a Group Captain in the Pacific during World War II, and came to UNRWA in 1954 under charter from an Indian airline along with the plane and an all-Indian crew.

A symbol of safe air travel at UNRWA, Captain Shorter flew to all major points in the Agency's operations, except nearby Syria -- from Beirut headquarters to Jerusalem and Amman, Jordan, to Cairo, and to the isolated Gaza Strip.

He began with UNRWA in the days when commercial plane service was still scanty between Lebanon and Jordan. This was the time, too, when the UNRWA plane was the only way to get from Beirut to the Gaza Strip -- unless one wanted to fly to Cairo and then take an all-day train or road trip across the Sinai Peninsula.

The airstrip in Gaza is an informal affair. Just a runway of hard-packed earth, it is good only for fair weather, and Captain Shorter recalls many a trip when he had to turn around and go back on receiving a radio message 15 minutes away, reporting it was too muddy for a landing.

Sheep, camels, and little Bedouin boys wander across the strip from time to time, and recently a nine-hole golf course has been put in on the outskirts. Club Rule No.1 reads: "Members will acquaint themselves with aircraft schedules".

The United Nations Emergency Force moved into the Gaza Strip in 1956, after the Suez crisis, and a UNEF plane doubled the airstrip's traffic.

UNRWA will now be serviced between Beirut and Gaza by a new UNEF "Caribou" carrier, belonging to the Canadian Royal Air Force, while commercial charter flights will be used for duty trips to and from Jordan.

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, the Syrian Arab Republic, 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 1950 and its present mandate expires on 30 June 1963.

Further information may be obtained from:

UNRWA Liaison Office
Palais des Nations
Geneva
Switzerland

UNRWA Public Information Office
UNESCO Building
Beirut
Lebanon

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(For information purposes - Not an official record).