



PALESTINE REFUGEES TODAY

An UNRWA Newsletter

Io. 30 January 1964



DR. JOHN H. DAVIS BIDS FAREWELL

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CONTENTS

General Assembly Passes Resolution on UNRWA	3
Mr. Laurence Michelmore Assumes Duties of Commissioner-General of UNRWA	4
In Brief.	5
Dr. Davis Bids Farewell to UNRWA Donations	
Government Pledges Indicate Support of UNRWA's Work	7
Skill + Tools = Work.	9
A Christmas Gift for Hajji.	11
ICVA Resolution Supports UNRWA.	13

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The cover picture shows Dr. John H. Davis, who served as Commissioner-General of UNRWA for five years until the end of 1963, bidding farewell to refugee leaders in the Gaza Strip.

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY PASSES RESOLUTION ON UNRWA

Following consideration of the Annual Report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the following resolution 1912 (XVIII) on 3 December 1963, with 82 votes in favour, 1 against and 14 abstentions:

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 194 (III) of 11 December 1948, 302 (IV) of 8 December 1949, 393 (V) and 394 (V) of 2 and 14 December 1950, 512 (VI) and 513 (VI) of 26 January 1952, 614 (VII) of 6 November 1952, 720 (VIII) of 27 November 1953, 818 (IX) of 4 December 1954, 916 (X) of 3 December 1955, 1018 (XI) of 28 February 1957, 1191 (XII) of 12 December 1957, 1315 (XIII) of 12 December 1958, 1456 (XIV) of 9 December 1959, 1604 (XV) of 21 April 1961, 1725 (XVI) of 20 December 1961 and 1856 (XVII) of 20 December 1962,

Noting the annual report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, covering the period from 1 July 1962 to 30 June 1963 [A/5513],

Noting with deep regret that the repatriation or compensation of the refugees as provided for in paragraph 11 of 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. Expresses its sincere appreciation to Dr. John H. Davis, on the occasion of his resignation as Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, for his efficient administration of the Agency during the past five years and for his dedicated service to the welfare of the refugees;

2. Expresses its thanks to the staff of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East for their continued faithful efforts to provide essential services for the Palestine refugees, and to the specialized agencies and private organizations for their valuable work in assisting the refugees;

3. Requests the Secretary-General to provide the staff and facilities that the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine may require in carrying on its work;

4. Calls upon the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine to continue its efforts for the implementation of paragraph 11 of resolution 194 (III);

5. Again directs attention to the precarious financial position of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and urges non-contributing Governments to contribute, and contributing Governments to consider increasing their contributions so that the Agency can carry out its essential programmes.

The adoption of the resolution was preceded by almost three weeks of discussion and debate on the Palestine problem in the General Assembly's Special Political Committee. The discussion opened with a statement from the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, Dr. John H. Davis. Delegates from 33 nations and a spokesman for a Palestine Arab delegation spoke during the discussion, which ranged over the whole Palestine problem. Most of the speakers commended the work of UNRWA, many of them singling out the Agency's programmes of education and vocational training for particular praise.

* * *

MR. LAURENCE MICHELMORE ASSUMES DUTIES
OF COMMISSIONER-GENERAL OF UNRWA

Mr. Laurence Michelmores assumed the duties of Commissioner-General of UNRWA on 1 January 1964, following the resignation, effective 31 December 1963, of Dr. John H. Davis.

Mr. Michelmores, who has been a United Nations official since 1946, is due to arrive in Beirut in mid-January. Prior to his appointment as Commissioner-General of UNRWA, he had served since 1959 as Deputy Director of Personnel of the United Nations Secretariat in New York.



Dr. Davis (left) and Mr. Michelmores (right)

IN BRIEF

Dr. Davis Bids Farewell to UNRWA

Dr. John H. Davis, who resigned as Commissioner-General of UNRWA on 31 December 1963, returned to Beirut in mid-December from New York, where he had presented his Annual Report and attended the discussions on the Palestine problem at the United Nations. Dr. Davis made a final tour of the "host" countries--Lebanon, Jordan, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Gaza Strip--to pay farewell calls on Heads of State, Government leaders, UNRWA staff and refugees.

Donations

The Norwegian Refugee Council has donated \$8,000 to cover the cost of providing scholarships for a class of 16 trainees in the first year of their two-year plumbing course at UNRWA's Gaza Vocational Training Centre. The Norwegian Refugee Council, which donated \$100,000 to finance the expansion of the Gaza Centre two years ago, has also pledged to sponsor the 16 trainees in their second year.

A further donation of medical supplies has been received from American Middle East Relief (AMER) in the United States. The shipment of drugs has resulted in a saving to UNRWA of approximately \$4,500 which would otherwise have been spent purchasing the supplies. The saving has been credited towards UNRWA's vocational training programme and will provide scholarships for young refugees at UNRWA training centres.

The International Federation of Business and Professional Women has donated three scholarships to cover the second year of training of the three girls sponsored by the Federation last year. The girls are in the clerk/typist course at UNRWA's girls' training centre at Ramallah, Jordan.

The American Machine and Foundry Company has donated a further \$1,000 to continue its university scholarship for a refugee student now in the third year of the engineering course at the American University of Beirut.

* Donations of vocational training scholarships are needed to ensure *
that as many young refugees as possible receive training. Each \$500 scholarship provides one year's training for one refugee, including tuition, accommodation and food, clothes and tools and the full use of the centre's facilities. In return, UNRWA will send a photograph and a brief biography of each "adopted" trainee to his or her sponsor in addition to periodical progress reports. UNRWA's 10 training centres have a total capacity of more than 3,300 refugee boys and girls this year. Next year, the enrolment will be 3,500. Each of them needs a vocational training scholarship. The target is still a long way away. Further information on the vocational training scholarship programme may be obtained from the UNRWA Liaison Office, United Nations, New York. *

The Canadian Junior Red Cross presented two checks to Dr. John H. Davis at a recent luncheon in Toronto. The first, for \$25,000 (Canadian), has provided vocational training scholarships for four entire classes of refugee trainees at UNRWA's Sibilin Vocational Training Centre in Lebanon. The boys, in the plumbing, radio/TV mechanics, sheetmetal work and blacksmith/welding courses, were also sponsored in their first year by the Junior Red Cross.

The second donation of \$1,880, will be used by UNRWA to pay the operating costs of two play centres for refugee children living in camps. The contribution will cover the operating costs of one centre in the Gaza Strip for two years and of one centre in Lebanon for one year. UNRWA has 13 play centres in operation, giving the rudiments of education to some 1,200 young children. This programme is financed entirely with special contributions for this purpose and not from UNRWA's regular budget.



GOVERNMENT PLEDGES INDICATE SUPPORT OF UNRWA'S WORK

Confidence in UNRWA has been indicated by the pledges of funds made by Governments towards the Agency's 1964 budget.

The Governments of 30 countries, five more than last year, pledged the equivalent of \$32.5 million. Eight Governments increased their pledges. The representatives of three other nations expressed support for the work of UNRWA but were unable to make pledges at that time.

The pledges were made in the ad hoc Committee for the Announcement of Voluntary Contributions to UNRWA at United Nations Headquarters, New York, in December.

UNRWA's total operating budget for 1964 is \$38 million. On the basis of the pledges, indications are that UNRWA will receive approximately the same amount from Governments as last year, in the region of \$34.5 million. Unless the gap between Government contributions and the Agency's proposed expenditure can be made up by donations from other sources, UNRWA will have a considerable deficit in 1964.

The serious financial situation now facing the Agency was described in a statement by the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, Dr. John H. Davis, to the delegates at the Pledging Conference.

Dr. Davis said that the Agency would end 1963 with a deficit of about \$1 million. Since UNRWA's vocational training programme had been financed from extra-budgetary funds and since total relief costs had been held in check in the past two years, it followed that the deficit was the result of the Agency's effort to meet the pressing need for expanding general education at elementary, preparatory and secondary levels, said the Commissioner-General. He added that it would cost UNRWA at least \$500,000 more in 1964 than in 1963 to maintain the same standard of general education because of the greater number of refugee children seeking education.

Dr. Davis said that during the past four years, regular contributions from Governments had remained at a level of about \$34.5 million. "Taking all these factors into account, it must follow that Governments must be the

source of greater funds if the budget needs -- totalling about \$38 million -- are to be met in 1964," stated the Commissioner-General.

If the budget were not met, the Agency would have to reduce its level of services, either on the relief side by rectifying the ration rolls or on the education side by cutting the education services. If savings can not be attained by rectifying the ration rolls, the Agency "will be driven to cut education services which, in my opinion, would be a tragic step to take," said Dr. Davis. He recommended that "every possible effort" should be made to rectify the rolls before the Agency resorts to cutting back education.

As in previous years, the three Governments pledging the largest sums were those of the United States (\$24.7 million, provided that this sum does not exceed 70 per cent of the total contributions from Governments), the United Kingdom (\$5.4 million) and Canada (\$925,000, half in cash and half in wheat flour). The U. S. representative stipulated that 5 per cent, or \$920,000, of her Government's contribution to UNRWA's relief budget should be shifted to the budget for education and recommended that in 1964 the Agency confine its expenditures for relief to \$25 million within the overall 1964 budget estimates of \$37,950,000. The United Kingdom delegate stated that his Government had cut its allocation for relief services by 5 per cent and added the savings to its allocation for education, training and assistance for self-support, making a total of \$1,910,600 for those purposes.

Pledges (the amount is shown in the equivalent of U. S. dollars) were also made by: Australia, \$201,600; Austria, \$5,000; Belgium, \$30,000; Central African Republic, \$400; Denmark, \$50,000; Federal Republic of Germany, \$400,000; France, \$206,000; Ghana, \$3,000; Greece, \$15,000; Holy See, \$1,000; India, \$21,000 (in kind); Iran, \$5,000; Ireland, \$20,000; Japan, \$10,000; Kuwait, \$220,000; Libya, \$20,000; Luxembourg, \$3,000; Malaysia, \$1,500; Morocco, \$20,000; Netherlands, \$110,000; Nigeria, \$5,000; Norway, \$63,000; Sweden, \$58,000 (in addition to a technical assistance grant of almost \$800,000 over the three-year period 1963-65); Switzerland, \$58,000 (plus 100 tons of powdered milk and cheese); Tunisia, \$4,000; Turkey, \$8,000; and Yugoslavia, \$20,000 (in kind).

The pledges of the Governments of Austria, France, Libya, Luxembourg, Morocco, Norway, Switzerland and Tunisia showed increases over their pledges for 1963.

The representatives of Italy, New Zealand and the United Arab Republic did not make pledges but indicated that their Governments would continue to support the work of UNRWA.

There were many speeches welcoming the appointment of Mr. Laurence Michelmore, the Commissioner-General designate, and many warm tributes to the retiring Commissioner-General, Dr. Davis, whose efforts to promote the education and vocational training of the refugees received special praise.

* * *

SKILL + TOOLS = WORK

A simple equation: skill plus tools equals work. And if you are a refugee, work means self-respect. Work means more food and better clothing for your wife and children.

But without tools, even skilled men find it difficult to obtain work. And if you are a refugee, unemployment means poverty, bordering sometimes on destitution.

Take the case of Zuhdi Shahin. Zuhdi learned a skill the hard way, by working for three years in a tailor's shop in UNRWA's Beach Camp in the Gaza Strip without pay. Zuhdi is now 20 years old. He lives with his parents and his seven brothers and sisters in a two-room hut in Beach Camp. When Zuhdi left school, he found work with the owner of a small camp tailor, first as odd-job boy, then as apprentice. He worked there for three years. He was paid nothing. Last year he decided he had learned enough to establish his own little tailor's shop and to earn a little money. He had the skill-- but he had no equipment. Skill alone, he found, was not enough.

Abdulla Ali Rabah had been a shoemaker in his village near Tiberias in Palestine before the 1948 conflict made him a refugee. He had never been rich, but he had earned enough to support his family. For the past 15 years

he has lived in refugee camps, first in tents and now in a concrete-block hut in UNRWA's Ein el Hilweh camp in Lebanon. When he fled from Palestine, he left behind all his tools and equipment. He had no money to buy new tools. Abdulla soon found that skill, without tools, could not support a family of nine.

Mohammad El Ghuff had always been skillful with his hands but found schoolwork difficult. He left school when he was 10 years old and later persuaded a local camp tinsmith to let him help in the workshop. He learned fast but was paid nothing. His father had a chronic disease and could not work. His younger brother was retarded and was also unable to work. The family, including Mohammad and his four brothers and sisters, existed only on UNRWA rations and on the small grants of cash and clothing that the Agency's Welfare Division reserved for the most serious of hardship cases. After four years of voluntary, unpaid work at the little tinsmith's shop, Mohammad decided he knew enough to set up his own shop to help his destitute family. But without tools, he was helpless.

Zuhdi, Abdulla and Mohammad are just three of the many refugees in a similar situation: men with skills but no tools or equipment and, consequently, no work.

It is for such refugees that UNRWA operates a scheme of small grants for the purchase of tools. Most grants are between \$50 and \$100. During the past year, grants enabled 164 refugees to buy the tools of their trade and to resume work.

Zuhdi Shahin was given a grant of 25 Egyptian pounds, about \$75. He used it to make the down-payment on a sewing machine, costing \$125, to buy other assorted tailor's equipment and to rent a small hut to use as a shop. His small business is flourishing, and Zuhdi is earning about \$20 a month, which he is using to pay the installments on his sewing machine and to support his family.

Abdulla Ali Rabah received a grant of 150 Lebanese pounds (\$50) last year. He has bought a shoemaking sewing machine and is happily back at his old trade earning a little money with which to supplement the support that his family receives from UNRWA.

Mohammad el Ghuff was allotted \$55 to buy a vise, a blow lamp, a sledge hammer, pincers, pliers, sheers, saws, drills, and other tinsmith's equipment. He earns about \$15 a month in his little shop, and his family, once destitute, is no longer on UNRWA's list of severe hardship cases.

Financial limitations restrict the scope of the small grants programme. Last year UNRWA had only about \$6,000 available for this scheme. However, a number of refugees were able to begin work again with the help of grants made from outside donations earmarked for this purpose. Under this programme, a little money goes a long way. A donation of \$50 is enough to put a skilled refugee back to work, benefitting not only the artisan but also the members of his family, which usually averages six or seven persons. Donors of funds for this programme can be notified of the use to which their donations are put and thus know exactly whom they are helping.

The busy little workshops of Zuhdi, Abdulla and Mohammad bear witness to the success of the small grants programme. But the idle hands of other skilled refugees bear witness to the continuing need.

* * *

A CHRISTMAS GIFT FOR HAJJI

"Hajji" Fatmeh Hassan is a devout Moslem. But this year she decided to send a Christmas gift to her son Mohamad.

Hajji -- the Arabic term for women who have made their pilgrimage to the Moslem holy city of Mecca -- knew that it was the custom in Sweden for parents to give gifts to their children at Christmas time, and she did not want Mohamed to feel lonely when his Swedish friends were receiving gifts. For Mohamad is one of the 50 young refugee men who flew to Sweden last fall to spend a year training and working in Swedish industry under an agreement between UNRWA and the Swedish Agency for International Assistance.

Since Mohamad went to Sweden, Hajji's little mud-brick hut in Maghazi Camp in the Gaza Strip has seemed very empty, for he is her only son and the apple of her eye. Her husband died soon after the family fled from their home in Palestine during the 1948 conflict.

Over the past four months, Hajji has gone regularly to UNRWA's Gaza Vocational Training Centre, from which Mohamad graduated as an auto mechanic in 1963, to keep track of her son's whereabouts. Five coloured pins in a map of Sweden at the centre indicate the positions of the five young men from Gaza who were selected to go to Sweden. If the boys move from one location to another in the course of their training and work programme, the pins move with them. Hajji has kept her eye on Mohamad's pin, anxious to be reassured that her son was well. From time to time, they exchanged letters through the vice-principal of the training centre who wrote Hajji's letters for her, since she had never learned to write.

Shortly before Christmas, Hajji paid another visit to the training centre. But instead of having a small Christmas gift to send to her son, she had only bad news. Their humble hut had been severely damaged by heavy rains. Hajji was homeless, and most of her few possessions had been ruined. She knew that UNRWA would give her assistance in rebuilding her hut, but her dream of sending a small gift to her son had been washed away by the torrential rains. She would need every available piastre to repair or replace her damaged belongings.

Sadly, Hajji asked the vice-principal to tell Mohamad that she had wanted to send a Christmas present to him, as parents do in Sweden, but that she could send only her love.

In reply the vice-principal handed her a letter from Mohamad. The letter said that he was working hard in Mora, in northern Sweden. Enclosed was a small sum of money. Mohamad wrote that he had been able to save a little money and that he was sending it to his mother as a Christmas gift. In Sweden, explained Mohamad, it is the custom for children to give gifts to their parents at Christmas time.

And Mohamad thought it would be nice to do likewise.

* * *

ICVA RESOLUTION SUPPORTS UNRWA

The International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) passed a resolution supporting the work of UNRWA at its recent General Conference in Geneva. The ICVA, which comprises 74 member agencies, was awarded the 1963 Nansen Medal in tribute to the member agencies' work in aid of refugees.

The resolution states that the ICVA Conference "considers that the unsolved problem of the Palestine Arab refugees remains a threat to peace." The Conference "views with full appreciation the work now being done by UNRWA," calls upon member agencies to improve their programmes of assistance to the refugees and urges Governments to ensure that the work being carried out by UNRWA and the voluntary agencies "be continued as long as the conditions require." The resolution expresses the ICVA's regret at the resignation of Dr. John H. Davis, Commissioner-General of UNRWA, and conveys thanks to Dr. Davis for "his unique contribution to the cause of humanitarianism."

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