



# PALESTINE REFUGEES TODAY

## An UNRWA Newsletter

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REFUGEE GIRLS IN SCHOOL

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The cover photo shows one of the increasing number of refugee girls in UNRWA schools. (See page 1).

All photographs in this Newsletter, and other pictures of Arab refugees and of UNRWA's work, may be obtained from the Public Information Office, UNRWA, Museitbeh Quarter, Beirut, Lebanon.

The text of all articles in this Newsletter may be reproduced without acknowledgement.

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## REFUGEE GIRLS IN SCHOOL: MORE AND LONGER.

Samira Ahmad thinks of herself as a schoolgirl, not a statistic.

Samira, 14 years old, has been attending school for the past eight years, and has enjoyed almost every moment of it.

But unknown to Samira, she and her school friends have, by their attendance at school, created some revealing and significant statistics. The statistics point out two trends in education which are quite revolutionary in the Arab world, and which will have a considerable impact on both the present and the future generations.

The two trends: an increasing number of refugee girls are going to school each year, and staying there longer.

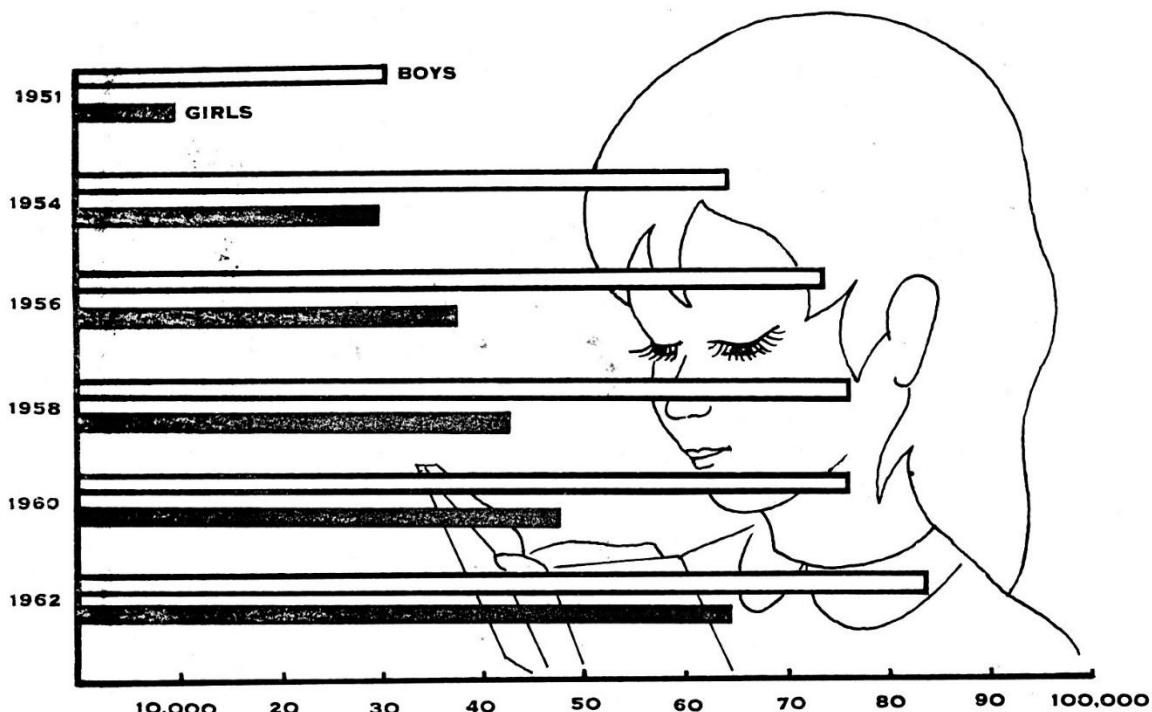
If Samira had been born a generation earlier, she would probably never have gone to school. Even if she had been born four or five years earlier, she would probably have left school when she was 10. For, until very recently, the tradition of the area was such that few girls went beyond elementary school. While the sons were sent to school, the daughters were often kept at home, or taken from school after only a few years of elementary education.

### The old tradition changes

This tradition is reflected in UNRWA's school enrolment figures in the first years of the Agency's operations. Of the 43,000 refugee children in UNRWA schools in 1951, only 27 per cent, slightly more than a quarter, were girls.

Since then, the proportion of girls in UNRWA schools has increased steadily: in May 1955, one third of the pupils were girls; in 1960, the figure stood at 39 per cent. The latest figures, for the 1962-63 academic year, show that 43 per cent of the children in UNRWA schools are girls.

NUMBER OF REFUGEE CHILDREN IN UNRWA SCHOOLS  
showing the increasing proportion of girls.



Equally significant are the figures showing the number of years refugee girls stay in school. In May 1954, only five per cent of the 4,000 refugee children in UNRWA preparatory or secondary schools were girls. In 1958, it was 14 per cent; in 1960, 22 per cent, and in the current academic year, 34 per cent of the young refugees enrolled in UNRWA preparatory schools are girls. (A full education consists of six years in elementary school, three in preparatory school, and four in secondary school).

The speed with which this revolution in education has taken place is illustrated by the rapid jump in the number of refugee girls

in preparatory and secondary schools (UNRWA, private and Government) in Jordan: in 1954 there were eight; in May 1962, there were 4,846.

The crucial years

The significance of this trend lies in the fact that the years of education following the first six years (elementary school) are crucial in determining the level of literacy.

A child who leaves school after only six years may be able to read and write, but he or she will not have fully mastered the language. In the environment of the refugee home, with little opportunity for reading and self-improvement, it is probable that such a child would become less, rather than more literate, and that as an adult, he or she could be classed as only semi-literate.

But with an additional two or three years of preparatory education, children have a chance to become fully literate, and remain so all their lives.

The impact of an increasingly literate female population is two-fold.

A higher level of education for girls will help them to be better wives and mothers and will facilitate the entry into professions or trades of those who seek such employment. The trend towards a better basic education for girls goes hand in hand with the increasing interest that Arab girls are taking in careers.

Illustrative of this growing interest is the fact that UNRWA received over 800 applications for the 244 places in the Agency's new vocational and teacher training centre for refugee girls, which was opened in Jordan last October. The minimum requirement for candidates was nine years of schooling. Five years ago, there would have been few girls who would have even met these minimum requirements.

More literate mothers

Perhaps even more significant is the effect that better-educated girls will have on the next generation. As in most parts of the world, it is the mother who exercises most influence over her children during the early, formative years of their lives. With an ever-increasing number of girls attending school, a greater proportion of the next generation - boys and girls - will grow up in the care and company of literate mothers.

Among the beneficial results will be the increased rate of learning of these children, and the increased status and influence of women in the next generation.

The increase in the number of refugee girls attending school, and in the number of years they stay there, is part of the social revolution which is taking place throughout the Middle East at an ever increasing pace.

As Samira Ahmad and her classmates walk to school each day, they are not only creating better statistics, but also building the foundations for better lives for themselves, their future families and their communities.

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IN BRIEF

Visitors

Dr. John Richardson, Principal of the Regent Street Polytechnic Institute, London, spent 10 days in the Middle East, at the request of the U.K. Government's Department of Technical Co-operation, studying the Agency's vocational training programme. Dr. Richardson, one of Britain's top experts in the field of vocational training, visited all four "host" countries (Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Gaza Strip) and saw eight of the Agency's nine training centres as well as other training institutions in the area.

Mrs. Helvi Sipila, Chief Commissioner of the Unions of Finnish Girl Guides, and Chairman of the Secretariat of Finnish Zonta Clubs, paid visits to UNRWA's Siblin Vocational Training Centre in Lebanon, and the Girls' Teacher and Vocational Training Centre in Ramallah, Jordan. The Finnish Girl Guides are sponsoring three refugee girls in the preparatory nursing class at the girls' centre for two years, and the North European Zonta Clubs have recently given another \$500 scholarship for a trainee at that centre. They have previously given a two-year scholarship to a girl in the infant leaders' course.

Professor Henry Arthur, Director of the Programme in Agriculture and Business at Harvard University's Graduate School of Business Administration, and Mrs. Arthur visited UNRWA camps in the Baalbek area of Lebanon during a brief stay in that country. Professor Arthur succeeded Dr. John H. Davis at Harvard when the latter became Commissioner-General of UNRWA.

Mrs. Genevieve Maxwell, columnist of the Daily Star, Beirut, and Mr. Edmond Monaghan, a Canadian teacher and writer who is presently teaching at Beirut's International College, visited the Agency's Girls' Teacher and Vocational Training Centre at Ramallah, Jordan.

#### Donations

The United Kingdom Save the Children Fund will sponsor the entire class of 20 girls in the home economics course at UNRWA's Girls' Teacher and Vocational Training Centre at Ramallah, Jordan, with its donation of £7,200 (\$20,160). The contribution, made from the SCF's Freedom From Hunger Campaign funds, will provide 40 vocational training scholarships of \$500 each, enough to sponsor the 20 girls for their complete two-year courses.

A donation of £5,760 (\$16,000) from the Board of the British Bank of the Middle East, London, has provided two-year scholarships for a group of 16 young refugees in the business and office practice course at the Agency's Siblin Vocational Training Centre in Lebanon. Mr. Henry B. Sinclair, Manager of the British Bank of the Middle East in Beirut, presented the contribution on behalf of the Bank's Board to Dr. John H. Davis, Commissioner-General of UNRWA, in January.

A donation of \$50,000 made last year by Misereor, the Federal German Catholic Bishops' Campaign Against Hunger and Disease in the World, has provided 32 two-year vocational training scholarships, and 36 one-year scholarships, over the three academic years 1961-62, 1962-63 and 1963-64. Young refugees presently receiving training with Misereor scholarships are attending Siblin Vocational Training Centre (Lebanon), and Wadi Seer and Kalandia centres (Jordan).

The Middlesbrough Freedom From Hunger Campaign Committee in the United Kingdom has pledged to provide two-year scholarships for the entire class of 16 trainees in the diesel plant site mechanics course at UNRWA's Wadi-Seer Vocational Training Centre in Jordan. The contribution will amount to £5,760 (\$16,130).

A donation of medical supplies made through American Middle East Relief, Inc., (Amer) will enable 27 young refugees to attend UNRWA training centres. The donation, which includes aspirin, vitamins and vaseline, represents a saving of nearly \$13,500 to UNRWA. This amount, which would otherwise have been spent by the Agency in purchasing these essential medical supplies, will be used for vocational training scholarships. The drugs were donated through AMER by E. R. Squibb and Sons, Mead Johnson, and Wyeth Laboratories, three American pharmaceutical companies. Also included is a special contribution of 10 tons of vaseline from Chesebrough-Ponds, which will fill UNRWA's requirement for vaseline for one year. The vaseline is valued at \$2,250. Included in the AMER donation is a contribution from U.S. OMEN, which will provide two scholarships.

The United States Committee for Refugees has donated \$3,000, which has been used to provide vocational training scholarships for six young refugees in the auto mechanics course at Wadi Seer Vocational Training Centre, Jordan.

The Lutheran World Federation has sponsored 17 trainees with its contribution of \$10,000. (See page 11 for further details.)

A contribution of \$1,000 from the American Friends of the Middle East has provided two scholarships: one for a trainee in the auto mechanics course at Wadi Seer Vocational Training Centre, Jordan, and one for a young man in the electricians' course at Kalandia Vocational Training Centre, also in Jordan.

A donation of \$5,000 from the American Council for Judaism  
- Philanthropic Fund will cover the cost of training 10 young refugees  
for one year in one of UNRWA's nine training centres.

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#### A DOLL FOR CAROLINE

Caroline Kennedy, the five-year-old daughter of President John F. Kennedy of the United States, received a rather special doll for Christmas.



The doll dressed in the traditional costume of the women of Bethlehem, was designed and made by a young refugee woman now living in Lebanon. It was flown to Palm Beach, Florida, and given to Caroline just before Christmas.

The doll was made by Miss Souraya Zacharia, who used authentic material from Jordan for the flowing robes, and even moulded and painted the face by hand.

Souraya holds a doll dressed in traditional Turkish costume (left), and one whose costume was very chic in Paris in the 17th century.

"Making dolls has been my hobby for years," said Souraya, who now works as a typist. "But of all the dolls I've made, this is the one I'm most proud of. I do hope Caroline likes it."

The doll, about two feet tall, wears a long robe embroidered with the traditional designs of the Bethlehem area. Her cone-shaped hat is pinned with small replicas of the gold and bronze Ottoman coins that the women of the region wear across their foreheads.

Like Caroline's doll, each of Souraya's dolls are meticulously dressed, after thorough research into the styles and materials of the original costumes.

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#### LATEST STATISTICS

The number of refugees registered with the Agency continues to grow, for each year about 40,000 babies are born to refugee families.

During 1962, the number of registered refugees increased by almost 28,000.

The table below shows the number of registered refugees, and the number of those entitled to rations, in each of the four host countries, as at 1 January 1963.

COUNTRY	REFUGEES ENTITLED TO RATIONS.	REGISTERED REFUGEES
Jordan	433,233	644,940
Gaza	240,642	273,038
Lebanon	108,568	146,969
Syria	99,053	124,626
 Total 1/1/63	881,496	1,189,573
 Total 1/1/62	874,135	1,161,874
 Increase	7,361	27,701

Of the 1,189,573 registered refugees, 491,364 or approximately 41 per cent, live in the Agency's 57 camps.

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#### LUTHERAN AID TO THE REFUGEES

The cornerstone of a \$350,000 vocational training centre, which will include many Palestine refugees in its enrolment, was laid in Jordan in December.

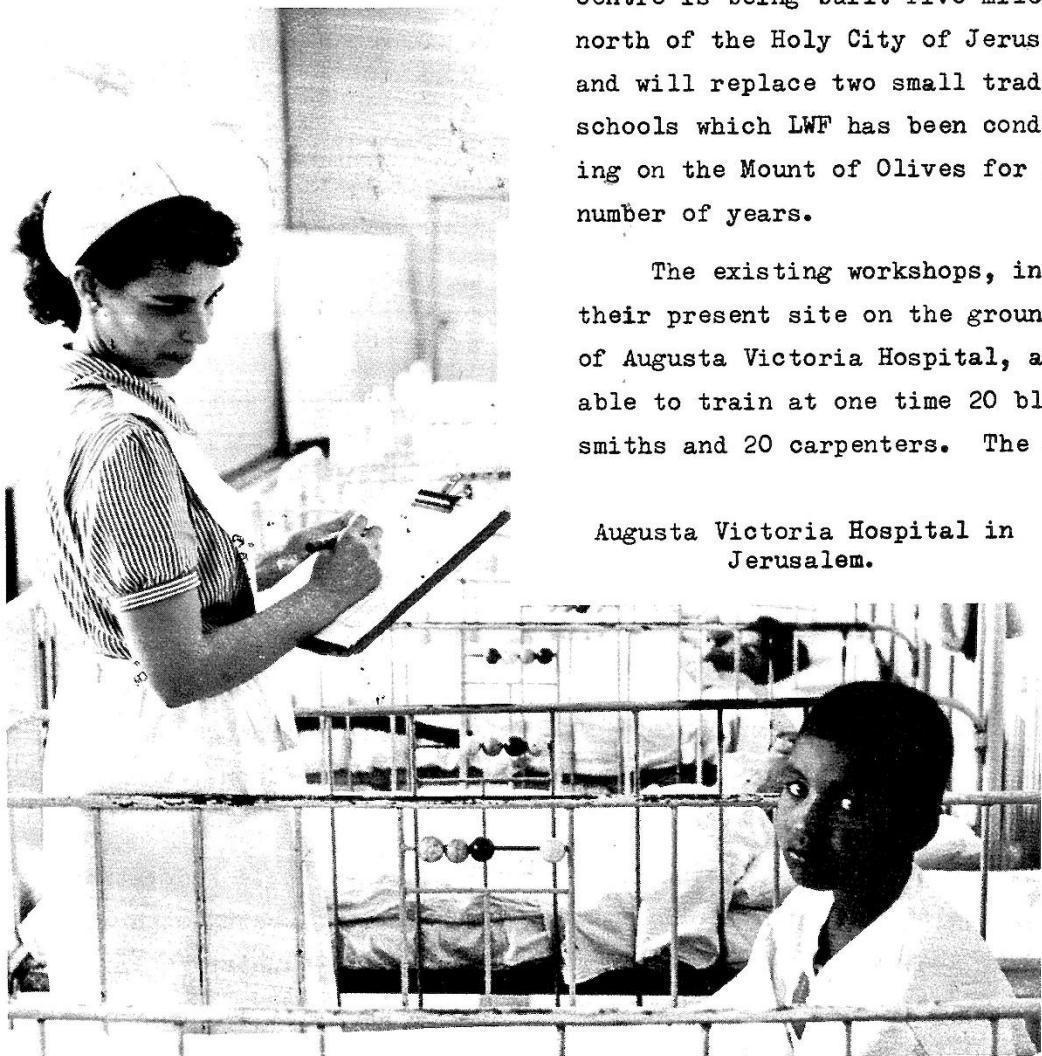
The centre is being built by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), one of the largest of the voluntary agencies working with UNRWA to assist the refugees. As with many of the voluntary agencies,

LWF assists many refugees through the channels of the Agency, and also supplements UNRWA assistance by giving aid to those not eligible for aid from the Agency.

The new training centre is the largest of LWF's aid programmes, which also include medical care, nursing training, a school for the blind and the provision of clothing. The centre is being built five miles north of the Holy City of Jerusalem, and will replace two small trade schools which LWF has been conducting on the Mount of Olives for a number of years.

The existing workshops, in their present site on the grounds of Augusta Victoria Hospital, are able to train at one time 20 blacksmiths and 20 carpenters. The new

Augusta Victoria Hospital in Jerusalem.



centre will accommodate 30 trainees in each of these trades, and introduce a course for auto mechanics which will have a capacity of 60 apprentices when the Centre is in full operation.

Scholarships to UNRWA

In addition to its own vocational training programme, LWF is assisting young refugee men to acquire skills through UNRWA's vocational training programme. A donation of \$10,000, made by LWF to UNRWA in January, will provide vocational training scholarships for 17 young refugees at UNRWA's Kalandia Vocational Training Centre in Jordan. The contribution will allow 14 trainees to complete one-year courses as wiremen, land surveyors and power overhead linesmen/cable jointers, and three young men to take two-year courses in business and office practice.

LWF is as active in the field of health as it is in the field of vocational training, maintaining a hospital, a nursing school and 15 clinics.

Augusta Victoria Hospital, near the summit of the Mount of Olives, is operated by LWF with a subsidy from UNRWA. The Agency reserves 284 of the hospital's 312 beds for refugee patients paying a subsidy of about \$330,000 annually.

Nursing school trains refugee girls

The nursing school conducted at the hospital trains both refugees and non-refugees. At present there are 18 student nurses in the first year, of whom eight are refugees, and 16 in the second year, six of them refugee girls. There is no third year class yet, since the present course was only started in 1961. When the school is running at full strength, the total operating cost will be about \$33,000 a year, of which UNRWA will pay \$5,000 for the training of refugee girls.

LWF also makes an annual grant to a nursing school in Damascus run by the Syrian Government's Palestine Arab Refugee Institute. In 1962, the grant amounted to \$2,800.

LWF maintains seven static clinics in Jordan, and three mobile clinics which serve the frontier villages and the Bedouin communities in the Jerusalem-Bethlehem area. There are five LWF clinics in Syria.

Used clothes from LWF

An important aspect of UNRWA's aid is the used clothing programme. The Agency depends entirely on voluntary agencies to collect the clothes, which are shipped to the Middle East at UNRWA's expense. One of the largest contributors of used clothing to UNRWA is LWF, which also assists the Agency by sorting and parcelling the clothes. LWF donates about 450 tons of clothing each year -- enough to supply 250,000 needy refugees with almost four pounds weight of clothing each.

In addition to supplying used clothing, LWF distributes new garments to children in UNRWA schools in Jordan through its Dorcas project. Every child in the first four elementary classes receives one garment each year. Last year, about 35,000 children benefited from this programme, which is financed by Lutheran World Relief.

LWF estimates that it gives assistance to more than 300,000 persons in Syria and Jordan each year. Many of these are refugees, whom LWF assists through UNRWA. This aid is invaluable, both to the refugees and to UNRWA, for the Agency could not provide the whole range of assistance without the help of voluntary agencies such as LWF.

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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: first: to provide food, health and welfare services, and shelter for the refugees; second: to provide education and training to refugee children and young adults including general education, vocational and teacher training, and university scholarships.

UNRWA began work in May 1950 and its mandate expires on 30 June 1965.

Further information may be obtained from :

UNRWA Liaison Office  
Palais Wilson,  
Geneva,  
Switzerland

UNRWA Public Information Office  
Museitbeh Quarter,  
Beirut,  
Lebanon

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(For information purposes - Not an official record)