



# PALESTINE REFUGEES TODAY

## An UNRWA Newsletter

No. 35 August—September 1964



### ACCENT ON YOUTH

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This edition of the UNRWA Newsletter is devoted to the Youth Activities Programme for Arab refugees. It is dedicated to the World Alliance of YMCA's, whose invaluable advice, generous financial assistance, and active participation have done so much to make the programme a beneficial force in the life of the refugee community.

*Laurence Michelmore*  
Commissioner-General of UNRWA

A C C E N T  
O N  
Y O U T H

In much of the assistance provided for the Palestine refugees by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, the accent is on youth.

Of the more than one million refugees registered with UNRWA in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Gaza Strip, half are below the age of 18, and a further substantial number are between 18 and 35 years of age.

The refugees -- the victims of the conflict in the Holy Land in 1948 -- receive a broad range of assistance from UNRWA, including basic food rations, shelter, medical care and welfare services. But since so many of the refugees in its care are children, UNRWA has been giving increasing emphasis in recent years to education and vocational training, through which the Agency seeks to enable the



younger generation to lead constructive lives, wherever their future may lie.

A parallel programme which has been developed in recent years and which is also designed to prepare young refugees for the future is the Agency's Youth Activities Programme. It has two main aims: to relieve the burden of unavoidable idleness which weighs so heavily on many young men who, through no fault of their own, have been unable to find employment; and to prepare refugee youths to assume their responsibilities as good citizens in their communities by providing opportunities for the development of character and leadership abilities.

The Youth Activities Programme, directed primarily towards young men, is conducted through three channels: through the operation of youth activities centres (page 7), through a Scouting programme (page 10), and through a programme for younger boys (page 13). Volunteer leaders for these activities are trained through the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) Leadership Training Programme (page 4), which forms the cornerstone of the youth programme.

The Youth Activities Programme is supplemented by a number of other UNRWA programmes for young refugees which offer opportunities for individual development, for leadership and for participation in sports and recreational activities. The 3,500 young men and women enrolled in UNRWA's 10 vocational and teacher training centres are encouraged to take part in extra-curricular programmes of sports, recreational and cultural activities, organized in many centres by associated staff members who voluntarily offer their services to UNRWA. There are presently seven associated staff members from the United Kingdom, five from the United States and one from Canada.

Refugee girls and young women have responded enthusiastically to a programme of women's activities started recently by UNRWA. They are offered the opportunity to learn a variety of household skills, ranging from cooking to child care, and to participate in games, classes in reading and writing and sports and social events. This programme is a significant innovation, for tradition has generally restricted women in the Arab World to their immediate family and social circles. (See article in UNRWA Newsletter No. 32 of March 1964.) Six-month courses in sewing offer opportunities for some 1,800 young women each year to acquire enough skill to make garments for their families or perhaps to earn a little money by sewing for others.

UNRWA's Youth Activities Programme and the Agency's other youth programmes are performing a significant service for young refugees—a service which is only limited by the amount of the funds available. UNRWA is financed entirely by voluntary contributions from Governments and other sources, and of necessity, relief programmes (rations, shelter, and medical care) and education and training must take priority.

The progress of the Youth Activities Programme is encouraging. But the need remains very great, for every year some 15,000 refugee boys and 15,000 girls become young men and women. A number are benefitting from UNRWA's youth programmes, but many more could be helped if increased support were forthcoming for these valuable programmes from outside sources.

YMCA LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAMME

Mas'oud Jajah is a refugee schoolteacher who teaches boys in the morning and builds men in the afternoon.

Every morning Mas'oud can be found in the UNRWA elementary school in Beach refugee camp in the sandy 25-mile stretch of coast known as the Gaza Strip, teaching refugee children from the camp.

Most afternoons, after school is over, Mas'oud can be found at the youth activities centre in the camp, encouraging and training young boys and young men from the camp, many of them embittered and disillusioned after 16 years of refugee life. His tools: enthusiasm, optimism and a brief but sound training in the essentials of leadership.

The training was given to Mas'oud by the YMCA under its Leadership Training Programme for Palestine refugees. Mas'oud is one of almost 2,000 young refugee men who have received leadership training since the programme was established jointly by the YMCA and UNRWA in 1960. Like Mas'oud, many of them are now making a valuable contribution to the development of other young refugees by their enthusiastic work as voluntary leaders in UNRWA's 39 youth activities centres, helping them to grow--as the YMCA motto puts it--in body, mind and spirit.

The YMCA Leadership Training Programme forms the foundation of UNRWA's programme of youth activities, for it trains volunteer refugee leaders for the youth activities centres, for the Scout troops and for the Boys' Programme. The Leadership Training Programme is conducted by the YMCA in agreement and cooperation with UNRWA, which provides half of the annual \$55,000 operating costs.

For the first two years of the leadership programme, young men selected by UNRWA welfare staff were brought from the other "host" countries to Lebanon, where a leadership training centre was established in rented premises in the village of Broumana in the hills a short distance from Beirut. It was there that Mas'oud, now 25 years old, went to receive the training that has given new meaning and purpose to his life. In 1962 the training programme was decentralized, and a four-man leadership training team began travelling



to each of the "host" countries to conduct courses. In 1963 more than 650 people, almost all of them young refugee volunteers, participated in 20 training courses, which covered sports, cultural activities, recreation, community service, boys' work and youth activity centre administration.

The sports courses included special training for sports referees and for junior sports instructors, teaching young men the rules and basic technique of various sports and training them how to teach others. Softball was introduced recently; in addition to football, basketball, handball, volleyball, boxing, weight-lifting and track and field sports. The rules of softball were translated into Arabic for the first time for use in the training programme and the youth activities centres.

In the field of cultural activities, volunteer leaders are taught how to organize small libraries, how to pre-

LEFT: Khazen Obeid, 22, lives in Jisr el Pasha refugee camp near Beirut. He was selected recently to attend a YMCA leadership training course during which he learned the elements of first aid (top) and the principles of organizing sports competitions (second from top). At the camp's youth activities centre Khazen is able to put what he learned to good use as a member of the sports committee (third from top) and as a volunteer leader working with younger boys from the camp (bottom).

pare wall newspapers, how to produce theatrical performances and how to organize debates, quizzes and contests. Recreational leaders learn and practise the planning of social evenings, including the organization of games, sketches and the leading of community singing, using a selection of traditional Arabic folk songs compiled specially for the YMCA training programme. They also receive instruction in the planning of hobbies, groups and exhibitions.

Service to the community is emphasized in all leadership training courses, and special courses are held to promote active participation in community development projects. Useful skills such as fire-fighting, first-aid, gardening and tree planting are taught, and the young men explore the many ways in which they can serve their communities--by promoting safety campaigns in the camps, by assisting UNRWA health educators or by participating in camp construction projects.

During 1964, 21 training courses are planned, and it is estimated that about 700 young refugees will take part in them. Some 15 to 20 trained and active volunteer leaders are needed in each youth activities centre to run well-rounded programmes. Of the young men who are trained, some leave the camp or are not able to participate fully in the activities of the centres, so a constant supply of new leaders must be trained. Only a small percentage of the 15,000 refugee boys who reach the age of 18 every year can hope to receive leadership training from the YMCA. The task of training this small but significant number can continue only with sustained and generous support from the YMCA and other voluntary organizations.

The YMCA Leadership Training Programme for Palestine refugees is under the direction of a man who knows what it is to be a refugee. Mr. Tadeusz ("Teddy") Paczkowski is a refugee who was evacuated from his native Poland in 1939. He was captured while fighting in the French Army but escaped from a prisoner-of-war camp in Silesia to join the underground movement. Mr. Paczkowski, who has been a YMCA member since he was 12 years old, worked for the YMCA with refugees in Austria before coming to the Middle East to direct the YMCA Leadership Training Programme. The programme was established following a survey of the needs of young refugees in the camps made in 1959 at the request of UNRWA by Mr. Joseph Bednarek, the director of refugee services of the World Alliance of YMCA's.

The YMCA's four-man mobile training team includes three Arabs, who are assisted by instructors from universities, sports organizations and other agencies and by graduates from previous training courses. The training team is also being assisted during the summer by six young volunteers — three Canadians and one Swede sent to the Middle East through the YMCA and two refugees who have graduated from YMCA leadership training courses.

The value of the YMCA Leadership Training Programme is evident in the bustle of UNRWA's youth activities centres, in the enthusiasm of the Scout troops, in the success of the Boys' Programme and, most eloquently, in the faces of the young refugees, like Mas'oud Jajah, who have found satisfaction in helping to bring meaning into the lives of others.

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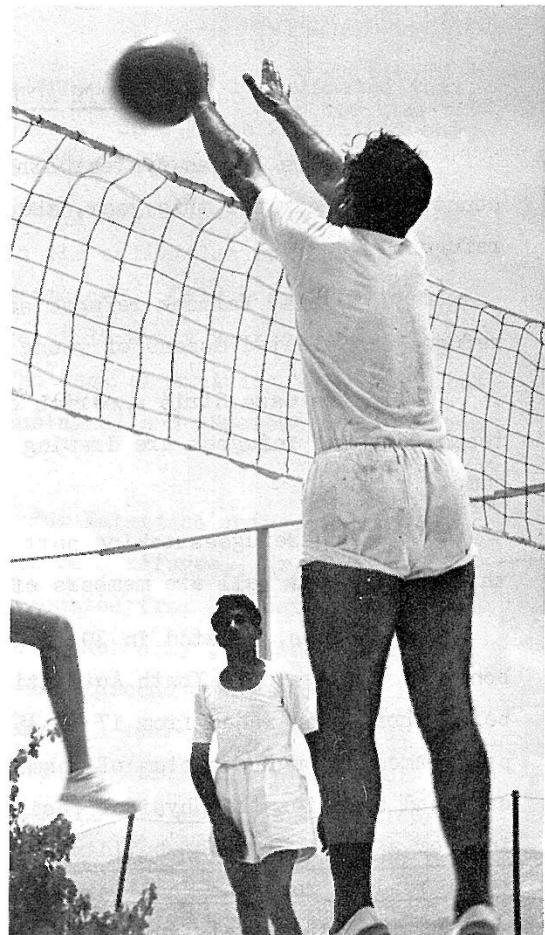
#### YOUTH ACTIVITIES CENTRES

- When the Jordan Amateur Athletic Federation held its first cross-country race earlier this year, the first five places were taken by young refugees.
- In Syria, Yarmouk refugee settlement is looking greener since young refugee men planted dozens of young trees.
- In the Gaza Strip a series of general knowledge contests between teams of young refugees are drawing audiences of up to 800 in the refugee camp.

The young refugees taking part in these diverse activities have one thing in common: all are members of UNRWA youth activities centres.

The centres, located in 39 of UNRWA's 54 refugee camps, form the "back-bone" of the Agency's Youth Activities Programme. They are run by the members, whose ages range from 17 to 35, with volunteer leaders directing the programmes through a system of committees. UNRWA provides general supervision and supplies the physical facilities, which usually consist of a building, or a small group of buildings, and a sports area. Most centres have a small reading room and facilities and equipment for a variety of games and sports, including table tennis, boxing, football, basketball and volleyball.

UNRWA's youth activities centres provide opportunities for a wide variety of activities, including recreation (top right), sports (bottom right) and cultural programmes. Most centres produce regular wall newspapers (top left) and have small reading rooms with books and magazines at the disposal of the members (bottom left).



The centres, which have a total membership of more than 6,000 young men, are becoming increasingly self-supporting, raising funds to provide their own equipment, to improve the facilities and to finance their activities. The members of the centre in Karameh camp in Jordan constructed their own basketball field; in Buss camp in Lebanon members of the youth activities centre rented a local cinema and sponsored a film performance, raising money to organize a sports competition with teams from centres in other areas. Young men from Beach camp in Gaza repaired an abandoned dinghy, which now gives employment to two of the members who use it for fishing; a percentage of the money they earn is given to the youth activities centre.

Young Palestinians are keen sportsmen and participate enthusiastically in the centres' sports programmes. With emphasis on playing by the rules and with good sportsmanship, sports not only provide healthy activities and entertainment but also give young refugees opportunities for responsible leadership as coaches, captains, officials and team members. The YMCA Leadership Training Programme's courses for sports players and referees have built up a nucleus of young men who know the rules and the basic techniques of a variety of sports and can teach them to others. The sports courses also include instruction in the organization of competitions. The eight youth activities centres in the Gaza Strip took part in 114 sports matches during March against teams from other centres, from Government schools and from the YMCA.

Cultural activities form an important part of the centres' activities. Most centres produce regular wall newspapers--written and illustrated by hand and posted on the wall for all to read--to encourage the members to express themselves in writing. The contents of a sample wall paper include an article on camp cleanliness, a report of a football match against a team from another centre, an editorial, a short story and an article outlining the future activities of the centre. Seven centres in Jordan are conducting literacy classes in which some members are voluntarily devoting their time to teach others who have not achieved as high a standard of literacy. More than 50 young men are improving their reading and writing in this way. A successful short story and poetry writing contest was held in Jordan in early 1964, and there are plans for a similar competition to be open to refugees from all four "host" countries. Guest speakers and debates are among the most popular cultural programmes organized in many centres.

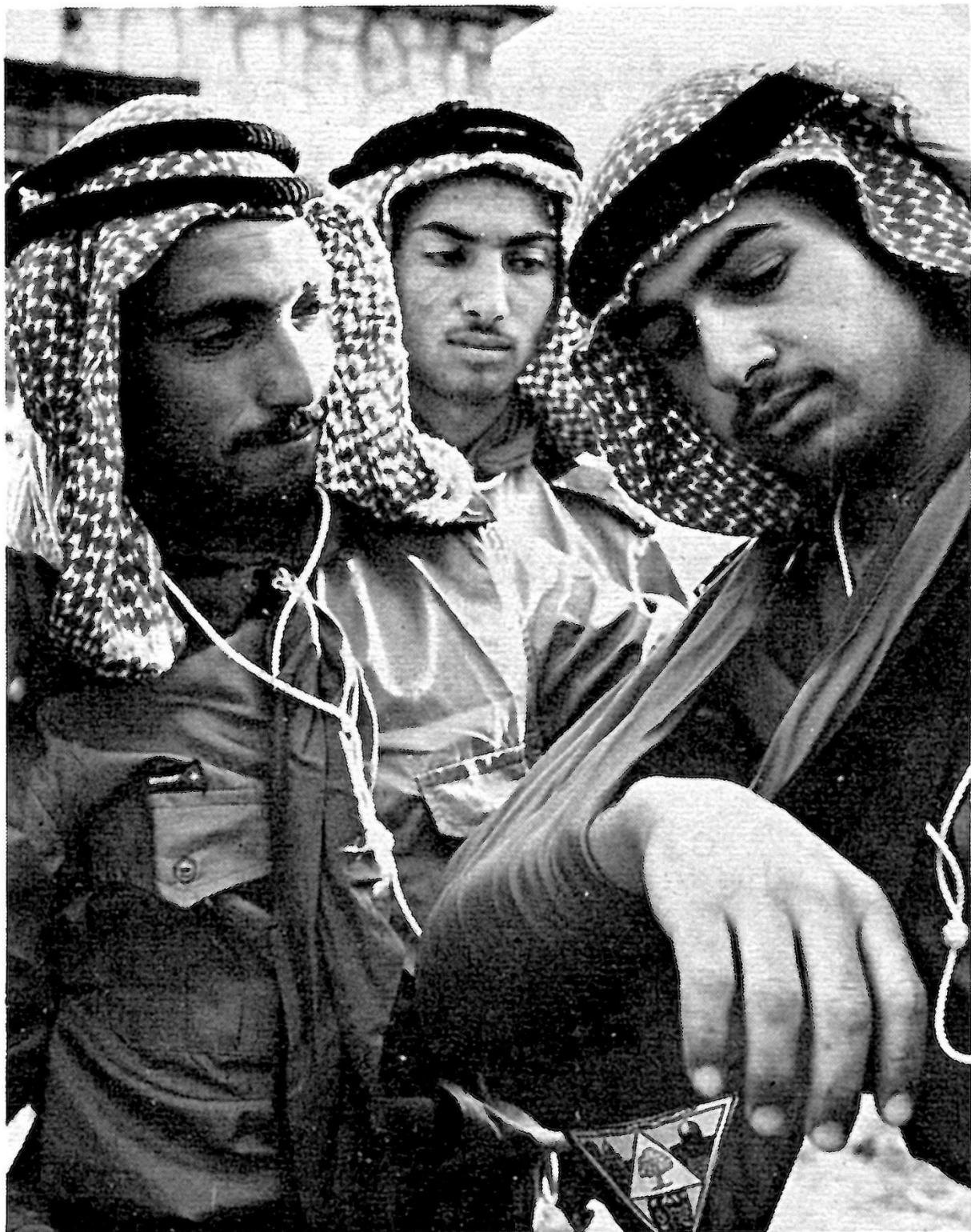
The Shepherds' Cave is now the property of the YMCA, for it is located in the grounds of the YMCA hostel at Beit Sahour, a small village near Bethlehem -- appropriately named the Shepherds' Field YMCA. It was there that 38 young men from refugee camps throughout Jordan undertook an intensive training course as Scout leaders. The course was one of a number of Scout leader training programmes organized jointly by UNRWA and the YMCA within the framework of the Leadership Training Programme. Scouting, introduced to the young refugees two years ago, has been enthusiastically received and is now an important part of UNRWA's programme of youth activities.

The young men who earned their leaders' badges at the Shepherds' Field are now leaders of some of the 40 refugee Scout troops that have been established in the refugee camps of Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Gaza Strip to provide young refugees with opportunities of channelling their energies into constructive programmes of training and community service.

Most of the Scout troops are connected with the youth activities centres, although some troops have been formed in UNRWA schools. There are 40 troops

LEFT: Members of a refugee Scout troop practice first-aid. RIGHT: A refugee Scout leader demonstrates a novel "tap" for washing. He presses a lever with his foot to "turn on" the suspended water pitcher.







for boys, including Cub, Scout and Rover troops, and 11 Girl Guide troops, including 1 at UNRWA's girls' training centre in Ramallah, Jordan, one of the 10 vocational or teacher training centres established by the Agency to give training to young refugees. More than 1,000 young refugees have become Scouts or Guides.

The troops usually meet once a week and undertake a wide variety of activities, both in the field of training and of community service. Like Scouts all over the world, the young refugees learn the traditional skills of Scouting, including camping, first-aid and signalling.

Service to the community is an important aspect of the Scouting programme. Members of the troop in Amari refugee camp in Jordan still remember the stormy night last winter when they worked through the night assisting refugee families whose homes were in danger of being flooded. In Gaza the Beach Camp Sea Scout troop has organized a team of lifeguards to supervise the beach where camp residents swim. On rough days they post danger flags; when swimming is possible, the lifeguards have at their disposal a surf-board boat, built by the members of the troop themselves. The lifeguard team was formed following a training course for Sea Scouts held earlier this year at the new Gaza YMCA Hostel as part of the Leadership Training Programme.

The Scouting programme was started by UNRWA with an initial grant from the Agency's budget. However, the continuation and expansion of the programme depends on outside contributions made for this purpose.

Scouting is a most suitable form of activity for young refugees, for it combines training in useful skills, the need for strict discipline, an emphasis on community service and an opportunity for young men to develop as leaders.

The words of the Scouts' motto -- "Be Prepared" — are finding expression in the refugee camps of the Middle East, where Scouting is preparing young refugees to take their places in their communities as leaders and as good citizens.

#### BOYS' PROGRAMME

Nine tenths of the refugees are Moslems, and like most youngsters throughout the Arab world, the young Moslem refugees look forward to Friday, their holy day and a holiday from school.

Thousands of refugee boys between the ages of 11 and 15 have a further reason for looking forward to Friday. For Friday is "their" day at the youth activities centre.

Under a Boys' Programme run as part of UNRWA's Youth Activities Programme, some 2,000 youngsters flock to the youth activities centres every Friday morning for four hours of sports instruction and practice and organized recreation. This programme is currently being conducted at 26 centres; other centres are also planning to start boys' programmes.

The most significant aspect of the boys' programme is that it is run entirely by volunteer members of the youth activities centres, with only routine supervision by UNRWA welfare workers. The older boys willingly devote their time to pass on to the youngsters some of the sports skills they have learned in training courses or at the centres and to put into practice some of the principles of leadership and organization that they have learned at YMCA Leadership Training Courses.

During 1963 more than 230 volunteer members from youth activities centres attended six courses organized within the YMCA Leadership Training Programme for boys' programme leaders. During the 11-day courses, the volunteers learned how to prepare and conduct programmes of sports, games, recreation and social events for younger boys.

The weekly programme was introduced last year as an extension of a summer boys' programme that was initiated in 1962. Last summer 20 youth activities centres held boys' programmes, during which boys came every morning for 11 days. A total of 350 youngsters benefitted.

The Friday morning programme begins in most centres with an assembly, during which the motto for the day is introduced (example: "Science, cooperation and friendship are the foundations of a good nation"). Indoor and out-

door games, Scouting activities where there is a Cub Scout troop and sports constitute the bulk of the programme. For many of the youngsters it is their first opportunity to play football, basketball or volleyball and, for most of them, the first chance to receive instruction and to play with proper equipment.

In a number of youth activities centres the older members have become so enthusiastic about the Boys' Programme that they have arranged to provide cakes and refreshments to serve to the youngsters -- no small undertaking in refugee camps where neither money nor food is plentiful.

The Boys' Programme benefits the young men of the youth activities centres almost as much as the boys, for it gives them valuable experience in leadership and community service.

In fact, the young men look forward to Friday as much as the boys.

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The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is a special, temporary, nonpolitical body established by the General Assembly of the United Nations in December 1949.

In cooperation 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; its current mandate expires on 30 June 1965.

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Further information may be obtained from

UNRWA Liaison Office  
United Nations  
New York

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In the United States, the United States Committee for Refugees is an organization cooperating with UNRWA

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