

UNRWA AND PALESTINIAN NATIONAL IDENTITY:
THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN STATE-BUILDING

by

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Abstract

UNRWA and Palestinian National Identity: The Role of the United Nations and State Building

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This dissertation explores the role that the United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has been playing in Palestinian state-building since the 1970s. UNRWA's role is examined by assessing the impact of the organization's socio-economic services, particularly in education and human development on the reconstruction of Palestinian identity. Despite the efforts of Israel and Jordan to suppress Palestinian nationalism, UNRWA has succeeded in not only enabling the emergence of a politically-conscious class of Palestinians, but its social services have also fostered the creation of a professional class of Palestinians that is more capable of controlling their own destiny, most commonly associated with an independent Palestinian state. Also the dissertation focuses on how UNRWA's reports to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) have shaped UN resolutions since the late 1950s and in turn the UN's approach to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict

The main questions that this dissertation seeks to examine are the following. Did UNRWA change its agenda after the 1970s from an intergovernmental institution that was established to reintegrate and resettle the Palestinians in other Middle Eastern countries to an intergovernmental institution that started working hand in hand with the refugees to help them set the foundation of their future state? Did UNRWA keep the Palestinian question alive, thus keeping the Palestinian people's plight center stage around the world instead of putting an end to it in accordance with its original mandate? Who has influenced UNRWA more, the refugees or the donor and host countries?

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Abbreviations

ACABQ Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

AFSC American Friends Service Committee

AHCP Arab Higher Committee for Palestine

ATF Arab Teachers Federation

AUO African Unity Organization

CG Commissioner General

CSO Camp Services Officer

DOC District Coordination Office

DOP Declaration of Principles on Interim Self Government Arrangements

EHP Extended Help Program

EMOT Emergency Measures for the Occupied Territories

EPA Expanded Program for Assistance

EU European Union

GA General Assembly

GUPW General Union of Palestinian Women

ICA Israeli Civil Administrator

ICJ International Court of Justice

ICRC International Committee of the Red Cross

IGP Income Generation Program

IGPOs Income Generation Program Officers

IMF International Monetary Fund

IRO International Refugee Organization

JCH Joint Committee on Hebron

JHC Joint Hebron Committee

JPJC Jordanian Palestinian Joint Committee

LCRS League of Red Cross Societies

MC Master of Ceremonies

MOTF Ministry of the Occupied Territories

MTP Medium-Term Plan
NATO North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO non-governmental organization
NJIT New Jersey Institute of Technology
ODO Operational Support Officers
OPT Occupied Palestinian Territories
OSO Operational Support Officers
PA Palestinian Authority
PAWS Palestinian Arab Workers Society
PFLP Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PIP Peace Implementation Program
PLA Palestinian Liberation Army
PLO Palestinian Liberation Organization
PNA Palestinian National Authority
PNC Palestinian National Council
PPF Palestinian Patriotic Front
PRCS Palestinian Red Crescent Society
PWIF Palestinian Women Initiative Fund
RAO Refugee Affairs Officer
SWAPO South-West Africa People's Organization
SC Security Council
TCs Teachers Colleges
TIPH Temporary International Presence in Hebron
UK United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UN United Nations
UNDP United Nations Development Program
UNESCO United Nations Educational, Social, and Cultural Organization
UNESM United Nations Economic Survey Mission
UNHCR United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund
UNRPR United Nations Relief for Palestinian Refugees

UNRWA United Nations Refugee and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near
East

UNSCOP United Nations Special Committee on Palestine

US United States of America

VTC Vocational Training Center

WB West Bank and the Gaza Strip

WHO World Health Organization

WZO World Zionist Movement

Chapter 1

Introduction

This dissertation aims to make two distinct contributions. The first concerns the existing body of studies focusing on the United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).¹ Whereas the overwhelming tendency of these studies has been to focus on the humanitarian and bureaucratic aspects of the organization, very little attention has been paid to UNRWA's political role in the occupied Palestinian territories (OPT).² (Buehrig 1971; Peretz 1993; Schiff 1995; Virost 1989). By contrast, this dissertation will show that, instead of being merely a technical UN agency involved in administering humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people, UNRWA has played a quintessentially political role by engaging in Palestinian state-building in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (WBG) since the 1970s.³ This dissertation will show how one international institution, UNRWA, and its clients, Palestinian refugees, performed an instrumental role in

¹ UNRWA was established as a subsidiary organ of the United Nations under General Assembly resolution 302(IV), which was adopted on December 8, 1949, in accordance with Article 22 of the Charter of the United Nations. The Agency's mandate has been renewed periodically and was extended most recently to June 30, 2008. The agency's activities are mainly humanitarian in nature, and include a development component carried out through its three main programs, namely education, health, and relief and social services. In subsequent years the Agency's mandate has been expanded by the Assembly, which has added other activities to its traditional programs. Certain development activities were added. In this context, paragraph 5 of Assembly resolution 48/40 which was adopted on December 10, 1993 called upon the Agency to "make decisive contribution towards giving a fresh impetus to the economic and social stability of the OPT. For more details on UNRWA please see chapter 2.

² By occupied Palestinian territories (OPT) I am referring to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem, the land that Israel occupied in the Six Days' War in 1967. Throughout this project I use OPT and the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (WBG) interchangeably because both refer to the same geographic entity.

³ Charles Tilly defined the process of state-building as the political centralization initiated by a permanent bureaucracy, supported by a monopoly of coercion, it results in the centralized, administrative control of a well-defined piece of territory and the people within it. (Tilly, 1975: 25).

the building of a modern Palestinian state in the OPT.⁴ Not only were Palestinian refugees and UNRWA itself instrumental in reshaping the agency's mandate in the Middle East in recent decades, but they also influenced how Israel, Jordan, and the United States (US) handled the Palestinian question. As we will see, various UNRWA and broader UN activities that were undertaken at UN headquarters in New York and in the Middle Eastern region caused an adjustment to these countries' policies regarding the establishment of a Palestinian state. Meanwhile, the proactive approach of Palestinians, particularly in resisting UNRWA policies that they opposed, was instrumental in building international political support for their cause. Ideas like Palestinian self-determination, the right of return, a distinct Palestinian national identity, Palestinian human rights and Palestinians as civilians living under occupation have become highly and widely accepted in the foreign policies of Western and Middle Eastern governments. Given how Arab and Western governments strongly opposed

⁴ State-building, in this study, means the setting of institutions, creating the legitimacy and the promotion of social solidarity through education, and institutionalizing the people's identity. State-building also refers to the establishment of the idea of the state in and of itself. It also refers to the direct involvement of the UN and UNRWA in training Palestinian cadres thus enabling Palestinian refugees and non-refugees to run their own affairs.

The process of institutionalization leads to the concretization of the idea of the state. As that idea becomes incorporated in a tangible institutionalized reality (a legislative body, an army, a police force, education structures, health structure, legal structure, and financial structure), which it suffuses – it becomes available to the leaders of the State as a powerful representation. UNRWA in the last several decades has established many institutions in the five fields of operations that enhanced and consolidated its legitimacy within the Palestinian people.

In addition, UNRWA succeeded in maintaining a national consensus on the most pressing issues regarding the Palestinian people: right of return and independence. This aspect of state-building concerns the organization of a common experience. For state-building to proceed, it is in effect necessary to have the community share a minimum of consensus about their political vision. A loose definition of the local general interest has to be attained in order to give meaning to the action of institutions and the orientation of policy. Seeking to establish unity in place of fragmentation, the leadership of the people will often rely, to that end, on inclusive nationalistic generalizations and historical metaphors. In nations involved in the creation of a modern state like the Palestinians, the process has a particularly important role insofar as it establishes new founding common ground. To provide coherence and consistency to the national consensus required to pursue state-building, a certain level of societal and political national cohesiveness has also to be maintained to which UNRWA provided the Palestinians in its schools, clinics, ration distribution centers, and camps as chapter six demonstrates. See Francis Fukuyama, *State-building Governance and World Order in the 21st Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 1-10. Also see Simon Chesterman, *You The People: The United Nations, Transitional Administration, and State-Building*. (London: Oxford University Press, 2004), 5.

these ideas in the 1950s and 1960s, progress for Palestinian aspirations owes much to the efforts of UNRWA, as well as to the refugees themselves.

As a result of the efforts of UNRWA and the Palestinians, the idea of integrating and assimilating Palestinian refugees into neighboring countries has been replaced by widespread international support for a two-state solution. How did we get from a situation in which there was little international political support for creating a Palestinian state to considerable support for the idea of a Palestinian and Israeli state existing side by side? The main argument of this dissertation is that since the 1970s UNRWA has played a major role in building international support for the two-state solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict by bringing the grievances of the Palestinian people to the UN and in return convincing the UN to adopt resolutions calling for the UN to invest in the infrastructure – i.e., schools, teachers colleges, hospitals, clinics, vocational training centers, development programs, loan programs, job search institutions, etc. – of a future Palestinian state.

A puzzling aspect of UNRWA's role in fostering Palestinian state-building in recent decades is that in so doing, UNRWA overstepped its mandate (i.e., to assimilate and integrate Palestinians into host countries) and acted in contradiction to the expressed interests of the main countries involved in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict: Israel, the US, and Jordan. Why would Israel, Jordan, and the US allow UNRWA, an intergovernmental institution and a subsidiary organ of the UN, to exceed its mandate and continue its operations in the OPT and in the General Assembly (GA)? Moreover, why would these countries, particularly the US, continue to provide UNRWA with financial and political support for an outcome – the creation of a Palestinian state – that contradicted its declared foreign policy objectives? Can existing theories of international relations explain why UNRWA succeeded not only in acting independently of UN member states but also in

reconstituting the interests of those countries regarding a solution to the Palestinian refugee problem? In other words, can existing theories explain why UNRWA would be capable of softening the opposition of the US, Israel and Jordan to the idea of establishing an independent Palestinian state in the WBG? Herein lies the second intended contribution of this study.

Outline of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized as follows: Chapter Two talks about the main theories of international relations, neorealism, neoliberal institutionalism, and constructivism and their ability to explain the functions of UNRWA in the last several decades. I find that constructivism's focus on ideas, norms and the changeability of state interests best explains the functions of the agency. Chapter Three provides an historical analysis of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict by answering the following questions. Why did Great Britain promise Palestine to the European Jews? How did the Palestinian refugee problem and the question of Palestine evolve within the context of the UN? Why was UNRWA established and what was its original mandate? How was a Palestinian refugee defined in the early stages of the conflict? Finally, how did Israel, Jordan, and Western countries envision solving the question of Palestinian refugees and the question of Palestine? I argue in the chapter that Israel's ultimate objective was to end any Palestinian claim to the land and to establish the new Jewish emigrants as the original and legitimate owners of the land. I also suggest that had it not been for Great Britain's help Israel would have never been established. The chapter also demonstrates that the United Nations' involvement in the question of Palestine was very negative, at least according to the refugees and the majority of the Palestinians who lost their lands, but improved over the years.

Chapter Four details the challenges that UNRWA and the Palestinian cause have faced from three countries: Israel, Jordan, and the United States. It argues that they have gradually changed their political attitude toward the Palestinian question due to domestic, regional, and international factors. On the domestic level, two factors led to that change. First, the refusal by the refugees to agree to assimilation and integration forced UNRWA to look for other mechanisms to insure the refugees' human development building and survival. In response, UNRWA's services made the establishment of a state in OPT a reality. Second, the eruption of the two Intifadas of 1987 and 2000 forced Israel, Jordan, and the US to consider new realities for solving the Palestinian question. On the global level, the constant passage of GA and SC resolutions in favor of Palestinian self-determination placed the Americans and the Israelis on the defensive in the last three decades or so at the UN. Thus, the Americans were the drafters and the introducers of the Security Council Resolution 1397 which passed on March 2, 2002. The resolution, for the first time in US history, calls for an independent Palestinian state living along side Israel.

Chapter Five illustrates how UNRWA has championed the Palestinian cause for an independent state by pushing the issue of Palestine at the United Nations and keeping the issue alive against its designed mandate. In addition, the chapter traces the four distinct phases through which the Palestinian struggle has evolved within the UN and shows how the Palestinian refugees, operating through UNRWA, with implicit and explicit support from the PLO have played a major role in defining these four periods. The chapter will also show how UNRWA became involved in Palestinian state building by engaging directly in building Palestinian institutions and training cadres.

Chapter Six argues that UNRWA's mandate has evolved from a provider of relief services to Palestinians to a provider of "soft protection" in the OPT. The chapter argues

that UNRWA went beyond its mandate on many occasions, challenging the sovereignty of the state of Israel, Lebanon, and Jordan. It also demonstrates how UNRWA became an autonomous organization shaping its own destiny rather than being subordinate to the host state. The chapter also argues that UNRWA's recommendation to the General Assembly on many occasions became the central policy of the UN on the question of Palestine, thus influencing how the Palestinian question developed in the last three decades at the UN.

Chapter Seven analyzes the role of UNRWA's socioeconomic services, education and relief and development, in reconstructing Palestinian nationalism. UNRWA's education system and its socioeconomic services have been key factors leading to the emergence of a new and more politically aware generation of refugees. That process was reinforced by determination among refugees to preserve the memory of the 1948 catastrophe, including through narratives, oral history, and photographic display for which UNRWA's photo archives were an unsurpassed source of material. Cultural celebrations in schools invariably commemorated refugee origins in Mandate Palestine, including the wearing of Palestinian costumes from villages and towns of origin. UNRWA's academic and socioeconomic services have been a force in mobilizing the majority of the Palestinian refugee population into the political process and gave them the necessary ingredients to preserve their own identity and build their own state.

The following chapter talks about the main theories of international relations, neorealism, neoliberal institutionalism, and constructivism and their ability to explain the functions of UNRWA in the last several decades. The chapter finds that constructivism's focus on ideas, norms and the changeability of state interests best explains the functions of the agency.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Why would Israel, Jordan, and the US allow UNRWA, an intergovernmental organization and a subsidiary organ of the UN, to exceed its mandate and continue its operations in the OPT and in the UN General Assembly? Moreover, why did the US continue to provide UNRWA with financial and political support in contradiction to its declared foreign policy objectives? Of the three main theories of international relations – neorealism, neoliberalism and constructivism, this dissertation finds that constructivism most clearly explains why UNRWA was so influential in shaping state interests toward Palestinians and in laying the groundwork for the establishment of a Palestinian state over the last three decades. Indeed, as the review of these approaches will show below, constructivism better explains why Israel, Jordan, and the US would allow UNRWA to exceed its mandate in the OPT by evolving from a relief agency for Palestinian refugees to an agent capable of facilitating the establishment of Palestinian state institutions. By introducing resolutions within the UN to meet Palestinian refugee needs and building broad international support for the Palestinian cause, UNRWA succeeded in modifying the policies of the main interested parties to the conflict in the region.

While mainstream international relations scholarship, particularly realist theory, argues that state behavior is predominantly shaped by such external constraints as the security dilemma, competing national interests, and states' concerns for relative gains, analysis of UNRWA operations in the OPT and Jordan since the 1970s demonstrates how and why internal factors can influence state behavior on issues crucial to national security. Therefore, I argue that the socioeconomic services of UNRWA toward Palestinian refugees make the outcome of a sovereign Palestinian state inevitable. By developing basic state

institutions for Palestinians in the WBG, and by building broad international support for the idea of an independent Palestinian state, especially within the UN, UNRWA succeeded in softening Israeli, American and Jordanian opposition to Palestinian self-determination.

The chapter is structured as follows: the first section talks about neorealism and the functions of UNRWA in the OPT and Jordan, the second discusses neoliberal institutionalism and the activities of UNRWA in the WBG and Jordan, and finally the chapter ends with a discussion on norms and their importance on states' behavior in international relations.

Neorealism, Cooperation, and the Work of International Institutions

According to theory of neorealism, UNRWA should have been prevented from functioning in the OPT and in Jordan. Its educational and socioeconomic services have been jeopardizing the national security of Israel and Jordan in the last few decades. Both Jordan and Israel have sought to end Palestinian nationalism or any bid for Palestinians to have a state of their own from 1948 until the 1990s. In the last decade, however, both have dramatically changed their policies regarding that issue. Jordan now acknowledges the necessity of having an independent Palestinian state in the WBG, while international pressure has forced Israel to recognize this demand in the last few years. Israel has been routinely condemned at the UN in the last two decades for its practices against the Palestinians.

John Mearsheimer argues that neorealism has five fundamental assumptions: (1) the ordering principle of the international system is anarchy, the units which comprise the system are states, and states compete without a central authority to regulate their conduct; (2) states inherently possess some offensive capability; (3) states' intentions are fluid and

uncertain, so that a state which may be benign one day may be malign the next; (4) the most basic motive driving state behavior is survival; and (5) states think strategically about how to survive in the international system (1994/95:10). These assumptions illustrate and emphasize the importance of security and survival of the state.

As this chapter shows, not only did UNRWA on many occasions challenge the host state, the refugees also challenged UNRWA and the host states. When that happened UNRWA appeased the refugees more often than the host state. Lebanon during the 1950s is an interesting case in point. In this instance the refugees were violently protesting the reintegration programs, which they perceived as a first step for their assimilation and liquidation to which UNRWA reacted by canceling the projects and refocusing its attention on education and other services. In addition, refugees rioted in Gaza when Egypt did not effectively protect them from Israeli commando attacks in the 1950s. In the late 1970s and 1980s, they damaged distribution centers and attacked relief workers in the occupied territories to protest ration cuts. UNRWA's response to the refugees was consistently to look for a solution or ways to appease them.

Kenneth Waltz sees states as the most important actors in international politics (1979: 94). He assumes that states are functionally undifferentiated unitary actors who "at a minimum, seek their own preservation and at a maximum, drive for universal domination" (Ibid: 91,126). Waltz minimizes the role of non-state actors and he dismisses the role and impact of organizations such as the UN, its sub-organizations and other groups in world politics. Waltz argues that the anarchic nature of the international system made states insecure and in a situation of self-help (1979: 105). Therefore, a security dilemma arises because states are forced to fend for themselves, which leads them to be "unsure of one another's intentions" (Ibid: 186). The only possibility for cooperation, Waltz argues, is

“forming a military alliance.” Neorealism does not account for the processes that help create new actors and their potential impact on the system. Accordingly, transnational actors are treated as if they do not exist or are considered politically insignificant. Hence, world politics are perceived, understood, and analyzed in terms of state behavior and interstate activity and interaction.

The practices of UNRWA in Israel and in Jordan demonstrate that while in theory states might wish not to engage other non-state actors in their business, in practice this is almost impossible. Both Jordan and Israel were witnessing the PLO’s direct involvement in the refugee camps and in UNRWA’s staff politics. The PLO had a say in who got elected to the unions, when to start and end a strike, and the overall direction of the employees. Indeed, the PLO on numerous occasions mediated between the international staff of UNRWA and the Palestinian employees on “ending strikes or carrying out certain duties” (Schiff, 1995: 151). For instance, in 1982 UNRWA employees in the five fields (Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank, and Gaza) refused to carry out their duties due to low salaries, bad working conditions, and inequality on many fronts between the local and the international staff. The PLO intervened and negotiated an end to the strike. Similarly in 1997 when UNRWA signaled that it would cut its services in the five fields, the refugees erupted and demonstrated against the agency. The refugees boycotted classes in Gaza schools. Well organized demonstrations and strikes took place around UNRWA facilities, and the PNA’s TV covered the issue for five full days as its lead item. The PLO intervened in the crisis and appointed a well know critic of the agency (Abu-Ali Shaheen) to lead the negotiations to find a solution to the problem. Equally in 2004, UNRWA employees in the WBG declared a strike in August and ended it in November. The reasons behind the strike were bad working conditions, low salaries, and lack of maternal leave for women in comparison with host

governments' female employees, and general health insurance for all the employees. The strike ended after the Palestinian Authority (PA) intervened between the two sides. UNRWA had to give in to the local employees' demands.⁵

The broad objective of *Theory of International Politics* was to provide an explanation of how and why the only cooperation that happens among states, and between states and international institutions, should be based on balance of power considerations (Waltz, 1979:121). Waltz argues that there is very little room for cooperation in the real world especially when it relates to high politics, issues of decision-making, power, diplomacy, national interest, and national security; in fact the only possibility of cooperation for him is forming a military alliance. While Waltz's preoccupation was with balance of power and how and why alliances should be formed, other neo-realist scholars have expanded on his analysis.

John Mearsheimer criticized what he calls the "false promise" of international institutions (Mearsheimer, 1994/95:7). Mearsheimer argues that such institutions are poorly equipped to maintain or cause peace or cooperation. He asserts that they have little or no independent effect on state behavior and consequently "institutional outcomes invariably reflect the balance of power in the system. "Institutions, in his view, are nothing more than "tools that great powers employ for their own selfish purposes" (Mearsheimer, 1995: 82-3). Thus they have "no autonomy as agencies capable of articulating collective purposes" and merely represent a "public ritual" for endorsing objectives arrived at by states with the power resources necessary for attaining them (Cox, 1992: 165). At best, those creations are marginal.

⁵ *Al-Quds*, November 2, 2004: 17

Hence, Mearsheimer outlines several reasons why states cannot cooperate with other states or with international institutions. First, all states possess some degree of offensive capabilities. Second, states cannot be sure of other states' intentions. Third, states care only about their own survival, and think about survival strategically (Mearsheimer, 1994/95:10). In fact, Mearsheimer sees very little use for international institutions due to the absence of a central authority in the international system. He claimed that institutions could hardly affect the behavior of a state; their influence at best is “minimal”(Ibid: 7).

If Mearsheimer is correct, the General Assembly (GA) and UNRWA overstepped their mandates regarding the refugees and in dealing with sovereign countries.⁶ For example, following the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the GA adopted a resolution on the “Protection of Palestine refugees.” The General Assembly called upon the Secretary-General, in consultation with UNRWA, “to undertake effective measures to guarantee the safety and security and the legal and human rights of the Palestine refugees in the occupied territories.”⁷ Similar resolutions were adopted in subsequent years. In response to these resolutions, the Commissioner-General of UNRWA pointed to the fact that responsibility should go with power and that under international law, the occupying power must ensure that the civil and other rights of the inhabitants of the territory are safeguarded. UNRWA, nevertheless, monitored the situation of Palestinian refugees in the occupied parts of the country, especially in southern Lebanon before the Israeli withdrawal. It brought to the attention of some members of the Security Council, as well as to the government of Israel,

⁶ While Mearsheimer accepts that states sometimes use institutions for “maintaining or even increasing their share of world power,” he finds it difficult to identify the specific circumstances under which states’ collective calculations will lead to the use of institutions as opposed to unilateralism. For example, he says, “U.S. policymakers used NATO and other institutions to improve their relative power positions vis-à-vis their main adversary, the Soviet Union.”

⁷ UNRWA Annual Reports, 1982, 1983, 1985, 1988, and 1991.

the need for appropriate action to protect refugees, particularly in the camps in southern Lebanon, and made public statements, when appropriate, voicing its concerns.⁸

In addition to the 1982 resolution on the protection of Palestinian refugees, the General Assembly also adopted a resolution requesting the Secretary-General, in cooperation with UNRWA, “to issue identification cards to all Palestine refugees and their descendants, irrespective of whether they are recipients or not of rations and services from the agency, as well as to all displaced persons and to those who have been prevented from returning to their homes as a result of the 1967 hostilities, and their descendants.” To facilitate implementation of the resolution, the Secretary-General established a team of experts to consider the two broad categories of Palestinians covered by the terms of the resolution: (a) those registered with UNRWA, and (b) those not registered. Regarding those in the first category, it was noted that, prior to the General Assembly decision, the Commissioner-General of UNRWA had already decided to issue individual registration cards to all refugees registered with the Agency to replace the family cards used thus far.

In 1987 the SC adopted Resolution 605, which deplored the Israeli violations of human rights in the Palestinian occupied territories, and in particular “the opening of fire by the Israeli army, resulting in the killing and wounding of defenseless Palestinian civilians.” The resolution also called once again upon Israel “to abide immediately and scrupulously by the Fourth Geneva Convention and to desist forthwith from its policies and practices that are in violation of the provisions of the convention.” The resolution also called for the formation of an international force to help protect the Palestinians over the objection of Israel. Finally, the resolution requested the Secretary-General “to examine the present situation in the occupied territories by all means available to him, and to submit a report no

⁸ Ibid.

later than January 20, 1988 containing his recommendations on ways and means for ensuring the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilians under Israeli occupation.”⁹

According to the theory of neorealism, transnational actors – e.g., trade unions, the Vatican, multinational corporations, revolutionary movements, and many others – are treated as if they do not exist or are considered politically insignificant. It claims that non-state actors are able to formulate and articulate policies relatively independently only when they are serving the larger interests of the major powers. But the problem of international institutions in the present international system is the traditional concept of the state itself. World politics are perceived, understood, and analyzed in terms of state behavior and interstate activity and interaction (Morgenthau, 1967: 34). The realist mode of politics, for example, minimizes the role and significance of non-state actors, treating states as primary actors and the main units of analysis. As a result, neorealism divides politics into two distinct categories: “high politics” and “low politics.” Issues of decision-making, power, diplomacy, and national interest are considered “high politics.” Areas of social, economic, and cultural concern fall into the category of “low politics” (Taylor 1984: 77; Kirisci, 1986: 92). Issues that fall outside the high politics category are considered to be of low significance to world politics. Non-state actors and transnational relations fall into the low politics category, according to this theory.

Thus, based on the realist rationale, the humanitarian activities of UNRWA should not be considered a threat to host states. Realists would argue that UNRWA was a state created and funded institution; it serves the interests of its founders by keeping the refugees well fed and at bay. They argue that the refugees due to UNRWA services have saved both Israel and the US from social upheavals. I suggest, however, that the agencies’ services have

⁹ UNSC Res.605, December 22, 1987.

been a double-edged sword. The socio-economic services that the agency has been offering the Palestinians ended up strengthening Palestinian nationalism and identity. As chapter seven shows, UNRWA's services and the camp population became a major force behind Palestinian desire for independence, thus creating a regional norm with regard to Palestinian aspirations. Both the Israeli and the American governments in the last two decades or so have begun tightening their grip on the agency hoping to close or restrict its movements but to no avail. The agency has developed enough clout, strength, and trust among its clients, the refugees, and their supporters, at the General Assembly, to have a life of its own. The puzzle thus remains, why UNRWA has been allowed to evolve and have a life of its own and formulate policies in contradiction to its host and main donor countries? What can states do to dissolve it? While UNRWA and others institutions were created to serve the interests of the most powerful states, the US, Israel, and Jordan wanted UNRWA to assimilate and integrate the refugees into the host countries. Ironically, not only did UNRWA not work for assimilating the refugees as the three countries had desired, but the refugees themselves ultimately shaped the way in which UNRWA addressed their concerns.

Hence, according to neorealists, UNRWA should have vanished a long time ago, or could be dissolved any minute in accordance with state sovereignty, for it has been overstepping its own mandate, interfering in the politics of Israel and Jordan and contradicting the national interests of Israel, Jordan, and the US. UNRWA has been policing the camps, issuing its own press releases, exchanging political and diplomatic jabs with Israel, issuing refugee identity cards to keep track of all of the refugees, dealing with the PLO directly and publicly since 1975, and bringing the question of Palestine to the GA on an annually basis. In addition, when Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982, it discovered hidden weapons in the Vocational Training School Center of Sibling, Lebanon. For many this

discovery seemed to confirm the allegations of UNRWA's critics. Israel made it clear that for a long time it had suspected that the PLO was taking advantage of the camps, the buildings and the institutions of the agency. The same was true in 2004 when Israel was constantly battling UNRWA's staff and accusing them of taking the side of the Palestinians. This image was best captured in a article published by Haaretz-Daily, an Israeli newspaper, in which Commissioner-General Peter Hansen responded to Israel's accusations that UNRWA employees were aiding terrorism in the OPT. Hansen said: “[w]e are working under very dangerous circumstances and we don't need false stories to make these circumstances even more dangerous than they are already are.”¹⁰ Hansen added that the Israeli press calls me a “hater of Israel.”

Neorealists argue that states constantly pursue their national interests at a minimum to survive and at a maximum to achieve world domination (Waltz, 1979: 91, 126). Accordingly, neorealists posit that due to states' concerns about cheating and relative achievements of gains, states will decline to cooperate even if they are confident that partners will keep their commitments to a joint arrangement (Grieco, 1993: 54). Thus, an intergovernmental institution like UNRWA should neither have nor be allowed to either make any important impact on regional or world politics or function independently if political powers consider its actions as threatening their security.

Many in Israel consider various activities of UNRWA – e.g., its protection of Palestinian refugees, its engagement of public relations and media coverage on their behalf, its maintenance of Palestinian national records and its assistance in arguing their case in numerous international forums – as grave violations of the institution's mandate. Israel has referred to these activities as evidence of UNRWA's partiality in the conflict as well as the

¹⁰ *Haaretz Daily*, November 11, 2004: 10

politicization of its mandate. Furthermore, its involvement created an atmosphere of mistrust between UNRWA and the Israeli government. UNRWA became involved in media related issues after the beginning of the first Palestinian Intifada 1987-1993. In February 1988, in a discussion with the Commissioner-General about press freedom, Gaza Israeli Military Commander, Shmuel Goren, said that “from a military viewpoint Israel’s open, democratic policy of allowing the press free access to troubled areas had led to a stirring up of trouble which would not have otherwise happened.” He added that “had Gaza been declared a closed area to the press, the uprising could have been put down quickly and with fewer casualties.” Commissioner-General Giacomelli argued, however that although the press was sometimes irritating and irresponsible “it was better to have a policy of free access than give rise to suspicions that one had about something to hide.” He further asserted that the press gathered where there was a story. “They would quickly tire of visiting locations from where there was nothing to report.”¹¹

In summary, the case of UNRWA shows that factors other than pure national interests, balance of power, the security dilemma, cheating, and many other realists’ concerns shape states’ behavior. The study of UNRWA demonstrates that international norms and values, human rights concerns and reputation in the international community, also have a significant impact on the character of state behavior. While neorealism lacks explanatory power in relation to UNRWA, the theory remains an important tool for understanding state behavior in various other aspects of international relations.

¹¹ UNRWA Documents, note for the record of a meeting on Feb. 23, 1988, between the Commissioner-General and the civil administrator, Gaza, February 24, 1988.

Neoliberalism, Cooperation, and the Work of UNRWA

Neoliberals would account for the UN's and UNRWA's success in shaping the policies of Israel and Jordan toward Palestinians by contending that while states are the main actors of significance in international relations, international institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), inter-governmental organizations (IGOs), and many others are also significant actors in world politics. In *Power Interdependence* Keohane and Nye sought to integrate realism and liberalism by using a concept of interdependence that emphasized bargaining (Keohane and Nye, 1989: 251). Neoliberalism accepts many neorealist assumptions, including the centrality of the state in and the anarchic nature of the international system. The theory is rationalistic and utilitarian and uses the methodology of game theory (Keohane & Martin, 1995: 39). Like neorealists, neoliberals group the process of preference and interest formation and tend to discount the prospects for socialization and persuasion at the international level (Keohane, 1984: 294). Keohane and Nye argue that "since force, violence and threats are at the core of this interplay, the struggle for power, whether as end or necessary means is the distinguishing mark of politics among nations"(Ibid).

Unlike neorealists, however, neoliberals are more optimistic about the possibilities for international cooperation, particularly the role of institutions in making state behavior more conducive to such cooperation.¹² They argue that neorealists mischaracterize the international system and fail to recognize the ways in which "both the nature of political and economic competition and the consequent definition of state interests are affected by

¹² For a good summary of the similarities and difference between neoliberalism and neorealism, see Robert Powell, "Anarchy in International Relations Theory: The neo-realist-neoliberal Debate," *International Organization*, vol.48, no.2 (Spring 1994), 313-344; Emerson Niu and Peter C. Ordehook, "Less Filling, Tastes Great": The Realist-Neoliberal Debate," *World Politics*, vol.46, no.2 (January 1994) 209-234; and Joseph S. Nye, "Neorealism and Neoliberalism," *World Politics*, vol. XV, no.2 (January 1988), 235-237.

changes in the global economic system” (Baldwin 1993: 4). They contend that neorealists exaggerate the impact of international anarchy at the expense of factors like economic interdependence. Neoliberals also believe conflict is not the inevitable result of relations between rational egoistic actors. Rather, “if egoists monitor each other's behavior and if enough of them are willing to cooperate on condition that others cooperate as well, they may be able to adjust their behavior to reduce discord. They may even create and maintain principles, norms, rules and procedures” (Keohane, 1984: 83-84).

The General Assembly requested in resolution 37/120 I of 16 December 1982 that the Secretary-General, in cooperation with UNRWA, “issue identification cards to all Palestine refugees and their descendants, irrespective of whether they are recipients or not of rations and services from the Agency, as well as to all displaced persons and to those who have been prevented from returning to their homes as a result of the 1967 hostilities, and their descendants.” The issuance of identification cards to those refugees and displaced persons not registered with the Agency required the concerted cooperation of the numerous countries in which they had taken-up residence over the years. In the absence of the political will for such cooperation, the Secretary-General and UNRWA were unable to carry out this “soft” protection measure.

UNRWA’s activities did not stop there; it continued and reached out to Jordan and Israel’s worst enemy, the PLO. UNRWA cooperated with the organization on a vast range of issues inside and outside the OPT since 1974. UNRWA’s Commissioner-General John S. Rennie (1971-1977) asked Yasser Arafat, the Chairman of the PLO’s Executive Committee, to help the agency end its financial troubles.¹³ Consequently, Arafat used the PLO’s influence with such oil exporting countries as Iraq, Libya and the Gulf States to increase their

¹³ UNRWA Annual Report of the CG. 1973-1974, pp. 4-5.

contributions to UNRWA (Schiff, 1995: 116-7). For example, the PLO raised \$30 million dollars from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States in the early 1980s for UNRWA operations. This financial assistance was critical in helping UNRWA overcome the financial crisis it suffered during the Reagan administration and cemented the PLO's position as a power broker within the organization. Most important, the financial aspect of relations between UNRWA and the PLO allowed the PLO to become a full partner with UNRWA in reshaping and carrying out its mission in the region.

The added financial assistance that the PLO was able to raise from the Gulf States also helped UNRWA resist pressures to impose drastic austerity measures that would have forced UNRWA to close many centers in 1982. Indeed, the PLO began channeling money directly to the OPT through UNRWA and under the watchful eyes of the Israeli government. Pearl Herman asserts that UNRWA had overstepped its powers in the last five decades of operation in all fields. In fact, he argues that UNRWA did not fulfill its mandate regarding resettling the refugees (Herman, 2003: 16). It is very clear that UNRWA has been carrying far more responsibilities than anyone could have imagined in the last five decades of operations due to the complexity of the situation and to the fact that the UN and the international bloc it failed the Palestinian refugees. Its officials argue that the "basic goal of the UNRWA has been to help avoid or ameliorate conflict through socioeconomic programs"(Ibid: 2).

Despite not having any explicit legal jurisdiction over either the territory or its inhabitants, UNRWA practically became a nonterritorial administration, taking on national governmental responsibilities. While the organization cannot be subordinated to any sovereign government in accordance with the UN Charter, it has to deal with host countries and be sensitive to their concerns. Hence, UNRWA's operations prompted adverse results.

It actually enhanced the refugees' living standards, made them more intellectually capable to understand and resist any projects that did not fulfill their aspirations, and thus made it much harder for anyone to convince them to assimilate or integrate in host countries. The camps have been breeding grounds for national pride and a vanguard for the right of return. While UNRWA's activities have helped reconstruct a Palestinian national identity and state institutions, its activities have had a minor effect on the peace process itself as desired by Israel, Jordan, and the US. The continued and ever-growing discontent among the refugees, culminating in the 1987 outbreak of the Intifada in the Gaza Strip, indicated that UNRWA's humanitarian and social operations have been a factor in reminding the refugees of their past and how the future should look. When I visited a school in Al-Fawwar refugee camp, many educators gave this account when they spoke about UNRWA's services and their impact on the refugees:

In 1984-86, the Israelis confronted us directly with the question of resettlement. They said, "we give you new houses, better living conditions, and you refuse." Why? To the refugees the "question is much deeper than that," he asserted. It is no longer an issue of a house or a school it is "the right of return, independence, dignity of a whole people, and a revolution." The Palestinians have been against any settlement that does not guarantee their right or their full independence. None can agree for less than that. Thus, the refugees, not the Arab countries had refused any attempt of repair in the camps, like the replacement of shelters with solid concrete buildings. But after UNRWA refused the Israeli plan to forcefully settle us, we began accepting UNRWA's help more openly. The agency gradually convinced that the improvement of the standard of living in the camps had no impact on our right of return; and that this improvement by our own means would be the best guarantee of that right for it will prepare us for independence.¹⁴

I suggest that all this has been possible because the agency's structure allows it broad freedom of action, making it capable of engaging in commercial transactions and establishing legally defined relations with governments, other international organizations, and its own

¹⁴ A meeting with a group of educators in Al Fawwar Refugee Camp, West Bank, August 10, 2004.

employees as chapter two demonstrates. In short, UNRWA is capable of playing an independent role in international politics. The agency has mostly been left to fend for itself both in policymaking and in collecting its own voluntary contributions for most of the last six decades. Nevertheless, both Israel and the US have been supporting the organization financially and otherwise in spite of its activities as Table 2.1 indicates. In fact, after the 1967 war, Israel asked UNRWA to continue its operations in the OPT through the Comay-Michelmores Agreement (See Appendix B).¹⁵ Many Israelis have argued that Israel did that to keep the refugees well fed and at bay. However, my research shows that UNRWA, through the General Assembly, has been conveying the Palestine message to the world through the organization. It was UNRWA that recommended to the GA the adoption of “soft protection” policies in Lebanon and then transferred these measures to the OPT.¹⁶ As a result, UNRWA undertook to monitoring the security of Palestine refugees in occupied Lebanon, issued public statements on the situation from time to time, and “took up the need for appropriate action...to protect the refugees” with the Government of Israel and various members of the Security Council. Then it was UNRWA that suggested the registration of all refugees and their descendants that became a GA resolution in 1982. Almost every new initiative at the UN concerning the Palestinians originated in UNRWA’s recommendations to the General Assembly, and the Security Council as chapter four demonstrates.

The US has been a champion of UNRWA from the outset and its biggest contributor. However, it is paralyzed by the amount of political and humanitarian support

¹⁵ An Agreement Between UNRWA and the Government of Israel Embodied in an exchange of Letters dated 14 June 1967 for the Purpose of Enabling UNRWA to Continue to Provide assistance to the Refugees in Areas under the Control of the Government of Israel.

¹⁶ By soft protection I refer to the many measures that UNRWA undertook in the OPT to interfere with the Israeli government on behalf of the Palestinian people in order to facilitate their daily movements and life restriction. See chapter five for more details.

that the agency has been able to garner on behalf of the Palestinian people in the last six decades at the GA. According to Richard Murphy, the Americans wanted UNRWA to help in the integration and assimilation of the refugees and to prevent them from being “radicalized by the communist camp.”¹⁷ The US’s ultimate goal has been to “put an end to the refugee question” by creating suitable circumstances for them to integrate in the host countries. Pumping hundreds of million of dollars into the organization was consistent with that in the past. Now it seems that the refugees have outmaneuvered the agency to represent their interests; right of return, independence, preserving their identity, and keeping their plight alive have been made possible by the survival of the agency.

Constructivism, Norms, Ideas, and the Functions of UNRWA

Constructivists have argued that international norms not only constrain actors by changing the incentives that shape their behavior but also help to constitute the very actors whose conduct they seek to regulate. In other words, international norms change the basic character of states themselves (Katzenstein, 1996: 22). Deriving its name from the basic claim that world politics is socially constructed, it argues that collective identities and interests in international life are formed (Wendt, 1995: 39). Unlike realists, constructivists do not simply take national interests for granted, nor do they assume that preferences are formed exogenous to interactions. Rather, they ask, “how do states know what they want?” and look for the answer in structures, “not of power, but of meaning and social value” (Finnemore, 1996: 2). While rational theories of international relations derive their assumptions from microeconomics, constructivists take a more sociological approach to theorizing (Wendt, 1994: 390). While different constructivist scholars use different

¹⁷ Interview with Ambassador Richard Murphy, Council on Foreign Relations, New York City, June 3, 2003.

methodologies, they all share a “willingness to make social structures causal as well as a belief that these structures mold preferences in important ways” (Wendt, 1995: 39).

Unlike neorealism and neoliberalism, constructivism is not founded on a purely materialist ontology. Without drawing a sharp line between material and social realities, constructivists like to emphasize the “inter-subjective nature of the international system” (Onuf, 1990: 40). They point out that material facts only acquire meaning through human communication and social interaction” (Fennimore, 1995: 6). They argue that a purely materialist focus neglects many of the most important forces in world politics. It cannot explain why states act in one way towards friends, but differently towards enemies, irrespective of the power relationships involved. To use Wendt's oft-cited example, anarchy and the distribution of power cannot explain why five hundred British nuclear weapons mean one thing to the United States, but five Iraqi or North Korean nuclear weapons mean something quite different. Constructivists conclude “while the distribution of power may always affect states’ calculations...how it does so depends on the intersubjective understandings and expectations...that constitute their conceptions of self and other (Wendt, 1994: 390).

This assumption leads constructivists to challenge the very basis of the realist’s ontology. Neorealists contend that the persistence of the security dilemma and the practice of power politics are the necessary consequence of the unequal distribution of power in an anarchical system. Anarchy, they say, creates the self-help system - a point that is accepted by neoliberal institutionalists. In contrast, constructivists assert that structure only acquires meaning through intersubjective interpretations.

Anarchy, as the structural component of the rationalist international system, has no meaning independent of what definition is attached to it by states. “Neither anarchy...nor the

distribution of capabilities, can socialize states to the cope with the international system's structure absent some set of meaningful norms and practices" (Hopf, 1998: 171). Or, in Wendt's rather more concise phrase, "anarchy is what states make of it" (Wendt, 1995: 77). Constructivists assert that anarchy has no fixed meaning other than that ascribed to it intersubjectively, and accordingly claim it is possible to imagine quite a different international system to the one posited by realist theories.

The United States, Israel and Jordan moved gradually to accept the evolution of the concept of a Palestinian state, Palestinian nationalism, and Palestinian separate identity in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip over the last four decades. The slow change in the aforementioned countries' positions came as a result of the evolution of the concept of self-determination after World War II, the process of decolonization and the adoption of the United Nations General Assembly of two important resolutions in 1960 resolution 1514(XV) on December 14 and 1541(XV) on December 15, 1960, and the establishment of the PLO in 1965. In addition, the three countries' gradual acceptance has been due to the creation of a regional norm in the Middle East in the last four decades. More Arab countries came to acknowledge the presence of a separate Palestinian identity, and thus the necessity for creating a state for them for human rights reasons due to their constant suffering. Moreover, the region could not ignore the decolonization process in Africa, Asia, and the Arab World. According to Jorge Castañeda, resolution 1514 (XV) entitled "Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples" is one of the most significant developments in the history of the UN. He believes that the resolution was not only an idealistic political declaration declaring or establishing a specific legal obligation to grant political independence to colonized people, but also a declaration to grant political and legal independence to all people around the globe. In the words of Castañeda, this resolution

was “the modern interpretation of the principle of self-determination, rendered by the most representative organ of the international community, on the basis of political trends and events since the Charter was signed (Castañeda, 1969: 175).

The passage of the two resolutions paved the way for the General Assembly to build on a strong foundation and to take bolder steps in helping other colonized peoples. The first country to benefit from this was Namibia 1966-1991, then the Palestinians 1967-present, followed by Kosovo 1999-2002, and in 2002 East Timor. As for Namibia, the UN challenged South Africa on several occasions and passed resolutions despite its rejection. A case in point is resolution 2145 (XXI). The resolution allowed the Afro-Asian group to call for the United Nations to assume direct responsibility for South West Africa (today’s Namibia) and establish an authority for the territory. The group also called upon the Security Council to take the necessary measures to enable such an authority to fulfill its tasks.¹⁸ Thus, the creation by the UN of the Council for South West Africa followed by the South West African People’s Organization (SWAPO) were a testament to the many country members of the UN that colonization must end. Both the question of South West Africa and the adoption of resolutions 1514 and 1541, I suggest, have been conducive to the question of Palestine at the General Assembly. And the granting of an observer status to SWAPO at the GA set a precedent for the PLO to follow.

The Palestinians began lobbying the General Assembly and other international organizations based on the Namibian experience. The Palestinians allied themselves with Arab, Islamic, Non-Aligned, Latin American, Northern European, and African countries. The Palestinians started using the mechanism of adopting resolutions through voting at the

¹⁸ United Nations Document, A/PV.1419, 27 September 1966, pp. 6-7. See also for details Rocha, pp 75-76.

GA. Voting is the formal process of decision-making in international organizations. It has a great significance in deciding the attitudes and orientations of any international gathering. In the General Assembly the voting system is specified in Article 18 of the Charter. According to this article, each member of the General Assembly has one vote.

The assembly passed hundreds of resolutions on various issues since its inception. States to whom they were addressed disregarded many of these resolutions. Some states have argued that General Assembly resolutions are mere recommendations, and thus, non-binding. Those states have also accused the General Assembly of improperly attempting to impose the will of its automatic majority on the minority. In fact in recent years the Israeli Ambassador to the UN, Dan Gillerman, has called the automatic majority “the immoral majority” on many occasions, due to Israel’s failure to stop being deplored and condemned at the world organization. The ambassador’s accusations and aggressive stands have prompted many representatives at the UN to boycotting his sessions. Israel and the US have been suffering enormously at the General Assembly and lately at the Security Council due to their stand against ending the occupation and not abiding by international law (on Palestine and Iraq) respectively. The US has been using its veto power to protect Israel from sanctions and the deployment of a peacekeeping mission in the OPT. Close analysis of the UN voting arrangement reveals that the majority rule was the system adopted by the founders of the UN. Western countries commanded a clear majority during the first decade of the organization and used it to obtain favorable resolutions to serve their national interests particularly with regard to the Cold War. It was the Soviet Union at that time that complained of such an automatic majority, while the West hailed it as democratic. Western countries even tried to circumvent the Soviet veto by expanding the General Assembly’s authority in matters pertaining to the maintenance of peace and security by General

Assembly resolution Uniting for Peace of 1950, which the Soviet Union rejected as unconstitutional.

Although it is clear that moral victories at the UN mean very little to many, the chief American diplomat during the Reagan administration, Jeane K. Kirkpatrick, admitted the importance of UN resolutions. Testifying before Congress in 1984, she said, “The decisions of the United Nations are widely interpreted as reflecting ‘world opinion’ and are endowed with substantial moral and intellectual force. The cumulative impact of decisions of United Nations bodies influence opinions all over the world about what is legitimate, what is acceptable, who is lawless and who is repressive.”¹⁹ The importance of Ambassador’s Kirkpatrick statements stems from the fact that she is a conservative and was representing a conservative administration.

The UN and other international institutions, contrary to what neorealists predicted, have been effective tools in changing states’ behavior. The UN’s importance has been growing over the last six decades especially after the end of the Cold War. The UN has been participating on equal footing with other major powers on many issues that threaten peace and security around the world. A case in point is the UN’s full participation in the Quartet (the US, EU, Russian Federation, and UN) on the question of Palestine. Thomas Weiss has categorized the contributions of the world organizations into four major categories: peace, development, independence, and human rights. He argues that the UN system has been ahead of the curve on many issues: development; environmental; population and technology; women’s issues; and trade and finance (Weiss *et.al*, 2001: 13-16). This does not mean that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the European Union (EU), the Arab League, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank and other IGOs are not

¹⁹ Jeane K. Kirkpatrick, Testimony Before the Senate Appropriations Committee, Foreign Operations Sub-Committee, 2 March 1984, p. 7.

stabilizing and influential forces in their respective spheres and beyond. However, it does mean that the UN has garnered enough credibility and clout in the last few decades to surpass many other organizations due to its universal membership and the fact that it has a system of an inclusive rather than exclusive membership.

The pursuit by the General Assembly of the goal of decolonization in general and the case of Palestine in particular has had its impact on the role of the Assembly in generating obligations on its members and creating new norms of international behavior. Following the precedents in which the assembly purported to declare the law, advocates of decolonization pushed through resolution 1514 (XV) of December 1960, entitled "Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples." This resolution has been widely considered a landmark in the development of the right to self-determination and UN efforts for decolonization as a clear sign of the transformation of the organization itself. In this resolution the General Assembly declared that colonialism, in any form, constitutes a denial of human rights, is contrary to the UN Charter and is an impediment to the promotion of world peace and that all peoples have the right to self-determination. The assembly also called for the immediate transfer of all powers to the peoples in trust and non-self-governing territories.

While most scholars considered General Assembly resolution 1514(XV) as the most important landmark in the UN march towards comprehensive decolonization, W.B. Ofuatey-Kodjoe argues that resolution 1541(XV), which was adopted by the General Assembly one day later during the same session, is rather more significant in this regard than resolution 1514 (XV) (Kodjoe, 1977:115). In resolution 1541(XV) the General Assembly approved the report of the special committee of six on the transmission of information under Article 73 of the Charter, appointed one year earlier. The adoption of resolution

1514(XV) and 1541(XV) was a clear manifestation of the drastic change that has taken place in the membership of the UN. Today, it is almost universally agreed that colonialism is outlawed and illegal and that self-determination is an inalienable right for all peoples. The adoption of both resolutions was a clear manifestation of the drastic change that has taken place in the membership of the United Nations. These resolutions and many others were introduced to the General Assembly mainly by the large group of member states, which have emerged from colonial status and were subsequently admitted into the organization. Since their admission, they have been strongly advocating a more militant stance by the UN against colonialism and a stronger effort toward its complete elimination.

In the early days of the assembly's handling of the question of Palestine, a handful of states opposed Israeli positions in Palestine, for most of the assembly members were Westerners who shared Israel's vision of how to solve the problem. During the first decade of the organization, the West, particularly the US, had a clear and decisive command in the General Assembly. Of the original 51 member states of the UN in 1945, at least 35 were closely associated with the US, only five with the Soviet Union and the rest were neutral. As a result, the US did not hesitate in those years to use its "automatic majority" to serve its national interest. Until 1955, there was little change in the composition of the assembly. Only nine new members were admitted between 1946 and 1950, and none thereafter until 1955. In 1955, a "package deal" was reached to solve the membership crisis resulting from the Cold War, thus admitting 16 states to membership.

However, 1960 was the turning point in the composition of the General Assembly. During that year, seventeen new members, including sixteen former African colonies, were admitted to the GA. This influx set the stage for basic changes in the direction of the assembly's interests and for a permanent shift in the voting power structure of the

organization. The increase in the GA membership from 51 members at its establishment to 191 today constitutes the most obvious and dramatic change in the structure of the world organization. Instead of a majority of long established states, largely western in orientation, the overwhelming majority of the assembly today is constituted of Third World states. The new members, like the older ones, have sought to use the UN to enhance their primary national objectives (development, ending civil wars, fighting AIDS and other diseases). Thus, to the dislike of the Western powers, the questions of decolonization, racial equality, and economic development and social justice are the most predominant concerns of the assembly.

The Soviet Union, after being in a permanent minority position for more than a decade, found the change in composition and concerns of the assembly most useful. It sought to benefit from the anti-colonial sentiment of the majority not only as an effective propaganda on a matter of principle but also as a good point of departure from which it could attack Western policies in general. However, in the late 1960s and early 1970s many Arab, Islamic, African, Asian, and Latin American countries started to show some discomfort and frustration over Israel's treatment of the Palestinians, and over Israel's disrespect of international law and its disregard of the Geneva Convention. Since then the Israeli position has been more frequently challenged at the UN despite the overwhelming support by most Western and few third world countries of Israel's treatment of the Palestinians, due to the rising norms of human rights.

Consequently, a gradual change in how the Palestinian question was treated started to take place at the UN. For instance, from 1950 until the late 1960s, the GA adopted scores of resolutions that mentioned the Palestinians as refugees only and referred to their case only through UNRWA. All UN resolutions in that period referred to the UN accepting UNRWA

accounts on the refugees and extending UNRWA's mandates for more years. A case in point was Resolution 513(VI) paragraph two, which the UN adopted in 1952. In the resolution the UN recognized "the concern of the United Nations in the problem of the Palestine refugees." In addition, the UN endorsed more humanitarian projects for the refugees in the region to help their integration. The resolution did not say anything about suffering, human rights abuses, self-determination, and/or the national aspiration of the refugees. On the contrary, paragraph four invites "UNRWA to explore with the governments concerned, arrangements looking towards their assuming administration of reintegration projects at the earliest possible date." Resolution 513(VI) shows how the UN and other countries envisioned solving the Palestinian issue.

On December 4, 1954, the GA adopted resolution 818(IX), which extended the mandate of UNRWA for another five years. By extending UNRWA's mandate the UN was ignoring paragraph eleven of resolution 194(III), which called on Israel to allow refugees "wishing to return back to their homes" at the earliest possible date to do so and those who want compensation to be granted that too. When resolution 194(III) was adopted, 35 states voted for it, 15 against it, and eight abstained. The US, Great Britain, and France all voted in favor of that resolution. In paragraph eleven, the GA resolved that "refugees wishing to return to their homes and live in peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practical date and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage of property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible."

Norms

According to Jepperson, Katzenstein, and Wendt, norms are "collective expectations about the proper behavior for a given identity" (Jepperson, Katzenstein, and Wendt, 1996: 54). They differ from privately held ideas by virtue of being shared and social; norms are not subjectively held, but are inherently intersubjective (Finemore, 1996: 22). Norms make claims on behavior, shaping interests and policies. They are dynamic creatures, changing over time as they are constantly contested and challenged. Some become institutionalized and so taken for granted that they are hard to recognize. The acceptance of statehood as the only legitimate political unit in international society is one example; the rule of law is another (Katzenstein, 1996: 3). Any new or emergent norm must compete with established norms and whether any particular norm prevails or succumbs "is a political process that implicates the relative power of international and domestic coalitions" (Jepperson, Wendt, & Katzenstein, 1996: 56).

Constructivists see norms as typically divided into two distinct groups: regulative and constitutive norms, or legal and social norms as they are sometimes called (Katzenstein, 1996: 2). Regulative (legal) norms set down standards of prescribed or proscribed conduct. They act as rules spelling out how an actor is expected to behave in a specific situation. Regulative norms influence decision makers and publics about what is a good or appropriate way to behave. Constitutive (social) norms, on the other hand, actually define and constitute the actor in the first place. They "embody the qualities that define an actor's identities" (Katzenstein, 1996: 18). They specify the conduct that will lead others to "recognize and validate a particular identity and respond to it appropriately" (Jepperson, Wendt & Katzenstein, 1996: 54). Taken together, regulative and constitutive norms shape expectations

about what an actor's identity will be in a specific situation and how that actor ought to behave.

The literature on norms in international relations is of relatively recent vintage. Much of the work has stressed the constructed notions of “appropriateness” and “inappropriateness” in international politics and how these normative questions penetrate and constitute even the most basic units of international society. For example, what influences determine the kind of bureaucratic structures that a modern state should have²⁰ and is organized military or certain kinds of weapons systems a prerequisite of normal “stateness.” The norms literature also tackles traditional 'high security' issues, for example, offering an ideational explanation for the non-use of nuclear weapons in warfare since 1945.

Some of the most important contributions theorize the dynamics of norm change. These investigate how norms move from “out there” (the international realm) to “in here” (the domestic) and vice-versa and how they actually alter actor preferences. Such theories stress the importance of socialization and communicative rationality, as well as the role played by epistemic communities’ networks of specialists, non-governmental organizations, activists and even key individual actors. This scholarship challenges the realist assumption that states “tend to see themselves as vulnerable and alone” and argues instead that states often conceive of themselves as embedded within a larger society in which state and non-state actors play an important role.²¹ Identities are not something that only exist in isolation, or prior to interaction, but are defined in a social fashion, through an actor's “interaction with others and placed within an institutional context” (Adler & Barnett, 1998: 47). This

²⁰ Martha Finnemore has shown how international organizations 'teach' states, demonstrating how UNESCO helped persuade states certain bureaucratic scientific structures were a vital part of what it meant to be a modern state. See chapter 2 of Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society*. 1996.

²¹ Mearsheimer, “False Promise.” Cf. Richard Price, “Reversing the Gun Sights: Transnational Civil Society Targets Land Mines,” *International Organization*, vol. 52, no.3 (Summer 1998), 613-644.

relational perspective supports the view that "national and state identities are formed in relationship to other nations and states – that the identities of political actors are tied to those outside the boundaries of the community and the territory respectively" (Ibid: 47).

According to ICJ Judge Rosalyn Higgins, the UN is the most appropriate body to look to for indications of developments in international law, for international custom is to be deduced from the practice of states, which includes their international dealings as manifested by their diplomatic actions and public pronouncements (1963: 1). With the development of international organizations, the votes and views of states have come to have legal significance as evidence of customary law. Moreover, the practice of states comprises their collective acts as well as the totality of their individual acts; and the number of occasions on which states see fit to act collectively has been greatly increased by the activities of international organizations. Collective acts of states, repeated by and acquiesced in by sufficient numbers with sufficient frequency, eventually attain the status of law. Although Higgins agrees with the argument that the General Assembly has no legislative capacity, and that its resolutions are non-binding, she argues that "the body of resolutions taken as a whole indicates a general customary law" undoubtedly provides a rich source of evidence. (Ibid: 5).

Higgins asserts that the UN has successfully created a period during which new customs of international law have been developing and leading states to participate directly at a rate never seen before in making laws through voting. Questions regarding the size of a majority supporting an implied legal prescription or the consent of all major powers to such a norm only make a difference between practice and customary international law. Thus, she argues that a usage becomes a law "at that point at which states regard themselves as legally bound by the practice, a point which can only be ascertained by the close examination of

States, attitudes and public statements” (Ibid: 6). These states should constitute the majority of nations and not necessarily all the major powers, though the latter's exclusion "may in present circumstances render the new customs, and norms ineffective” (Ibid: 5).

Furthermore, she argues that the UN is an important source of international law, for the General Assembly possesses a protolegal capacity and that its resolutions can even indicate evolving rules of international law. Higgins defines international law as "a body of legal norms which apply to relations across state boundaries"(Ibid: 1). In addition, she argues that international law has two main sources: contractual law and general international law. Contractual law comprises bilateral and multilateral treaties; the UN Charter is one of the latter types.

General international law, according to Higgins, "refers to customary rules which are evidenced by the practice of States" and general principles of international law widely accepted by States. Thus, customary international law is basically a "political" form of international law, "reflecting the consensus of the great majority of States” (Ibid: 7). Norms of international law evolve gradually over a period of time. There are two basic prerequisites for their emergence: first, an evidence of practice; and second, a demonstration of acceptance. The introduction of the Palestinian question to the General Assembly every year shows that the UN wanted to nurture the norms of decolonization by keeping up the heat on colonial powers the way it did against South Africa (as an evidence of practice). Since the Six-Day War the UN has been determined to end the Palestinian-Israeli conflict according to international law.

The General Assembly practice has shown, as Christopher Joyner argues, that the resolution-issue can be "transformed into a new legal norm or general principle of law. Declarations by the General Assembly purporting to declare the law, particularly those

adopted unanimously or by consensus, carry more weight and significance in this regard as authentic interpretations concretizing the principles of the Charter and thus are binding" (1981: 463). An example of this is the Declaration of Principles of Law Concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation Among States, adopted by the Assembly as resolution 2625 of 24 October 1970.

According to Oscar Schachter, "when all the States in the United Nations declare that a stated norm is legally binding, that determination cannot simply be dismissed as 'ultra vires' – or reduced to a recommendation – because it was made in the General Assembly" (1981: 7). However, he quickly added that past and future state practices would significantly determine the validity of the declaration of a custom (Ibid: 13). Schachter further argues, law-declaring resolutions "may have legal effect as evidence even if they are not unanimous" (Ibid: 14). In this regard, "the size and composition of that majority must be taken into account in judging the weight to be given to the resolution" (Ibid: 21). Although he states that dissenting states could not be bound by a majority resolution, he argues, "if a resolution is persuasive evidence of an existing obligation, then a dissenting state may be considered bound by that obligation" (Ibid: 27).

Other scholars attribute the role of the General Assembly resolutions as a means of norm creation to the fact that international law has been perceived by most of the new nations as the normative product of most of the states around the world. Thus, the General Assembly may be perceived as the vehicle through which the international community in its entirety can contribute to the development of international law. Hence, "by virtue of its nearly universal representation and powers specifically granted in the Charter, the United Nations General Assembly which has most directly influenced the nature and subsistence of contemporary international law" (Joyner, 1981: 448).

Notwithstanding the legal argument about General Assembly resolutions, their role in legitimation is undeniable and it goes beyond the confines of international law. Legitimation is basically political, and "it must take into account the ends sought, the means for achieving those ends and the procedures used in reaching decisions" (Ibid: 16-7).

Resolutions of the General Assembly, if they are to gain consensus, which is the usual process of decision-making, are the result of a long process of negotiations and compromises. In other cases, the majority against the objections of the minority approves them. Based on the facts of international politics and the UN Charter, such resolutions, even if not binding on dissenting minorities in the legal sense, are "entitled to considerable weight" (Schachter, 18). However, "an essential requirement for legitimizing international decision, whatever the size of the majority, is their conformity with minimal procedural standards relating to the decision process. Thus, voting has to reflect the requirements of 'due process,' or of fairness and of principle decisions" (Ibid: 19).

By focusing on norms, constructivists restrict the situations where identity-change can occur through interaction. States, they believe, can transcend the security dilemma if they share the same common norms of liberal-democratic government. But scholars like Peter Katzenstein, Amitav Acharya, Iain Johnston, and Alexander Wendt argue that states can create identities from other norms, including specific approaches to economic development and perceptions of a common culture (Acharya, 2000: 37). Drawing on insights from sociology, including "contact theory" and "social identity theory," which assert that under certain conditions, contact between groups should reduce negative stereotyping, these writers emphasize the role that socialization and interaction play in the development of collective identities based on non-liberal norms, rather than focusing on a single element of a

state's identity. In contrast to liberal-constructivists, they can be better called "social constructivists."

The General Assembly has come to identify itself almost totally, in spite of the opposition of some of its members, with the demands of the anti-colonial camp. Thus, the pursuit of Palestinian independence has helped the evolution of the UN's endorsement of the universal right to achieve decolonization into new dimensions. A close look at the question of Palestine at the UN reveals that between 1950 and 1965 the UN did not refer to the Palestinians except as refugees. Then from 1966 until 1975, a clear modification took place in the General Assembly's tone toward the Palestinians. During these years the GA mentioned the Palestinians as "a people who are entitled to certain human rights and representation." From 1976 until 1988 a radical shift happened at the UN concerning the Palestinians. During that period two of the US's principal organs, the Security Council and the General Assembly, recognized the Palestinians as a nation that deserved to live in its own state and to rule itself. Finally, from 1990 until now, both the UN and many other institutions: the European Union, NATO, G8, and others have stepped up the pressure on Israel urging it to end its occupation of Palestinian land. This later era has been the most significant of all because of the Security Council's adoption of resolution 1397 on March 12, 2002, which "affirmed a vision of a region where two states, the Israeli and the Palestinian, live side by side within secure and recognized borders." I suggest that the adoption of resolution 1397 is one of the most important developments in Palestinian history in the last half century. For the very country that has been opposing the establishment of a Palestinian state, the US was the one that drafted the resolution.

Analysis of UNRWA's relationship with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict clearly shows how and why the institution evolved from a simple humanitarian relief agency to an

organization that has influenced its own mandate and operations, as well as government behavior toward and in the Middle Eastern region. Supported by an avalanche of resolutions that developing and many Western countries brought to the General Assembly on behalf of Palestinians, UNRWA prevented the US, Jordan, and Israel from impeding snow-balling momentum at the UN. The position of the UN and UNRWA were also strengthened by the adoption of General Assembly resolutions 1514 and 1541, which called for decolonization and self-determination in 1960 and for the Secretary-General to do all that he could to implement those resolutions. In addition, the willingness of the General Assembly to uphold and nurture international law and refuse to accept the inquisition of land by force by any country. Thus, the Palestinian question shows that countries around the world – Arab, Islamic, Non-Aligned, Latin American, Northern European, and African – who favored a Palestinian state, used the mechanism of adopting resolutions through voting to establish new norms around the globe. This dissertation argues that in recent decades smaller countries effectively used this technique to further their interests and create the norms that states need to have a more peaceful world.

The transformation of the UN with regard to decolonization in Palestine was clearly evident when 112 countries asked the Security Council and the Secretary General in 1980 to consider, as a matter of urgency, the situation in Palestine and called on Israel to immediately withdraw from all the occupied territories including East Jerusalem. The foundation on which the General Assembly based its resolution seemed to be the violation of human rights, a question long cherished by the West, and not international peace and security. The question of Palestine at the UN demonstrates that norms do not work by themselves. They need to be nurtured by advocates and agents. UNRWA and the refugees have been doing just that for the last six decades. The agency kept asking the General Assembly to adopt

resolutions that led to transformation of the question of Palestine from a refugee problem to a question of a people who deserve their own state.

The general argument here reaffirms the constructivist claim that the international system is a social environment. Rather than seeing themselves as “vulnerable and alone,” most states, most of the time, perceive themselves as members of an international society in which they interact with other states and non-state actors. Their calculations about how to act within that society are not based solely on zero-sum, or mean-ends calculations with the goal of dominating other states or gaining more wealth, but also by expectation about how they ought to behave and how they ought to treat and interact with other identities. The constructivists approach emphasizes the importance of social structure: the dominant beliefs, norms, and understandings that characterize a given order.

Conclusion

Events after World War II and after the Cold War and the current war on terror suggest that small regional states, popular movements, international institutions and terror groups like Al-Qa’eda and others appear to have as much influence on determining the behavior of major actors than neorealism would like to admit. We have seen that in the last few decades that the behavior of US and other major powers have been influenced by small states, non-state actors and international institutions. According to Palestine’s permanent observer at the UN, Dr. Nasser Al-Kidwa, the Palestine mission forced the US to use its veto more than fifty times in the last three decades. It also forced Israel and the US to vote against more than 400 resolutions. While looking at the pattern of voting at the UN, the US and Israel have consistently voted against UN resolutions on Palestinian affairs. However, both Israel and

the US have been voting in favor of UNRWA continuing its mission and its services in the Middle East.²²

Neoliberals and neorealists ought to consider factors other than interests, security, relative and absolute gains and balance of power as the only elements that shape state interests. Domestic factors and norms do play a significant or an independent role in world politics. Neoliberals contend that norms create incentives and constraints for states to behave in ways that do not necessarily reflect the interests of the most powerful states. And they argue that states might change their behavior due to regime pressure, but they argue that a regime is not a norm. They also posit that interests are static, whereas, neorealists argue that state interests will always override norms. They assume that states agree with a norm only when they find identical or complementary interests in it.

Constructivism focuses on the influence of a norm on state behavior. Furthermore, constructivism demonstrates that identities and norms are made through the daily practices and participations in domestic and global politics that states undertake.²³ State behavior like self-interest, for example, cannot be understood as separate from a state's identity or identities, or how it regards itself in relation to others. Wendt describes the daily life of international politics as one where there is an on-going process of states taking identities in

²² Interview with a US diplomat at the UN who spoke on conditions of anonymity on November 19, 2003.

²³ By identity I refer to the 'basic character' of a state. But what gives a state its character? Here the constructivist literature seems to be divided between those who argue political norms are the key determinants of state identity and those who believe it is possible to create collective identities around a range of other norms. The former school (sometimes called 'liberal-constructivists') stresses the role of democracy and liberalism in shaping identity. For example, Thomas Risse offers an account of identity formation in an attempt to explain the theory of the democratic peace in social constructivist terms. He says that democracies do not go to war against one another because liberal norms embedded in their political cultures dictate appropriate behavior, including a preference for non-violent solutions, compromise, rights of minorities and tolerance of dissent. The externalization of these norms explains pacific relations between democracies. But, he goes on to ask, why is it that relations between democracies and non-liberal states are still often belligerent? (Risse, 1996: 366).

relation to others, casting them into corresponding counter-identities, and playing out the result. Constructivists believe that through socialization states can grow to develop a sense of collective identity or community and transcend the security dilemma which neorealism believes is a necessary condition of international anarchy. In addition, constructivists believe that both neoliberals and neorealists fail to adequately explain long-term change in world politics. They stress the ultimate subjectivity of interests in world politics and their links to changing identity.

During the 1960s and 1970s, there was an upsurge of voices calling for respect of human dignity and freedom, neither the US nor Israel was able to challenge such evolving norms openly and publicly without being condemned by countries and international institutions around the globe or having other interests threatened by major allies. Even in recent years, many European, Arab and other governments have urged the US to pressure Israel to find a solution to the question of Palestine. In fact, Arabs and Europeans made their support to the US in its war on terror and on Iraq contingent upon solving the Palestinian question. Over the years Palestinians have succeeded in convincing most countries that their situation is central to broader peace and stability in the Middle East. As a result, the question of Palestine has gained increased importance in the General Assembly and the Security Council. I suggest that both the US and the Israeli governments could not challenge or defeat two realities in the OPT: (1) the refugees aborted any program that was not consistent with their vision or aspiration of repatriation; and (2) prevailing international norms of decolonization and respect for human rights pressured the US and Israel to find a solution to the problem consistent with prevailing international norms.

The following chapter provides an historical analysis of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict by answering the following questions. Why did Great Britain promise Palestine to

the European Jews? How did the Palestinian refugee problem and the question of Palestine evolve within the context of the UN? Why was UNRWA established and what was its original mandate? How was a Palestinian refugee defined in the early stages of the conflict? Finally, how did Israel, Jordan, and Western countries envision solving the question of Palestinian refugees and the question of Palestine? I argue in the chapter that Israel's ultimate objective was to end any Palestinian claim to the land and to establish the new Jewish emigrants as the original and legitimate owners of the land. I also suggest that had it not been for Great Britain's help Israel would have never been established. The chapter also demonstrates that the United Nations involvement in the question of Palestine was one sided at the beginning, but improved over the years.

Chapter 3

The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict and UNRWA

How did the Palestinian refugee problem and the question of Palestine evolve within the context of the UN? Why was UNRWA established, and what was its original mandate? How was a Palestinian refugee defined in the early stages of the conflict? Finally, how did Israel, Jordan, and Western countries envision solving the question of Palestinian refugees and the question of Palestine? This chapter argues that Israel's ultimate objective was to end any Palestinian claim to the land and to establish the new Jewish emigrants as the original and legitimate owners of the land.

This chapter is organized as follows. The first section briefly reviews the role Britain played in promising Palestinian territories to European Jews after the First World War and how European Jews viewed indigenous population in the OPT. The second section evaluates the role that the UN has been playing in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and its reaction to the conflict. The third section examines why the Palestinian Arabs left their homes, farms, towns, and villages. The fourth section looks at the formation of UNRWA, its mandate, budget, and how it defined a refugee. Finally, the fifth section analyzes the reasons behind the departure of the Palestinians.

Britain's Role in the Creation of Israel

The origins of the Palestinian dilemma as an international problem can be traced to the League of Nations decision to place Palestine under the administration of Great Britain as the mandatory power toward the end of the First World War. In principle, the mandate was a transitory phase until Palestine attained the status of a fully independent state, a status provisionally recognized in the League's Covenant. While World War I was still raging, the

disintegration of the Ottoman Empire became imminent, and the Entente Powers were in negotiations over rival territories then. In 1919, the French and the British signed the San Remo Agreement, which divided the land. France took Lebanon and Syria, and Great Britain took Iraq, Transjordan, and Palestine. Although the European powers sought to establish spheres of influence, they recognized that sovereignty would rest with the rulers and people of Arab territories.

To give the reader a historical background of the conflict in Palestine, one has to trace the historical events back to 1916. Negotiations between Britain, France, and Russia and later Italy led to the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement on the allocation of Ottoman Arab territories to certain European powers. By 1916, the Sykes-Picot Declaration was signed between France and Britain; the latter was to assume control over Palestine. The Sykes-Picot Agreement specified a future recognition of an independent Arab state or confederation of Arab states. (Cleveland, 2004; Smith, 2004; Migdal & Kimmerling, 2003; Aruri, 2003; Farsoun, 1998). Nevertheless, in 1917 Britain promised in the words of the Balfour Declaration “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for Jews” (Farsoun, 1997: 4).

This meant that England would make sure that the Jewish people would be accommodated in the future in a national home to co-exist, adjacent to that of an Arab state. However, this declaration was not made public for fear of criticism by the Arabs in the Middle East, especially Sharif Hussein Ibn Ali who the British promised Palestine to, and the Palestinian Arabs, who at the time represented the majority of the population of Palestine. But Great Britain would not have done that had it had any respect for the Arabs in general and the Palestinians in particular. Alan Taylor observed that “the dehumanized image of the Palestinians which the Zionists developed and propagated was instrumental in displacing the

moral issue and establishing an aura of legal justification around Zionist goals and activity (Taylor, 1974: 48).

During that time many Western leaders regarded the Arabs as simply nomads. In addressing the people of Palestine, King George V described the Arabs of Palestine not by name, but as the “general population” of the country. For the first Jewish settlers in the Hadera settlement in Palestine, the Palestine Arabs were termed “Barbarians.” Moreover, in the terms of the British Mandate (Article VI), they were described as “the other sections of the population,” and in the Balfour Declaration, they were referred to as the “existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine” (Smith, 2004: 73).

Such perceptions fulfilled the long-term plan that Theodore Herzl put forward against the Palestinian Muslims and Christians.²⁴ Herzl wanted to see the removal of all the Arabs from Palestine. This was best explained in his diaries:

We shall try to spirit the penniless population (Palestine Arabs) across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it an employment in our country. The property-owners will come over to our side. Both the process of expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discretely and circumspectly. Let the owners of immovable property believe that they are cheating us, selling us things for more than they are worth. But we are not going to sell them anything back (Cited in Hirst, 1977: 18).

All this happened under the eyes and supervision of Great Britain, the country that was entrusted with preparing Palestine for independence in accordance with the League of Nations mandate. The League divided the mandated territories into A, B, and C categories, with A having the best chances of being independent the fastest. Palestine was categorized as

²⁴ Theodore Herzl (1860-1904) was born in Budapest to a middle class family. He studied law, and then moved to Vienna to work for a prestigious Viennese newspaper. Herzl wrote the *Jewish State*, which provided the ideological basis for political Zionism. Herzl converted to Zionism as a result of the Dreyfus Affair. In 1894, Alfred Dreyfus, a French Army Captain, was accused for spying for Germany. It was clear that Dreyfus had been guilty of little more than being a successful Jew in Catholic France (Gelvin, 2005: 207-8).

an A zone. This did not, however, change reality at all. The British did not fulfill their legal obligation under the mandate when they denied the Palestinians their independence and when they promised their land to others.

Great Britain's situation became more complicated during and after World War II, as it was unable to maintain its control over all its colonies. Thus, many voices were raised inside and outside England calling on it to abandon its military domination over many others. Great Britain was exhausted by World War II, signaled in the case of Palestine to the UN that it wished no longer to continue the burden of the mandate. As a result, on September 3, 1947, the UN recommended the termination of the mandate power over Palestine (Ibid: 110). The British colonial secretary, Arthur Creech Jones, accepted the UN decision; hence, Great Britain started the process of withdrawal from Palestine. By August 1, 1948, it was ready to leave Palestine only with the consent of the Arab and Jewish population in the area (Smith, 2005: 340).

The partition plan, which the UN adopted, called for the establishment of independent Arab and Jewish states and a special regime to control the City of Jerusalem. These states were to come into existence in Palestine two months after the evacuation of the armed forces of the mandatory power had been completed, but no later than October 1, 1948. The boundaries of the Arab state, the Jewish state, and the City of Jerusalem were specified to all parties concerned, and a UN commission was sent to Palestine to implement the recommendation.

On May 15, 1948, the UK informed the UN Security Council that hostilities and armed forces on both sides were clashing in Palestine. Resolutions on October 19 and November 4, 1948 were passed by the SC to stop the fighting. However, both sides continued to fight. This complicated the situation and created new problems. Most

important to this study, it created Palestinian refugees as a substantial number of people were expelled from their homes.

The Evolution of the Question of Palestine Within the UN

The future and welfare of Palestinian refugees have been of great interest and agony to many UN institutions and many governments. This section reviews the evolution of the question of Palestine in the context of the UN. It details the various institutional responses that the UN undertook immediately following World War II to address the problems caused by the dislocation of indigenous Arabs from the land historically known as Palestine.

The origins of the question of Palestine within the UN can be traced to the passage of Resolution 181 (II) on November 29, 1947. This resolution called for the partition of Palestine into two separate states: one Arab, the other Jewish. As a result, Palestine was divided and a state planted on the eventual ruins of another nation. Since 1947, the UN has passed numerous resolutions recommending the resettlement and accommodation of the Palestinian Arabs.

The first reaction to the refugee issue by the General Assembly was the creation of an emergency committee to oversee the problem. Accordingly, the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) was created in. It consists of eleven government representatives including Australia, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Guatemala, India, Iran, the Netherlands, Peru, Sweden, Uruguay, and Yugoslavia. It was created to conduct investigations in Palestine and to receive and examine written and oral testimony from representatives of the population of Palestine, governments and organizations.²⁵

²⁵ UNGA Resolution 106, May 15, 1947.

The UN Special Committee on Palestine: In the early stages of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the first way in which the UN attempted to respond to the mounting crises in the Middle Eastern region was to form UNSCOP. It held preliminary meetings in New York and reached Palestine in mid-June 1947, where it conducted public meetings in Jerusalem, Beirut, and Amman (Khouri, 1985:44). Arab League members and Jewish organizations cooperated, but the Palestinian leadership in the Arab Higher Committee did not participate. Members of the committee also visited Europe, where a subcommittee was sent to investigate Jewish refugee camps in Germany and Austria. UNSCOP concluded its three-month investigation by August 1947. Its report summarized the Jewish and Arab cases and presented to the General Assembly two recommendations for the settlement of the Palestine question:

- Recommendation of the Majority: “The partition of Palestine into an Arab State and a Jewish State with Economic Union.”
- Recommendation of the Minority: “A Plan of a Federal State.”

The only unanimous agreement was on the termination of the mandate, the principle of independence, and a role for the UN.²⁶

Reactions to the differing recommendations made by UNSCOP were predictable, even before the GA met. The Arab League condemned the plan “As unfair and undemocratic...it also rejected the legitimacy of such a ruling” (Khouri, 1985:47-9). The Arab Higher Committee decided to fight the Palestinian case in the assembly. The World Zionist Organization (WZO) approved the partition resolution, but objected that the Jewish State had not been given enough territory. Palestine faced a historic decision on its future,

²⁶ U.N. Official Records of the G.A., Second Session, Supp. No. 11, Document A/364 (Report of the UNSCOP) Vol. II, pp. 42-44.

the most significant since the League of Nations had made it a mandated territory. For the UN, the question was even more fundamental: would Palestine attain independence as a unified entity or only by partition?

The GA met in November 1947 in a special session to consider the question of the future government of Palestine. The discussions in the assembly were long and intense, but the informal political agreements made outside the chambers were decisive in the final outcome. However, at the end of the general discussion, two subcommittees were appointed to report on the two proposals before the Ad Hoc Committee and an informal third subcommittee was appointed to try to promote conciliation between the Arab and Zionist positions.

The two subcommittees met for four weeks in late 1947 and presented to the Ad Hoc Committee their report on November 24, 1947. Subcommittee two argued for a unified Palestine, while subcommittee one amended the UNSCOP majority recommendation for the partition of Palestine. The vote, held on November 25, 1947, was 25 to 13 with 17 abstentions. The proposal to partition Palestine was therefore approved and sent to the General Assembly.²⁷ The assembly adopted Resolution 181 (II), the partition of Palestine, and requested that:

The Security Council takes the necessary measures as provided for in the plan for its implementation; and the Security Council consider, if circumstances during the transitional period...constitute a threat to the peace...by taking measures, under Articles 39 and 41 of the Charter...to exercise in Palestine the functions which are assigned to it by this resolution.

²⁷ U.N. Official. Records of the G.A., Second Session Ad Hoc Committee on the Palestine Question, pp. 276-279.

The UN resolution to partition Palestine did not resolve the Arab Jewish conflict over Palestine. Rather, it led to an increase in violence. The Palestinian Arab Committee called for a general strike to protest the partition of their country, which resulted in increased tension between the two communities as violence spread through the region. This violence, in turn, caused many people to leave their homes, farms, villages, towns, and cities.

Why Did The Palestinian Leave their Homes? It is impossible to understand the involvement of the UN in the question of Palestine without first taking a moment to examine the events surrounding the exodus of indigenous Arabs from their homes in Palestine. Most historians agree that the departure of almost 70,000 upper class Palestinians by the end of January 1948 was voluntary. The main debate is over the exodus of Palestinians from March 1948 onward, and in particular whether the exodus was the result of Jewish plans to drive the Arabs out of Palestine (Bowker, 2003: 30). In 1987, Benny Morris, lacking access to key data that had not yet been released, concluded that the events of 1947-1949 were so complex, changing, and varied that a single-cause explanation of the exodus from most sites was untenable. For Morris, the refugee problem resulted from war, not by design, Jewish or Arab. It was largely a byproduct of Arab and Jewish fears, protracted and bitter fighting and, to a lesser degree, the deliberate creation of Jewish and Arab military commanders and politicians (Ibid).

Critics of Morris's work, who are generally sympathetic to the Palestinians, condemned his findings as biased and inconsistent with his own evidence. For example, Norman Finkelstein concluded that a legitimate interpretation of Morris's evidence, if not his thesis, was that "a sequence of Zionist terror and Israeli expulsion" lay behind the birth of the refugee problem (Cited in Hirst, 2003: 77). Drawing on diaries of the former director

of the Jewish National Fund, Joseph Weitz, Edward Said also detailed how the Zionist aim was to Judaize the territory “conterminously with de-Arabising it” (Said, 1992: 81). Elsewhere, Morris acknowledged that he paid inadequate attention to the Zionists’ “transfer” predisposition in explaining what happened in 1948. He remarked that:

the Zionist leadership in the late 1930s and early 1940s almost consensually and persistently supported the idea of transfer, whether “voluntary” (with Arab agreement and compensation) or compulsory, as a solution to the “Arab problem.” Nor was Ben Gurion alone in the Zionist hierarchy in supporting transfer. Indeed the majority of the movement’s leaders in the 1930s and the 1940s went on record (at least in closed and secret discussions) in support of the idea (2001:1 27).

However, historians and other academic supporters of Israel, particularly right-wing Israeli commentators have condemned the interpretation of the historical record by Morris and other revisionist historians as distortion peddled by post-Zionist cynics (Peters, 2003: 13). The official Israeli version of the events surrounding the departure of the Palestinians in 1948 places blame with Arab states for rejecting partition and attacking the newly established Jewish state (Peres, 1993: 147). The popular Israeli version of the events of 1948, as outlined by David Ben Gurion, was that the Palestinians left “following instructions by the Arab leaders, with the Mufti of Jerusalem, Amin al-Husseini at their head, under the assumption that the invasion of the Arab armies at the expiration of the Mandate would destroy the Jewish state and push all the Jews into the sea, dead or alive” (Morris 2001; Peters 2003). Morris and other writers have effectively discredited this claim, pointing out that there is no evidence of instructions by the Arab Higher Committee, let alone any Arab government, for Palestinians to leave the country.

Contemporary scholarly debate on why Palestinians became refugees, centers on the importance of the Israeli military plan known as Plan Dalet, or Plan D, or operation Nahshon, which started on April 2, 1948. Morris argues that Plan D was a military program

for securing the interior of the Jewish state and the clusters of Jewish settlements outside the state's territory against the expected Arab invasion following the expiration of the UN mandate. It was not, in his view, a political blueprint for expulsions, although in practice it meant the depopulation and destruction of unspecified villages "that hosted hostile local militia and irregular forces." Nevertheless, Morris acknowledges that "in providing for the expulsion of communities and/or destruction of villages that had resisted the Haganah [Plan D] constituted a strategic-ideological anchor and basis for expulsions by front, district, brigade and battalion commanders (who in each case argued military necessity) and it gave commanders, post facto, a formal, persuasive covering note to explain their actions" (Morris, 2001: 206).

In support of his view that Plan D was essentially a military plan, Morris also found no evidence, apart from the existence of Plan D itself, of a political decision in March or April 1948 in favor of "a blanket, national policy of driving out the Arabs." Nor was there any general expectation on the Jewish side that there would be a mass exodus by the Arab population. Evidence of a deliberate pursuit of expulsion policies "with respect to certain key strategic districts and localities" including Tiberias and Haifa emerged from April 1948 onward, amid the accelerating disintegration of the situation on the ground (Thomas, 1999: 167).

In contrast to Morris's interpretation, Palestinian historian Walid Khalidi has argued that Plan D was the Jewish High Command's master plan to expel and evict Palestinians in order to secure a territorial basis for the Israeli state (Khalidi, 1992: 35). Considering the Zionist attraction to the notion of transfer, Khalidi's assessment cannot be dismissed. Indeed, the underlying assumption of Plan D, as reflected in Ilan Pappé's words, included "an existing notion prevalent among the policy-makers of the Jewish community...that a

Jewish success in the struggle over Palestine might involve the destruction of the Palestinian community.” While noting that Plan D demanded the surrender of the population, not their expulsion, and that it was not the only factor causing the flight of the refugees, Pappé’s own conclusion was that the Jewish policy, as exemplified by Plan D, was “the principal reason for the departure of most of the Arabs of Palestine.”

The question of responsibility for the Palestinian refugee exodus is likely to remain controversial among academics and a propaganda issue for both sides of the conflict. The general Arab belief continues to be that the Jews expelled the Palestinian population as a matter of deliberate policy choice. In the words of Salman Abu-Sitta, the Palestinians “did not leave on Arab orders. They were expelled or removed from their villages by force, 89 percent left due to direct Israeli military assaults, 10 percent left due to psychological war and the remaining one percent left on their own initiative. The exodus was...concurrent with and resulting from Israeli military operations” (Bowker, 2003: 31, 35). This view is consistent with the observation of John Bagot Glubb, former British commander of the Jordanian army, recalled from his field experience that

the story which Jewish publicity at first persuaded the world to accept, that the Arab refugees left voluntarily, is not true. Voluntary emigrants do not leave their homes with only the clothes they stand up in (and) in such a hurry that they lose other members of their family. The fact is that the majority left in panic flight, to escape massacre (at least, so they thought). They were in fact helped on their way by the occasional massacre. Others were encouraged to move by blows or by indecent acts (Buehrig, 1972: 45).

The subject has retained propaganda value for both sides of the conflict. Morris has observed that

the general Arab claim, that the Jews expelled Palestine’s Arabs, with predetermination and preplanning, as part of a grand political-military design, has served to underline the Arab portrayal of Israel as a vicious, immoral robber state.

The Israeli official version, that the Arabs fled voluntarily (not under Jewish compulsion) and/or that they were asked/ordered to do so by their Palestinian and Arab states' leaders, helped leave intact the new state's untarnished image as the haven of a much-persecuted people, a body politic more just, moral and deserving of the West's sympathy and help than the surrounding sea of reactionary, semi-feudal, dictatorial Arab societies (Morris, 2001: 225).

The new Jewish emigrant's policy of expelling Palestinians was implemented by terrorizing the civilian population through military and psychological means. Joseph Wietz, who witnessed the Dier Yassin massacre, noted that

between ourselves it must be clear that there is no room for both peoples together in this country. The only solution is a Palestine, at least Western Palestine, without Arabs. And there is no other way than to transfer the Arabs from here to the neighboring countries, to transfer all of them; not one village, not one tribe, should be left....only after this transfer will the country be able to absorb the millions of our own brethren. There is no other way out (Cited in Hirst, 2003: 255).

Moreover, a former Israeli military governor of Jerusalem who investigated the same massacre said, "there was no reason for the attack. It was a quiet village, which had denied entry to the volunteer Arab units from across the frontier and which had not been involved in any attacks on Jewish areas. The dissident groups (Etzel and the Stern Gang) chose it for strictly political reasons. It was a deliberate act of terrorism" (Joseph, 1960: 71-2). Yigal Allon, one of the founders of the state of Israel and its first chief of staff, understood the benefits of psychological wars in this conflict when he said:

I gathered all the Jewish Mukhtars, who have contacts with Arabs in different villages, and asked them to whisper in the ears of some Arabs that a great Jewish enforcement has arrived in Galilee and that it is going to burn all of the villages of the Huleh. They should suggest to these Arabs, as their friends, to escape while there is still time. And the rumor spread in all the areas of the Huleh that it is time to flee. The flight numbered myriads. The tactic reached its goal completely. The building of the police station at Halsal fell into our hands without a shot. The wide areas were cleaned, the danger was taken away from the transportation routes and we could organize ourselves for the invaders along the borders, without worrying about the rear (Cited in Hirst, 2003: 267).

The terror that spread among Palestinians led to a mass exodus of refugees into neighboring countries and was a crucial factor affecting developments in Palestine and to the creation of the state of Israel.

The Birth of Israel: The state of Israel declared its independence on May 14, 1948, one day before the British withdrawal. The departure of the British High Commissioner ceremonially signaled the end of the British mandate. Jewish forces moved to occupy further territory beyond the boundaries that the UN specified to Israel. Consequently, many Palestinian Arabs were forced to relocate. Neighboring Arab states' irregular units from Syria, and Iraq entered Palestine in the final weeks of the mandate and, once it officially ended, regular forces from Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and, Iraq crossed into Palestine. The fighting between the Arab forces and Israeli forces escalated into the first Arab Israeli war.

Israeli forces were well equipped, well manned, and well trained, drawing on the Jewish Brigade that was formed during World War II. The forces also drew on various armed groups like the Haganna, the PalMach, and the Urgan. It is difficult to deny that all these paramilitary groups engaged in acts of terrorism against indigenous civilians in the region. The Arab forces were relatively ineffective and poorly equipped and trained did not work in smooth cooperation. Consequently, the Israeli military quickly demonstrated its superiority over the Arab forces. Within weeks, Israel occupied most of Palestine, with the exception of the West Bank of the Jordan and the Gaza Strip, which were respectively held by the Arab Legion of the Jordan and Egyptian forces (Cleveland, 2000: 260-1).

Although the Security Council ordered a ceasefire on May 29, 1948, the measure failed. Incapable of imposing orderly change, the UN shifted its approach to mediation. As a

result, the General Assembly designated a UN mediator in Palestine to “arrange for the operation of common services necessary to the safety and well-being of the population of Palestine; assume the protection of the holy places, religious buildings, and sites in Palestine; and promote a peaceful adjustment of the future situation of Palestine.”²⁸

United Nations Mediation: The Mission of Count Folk Bernadotte: On May 17, 1948 Count Folke Bernadotte of Sweden was appointed UN mediator in Palestine.²⁹ His mandate was to supervise the ceasefire and “to promote a peaceful adjustment of the future situation in Palestine.”³⁰ Count Bernadotte succeeded in arranging a one-month truce between the Arabs and Israelis, from June 8 to July 11, 1948, so that a concerted effort could be undertaken to address the basic conflict, namely the November 29, 1947 Partition Plan and the Palestine refugee problem. As the first truce expired, Bernadotte urged another indefinite truce, which was ordered by the SC on July 15.

On June 27, 1948, Count Bernadotte submitted his first proposal for “a union comprising two members, one Arab and one Jewish.” Territorial adjustments included: (1) the return of the Negev, Lyddah, and Ramleh to the Palestinian Arabs (there were no Jews residing in those areas); (2) the provision that Arab Palestinians who had left their homes be allowed to return without restrictions; and (3) a restriction of Jewish immigration, although not a total one (Khoury, 1984: 144). On July 8, 1948, Bernadotte reported to the UN:

No settlement can be just and complete if recognition is not accorded to the rights of the Arab refugee to return to the home from which he has been dislodged by the hazards and strategy of the armed conflict between Arabs and Jews in Palestine...the

²⁸ UN General Assembly Resolution 186, May 14, 1948.

²⁹ UN Resolution A/554, May 17, 1948.

³⁰ Ibid.

exodus resulted from the panic created by the fighting in their communities, by rumors concerning real or alleged acts of terrorism, or expulsion. It would be an offense against the principles of elemental justice if those innocent victims of the conflict were denied the right to return to their homes while Jewish immigrants flow into Palestine. Israel made it known during the summer of 1948 that it would not repatriate the Palestinian Arabs or return those parts of Palestine acquired during the war. The condition of the Palestinian refugees, as a result of Israel's refusal to allow them to return to their homes and property, became so desperate (Palumbo, 1987: 120, 135).

By July 1948, more than half a million refugees were drifting aimlessly and helplessly in neighboring Arab states, and the bitterness engendered threatened to destroy any hope that Bernadotte's work could be carried out successfully. The Arab states themselves fed and cared for refugees of Arab nationality in the early months, but the problems were too great for their limited resources (Ibid: 136).

Twice in July 1948 the League of Arab States appealed to the UN Secretary-General for help, but they were referred to the International Refugee Organization (IRO), a temporary specialized agency designed to deal with the European refugees during World War I and World War II. But due to technical difficulties, the IRO was not able to help at all. The IRO lacked funding, mobility, staff and a mandate to go to the region.

Count Bernadotte's report of September 16, 1948 surveyed the situation and asked for immediate relief and stressed urgent need. The report noted that "[a]ction must be taken to determine the necessary measures of relief and to provide for their implementation." The situation was a matter of life or death for thousands of Palestinians and unless international help arrives hundreds of lives will be lost. Bernadotte envisaged other plans and proposed other measures but before the UN could act on any of his recommendations, the Stern Gang – i.e., one of many Jewish underground groups, which were led by two future prime ministers Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir – assassinated him. All of Bernadotte's proposals were buried with him.

In response to Bernadotte's death, the UN designated Ralph Bunche to succeed him. Remarking that "the situation of the refugees is now critical" in his first report, Bunche warned that "aid must not only be continued, but very greatly increased if disaster is to be averted."³¹ The General Assembly recognized that UN efforts to bring lasting peace to Palestine hinged on its ability to alleviate the threat of starvation and distress among the Palestinian refugees. Acting on the recommendations of the late Count Bernadotte the GA urged countries to contribute funds to feed, clothe, and provide temporary shelter to more than half a million homeless Palestinians. The United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) was the first international body to contribute, dispatching personnel in August 1948. Following UNICEF's action, Count Bernadotte established a disaster relief project under the control of a UN Director of Disaster Relief, assisted by the World Health Organization (WHO) and other voluntary agencies. Thus, the first recommendation to create an institution to help the Palestinians was the United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees (UNRPR).

The UNRPR: On November 13, 1948, the GA unanimously passed Resolution 212 (III), which authorized the Secretary-General to "take all necessary steps to extend aid to Palestine refugees." Paragraph 9 requests the Secretary-General to appoint a director of UNRPR to plan and implement relief programs in conjunction with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the League of Red Cross Societies (LRCRS), and the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), who "undertook to carry out the distribution of relief supplies procured by the U.N. for the refugees, then estimated at 700,000." UNICEF continued its supply of food and medicine to children and pregnant women, while UNRPR was

³¹ UN Document, A/689, October 18, 1948.

responsible for the distribution of relief. The Secretary-General, in consultation with the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, advanced a sum of five million dollars from the Working Capital Fund of the UN, which was later substituted by government contributions made voluntarily, to provide relief for Palestine refugees.³² UNRPR's main purpose was to keep the refugees alive. It made some strides in that direction but the number of refugees that the UN was dealing with was greater than the funds received. By May 1, 1950 UNRPR was serving an estimated number of more than 950,000. The UN sensed that the refugees were looking for more than food and relief; they needed jobs. Thus, the UN dispatched to the region the United Nations Economic Survey Mission (UNESM) to study and report on the condition of refugees and make recommendations concerning future activities. After three months in the field, the mission's interim report to the General Assembly recommended the creation of a new agency not only to carry out relief but also to inaugurate a works program in which physically able refugees could become self-supporting.

UNESM: UNESM was instructed to examine the economic situation arising from the hostilities in the Near East on September 12, 1949 and recommend to the UNSCOP means for overcoming resultant economic dislocations, reintegrating the refugees into the economic life of the area, and creating economic conditions conducive to the establishment of permanent peace (Khouri, 1985: 129). Delegates from the mission toured the region and met with officials from Egypt, Israel, Jordan, and Lebanon. The mission ended its visit in Beirut, Lebanon, where it had begun its work in the Near East on November 16, 1949 by authoring a report.

³² G.A. Res. 212 (111), November 19, 1948, para. 3

UNESM presented its first interim report to the General Assembly on December 15, 1949. Given that the funds for the relief of Arab refugees were soon to be exhausted, immediate action was needed. Seeing the plight of the refugees as both a symptom and a cause of grave economic instability, the mission recommended that steps be taken to establish a program of useful public works for the employment of able-bodied refugees as a first measure towards their rehabilitation. In the meanwhile, it called for relief, restricted to those in need, to be continued throughout the coming year.³³ In light of its findings, the mission made the following recommendations:

- emergency relief for refugees be made possible by voluntary contributions from UN member states through the winter months, and until April 1, 1950, under the present UNRPR system;
- a program of public works, calculated to improve the productivity of the area, and such continuing relief as will be needed, should be organized as an integrated operation and in cooperation with the governments of the countries where the refugees are located. This program should be planned and arrangements negotiated with the appropriate Near Eastern governments to begin April 1, 1950; and
- an agency should be established to organize and, on or after April 1, 1950, direct the programs of relief and public works herein recommended the creation of (UNRWA) (Buehrig, 1972: 36-40).³⁴

The failure of the UN to repatriate the Palestinian refugees by convincing Israel to take them back resulted in the UN pursuing other means to settle the problem. The world organization with collaboration of Israel and the US tried to assimilate and integrate the refugees in Middle Eastern and other countries. However, UNRWA and the refugees successfully resisted UN efforts aimed at assimilation.

³³ UN Document A/AC.25/6 AP. I. A. p. 14.

³⁴ Also see UN Document A/AC.25/6 Interim Findings, pp. 16-17.

The Creation of UNRWA

On December 8, 1949, acting on the recommendations of UNESM, the GA passed resolution 302(IV), thus establishing UNRWA as a temporary humanitarian agency in response to the urgent problem of the Palestinian refugees.³⁵ UNRWA was established one week before its sister organization, the United Nations Higher Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Thus, making UNRWA the oldest, largest, and most expansive temporary UN humanitarian agency. It has more employees and spends more money per refugee than its sister organization.³⁶

UNRWA was established to provide relief and assistance, “ without prejudice to the provisions of paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194(III). While the exact meaning of assistance for the relief of the Palestinian refugees was never defined, many of the refugees viewed assistance programs, especially large-scale development ones, with suspicion and reacted against them with anger. As the agency noted in 1951, the resentment against many of its projects was based on the convection that the works project might lead to permanent settlement. Given the strong backing of these projects from the donor countries that supported resettlement, especially the United States, the anxiety and anger expressed by refugees was not without cause. The appointment of Gordon Clapp, the head of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) in the US, to head up the Economic Survey

³⁵ General Assembly Res. 302 (IV). UNRWA was set up by the General Assembly as a subsidiary functional organ of the United Nations in accordance with Article 22 of the UN Charter to establish such subsidiary organs as it may deem necessary for the performance of its functions (Williams, 1974:3).

³⁶ In 2002 UNHCR had 268 offices in 114 countries. UNHCR employs 5,523 people world wide, and the ratio of staff to clients is 1 per 3,582. UNRWA’s ratio is 1 per 83 clients. UNHCR has 510 NGOs working as implementing partners (July 2002). UNRWA has none. (UNHCR FY 2002 documents) UNHCR budget (2002) for about 2 million Afghan refugees and Iraqi Kurds in Iran (similar number of refugees aided by UNRWA) was \$25,555 million compared, with UNRWA’s \$400 million. *Interaction Activity Report*, December 2002.

Mission and statements by both the Clapp Mission and US Department of States officials in favor of resettlement not only provided further evidence to refugee legitimate fears but also heightened the increasingly broad mandate under which UNRWA operated.

UNRWA was established under Article 22 of the United Nations Charter, which authorizes the GA to “establish such necessary subsidiary organs at it deems necessary to the performance of its functions.” The General Assembly has quite often used that power since the establishment of the UN, and more than one hundred subsidiary organs have been created. Subsidiary organs are normally juridically weaker than specialized agencies. Specialized agencies are normally founded by treaties such as the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the World Health Organization (WHO), which gives them their own “constitution” so to speak. But, UNRWA has only a GA resolution to fall back on.

UNRWA, unlike other subsidiary organs and specialized agencies, was also not provided by the GA with a statute of charter providing a detailed constitution for its work. When compared to UNHCR, we see that the world’s refugee organ has a very detailed statute outlining its powers, its mandate and its responsibilities. But not UNRWA, the agency was to implement the works projects proposed by the ESM, and the only thing that the Economic Survey Mission had done in its report was to mention a few sample pilot projects that could be considered as the way to re-integrate the refugees into economic life. In addition, UNRWA was created for a specific people; the creation of the UN it had never happened that a special agency dealt with only one group of people. Besides, UNHCR is explicitly requested and expected to actively pursue solutions to refugee problems. Whereas in the Palestinian case, the United Nations Conciliation Commission was entrusted with that task not UNRWA. Furthermore, UNRWA was not provided with an explicit protection mandate, but UNHCR was. In the case of the Palestinians, UNHCR is not allowed to grant

them any protection at all. In effect, Palestinian refugees do not have the same protection afforded to all other refugees, which is critical in reaching a durable solution to the refugee problem.

The lack of protection afforded to Palestinian refugees, rather, relates to a misinterpretation of the status of Palestinian refugees under the 1951 Refugee Convention and the Statute of the UNHCR and the resulting non-implementation of protection. According to the second paragraph of Article 1(D) of the 1951 Convention, when such protection or assistance from organs or agencies of the UN other than the UNHCR has ceased to exist for any reason without the position of such persons being definitively settled in accordance with the relevant resolutions adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations these persons shall *ipso facto* be entitled to the benefits of the convention. In other words, because Palestinian refugees do not receive protection and because their status has not been resolved according to the relevant General Assembly resolutions, especially resolution 194(III) Palestinian refugees should receive protection from the UNHCR.

Even though UNRWA has not provided the Palestinians with physical protection except for a short period of time, the RAO, as chapter five shows, the refugees have always seen in UNRWA the only hope, if not the belief, that the international community has not abandoned its responsibilities for securing a just settlement of their plight. Today UNRWA provides basic health, education, and social services for some 3.7 million Palestinian refugees, or about three-quarters of the entire Palestinian refugee population, residing in Gaza, West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. The agency administers 59 refugee camps and employs some 24,000 persons, the majority of whom are refugees. When the UN created UNRWA, it entrusted the organization with a gigantic mission. The UN delegated to the new institution the sensitive and problematic job of defining who is a Palestine Refugee. The

GA also gave UNRWA a vague and temporary mandate. The following section examines the UNRWA's mandate and how the agency defined a Palestine refugee.

UNRWA's Mandate: After the General Assembly adopted resolution 302 on December 8 1949, to establish UNRWA, the GA entrusted UNRWA with the following mandate: "to carry out in collaboration with local governments the direct relief and works programs recommended by the Economic Survey Mission and to consult with the interested Near Eastern governments concerning measures to be taken by them preparatory to the time when international assistance for relief and works projects will be no longer available." While the exact meaning of assistance for the relief of Palestine refugees was never defined, some of UNRWA's stakeholders, the refugees, felt that the agency projects went beyond the mandate set down in the General Assembly resolution 302(V), especially those initiated in the early years. The agency undertook small-scale training and employment-creating projects known as "work relief" and, medium government controlled projects such as road building and tree plantation known as work projects. In 1951, a development bank, offering medium and long-term loans, was established in Jordan to encourage development and "to raise the standard of living of all inhabitants including the refugees" (Schiff, 1995: 40). The provision of loans to all inhabitants of Jordan, rather than solely to Palestine refugees, reflected what would become a pattern of a more flexible interpretation of the Agency's mandate.

Many donor countries had hoped that after a few years, when the public works schemes were off the ground, the agency could simply close its doors after it helped most of the refugees to settle and integrate in the host countries. Thus, UNRWA was seen as a short-term agency. However, the refugees aborted all of UNRWA's plans to settle them in the host countries, thus there was no quick solution. This prompted the GA repeatedly to extend the

agency's mandate, usually for three years at a time. Over the years, the agency and the refugees began to see eye-to-eye on many issues, especially repatriation and independence. Thus, after the Israeli occupation of the WBG in 1967, the Israeli government initiated a policy involving the demolition of refugee shelters in the OPT in order to break up and eventually eliminate the refugee camps. The Israelis succeeded in demolishing 8000 shelters between July and August 1971. But UNRWA and the refugees vigorously protested the Israeli move. UNRWA's stand against shelter demolition in the WBG signaled a shift in policy. Whereas UNRWA was eager and willing to assimilate and integrate the refugees in the early years of its mission, after the Six-Days War, the agency was pressured to play a different role: state-building. UNRWA's objections and protests to the Israeli move found strong support among many General Assembly Members and led the Assembly to adopt resolution 2792 C (XXVI) on December 6, 1971, which called on Israel to "stop the demolitions and removal of refugees from their residences, to return those displaced and provide for their housing." The resolution has been reiterated in subsequent years before the GA in relation to the WBG, calling upon Israel "to abandon its plans and to refrain from the removal, and from any action that may lead to the removal and resettlement of Palestine refugees, and from the destruction of their camps. UNRWA's shift demonstrates how the agency evolved to have a life of its own contrary to its original mandate which advocated "assimilation and integration" in host countries.

Another demonstration of UNRWA's mandate evolution is the constant calling on the agency by the General Assembly to perform duties outside its domain in the five fields of operation in the Middle East: the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon.³⁷ With each crisis in the region, UNRWA's work became more important and vital, for it has

³⁷ A list of all the refugee camps that UNRWA has been servicing since 1948 is provided in chapter four.

been the longest serving agency in the region due to its experience and relatively durable infrastructure. For instance, after the 1967 war the GA endorsed the efforts by UNRWA's Commissioner-General to provide humanitarian assistance on an emergency basis and as a temporary measure to displaced persons and to people seriously in need. The resolution has been repeatedly confirmed at every session of the General Assembly and thus still gives UNRWA a mandate to provide assistance to the 1967 displaced persons who were not already 1948 refugees.

Then, when Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1991, a stream of Palestinians flooded the Jordan desert. UNRWA was the first on the scene to help. It created temporary camps on the boarder between Jordan and Kuwait and supplied humanitarian assistance. The same is true when Libya expelled almost 1,500 Palestinian families in October 1995 to the Egyptian Libyan boarder at Salloum, UNRWA together with UNHCR responded by creating shelters for them and became a mediator between the Egyptian, Libyan, and Palestinian authorities. UNRWA wanted to find a solution whereby refugees would be reintegrated in any of these societies.

The General Assembly has interfered very little with UNRWA's decision making on the ground. As the following section shows, both the GA and the Secretary-General has no authority of the appointments and the spending of UNRWA's staff and finances respectively. All is left to the commissioner-general, who is appointed by the SG without the approval of the GA. Accordingly, UNRWA has used this lenient supervision to broaden and on many occasions exceed its initial duties. Indeed, UNRWA's vague mandate commissioned the agency to assist the refugees until their status was politically resolved, thus making UNRWA a party to the political process. Many refugees view the agency as a symbol of the world's responsibility for their right of return and some believe that it should function

as a state until a real Palestinian state is established. Such perception would not have been possible had UNRWA not exceeded its mandate while conducting its daily businesses.

The politicization of UNRWA and the evolution of its mandate was the result of the deep bond that united the Palestinian community and UNRWA's bureaucracy. The relationship between the two sides has been based on norms, and values of international behavior that are legitimate and in harmony with the UN Charter, which considers peace, security, and human rights as its main pillars.

Accordingly the agency's emphasis on education, vocational training, self-support, primary health, and continued relief for the needy refugees established the primary blueprint for UNRWA's operations and mandate. UNRWA faced the difficult task of verifying the refugee relief rolls that it inherited from UNRPR, and developed its own refugee registration system. It was also given the difficult task of defining a Palestinian refugee. However, the agency was asked by the GA to extend support to some categories of Palestinians who did not fit its operational definition of a Palestine refugee. Thus, Resolution 916 (X) dated December 3, 1955, noted "the serious need of the other claimants for relief...namely, the frontier villages in Jordan, the nonrefugees population in the Gaza Strip, and a number of refugees in Egypt. At that time, UNRWA pleaded lack of funds to assist them, though some categories of the 'other claimants' such as Jerusalem's poor and the Bedouins in Jordan and the Gaza Strip did receive UNRWA's assistance. Later on, in the aftermath of the 1967 conflict, General Assembly Resolution 2252 (ES-V) dated July 4, 1967, endorsed the efforts of the commissioner-general of UNRWA, the amended title of the chief executive officer of the Agency previously referred to as the director, "to provide humanitarian assistance, as far as practicable, on an emergency basis and as a temporary measure, to other persons in the

area who are at present displaced and are in serious need of immediate assistance as a result of the recent hostilities.”

The war in 1967 placed UNRWA in a critical juncture vis-à-vis the Arab-Israeli conflict. Israel asked UNRWA to continue its operations in the OPT. The international community,³⁸ through the GA and in recognition of the fact that UNRWA has been the sole significant international presence in the OPT, has sought to use UNRWA as a mechanism to discharge some of its non-humanitarian assistance-related responsibilities towards the Palestine refugees. One such area was of providing soft protection to the refugees through such activities as registration and documentation not related to service provision; protection by monitoring and publicity, especially of human rights violations; and promotion of aspects of international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law, especially at times when the security and human rights of the Palestine refugees were under considerable threat.³⁹

The agency’s soft protection activities began in 1982 following Israel’s invasion of Lebanon and the Sabra and Shatilla massacre. In resolution 37/120J of 16 December 1982, the General Assembly urged “the Secretary-General, in consultation with the UNRWA, and pending the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem, to undertake effective measures to guarantee the safety and security and the legal and human rights of the Palestinian refugees in the occupied territories.” As a result, UNRWA undertook to monitor the security of Palestine refugees in occupied Lebanon, issued public statements on the situation from time

³⁸ By international community I refer to the states and major international organization (the UN, EU, Arab League, African Unity Organization).

³⁹ By soft protection I refer to a term introduced by UNRWA in association with its practices in OPT during the Palestinian Intifada. Soft protection is discussed thoroughly in Chapter Five.

to time, and “took up the need for appropriate action...to protect the refugees” with Israel and various members of the SC.

In addition, the GA requested in resolution 37/120 I of December 16, 1982 that the Secretary-General, in cooperation with UNRWA, “issue identification cards to all Palestine refugees and their descendants, irrespective of whether they are recipients or not of rations and services from the Agency, as well as to all displaced persons and to those who have been prevented from returning to their homes as a result of the 1967 hostilities, and their descendants.” The issuance of identification cards to those refugees and displaced persons not registered with the agency required the concerted cooperation of the numerous countries in which they had taken-up residence over the years. In the absence of the political will by host countries for such cooperation, the Secretary-General and UNRWA were unable to carry out this soft protection measure.

The first Intifada, which lasted from 1987 to 1993, provided the next occasion for UNRWA to be called upon to implement soft protection activities in relation to the Palestine refugees. SC resolution 605 of December 22, 1987, which strongly denounced Israel’s violations of Palestinian human rights, called upon commissioner-general Giorgio Giacomelli (1985-1991) to “recomm[en]d ways and means for ensuring the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilians under Israeli occupation.” Accordingly, the Secretary-General proposed four ways of protecting Palestinian refugees to the Security Council: (1) physical protection; (2) legal protection; (3) protection by way of general assistance; and (4) protection by publicity. Of these four protection mechanisms, UNRWA was specifically requested by the Secretary-General to enhance its “general assistance” capacity through the addition “of extra international staff” in the OPT to, *inter alia*, intervene with the authorities of the occupying Power in an effort to provide a modicum of “passive protection” to the

Palestinians. Thus was initiated the Agency's Refugee Affairs Officer (RAO) Program, which included its "program of general assistance and protection." Chapter Six of this dissertation details RAO activities in the OPT.

The RAO program, which began in January 1988, was intended: (1) to facilitate "UNRWA operations in the difficult prevailing circumstances" of the Intifada; and (2) to provide "a degree of passive protection for the refugee [and, eventually, non-refugee] population." The general assistance and protection program became a central supportive feature of UNRWA's programs in the OPT by the early 1990s. By 1991 it had come to include a "legal aid scheme" run by the agency with the purpose of helping the "refugees deal with a range of problems of life under occupation," including "sustained follow-up in cases of deaths, injuries and harassment; bureaucratic difficulties in obtaining various permits; discrimination in access to courts of law, welfare benefits, etc.; travel restrictions; and, various forms of collective punishment." The conclusion of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements (DOP) in 1993 between the Israeli government and the PLO led to the Oslo peace process, and a year later to the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority. Consequently, the program was officially suspended in the Gaza in May 1994 and in the West Bank in April 1996.

During the second Intifada (Al Aqsa Intifada) the Operational Support Officers (OSO) program was introduced in 2000 to assist in facilitating the delivery of humanitarian goods, securing the safe passage of agency staff through checkpoints and more generally enhancing the proper implementation of agency programs in accordance with UN norms. According to many teachers at Al-Fawwar Middle Schools, the OSO officers visit the camps almost on daily basis to check on the well being of the refugees. They observed, "they come stop their white UNRWA Range Rover Jeeps look around, report on any trouble and

leave.”⁴⁰ The GA also involved the agency in the momentum created by the Madrid and Oslo peace frameworks. Through its resolution 48/40A dated December 10, 1993, the assembly noted that “the new context created by the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government...will have major consequences for the activities of the Agency, which is henceforth called upon, within the framework of strengthened cooperation with the specialized agencies and the World Bank, to make a decisive contribution towards giving a fresh impetus to the economic and social stability of the occupied territories.” This endorsed the agency’s Peace Implementation Program (PIP) designed to improve services and infrastructure for the refugees and in the camps in the OPT.

Although UNRWA’s mandate was generally considered to be confined to Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and the OPT, UNRWA grew to a more pragmatic institution. UNRWA’s Commissioner General noted, “I consider that the responsibility of UNRWA should be extended to Palestinians in all parts of the Middle East including Kuwait.”⁴¹ Accordingly, UNRWA sent a special mission to Kuwait from July to September 1992 to assess the situation of the remaining Palestinians in that country.⁴² The mission operated in close cooperation with the office of UNHCR in Kuwait and was able to carry out a detailed survey. The effects of the mission were limited, however, as the Commissioner General reported to the UNGA: “UNRWA was disappointed that its efforts with concerned Governments on behalf of those Palestinians remaining in Kuwait under difficult circumstances had so far met with only limited success, but intended to continue its efforts

⁴⁰ A meeting with educators from Al Fwwar refugee camp, Hebron, West Bank, August 20, 2004.

⁴¹ Text of former Commissioner-General I. Türkmen’s address to the donors’ meeting, June 5-6, 1991.

⁴² UN doc. A/48/13: 7.

on their behalf.” I believe that UNRWA will continue to expand its operations, as necessity requires until a political solution is provided for the refugees.

UNRWA’s Organization: The agency is headed by a Commissioner-General who is appointed by the Secretary-General in consultation with Governments represented in UNRWA’s Advisory Commission in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 9 of General Assembly resolution 302 (IV).⁴³ The Advisory Commission, composed of representatives of Governments, including contributing Governments, was established under the same resolution to advise and assist the Commissioner-General. He answers to the GA and is authorized to report directly and independently to it in accordance with resolution 302(IV). The Commissioner-General, who is at the level of an under-secretary-general, is responsible for all activities of UNRWA as well as its administration; establishes general policy guidelines and priorities for the work of UNRWA; establishes fund-raising strategies and maintains liaison with donors and potential donors to UNRWA funds; directs the activities and operations of the various organizational units at headquarters and in the field responsible for the delivery of services to refugees; plans and coordinates interaction between headquarters and the field officers in respect of the Agency’s programs of assistance and support services; and represents UNRWA in relations with international and local press and other public information channels. Under paragraph 21 of resolution 302(IV) the Commissioner-General is required to submit an annual report on the work of UNRWA, including an audit of funds. UNRWA’s budget is presented to the Assembly through the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and is funded mainly by voluntary contributions from governments and international organizations. The

⁴³ Members of the Advisory Commission are Belgium, Egypt, France, Japan, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Great Britain, and the US. The PLO has been attending as an observer since 1974.

Commissioner-General has a deputy who carries out specific substantive assignments and is accountable to the Commissioner.

UNRWA has a liaison in New York, based at the UN Headquarters. Operations in the liaison's office are carried out by its chief. The liaison in NY coordinates all the agency's work at the UN, reports to UNRWA's headquarters about all related activities, coordinates with the diplomatic community in NY, attends meetings at the GA and other related organs and advises the Commissioner-General on all related matters.⁴⁴ UNRWA has several departments to help it carry out its functions efficiently. The Department of Administration and Human Resources is located in Gaza City. It answers directly to the Commissioner-General. The Department of Finance, located in Gaza City, is headed by a Comptroller (Director). It prepares and controls the budget, maintains and publishes accounts, procuring and controlling the inventory of supplies, and ensuring that sufficient internal controls are in place at all times in all agency operations. The Department of Legal Affairs, located in Gaza City, is headed by a legal advisor. It provides legal advice and assistance to the commissioner-general and all departments on legal matters. The Department of Education, located in Amman Jordan, is headed by a director. The department consists of the Office of Directors of Education, the General Division, the Vocational and Technical Education Division, the Institute of Education and the Educational Planning and Management Division. The department advises the commissioner-general on all academic policies. A director heads the Department of Health, located in Amman, Jordan. The department consists of the Office of the Director of Health, the Medical Care Services Division, the Family Health Division, the Disease Prevention and Control Division and the Environmental Health Division. The core function of the health department is to advise the

⁴⁴ Please see Appendix B for a list of all UNRWA's Commissioner-Generals and their deputies from 1950-2005.

Commissioner-General of all health related issues in the fields of operations. The Department of Relief and Social Services, is located in Amman, Jordan and headed by a director. The department consists of the Office of the Director of Relief and Social Services, the Relief Services Division and Social Services Office. The core function of the department is to advise the Commissioner-General on technical issues related to health and relief matters.

The agency has several offices that help it in carrying out its functions in the fields of operations professionally. First, an Audit Office is located in Amman headquarters. A chief who answers to the commissioner-general heads it. The office is responsible for inspecting the agency's operations for compliance with prescribed procedures and standards; investigating the loss of Agency cash and loss of/or damage to supplies or other property; and protecting agency assets. Second, the External Relations Office is located in Gaza City. It is headed by a chief who answers directly to the commissioner-general. The office is responsible for implementing fund-raising strategies established by the commissioner-general, and it coordinates with donor countries regarding financial issues. Third, the Public Information Office is located in Gaza City and is headed by a chief. The office handles the agency's relations with the media and provides information to the general public. It arranges visits to the refugee camps, and provides technical support and direction to the public information offices in the field. Fourth, the Policy Analyses Unite is located in Gaza City and is headed by a chief. The Unite helps the agency to develop policies, and in making informed and appropriate decisions through research and analysis (See Appendices C and D).

Unlike most other UN agencies, the appointment of UNRWA's Commissioner-General does not require any approval or confirmation from the GA. The Commissioner-

General reports directly to the General Assembly by way of the Fifth Committee. After the Commissioner-General's report has been discussed in the Fifth Committee, it is forwarded to the GA for a resolution and a vote. UNRWA's Advisory Committee of ten member nations has no executive or operative authority. Its duties are vaguely defined, and its functions are limited to non-compulsory recommendations.

UNRWA's Constitution and Legal Status: The agency's privileges and immunities include the maintenance of legal personnel, the right to acquire property in its name, immunity from foreign exchange control regulations and taxation, immunity from restrictions on imports for official purposes, and exemption from legal process. Functional immunities are provided for officials of the organization.⁴⁵ Every year UNRWA concludes large number of contracts with commercial bodies on such matters as the purchase of goods and services; construction of buildings, schools, housing, clinics, and others; transportation of goods to warehouses and distribution centers; fire insurance of UNRWA buildings and properties; and marine insurance in respect of transport risk to goods purchased or donated to UNRWA for its own use. As a UN organ it is the policy of UNRWA not to seek the jurisdiction of local courts. Therefore, the agency specifies in its contracts that disputes will be settled by arbitration. Unlike most other UN organizations, UNRWA is an operational agency performing specific tasks of a governmental character: health, education, relief, and development programs. Thus UNRWA has developed a complicated administrative autonomy with its own self-contained administration. In carrying out its quasi-governmental tasks, the agency has no territorial authority; no legislative power and no jurisdiction over the

⁴⁵ UNRWA, *UNRWA: A Brief History* (1950-1982), p. 26.

refugees in its care, but even so UNRWA perform many tasks, which would normally fall to a territorial authority.

UNRWA's Budget: The founding resolution of UNRWA, 302(IV) of December 8, 1949, “urges all members of the UN and non-members to make voluntary contributions in funds or in kind to ensure that the amount of supplies and funds required is obtained for each period of the program,” and the resolution instructed the “Director” after 1961 referred to as Commissioner-General in consultation with the Secretary-General and the ACABQ, and financial regulations for UNRWA. The above indicates that the financing of UNRWA's operation is based on voluntary contributions. The agency's funds are derived from the member states of the UN, the European Union, specialized agencies, voluntary agencies, and NGOs.

The agency presents its budget on a biennial basis although operations are financed on an annual basis. Its largest contributors are the US, Great Britain, European Community, Sweden, Japan, Canada, Germany, France, and Saudi Arabia. The Arab governments and Israel have contributed significantly to the work of the agency and supplied much direct assistance to the refugees through other channels. Since 1967, Israel and the host governments have effectively donated some millions to help the refugees. In addition, the host governments provided all the basic services and infrastructures (roads, water, electricity, schools, health centers, and sanitation). In the case of Jordan, the government provided the land to build five new camps (Haddad, 2001: 160).

UNRWA's budgetary procedures differ from those of other UN organs. The Commissioner-General takes full responsibility to prepare the budget. The Advisory Commission acknowledges that it was informed of the Commissioner's requests. The budget

of the agency forms an integral part of the Commissioner-General's annual report, submitted to the president of the General Assembly every year. A Special Political Committee deals with the report, including the budget, without reference to the Advisory Committee. The budget proposal does offer the committee an opportunity to evaluate UNRWA's operations and needs, but the committee does not scrutinize the budget in detail, nor does it recommend approval or disapproval to the GA. The rationale behind this is the uncertainty that shadows UNRWA's financial outlook every year. The agency is left in a state of considerable ambiguity about its revenues. The income side of the budget is no more than an assessment based on pledges to the extent that such have been made at the pledging conference.

Corresponding with its program structure, UNRWA's budget is divided into a budget for regular programs/operational and special budgets/administrative. Both are largely financed from UNRWA's own resources through voluntary contributions. The operational budget is functionally divided between education, health, and relief services, in addition to supply and transport services, internal services and general administration services, and other costs related directly to other staff costs such as separation benefits, termination indemnities and repatriation costs for expatriate area staff. Proportional allocation between the various services has changed drastically over the years. At the beginning relief services claimed the lion's share of the budget accounting for almost 69% of the total, while the health services took 2.2 percent and education took .09 percent. But in 1982, the agency allocated 22 percent for relief, 17 percent for health, and 57 percent for education. In 2003, UNRWA spent almost 52 percent on education, 18 percent on health, and 10 percent on. Since the second Intifada, which started on September 28, 2000, the

agency has been allocating less money to education and more to health, human development, and other social services.

In the last two decades or so, UNRWA has been suffering from budgetary deficits. The major reason for the crisis in UNRWA's regular budget is the lack of donor willingness to raise their contributions in accordance with the annual 5 per-cent budget increase required to maintain the standards of UNRWA's services.

Another is the UN's preferred method of voluntary funding for UNRWA to increasing members' contributions. According to Schiff, the funding system has placed UNRWA under the mercy of the willing as (Appendix E) demonstrates. The table also shows how over the years more and more countries contributed to the Palestinian cause. In the early 1950s only twenty countries or so contributed to UNRWA, now more than 60 countries donate to the agency on a regular basis. The agency has been very successful in the last few decades to garner more support for its mission in the region. Nevertheless, the voluntary system of contributions has placed the agency in an awkward position since its early years. For instance, in 1950-51, the agency did not receive sufficient funds to cover the cost of urgent relief. Of the \$54 million that the agency had aimed to raise from January 1950 to June 1951, only \$37.1 million in cash and kind were received. As a consequence, UNRWA has never been able to project its longevity and expenses. Rather, it always had to primarily react to sudden changes in the political and socioeconomic situation in its field of operation.

A third reason for UNRWA's financial difficulties is the political convictions of many US Senators and representatives. The constant accusations by Israel and its lobbies in the US against UNRWA's schools and other facilities made it very hard for the organization to get its funds easily. For example, since Congress has been a strong opponent of UNRWA

and its work in the region, American contributions went down gradually from 68.1 per-cent of the total contributions between 1950 and 1969 to less than 52 percent in 1972, 37 percent in 1975, and 25 percent in 1990s. Since 2000 until now the US government continues donating almost 25 percent of UNRWA's overall budget. Meanwhile, demands for UNRWA services in the region have increased significantly. For instance, the 950,000 refugees that UNRWA was servicing in 1950 became 1,633,000, in 1975, and in 2004 the number increased to 4,186,711. The world inflation that started in 1971, then the depreciation of the dollar in 1973, pushed UNRWA into a financial crisis that culminated in the beginning of 1975, when the office planned its highest deficit of \$46 million.⁴⁶

Due to such pressures from the US, the General Assembly has been regularly appealing to the member states for greater generosity. In December 1970 it adopted resolution 2656 (XXV) calling for the establishment of a working group to solve the financial dilemma of the agency. The recommendations of the group did not solve anything, and UNRWA became convinced that it was time for a complete reform in its fiscal policies. Hence, the Commissioner General declared austerity measures on relief aid. He announced that he would be forced to suppress unilaterally some activities if the financial situation required it. Since then UNRWA has worked very hard to balance its priorities. The agency shifted its focus from relief to education, training, and socioeconomic programs. The agency decided to cancel its rations to residents of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, because it felt that the refugees' standard of living had been improving as a result of their employment in Israel.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ UNRWA documents 1950-1982.

⁴⁷ UNRWA Annual Report of the CG. 1972:54.

The above-mentioned reasons have forced UNRWA to take extreme measures to raise funds in the last two decades. The conference that UNRWA held in Geneva on June 7 and 8, 2004 is illustrative. One of the four main papers that were presented at the conference outlined a Medium Term Plan (MTP) and UNRWA's strategic vision for the coming five years. It noted that the agency seeks to "raise the standards of the services it provides to the Palestinian refugee population and ensure that it is well-equipped to meet their immediate and longer term humanitarian and development needs" (UNRWA Documents, 2004: 1). However, Jalal Al Hussein, a member of the Swiss Delegation, remarked "The MTP and other plans that UNRWA has been initiating have always kept the agency in a dire financial situation and at odds with its contributors." Such plans have been always suggested and adopted by international staff.⁴⁸

According to many UNRWA administrators in Amman, the international staff of UNRWA is "very protective of its privileges" its high salaries, diplomatic immunity, and reimbursed expenses. They said "the international staff makes on average six times more than the domestic ones doing the same job or even less."⁴⁹ The pervasiveness of this problem can hardly be overstated. Most of the international staff is given German made cars (e.g., Volkswagens), with yellow and blue strips on the side and yellow and white license plates, allowing them to travel anywhere they wish.

Similar to the MTP, which UNRWA just launched in 2004, the organization introduced many projects in the past, such as, the 1952 rehabilitation and reintegration projects, which intended to assimilate and integrate the refugees in the Middle East region.

⁴⁸ UNRWA employs almost 25,000 thousand refugees and 100 internationals in its five fields of operation, the domestic employees are mainly refugees with few exceptions. The internationals on the other hand, are picked by the Secretary General, and the Commissioner-General, from donor countries. The internationals are very highly paid and occupy all the sensitive jobs in the agency.

⁴⁹ A meeting with several UNRWA administrators, Amman, Jordan, June 20, 2004.

In order to do that the agency asked the donor countries to raise \$200 million for relief and reintegration. The rehabilitation fund, a pledge of \$200 million, was approved in principle only, and did not provide actual cash for agency expenditure. Moreover, it was conditional on the approval of the contributing states, namely the US and the UK, the two major contributors. When the rehabilitation fund was discontinued, only \$37.7 million were actually received and expended by the agency. Though at times sufficient pledges were made, the problem was to obtain the payment of those pledges in time. Often they were so delayed that they were received only the following year. The situation was further aggravated by the fact that the majority of contributions continued to be paid during the latter part of the fiscal year.

Similar financial dilemmas have been hampering the agency's functions all along. For instance, between 1960 and 1961 the projected budget for the organization was \$38.7 million, but UNRWA was able to collect only \$32.2 million. This left the organization with a \$4.7 million deficit. UNRWA suffered from the same difficulties during the 1970-71 budget year. The organization was down by almost \$5.7 million. The agency faced a more difficult problem in 1980-81, as projected expenditures were \$265.6 million and the income from donors was only \$185.3 million. During that fiscal year UNRWA had a shortfall of almost \$80.3 million. However, as a result of the first Palestinian Intifada and the generous contributions of many sympathetic countries around the world, the agency experienced a surplus of almost \$31.7 million during the 1990-91 fiscal year. These financial issues have not disappeared – estimates suggest that UNRWA had a deficit of \$66.0 million in 2001. Finally, the 2003-04 budget is suffering from more difficulties.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ UNRWA Annual Reports of the CG. 2001, 2002, 2003.

UNRWA's budget has been based on requests for cash funds and any supplies given to it from friendly governments, both members and non-members of the UN. This has proved to be a precarious method of meeting definite monthly requirements, like food for refugees. At no time has the agency been able to see its financial position assured for more than a few weeks. Expenditure, allocation of funds for programs, and hiring of staff are decided by the UNRWA's director and are not subject to formal approval by the General Assembly. Although UNRWA's budget may be reviewed if it requires extra funds, there is no provision in UNRWA's Charter for its budget to be approved. The agency has no governing board or similarly responsible political body to advocate its interests. Lacking a responsible fund-raising board, the Commissioner General (CG) became responsible for this task. In times of shortages the CG could do little more than plead for contributions from member governments and ask the SG to aid in the effort.

Who Is a Palestine Refugee? UNRWA's Clients

There is no accepted legal definition of a "Palestinian refugee" (Akram, 2001: 10). The term is generally applied, however, to those Arab citizens of Mandate Palestine who fled in 1948 and were subsequently prevented from returning. As Lex Takkenberg noted, UNRWA instructions concerning refugee registration were developed for operational reasons at the time of its establishment rather than as a considered attempt to deal with the legal, political and humanitarian complexities involved. UNRWA defines a Palestinian refugee as "any person whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948 and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict (1998: 81). This definition was later refined as:

a person whose normal residence was Palestine for a minimum of two years preceding the conflict in 1948, and who, as a result of this conflict, lost both his home and his means of livelihood and took refuge in 1948 in one of the countries where UNRWA provides relief. Refugees within this definition and the direct descendants of such refugees are eligible for Agency assistance if they are: registered with UNRWA; living in the area of UNRWA operations; and in need.⁵¹

To Palestinians, UNRWA's definition is inadequate. For instance, the definition excludes refugees who did not register with UNRWA for various reasons. In other words, eligibility is conditional upon need as well as upon loss of home and means of livelihood. Israeli scholars also believe that the definition is ambiguous in that it allows the descendants of refugees to be considered refugees. Ruth Lapidoth argued that the definition never mentioned the children of the refugees but that UNRWA serves them nonetheless (Lapidoth, 2004: 2).

Eligibility for registration with UNRWA for the purpose of obtaining services from the agency was limited to those who could produce documentary evidence of being a Palestinian refugee, as defined above. Eligibility for registration as refugees also extended to the descendants of fathers fulfilling that definition, and to the descendants of fathers registered with UNRWA of a limited number of other special categories, mentioned below. The descendants of those who left in 1948 were included because the defining characteristics of refugee status in general, inability to return (except in small numbers in the context of family reunification) and lack of national protection by the government of the country of origin, also applied to them. The principle, recognized by the UNHCR of upholding family unity, was also relevant.

Although Palestinian refugees are recognized as such under the Convention of UNHCR, they are deprived of the rights under them. The UNHCR's omission of Palestinian

⁵¹ UNRWA Documents, 1990: 6.

refugees from its mandate in 1950 was due to the political nature of the Palestine question and whether that would interfere with the humanitarian role envisaged for the new office (The Independent Commission, 1986: 50-51). The failure to treat these refugees as equals to others deprived them from the legal protection that other refugees around the world had. This allowed Israel to refuse all along to apply the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which governs the protection of civilians under military occupation. But, all the groups concerned do not necessarily accept the definition of Palestinian refugees.

How Many Palestinians Left their Lands?

As a result of the Arab-Israeli War of 1948 and the campaign of expulsion, nearly one million Palestinians were displaced from their homeland. Almost 360,000 refugees entered Central Palestine (renamed as the West Bank) and 110,000 refugees entered Jordan proper (renamed the East Bank). At the time, the population of Central Palestine was 425,000, while Jordan's population was 375,000 (Migdal & Kimmerling, 2003: 221). As a result, the total population of the East Bank rose to 485,000, while that of the West Bank rose to 785,000, making the total population of the newly emerging state of Jordan almost 1,270,000 people.

Seemingly overnight, Jordan's demographics changed dramatically, with its population increasing by almost 300 percent. As a result, the proportion of the newcomer Palestinians between 1951 and 1952 was 64.57 percent of the total population of Jordan (which includes all the West Bank Palestinians as well as all registered Palestinian refugees in the East Bank). If we wanted to include the Palestinians who were living in Jordan before 1948, the proportion rises at least to 68.81 percent. As for the East Bank, the proportion of newcomer Palestinians to the total population was 19.77 percent, which would rise to 29.31 percent if the pre-1948 Palestinians living in Jordan were included. This proportion would

increase further to 34.42 percent if we counted Palestinian refugees registered in the East Bank, pre-1948 Palestinians living in Jordan and West Bank Palestinians who moved to the East Bank between 1948 and 1952. Palestinians constituted one-third of the population of the East Bank alone. In 1961, that proportion rose to 43 percent, which increased to 47.1 percent on the eve of the 1967 war. Moreover, the proportion of the total Palestinian population to the whole population of the East and West Bank had risen to 70.35 percent on the eve of the 1967 war (Hadad, 2001: 151, 153).

Following the war, and due to the new wave of refugees expelled by the conquering Israelis, the proportion of Palestinians living in the East Bank increased to approximately 60 percent (although estimates are inaccurate for this period). These numbers increased substantially after the Gulf War in the early 1990s with the return of more than 200,000 Palestinian-Jordanians who lived in Kuwait and the rest of the Gulf raising the proportion of Palestinians in the East Bank to around 70 per-cent, the majority of whom live in Amman and neighboring cities.

Indeed, this immense and sudden demographic expansion had a major impact on all aspects of life in Jordan. It is important to stress here the urban nature of much of that expansion on the East Bank, as the majority of the Palestinian population alone rose from a pre-war 1948 population of 70,000 people to 120,000 in 1952, further increasing to almost 250,000 people in 1961. Amman had already seen much expansion during World War Two, whereby its population increased to 30,000 in 1943 and 70,000 in 1948.

When UNRWA assumed responsibilities in the field it was evident that the number of refugees was over 950,000. This number exceeded the number estimated by UNESM, which was set the number at about 750,000. “This difference was the result of different approaches to the problem. The figure of the UNESM was obtained from mathematical

calculations, while the numbers on ration lists were compiled by voluntary agencies dealing with hundreds of thousands of hungry people claiming need” (Peretz, 1993, Buehrig, 1972, Schiff, 1995).

At first UNRWA accepted the figures set forth to it by UNESM, but when it compiled its own list, it was evident that it could not reduce ration numbers to below 800,000. Besides, UNRWA officials knew they were likely to exceed it due to the high birth rate of the refugees. One of the first tasks undertaken by the agency was to organize a census operation to determine who should receive relief according to the working definition of refugees. Subsequently, by June 1951, UNRWA’s relief rolls totaled 876,000 persons.⁵²

In Gaza, where the refugee population was highly concentrated and housed mainly in camps under military control of the Egyptian army, the numbers estimated by UNESM were nearest to the actual number of refugees: on August 1, 1950, 199,000 refugees were registered. Syria, with the smallest number of refugees on rations, was next in accuracy, with 82,000 registered. The figures for Lebanon, 128,000, were confused. Having received the greatest influx of refugees in the region, more than half of all the refugees, Jordan had 485,000 on lists on August 31, with 430,000 on rations.⁵³ In addition, there were some 67,000 persons in Jordan and some 60,000 in Gaza who lost their means of livelihood as a direct result of hostilities of the demarcation line that divided Israeli-held from Arab-held territory under the Rhodes Armistice Agreement. Those persons were in genuine need and their position, “economic refugees,” was worsening as time went on. They needed assistance.

⁵² UNRWA Documents, 1984: 77.

⁵³ Ibid: 81.

Table 3.1: Total Registered Palestinian Refugees and the Refugee Population in Camps between 1953-2002

Year	Total Population	Refugee Population in Camps	Refugee Population in Camps (%)
1953	870,158	300,785	34.6%
1960	1,136,487	409,223	36.0%
1965	1,300,117	508,042	39.1%
1970	1,445,022	500,985	34.7%
1975	1,652,436	551,643	33.4%
1980	1,863,162	613,149	32.9%
1985	2,119,862	805,482	38.0%
1990	2,246,044	697,709	28.3%
1995	3,246,044	1,00,7375	31.0%
2000	3,737,494	1,211,480	32.4%
<u>2002</u>	<u>3,973,360</u>	<u>1,262,867</u>	<u>31.78%</u>

Table 3.2 Annual Growth Rates of Registered Palestinian Refugees, 1953-2004

Year	Total Refugee Population	Annual Growth Rate
1950	914,221	
1960	1,120,889	2.3%
1970	1,425,219	2.7%
1980	1,844,318	2.9%
1990	2,422,514	3.1%
2000	3,737,494	5.4%
2002	3,973,360	3.1%
2003	4,082,300	2.8%
2004	4,186,711	2.6%

Source: UNRWA Annual Reports, 1952-2002.

Conclusion

The chapter showed the reasons that led to the establishment of the state of Israel. It also demonstrated the factors that led to creation of the Palestine refugee question and as a result the creation of UNRWA. It was unfortunate for the Palestinians that nations around the world knew very little about modern Palestine or the struggle that had been taking place in the decades before World War II over the immigration of Jews and their efforts to create a Jewish state. For instance, most people in the US had not heard the Arab's side of the story presented equally and accurately. This made it very difficult for the US government and the American people to see both sides of the argument. The horrific images of World War II garnered sympathy for Jewish people around the world at the expense of the indigenous

population in Palestine. In December of 1945, both the House of Representatives and the Senate passed a resolution encouraging the immigration of Jews to Palestine to establish a state. Meanwhile, Harry S. Truman rejected the advice of his foreign policy advisors not to support the creation of Israel, remarking “how many Palestinians are likely to vote for me in the next elections”(Quandt, 2000: 210).

Palestinians have been the victims of a cultural, political, and an economic war that the West preferred to fight on their territory. The West constantly saw itself as the guardian of the Orient and its master. The future of the Orient was determined without the consultation of its citizens. Their land was divided and sold without their permission. They were constantly dehumanized for their reactions and actions against imperialism and occupation. Most League of Nations and UN resolutions passed regardless of the indigenous people’s feelings and wishes. The western world’s solutions to the problem of Palestine could be best explained in a trial and error fashion. If one institution failed (UNRPR, UNSCOP, UNRWA and others), another was tried regardless of the human cost. If one resolution did not solve the problem (181, 194, 302, 212, 242, 338, 1397 and so on), another was drafted. And if one mission failed (the White Paper, the Green Paper, Hope Simpson Mission, the Peel Mission, the Quartette group, the Road Map), another was proposed. No mission or resolution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict ever introduced by the world powers held the violator accountable.

The consensus in most western capitals in the last decade or so is that the Palestinians deserve their own state and a just solution to the refugee question. Every year the UN passes scores of resolutions condemning Israel’s occupation of Palestinian lands and affirming the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. The irony is that most of the resolutions pass with American and other major Western countries’ support. In fact, the

US and other Western countries draft many such resolutions. In addition, all UNRWA-related resolutions and activities pass with no objection from any country, especially the US and Israel. Nevertheless, many officials in Israel and the US have condemned UNRWA for violating its mandate and its agreements. The following chapter will show that norms and consensus building do matter in international relations.

Chapter 4

Challenges to UNRWA and the Palestinian State from Jordan, Israel, and the US

Why did the United States, Jordan, and Israel change their positions regarding Palestine in recent decades and recognize the legitimacy of an independent Palestinian state? For almost 45 years Israelis, Jordanians, and Americans have vehemently opposed the establishment of a Palestinian state and the idea of a separate Palestinian identity. Yet in recent years these countries have dramatically changed their positions. Jordan began recognizing Palestinian rights in 1988 after the first Intifada erupted in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Meanwhile, more than a decade later Israel and the US reached the same conclusion. The Israelis entertained the idea of granting Palestinians independence at the failed Camp David summit in July 2000. The US was ready to talk about a Palestinian state in the spring of 2002, with the adoption of SC Resolution 1397, which advocated a two-state solution to the decades' old Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Until recently, the three aforementioned countries perceived the establishment of a Palestinian state as a threat to their national interests and in Israel's case, its very existence. For decades, Washington and Tel-Aviv collaborated publicly and privately to discredit and delegitimize any official Palestinian political organization, particularly the PLO. They accused the PLO of being a terrorist organization, and refused to recognize the organization as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people (Khouri, 1984: 210). Furthermore, the US blocked numerous UN resolutions demanding that Israel end its occupation of Palestine and grants Palestinians the inalienable right to form their own state. Jordan, on the other hand, secretly supported Israel and the US in their efforts to block the PLO from gaining international legitimacy. In addition, Jordan continually discouraged the creation of any local

leadership that was loyal to PLO. Jordan's objective has been to bring back the West Bank and East Jerusalem under its control (Morris, 2001: 67).

Despite their efforts, Washington, Amman, and Tel-Aviv have been unable to stem UNRWA and the PLO's collaboration in laying the institutional groundwork for the creation of a Palestinian state. UNRWA began building institutions in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip at an early stage and began coordinating publicly with the PLO in Lebanon, financing infrastructural projects inside and outside the camps, establishing preliminary "states networks" in the OPT, and encouraging the organization of Palestinian civil society (Al Hussein, 2000: 57). At the same time, the US government kept pumping millions of dollars into UNRWA's budget. In fact, the US has accounted for almost 25 per-cent of UNRWA's budget since 1950. Meanwhile, Israel continued to allow all UNRWA materials to pass through its ports duty free and gave its personnel the freedom to conduct their operations in a relatively unobstructed manner. Finally, Jordan waived rents and constantly facilitated UNRWA's work.

So why did the US, Israel, and Jordan soften their opposition to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state? As this chapter shows, a series of events contributed to each country's change of policy. In the case of the US, the gradual acceptance of a two-state solution, including its recognition of the PLO as a legitimate political representative of the Palestinian people, was the outcome of the General Assembly's unwavering support of the Palestinian cause since 1960 until now, which gradually increased international attention to the plight of the Palestinians, and which in turn generated political support for the two-state solution at the Security Council and around the world. Moreover, the passage of numerous resolutions at the GA and SC added legal weight to Palestinian claims for an independent state. Israel softened its opposition to the creation of a Palestinian state in response to

political pressures stemming from two Intifadas; the failure of UNRWA to assimilate Palestinians in host societies or to convince them to migrate elsewhere; the failure of Israel to absorb or transfer the refugees; the failure of Jordan to win the loyalty of the Palestinians; and the passage of numerous GA and SC resolutions.⁵⁴ Meanwhile, Jordan's opposition to the creation of a Palestinian state changed as a result of the first Intifada; its failure to convince Palestinians to become part and parcel of the kingdom; the emergence of the PLO; and Arab countries rejection of Jordan's claim to be the representative of the Palestinian people.

The remainder of this chapter is organized as follows. The first part talks about the relationship between Jordan and the Palestinians: how and why King Abdullah and King Hussein suppressed Palestinian nationalism, but latter king Hussein succumbed to Palestinian demands and agreed to a separate Palestinian state. The second section sheds light on the many maneuvers by Israel and UNRWA to assimilate the Palestinian refugees and many countries around the world and it also talks about the many attempts by Israel to liquidate Palestinian nationalism. The final section demonstrates the US's involvement in the question of Palestine and its efforts to have the Palestinians represented by Jordan on many occasions. In addition, the final section sheds light on the strained relations between UNRWA and the legislative branch of the US government.

Jordan and Palestinian Aspirations

Ever since the establishment of the emirate of Transjordan in 1921, both Israel and Jordan have conducted secret negotiations on the future of Palestine. King Abdullah I made it very

⁵⁴ By global civil society and NGOs, I mean the broad consensus that many European and American organizations have been advocating to end the Israeli occupation of Palestine (e.g., International Solidarity Movement, End the Occupation USA, End the Occupation Europe, Peace Now, Women in Black, and so on).

clear to the new Jewish emigrants that he “would not oppose the establishment of a Jewish state on most of historic Palestine” (Shlaim, 2001: 30). The king’s main concern in Palestine was the West Bank and East Jerusalem. (Ibid: 44) In fact, as early as November 1947, Golda Meir, Israeli prime minister in the late 1960s, reached an agreement with King Abdullah to partition Palestine at the expense of the Palestinians (Ibid: 311). Abdullah was hoping all along to annex the West Bank to his Kingdom.

Time and again, King Abdullah proclaimed that the unity of both banks is “a nationalist and factual reality.” According to him, its nationalist reality resulted from “the entanglements of people’s origins and branches and the coalescence of vital interests and the unity of pain and hopes.” On the other hand, its factual reality was attributable to “strong unionist links between both banks since 1922.”⁵⁵ Such links included unity of currency, common defense, utilization of ports, reinforcement of border security, and facilitation of custom and travel barriers, all based on the unity of interests and cultural and legislative exchange which have rendered each of the two banks an excellent center especially for the other (Sayigh, 1966: 244). The discourse permitting this union, like the one used to found Jordan itself back in 1921, was shaped by Jordan’s desire to downplay Palestinian nationalism and recreate a Jordanian one on both sides of the Jordan River instead.

Jordan’s attempt to annex part of Palestine was motivated largely by its desire to become the sole representative of the Palestinians on the two banks. Plans for such a dream had, in fact, been in preparation well before the UN voted to partition Palestine. The Peel Commission, a British committee that was dispatched to the region to study Jewish emigration and put an end to the suffering of the indigenous Palestinians, was the first to recommend the annexation of the West Bank to Transjordan in 1937. King Abdullah

⁵⁵ King Abdullah I, *Speech to the Throne*, 1950, Department of Humanities, University of Jordan Library, pp. 3-4.

welcomed the proposal and he submitted a proposal to the British government calling for the establishment of “a unified Arab kingdom composed of Palestine and Transjordan under royal Arab rule”(Ibid: 6). Practical plans to achieve this goal were put in place following the UN partition plan. King Abdullah was adamant about his right to represent the Palestinians soon after his army entered Palestine on May 15, 1948. He asserted with no reservation “the Arab Higher Committee no longer represents the Arabs of Palestine” (Sakhnini, 1974: 59). This situation became more complicated after the establishment of the General Palestine Government in September 1948, which was supported by the Arab League. To challenge the legitimacy of the new Palestine government, King Abdullah convened a conference in Amman on October 1, 1948. The king called the conference “the Nationalist Conference on Palestine” the same day the Palestine government had called for a meeting in Gaza. King Abdullah invited several hundreds of Palestinian community leaders to attend his meeting. To guarantee that the Palestinians would attend the Amman conference and not the one convened in Gaza, Abdullah authorized the use of some repressive measures, including preventing delegates from going to Gaza and forcing them to go to Amman instead (Ibid: 56-7). The delegates issued a number of resolutions stating that they:

confer upon His Majesty full and absolute authority to speak in the name of the Arabs of Palestine and that he negotiate in their name and that he resolve their problem in the way he sees fit. Furthermore, the delegates decided to send a telegram to the Arab Higher Committee informing it that the delegates are “removing from it the trust of the Arabs of Palestine, for it does not represent them and it does not have the right to speak in their name or to represent their opinions (Ibid: 60).

I spoke to several of the delegates from the city of Hebron, about the conference and its intended consequences. When asked about the intended consequences of the conference

that the king called they said “the king’s ultimate objective all along had been to suppress the reawakening of Palestinian nationalism. The king sought to deny the legitimacy of the General Palestine Government, which was in progress, and desired to be the sole representative and caretaker of Palestine and the Palestinians. His ultimate objective “was control over Jerusalem.”⁵⁶

The Jericho Conference

By convening the Jericho Conference on December 1, 1948, King Abdullah sought to strengthen his grip on the West Bank and annex it as soon as possible. But residents of the West Bank opposed his vision of annexation. As a result, many anti-Hashemite demonstrations and opposition rallies took place in the area. The king’s reactions were swift, and the government undertook a campaign to destroy the armies of the Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini, thus eliminating any organized resistance to his plan. To insure the full implementation of his vision, the king appointed many of his allies as provincial governors and municipal mayors throughout the West Bank. In addition to the deportation of many members of the anti-Hashemite camp, the king ordered around the clock surveillance on those members who remained especially in the big towns of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Ramallah, and Nablus (Sayigh, 1966: 272).

On an official level, the conference called for “Palestinian-Jordanian unity” and the renaming of Central Palestine on the “West Bank”: “We must begin by unifying Palestine with Transjordan as a prelude to real Arab unity.” The conference also declared that it “elects His Majesty King Abdullah as king of all Palestine and its salutes Him and his brave army and the Arab armies who have fought and are fighting in defense of Palestine” (Al Tal,

⁵⁶ A meeting with some delegate from the city of Hebron, July 25, 2000, Hebron, West Bank.

1959: 376). Upon conclusion of the conference, delegates headed to the king's palace in Shunah in the Jordan Valley, where they informed him of their resolutions, including his election as King of Palestine (Ibid: 378-9). The US and Britain welcomed the unity declaration with one reservation, Jerusalem. The unity of the two banks was alarming to many in the Arab world, especially the Egyptians and the Syrians. Many Arab countries did not want Jordan to control the holy of Jerusalem so they can limit its prestige and influence.

Palestinians were furious with the outcome. After touring the West Bank on July 20, 1951, King Abdullah, accompanied by his eighteen-year-old grandson Hussein, headed to al-Aqsa mosque to pray. The mosque was full with thousands of worshipers from Jerusalem and the surrounding areas. The service was being broadcast live on radio. Upon entering the mosque, Abdullah was shot dead by a young Palestinian, Mustapha Ali Ashow. Abdullah's guards killed Ashow on the spot. Some Palestinians thought that by killing Abdullah the Hashemites' ambition to annex their land would end. They were gravely mistaken. King Abdullah's successor, King Hussein, shared his grandfather's dream of having the West Bank and East Jerusalem as part of the Hashemite kingdom.

King Hussein and the Palestinians

King Hussein ascended to the throne in 1953 and maintained the legacy of his grandfather, King Abdullah. King Hussein kept the secret channel open with Israel and continued to suppress "Palestinian nationalism" (Thomas, 1999: 85). Jordan's ultimate objective was until recently to prevent the establishment of an independent Palestinian state west of the Jordan River. Despite the killing of his grandfather, King Abdullah, King Hussein did not retreat but aggressively pursued the unification of the two banks, eliminating any opposition to his family's claim on Palestine.

King Hussein moved all Palestinians from camps next to the newly established state of Israel to Amman and the remote cities of Jarash and Irbid. Most Palestinians who fled their lands erected tents in locations adjacent to their homes on the boarder between Jordan and Israel. In 1954, the king ordained Jordanian citizenship to all refugees. “The plan aimed at integrating the Palestinians in the cities, towns, and villages of his kingdom as fast as possible,” remarked some UNRWA officials and along time bureaucrats. They strongly believed that the kingdom conspired with the Israeli government on issues such as the future of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and Palestinian identity. They remarked that

When I ran UNRWA’s teachers college in Ramallah in 1971, the students asked to establish a student government. I asked for a constitution for it before I could say yes or no. When the students framed the constitution and sought my approval, I brought their concerns to the regional office of UNRWA’s education office at the headquarter in Jordan. Due to certain bureaucratic measures UNRWA had to run the project by the Jordanian ministry of education. The ministry refused the whole scheme categorically for security reasons.⁵⁷

However, the officials believed that the issue had “nothing to do with security. It had to do with forming a different political identity in the West Bank.”⁵⁸ They said that as the PLO was a relatively new organization and was attracting most of the younger generation, Jordan wanted to curtail its activities.

Many long serving educators and administrators at UNRWA, shared with me their experiences in Amman. One of the officials holds a Ph.D. in Public Administration from the University of Jordan. A Palestinian refugee himself, he believed that the geographic location of the refugee camps and their names reflected the vision of the king, his family, and

⁵⁷ A meeting with some UNRWA officials, June 20th 2004 Amman Jordan.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

UNRWA at the outset on how best to solve the question of Palestine. As for UNRWA, the officials stated that the UN passed resolution 309(V) on December 2, 1950, urging the “reintegration of the refugees in to the economic life of the Near East.”⁵⁹ The UN instructed UNRWA “to establish a reintegration fund which shall be utilized for the permanent re-establishment of refugees and their removal from relief.”⁶⁰ As for the kingdom, he said “You will not see one single school named after a city, a town, or a village in historic Palestine in the camps in Jordan or the West Bank because Jordan administered it before 1967.”⁶¹

However, in Lebanon and Syria, most schools and institutions are named after places in historic Palestine. When asked to give an example of what they were talking about, they smiled and said, “if you tour the refugee camps in Amman, how many schools, hospitals, libraries, museums would you see named after Haifa, Jaffa, or Safad [all refer to main cities in historic Palestine]?” I said that I did not see any. They said, “In Lebanon and in Syria most of the Palestinian institutions are named after historic places in Palestine.”⁶² According to the same official, the Hashemites wanted from the beginning to “eliminate the sense of belonging to these areas in the minds of the younger generations.”⁶³

I asked another administrator in the agency, a civil engineer, who holds a masters degree from a US university, about the logic behind the physical separation of the refugee camps. The official corroborated the other’s claim that the ultimate objective was to prevent

⁵⁹ A meeting with UNRWA officials, June 14th 2004, UNRWA Headquarters, Amman.

⁶⁰ UNRWA Documents, September 2003: 3.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

the rise of “a collective voice.” But like many others, he strongly believed that the kingdom failed to achieve its objectives: the liquidation and suppression of Palestinian nationalism. He noted that UNRWA and the refugee camps served the opposite of their intended purposes. UNRWA was created to assimilate and integrate the Palestinian refugees in the societies of the Middle East, but instead it ended up fostering Palestinian sense of belonging to a separate identity. For him, when one looks at the UNRWA camps, schools and students, at their activities, their loyalty and their drawings, one can hardly deny that in Jordan and in all the camps where UNRWA operates, Palestinian nationalism is more robust than ever.⁶⁴ The official asserted that all of UNRWA’s activities have been taking place under the watchful eyes of the Jordanian government that failed to stop it. The issue of education and its relation to Palestinian nationalism will be dealt with in detail in Chapter Seven.

In 1972, King Hussein answered Palestinian nationalism by declaring the United Arab Kingdom, proposing Amman as the capital. The Arab countries reaction to the king’s plan was swift — Syria and Egypt broke off relations, and the PLO accused the king of liquidating the Palestinian cause by proposing autonomy rather than independence for the Palestinians (Quandt, 2000: 290). The project for the United Arab Kingdom went nowhere, as vocal Palestinian opposition to it continued unabated. However, the king abandoned his plan not because of Arab opposition but because Israel’s opposition was swift and categorical. In a speech to the Knesset on March 16, Prime Minister Golda Meir said that Israel never interfered in the internal structure or form of an Arab regime. If the king of Jordan had seen fit to change the name of his kingdom to “Palestine” and modify its internal structure, it would have raised no objections. But Israel strongly opposed the king’s federal plan because it affected Israel’s borders and security.

⁶⁴ A meeting with UNRWA Officials, June 17, 2004, Amman, Jordan, UNRWA Headquarters.

Meir's clear rejection of king Hussein's federal plan was music to the ears of PLO leader Yasser Arafat. Arafat and his colleagues regarded the king's plan as "an attempt to put the PLO out of business." Later, Arafat told his biographer that if Israel had agreed to withdraw from the West Bank, King Hussein would have made peace with her immediately, and the PLO would have been "finished absolutely finished" (Ibid: 310).

King Hussein and Palestinian Representation

The Jordanian government opposed any Palestinian body claiming to represent Palestinians, such as the General Palestine Government set up in Gaza in 1949, or the Higher Palestine Organization, based in Cairo and Damascus, which was led by Haj Amin Al-Husseini. But Jordan decided to support the Arab decision to establish the PLO in 1964, albeit with some reservations. Initially, Amman supported the PLO, for it did not claim to be the sole representative of the Palestinian people and made no claims of sovereignty over the West Bank. Its position, therefore, did not challenge the existing Jordanian claims to both banks (Plascov, 1981: 37). In fact, the framers of the PLO's covenant were sensitive to the king's needs, and they did not attempt to liberate the West Bank, the Gaza Strip or the Himmah area.⁶⁵

In a press conference held in Cairo, the head of the PLO, Ahmad Shuqayri, announced, "the Palestinian organization and Jordan will share a historic responsibility for liberating Palestine, for the land and the people are one."⁶⁶ King Hussein was satisfied with Shuqayri's assurances and instructed his prime minister, Wasif Al-Tall, to insure that the relationship between the PLO and the Jordanian government prospers. King Hussein wrote

⁶⁵ Palestinian National Covenant, Article 24.

⁶⁶ Al Ahram news Paper January 21, 1964. 12.

that one of the “central” points of the new government’s policies toward the Palestinian cause be

the support of the Palestine Liberation Organization and close cooperation with it in Jordan, the Arab World and around the world. This position is surely based on our faith that as long as our brothers, Palestine’s children, in Jordan and outside of it, choose the Palestinian organization as a way to mobilize and organize the efforts of Palestine’s children, we shall stand by Palestinian institutions support them agree with them, and back up their efforts until Palestine’s children and the Arab nation reinstate Arab rights in Palestine.⁶⁷

The king stressed that the PLO would ensure that the two people would remain united.

But the friendly relationship between Jordan and the Palestinians did not last long. The PLO demanded that the Jordanian government institute compulsory military service. Subsequently, King Hussein asserted that “we shall not discriminate between the eastern Jordanian and the western Jordanian and no one will be able to tear this unity apart and take the brother away from his brother and take the soldier away from his unit...and much of what we have recently heard and continue to hear...is only meant to break apart the one structure, and to tear apart the one entity, which is what we shall not permit under any circumstances.”⁶⁸

Then, King Hussein took his campaign against Palestinian aspirations to some Arab countries to lobby their support for his vision. The king wrote a letter to Egyptian President Jamal Abd Al-Nasir, in which he insisted that “the argument that Mr. Shuqayri uses in his speeches is that Jordan complicates the work of the Organization and does not permit it freedom of activity...wherein freedom of activity, in his understanding of it, and as it has

⁶⁷ See Letter of Designation of the prime minister, February 13, 1965. Jordan University Library

⁶⁸ Speech delivered on October 4, 1965. Jordan University Library

been clearly revealed, aims to tear the Palestinian Jordanian citizen west of the River Jordan from his brother the Palestinians Jordanian citizen to its east, and to stir up hidden resentment and dormant disputes and to break up the people's and the army's unity."⁶⁹ Finally, in one of his most proactive statements on the question of separate Palestinian statehood and national identity, King Hussein declared in the northern city of Ajlun in June 1966 that "the Palestinian cause ceased to have a Palestinian character the moment the Arab armies entered the land of Palestine...and we in this country have a solid belief that the unity of both banks is a unity blessed by God and supported by the people and that it constitutes a vanguard nucleus for the larger Arab unity."⁷⁰ The king ended his speech by threatening the Palestinians who seek independence, declaring that "we shall cut off every hand that extends itself in harm to this unity, to this one struggling country, and we shall scrape out every eye that looks doubtfully at us, and we shall not be lax or tolerant, not even a fingertip, from this moment on." These words were not only addressed to Shuqayri's PLO but also to the Palestinian guerilla movements that operated outside PLO authority.

Between 1965 and 1967, the guerilla movement, headed by Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement, was already launching a number of attacks on Israel from Jordanian territory. The Jordanian government sought to prevent such attacks by force. In fact, the Jordanian military rather than the Israeli army killed the first Fatah individual who attempted to cross the border and attack Israeli interests. The Jordanian military, aiming to curb its activities, continually pursued the rest of the movement. This led to more mutual recriminations between the PLO and Jordan, on the one hand, and between Fatah and the Arab Nationalist

⁶⁹ King Hussein letter to Abdel Nasser October 18, 1965. Jordan University Library.

⁷⁰ King Hussein speech at the Graduation Ceremony of the Ajlun Teachers Colleges, June 14, 1966, Jordan University Library.

Movement, on the other (Sayigh, 1987:25-7). Such developments in the East Bank of the Jordan River led to the 1967 war. Israel felt that the best way to help the king would be to cut the East Bank and the West Bank in half.

The 1967 Six-Day War, which ended with the West Bank under Israeli occupation, led to another wave of refugees. While Palestinians considered it to be another exodus, Jordanian officials looked at the population movements as moving from one part of the country to another. As a result, the number of Palestinians in Jordan increased to at least 60 percent of the total East Bank population (Ibid. 34-5). One of the political implications of the 1967 war was that Palestinians began to refuse to abide by the larger Arab consensus. Israel's defeat of three Arab armies created massive popular support in the Arab world for the Palestinians. Thus, Palestinian resistance groups became very popular and become pivotal in mobilizing refugees and nonrefugees alike in the region.

Despite their increased presence among of Palestinians, freedom fighters did not accomplish any major victories until the Battle of al-Karamah in March 1968. Al-Karamah, a small Jordanian town in the Jordan valley and the site of a Palestinian refugee camp housing many guerillas, became the target of a major Israeli operation. In collaboration with Jordan's army, the guerillas and the army were able to force the Israelis to withdraw. The Israelis, however, were not defeated. On the contrary, before withdrawing they had leveled the town of al-Karamah and inflicted heavy damages on the guerillas and army. What was different this time, however, was that the Israeli military, successful as it might have been, did not escape unscathed. For the first time in its history, it received heavy damages in personnel and material (Turkey, 1988: 89-100).

Al-Karamah was a turning point for the Palestinian political organization and psyche. It signaled the beginning of the most serious challenge the Jordanian state and regime were

to face since their formation in 1921. This was not only a challenge to the Jordanian state's authority and sovereignty, or to the throne itself, but also to the state's claim to represent Jordanians of Palestinian descent. Indeed, the very Jordanianness of the state was challenged.

Jordanian and PLO competition for position on the issue of Palestinian representation continued unabated. In 1973, the PLO was recognized by the non-aligned nations at the fourth summit of the movement in Algiers as "a legitimate representative of the Palestinian people." In November of that year, the Arab League recognized the PLO in a secret resolution as the "sole representative of the Palestinian people." Jordan expressed its reservations. Its position became very clear when a diplomatic rupture between Syria and Egypt took place. In July, King Hussein flew to Alexandria, Egypt to meet with Anwar Sadat. Subsequently, the two issued a joint declaration stating that the "PLO is the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people except for those resident in the Hashemite Jordanian Kingdom," which ostensibly included the West Bank. Arab and PLO anger followed forcing Sadat to retreat from the declaration at the meeting of the foreign ministers of Syria, Egypt and the PLO in Cairo in September. Finally, the situation came to a close with the open Arab League decision at the Seventh Arab League Summit in Rabat in October recognizing the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Soon after this declaration, the PLO was recognized by the General Assembly as sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. As a result, King Hussein denounced all political responsibility for Palestinians and reorganized the Jordanian cabinet, reducing Palestinian representation (Aruri, 1972: 123).

King Hussein's Secret Negotiations With Israel

While King Hussein publicly recognized the PLO status as representative of Palestinians, he secretly maintained his position that he alone should have the authority to represent Palestinians in the West Bank and in Jordan. According to Richard Murphy, former assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs during most of the Reagan administration, King Hussein gave the impression of being ready to proceed in peace talks with Israel, perhaps without the PLO, and did not insist on knowing the outcome of negotiations before joining the peace process.⁷¹ Hence, Jordanian-Israeli contacts increased during the 1980s. King Hussein met secretly with Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin near Strasbourg in April of 1988. Subsequently, Jordan closed down PLO offices in Amman, and both Israel and Jordan encouraged the development of the "Village League" as alternative sources of leadership to the PLO-oriented nationalist leadership in the West Bank. Branches of the Cairo-Amman bank were opened in the West Bank, and a pro-Jordanian newspaper was set up in Jerusalem (Smith, 2005: 350).

To capitalize on their understanding, King Hussein and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres met secretly in London to work out the principles for convening an international conference. An agreement was reached on April 11, 1987. Jordan and Israel both supported the idea that a conference would not have plenary powers. It could not impose its view or veto the results of bilateral negotiations that would take place under the umbrella of the conference. Both countries agreed there would be a ceremonial opening with representatives of the permanent members of the Security Council and regional parties to the conflict that had accepted resolution 242.

⁷¹ Interview with Ambassador Richard Murphy at the Council on Foreign Relations, New York City. June 3, 2003.

On the day that Peres and Hussein reached an agreement, an aide to Peres met with Secretary of State George Shultz to plead with him to make the new document the core of an American initiative. Only in that way might Shamir be persuaded to accept it. Shultz refused to play this kind of game and insisted that Peres present his own agreement to Shamir before the US would take any position on it. Shamir was not interested in any agreement that led to territorial compromise. Shamir's rejection of the idea of a nonbinding international conference was rooted in his determination never to cede an inch of the historic land of Israel.

At a summit in Algiers in June 1988, during the first year of the Intifada, Arab nations affirmed that the PLO was the sole representative of the Palestinian people. The Intifada brought unprecedented Arab and international sympathy to the Palestinian cause. As a result, King Hussein was forced to relinquish all claims to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In an open speech delivered on May 15, 1988, the king declared the "disunity between the two banks." This paved the way for the Arab states and the US to begin the process of proposing the idea of two states living side by side to coexist in peace and harmony.⁷² President George H.W. Bush declared on March 6, 1991 that it was time for the Palestinian people to have a separate political and economic identity. Thus, the shuttle diplomacy of Secretary of State James Baker III began in 1989. The fruits of Baker's diplomacy were the convening of the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991. The conference brought representatives of most Arab countries, including the Palestinians, and the Israelis publicly to the table for the first time since 1948. The Israelis, Jordanians, and the Palestinians understood that the end result of the negotiations would be a separate Palestinian entity. The process convinced King Hussein and now his son King Abdullah II that the creation of a Palestinian state in

⁷² Speech to the people, May 20, 1988.

OPT will take place in spite of them. Consequently Jordan changed course dramatically after the first Palestinian Intifada and the Madrid peace conference. Since the second Intifada, King Abdullah II has been lobbying the Americans and the Israelis alike for the creation of a Palestinian state. In fact it was King Abdullah II also lobbied president George W. Bush to introduce a road map for peace and the establishment of a Palestinian state in the OPT. The administration did and named the “Road Map” in honor of King Abdullah II’s request.

Israel and the Palestinians

The creation of a Jewish state in Palestine became the ultimate objective of Zionism, which Dr. Chaim Weizman pressed zealously when he headed the movement. After the Young Turk revolution, the Zionist organization was cautious in declaring its aims; the term “state” was avoided and “homeland” was used instead. In Herzl’s words: “No need to worry. The people will read it as ‘Jewish state’ anyhow” (Farsoun, 1998: 210).

What was needed for the political concept of a Jewish state in Palestine to give it reality was to transfer people to Palestine. A stirring slogan was spread: “A land without a people for a people without land.” The rights of the people of Palestine, who were almost a million and a half at the turn of the century, were disregarded. Zionism’s strongest hopes for a Jewish state in Palestine lay with Great Britain. Links with British leaders were thus established. Weizman described the links built up with British leaders as follows: “One of our great finds was Sir Marks Sykes, Chief Secretary of the War Cabinet...if it had not been for the counsel of men like Sykes we, with our inexperience in delicate diplomatic negotiations, would undoubtedly have committed many dangerous blunders” (Weizman, 1949: 149).

Zionist leaders impressed upon Britain the strategic advantages of a Jewish state in Palestine. Sykes was especially valuable in helping Weizman and his colleagues, particularly Leon Sokolow, in trying to persuade France to renounce her lingering claims in making Jerusalem international as agreed upon in the Sykes-Picot accord. Originally, French ambitions had embraced all of Syria, including Palestine, whose internationalization she had agreed to only on strong British insistence (Ibid: 374). Eventually, the French were persuaded to accept the development of Jewish colonization in Palestine and let Palestine pass into the British sphere of control.

Weizman pressed for a declaration of policy, and by the end of January 1917, he submitted a memorandum to Sykes: “The document was called: ‘Outline of Program for the Jewish Re-Settlement of Palestine in Accordance with the Aspirations of the Zionist movement.’” Its first point had to do with national recognition (Ibid: 184). Many drafts were exchanged and discussed between the British government and the Zionist movement. US assent was also obtained before the British foreign secretary issued the final text of the declaration in November 1917 (Stein, 1961: 6).

The Balfour Declaration was highly controversial. It disturbed some Jewish circles who were not in favor of the creation of a Jewish state, as well as Jewish communities of non-Zionist convictions, who regarded themselves as nationals of their own countries, and in whom the concept of a “Jewish national home” created conflicting loyalties. Neither David Ben-Gurion nor Golda Meir had ever shown any interest in the Palestinian option. Both regarded the Palestinians as the irreconcilable enemy of Israel. Their views about the Palestinians had been formed in the pre-independence period and had hardly changed. In November 1947 they reached an agreement with King Abdullah to partition Palestine, and that policy held until early June 1967 (Thomas, 1999: 137).

After June 1967, Golda Meir remained unremittingly hostile toward Palestinian nationalism. In fact, she refused to acknowledge that the Palestinians were a nation or that they had any right to national self-determination. Meir saw Palestinian nationalism as a threat not only to Israel but to the monarchy in Jordan as well. This was one of the reasons for her solidarity with King Hussein. In 1968, she sent the following message to the king through an American visitor: "I hope your majesty realizes that Israel is your best friend in the Middle East." On his return to Jerusalem, Theodore Sorensen, a former close adviser to President Kennedy, reported that when King Hussein heard the message, he replied with a smile, "There are some people who think that I am Israel's best friend in the Middle East" (Quandt, 2000: 330).

Simha Dinitz, who served as director general of Meir's office between 1969-73 wrote about the prime minister's relations to the king:

For Golda the only realistic solution to the Palestinian problem, from the demographic and the geographic point of view, was to place them under Jordan's jurisdiction. An attempt to deal with the Palestinians question without linking it to Jordan in other words, an attempt to create an additional state between Israel and Jordan, would not succeed, because such a state would not have an adequate geographic or demographic base. This was the foundation of her thinking. Consequently, in order to arrive at a solution to the Palestinian problem, a link with Jordan had to be forged. Other Israeli leaders like Moshe Dayan and Ariel Sharon had their own plans for the Palestinians (Cited in Quandt: 118).

Moshe Dayan's Proposals and Activities

According to Ra'anana Wietz, shortly after the 1967 war, Dayan worked out a secret plan for encouraging Palestinian emigration from the West Bank and Gaza to South America. Under this scheme, each Palestinian family willing to emigrate would receive sums ranging from \$3,000 to \$5,000. However, according to Weitz, the project ended in failure: scores of Arab families from the West Bank that agreed to emigrate to Latin America did not succeed in

establishing themselves there and after a certain period returned to their homes on the West Bank (Nisan, 1985: 2).

Likud Minister of Industry and Trade Ariel Sharon also referred to the same plan in public in November 1987.⁷³ Based on an Israeli newspaper report, the scheme began with the formation of a highly secret unit composed of representatives of the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Defense, the Israeli army, and the Shabak: Israel's internal secret service. This secret unit was also called the "Eshkol unit," named after the late Prime Minister Levi Eshkol, because the unit was established while he was in office. The unit was charged with encouraging the emigration of Palestinians, refugees and non-refugees, from the OPT to South America and other destinations. For three years it operated in utmost secrecy out of the office of the Israeli military governor in Gaza city on 'Omar al-Mukhtar Street, one of the main streets in the city. Evidently,

the unit provided the emigrants with one-way tickets to various South American countries, mainly Paraguay, through a Tel Aviv-based travel agency, and promised to give further financial assistance to get them established once they had arrived. Apparently the military authorities in the Gaza Strip worked hard to find individual Palestinians, particularly among the residents of refugee camps, who were disappointed with their lot and might be candidates for the secret program. The clandestine activities of the unit also included the purchase through intermediaries of land in Paraguay, Brazil and even in pre-Qaddafi Libya for carrying out the emigration and resettlement scheme (Masalha, 1996: 28).

The secret operation continued for about three years, from 1967 until mid-1970. During this period, the semi-official unit managed, according to an Israeli newspaper report, to arrange for the emigration of about one thousand Palestinians. However, in May 1970, the scheme came to an end as a result of a sudden development. In desperation a refugee from

⁷³ The Washington Post, February 7, 1988.

the Jabalya refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, the 21-year-old Talal ibn Dimassi, who agreed to immigrate to Paraguay and was promised financial assistance and received none, went to the Israeli consulate in Asuncion on May 4, 1970 and demanded to see the Israeli ambassador. When his request was denied, he pulled a pistol and shot the ambassador's secretary dead. The killing in Latin America, the failure of UNRWA to assimilate and integrate the refugees, the unwillingness of the refugees to abide by UNRWA's vision of integration, and the opposition of some Arab countries to any resettlement projects led to the collapse of the Dayan scheme.

Ariel Sharon's Proposals and Activities, 1969-71

The main objective of Sharon, according to his biographer 'Uzi Benziman, was to create a "security belt" around the heavily populated Gaza Strip: Sharon's plan called for the isolation of the Gaza Strip from the Sinai Peninsula, severing the continuity of the Palestinian population within Gaza by introducing Jewish settlements in its midst, and thinning out the population of the refugee camps (Benziman, 1987: 119). Sharon was basically repeating the traditional Israeli position towards the Palestinian refugee problem in particular and the Palestinian people in general: the refugees had no right to return to their villages and towns in Israel, with the exception of the suggestion he made that Israel should undertake a gesture of goodwill by resettling up to 30,000 refugees in Israel and this should be part of a wider plan for total elimination of the Gaza refugee camps. Some of the camps' residents would also be encouraged by financial incentives to emigrate to and settle in Arab countries. Sharon wrote:

it was the obligation of the Arab world to absorb the Arab refugees. And since the Jewish as well as the Arab refugees had left all their property behind, any compensation had to be reciprocal. But though Israel's position on this was

absolutely fair, I proposed that we go a step beyond it... I believed we could agree to pay the legitimate claims of Arab refugee families once they had permanently settled in other countries. I had no doubt whatsoever that we could establish a long-term fund for that purpose, that however large a sum we would need for this could be raised from a variety of sources, including the immensely supportive overseas Jewish communities; the elimination of the camps would be neither easy nor quick; it would take, as I envisioned it, ten years or so (Sharon, 1989: 258-9).

UNRWA did not oppose Israel's attempts to resolve the refugee question by settling them in the Middle East and other countries before the Six-Day War. Israel encouraged the transfer of Gaza refugees to Libya and Brazil with the help of UNRWA to no avail. An official document in the Israeli archives confirms that land for this purpose was bought in Libya, and is still registered in Israel's name.

UNRWA's plan to resettle refugees had been made by Leslie Carver, the deputy director of UNRWA, suggesting that the Arab countries carry responsibility for solving the refugee question by receiving \$300 million from the UN and advocating the transfer of 100,000 refugees from Gaza and other places to Iraq and Libya. Moreover, UNRWA announced its readiness to cover the expenses of emigration for refugees who obtained visas to any country in the world. Every refugee was to be paid \$150, in addition to a transfer allowance, which would enable him or her to start work and establish a new residence. The agency committed \$112 million to carry out the project and ensure its success (Masalha, 1996: 13).

Furthermore, UNRWA encouraged the emigration to Burqa in Libya and the organization opened an office there in November 1951. Registration offices were also opened in Beirut, Damascus, Jordan, and Egypt for refugees interested in emigrating. The Libyan government agreed in the early stages to allow in 200 refugees, peasants and professional people; and on 23 November 1952, it agreed to accept 2,500 refugee families. At the same time, UNRWA was ready to give \$2 million to the Libyan government. But

King Idris of Libya refused to approve it, unless the agreement between UNRWA and Libya included assurance to the refugees and their permission. UNRWA additionally tried to promote the emigration of Palestinian refugees to Europe, Brazil, and other places by providing financial incentives. UNRWA Commissioner-General documents show that during the period of 1954-1960 there exist many cases of those who emigrated at UNRWA's expense.⁷⁴

Western religious organizations from Europe and the US assisted UNRWA in encouraging Palestinian refugees to emigrate by promising them "a better living" elsewhere. Hundreds were attracted by the offer to escape miserable conditions. However, many of those who emigrated to Brazil wrote to the Arab Higher Committee for Palestine asking for help to go back, due to a lack of employment, police repression, low wage labor and frustrating living conditions (Ibid). Thus, when Israel asked UNRWA to continue to work in the occupied territories after 1967, its vision was very clear: help solve this problem.⁷⁵ Israeli leaders envisioned UNRWA as an instrument in helping them assimilate the Palestinian refugees in OPTs. They looked at the agency as a formula in an equation that will add up in their favor sooner or later. But Israel discovered that most refugees had no intentions of settling outside their original homes, villages, and towns. Worse yet, UNRWA had stopped advocating Palestinian integration. Nevertheless, Israel continued to support UNRWA's socioeconomic and educational programs, which led to the organization and formation of many resistance groups in the region. Israel believed that by improving the economic well being of the refugees, stability, assimilation, and reintegration would result. On the other

⁷⁴ UN General-Commissioner Reports, 1955-1960.

⁷⁵ See the Comay-Michelmores Agreement that UNRWA and Israel signed on June 14, 1967 for the purpose of enabling UNRWA to continue to provide services to the refugees in the OPT Appendix B.

hand, refugees believed that UNRWA's services would train them to become self-sufficient, while keeping an international commitment to their refugee status.

Israel and UNRWA

According to Michelmore, UNRWA's commissioner-general from 1964 to 1971, Israeli officials at first debated eliminating UNRWA in the territories and dealing directly with the refugee problem by themselves (Schiff, 1995: 120). Israeli leaders for example remarked, "in general we thought that UNRWA had simply become an instrument to perpetuate the Arab refugee problem" (Ibid: 121). Comay responded by saying that this was not practical. As an international organization supported by other states, UNRWA was "a sort of sacred cow" as far as the UN was concerned. If they tried to reduce or get rid of UNRWA, it would have raised "a tremendous hullabaloo internationally...politically it was not a feasible proposition at all" (Ibid: 181). So the government decided, in Comay's words, "to cooperate with UNRWA and create the conditions to maintain the status quo in these territories." The Comay-Michelmore negotiations hammered out the government's and the agency's responsibilities and codified them in an exchange of letters.

But there was a huge gap between Israel's desires and reality on the ground. Israel expected the agency to keep the refugees well fed and at bay. Israel supported UNRWA's activities in the OPT with the hope that the agency would give legal and international cover to the Israeli projects of forced resettlement. To the surprise of Israel, however, Palestinians vehemently resisted any UNRWA or Israeli program of assimilation. UNRWA had learned from its previous mistakes. The agency's collaboration with Israel at certain times, especially during the Sinai Peninsula project in which, Israel, the US and Great Britain allocated more than \$200 million to resettle refugees, resulted in mistrust between the agency and its clients:

the refugees. The Sinai project resulted in mass demonstrations and strikes against the agency and led the agency to shift its agenda from integration to welfare.

The Israeli government did not give up on UNRWA as a partner in finding a non-political solution for the Palestinian refugees. After the failure in the Sinai project the Israeli government enlisted UNRWA's help in migration schemes to Latin America and other Arab countries. But the refugees aborted both plans and forced UNRWA and other regional and international players to entertain other solutions. UNRWA had greater difficulty in working with Israel on other projects after the PLO was granted an observer status at the General Assembly and the recognition of the Palestinian organization as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people in 1974, by the Arab countries, UNRWA and the UN. With the refugees' insistence on the right of return to their original properties and a political solution the agency had no choice but to shift its vision on how best to solve the refugee issue. Many UNRWA officials became convinced that the right of return was feasible and should be implemented, and many in Israel and the west began to view UNRWA as the guardian of that right. Moreover, nowadays, residents of the refugee camps in Jordan and the West Bank feel strongly that UNRWA can best guarantee their rights under international law. Thus any attempt by the West or Israel to liquidate the agency before solving the lingering issue of the refugees, will be faced with massive demonstrations and chaos.

Some of the community leaders at the Ayda refugee camp located near Bethlehem, said, "they and others are very hopeful that one day they will be allowed to go back to their homes."⁷⁶ They sounded confident that the Palestinian people have succeeded in thwarting Israel's and UNRWA's attempt to relocate Palestinians. They stated unequivocally "the

⁷⁶ A meeting with some refugee community leaders, July 11, 2004, Hebron, West Bank.

government of Jordan, UNRWA and Israel wanted to liquidate Palestinian nationalism by separating us from our past.”⁷⁷ Israel and Jordan, through UNRWA and UNESCO, imposed their own school curriculums. But UNRWA’s board of education never imposed on the teachers what kind of stories he/she could use in the classrooms. Another educator, who also served on the board of education of UNRWA, corroborated the community leaders claim by stating that the agency’s board of education meets annually in Lebanon or Syria to determine the future policy of education. UNRWA officials called this the “hidden curriculum” to make sure that students in the five fields are educated similarly despite their physical separation.⁷⁸

The Ayda refugee camp community leaders observed that teachers in the UNRWA system “made history.”⁷⁹ They challenged host governments by fixing in the student’s minds their identity and city of origin. In fact, I had the chance to discuss this subject with many UNRWA students in Jordan and the West Bank. All students responded unequivocally in terms of Palestinian cities and towns from inside Israel. Also, They took me to an elementary school in a refugee camp where I observed drawings of historic Palestine on the walls; written poetry that portrayed the homeland as a jewel in the sea and as a piece of heaven Palestinian flags that were draped seemingly everywhere; and pictures of PLO and the Islamic Resistance Movement leaders (e.g., HAMAS). These symbols evidenced full well the failure of the West, Jordan and Israel to suppress Palestinian nationalism, as chapter seven demonstrates.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid

⁷⁹ Interview with an UNRWA educator, June 20, 2004, Amman, Jordan.

Israel, the only sovereign power in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, is aware of UNRWA's activities that helped the reconstruction of Palestinian nationalism and statehood but has not attempted to force an end to the agency's activities. Many Israeli leaders consistently criticize UNRWA and recently asked the UN Secretary-General to remove the commissioner-general of UNRWA, Peter Hansen, which the SG did in June 2005. Israel also asked the UN to open an investigation against the agency under the pretense that it aids terrorists in Gaza. UNRWA responded to this move by Israel by issuing its own press releases and its own footage debunking the Israeli claims. Afterwards, Israel retracted its accusation and apologized to UNRWA. The relationship between Israel and UNRWA is very tense and they are likely to remain so in the foreseeable future.

It is clear that the Israeli government lost the dispute over on Palestinian independence in the last two decades due to UN, European Union (EU), Arab League, Organization of African Unity (OAU), and other pressures on the state of Israel to solve the Palestinian question. In addition, the Israeli government lost its battle on Palestinian independence due to the constant passage of resolutions at the GA mainly introduced by UNRWA, the unwillingness of the refugees to a bid by the agency's plans for them, and the failure of Jordan to suppress Palestinian nationalism. Also Israel lost the battle on Palestinian independence because a sizable majority of its own society, artists, soldiers, poets, journalists, academics, some Parliament members, and many other civil society organizations such as Peace Now (*Shalom Achshaf*), and There is Limit (*Yesh Gvuol*), Women in Black and others have been putting tremendous pressure on the government to solve the question of Palestine. The civil society movement in Israel found many supporters around the world on college campuses and in the media especially in the US and Europe in the last two decades.

The US and the Palestinians

Since 1967 the US's position on the Palestine question has remained consistent. For example, each American president since 1967 has subscribed to the following points. First, Israel should not be required to relinquish territories captured in 1967 without a *quid pro quo* from the Arab parties involving peace, security, and recognition. This position, summarized in the formula "land for peace" and embodied in UN resolution 242, applies to each front of the conflict. Second, East Jerusalem is legally considered to be occupied territories whose status should eventually be settled in peace negotiations. Whatever its political situation, Jerusalem should not be physically divided. Consistent with the legal American position on the city, the American embassy has remained in Tel-Aviv, despite promises by many presidential candidates to move the embassy to Jerusalem, including George W. Bush, who promised to move it in the first six months of his administration. Third, Israeli settlements beyond the 1967 armistice lines (i.e., the Green Line) are illegal, obstacles to peace, and unhelpful, and creating facts on the ground that will prejudice the outcome of any future negotiations. Until 1981, the settlements were considered illegal according to international law and the Geneva Conventions, which states very clearly that an occupier, is prohibited from transferring civilians in or out of the occupied territories. The only exception has been the current administration of George W. Bush, which gave assurances to the Israeli government that "the large settlement blocks will remain part of Israel" contrary to all US administrations in the past. Fourth, however Palestinian rights may eventually be defined, they do not include the right to unrestricted return to homes within the 1967 lines. Nor do they entail the automatic right of independence. Until the mid-1990s, all US

administrations have opposed the creation of a fully independent Palestinian state, preferring instead a confederation between the WBG, on the one hand, and Jordan, on the other. It was not until March 12, 2002, when president George W. Bush declared his support for a two-state solution that the American position changed significantly by drafting and endorsing Security Council resolution 1397.

From 1950 until 2002, the US wanted the Palestinian issue resolved not by establishing a Palestinian state, but by having the refugees integrated into other Middle Eastern countries: Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, and Egypt. Accordingly, the US looked favorably on UNRWA and has been a strong supporter of its activities (Khouri, 1984: 98). Since the early 1950s until the late 1960s, Washington did very little to find a political solution to the Palestinian problem, for its vision of resettling the Palestinian refugees in Jordan and other countries was being realized. But, after the 1967 and 1973 wars, the conflict took a different dimension: the Soviet Union became a threat to America's interests in the region. As a result, the US wanted to establish itself as the undisputed power broker in the region and prevent the Palestinians and other Arabs from drifting to the Communist camp.

The US had sought to minimize Soviet influence in the region by financing its enemies and supporting their ambitions. In the case of the Palestinians, the US had supported Israel and Jordan equally against Palestinian aspirations, for the US envisioned establishing Jordan as a patron for the Palestinians. Accordingly, Henry Kissinger lobbied the Saudis and the Egyptians in 1974 not to recognize the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians at the Rabat summit (Quandt, 2000: 157). But when he failed, he issued his famous taboos regarding the Palestinian organization: no negotiation with the PLO; and no recognition of the Palestinian body until it had recognized Israel's

right to exist and it recognized Resolution 242, which treats the Palestinians as refugees only (Ibid: 278). Kissinger imposed hard conditions on the PLO because he wanted to bypass the controversial Palestinian issue by pressing for an Israeli-Jordanian disengagement accord for the West Bank.

Kissinger's conditions became the corner stone of all foreign policy making regarding the Palestinians. A case in point is conditions that George Shultz imposed on any future peace process between the Palestinians and the Israelis.⁸⁰ Shultz believed that the Palestinian issue should be addressed in negotiations between an Israeli delegation and a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation. While supporting a resumption of peace and diplomacy, Shultz did not look favorably on the PLO. On September 16, 1988, Shultz addressed a pro-Israeli group at the Wye River Plantation in Maryland. He explained why the US would not endorse the idea of Palestinian self-determination if it were seen as meaning an automatic right to statehood. However, he conceded that in negotiations Palestinians "were free to argue for independence." He also added that they must accept unconditionally Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 as a key for negotiations. Arafat's response to Shultz's challenges was multifaceted. He told an American envoy that he personally agreed to the conditions proposed by Shultz, and he will be more than willing to endorse them publicly. Arafat added however, that he has to seek the agreement from the other members of the PLO Executive Committee. Then, in public, Arafat issued the statement that had been worked out between his representatives and the American Jewish leaders on November 21. Its operational language came close to meeting Shultz's concerns, but not quite. Instead of unconditionally accepting Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 as the basis for negotiations with Israel, Arafat added the right of the Palestinians to self-determination as

⁸⁰ George Shultz served as Secretary of State during the Reagan Administration. He served from 1982-1989.

another basis for the conference, implying that this condition would have to be accepted in advance by the other participants, something that neither the US nor Israel was prepared to do.

Arafat's address to American Jewish communities frustrated the Americans more and more. As the frustration began to mount on both sides, Shultz authorized an oral message to be conveyed to a Palestinian businessman to pass to Arafat on September 23, 1988. The message stated, "we welcome the receipt of the initiative, which we recognize as a serious effort. This issue has been given serious consideration and will continue to be seriously discussed. We expect to provide our reaction in six weeks or so." In brief, the American response to the PLO statement was to be declared after the Israeli and American elections. But the Reagan administration was not passively awaiting PLO compliance. It was signaling a positive attitude and was reiterating that talks would, in fact, begin as soon as the well-known conditions were met. Previously, the stated policy was that talks could not take place unless the PLO accepted the American conditions fully. But even PLO acceptance of those conditions would not necessarily result in an official dialogue. Now it was explicitly stated that talks would follow immediately on the PLO's acceptance of American terms. Subsequently, on December 14, 1988, Arafat stated in English:

Yesterday, I made a reference to our acceptance of resolutions 242 and 338 as the basis for negotiations with Israel within the framework of the international conference. In my speech also yesterday, it was clear that we mean the right of all parties concerned in the Middle East conflict to exist in peace and security and, as I have mentioned, including the state of Palestine, Israel, and other neighbors according to the resolutions 242 and 338. As for terrorism, I renounced it yesterday in no uncertain terms, and yet I repeat for the record that we totally and absolutely renounce all forms of terrorism, including individual, group and state terrorism.⁸¹

⁸¹ *Al Quds*, July, 17, 1988: 13

Shultz finally agreed that Arafat had met the American conditions and so informed Colin Powell, the national security advisor to seek the president's approval to launch the talks. At long last, the US lifted its ban on dealing with the PLO.

In November 1989, the Americans elected a new president, George H.W. Bush. The new administration adopted the previous administration's policy. On May 22, 1989, James Baker, the new US secretary of state, spoke at the annual American Israeli Public Affairs Committee convention in Washington, D.C. Baker's remarks echoed the same American principles: Israel is a strategic ally in the region and the only functioning democracy. But Baker also wanted to convey to the Israelis what the US wanted to see happening in the Palestinian areas. Baker was frank about the occupation and what it leads to from humiliation to anger, he urged Israel to end it. Indeed the speech shocked his audience, especially when Baker interpreted Security Council resolution 242 as requiring the exchange of land for peace. He referred to "territorial withdrawal" as a probable outcome of negotiations, adding "for Israel, now is the time to lay aside, once and for all, the unrealistic vision of greater Israel. Israeli interests in the West Bank and Gaza, security and otherwise, can be accommodated in a settlement based on resolution 242."⁸²

Then, after the first Gulf war on March 6, 1991, President Bush addressed a joint session of Congress, saying

we must do all that we can to close the gap between Israel and the Arab states and between Israelis and Palestinians....a comprehensive peace must be grounded in United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 and 338 and the principle of territory for peace. This principle must be elaborated to provide for Israel's security and recognition, and at the same time for legitimate Palestinian political rights. Anything else would fail the twin tests of fairness and security.⁸³

⁸² *Department of State Bulletin*, Vol. 89, 1989: 24.

⁸³ President Bush, 41st Address to Congress, March 6, 1991.

The US seemed concerned when Israel strongly objected to any direct US-PLO talks. The US opposed Arafat's declaration of an independent Palestinian state and campaigned against full membership of the PLO at UN agencies. Israel's flat refusal to talk with the PLO was on grounds that the original Palestinian National Charter opted for a single state over all of Palestine. This was a mere technicality since the Palestinians had embraced a two-state solution already in 1974 and again in 1982 with the Arab League. In the spring of 1989, Arafat publicly declared that the twenty-five-year-old Palestinian National Charter was "null and void" (Aruri, 2003: 98).

Bill Clinton's victory in the 1992 presidential election brought with it a change in the US's attitude towards Arafat. The Palestinian leader became more accepted at the White House, where he signed the Oslo Agreement. However, many Palestinians criticized Arafat for signing the accord because it did not protect Palestinian aspirations. A case in point, Edward Said argued that Oslo was the end of the Palestinian problem, for it "legitimized the occupation" (Said, 2000: 139). In addition Naseer Aruri says that Oslo never spoke of a Palestinian state. In fact, he says that Oslo's main objective was to "repackage the occupation," not to end it (Aruri, 1995: 125). This view could be supported by the so-called generous offer at the Israeli government made to the Palestinian people at Camp David in 2000. According to Robert Malley, Israel did not offer the Palestinians anything at Camp David. Israel questioned how it could keep control of sensitive sites in the OPT in case it withdraws (e.g., Israeli settlements in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem, water reservoirs, and international crossing points into Jordan and Egypt); who among the Palestinian Diaspora can return to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; and who can assume control over holy sites in Jerusalem (Malley, 2001: 20).

UNRWA and the US

The relationship between the US and UNRWA has been influenced by the direct responsibility that the US had played in the establishment of the state of Israel, thus creating the refugee question. When Franklin D. Roosevelt was asked in 1942 about the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, his answer was very clear: “I will not create a state on the ruins of another nation” (Smith, 2005: 177). But Vice-President Harry S. Truman did the opposite. Truman pushed very hard for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine against the advice of the State Department and key military advisors in his administration.

Nevertheless, the US has been the main sponsor of all UNRWA activities in the five fields of operation and, on average, has contributed more than twenty-five percent of UNRWA budget. However, the relation between the US and UNRWA has suffered enormously over the years. The US hoped that UNRWA would solve the refugee question by settling, reintegrating, or assimilating them in the host countries. UNRWA failed to accomplish its mandate due to Palestinian resistance. Generally, the US has urged that refugees be settled with compensation. The Palestinians have insisted that the choice must be up to them, opposing settlement since it would nullify their claims to their homeland and negate the Arab case against Israel. Moreover, settlement with compensation would impose political hardships on the Arab states, which would have to absorb the refugees, in view of the difficulty in fulfilling the needs of their own citizens.

The US did not stop supporting UNRWA but on several occasions cautioned the agency not to over step its mandate. The US became very irritated with the agency after the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon. The Israelis claimed that UNRWA was hiding weapons in

its facilities. The discovery by the Israeli army of hidden weapons in the Vocational Training Center of Sibling made the US question its unconditional financial support of the agency. But UNRWA responded by stating that it has nothing to do with camp security, especially in a country like Lebanon.

Hence, after 1982 the US Congress increased its demands to punish UNRWA and cut all its financial allowances. A case in point is the objection to UNRWA's functions during the Reagan administration from some ideologues. Some objected to UNRWA because it was a relief organization, violating their vision of America's mission around the world. Others regarded it as anti-Israel and pro-PLO, and thus an obstacle to America's security objectives in the region. Some maintained that UNRWA was not being managed rigorously enough and was wasting American taxpayer's dollars (Peretz, 1993: 60).

Throughout the 1980s, additional opposition to UNRWA surfaced in the US Congress. In 1985, in a document titled the "United Nations War Against the West," the 99th Congress debated the issue of UNRWA and other international organizations. Congress concluded that the UN was working against America's interests around the world. In addition, Congressmen Lantos of California and Smith of New Jersey introduced to the House Appropriations Committee in 2002 a bill calling on the US government to suspend all its financial support to UNRWA. But the State Department continued to support UNRWA and its efforts in the region. On the one hand, the US supported the annual GA resolutions calling for repatriation or resettlement of the refugees and contributes over half of the sum needed by UNRWA for refugee health, welfare and training. On the other hand, it hesitates to take any measures to implement the resolution in a manner satisfactory to the

Palestinians, to which Elizabeth Dibble asserted “the US will always support the activities of UNRWA in the five fields of operation regardless of what some want.”⁸⁴

Conclusion

Before the 1990s, American, Israeli, and Jordanian officials contended that only Jordan should negotiate with Israel over the West Bank and that Jordan would protect Palestinian interests. As a result, the US had been reluctant to recognize the Palestinians as a people with a legitimate aspiration to have an independent, viable, and contiguous homeland of their own. Until April 2002, when President George W. Bush announced his support for an independent Palestinian, Washington maintained that the Palestinian people should have “autonomy” but not independence.

For almost 45 years Israel, Jordan, and the US vehemently opposed the establishment of a Palestinian political organization, nationalism, and statehood, both in theory and in practice. But after the first Intifada erupted in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in 1988, Jordan came to accept such a reality by acknowledging the strength of Palestinian nationalism before both Israel and the US. For the first time in its history, Jordan recognized the seriousness of Palestinian opposition to its role in their lives. But, while Israel attempted time and again to eradicate Palestinian nationalism, its efforts failed. As a result, Israel had little choice but to accept Palestinian nationalism as an eventuality, especially after it was unable to secure a separate peace deal with King Hussein of Jordan. Indeed, both Israel and Jordan underestimated the role of the social and economic services that UNRWA has been providing Palestinian civil society. Neither Israel nor Jordan predicted that UNRWA or the camps it administered would play a crucial role in reconstructing Palestinian

⁸⁴ Meeting with Elizabeth Dibble, Deputy Assistance Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, July 27, 2004, State Department, Washington, DC.

nationalism. While in the refugee camps I examined the some of the journals that circulate frequently. Most articles talked about the city of origin and the dream to go back one day to the motherland. The literature that circulated in the camps reminded Palestinians that their presence anywhere outside the homeland was temporary. The elderly gathered the young generations and mentioned the stories of exodus from the homeland; older men cried telling the stories and they urged the younger generation not to forget the past. Palestinian nationalism was rewritten in the refugee camps under the watchful eyes of Israel and Jordan.

American acceptance of a Palestinian state evolved over the years. After all US demands from the PLO were met, renouncing terrorism, recognizing the state of Israel and negotiating as part of a Jordanian delegation, various American administrations were looking for a formula to bring the Palestinian question to a conclusion. The American decision-makers saw Oslo as the best approach to end the conflict. But even before Oslo the Americans were heavily involved in UNRWA's socioeconomic activities and were participating directly in establishing institutions necessary to the creation of the state. The Americans during the Carter administration were eager to open a direct dialogue with the PLO and crossed a red light when it called for a homeland for the Palestinian people. The Carter administration was responding to heavy pressure from the UN and other organizations in that regard. The constant passage of General Assembly and Security Council resolutions in favor of Palestinian self-determination placed the Americans, Israelis, and Jordanians on the defensive in the last three decades or so. In addition, the refugees aborted any program that was not consistent with their vision or aspiration of repatriation, and independence. Furthermore, prevailing international norms of decolonization and respect for human rights, the war in Lebanon, and the Palestinian Intifada strengthened the Palestinian cause and, by extension, UNRWA. During the 1960s and 1970s, there was an

upsurge of voices calling for respect of human dignity and freedom. Neither the US nor Israel was able to challenge such evolving norms openly and publicly without being condemned by countries and international institutions around the globe or having other interests threatened by major allies. As the current wars on Iraq and terror demonstrate the US is having a hard time convincing major Western allies on the legality of its conduct while avoiding its obligations under international law. Thus norm and values are very important.

The following chapter illustrates how UNRWA has championed the Palestinian cause for an independent state by pushing the issue of Palestine at the United Nations and keeping the issue alive against its designed mandate. In addition, the chapter traces the four distinct phases through which the Palestinian struggle has evolved within the UN and shows how the Palestinian refugees, operating through UNRWA, with implicit and explicit support from the PLO have played a major role in defining these four periods. The chapter will also show how UNRWA became involved in Palestinian state building by engaging directly in building Palestinian institutions and training cadres.

Chapter 5

The Evolution of the Question of Palestine Within the UN

This chapter details how UNRWA has advocated for the rights of Palestinians within the UN and has kept the issue alive beyond the expiration of its mandate. In tracing the four distinct phases through which the Palestinian struggle has proceeded at the UN, I show how Palestinian refugees have played a major role in influencing their own destiny through their relations with UNRWA. The refugees' unwillingness to cooperate with proposed schemes to resettle them outside or inside Palestine forced the interested countries to search for new solutions to their problem. UNRWA's socio-economic services made the refugees a valuable force in shaping their future and the future of the Palestinian people at large. This chapter will show that at each stage in the evolution of the Palestinian question at the UN, the refugees were instrumental in extracting conditions that they favored over the preferences of donor and host countries. At each stage the Palestinian refugees actively shaped international responses to their plight by insisting on alterations to government proposals.

The question of Palestine has passed through four distinct phases at the UN: the colonial era; the lost years; the supportive stage; and the proactive years. During the colonial stage, which lasted from 1947 until 1950, the Palestinians viewed the UN as an imperial tool that wanted to erase their history, nationality, and existence. They associated the UN with their miseries and refused to recognize its legitimacy. The Palestinians' disdain for the UN was exemplified by their refusal to abide by any of its resolutions. In fact, it was during this period that the Palestinian people suffered enormously from UN resolutions.

The second stage, or the lost years, lasted from 1950 to 1974. During this period the Palestinian people were treated like refugees by the UN, Israel, the US, various other

Western countries and fellow Arabs. Very few countries recognized their plight or their struggle. The UN itself did not pass any resolutions that recognized Palestinians as a people with inalienable rights and deserving their own state or homeland. In fact, all of the resolutions that were adopted at the UN referred to the Palestinians as refugees that were to be dealt with by UNRWA. Such benign neglect prompted some refugees to establish a political organization to advocate Palestinian interests. The creation of the PLO in January 1964 changed realities on the ground. From this point forward, no longer was it possible for the Israeli, Jordanian, and American governments to suppress Palestinian nationalism. Nor could they convince the international community that the creation of an independent Palestinian state was not an appropriate solution to the Palestinian question.

This development ushered in a third phase in the evolution of the Palestinian struggle at the UN, the supportive stage. It was during this period, which lasted from 1975 until 1991, that the UN began to recognize the Palestinians as a nation that had a right to a state of their own. Indeed, from 1975 onward, the UN began laying the groundwork for the establishment of a Palestinian state in the OPT. As this chapter shows, UNRWA and other international agencies played a central role in this process. Meanwhile, countries like Jordan and the US changed their views on the very idea of Palestinian nationalism and self-determination. While Jordan publicly embraced the idea of a Palestinian state, the US initiated a dialogue with the PLO.

The fourth stage, the proactive years, can be traced from 1991 to the present. All GA and SC resolutions have been calling on Israel to end its occupation of Palestinian land. The General Assembly's efforts to solve the problem of Palestine by diplomatic and legal means have yielded steady progress over the last three decades, despite Israel's refusal to abide by any UN resolutions. This success is best exemplified by the number of UN resolutions that

have been adopted by a sizable majority at the world organization. Most UN resolutions on Palestine have been very critical of Israel's treatment of Palestinians and have urged Israel to respect Palestinian human rights. These resolutions have categorically condemned Israel for annexing East Jerusalem, forcing Palestinians from their land, confiscating Palestinian lands for Jewish settlements, and barring Palestinians from returning to their homes.

For the last three decades the GA has tried to settle the dispute over the OPT by diplomatic and humanitarian means. UNRWA, United Nations Development Program (UNDP), UNICEF, and other international institutions have played a critical role. UNRWA has played a decisive role in keeping the Palestinian question alive, contrary to its mandate, due to pressures from below by the refugees and support from most of the international community.⁸⁵ The sweeping support that the newly independent Third World countries and the Eastern bloc gave to the concept of self-determination and decolonization armed the UNGA and its subsidiary organs such as UNRWA with the necessary legitimacy they required to lay the groundwork for the creation of an independent Palestinian state.⁸⁶ The refugees welcomed the new horizon at the UN and they utilized it to their benefits.

The remainder of this chapter is organized as follows. The first part talks about the relationship between the UN and the Palestinians. The second section sheds light on the relationship between the UN, the Palestinians and UNRWA. The third section demonstrates the direct involvement of the UNRWA in Palestinian life and politics, and the final section will reflect on the question of Palestine as an international issue.

⁸⁵ By international community, I mean the UN member states, religious organization like the Vatican or the Holy Sea, and the EU.

⁸⁶ UNRWA began building institutions in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip by coordinating closely with the PLO in Lebanon, financing infrastructural projects inside and outside the camps, establishing preliminary "states networks" in the occupied territories, and encouraging the organization of Palestinian civil society (Al Hussein, 1996: 129).

The First Stage: The Colonial Era

From 1947 until 1950, Palestinians viewed the UN as a colonial tool that wanted to nullify and eradicate their history, nationality, and existence. Palestinians associated the UN with their plight and refused to recognize its legitimacy. Within the UN the Palestinian issue was defined by the passage of a series of resolutions that Palestinians viewed as anathema to their interests. For example, on November 29, 1947, the General Assembly passed resolution 181 (III), which ordered historic Palestine divided to three territories: a Jewish state, an Arab state, and an international Jerusalem. To make matters worse, the GA adopted resolution 212 (III) on November 19, 1948. This resolution, which established the United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees (UNRPR), defined Palestinians as refugees. The labeling of displaced Palestinians as refugees signaled that the international community did not recognize the territorial claims of Palestinians. The passage of resolution 194 (III) on December 11, 1948 again marked a political low point for the Palestinian people; while it represented another instance where the international community refused to recognize Palestinians as a nation with legitimate and inalienable rights to a state of their own, it called on Israel and other countries to allow Palestinians to return to their homes. However, the UN was incapable of enforcing this resolution. Besides, on December 11, 1949, the GA adopted resolution 302 (IV), which led to the creation of UNRWA (Schiff, 1995: 20). Although this resolution echoed resolution 194 in reaffirming the right of Palestinians to return to their homes, UNRWA's agenda was geared more toward resettling and reintegrating the Palestinian people in other Middle Eastern countries. Thus, the idea of Palestinians possessing an inalienable right to self-determination was precluded by an international settlement in favor of establishing a Jewish state in historic Palestine.

Ultimately, the great powers decided to respond to the horrors of the Holocaust by granting Jews an independent state at the expense of displaced Palestinians.

The Second Stage: The Lost Years

From 1950 until 1974 the Palestinian people were defined and treated as refugees. Few countries recognized their plight. The UN did not pass any resolution that recognized the Palestinians as a people with inalienable rights to a state of their own. Meanwhile, the US, Israel, Jordan, and many other countries aimed to solve the so-called Palestinian refugee problem by relocating Palestinians to neighboring countries and incorporating the West Bank and the Gaza Strip into Jordanian and Egyptian territory respectively. Accordingly, Blandford Johnston and Dag Hammarskjöld forwarded plans for resettling the Palestinians. The aim of the Johnston Project was to end the Palestine problem through resettlement outside Palestine, particularly by building several cities for the refugees in the Sinai Peninsula. However, Palestinians would accept nothing of the sort. In fact, they resisted the plans by holding numerous demonstrations and conferences. For instance, they opposed the work programs proposed by UNRWA and based on the Clapp Mission's recommendations in 1950. Refugees organized strikes and refused to work. Moreover, they rejected food rations in Lebanon and Syria, labeling the work program as an "Anglo-American imperialist scheme." As a result of Palestinian resistance, UNRWA was forced to reorient its works programs in 1951 and began focusing on other means to develop the refugee communities (Peretz, 1975: 13).

The Arab Higher Committee for Palestine (AHCP) represented the demands of Palestinian refugees. The committee criticized UNRWA for its initial support of the Johnston project, pointing out that it had violated its humanitarian mandate by getting

involved in the political aspect of the Palestine problem. The committee gave evidence of UNRWA's bias in this respect, in terms of UNRWA's cancellation of funding for the Yarmouk project, which only brought benefits to the Arabs, and replacement by the Johnston project which served Israel (AHCP Records, 1955: 31).

On June 26, 1959, the Arab Conference in Beirut categorically rejected the Hammarskjöld's project, which aimed to divert water from the Yarmouk River to the Jordan desert. The goal of the project was to encourage Palestinian refugees to assimilate themselves into the societies of the host countries – Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. The conference called on Arab states and the Arab League to oppose the plan and to accelerate efforts to support the creation of a Palestinian national entity (Sayigh, 1959: 89-92). On the July 12, 1959, a conference was held and reconfirmed the earlier recommendations with one addition, the denouncement of UNRWA's past and present rehabilitation and emigration projects. UNRWA was asked to cease the latter, on the grounds that they would lead to the liquidation of the Palestine problem, and the non-cooperation of the Arab states with UNRWA was sought in this respect (Ibid: 93-96). On March 1, 1955, hundreds of thousands of refugees from Rafah to Beit Hanun took to the streets shouting: "No settlement! No relocation! Oh, you American agents!"

Mu'in Basisu described the first refugee demonstration in the Gaza Strip against the joint UNRWA-Egyptian project to resettle them in the Sinai Peninsula and in reaction to the Israeli raid on Gaza the night before. The project preparation had extended from October 1952 to 1955, and entailed the transfer of 50 hectares of land in North-West Sinai to agricultural land and the resettlement of 20,000 refugees from Gaza as an initial experiment (Hazboun, 1994: 62). Basisu wrote that refugees were shouting "They wrote the Sinai project in ink, and we shall erase it with blood" and "we want arms not food." Clearly, the refugees

aimed to oppose any scheme that did not involve repatriation. They resisted UNRWA and the Egyptian government, which were attempting to implement the project. On many occasions the refugees attacked and damaged UNRWA's installations and food supplies in Jordan and Egypt. The leaders of the first Intifada succeeded in obtaining a copy of the project written by UNRWA's experts described by Basisu as an appalling document:

In spite of UNRWA's experts admission that it would be impossible to live in that piece of hell due to the lack of water and the prohibitive cost of reclaiming the desert and in spite of the doctors' forecasts of the diseases that would plague the refugees, especially those resulting from the effect of dust-saturated air on the lungs and eyes of the children - in spite of these reservations, the report carried the Agency's experts' approval (Hazboun, 1994: 91).

However, the Egyptian government resorted to harsh measures to force refugees to relocate. Sa'ad Hamza, the military governor of Gaza, used to go to the camps and shout at the refugees: "if you do not go to Sinai in these trucks, you will go there on foot." (Ibid: 91).

Rejection of the project took many forms and despite their receiving secret police threats, the Communist Party and the Moslem brotherhood aligned themselves against Egyptian rule and against the Sinai project. Peasants formed the nucleus of rejection to the project. Only some *Mukhtars* (village presidents) supported it. Cells in the camps were formed, and leaflets of the report were distributed from Beit Hanun to Rafah. These protests led to the defeat of the Sinai project, and "the illiterate masses of Gaza felt that they had been responsible for its defeat" (Ibid: 91).

Other projects were set up outside Palestine. In Syria, the first settlement project in Arab countries came into being in April 1953. Land was provided for UNRWA to set up an agricultural project for the resettling of refugees. By 1954 more than 400 refugees settled there. The US financed this project together with the related East Ghor Rural Development Project. The project had a political and an economic goal. Economically, it aimed at

increasing the agricultural productivity of the area through the expansion of irrigated farming. Politically, it was important because sixty-one percent of the people in the project were Palestinian refugees. The shortcomings of the project were that it lacked a route of transportation, so refugees were unable to reclaim the land. The Jordanian government tried to hide the fact that the East Ghor Canal was in fact a refugee resettlement project for two reasons: to avoid being seen to depart from general Arab policy on the issue of Palestine and to avoid the protest of the refugees.

In the early 1960s and after almost two decades of exile, Palestinian refugees realized that neither the Arab nations nor the US had the desire or the will to help them retrieve their lost land and homes. In 1965, a Palestine refugee, Yasser Arafat, organized a militant group called Fatah, which after 1967 supplanted the falling PLO under Ahmad Shuquri. Fatah was an organization of less than 200 that began attacking Israeli targets. Arafat, like most angry and restless Palestinians, grew tired of Arab and Western negligence of the Palestinian cause.

The PLO leadership, personnel and fighters emerged from the refugee camps. The emergence of the PLO reflected a desire by the Palestinian people to affirm their nationalism and to pursue their independence. Almost five years after the PLO's establishment, UN member states started viewing the Palestinians as a people who deserve independence and international recognition. The emergence of the PLO placed UNRWA in a very delicate situation. UNRWA international staffs were very concerned about the nature of their relationship with the emerging organization. It was under the watchful eyes of UNRWA staff that the Palestinian employees of UNRWA began enlisting in the PLO. To the dismay of Israel, Jordan, and the US, UNRWA continued to give rations to refugees who became members of the PLO. Many in the United States and Israel started questioning whether UNRWA could continue giving services to the *fedayins* (freedom fighters) represented as

“Palestinian refugees” as well as to their families. This question has poisoned the relationships between UNRWA and many of its western sponsors for a long time. These concerns were raised as early as 1965, after the establishment in Gaza of the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) battalions, the armed forces of the PLO (Schiff, 1995: 103). Under pressure from the US, which feared that its financial contribution would feed the PLA recruits, UNRWA denied rations to the recruits.

But the Arab League was not going to let this go easily. It financed the rations of more than 5,000 refugees enrolled in the PLA.⁸⁷ This move reflected the vulnerability of UNRWA’s mission in the region. The arrangement allowed UNRWA to temporarily protect itself from the influence of western actors. In September 1966, the US Congress passed a law threatening to end UNRWA subsidies unless it stopped assisting refugees who were being trained by the PLA. The Congress passed a new law extending the application of the 1966 law to members of all Palestinian guerilla organizations.⁸⁸ Given that these organizations officially controlled the activities of UNRWA in the refugee camps in Lebanon, Jordan, and to a certain extent the West Bank, UNRWA could not do much to stop it. In fact, UNRWA fell under the influence of the resistance. Indeed, such influence was evidenced not least by the presence of a growing number of armed individuals in the camps, the mass recruitment of refugees and local staff in the *fedayin* organizations, and the repeated occupation of some administrative and school offices of UNRWA by some armed elements for propaganda purposes.

Between 1965 and 1974, both UNRWA and the Palestinian people were trying to define the road ahead. Palestinians became more comfortable with the organization

⁸⁷ UNRWA *Annual Report*, 1965- 66: 26.

⁸⁸ Foreign Policy Assistance Act of 1966, Public Law Act 89-583, September 1966, AFPCD, 1966.

overtime, for it became part of them and they became part of it. Its activities became embedded in their psyche and their aspiration became part of its agenda. UNRWA was looking for the moment when the UN would give it more powers or would adjust its mandate so it could assume larger responsibilities.

It was after the 1967 Six-Day War that the mission of UNRWA began to gradually change. The Arab countries weight at the General Assembly was not as strong as it should have been in 1967, especially after losing a war to Israel, so they did very little to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinians. Nonetheless, in 1970, the UN passed resolution 2672 A, B, C, D, (XXV), thus recognizing the Palestinians “as a people who are entitled to self-determination.” In December 1972 the UN passed resolution 2787 (XXVI), which it confirmed the legitimacy of struggle for self-determination by peoples under colonial and foreign domination, including the people of Palestine. But after the war of 1973 the dynamics of the situation changed. The Arab countries achieved a partial victory in the war against Israel. This allowed them to be more aggressive and demand certain recognition globally. Subsequently, Arab countries demanded that the PLO be represented and recognized at the UN. Two years later, on October 14,1974, the UN invited the PLO to participate in the deliberation of the GA resolution 3210 (XXIX). Then in November 22, 1974, the UN passed resolution 3236 (XXIX), which it recognized “the Palestinian people is entitled to self-determination in accordance with the charter of the UN, and their right to self-determination without external interference, and their right of national independence and sovereignty.”⁸⁹ Moreover, the General Assembly passed resolution 3237 (XXIX) on

⁸⁹ Eighty-five members voted in favor of resolution 3236(XXIX), seven against, and 37 abstained. The US and Israel were against this resolution, the UK, France, Italy and other major western countries abstained from it. But resolution 3237(XXIX) that granted the PLO an observer status at the UNGA was adopted by 95 countries, 17 against and 10 abstained. The US, Israel, and the UK were all against.

November 22, 1974, granting the PLO observer status and elevating the organization to a quasi-state status. The UN's recognition of the PLO paved the way for UNRWA to deal with it directly, ushering in the supportive stage in the relationship between the UN and the Palestinians.

The Third Stage: The Supportive Period

Between 1975 until 1991, the UN began recognizing the Palestinians as a people that deserved a state of their own. During this phase the UN started publicly calling for the establishment of a Palestinian state. Implicitly, it began laying the groundwork for a state in the OPT. Through UNRWA and in coordination with the PLO, the UN started building institutions, training cadres, and improving infrastructure in the OPT. After the passage of resolution 3236 and 3237, which recognized the Palestinian right to self-determination and granted the PLO observer status at the GA, the SC acknowledged in 1979 that Israel was occupying Palestinian territory. Resolution 452 of December 1979 declared Israel's activities in this regard to be illegal. Importantly, the US, the UK, and France voted in favor of the resolution along with eleven other countries.

The passage of resolution 452 on July 20, 1979 marked an important turning point in the evolution of the Palestinian issue within the UN. For the first time since the beginning of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Security Council began to recognize the rights of Palestinians not as refugees but as people with land and human rights. For several reasons resolution 452 represented a great moral and political victory for the Palestinians. First, the SC is the most powerful and authoritative UN body. Second, the fact that the UK, the US, and France did not veto the resolution attested to the importance of the issue and the beginning of a gradual change in policy regarding the conflict. Third, the US was the most important supporter of Israel, the UK was the country that helped establish the state of

Israel by issuing the Balfour declaration, and France's commitment to the security of Israel was unprecedented in the early 1950s (France helped Israel build its nuclear reactor in 1956). Despite their strong political ties to Israel, none of the aforementioned powers used its veto to block the resolution. By managing to create a balance at the GA and the SC, the Palestinians effectively changed the dynamics of how the world began to view a final solution to their cause, thus assisting in the consolidation of a norm that the UN called for: might does not make right.

The Palestinians scored another victory on July 29, 1980, when the UN adopted resolution ES-7/2, which explicitly called on Israel to begin complete withdrawal from all Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since June 1967, including Jerusalem, by November 1980. The resolution affirmed "that a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East cannot be established, in accordance with the charter of the United Nations and the relevant UN resolutions, without the withdrawal of Israel from all the occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories, including East Jerusalem, and without the achievement of a just solution of the problem of Palestine on the basis and attainment of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people in Palestine"(Para. 2). In addition, this resolution requested and authorized the Secretary General "to take the necessary measures towards the implementation of the recommendations contained in paragraphs 59 to 72 of the report of the committee to the GA at its thirty-first session as a basis for the question of Palestine"(Para.11). This resolution was adopted at the General Assembly with 112 countries voting for, 12 against and 24 abstentions. The US, Israel and other western countries opposed the resolution. The UK, and France abstained.

Furthermore, the GA adopted resolution 35/157 in December 1980. With this resolution the General Assembly affirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people,

rejected those provisions of the Camp David Accords which ignored or violated those rights, called for the participation of the PLO in deliberation on the Middle East, and rejected Israel's "basic law" on Jerusalem.⁹⁰ For the first time the UN called publicly for the full participation of the PLO in Middle East negotiations. Moreover, the UN requested in resolution 37/134 of December 17, 1982 that all humanitarian assistance for the Palestinians to be implemented in coordination with the PLO.

This development signaled a breakthrough in UN-Palestinian relations. On December 15, 1983, the GA adopted resolution 38/83, which called on Israel to permit the return of displaced Palestinians and to remove obstacles to the establishment of a university of Jerusalem for Palestinian refugees. It also requested the UN Secretary-General to take the appropriate steps for the protection and administration of Arab refugee property, assets, and property rights. Resolution 38/83 is important because UNRWA was instrumental in pushing and asking for the establishment for a university for the refugees in Jerusalem. Gradually, the UN became very involved in the conflict by adopting more critical resolutions. For instance, GA resolution 42/160 of December 8, 1987 called on Israel to end all practices that endangered the human rights of the Palestinians in the OPT. It also demanded that Israel release Arab prisoners, affirmed the applicability of the fourth Geneva Convention to the OPT, and condemned Israel's settlement and annexation policies in the OPT, its measures against civil and educational freedoms, and its expulsion of Palestinian leaders. The significance of this resolution lies in its recognition of the applicability of the fourth Geneva Convention to the OPT. Also important was that the US voted against only one of its provisions.

⁹⁰ Camp David is the peace agreement that Israel and Egypt signed in 1979 under the auspices of the United States. See Boutros Boutros Ghali, *Egypt's Road to Jerusalem*. (New York: Random House, 1997).

The Palestinians received an added boost in 1988, when the UN decided to use the term “Palestine” instead of “the PLO.”⁹¹ Only Israel and the US voted against the resolution; all other UN member states voted in favor, although, several western countries abstained. In December 1989, the GA adopted resolution 44/40 A, B, C, which called for the convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East. It condemned Israel’s policies in the OPT and called on it to complete its withdrawal from them. It also declared the need to recognize the rights of the Palestinian people, under the leadership of the PLO, to self-determination and independence, and it called on all states to end aid to Israel. This resolution contained two sections that were never used before: the need for an international conference to solve the Palestinian problem, and the legitimacy and authority of the PLO in future negotiations. Both steps represented a clear victory for the Palestinians. Israel and the US tried their best to prevent the conflict from becoming a multilateral issue.

Furthermore, the General Assembly adopted resolution 45/183 on December 21, 1990, in which it requested the international community to provide assistance to the Palestinian people in co-operation with the PLO. Paragraph 8 of this resolution calls for the implementation of development projects in the OPT, including the lifting Israel’s restriction on the economy and the establishment of a seaport in the OPT. Paragraph 9 called for the establishment of Palestinian development banks in the OPT, with a view toward promoting investment, production, employment and income. Both paragraphs demonstrate a shift in policy and in vision by the UN with regard to how best to empower the Palestinians and prepare them for independence.

The importance of all the aforementioned General Assembly and Security Council resolutions stems from the time frame and the shift in language in which they were written.

⁹¹ UN. Res. No. 43/177, December 1988.

They marked a gradual and significant discursive change in the way the Palestinian question was conceived by the international community.

The gradual shift at the UN occurred for the following reasons: (1) the occupation by Israel of the rest of Palestine and the subjugation of nearly two million Palestinians to inhuman treatment by the new occupying forces; (2) the expulsion of the PLO from Lebanon by Israel in 1982 and the massacres of Palestinian refugees in two UNRWA camps, Sabra and Shatilla, made the UN more sympathetic to the Palestinians plight; and (3) the consensus among most of the Arab countries in 1974, Rabat Summit held in Rabat Morocco, that the Palestinian people must represent themselves. This latter development paved the way for the UN to start treating the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as a potential future state for the Palestinians.

Thus, the UN embarked on introducing new programs aimed specifically at enhancing the social, economic and political infrastructure in the territories. For instance, UNRWA introduced the Expanded Program for Assistance (EPA), which focused mainly on infrastructural projects in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. UNRWA also launched the Emergency Measures for the Occupied Territories (EMOT) to help Palestinians deal with the hardships of the occupation. The program considered assistance in cash and in kind to women over 50 years old. Many women got almost \$500 in cash in order for them to create a small canteen in their homes. Most women used that economic opportunity to save more money and start their own business. One woman in her late 50s, from the Ayda refugee camp near Bethlehem remarked in the summer of 2003 that because she could not read or write, it was very hard for her to handle complicated tasks. But when UNRWA offered her the \$500, she opened her own canteen. From her daily profit she bought a few hens. Between the canteen and the hens she manages stable income every week.

The refugee camps in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are populated with stories like Imm Adel's. For instance, I met a 28 year-old woman from the refugee camp of Al-Fwwar located next to the city of Hebron. Like others, she qualified for a loan from UNRWA. She wanted to invest her money by opening a hair salon. Possessing little knowledge of the business, she approached the UNRWA administrator in her area. The administrator arranged for her to be trained for six months in a vocational school. After six months of training, she was prepared to open her own shop in the refugee camp. When asked about her economic dependence on UNRWA, she answered very proudly "no more." She simply stated, "my family and I now could live happily out of this investment." Arab states would never do what UNRWA has – the state does not train or help people so they can establish businesses. Based on UNRWA's annual report, the agency distributed more than \$500,000 in cash to families in the West Bank and more than \$1,000,000 to families in the Gaza Strip. These distributions enabled Palestinians to participate in the local economy of their communities.⁹²

After the UN changed its perception of the Palestinian people and their cause, the PLO responded by adjusting its plan in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The PLO's main objective in the OPT was to mobilize the people to resist Israeli occupation. Thus, between 1965 and 1974, most of the PLO's financial support to Palestinians was intended to defeat the occupation. But after the UN recognized the PLO, the organization began spending money on building institutions to preserve the Palestine character of the OPT. The PLO gained more momentum in supporting institution building after the Arab summit in Rabat Morocco in which Arab countries created many committees to help the Palestinians in their steadfastness (*soumond*) against the Israeli occupation. Arab countries pressured Jordan in

⁹² UNRWA Annual Report, 2001-2002: 46-7.

1978 to accept a partnership with the PLO to establish the Jordanian Palestinian Joint Committee (JPJC); an institution that was created to help the Palestinians endure the hardships of the occupation through socioeconomic projects to prevent a brain drain from the OPT. UNRWA was expected to play an important role in JPJC projects.

The strategy of the PLO and many Arab countries was to insist that the West Bank and Gaza Strip should be the future site of the Palestinian state and that Jordan should relinquish its claims to the OPT. Some Arab countries wanted to strengthen the PLO, while the PLO wanted to penetrate UNRWA to reach as many Palestinians as it could. The Palestinian National Council (PNC) declared in 1974 that it would not give up the right to use arms to liberate Palestine, but it was willing to accept a state in the OPT only if Israel undertook a complete withdrawal. Hence, without denying the aim of a total liberation of Palestine by means of arms, the PNC announced in June 1974 that the PLO would seek the establishment of a Palestinian state in the OPT. It declared that

the PLO reserves the right to struggle by any means that it sees necessary, namely using arms to liberate Palestine against any foreign occupation of the Palestinian land. The PLO will continue that struggle until Palestine is liberated and a Palestinian government is established on its soil.⁹³

The PLO was eager to pursue its strategy of armed and passive resistance (*soumond*) to the occupation. The political programs of the tenth PNC sought to encourage the OPT inhabitants not to work in Israel but to develop the local economy, especially in the areas of agriculture and manufacturing. The refugee camps were asked to mobilize and increase their autonomy by appointing committees, which could coordinate directly with the PLO on

⁹³ Palestinian National Covenant, 1964: Paragraph 3.

everyday matters and reduce its dependence on the occupation.⁹⁴ The PLO's adoption of a new strategy to solve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict allowed it to focus on the OPT as the potential future state. This new vision placed Israel and Jordan on the defensive. Both countries cooperated after 1967 on running the OPT. Hoping to normalize its relations with Jordan, Israel managed security and border issues, while letting Jordan handle the civil administration as well as trade between the two banks (the policy of the "open bridges").

The warm relationship between the two countries convinced King Hussein to propose a union between the two banks of the River Jordan. Thus, in 1972, the king proposed the creation of the United Arab Kingdom. The king was willing to grant the residents of the OPT partial autonomy. But neither Israel nor the PLO accepted his proposal.⁹⁵ In fact, more so than Israel and Jordan, the PLO became involved in Palestinian institutional planning in the OPT. The PLO encouraged and supported the Palestinians, culturally, institutionally and politically. Culturally, it encouraged and supported folklore and art events. Institutionally, it supported trade unions, students' governments on college and school campuses, the creation in 1972 of the Palestinian Patriotic Front (PPF), and social clubs. Politically, it supported the creation of a national press. For example, the PLO supported the establishment of *Al-Fajr* and *Al-Sha'b* newspapers. The prime reason behind that support was to counter the Jordanians who supported the publication of *Al-Quds*, one of the most prominent newspapers in the OPT.⁹⁶

In the early 1970s the PLO and Jordan fought bitterly to control the camps. The refugees at large were loyal to the PLO and its vision for them. The socioeconomic

94 Resolutions of the Palestinian National Council, 1974: 201-2.

95 King Hussein Speech to the Throne, 1972, University of Jordan Library.

96 *Al-Fajr*, June 21, 1987. 9

assistance that UNRWA had been providing Palestinian refugees enabled the PLO to maintain a greater influence over the refugees than the Jordanian government. For example, the monthly rations that UNRWA had been providing refugees motivated them to side with the status quo in the OPT and Jordan. In other words, the refugees saw little benefit from siding with the kingdom against an indigenous political organization that they deemed as a legitimate representative of their interests. But Jordan and the PLO were not embroiled in a zero sum game; they both realized that while they were vying for representation of the Palestinians, they had mutual interests in promoting stability in the East and West Banks. Besides, Jordan had to deal with the fact that Arab countries (Syria, Egypt, Libya, and many others) opposed its ambitions to rule Palestinians.

When the Arab countries established the JPJC, the two entities, Jordan and the PLO, had to cooperate to ensure its success. Both turned to UNRWA for help on the JPJC. A first step was to rehabilitate the camps infrastructure through the extension and repair of the UNRWA installations. UNRWA was entrusted with many projects, such as the enlargement and electrification of classrooms, the construction of libraries, the repair of activities centers and roads, the draining of stagnant waters, and the repair of housing units. In addition, UNRWA was asked to eliminate unemployment in the camps. Accordingly, it created a job search center that opened branches in the Gulf States and Saudi Arabia. Almost every year UNRWA sends hundreds of teachers, secretaries, electricians, mechanics, masons, carpenters, and many others to the Gulf States and other Arab countries. Some UNRWA officials who worked in UNRWA's Employment Office in Jordan, noted, "UNRWA graduates are very competitive and are better trained than the government's graduates."⁹⁷ He

⁹⁷ A meeting with the some UNRWA's employment office officials, June 11, 2004, UNRWA HQ, Amman, Jordan.

asserted that UNRWA is not as successful in finding jobs abroad for those who graduate from its schools in the OPT, although, Israel has been eager to facilitate their emigration. The official also added that between 1980 and 1988, the number of students who graduated from UNRWA vocational schools was modest. Almost 1,283 students graduated from these schools, and the majority was employed in the Gaza Strip.⁹⁸

UNRWA has aimed to make the residents of the OPT self-sufficient. The PLO gave UNRWA a free hand to execute many of the projects that JPJC planned for the OPT. The PLO's decision came as a result of the economic hardships and the economic crisis that the territories experienced because of war. In addition, the PLO wanted residents of the territories to remain loyal to it by spending money on them. Thus, the PLO was compelled to adopt a flexible position in regard to which projects should be prioritized, even if it meant accepting certain decisions that were unacceptable to it before. UNRWA was able to be a successful partner in the JPJC due to the fact that the organization itself was a flexible institution. Although the directions and the intentions of the PLO and UNRWA differed in many ways, the PLO wanted UNRWA to achieve its political goal of steadfastness. Likewise, UNRWA needed the PLO to continue pouring money into the organization and the refugee camps. In many ways these institutions were seeking to maximize their gains by cooperating with one another.⁹⁹

Cooperation between UNRWA and the JPCJ in the OPT has grown in scale and substance over the years. But the projects never addressed fully on a grand scale a macroeconomic plan to eliminate many of the concerns of the refugees. Even the

⁹⁸ *Al-Fajer*, June,13, 1986: 5.

⁹⁹ UNRWA Documents, From Chief External Mission to Finance Department, Summary Record of Meeting, December 30, 1988.

commissioner general of UNRWA admitted in 1990 that UNRWA could not manage large-scale economic projects. In his view, the agency is best suited to help the most “destitute of refugees to become economically independent.”¹⁰⁰ But by funding economic programs through the JPCJ over the years, UNRWA has succeeded in making Palestinians less dependent on Israel for employment and income. A case in point was the 1983 Emergency Measures for the Occupied Territories (EMOT). This program was designed to help Palestinians deal with the hardships of occupation. The program considered assistance in cash as well as “passive protection” measures to the entire camp population, including nonrefugees.

Hence, UNRWA began a new effort to help hardship cases become self-supporting, harking back to the old “work relief” idea from the agency’s early days. According to UNRWA’s 1983-84 reports, the agency began giving grants of about \$1,000 to seventeen families among the hardship cases.¹⁰¹ This small experiment foreshadowed other efforts to revive self-support activities, which were expanded only as UNRWA received donations earmarked for them, or carried them out in cooperation with voluntary organizations. In 1988, the agency reported that projects for assisting refugees in the OPT to start enterprises were progressing, but were hampered by the security and the stability situation. In 1990, UNRWA reported that the joint program extended loans averaging almost \$7,700 to more than a 167 enterprises in the OPT, with each hiring on average three employees. The agency loaned almost \$1.3 million to fourteen projects. According to UNRWA, women were the greatest beneficiaries of its loan programs. By April 1991, 206 projects in the West Bank and

¹⁰⁰ UNRWA *Annual Report*, 1990-91: 34.

¹⁰¹ UNRWA *Annual Report*, 1983-40: 44.

Gaza had received \$1.6 million, and the program was being started up in Lebanon and Syria.¹⁰²

Noting that women headed almost half of the special hardship households, the agency began emphasizing programming for women in the late 1980s. Given the social and economic roles that women perform in developing countries, the agency announced three objectives in its Annual Report of 1989-90. First, UNRWA hoped to enable more women to acquire the skills and opportunities that are needed to earn a living. Second, UNRWA sought to help women to better cope with family and social problems. Finally, UNRWA aspired to facilitate women's roles in the development of their community. The agency expanded women's activity centers in refugee camps. During 1989-90, money became available for three new centers: one was completed and two were under construction until the Israeli authorities halted work for "security reasons." From 1987 to mid-1991, the number of women's centers in the five fields expanded from 50 (serving about 1,500 women) to 62 (serving 5,550 women). Refugee women themselves decided what kind of training they wanted and played a major part in all phases of the projects. UNRWA embraced the new international development ethics of women's involvement and grassroots participation as it expanded the Women's Program Centers in the refugee camps. Besides, with the new focus on women, UNRWA increased programs for handicapped refugees and their families. This began with five community centers in Jordan, and was extended to other fields.

Despite certain financial and political constraints, UNRWA began shifting resources to its new "developmental social services." The refugees' reaction to UNRWA programs in the OPT changed dramatically from the early fifties and sixties. UNRWA's programs for small-scale development did not meet the resistance that earlier programs had, because the

¹⁰² UNRWA Documents, 1992: 155.

refugees recognized that the solution to their plight was being presented differently. Most importantly, the new programs no longer aimed to relocate them. Rather, they aimed at integrating them into the economy of the OPT, while preserving their identity by protecting them from dealing directly with the host government. Politically, these programs seemed to be less sensitive than the earlier counterparts, which intended to assimilate the refugees once and for all. Palestinians accepted UNRWA programs also because of their changing perception of UNRWA itself. The agency no longer appeared to challenge their rights as a people, but came to be seen by Palestinians as an essential factor in rebuilding their society and an international witness to their plight.

When the first Intifada broke out in 1987, cooperation between UNRWA and the PLO intensified and was encouraged by the General Assembly and the Security Council. After the intifada, the Arab countries and the PLO used JPJC funds to prepare the OPT for independence. This prompted Jordan to abandon once and for all any claims it has to the OPT. During the Intifada both Jordan and the PLO wanted UNRWA to run and coordinate all the JPJC projects in the region.¹⁰³

Jordan's decision to break off political and administrative ties with the West Bank gave a new meaning to the JPJC's meetings.¹⁰⁴ The JPJC met regularly to discuss the future of the Palestinians in the OPT and how best to protect Jordan's interests, while after Jordan announced its disengagement plan, it conceded that the PLO was the only organization that could negotiate on behalf of Palestinians. For the first time since 1948, Jordan explicitly expressed its desire to cede political authority over the OPT to a Palestinian political body.

¹⁰³ Remarks by Faruq Kadomi, the head of the Political department in the PLO, New York City, November 29, 2003.

¹⁰⁴ King Hussein's speech, July 31, 1988, University of Jordan Library.

As a result, Jordan stopped attending JPJC meetings and conceded that role to the PLO and UNRWA. This move gave the PLO more influence in designing JPJC programs.¹⁰⁵ However, the PLO was unable to control UNRWA. For example, soon after Jordan decided to limit its involvement in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the PLO declared a state in exile, UNRWA's Commissioner-General Giorgio Giacomelli stated that neither decision would affect the orientation of the agency. Given that UNRWA depended upon the PLO for financial support, the statement put the agency in an awkward position.¹⁰⁶ Clearly, through the refugees, the PLO aimed to change many UNRWA programs. For instance, although the PLO urged UNRWA to help export Palestinian agricultural products to Europe during the Intifada, UNRWA refused to accommodate the PLO.

Nevertheless, UNRWA's contribution to the Palestinian people in general and the Palestinian refugees in particular was crucial. It was during the early days of the Intifada that the UN gave UNRWA a full mandate to prepare Palestinians for independence. The UN permitted UNRWA to create a force to protect Palestinians inside as well as outside the refugee camps. The creation of Refugee Affairs Offices (RAOs), who were responsible for monitoring the situation in the OPT and providing soft protection to the refugees, marked the agency's greatest evolution as an intergovernmental organization. UNRWA's overall mission after the Intifada became geared toward Palestinian independence.¹⁰⁷

Armed with General Assembly unprecedented support for its activities, UNRWA organized an informal meeting of the main international organizations involved in building a future Palestinian state in Vienna in March 1989. Its unparalleled experience in the OPT

¹⁰⁵ Interview with a delegate to the Oslo Peace Process, June 22, 2004, Amman Jordan.

¹⁰⁶ *Al-Quds*, August 7, 1988: 28.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with an UNRWA educator, Summer 2005, Jordan, June 22.

helped UNRWA position itself to be the prime coordinator of activities by international organizations and to help coordinate all the UN efforts to assist nascent Palestinian bureaucracies. Giacomelli asserted that the agency intends to transfer all of UNRWA's departments to a future Palestinian state. Moreover, he believed that all UNRWA's staff would continue to work for the new Palestinian state. Thus, in his view, UNRWA will play a prime role in supporting the planned state formation process not only as an operational resource, but also as a pillar of its future administration (Viorst, 1989: 118-9).

Many Palestinian officials echoed Giacomelli's vision. For instance, Dr. Nabeel Sha'a'th, a senior advisor to Yassar Arafat, and the current deputy prime minister of the Palestinian National Authority said:

we in the PLO would like to engage in joint planning with UNRWA when a decision of establishing a state is made...It is our view that UNRWA will have to continue its work for the first five years of our independence, maintaining the operation of its schools and hospitals. During this period, UNRWA will train cadre to run these institutions, and also make its facilities and skills available to the refugees coming from outside. Gradually, its schools and hospitals will be turned over to the government, and UNRWA operations will dissolve into the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Refugee Affairs and the Ministry of Education.¹⁰⁸

Cooperation between the PLO and UNRWA during and after the Intifada assured the Palestinians that UNRWA understood its limitations. UNRWA began initiating aggressive economic projects in the region to insure the well being of the refugees. A case in point was the 1988 Extended Help Program (EHP), whose sole purpose was to localize the production of goods and services and to create permanent jobs in the refugee camp and its surroundings. EHP was an extension of programs UNRWA initiated after it began collaborating with the PLO. Many refugees looked upon the EHP as a welfare program by

¹⁰⁸ Sha'a'th speech before UNRWA's CG in Amman, Jordan 1991, University of Hebron Archives.

UNRWA and the international community to help them deal with the economic consequences of the Intifada.¹⁰⁹

The UN granted UNRWA great flexibility of action during the Intifada. An economist, who has been working for UNRWA for the last two decades, captured this in saying “the objective of UNRWA development programs went beyond the refugees even if they appeared to be its first priority. The real stake now is the adaptation of the agency to the peace process and its desired outcome: the establishment of a Palestinian State.”¹¹⁰ In fact, UNRWA executives counted on the Intifada to result in a peace process that would, in turn, result in the establishment of a Palestinian State in which UNRWA would play a central role. UNRWA also had a vision of how best to pursue such an outcome. According to Angela Williams:

the longer-term program...is intended to be in parallel with a credible effort towards a peace process, and in support of that peace process. We are not working towards a resettlement of the refugees, even if we are concerned about the housing. And we do not see it as a prolongation of UNRWA’s mandate. We do not want to remain in existence for another thirty-eight years. We see it, hopefully, as a passage toward the last stage of the UNRWA’s role.¹¹¹

The EHP compensated those who were hit economically hard by the Intifada, spending \$76 million in Gaza and \$46 million in the West Bank in 1984 and 1985. UNRWA provided unemployment benefits and other social benefits. In this regard, the EHP marked an important step toward UNRWA’s involvement in large-scale development programs. But

¹⁰⁹ *UNRWA Annual Report, 1985-1986*: 14.

¹¹⁰ Interview with an UNRWA Development worker, Amman, Jordan, July 31, 2005.

¹¹¹ *UNRWA Annual Report, 1987-1988*: 10.

it also altered UNRWA's relations with refugees. Rather than merely providing "assistant" bonds, UNRWA began entering into "contractual bonds" with Palestinian refugees.¹¹² On an individual level, UNRWA helped establish economic independence for the refugees by encouraging them to develop small-scale projects. Second, on a collective level, it trained a cadre of skilled people for management and other community services, such as training people to run community centers for the handicapped and manage rehabilitation centers. The agency also trained refugees in civil and religious law seminars, business, and dental hygiene and many other community service courses.¹¹³

In addition to the EHP, UNRWA launched another economic program: the Income-Generation Program (IGP). It provides investment capital to refugees "to assist Palestine Refugees to establish and expand small to medium sized enterprises," and it represents one of the most progressive economic programs in the Middle East. It aims to integrate refugee women and men into the local economy by offering them substantial economic assistance. The goals pursued through the new approach of financial assistance remain the same as the aims of earlier programs: to promote the economic integration of Palestinians and the creation of jobs.¹¹⁴

The IGP also grants money to refugees who suffer from permanent health problems. For example one of the Palestinian refugees that I met in the Al Hussein refugees suffers from a heart problem. A man in his early thirties married with five children. He had open-heart surgery in 2002. He applied to UNRWA for financial assistance and was granted \$10,000 to open a store in the refugee camp. Moreover, UNRWA helped him rent and equip

¹¹² *UNRWA Annual Report*, 1993-4: 53-58.

¹¹³ *UNRWA Annual Report*, 1992-3: 47.

¹¹⁴ Interview with an UNRWA Development Worker, UNRWA Headquarter, Amman Jordan, August, 2005.

a store. Business was slow for the new owner in the beginning, but eventually the store became a very successful family business. In this case, UNRWA supported an entire family through the IGP. Yet, not all cases have been as successful as this, for many refugees have been unable to repay their loans.

Another refugee, who resides in the Al Baqa refugee camp in Jordan believes that UNRWA has done a great job helping the refugees, even though the economic hardship in the camps make it hard for them to repay their loans. The refugee has a brother who works for UNRWA; he applied for a loan from UNRWA to update his mobile telephone store. When asked about the reasons that led him to apply for the loan and if the loan accomplished its intended goals, he remarked “I needed some money to put more products in the store and I needed to spend on the image of the store.” He was right about all his assumption regarding the loan – the store’s business improved markedly. He believes that UNRWA did him and his family a big favor by granting them a loan.

It was clear, however, that most recipients of UNRWA loans wished their debts could be forgiven. I questioned the officer who accompanied me to the store about the loans.¹¹⁵ She remarked that the project is first evaluated by an UNRWA Field Office and either approved or rejected by UNRWA’s Development Department. UNRWA asks applicants to find two guarantors for the loan. Also, the applicant is required to provide between 20 and 50 per-cent of the overall budget of the project, depending on the amount of the loan. The IGP warns against laxity in the application of the rules. Given that “UNRWA has such a long history of grant-based assistance to the refugees, cases are bound

¹¹⁵ Interview with an UNRWA development Officer, July 29, 2005, Amman, Jordan.

to arise where borrowers seek to adopt a lax attitude towards repayment feeling that at the end of the day UNRWA will 'give in' and accept non-repayments of loans."¹¹⁶

The UNRWA officer also highlighted the non-financial aspects of the loan program. For example, UNRWA helps its clients in planning and setting up their businesses. Income Generation Program Officers (IGPOs) visit the different projects until the loan is paid in full. Debt rescheduling is available for those people who experience difficulty in repaying their loans.

As mentioned, the program privileges women. Two kinds of measures are aiming at promoting the creation of small businesses by women. The IPG earmarks funding for women's projects. Besides the amount of money exclusively reserved for female "clients," there is no formal difference in the process of application and assistance for women and men. However, specific programs have been designed to address women's issues. For instance, UNRWA and the Palestinian Women Initiative Fund (PWIF) have been working together to strengthen the role of women in the local economy. The PWIF aims to develop "women's economic status through IGP suited to their needs and abilities, including the disabled among them, through skill training and vocational rehabilitation related to identified business opportunities and through the establishment of small enterprises." Whereas the IGP simply reserves a certain amount of money for women candidates, the PWIF explicitly addresses women's specific "needs and abilities." The PWIF program therefore calls for more training and the setting up of projects suited to women's social status, such as the "food-production units." The fund's projects may be initiated and organized by other Palestinian women's organizations that aim to improve the economic status of Palestinian women. Funds may be given for "economic activities, including Income-Generating and

¹¹⁶ UNRWA Documents, 1999: 20-35.

Financial Services, Training, and Institutional Support.” The objective is not only to support women’s individual projects but also to promote the establishment of supportive structures. Unlike the IGP, the PWIF is intended to help women become business owners.

Consequently, Palestinian women are organized in savings-groups that follow weekly courses where they learn how to start their own business. During these months, women put together their seed-capital and establish their business-projects on an individual and collective basis. UNRWA provides the start-up capital, which does not have to be paid back. The system of solidarity-groups refers to traditional saving-systems, popular in some Middle Eastern countries like Jordan, Syria, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. According to UNRWA’s annual report, the businesses started by women in these programs are part of the “informal economy.” As such, they do not differ from businesses started without external development aid and training.

Though the services enumerated above, UNRWA prepared the OPT for independence and it equipped the inhabitants to assume responsibility for their future. Thus, the fourth stage begins with great expectations on both sides.

The Fourth Stage: The Proactive Years

From 1991 to the present, UNRWA has been explicitly engaged in Palestinian state-building. It has done so by helping Palestinians build state institutions in the OPT and by training a cadre of administrators. Through UNRWA and its associated organizations (e.g., UNDP) the UN has built schools, hospitals, clinics, training centers, rehab centers, and industrial zones and expanded colleges and universities. In 1993 UNDP, UNICEF, and UNRWA collectively reported that the UN was providing services and implementing projects amounting to nearly \$250 million in the OPT. It accounted for about one-third of all public

expenditure in the West Bank and about one-half of all public expenditure in the Gaza Strip. UNRWA programs accounted for about 88 percent of total UN expenditure in the area. The task force proposed activities worth an additional \$138 million to support “the capacity of the incoming Palestinian authority to assume responsibility for services in education, health, social services, income generation, hospital care, etc.” and to improve “basic physical and social services infrastructure.”

The UN also sent teams to monitor the Palestinian elections of 1996 and 2005 and brought Palestinian civil servants and journalists to certain GA departments in New York to train in various fields. According to Walied Badawy, the head of the Middle East desk at UNDP, “when UNDP started its operations in WBG in 1982, the number of existing schools did not correspond with the number of students [so] UNDP started by fixing old ones and building new ones.” Badawy also asserted, that “teachers were provided with training in teaching methodologies. A Palestinian school network has been established to train teachers and support staff in the use of computer information technology as a means of upgrading classroom practices.” Badawy also indicated, that “an academic computer network has been organized that has linked Palestinian universities to one another and the Internet. At the government level, the Ministry of Higher Education has been assisted to establish an Information Technology Unit.¹¹⁷

In the area of health Badawy stated that UNDP has been very active in expanding, upgrading and building new hospitals in the major Palestinian cities. When asked to give examples, Badawy pointed to the new hospital that UNDP built in Salfeet in the West Bank and expanded Queen Alia Hospital in Hebron. Badawy also referred to the hundred or so health clinics that UNDP helped build or upgrade and to the training of hundreds of nurses,

¹¹⁷ Interview with Walied Badawy, UNDP, New York, February 12, 2005.

medical secretaries and other support personal. UNDP health programs were extended to the Red Crescent Society, the Patient's Friends Society and some other private health organizations. UNDP provided them with better equipment and intensive care ambulances. It also provided physicians with specialized training in fields such as anesthesiology, where the shortage has been particularly acute. Finally, Mr. Badawy cited the relationship between UNDP and the PNA. He pointed to the high level of coordination between UNDP and the Ministry of Health in the area of policy formulation and technical assistance.¹¹⁸

The UN has been investing millions rezoning the refugee camp and connecting it to the closest towns and villages, so people can receive permanent utility services. The UN and UNRWA focused all their energy on the WBGS in response to the Oslo agreement, which Israel and the Palestinians signed in July of 1993.¹¹⁹

The fourth stage is also significant because of developments that occurred within the context of the UN. Most importantly, SC and the GA began passing resolutions calling on Israel to stop its occupation and allow the Palestinians to have a state of their own. Moreover, both bodies passed resolution calling on UNRWA and other UN organizations to assume a greater role in achieving that goal. For example, on December 10, 1993, the GA called on UNRWA "to make a decisive contribution towards giving fresh impetus to the economic and social stability of the occupied territories (Bowker, 2003: 131). The UN went further in assisting the Palestinians when it voted to get the International Court of Justice (ICJ) involved in the wall that Israel has been erecting on Palestinian land in the OPT. It asked the ICJ to render an advisory opinion on the following question: "What are the legal consequences arising from the construction of the wall being built by Israel, the occupying

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ *New York Times*, September 14, 1993, A13.

Power, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, as described in the report of the Secretary-General, considering the rules and principles of international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, and relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions?”¹²⁰ On July 9, 2004, the ICJ ruled, “Israel [was] obliged to put an end to the violation of its international obligations [and] cease...construction of the wall.” In response to the ICJ ruling on the wall Israeli’s Attorney General, Menachem Mauzoz, called on the government to “abide by the ruling or risk a legal battle with his office.”¹²¹ Most significantly, the ICJ ruled that Israel’s construction of the wall in the OPT was illegal, was an obstacle to peace and economic development, and should be dismantled.¹²² The General Assembly’s response to Israel’s construction of a wall in the WBG has arguably been its greatest single contribution to the Palestinian cause, especially given that the ICJ ruled in favour of Palestinians and invoked the Geneva Convention.

Other GA resolutions of significant consequence were 1397 and 1515. The US, which introduced resolution 1397 to the Security Council in March 2002, called for the creation of a democratic Palestinian state existing side by side with Israel. In other words, in this resolution, the US called for a two-state solution to the decades’ old Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Meanwhile, resolution 1515, which was introduced by Russia in May 2004, called on the Quartet (i.e., the EU, the US, the UN and Russia) to adopt the “Road Map,” which also calls for a two-state solution, as the official policy governing the conflict.

Since 1991 UNRWA had the greatest support from the UN to implement General Assembly resolutions in the WBG. Between 1991 and 1992 the PLO intensified its

¹²⁰ *ICJ Ruling*, July 9, 2004.

¹²¹ *Haaretz-daily*, July, 17, 2004. 22

¹²² *ICJ Resolution*, July 9, 2004.

diplomatic efforts with all countries that contribute to UNRWA so that the agency could continue its operations. The PLO's interests in UNRWA's work stems from the larger vision the Palestinian body has for the agency. Seeing UNRWA as an active partner in the state-building process, the PLO aspired all along to have UNRWA's staff, facilities and institutions to eventually become their own. UNRWA's golden days were ahead of it after the Madrid Peace Conference and the victory of the labor party in the 1992 Israeli election. The Israeli government signed an agreement with UNRWA allowing it to assume civil administrative powers in the OPT the moment Israel decided to withdraw. The Israeli government also signed an agreement with the UNRWA granting the agency the right to assume full authority after Israel withdrew.¹²³

The transfer of UNRWA's headquarters from Vienna to the Gaza Strip to assist the nascent Palestinian state forming in the OPT marked another key step that suggested the UN's support for an expanded role for UNRWA in the region. PLO and the PNA greeted this decision with approval, for it allowed them direct contacts with the longest serving organization in Palestine. In fact, the PNA hoped to one day integrate UNRWA's departments and programs to its own ministries.¹²⁴ But UNRWA's relocation to the Gaza Strip was easier said than done. Financially, the move was expected to cost between \$13.5 and \$21 million, a sum that far exceeded UNRWA's budget. Politically, Jordan and Lebanon strongly opposed the move. Lebanon wanted UNRWA to return to its original location in Beirut. Ironically, UNRWA's top management did not completely favor the transfer. They knew that the PNA lacked total sovereignty in the Gaza Strip and thus assumed that their

¹²³ "Aid and International Organization in Palestine: Instruments of Development of Foreign Policy," *Middle East International*, 495 (April 28, 1995), p. 17.

¹²⁴ PLO Department of Refugee Affairs: "The final status negotiation on the refugee issue: Positions and Strategies," Ramallah, August 2000, pp. 22-3.

freedom could and would be restricted by the Israeli government. Hence, they moved the top operational staff to Amman, Jordan. The move to Jordan was intended to preserve the integrity of the organization and to prevent its files and archives from being violated or stolen. When Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982, it stormed UNRWA's building and captured many of the agency's files. The refugees outside the OPT were very upset about the move. They feared that once a Palestinian state is created UNRWA's mission will end and none will care about them. Besides, they feared that the international community would neglect them forever.¹²⁵

In response to the Oslo agreement, UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali created a "task force on social and economic development of the Gaza Strip and Jericho." Boutros Ghali chose representatives of three UN organizations (UNDP, UNICEF, and UNWRA) to help in the task. The UN agencies were asked to produce a report to be presented to the donor's conference in Washington in 1994. The conference also received a six-volume report on the territories' economic development needs from the World Bank. Donor countries pledged, \$2.2 billion in economic assistance for the occupied territories over a five-year period (Schiff, 1995: 110).

The Oslo Agreement created an unprecedented opportunity for the PLO and UNRWA to work together publicly in the OPT for the first time since 1967. As a result, they began cooperating in creating Palestinian state institutions. UNRWA responded to the Oslo Agreement by creating the Peace Implementation Program (PIP) in October 1993. PIP, an extension of the EHP and the IGP, aimed to help build infrastructure in the OPT and provide economic assistance to refugees and nonrefugees alike. In 1993, UNRWA spent more than \$76 million in Gaza and \$46 millions in the West Bank on the PIP. This amount

¹²⁵ *UNRWA Annual Report, 1993-4: 18-19.*

was almost two times more than the \$65 million that the EHP had spent in the West Bank in 1988. In December 1993, the UNGA justified the special attention paid by UNRWA to the economy of the future Palestinian state by stating that: “UNRWA’s ultimate challenge is to contribute in a decisive way to the economic and social stability of the occupied territories.”¹²⁶

Following the establishment of the PIP, donor countries funded UNRWA generously so that it could play a more active role in the region. For example, Saudi Arabia was the first country to fund PIP by giving it \$20 million. UNRWA’s vision for PIP was even greater. It raised more than \$315 million in the first year of operation. The PIP succeeded because of the strong support of donor countries in the region. Beyond their socio-economic impact, PIP programs have transformed relations between the PLO and UNRWA. In 1993, UNRWA declared that it would help Palestinians build their own state.¹²⁷ Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali especially wanted UNRWA to develop a strong relationship with the PNA after the Oslo Peace Agreement was signed. Consequently, in 1995, he instructed UNRWA to relocate its headquarters from Vienna to Gaza. For him, the move was necessary to gain more credibility with the Palestinians. In addition, the UN sought the support for UNRWA’s relocation to Gaza from the US and other countries. Ultimately, while support was given, the transfer did not pass without problems for UNRWA and the host countries.¹²⁸

It is hard to overstate how much the Oslo Agreements improved relations between UNRWA and the PLO. While these agencies had been communicating informally since the

¹²⁶ Official Document of the UNGA, Special Political Commission, A/C.4/49/SR.15, November, 1994.

¹²⁷ Official Document of the UNGA, Special Commission of Decolonization, A/C.4/48/SR.18 November 15, 1993. par. 24.

¹²⁸ *The Jordan Times*, July 2, 1994, A 12.

late 1970s, after Oslo, their relationship flourished. UNRWA became determined to be engaged in Palestinian state-building. As Mahmoud Atayh asserted that all indications from UNRWA Commissioner-General Giorgio Giacomelli that “we must work very hard with the Palestinians to help them see their state soon. Our job right now is to put the foundation of a Palestinian state.”¹²⁹

Soon after September 1993, UNRWA was included in the Refugees Working Group (RWG), an agency that was created by the GA to oversee a final solution to the refugee question. This was UNRWA’s first official task beyond its official mandate to be involved in a political rather than a humanitarian action with the approval of the Israel and the US. In addition, the SG asked UNDP and the UNICEF to support the Palestinian authority in the first two years of the provisional period by contributing to the economic and social development of the territories.¹³⁰ In December 1993, the General Assembly urged UNRWA to “contribute in a decisive way to the economic and social stability of the occupied territories.”¹³¹ In the Arab host countries UNRWA was asked to include the refugees in its economic development programs. The agency diverted more than \$65 million to refugees in Syria and Lebanon to help include them in its new initiatives.¹³²

Moreover, as a result of the Oslo Agreement, UNRWA and the PLO began coordinating their activities on three levels: the diplomatic the operational, and the political. Diplomatically, the PLO has been uncertain of how best to accommodate UNRWA in the territories it has controlled after Oslo. Meanwhile, in December 1993, the GA authorized

¹²⁹ Interview with Mr. Atayh, July, 29, 2005, Amman, Jordan.

¹³⁰ The Department of Public Information at the UN on the question of Palestine, October 1994: 3940.

¹³¹ UNGA Resolution 48/40 December 1993.

¹³² *UNRWA Annual Report, 1993-1994*: 53.

UNRWA to establish a working relation with the PLO. In return, UNRWA invited the PLO to attend UNRWA meetings as an observer. The creation of the PNA in May 1994 put it on equal footing with host countries in the region. In June 1994, UNRWA and the PNA signed a juridical framework of cooperation between the two organizations and the PNA agreed to adhere to UNRWA's international character.¹³³

Operationally, the PNA's new status permitted it to become a full participant in many of UNRWA's programs such as PIP and the GIP. Consequently, UNRWA began consulting with the PNA on all issues and allowed it to participate in the selection of refugee candidates. After UNRWA relocated its Office of Investment and Development from Vienna to the WBG in 1993 to help the PNA in its mission, UNRWA needed the PLO's blessing to carry out all its programs. As a result, it enlisted the PLO's support for the PIP so that the refugees would not consider it another resettlement program. Collectively, the PLO and the PNA ensured that the refugees understood the political and the economic implications of the programs, emphasizing their temporary nature. The PLO and the PNA made their positions very clear on PIP in May of 1994 in an edition of the PLO review, *Filistîn al-thaoura*. In this edition these organizations stated that the rehabilitation (*ta'hîl*) and its "urbanization" (*tamdîn*) of the camp were not synonymous of resettlement (*taouîn*). UNRWA was also presented positively.¹³⁴

The Oslo Agreements also changed political relations between UNRWA and the PLO. Above all, this involved technical cooperation between various UNRWA departments and corresponding Palestinian ministries. Cooperation in the area of education, where the

¹³³ Letter of exchange between the President of the Palestinian Authority and the Commissioner General of UNRWA, 1994. Document 2.

¹³⁴ *Filistîne Al thaoura*, May 1, 1994, p. 12.

contracts between the two organizations had been longstanding, was given considerable attention. For instance, a memorandum of cooperation between UNRWA's Department of Education and the PLO's Department of General and Higher Education was signed on May 12, 1994. The memorandum called for the formation of a joint committee whose objective was to (1) reorient education in all schools and UNRWA training centers in the WBGS to satisfy the needs and aspirations of the Palestinian people; (2) reexamine means on how best to reconstruct the educational infrastructure of the occupied territories; (3) hire qualified teachers in all sectors; and (4) create a modern Palestinian curriculum.¹³⁵

One of the greatest challenges that UNRWA and the PNA have faced since 1994 is to transfer UNRWA expertise into the hands of the newly formed authority. After Oslo, UNRWA sought to transfer the services and expertise of its agencies to the PNA's nascent ministries. Through UNRWA and other agencies the UN carried out its vision by means of technical cooperation. UNRWA's assistance to the PNA extended beyond education and health. The UNSC allowed UNRWA to financially help house the new authority. For example, when members of the PLO moved to Jericho in 1994, they had no shelter and their children were not enrolled in school. Consequently, UNRWA contributed to the establishment of a PNA police force by providing them with temporary barracks. The agency also supplied their barracks in May 1994 with water, food, and other basics and paid the salaries of more than 9,000 policemen.¹³⁶ Finally, UNRWA welcomed their children into its schools.

UNRWA has developed a positive relationship with the Palestinians. It has been a flexible UN institution, always ready to accommodate any and every challenge facing the

¹³⁵ Memorandum of Cooperation between the PLO & UNRWA on Education, paragraphs 3 and 4.

¹³⁶ UNRWA Documents, 1995: 8.

Palestinians. Likewise, the Palestinians have been fully aware of UNRWA's political impact on their lives. They fully understand the role UNRWA has played over the last five and a half decades in building Palestinian state institutions and reconstructing Palestinian national identity. As a result, after the PNA was formed, the agency sought to continue the progress that UNRWA had begun. It began initiating very ambitious economic programs in the OPT like the PIP and the Micro-Enterprise Program. Such programs aimed to stabilize the territories, solve rampant unemployment, make the refugees more receptive to the mission of their new government, and help the PNA focus on such grand initiatives as establishing ministries, a police force, airports and sea ports.

However, UNRWA's role changed dramatically between the late 1970s and the mid 1990s. Whereas it was implicitly engaged in preparing the territories for independence during the 1970-1980s, it became explicitly engaged in state-building from the early 1990s until the present time.¹³⁷ The PNA prioritized state building over issues like refugee resettlement, the status of Jerusalem, final borders, and so on. PNA leadership, especially President Arafat, was very worried about their standings in the refugee camps in Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. Nonetheless, the PNA pursued its grand strategy of having UNRWA become a partner in Palestinian state-building.¹³⁸

UNRWA's ambitious new role was not, however, unplanned. Two commissioner-generals, Giacomelli and Turkmen, sought to transform the agency to become more involved in Palestinian state-building during and after the first Palestinian Intifada. They stressed the importance of flexibility in dealing with changing circumstances on the ground. Based on this, the PLO and UNRWA began discussing joint projects in 1992. By 1993 the

¹³⁷ *Journal of Palestine Studies*, XXIV, No. 2 (Winter 1995): 76.

¹³⁸ *Al-Quds*, August, 14, 1996: 16.

PLO dispatched an economic advisor from its headquarter in Tunis to the WBG to meet with Turkmen and other UNRWA officials to explore the steps both should take to reduce unemployment in the occupied territories and to create a trust fund to help those who might have jobs including in Jordan.¹³⁹ The two organizations also explored ways to revive the academic curricula to fit the new era, forming new committees to address the issue. The PLO dispatched Yasser Amor to the OPT to meet with his UNRWA counterpart to discuss the issue directly. Amor met several times between 1992 and 1993 with UNRWA officials in order to convince them to change the curricula so it would include material on the Intifada. The PLO relied heavily on Palestinian cadres to help her achieve that goal. As early as 1989, senior Palestinian officials at UNRWA requested that the agency take into account the implications of the Intifada and develop, with the political and financial support of the PLO, an educational system that would promote a new Palestinian identity. Subsequently, in 1993, UNRWA and the PLO agreed to move the education department to Amman, Jordan in order to enhance the exchange of expertise between the two organizations.¹⁴⁰ As a result of close coordination between the PLO and UNRWA, the question of the transfer of UNRWA's institutions to a new Palestinian state resurfaced. Repeatedly, UNRWA officials expressed their readiness to transfer all their offices and facilities to a new Palestinian state.

There is not a shadow of a doubt about what UNRWA will become at last: it will be dissolved and its installations, structures and services transferred to the Palestinian institutions that will be created. That day will be a joyful day for the organization, for we will feel that we have carried out its mandate.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Report of the Palestinian Delegation of the Refugee Affairs Department in Amman, Jordan to the Arab League. July 26, 1993:2.

¹⁴⁰ PLO Documents, "The Need for New Curricula in the Occupied Territories," 1992: 3.

¹⁴¹ UNRWA Documents, UNRWA Serving Palestinian Refugees, 1990: 2.

Many UNRWA officials looked at the transfer of their offices—including infrastructure of services of 250 schools, 160 medical centers (hospitals, specialized clinics, rehab centers and laboratories), 29 centers for women activities, and 25 youth centers – as a golden opportunity for Palestinians to establish a nation state of their own.¹⁴² Indeed, UNRWA involvement in the daily lives of the Palestinians for nearly a half century enabled the agency to acquire “precise knowledge of all questions pertaining to the Palestinian society, thus positioning UNRWA to play a vital role in their lives for a long time to come.”

Conclusion

This chapter detailed the evolution of the Palestinian question within the UN over the last six decades. It illuminated the positive role UNRWA played in keeping the question of Palestine alive at the General Assembly and the Security Council by bringing the concerns of refugees to the UN and by encouraging the world organizations two particular organs to pass resolutions reflecting its interpretation of the situation. The chapter also demonstrated how the flexibility and the adaptability of UNRWA enabled the agency not only to serve Palestinian interests in founding a state of their own, but also develop its own mandate in that direction. Thus, allowing the agency to have a life of its own. The agency reacted and dealt with every emerging situation on the ground with professionalism and candor. Clearly, UNRWA was more sensitive to the concerns of Palestinian refugees than any single host or donor country, particularly in regard to the issue of resettling refugees in neighboring countries. The agency took its duties very seriously in training the refugee population of the OPT and paid special attention to building Palestinian state infrastructure, investing heavily in human capital in the refugee camps. Meanwhile, UNRWA walked a delicate line between

¹⁴² UNRWA Annual Report (1993-4), pp. 59, 60, and 63. Also see tables 4, 5, and 8.

Jordan and the PLO, on the one hand, and the PLO and Israel, on the other. It had to confront host countries and donor countries on several occasions, but over all, it kept the refugees' interests at heart.

The emergence of the PLO from the refugee camps gave the refugees the necessary political and military cover that they were hoping for all along. The PLO used the refugees to manipulate UNRWA and broader UN policies in the region. On numerous occasions the PLO depended on UNRWA employees to carry out its agenda. Similarly, the refugees looked to UNRWA employees to achieve their objectives. Thus, the PLO and UNRWA developed an exceptional relationship over the years.

Through its programs (e.g., IGP, PIP, the Micro-Credit program, education, distribution of relief supply, or health services), UNRWA has helped Palestinian communities survive their daily hardship in the Middle East. Because of UNRWA's efforts Palestinians today are much better off economically, politically, and administratively. If one compares the situation of Palestinian refugees to Kurdish, Somali, Rwandan, Congolese, Sudanese, or many others, it is obvious that Palestinians are better educated and trained and are more prepared to establish a state of their own. Today UNRWA maintains a huge and expensive organizational infrastructure spread over the five areas of its operation. This includes 640 schools, 8 vocational and technical training centers, 3 educational sciences faculties, 122 primary health care facilities, 71 women's program centers, 27 youth activity centers, and 34 community rehabilitation centers. All of this has been possible due to UNRWA's flexibility and adaptability in the field and its willingness to continually advocate the refugees' cause within the UN.

The following chapter analyzes the political implications of the evolution of UNRWA's mandate. The Intifada gave UNRWA a new role to play in the Palestinian-Israeli

conflict. The agency was asked by the UN to assemble a security force to protect Palestinians inside and outside the camps (RAO). The creation of RAOs reflected the UN's response to the Intifada. It also reflected the belief by many countries that the Israeli occupation must be judged according to international law.

Table 5.1

A List of the Refugee Camps in the Five Fields of Operation and their Current Population

West Bank

Camp	Number of Registered Refugees
Aqabat Jabr	5,510
Ein el-Sultan	1,723
Shu'fat	10,069
Am'ari	8,805
Kalandia	10,024
Deir Ammar	2,275
Jalazone	10,390
Fawwar	7,630
Arroub	9,859
Dheisheh	12,045
Aida	4,534
Beit Jibrin	2,025
Far'a	7,244
Camp No.1	6,508
Askar	14,629
Balata	21,903
Tulkarm	17,455
Nur Shams	8,659
Jenin	15,496
+ 4,458 ex Gaza refugees distributed throughout the camps	

Gaza

Camp	Number of Registered Refugees
Jabalia	106,691
Rafah	95,187
Beach	78,768
Nuseirat	57,120
Khan Younis	63,219
Bureij	28,770
Maghazi	22,266
Deir el-Balah	19,534

Jordan

Camp	Number of Registered Refugees
Baq'a'a	86,514
Amman New Camp	50,601
Marka	42,721
Jabal el-Hussein	30,096
Irbid	23,984
Husn	20,645
Zarqa	17,844
Souf	15,429
Jerash	15,121
Talbieh	4,676

Lebanon

Camp	Number of Registered Refugees
Ein el-Hilweh	45,337
Nahr el-Bared	31,023
Rashidieh	25,580
Burj el-Barajneh	20,405
Burj el-Shemali	18,659
Beddawi	16,198
Shatila	12,235
El-Buss	10,107
Wavel	7,553
Mieh Mich	5,037
Dbayeh	4,211
Mar Elias	1,411
Dikwaneh & Nabatieh (destroyed camps)	16,108

Syria

Camp	Number of Registered Refugees
Neirab	17,994
Sbeineh	19,624
Khan Eshieh	15,731
Homs	13,825
Qabr Essit	16,016
Khan Dunoun	8,603
Hama	7,597
Dera's	5,916
Jaramana	5,007
Dera'a (Emergency)	5,536
Yarmouk	112,550
Latakia	6,354
Ein al Tal	4,329

Source: UNRWA Documents.

Chapter 6

The Evolution of UNRWA'S Mandate from Humanitarianism to Soft Protection

The Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and the first Palestinian Intifada in 1987 created an unprecedented urgency at the General Assembly and the Security Council to internationalize and solve the question of Palestine, thus focusing on UNRWA to carry the will of the international community; to protect the Palestinians physically, and prepare the WBG for independence. To do so, the GA had to explicitly redefine UNRWA's mandate to cope with the new regional challenges. Most analysts agree that the Intifada changed the dynamics of the game more so than the Lebanese invasion, for the US for the first time in history was willing to accept some international protection measures for the Palestinians, thus the Refugee Affairs Officer program was born.

While in the past both the Israeli and American governments voted against any attempts to send foreign observers or peacekeepers to the OPT, the Intifada changed the US approach and softened the Israeli one. Israel faced tremendous pressure at the General Assembly and in Europe. This paved the way for the General Assembly and the Security Council to pass resolution to protect the Palestinians in the WBG.

The SC adopted resolution 605 in which it strongly deplored the Israeli violations of human rights in the Palestinian occupied territories, and in particular “the opening of fire by the Israeli army, resulting in the killing and wounding of defenseless Palestinian civilians.” The resolution also called once again upon Israel “to abide immediately and scrupulously” by the Fourth Geneva Convention and “to desist forthwith from its policies and practices that are in violation of the provisions of the convention.” Finally, the resolution requested the Secretary-General “to examine the present situation in the occupied territories by all means

available to him, and to submit a report no later than January 20, 1988 containing his recommendations on ways and means for ensuring the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilians under Israeli occupation.” Measures that were not acceptable to Israel, Jordan and the US became a point of friction among the three during the Intifada.

In response to the first Intifada, the SC passed three additional resolutions authorizing physical protection to the Palestinians from the Israeli occupation that the US supported.¹⁴³ In resolution 681, which was adopted unanimously on December 20, 1990, the Security Council reacted positively to a request by the Secretary-General to develop further the idea of monitoring Israeli occupation of Palestinian civilians. The implications of resolution 681 were significant. For the first time the world organization, through a unanimous SC vote, provided the Secretary-General, and through him UNRWA, with an explicit mandate to monitor and observe the situation regarding Palestinians under Israeli occupation. Thus, UNRWA officially became the UN’s eyes and ears for the application of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which is responsible for overseeing decolonization (Schiff, 1995: 269). In addition to making the use of the information gathered by the RAOs and the legal officers, UNRWA appointed research officers in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to coordinate reporting to the Secretary-General. The UNSC resolutions were a continuation of a norm that the UN has been pushing for and Israel had been resisting. The deployment of an international force to protect the Palestinians became an international demand that many in the US and Europe continue to favor. In fact, Colin Powell called for sending observers and peace monitors to the OPT when he met with Yasser Arafat in 2001.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ UNSC Res. 605, December 22, 1987; UNSC Res. 681, December 20 1990; and UNSC Res. 904, March 18 1994.

¹⁴⁴ Saul Singer, “Why Israel Rejects Observers,” *Jerusalem Post*, July 3, 2001. Also see Daoud Kuttab, “Foreign Presence needed in Palestine Now,” *Palestine Time*, May 26, 2002.

The Intifada of 1987-1993 and of 2000 put UNRWA in the eye of the storm once again. The General Assembly called on UNRWA more than once to provide more than food and relief. The assembly called on UNRWA twice to implement soft protection activities in relation to the Palestine refugees. This came by way of Security Council resolution 605 of December 22, 1987, which called upon the Secretary-General to present to the UNSC “recommendations on ways and means for ensuring the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilians under Israeli occupation.”¹⁴⁵ Consequently, the Secretary-General outlined four principal means of protecting the Palestinian people in the OPT: physical protection; legal protection; protection by way of general assistance; and protection by publicity (Takkenberg, 1998: 250). Of these four protection mechanisms, UNRWA was specifically requested by the Secretary-General to enhance its “general assistance” capacity through the addition “of extra international staff” in the OPT. The purpose of such assistance was to intervene with Israel in an effort to provide a degree of “passive protection” to the Palestinians. Based on the Secretary General’s recommendations, UNRWA created the RAO, which included a “program of general assistance and protection.”¹⁴⁶ The RAO program, which began in January 1988, had two major objectives – to give UNRWA more power to perform better and with fewer restrictions and to allow the agency to provide a degree of passive protection for Palestinian refugees and non-refugees alike. As this chapter shows, this marked a clear evolution of its mandate.

The general assistance and protection program became a central supportive feature of UNRWA’s programs in the OPT by the early 1990s. By 1991, it had come to include a

145 From Humanitarian Crisis to Human Development: *The evolution of UNRWA’s Mandate to the Palestinian Refugees*. Peter Hansen, Commissioner General, UNRWA, address to the American University of Cairo September 21, 2003: 10-11.

146 Ibid: 12.

“legal aid scheme” run by UNRWA with the purpose of helping the refugees deal with a range of problems of life under occupation, including sustained follow-up in cases of deaths, injuries and harassment. UNRWA became involved in helping the Palestinians in bureaucratic matters such as obtaining various permits, legal advisement, welfare benefits and many others. The significance of the RAOs began to dwindle after the conclusion of the Declaration of Principles (DOP), which Israel and the PLO signed in Washington on September 13, 1993. The DOP called for the creation of the PNA. Hence, the program was officially suspended in the Gaza in May 1994 and in the West Bank in April 1996.¹⁴⁷

On February 25, 1994, however, Israel and the UN faced another crisis regarding the question of Palestine after the Hebron massacre. The PLO insisted that it would not continue to negotiate with Israel until the UN sent a peacekeeping force to protect Palestinians in the WBG. Israel refused to accept any UN mandate force to be deployed in the OPT. A compromise was reached between the two when the SC adopted on March 18 1994, resolution 904, which called for “a temporary international or foreign presence” to guarantee the safety and protection of Palestinian civilians.” Based on that resolution, the UN worked a formula among six European countries, Israel and the PLO, calling for the creation of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH). The PLO and Israel agreed that the TIPH force will have a 180 observers deployed in the Hebron area and its mandate will be renewed every three months unless otherwise agreed.¹⁴⁸

Then during the Al Aqsa Intifada, which began on September 28, 2000, UNRWA created another “soft protection” force called the Operational Support Officers (OSO). The

¹⁴⁷ UNRWA Documents 2003: 22.

¹⁴⁸ Memorandum of Understanding on the Establishment of a Temporary International Presence in Hebron, Hebron University Collections.

OSO program was introduced in 2000 to assist in facilitating the delivery of humanitarian goods, securing the safe passage of agency staff through checkpoints and more generally enhancing the proper implementation of agency programs in accordance with UN norms. The GA also involved the UNRWA in the momentum created by the Madrid and Oslo peace frameworks. Through resolution 48/40, the Assembly noted that “the new context created by the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government... will have major consequences for the activities of the UNRWA.”¹⁴⁹

This chapter is structured as follows. First, I discuss and analyze the creation of the RAO, its mandate and its political implications on the states of Israel and the US. Second I look at the evolution of the question of protecting the Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip at the UN. Third, I examine how and why the RAO was established and the American and Israeli responses to it. Fourth, I will talk about the establishment of the TIPH and examine if UNRWA played any role in its mission. Finally, I look at UNRWA and the public relations campaign that it launched against Israel in the last two decades. Was UNRWA supposed to issue press releases describing the political situation on the ground? Was it UNRWA’s job to exchange jabs with the Israeli government regarding the accuracy of its reports? Why did the Israeli government allow UNRWA to continue its functions regardless?

UNRWA and Palestinian Protection: Evolution of a Mandate

After the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in June 1967, there was growing international concern for the safety and security of the people living in the OPT. The UN’s concern for the human rights of civilians in the territories occupied by Israel was

¹⁴⁹ Peter Hansen 2003: 13.

first expressed by SC resolution (237) 1967 of June of that year. Acting unanimously, the council called upon the Israeli government to ensure the safety, welfare, and security of the inhabitants of the areas where military operations had taken place, and to facilitate the return of those inhabitants who had fled the areas since the outbreak of the hostilities. It recommended scrupulous respect of the humanitarian principles contained in the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 (Khoury, 1984: 152)

Similar concerns were expressed by the GA in 1968, the assembly expressed its “grave concern at the violation of human rights in Arab territories occupied by Israel” moved to establish a Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories. The Israeli government rejected the resolution as being one-sided and tainted with discrimination and has since the committee’s inception, refused to allow it to visit the occupied territories. Consequently, the committee has been unable to contribute significantly towards the protection of the Palestinians in the occupied territories, although it made alternative efforts to monitor the situation, and periodically reported its findings to the GA.

After the 1967 Six-Day War, UNRWA was asked by the Israeli government to continue its operations in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Soon after however, the agency and the Israeli government did not see eye to eye on many issues. Israel began demolishing homes in refugee camps including camp shelters, as reprisals against neighborhoods suspected of supporting the Egyptians for attacking Israeli soldiers in Gaza. UNRWA protested these actions referring to the Fourth Geneva Convention’s prohibition of collective punishment and destruction. Despite its protests, the demolitions continued, leading the agency for the first time to consider whether a UN presence could be interposed between the refugees and the occupation authorities. Thus, feeling that its role should be

more than a humanitarian one (Schiff, 1995: 83). A case in point is when Laurence Michelmore, commissioner-general of UNRWA (1964-1971), sought advice from UN Under-Secretary-General Ralph Bunche on how best to protect the Palestinian refugees from leaving the OPT. Bunche wrote back that there was “no easy solution” because any new measures would be opposed by Israel. Michelmore then suggested that Bunche consider whether the mechanism for international supervision and protection laid down in the Fourth Geneva Convention could be implemented. No action resulted from Michelmore’s proposal and the situation, especially in Gaza, continued to deteriorate (Ibid. 102).

Following the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, the GA adopted a resolution on the “Protection of Palestine Refugees.” The GA called upon the Secretary-General, in consultation with UNRWA, “to undertake effective measures to guarantee the safety and security and the legal and human rights of the Palestine refugees in Lebanon and the occupied territories.” Similar resolutions were adopted in subsequent years. In response to these resolutions, the Commissioner-General of UNRWA stated that under international law it is the occupying power’s responsibility to ensure that the rights of the inhabitants of the territory are safeguarded. However, *de facto* responsibility for this function was left to UNRWA, which looked after Palestinian refugees in the OPT, especially in southern Lebanon before the Israeli withdrawal. As a result, UNRWA continually stressed to the SC and Israel the need for appropriate action to protect refugees, particularly in the camps in southern Lebanon.¹⁵⁰

The PLO built on UNRWA’s involvement in the question of Palestine to further boost the public relations campaign against the Israeli occupation and brutality during the Israeli invasion to Lebanon in 1982. UNRWA positioned itself to champion Palestinian

¹⁵⁰ UNRWA Annual reports of the CG of 1982, 1983, 1985, 1988, and 1991.

issues during that invasion after it became a witness to the massacres that took place, by Lebanese militias supported by Israel, in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps of Lebanon. The agency could no longer afford to remain idle by the suffering of the Palestinians. Hence, UNRWA used its “international statue to officially interfere with the authorities of the host countries in order to facilitate the distribution of food and relief in the camps or to offer mediation services in case of arrests or kidnappings of refugees or local employees.”

UNRWA’s job became more challenging and internationalized after the massacres in the Sabra and Shatila camps, the General Assembly in consultation with UNRWA adopted resolution 37/120J 1982, by which it urged the agency to take all necessary measures to guarantee peace and security in the camps, to protect the political and human rights of the Palestinian refugees in the OPT camps. The resolution also urged the Commissioner-General to establish a report on all the damages caused to the refugees and their goods and to the offices of the other international organizations.

Thus, after 1982, UNRWA became a central player in Middle East politics. While respecting the sovereignty of the host countries, UNRWA officials created or established several new programs that sounded or perceived offensive to the integrity of a host country. The agency refrained from using protection programs and favored using terms like “the moral right to help secure the Palestinian refugee,” the agency kept on assuming its duty to protect the Palestinian population. It kept using terms less proactive terms such as, alert, warn, advise and notify to the host countries.”¹⁵¹ It has been under such circumstances that UNRWA’s mandate evolved over the years to cover a variety of issues. UNRWA’s international staff has been able to interfere with the Israeli force.¹⁵² The agency in 1984 was

¹⁵¹ UNRWA Annual Report of the CG. 1982-83: 7.

¹⁵² Ibid: 8.

able to work out some arrangements between the refugees and the Israeli Army to protect Palestinians after the Israelis leave the country.¹⁵³ Then, during the “camps war” (1983-1986) between the Palestinian forces loyal to the Fatah movement and the Shi’aite militia of Amal, its personnel succeeded in obtaining the liberation of 1,500 refugees who had been kidnapped by the militia, making sure to feed people in the targeted camps as so they could.¹⁵⁴

Then, in 1987, the Intifada, erupted in the OPT to reflect Palestinian frustration with the occupation and with their traditional leadership. Some revolutionary leaders asserted in the summer of 2000 “the Intifada was an uprising against the occupation as well as a revolution against the traditional leaders.”¹⁵⁵ Reacting to the indignation felt by the international community towards the Israeli repression against the Palestinians during the Intifada, UNRWA was instructed by the SC and the UN secretariat to recruit workers in order to ameliorate the “general assistance” given to the refugee population in these two regions. The “general assistance” was a form of protection less precisely defined than the physical or legal protection, in which a foreign agency would intervene towards the authorities of the occupying power in order to help individuals or groups to resist against the violations of their rights and to face the daily troubles of the life under occupation.

Thus, UN Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar asked UNRWA to do more for the refugees and non-refugees. He urged UNRWA to adopt a policy of intervention with “the occupying power to help individuals . . . resist violations of their rights (e.g., land confiscations) and to cope with the day-to-day difficulties of life under occupation, such as

¹⁵³ Plan for Refugee Protection in Al-Fajer, Jerusalem Palestinian, Weekly Publication, December 7, 1984: 3.

¹⁵⁴ UNRWA Emergency Operation In Lebanon: 1986-87.

¹⁵⁵ A meeting with some revolutionary leaders, July 15, 2000. Hebron, West Bank.

security restrictions, curfews, harassment, and bureaucratic difficulties.” He also proposed enlargement of UNRWA’s international staff and called for the agency to make no distinction in extending humanitarian aid between Palestinians who have refugee status and those who do not. The Secretary-General’s proposals were more an endorsement of what UNRWA had already been doing than recommendations for new operations. UNRWA’s Commissioner-General Giacomelli collaborated fully with Pérez de Cuéllar in drafting many resolutions to help the international community deal with massive humanitarian disasters in the OPT.

The bloody character of the Intifada forced UNRWA to temporarily shift its operational focus from education to health services, which it had been providing refugees with for several years. In addition to laboratories, dental offices, maternity wards and mother-child care centers, UNRWA had been running at least 50 health clinics in the OPT. It had also been operating a fleet of ambulances and subsidized 400 beds in West Bank and Gaza hospitals. To meet the new demands associated with the Intifada, UNRWA transformed its prenatal health clinics into emergency treatment centers, as many of UNRWA’s new patients were young victims who had sustained injuries due to beating, gassing, or gunshot. UNRWA also dealt with patients who suffered from tear gas convulsions, suffocation and miscarriages. In other words, the severity of the situation created a gap in the health-care system that UNRWA alone was available to fill.¹⁵⁶

UNRWA hired 15 more doctors and 15 nurses from among the local pool of unemployed Palestinian doctors who had been trained in Western, Eastern, and Arab countries. It extended the hours of its clinics into early evening, especially in troubled areas, and it opened up emergency clinics in trailers equipped with only the barest necessities but

¹⁵⁶ UNRWA Annual Report of the CG 1988: 55.

essential in periods of high casualties. UNRWA also ran its own fleet of emergency vehicles and ambulances and on many occasions kept its clinics open on twenty-four hour basis. The agency enlarged its stocks of anesthetics, antibiotics, suture materials, oxygen cylinders, and plaster and brought new equipment for surgery, intensive care, and physiotherapy.¹⁵⁷

I visited many clinics in the West Bank and Jordan and listened to detailed description from doctors, nurses, and patients about UNRWA's role in providing medical attention to Palestinians. The process is as follows. Each refugee is issued a five digit number card. When patients enter a clinic, they submit their card. The card serves as a file on patients. It indicates where they come from, how many children they have, how long they have been refugees, and if they visited the clinic before. If it were a patient's first visit, the patient is given a blue or a white card that asks for personal information. Most patients wait an hour to be seen. I sensed few complaints from the refugees. They seem satisfied and thankful for the services of the agency. Many of the patients receive first aid and light treatment in the clinics from the modest hospitals that UNRWA operates in the region. The doctors at UNRWA clinics can usually check their patients for several diseases such as cardiovascular system, nervous system, respiratory system, renal disease, diabetes and lipid disorder. During the Intifada UNRWA added more to its services and increased its working hours to cope with increased demand for services. Moreover, the agency became more flexible in treating nonrefugees.

Furthermore, UNRWA had to adjust its food program in light of the Intifada. Where in the past the agency served preschool children on a daily basis after the eruption of the Intifada its feeding programs were expanded to cover youngsters up to the age of ten,

¹⁵⁷ UNRWA Annual Report of the CG of UNRWA 1989: 44.

pregnant and nursing women, and newborns. In addition, the agency expanded a program to distribute blankets, clothing, and cash to needy families and to repair and rebuild shelters damaged in the course of the conflict. The Intifada benefited UNRWA because it captured worldwide attention and sympathy, which led many governments to respond with donations to cover the costs of the special operations.¹⁵⁸

The increase in the number of the injured during the Intifada made medical services the most expensive for UNRWA. But keeping with its tradition of encouraging education, UNRWA was asked by the GA to introduce two new courses: “Conflict Resolution” and “Human Rights.” The General Assembly aspired to teach Palestinians children courses that will make them better able to adapt to the new circumstances. This measure seemed to boost UNRWA’s credibility with both sides of the conflict. But the results of the daily clashes did not decline. Thus, UNRWA began the process of ensuring the physical protection of the Palestinians. This led to UNRWA deploying some of its international staff observers in and around the refugee camps. The assumption behind the move was to save as many lives as possible. The agency then authorized these observers, if the circumstances held any promise, to act as negotiators in threatening situations and to deal with the Israeli army on the scene rather than pass through formal administrative channels. Thus, the birth of the RAOs took place.

The debate on the protection of Palestinians did not end with the adoption of SC resolution 605 (1987) and the introduction of UNRWA’s RAO program. The issue was discussed thoroughly by the Security Council following an incident on May 20, 1990, when an Israeli gunman, Ami Bober, killed eight Palestinian workers and wounded eleven others at

¹⁴ Annual Report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, 1990: 60.

Rishon Lezion, a suburb of Tel-Aviv.¹⁵⁹ Following the massacre at Rishon Lezion, Palestinians demonstrated in the OPT. During the demonstrations, the Israeli Army killed another seventeen and wounded more than 1,000. The council met again in Geneva to discuss the situation further.¹⁶⁰

During the Security Council debate in Geneva on May 25 and 26, 1990, and in New York on May 31, 1990, nearly every delegation that spoke, including permanent members of the council emphasized the urgent need to protect all Palestinians regardless of their status. However, a resolution which would have established a commission consisting of three members of the SC to examine the situation in the OPT and recommend ways and means for ensuring the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilians under Israeli occupation was not adopted owing to the negative vote of the US.¹⁶¹

Other calls for increased international protection were made following the violence on 8 October 1990 at the Al Haram Al Shareef and other holy places of Jerusalem, resulting in over twenty deaths. Following this incident, the Secretary-General decided once again to send a mission to the region to look into “ways to ensure the safety and protection of the

¹⁵⁹ Between December 1987 and May 1990 the UNSC met on several occasions to consider the situation in the OPT and adopted several resolutions about deportations. See, for example, UNSC res. 607 January 5, 1988; UNSC res. 608, January 14, 1988; UNSC res. 636 July 6, 1989, and UNSC res. 641, August 30, 1989. In a statement by the President of the Council on August 25, 1988, UN doc. S/20156, the members of the UNSC declared their grave concern at the continued deterioration of the situation in the OPT, including Jerusalem, since 1967.

¹⁶⁰ On the question of protecting the Palestinian refugees see Lex. Takkenberg, “The Protection of Palestine Refugees in the Territorial Occupied by Israel,” *International Journal of Refugee Law*, Vol. 3, No. 3, (1991), pp. 414-434; Ben Schiff, “Between Occupier and Occupied: UNRWA in the West Bank and Gaza Strip,” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XVIII, no. 3 (Spring 1989), pp. 60-75; Edward Marx, “Palestinian Refugee Camps in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 28, no. 2 (April 1992), pp. 281-294; Ben Schiff “Assisting the Palestinian Refugees: Progress in Human Rights?,” in E. Adler and B. Crawford, eds., *Progress in Postwar International Relations*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), pp. 359-402

¹⁶¹ UN doc. S/21919: 7.

Palestinian civilians under Israeli occupation.”¹⁶² Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar sent Murrack Goulding, the undersecretary-general for political affairs to the region to advise the secretariat on the next steps. Goulding was asked to conduct field investigations and to write his recommendations. Goulding received an icy welcome in Israel and was told that the UN had no jurisdiction in the OPT. The government ordered the Israeli Army to prevent him from going to refugee camps in the Gaza Strip and was personally harassed. While Under-Secretary Goulding was touring the WBG he witnessed incidents of harassment and endangerment against UNRWA and other UN personnel who were evacuating the wounded or feeding the hungry. In his recommendation to the SC, Pérez de Cuéllar reported that the Israeli government was in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention regarding the treatment of people under occupation. The report reaffirmed the conclusions of the report that was submitted on January 21, 1988. The Secretary-General noted in his earlier recommendation that it was necessary to add an extra international staff to UNRWA’s RAOs program. He asserted that such an addition had “helped to defuse tense situations, avert maltreatment of vulnerable groups, reduce interference with the movement of ambulances, and facilitate the provision of food and medical aid during curfews.”¹⁶³ The report also stated that the RAO’s presence “had been welcomed by the Palestinians” but that the Israeli authorities prevented it from fully benefiting the Palestinians the way it was intended. The Secretary-General also stated that the numerous appeals to the Israeli authorities to abide by their obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention had been ineffective. Realizing that for any measure of protection to be ensured, the cooperation of the Israeli authorities would be essential, the Secretary-General suggested that the Security

¹⁶² UN doc. SC/5221.

¹⁶³ UN Doc. S/21991, 9.

Council call for a meeting of the high contracting parties of the Fourth Geneva Convention to discuss possible measures that might be taken by them under the convention.

The employment of a greater number of international staff has certainly had a significant effect. The existence of an international presence at points of confrontation, reminding Israeli soldiers that their actions were not totally invisible to the outside world, often had an inhibiting effect. Moreover, the international presence allowed victims of alleged violations of human rights to report their allegations to UN officers specifically assigned for this purpose. This situation ensured that violations would not go unnoticed to the world. Finally, these reports frequently resulted in representations to the Israeli authorities.

Who Are the RAOs?

According to UNRWA documents, an RAO is an observer whose duty is to “uphold the safety and security and the legal and human rights of the Palestine refugees who lived under Israeli occupation in 1967 and thereafter.” An RAO facilitates the agency’s operations and assists the refugee population in their day-to-day life.¹⁶⁴ UNRWA established the RAOs in January 1988 as a practical response by the UN to the outbreak of the Intifada. RAOs have employed over 140 individuals over the years. Most of the officers who participated in the force were highly educated and well motivated. They came from many western countries, especially the US, UK, and France. At first, RAOs had no title attached to their functions. They were first deployed around the regional offices in Jerusalem and Gaza. They were referred to informally as “trouble-shooters.” But UNRWA administrators disliked these

¹⁶⁴ UNRWA Documents 1950-1990:44, & General Assembly Res. A/46/641, UN/ Doc, October 23, 1988:3.

designations, for they did not reflect the true intentions and functions of these forces. As a result, UNRWA headquarters in Vienna invented the title “Refugee Affairs Officer.”

By their presence alone, RAOs helped lower tensions and prevent maltreatment of the refugees, especially vulnerable groups such as women and children. They helped to evacuate wounded, reduce interference with ambulances, and obtain the release of refugee children. They assisted the population on an *ad hoc* basis. For instance, an RAO would help a Palestinian obtain permits to carry on essential services during curfew periods and to facilitate the movement of essential food and medical supplies to camps and other locations (Takkenberg, 1998 and 1991; Schiff, 1995; Peretz, 1993; Viorst, 1989).

To distinguish these services from others and to avoid mistakes, UNRWA gave RAOs uniforms and special identification. They were not allowed to carry weapons nor gas masks. In case of a disturbance, they were not allowed to interfere physically. The activities of the RAOs were seen in the context of a wider protection program, which also included a modest legal aid scheme. The work of the RAOs in the field was coordinated by two operations officers, supported and supplemented by two special legal officers and two public information officers. The operational officers were responsible for the day-to-day operations of the RAO teams, including scheduling of the duty rosters, communications, routine and reporting. The legal officers helped the field directors in preparing consolidated reports and in making representations to the Israeli authorities at every level from the local military commander right up to the ministries of defense and foreign affairs. In this context, the legal officers frequently investigated allegations of human rights violations and reports of violations of UNRWA’s privileges and immunities. Finally, the public information officers were responsible for servicing the international media, thereby contributing to “protection of publicity” as envisaged in the Secretary-General’s report. The public information officers

frequently used statistics and other information gathered through the RAO-program, highlighting the close interplay between the agency's general assistance and publicity functions.¹⁶⁵

What Do RAOs Accomplish?

According to UNRWA's documents, the RAOs typically assembled about 8:00 am each morning, both in Jerusalem and in Gaza, for a meeting chaired by the director or deputy-director of UNRWA's local office. The principal items on the agenda were the reports that the RAO's submitted on the previous day, along with accounts they personally missed. Someone would report on skirmishes between teenagers and settlers, house demolitions by Israel, gunshot victims, or a nighttime arrest by a squad of soldiers. They would also report, based on their conversations with Palestinians in the camps and towns, where trouble seems likely to occur in the upcoming 24 hours. The director would usually disclose information or cautions communicated to him the previous day in talks with Israeli military headquarters. The communications officer might discuss how to correct some radio problem. The legal officer would be responsible for investigating every known clash between Palestinians and Israelis, to measure the extent of wounds and injuries, and to file formal protests with the military administration if there has been some irregularity in conduct.¹⁶⁶

The RAOs had a legal officer who collected from them the daily status report. RAOs were asked to record injuries and deaths, arrests and releases, confrontations and curfews, as well as damage to UNRWA installations. Officers were allowed to ask questions to supplement the reports or schedule a fuller interrogation for later in the day. The job of a

¹⁶⁵ UNRWA Annual Report of the CG1988: 22.

¹⁶⁶ UNRWA Documents, October 6, 1993: 54.

legal officer was to compile data and forward it to headquarters in Vienna for the permanent file.¹⁶⁷

The principal tasks of the RAOs were to (1) circulate throughout refugee camps to observe and report any “unusual or abnormal circumstances”; (2) visit agency installations and report on disruptions; (3) visit camps under curfew and report problems affecting the populations’ welfare; (4) collect information on casualties; (5) help in the delivery of food and medical assistance; (6) liaise with military governors and the civil administration on matters affecting the agency’s operation and the refugees’ welfare; (7) visit imprisoned UNRWA staff; and (8) perform others duties as they arise.¹⁶⁸

Each RAO’s had an assistant called Camp Services Officer (CSO) or Camp Leader. The CSO’s job was to check on the activities and the actions that took place since the groups last met. He was a caretaker who rarely performed much of a leadership function at all. However, since the Intifada, some leadership responsibilities have been thrust upon him by the nature of events. On many occasions, CSOs were caught between protesters and soldiers, with both turning to him for support or information. All CSOs were Palestinian refugees. They were given many tasks that never were assigned to a refugee before. Many CSOs were paid to keep an eye on UNRWA installations within the camp schools, clinics, recreational centers, warehouses, and food distribution stores. In addition, CSOs supervised water supply systems, feeding programs and the sanitation facilities. Some of the other duties that an CSO dealt with or handled were camp improvements, hospital care and scholarships. In short, CSOs were UNRWA’s eyes and ears in the camps. As for the ranking between and RAO and CSO, the RAO was superior to the CSO. The CSO had to report to him all the

¹⁶⁷ UNRWA Documents, October 6, 1988.

¹⁶⁸ UNRWA Documents, Job Description: Refugee Affairs Officers 1988: 31.

incidents that took place since he left the scene. The RAO had to verify all the report he received from the CSO by asking to talk to witnesses in the area of tension. After the RAO validates the report, he would send it to Vienna.

While in the West Bank I spoke with a few “Camp Service Officers” or “Camp Leaders” from the Dehisha and Ayda refugee camps. I interacted with some who have been living in the Dehisha refugee camp and were assistants to the RAOs. They came from Haifa and all attended UNRWA schools and benefited from the agency’s services. They spoke highly of UNRWA and its impact on Palestinian human security and human development.¹⁶⁹ They praised UNRWA’s role in protecting the Palestinians inside and outside the refugee camp. They were critical of the UN’s ambiguous mandate regarding the protection of the Palestinians saying that “the fact that the General Assembly did not provide UNRWA with an explicit protection mandate has not prevented the agency from developing initiatives aimed at addressing the protection needs of the refugees it has been serving for almost 56 years.”¹⁷⁰ Many UNRWA services, though formally labeled “assistance,” have guaranteed basic rights of the refugees. They also pointed out that through its emergency operations, UNRWA has extended physical protection to hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees. On various occasions, the agency considered whether it would be appropriate and feasible to develop a more explicit protection role. The onset of the uprising in the OPT in late 1987 finally provided an opportunity to launch new initiatives in this respect.¹⁷¹

I met other refugees who worked in UNRWA schools for almost three decades. One of them became the head of the board of education and later a community leader in the

¹⁶⁹ By human security I mean: the providing of the protection and the empowerment of individuals against violent and non-violent threats in a manner that enhances their long-term ability for human fulfillment.

¹⁷⁰ A meeting with some Camp Service Officers, Dehisha refugee camp, West Bank, July 23, 2001.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

camp. He spoke about UNRWA, its services, and its future with such authority. Originally from Haifa, he has lived in Hebron and the Ayda refugee camp on and off for the last five decades. He is no longer on UNRWA's payroll, so he spoke with no reservation and no constraints. When asked about the RAOs their functions and rational, he asserted that the main significance of the work of the RAOs has probably been "the practical support and assistance it extended to individual Palestinians, as well as to communities, in dealing with day-to-day difficulties of life under occupation."¹⁷² The community leader listed examples of the kind of daily assistance that RAOs conducted: returning confiscated identity cards; obtaining permits for funerals; securing the early release of minors accused of involvement in riots; facilitating the movement of sick and injured persons during riots or periods of curfew; safeguarding clinics; preventing confrontations at schools; facilitating the distribution of food supplies in times of curfew; and delivering urgently needed medicine or documents. He hoped at one point that the RAO program would evolve into a peacekeeping or humanitarian intervention mission. Many refugees rational for supporting the RAO program was very clear: "the Palestinians were excluded from UNHCR's mandate, thus no protection policies were designed for them at all."¹⁷³ Thus, he believed with others in the camp that "UNRWA should continue its RAO-program for as long as it takes to document Israel's abuses of the refugees."¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² Interview with a community leader, June 25 ,2003, Hebron, West Bank.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

Israel's Reaction to the RAOs

The RAOs' confrontation with the Israeli government took place when they challenged publicly the "Iron Fist" military policies of former Israeli Defense Minister Rabin.¹⁷⁵ UNRWA's legal advisors put a great deal of energy and efforts to develop an operational code for the RAOs to prevent unnecessary confrontations with the Israelis. Both the Israelis and UNRWA foreign staff were after one another. When the Israelis objected to the RAOs' behavior, the field directors and the commissioner-general seemed to "relish tossing back at the Israelis the line that they had so many times received: they urged the Israelis to provide concrete information, to bring complaints to their attentions, and they promised to investigate, just as the Israeli Civil Administration had done to them so many times" (Schiff, 1995: 211).

From the Israeli standpoint, RAO patrols exceeded their mandate. The RAOs appeared to the Israelis as an effort to create an international presence to monitor and defuse violent confrontations between the security forces and the refugees, even though the agency downplayed its role. Because the Israelis rejected the idea of "general assistance," they believed that the RAOs were exceeding their mandate. Although Israel considered the RAOs objectionable in principle, in practice their responses to them varied from harassment to appreciation. As Ambassador Comay had argued regarding UNRWA after the 1967 war, it did not appear to be "worth the candle" to make too big an issue of the RAOs (Schiff, 1995: 254).

¹⁷⁵ On January 18, 1988, former defense minister Rabin announced a policy of "force, might, and beating." After the denouncement, a series of incidents that gained international censure – including the deliberate breaking of arms of Palestinian demonstrators – prompted the army to adjust its orders. See Al-Haq, *A Nation Under Siege: Al-Haq Annual Report on Human Rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories*, Ramallah, 1990, 32.

The Israeli Army complained about UNRWA on many occasions. They accused the agency of exceeding its mandate by following army vehicles, transporting the injured in their ambulances and creating a buffer zone between the Palestinians and the army. Israel feared that UNRWA would set a legal precedent for a UN peacekeeping mission in the OPT if they continued their aggressive policy. In October 1988, Brigadier General Fredy Zach told the commissioner-general that he appreciated what UNRWA was doing and that although “things were relatively good, there were some problems.”¹⁷⁶ For instance, the Israeli military complained about incidents of stone throwing from clinics and schools in the refugee camps.

Some Israeli officials argued that the RAOs interfered with Israel’s security forces. As the Intifada continued, confrontations between the RAOs and Israeli military units grew more hostile. The Israelis objected to RAOs taking photographs of their security operations. In a meeting in June 1989, Coordinator Goren reported to the commissioner-general that the Israeli army was complaining that RAOs were operating outside the refugee camps, taking pictures of troop activities, and using wireless equipment to report on army operations. He said that UNRWA was not allowed to do these things or to operate outside the camps. The commissioner-general said he had issued instructions that cameras were not to be used and he would “inquire into the matter.”¹⁷⁷

But reality on the ground was harsh. Many refugees lived, attended schools, and visited clinics and relief centers outside the camps and thus outside the legal jurisdiction of the agency. As a result, the commissioner-general had to extend the agency’s services to all

¹⁷⁶ UNRWA Documents, note for the record of a meeting between Giacomelli and Zach dated October 6, 1988.

¹⁷⁷ UNRWA Documents, telex record of meeting with Civil Administrator, Nov. 15, 1988; and note for the record of a meeting on Nov. 14, 1988, between DUO/G and LO/G with the head of the CA, Gaza et al, Nov. 16, 1988

Palestinians on the OPT regardless of their residence, a decision the Israeli army was not in favor of at all.

Despite UNRWA's assurances to remain committed to their mandate, the Israeli Army charged that the RAOs were attempting to interfere physically with the Israeli army in support of Palestinian demonstrators. Israel listed four incidents in which an RAO allegedly prevented an Israeli occupation forces soldier from firing his weapon, attempted forcibly to remove a refugee detained by the Israeli occupation forces, hit an Israeli occupation forces soldiers, and followed Israeli occupation forces vehicles in the Nablus area between June 28 and July 1, 1989 (Schiff, 1995: 231).

The public relations war between UNRWA representatives and the Israeli military continues until this day. UNRWA never hesitated to accuse the Israeli government of lying or fabricating a story. A case in point is when the Israeli government showed a picture of an UNRWA employee placing a missile in one of its ambulances. UNRWA refuted the claim and proved that the object that was inserted in the ambulance was a medical stretcher. The UNSG dispatched a fact finding mission to the Gaza Strip to investigate the incident. After long and exhausting investigation the UN team reported that the object was indeed a medical stretcher.¹⁷⁸

According to UNRWA Coordinator of Operations Robert Gallagher, as the Intifada wore on and Israeli security measures intensified, many agency international field officials found it increasingly difficult to retain a measured and objective approach to the Israeli authorities. He observed that on many occasions RAOs were drawn into shouting matches with Israeli military personnel. Gallagher, who accompanied some RAOs on their rounds, said, "it was sometimes difficult to stay aloof and focus on helping refugees" (Schiff,

¹⁷⁸ UNRWA press release HQ/G/30/2004.

1995:254). He accompanied an RAO to a town on the West Bank where Israeli settlers had shot two refugees, killing one and wounding the other. Israeli occupation forces troops were on the scene to investigate what had happened. The soldiers were being stoned by a large number of children “shocking, what risks the kids will take,” Gallagher, said:

In the confrontation during the troops’ investigation, one young man had been shot in the stomach, another in his leg. An UNRWA ambulance was on the scene, and the Israeli occupation forces troops agreed that the ambulance should take the wounded out. As the RAO and Gallagher accompanied the ambulance, it was stopped at an Israeli checkpoint at which there were an Israeli occupation forces ambulance and doctor. The doctor wanted to look at the wounded Palestinians, which the RAO considered interference. Gallagher overruled the RAO, and the Israeli doctor supplied plasma to the patients, perhaps saving their lives. The lesson the agency learned from the first RAO operations was that RAOs should remain on the scene of disturbances but be passive. They really had little to do as intermediaries between the army and the Palestinians, because they had nothing to offer the two to mitigate their clashes. What they could do was help the wounded get to hospitals, try to recover refugees’ identification papers from the authorities, and remind the Israelis that their actions were not totally invisible to the outside world (Schiff, 1995: 257).

At UNRWA’s headquarters in Gaza City, the RAOs and the agency’s foreign internationals staff helped in smoothing the relations between the agency and Israeli officials by avoiding hot rhetoric, minimizing stands on principle, and playing the role of objective and impartial facilitators rather than polarized participants. The RAOs on many occasions reported developments in the field – e.g., curfews, skirmishes, tensions, and problems with food supplies. The question that occupied them most was whether they could enter an area or not without permission from headquarters. The agency made sure each time that these activities would not go beyond the usual activities of the past, for instance, not including monitoring.¹⁷⁹ This was a huge challenge, but UNRWA’s legal advisor and coordinator of

¹⁷⁹ UNRWA Documents, note for the record of a meeting on June 27, 1989, between Giacomelli et al. and Shmuel Goren, coordinator of the administered territories, et al., dated July 2, 1989. (Reproduced in Schiff,

operations continually passed instructions to colleagues in the field. For example, UNRWA's Legal Advisor at the time Sinha wrote in a briefing memo to field staff saying:

The Agency should avoid giving the impression of being partisan in its approach to the problems of the occupied territories. It has to avoid on the one hand giving the impression of collaboration with the occupying power, or acquiescence in certain of its practices; on the other hand, it should not act as an advocate for any particular cause, or as a body which gives sanctuary to those indulging in acts of violence. This is admittedly a very difficult course to steer, but the Agency's credibility depends on the objectivity and impartiality with which it carries out its mission. Thus, while it is right and appropriate for the Agency to take up with the Israeli authorities instances of the maltreatment or brutalization of refugees, which it is directly aware of, it may not be necessary to write in great detail to the authorities on each occasion; it may suffice to raise some of these matters at meetings. Likewise we need not in every letter of protest or complaint, invoke the constitutional basis for the Agency's action, e.g., the Comay-Michelmore Agreement of 1967, or the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, or similar instruments. Letters of protest or complaint should not be emotional or give the impression of lecturing the addressee, but should be factual.¹⁸⁰

Generally, while Sinha believed that the activities of the RAOs could be justified under the mandate, he sought to maintain cordial relations with the Israelis as much as possible by focusing on practical matters rather than principle. He issued a memorandum describing how reports should be written, sending a second copy after a West Bank field official referred in a written protest to the Israeli occupation forces obstruction of an RAO's "duty of observation." Sinha reminded him that

[r]eports should not refer to the Refugee Affairs Officers 'monitoring' or 'observing' the activities of Israeli soldiers; indeed those two terms are best avoided. The facts to be described can be brought out in a neutral way by stating that the staff member concerned saw a certain incident the particulars of which could then be briefly described. There should also be a reference to any operational reason requiring the

1995).

¹⁸⁰ UNRWA Documents, note on UNRWA's mandate from The Legal Advisor (TLA) Surya Sinha, (annex C to a briefing package for CG and Director of UNRWA's Operations (DOUs): Notes for Briefing UNRWA Staff in the WB and GS), dated Sept. 21, 1988. (Reproduced in Schiff, 1995)

RAO's presence in the area, e.g., if he had gone to a camp to assist in overseeing relief distribution or in getting access by sanitation laborers to their work place, this should be mentioned.¹⁸¹

The RAOs found the work to be exciting and frustrating at the same time. A West Bank RAO reporting on his experiences in the Nablus area wrote:

Occasionally, the presence of international observers makes a difference when the Israeli army enters a camp or city on a raid. If the UN or the International Red Cross is around, perhaps a boy is merely arrested and not beaten or shot, a search of someone's house results in a rough lecture and not a thorough thrashing, or an army raid on a school ends with a warning instead of a tear-gassing. More often, in my experience, I have arrived too late to do anything but pick up the pieces. I can only sit and watch from the UN car, a human camera recording the visual evidence into a notebook with an unsteady hand (Lynk, 1990: 102).

Many RAOs were not afraid to speak their minds when necessary. The Palestinian assistant of one of the RAO officers spoke candidly to me about the relationship between a British RAO by the name of Bernard Mills and the Israelis. Mills was very frustrated with the Israeli military's lack of professionalism and poor training. Mill asked the army to reduce its profile, especially around schools, clinics, and refugee camps. He wanted the military to give UNRWA-RAOs the chance regularly to defuse tensions. Mills blamed the loss of control partly on the Israeli army, which had arrested students randomly and then mistreated them.

I interviewed some of the people who worked and dealt closely with Mills. One of them observed that Mills always lectured the Israelis on how to react to disturbance and rioting. The Israelis grew very impatient with him to the extent that they wanted him out of the territories. Although the Israelis never asked him to leave the country, Israel became

¹⁸¹ UNRWA Documents, memorandum to A/DUO/WB from TLA, on drafting of reports by RAOs, July 6, 1989.

furious with him after he challenged the truthfulness of Yitzhak Rabin's assertion that the army did not use live ammunition in confrontations with the rock-throwers.¹⁸²

The general consensus in the camps was that UNRWA's ROA program proved to be an appropriate mechanism to provide additional protection in periods of conflict similar to that of the Intifada. The program's informal and spontaneous character was a major key to its success. On many occasions, even the Israeli government supported RAO activities. Nevertheless, mainly the Palestinian community appreciated the assistance and protection provided by RAOs.

The Creation of The Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH)

TIPH is a governmental civilian observer mission that was established by an agreement between Israel and the PLO in 1994. This move resulted from the killing of 29 Palestinian worshippers in the Ibrahimi Mosque (Tomb of the Patriarchs) by an Israeli settler on February 25, 1994. TIPH is staffed by personnel from Denmark, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and Turkey. Its main task is to monitor and report on misconduct by either side in the conflict. TIPH is not allowed to intervene directly in incidents and has no military or police functions. TIPH consists of 180 members and is composed of three divisions, the Operations Division, the Staff Division, and the Support Division. According to PLO archives, the TIPH mandate is as follows: (1) to provide by their presence a feeling of security to the Palestinians of Hebron; (2) to help in promoting stability and an appropriate environment conducive to the enhancement of the well being of the Palestinians in Hebron and their economic development; and (3) to report to a Joint Committee on Hebron (JCH) on its daily observations.

¹⁸² Interview with a refugee in the Dehisha Refugee Camp, West Bank, June 25, 2000.

The organizational structure of the TIPH is somewhat different than that of the RAOs. According to PLO archives, the structure of the TIPH is as follows. First, TIPH will consist of up to 180 members from Denmark, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and Turkey. Second, the head of the mission is appointed by Norway and has the authority to direct and instruct all personal assigned to him. Third, a senior national representative is appointed for each country. The representative assigns responsibility for heading various sections within the TIPH organization. One senior national representative acts as deputy head of the mission. Fourth, TIPH is subordinate to the country that it works in, in matters that require joint decisions consultation will take place as appropriate on the national or local level. Fifth, each country covers all personnel cost directly related to its citizens. Sixth, in the city of Hebron the members of TIPH wear a distinct uniform with an emblem consisting of the letters TIPH. The observer will also wear armbands marked with observers in English, Arabic, and Hebrew. Seventh, TIPH provides its members with Identity Cards in English, Arabic, and Hebrew. Eighth, the working language of TIPH is English. Ninth, TIPH's headquarters and accommodation premises should be established in Hebron by the TIPH without outside interference.

The TIPH operational outlines were more restricted than the RAOs. Its guidelines are as follows: (1) to maintain close coordination with all the parties, the Palestinians and the Israelis, through the District Coordination Office (DOC) and the Joint Hebron Committee (JHC); (2) publish daily situation reports based on internationally recognized human rights standards; (3) move freely in performing tasks in the city of Hebron, except when notified through the DOC of exceptional and temporary measures (such measures must be approved by the respective Israeli or Palestinian commander of the Hebron area, as appropriate); (4) report its activities TIPH can use cameras or video equipment; (5) not

interfere in disputes or incidents (disputes or incidents will be reported immediately to the head of mission.); and (6) internal safety measures will be taken, after appropriate coordination, by the TIPH to protect its personnel.

TIPH personnel enjoyed certain immunities to facilitate their movements and their freedoms. They were accorded immunities against arrest or detention, immunity from legal processes of any kind, full immunity for their luggage, privileges concerning taxes on petrol, and reimbursement for locally procured operational supplies and equipment. Members of TIPH were asked to wear “distinctive uniforms” with a special emblem and their vehicles were to be marked with the same emblem.”¹⁸³ As its mandate indicates, TIPH’s main objectives have been to promote peace, stability and an environment conducive to economic progress. Walking the streets of Hebron, one can feel the presence of the TIPH. They are constantly on patrol; they drive from their headquarters, a three story building on the outskirts of the city of Hebron, to the occupied part of the city. They drive Italian made white cars (Fiat) with clear horizontal red strips and the initials of TIPH written on them. According to some UNRWA officials, the TIPH forces in Hebron are an independent force that was established to perform a task distinct from the RAOs and does not coordinate matters with UNRWA.

According to the Mayor of Hebron, Mustafa Al-Natsha, the UN agreed to send the TIPH after the SC adopted resolution 904 of 1994 Resolution 904 strongly condemned the massacre in the tomb of the Patriarchs. When asked about TIPH duties, Al-Natsha asserted that TIPH members were to report on specific events to the JHC. The committee is comprised of two representatives from each side. Overall, the mayor saw the TIPH as a good and a possible sign of having an expanded peacekeeping mission in the area. But he

¹⁸³ Memorandum of Understanding on the Establishment of a Temporary International Presence in Hebron, p. 2.

observed that the RAOs were more dynamic and had more international legitimacy. When asked to elaborate he mentioned that the GA did not establish the TIPH, it was established as an *ad hoc* international observer force, whereas UNRWA established the RAOs with a clear consent from the UN. Al-Natsha also pointed out that the RAOs mandate and the TIPH's mandate were drastically different. Whereas the TIPH's mandate was based on an agreement with the PLO, Israel, Denmark, Italy, and Norway, and limited to the city of Hebron, the RAO's mandate was more spontaneous and covered refugees and nonrefugees alike during the first Intifada. Finally, the mayor asserted that the refugees feel better and more protected by the RAOs than the TIPH.¹⁸⁴

Both Israelis and Palestinians alike have criticized the TIPH mission. Both have condemned their activities and accused them of being biased, unprofessional or powerless. The Palestinians expected the TIPH to exercise some power to protect them in case of any Israeli attack, but reality was more brutish than that. Several councilmen from the city of Hebron explained that the Israelis were ridiculing the TIPH members all the time. A case in point was when the Israeli government decided to demolish the house of a political activist in the city. The mayor's office and the family went to ask the TIPH to intervene on their behalf. The Israeli military governor of Hebron declared the area a closed military district and prevented TIPH and others from even coming close to the house until after it was demolished. The fact that TIPH was unable to deliver made Palestinians lose faith in the organization from its early stages¹⁸⁵

The Israelis, on the other hand, accused the TIPH of stepping beyond their mandate on several occasions. Indeed TIPH personal felt obliged to interfere on many occasions on

¹⁸⁴ A meeting with Mayor of Hebron, July 23, 2000, Hebron, West Bank. (Mr. Mustafa Al Natsha).

¹⁸⁵ A meeting with several Councilman from the City of Hebron July 25, 2000 Hebron West Bank.

behalf of the Palestinians against the Israeli Army. A case in point is when the departing Norwegian head of mission accused the Israeli government and settlers of committing ethnic cleansing against the Arab citizens of the city. In his farewell speech he said, “the current policies of the government of the state of Israel are amounting to ethnic cleansing.”¹⁸⁶ He also blamed the settlers for pushing many Palestinians by force from their own homes. His statements angered many Israeli officials.¹⁸⁷

In addition, some Israelis have charged that TIPH is exceeding its on mandate by becoming part and parcel of the Palestinian society in the city of Hebron. Israelis are very angered by TIPH’s regular involvement in Palestinian daily lives. TIPH has donated money for women sewing courses, donated books and sun/rain shelters for Al-Quds Open University, Hebron branch, gave money, school uniforms and books to poor children, gave on several occasions material supplies to the local branch of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, allocated funds for three summer camps for children in 2002 and with full coordination with the Palestinian Education Department and in cooperation with Hebron Municipality and Hebron Rehabilitation Committee, TIPH has been working to maintain and improve physical infrastructure in the city.

UNRWA and the Media

For Israeli authorities, the most troubling aspect of UNRWA’s work during the Intifada was its involvement with the international media. To many Israelis that action represented a flagrant abuse of UNRWA’s authority and a diversion from its mandate. During the Intifada, UNRWA held several press conferences and issued press release describing its

¹⁸⁶ *Al-Quds*, March 22, 2004. A 19

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid* A.19.

version of events that contradicted the Israelis. UNRWA became involved in media-related issues after the beginning of the first Intifada in December 1987. In February 1988, in a discussion with Commissioner-General Giacomelli about press freedom, the Israeli Civil Administrator (ICA) in Gaza said that “from a military viewpoint Israel’s open, democratic policy of allowing the press free access to troubled areas had led to a stirring up of trouble which would not have otherwise happened.” He added, “had Gaza been declared a closed area to the press, the uprising could have been put down quickly and with fewer casualties.” Giacomelli asserted, however, that while the press was sometimes irritating and irresponsible, it was better “to have a policy of free access than give rise to suspicions that one had about something to hide.” Giacomelli further argued that the press gathered where there was a story. “They would quickly tire of visiting location from where there was nothing to report.”¹⁸⁸

To protect itself UNRWA began issuing press releases through the UN. On March 18, the agency summarized the refugee casualties during the previous week and months, earning a protest from the Israelis. The release, entitled “UNRWA reports over 400 injuries in Gaza this week,” said

This week more than 400 Palestine refugees have been injured in the Gaza Strip bringing to well over 900 casualties reported by UNRWA’s Gaza Field Office so far this month. Injuries this week include 165 beatings, 216 overcome by tear gas, 25 hit by rubber bullets and 120 by live ammunition. Of the 10 shot on 16 March in Nuseirat Camp, three persons are in critical condition including an UNRWA teacher. A 60-year-old blind woman in Nuseirat was shot and injured by rubber bullets. Beatings had included children aged 3-12 and a 40-year-old blind woman Deir al Balah camp. Eight pregnant women in Beach camp were treated for tear gas inhalation. As of 14 March, the whole Gaza Strip has been under curfew from 2200 to 0300 hours daily until further notice. On the same day all international telephone lines were cut. The total number of confirmed dead in the occupied West Bank and

¹⁸⁸ UNRWA Documents, note for the record of a meeting on February 23, 1988, between the Commissioner-General and the civil administrator, Gaza, dated February 24, 1988. (Reproduced in Schiff 1995).

Gaza Strip from army gunfire, beatings and tear gas inhalation, since early December 1987, reached 100 this week, including 56 Palestine refugees. UNRWA continues distribution of food supplies in areas affected by curfews and medical services have been expanded with some clinics in the Gaza Strip operating 24 hours a day. The Agency has also increased its international staff in both West Bank and the Gaza Strip in order to assist with emergency operation.¹⁸⁹

The Israelis were more upset in April when UNRWA's director of health, John Hiddlestone, publicly expressed his dismay at casualties caused by riot-control gases being used in enclosed areas. Hiddlestone had been puzzled by reports of severe abdominal pain in people exposed to the gas, many reports of miscarriages, and by claims by medical personnel that they too fell ill while treating the victims. After his tour, the agency issued a press release entitled "Statement from UNRWA on West Bank/Gaza Strip Casualties" on April 14.¹⁹⁰

The Israelis charged UNRWA with irresponsibly publishing unreliable and false information. They argued that troops were under strict instructions in the use of tear gas that the materials in use could not be compared to chemical weapons, and that UNRWA health directors had based their claims that the gas was used inside shelters on hearsay. Israelis believed Hiddlestone's remarks were further evidence that the agency favored Palestinians. As with UNRWA Annual Reports, the press releases did not discuss actions by Palestinians (e.g., rioting, rock throwing, building barricades, etc.) that forced the military to respond.

Publication of summary casualty statistics including non-refugees provided the formal basis for the Israeli protest that UNRWA was overreaching its mandate. Meeting with

¹⁸⁹ UNRWA press release, HQ/15/88, March 18, 1988.

¹⁹⁰ UNRWA press release, HQ/16/88, April 14, 1988.

the commissioner-general ten days after the press release was issued, the Israeli representative to the UN in Vienna, Gideon Yarden, said he generally appreciated the agency's operations but there were "some problems" with UNRWA's activities, including the headquarters' press release of March 18, which went beyond the agency's mandate to include nonrefugee matters. Giacomelli responded that UNRWA was behaving as it had since 1967.

Nevertheless, Israeli representatives continued to protest UNRWA's press releases and its officials' interviews in the press as the uprising went on and considered them to be "counter productive," "beyond its Mandate," not "balanced and impartial," and possibly "harmful to the negotiating process. The issue was serious enough to instruct UNRWA field officers to leave contacts with the press to directors and public information officers. Still, as Israel increasingly restricted press access to the territories, UNRWA became one of the few accessible sources for international news.¹⁹¹

Again in December 1990, UNRWA expressed its grave concerns over the kinds of measures being used in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This concern was based on the massive increase of patients suffering from gunshot wounds, beatings and the effects of tear gas, which is particularly damaging when used inside buildings. UNRWA has been also concerned about the long-term effects of injuries on the refugee population and the costs for rehabilitation of severely injured refugees. In the first Intifada, the agency employed 16 physiotherapists with the help of UNICEF to assist in rehabilitation work in the Gaza Strip.

The media battles between Israel and UNRWA continued until. On many occasions UNRWA issued press releases that would condemn or challenge Israeli accounts regarding a

¹⁹¹ UNRWA Documents, note for the record of a meeting on May 5, 1989, between Commissioner General Eagleton and Ambassador Barnea from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs et al., in Jerusalem, dated May 22, 1989.

bombing or other incidents. A case in point was when UNRWA's Commissioner-General Peter Hansen protested Israeli damage to a Gaza school for the blind. Hansen said:

the only thing that could have been damaged by such a raid was the blind school because the police station has been hit five times. We will protest this action to the Israeli Authorities in the strongest possible terms and will ask to be reimbursed for the damage. UNRWA has to work with limited resources and the repairs we have to make to the school should mean less food aid to or fewer work programs for the poor of Gaza. Under the terms of the International community Israel has the duty to safeguard UN installations and personnel. Such bombing raids in heavily populated civilian areas, next to school flying a UN flag that is brightly lit at night, are totally unacceptable.¹⁹²

UNRWA press releases have always contained harsh language condemning Israel's occupation and its inhumane treatment of the Palestinians. On March 7, 2002, UNRWA issued a press release in reaction to an Israeli bombing next to an UNRWA school. Reacting to the bombing, Peter Hansen said:

the police headquarters targeted today has been bombed five times already and is little more than an empty shell. It is difficult to fathom just what military or strategic purpose is being served for bombing its foe six times. What is clear is that by bombing a crowded city center at 9am on a weekday morning, the innocent children at our schools have been severely traumatized. I have been told that young children started screaming and crying at the sound of the explosion. It is horrifying to think what would have happened if the bomb had gone astray, as indeed one did on February 20th when it landed on the roof of one of the schools but thankfully did not explode.¹⁹³

The afore-mentioned media engagements were established by an inter-governmental organization that was established by the General Assembly to integrate and assimilate the

¹⁹² UNRWA press release HQ/G/09, March 6, 2002.

¹⁹³ UNRWA press release HQ/G/10, March 7, 2002.

Palestinian refugee question. UNRWA evolved over the years to become an independent entity that neither the Israeli nor the American governments have been able to risk its demise or its disintegration. Although both Israel and the US use their financial muscles to influence the appointment of the commissioner-general as they have done with lobbying the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, to dismiss Hansen, they cannot lobby the GA to dismiss Palestinian claims or aspiration. Even if the CG hopes that the plight of the refugees ends, he very well knows that reality is much harder than that.

Conclusion

All the afore-mentioned activities were taken by UNRWA an inter-governmental organization that was established for humanitarian reasons. Why would Israel allow UNRWA, a subsidiary organ of the UN, to exceed its mandate and continue expanding its operations? Why did the US continue to support UNRWA financially and politically at the UN, contrary to its declared foreign policy objectives? I suggest that both the US and the Israeli governments could not challenge or defeat two realities in the OPT: (1) the refugees aborted any program that was not consistent with their vision or aspiration of repatriation; and (2) prevailing international norms of decolonization and respect for human rights, the war in Lebanon, and the Palestinian Intifada strengthened the Palestinian cause and, by extension, UNRWA. During the 1960s and 1970s, there was an upsurge of voices calling for respect of human dignity and freedom. Neither the US nor Israel was able to challenge such evolving norms openly and publicly without being condemned by countries and international institutions around the globe or having other interests threatened by major allies.

In recent years, many European governments have urged the US to pressure Israel to find a solution to the question of Palestine. In fact, the Europeans made their support to the

US in its war on terror and on Iraq contingent upon solving the Palestinian question. Over the years Palestinians have succeeded in convincing most countries that their situation is central to broader peace and stability in the Middle East. As a result, the question of Palestine has gained increased importance in the GA and SC. When the first Palestinian Intifada broke out in 1987, many countries sought to internationalize the conflict through UNRWA and other organizations. This conviction about the Palestinian cause led to establishment of the RAOs and the TIPH.

The flexibility and the adaptability of UNRWA made it possible for the agency to react to developments in the OPT and elsewhere with efficiency and professionalism. UNRWA coped with the capture of the Gaza Strip in 1956, the Six-Day War and the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in 1967, the camps war between Jordanians and Palestinians in 1970, the Lebanese civil war that began in 1975, Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982, and two Intifadas. During all these challenges, the General Assembly and the refugees themselves turned to UNRWA for assistance.

In spite of the financial and political difficulties, UNRWA has been asked to perform many useful state-building functions in the region. With each crisis UNRWA's work became more important and vital, for it has been the longest serving agency in the region with enough experience and durable infrastructure. For instance, the 1967 war drastically altered regional politics, initiating a phase in UNRWA's history that lasted until December 1987. Then, when Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1991, a stream of Palestinians flooded the Jordan desert. UNRWA was the first on the scene to help. It established temporary camps on the border between Jordan and Kuwait and supplied humanitarian assistance. In addition, when Libya expelled almost 1,500 Palestinian families in October 1995 to the Egyptian-Libyan boarder, UNRWA responded by creating shelters for them and became a mediator between the

Egyptian, Libyan, and Palestinian authorities. UNRWA wanted to find a solution whereby refugees would be reintegrated in either of these societies. UNRWA has allocated money for such projects from its own strained budget.

But the Six-Day War of 1967 and the two Intifadas marked a turning point in the history of UNRWA. The agency became the only means by which the GA and the SC force Israel to accept more international involvement in the OPT. It also became the only agency in which the UN could implement a vision of two states by building infrastructure and training cadres. During the first Intifada the agency was asked explicitly to deal with humanitarian and political problems. The refugees and the PLO considered UNRWA's involvement and the RAOs program to be a political victory. The involvement of UNRWA in favor of the political rights of the Palestinians gave the Palestinians hope. The Palestinians considered UNRWA's efforts as important steps toward internationalizing the conflict, for one of the PLO's ultimate objectives in the last four decades has been to make the question of Palestine an international one. The deployment of the RAOs and the TIPH in the OPT marked important steps in that direction.

Due to constant international pressure Israel was no longer able to continue ignoring the demands of the General Assembly. UNRWA challenged Israeli sovereignty in several ways, and Israel could do very little to stop it from providing soft protection to Palestinians in the OPT. The following chapter will discuss the impact of UNRWA socioeconomic services and education on Palestinian nationalism and the formation of Palestinian civil society.

Chapter 7

UNRWA Socio-economic Services and Palestinian Nationalism

In recent decades UNRWA's socio-economic services, particularly in education and human development, have helped reinforce Palestinian national identity. Despite the efforts of Israel and Jordan to suppress Palestinian nationalism, UNRWA has succeeded in not only enabling the emergence of a politically-conscious class of Palestinians, but its social services have fostered the creation of a professional class of Palestinians that is more capable of controlling their own destiny, most commonly associated with an independent Palestinian state. UNRWA's role in fostering Palestinian nationalism was unintended. The refugees consciously used UNRWA and the services it provided them to preserve their identity and to strengthen their national distinctiveness. Thus, over time, Palestinian refugees have pressured UNRWA to reorient its strategy for dealing with them, encouraging a policy shift from reintegration and settlement to state-building. Over the years, UNRWA's presence in the region has had the added effect of keeping hope alive in the minds of Palestinians that someday they could gain the right to return to their homeland. Finally, the socio-economic services of UNRWA helped create a Palestinian middle class that was desirous of their own state. The principles of the right of return and self-determination have functioned as common denominators that have united Palestinians around the globe.

In recent decades UNRWA has performed an important role in the evolution of Palestinian identity and nationalism in two ways. First, it has facilitated oral history. UNRWA's ration distribution centers have become places where oral history is exchanged, corroborated, and passed on to younger generations. Every month refugees met at these centers to collect oil, sugar, butter, rice, milk, dry meat, flour, and clothing. These monthly

meetings turned into heated debates. Why did we leave our homes? Was that the correct decision? Who are we? Are we Arabs or are we different? Do we want to assimilate or go back? Such questions were discussed in and around the ration distributing centers, schools, clinics, and the social and cultural clubs that UNRWA established for the refugees. Whenever the elders of the community met in any of these locations, second- and third-generation refugees were listening and learning in earnest. Schools and vocational training centers also played a central role in reconstructing Palestinian nationalism in and outside the refugee camps.

Second, UNRWA played an important role in the evolution of Palestinian nationalism through education. Most importantly, the interaction between refugee teachers and refugee students turned UNRWA schools into places where teachers imparted on students a love of homeland and a desire to one day return there. Vocational Training Centers (VTCs) and Teachers Colleges (TCs) also served as sites where all refugees, regardless of their background, would come to share their experiences. Depending on the program, students learned, ate, traveled, and conversed together in the VTCs and TCs for two or for years, paving the way for subsequent generations of refugees to assemble, remember, and share the past as well as their hopes and aspirations for the future. Undoubtedly, the refugee camps and the schools not only protected Palestinians, but also enabled the refugees to resist assimilation and integration, thus fostering a greater sense of distinctiveness among Palestinians all over the Middle East.

The remainder of this chapter substantiates UNRWA's dual role. First, I trace the origins of Palestinian nationalism and how it has evolved over the last few decades. Second, I analyze the relationship between UNRWA services and the reconstruction of Palestinian identity. Third, I assess how UNRWA's academic services helped preserve and reconstruct

Palestinian nationalism. Specifically, I look at UNRWA's schools, teachers, as well as the role of Jordan, Israel and the UN in preventing Palestinian nationalism.

The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism

Palestinian nationalism has been punctuated by the upheaval and change in Palestinian society since 1948.¹⁹⁴ The defeat and dispersal of 1948, the disaster (*al-Nakba*), had a strong and lasting impact on Palestinians. As a result of this event, traditional social and economic relationships were weakened or destroyed. Israel's occupation of the WBGS in June 1967 added another mark. The June war transformed the Palestinian economy speeding up the decline of traditional leadership and the leveling of society. By the end of the first decade of Israeli occupation, elite political control gave way to more participatory politics and an invigorated nationalist movement. Led by a new generation of leaders who mobilized workers, women, and the youth in and around the refugee camps. The adversity faced by Palestinians in the second half of the twentieth century – dispersal, statelessness, and continuing frustration of national aspiration – more firmly bounded Palestinians to an identity distinct from other Arabs.¹⁹⁵

The refugees, whose identity was partially preserved by UNRWA, injected another element into the emerging Palestinian identity. Embittered and suffering, they idealized

¹⁹⁴ According to Ernest Gellner, nationalism is the political principle “which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent” (Gellner, 1983: 1). Nationalism is also an ideological movement that strives for “autonomy, unity and identity” of a population deemed by its members to be an actual or potential nation (Smith, 1991: 73). As an ideological movement, nationalism is characterized by modularity; it can fit a variety of social and political realities and be combined with other ideological and political systems (Anderson, 1991: 4).

¹⁹⁵ According to Guibernau, identity, a powerful symbolic construct, is the set of ideas that delineates a person's position in his/her own world. It answers the key question, “who am I” in both psychological and social terms and in individual and collective spheres (Guibernau 1996: 73). The scholarly literature on identity and nationalism is vast. Recent writings tend to view national identity as socially constructed. Accordingly, Anderson views nations as “imagined communities,” while Hobsbawm (1991) and Gellner (1983) see identity and nationalism as “invented traditions.” The process of such constructions occurs within a multilayered and contested space (state-civil society), which involves continuous interpretation and reinterpretation.

visions of the paradise lost to the Israelis. They steered Palestinian discourse not only to regaining rights but also to recapturing a homeland. Return to the “lost garden” of Palestine was seen as the means to erase the poverty, humiliation, and loss of control over their personal and collective futures (Kimmerling and Migdal, 2003: 203). Intertwined with this spreading “diaspora consciousness” were images of the peasant past: the Palestinian headdress (*Keffiyeh*),¹⁹⁶ olive and orange trees, traditional folkdance, embroidered dress, and spice made from wild thyme and other local herbs. Swedenburg observes that the refugee essentialized a physical closeness to the soil of Palestine and a constant reminder of the village, town, and city that was destroyed by the Israelis (Swedenburg, 1994: 304-316). Swedenburg’s assessment is reflected very clearly in what several refugees, from Al-Hussein refugee camp in Amman, said about their feelings and love for Palestine. When asked about the source of Palestinian nationalism in the refugee camp after six decades of exile, they said:

It is true that we never saw Palestine, not even for a visit, but our love for the land is stronger than anyone else’s. We must go back to the groves that our family tells us about. It is hard for an outsider to imagine the feeling, we do not know if our groves are still there, but we tell you, our families have an immense yearning to go there and see. It is still very hard for our mothers and fathers to deal with the fact that they left their village.¹⁹⁷

The Palestinians were able to preserve their identity since their exodus by protecting their existence in the camps through memory and oral history. According to Johnson and Dawson, oral narratives involve authorship and are laden with evolution, representation and explanations. They are no more or less reliable than constructions of the past (Johnson and

¹⁹⁶ The *Keffiyeh* became associated with Palestinian resistance during the Great Revolt. In order to camouflage rebels operating in the towns of Palestine, rebel leaders ordered townspeople to replace their Ottoman inspired Fez with the *Keffiyeh*.

¹⁹⁷ A meeting with several refugees in the Al-Hussein refugee camp, Amman, Jordan, June 21, 2004.

Dawson, 1982: 228-229). The transformation of memory from one generation to another signaled a significant break with the past. Prior to 1948, Palestinian peasants, now refugees, symbolized a Palestinian who was backward, uneducated, and generally considered marginal to the emerging Palestinian national culture. The sense of alienation that the refugee felt in the host countries continued to burden the refugees in the Arab states, which took them in. Palestinians in the Arab host countries encountered discrimination from host governments and populations. Governments circumscribed Palestinian civil, economic, and political freedoms. Local populations generally looked upon Palestinians, especially those in the camps, as inferior because, they lacked the crucial requirements for respect and status in Arab society, the ownership of land. Palestinians faced continual pressure from host countries to maintain their social isolation. This pressure was used as a means for promoting the Palestinian cause (Ibid: 95). Spatial and social distance between the refugees and the host populations intensified the Palestinian sense of distinctiveness. Although differences of behavior and life style infused economic, social, and political inequalities with significance, it was the social border, the circumstances of interactions, the status gaps between these groups, the self-image of each group, that accelerated the reconstruction of boundaries separating Palestinians from other Arab communities (Ibid: 119). While the defeat of 1948 meant the physical dispersion of the Palestinian people and the denial of their national claims, the defeat also served to catalyze the process of national identity formation.

By the late 1960s, the Palestinian sense of self and nation had substantially changed.¹⁹⁸ The Palestinian refugee gradually took on the role as “national signifier” not

¹⁹⁸ The *nation* is a socio-economic category that embraces psychological, cultural, territorial, political, and historical components. Employing Anthony Smith’s definition, the *nation* refers to “a named human population, sharing an historic territory, common myths, and historical memories, a mass public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members (Smith 1996:447). As an organizing principle, the nation is a modern phenomenon, closely intertwined with the development of the territorial state.

merely because refugees were the most visible of the displaced groups but because the refugee represented a connection to the lost land. Listen to what a female resident of the Souf camp almost forty miles north of Amman, tells her story:

Since I was young, both of my parents who come from Abu Shusha, twenty miles north west of Tel Aviv, used to talk about their village constantly, how they planted, harvested and how they used to go to the farm. Also, how they latter fled gain from Ramallah during the 1967 war, and when they left. They always thought of the return and refused to re-settle...they thought they will only be out of their homeland for a short time, hopping they would return soon...of course, how could one avoid having a sense of national belonging in such a patriotic environment. The mere fact that it is called a camp for refugees, people who sought refuge from one place to another, enhances these feelings. In UNRWA schools every morning we used to sing the national anthem of the revolution. We always held demonstrations on land day. People always raised the Palestinian flag while Jordanian police was watching.¹⁹⁹

Fadwa's story and the many more that I have heard in the camps of Jordan and the WBG were partially explained by Randa Farah who argues, "Palestinian national identity has been constructed through oral history and popular memory in the refugee camps" (Farah, 2000: 16). But Farah's detailed anthropological study leaves out the crucial role of UNRWA. Farah overlooked the importance of the agency's organization, bureaucracy, legitimacy (international and local), centers, evolution, and the role the refugees played in reconstructing their own identity. In her study, the camp was portrayed as a national symbol of Palestinian struggle and perceived as a source of pride; in the eyes of others, including

Eric Hobsbawm contends that nations such as Israel and Palestine "must be novel, whatever the historic continuities of Jews and Middle Eastern Muslims, since the very concept of territorial states of the currently standard type in their region was barely thought of a century ago, and hardly became a serious prospect before the end of World War I (Hosbawm, 1994: 76). Without denying the degree of overlap between the terms nation and state in contemporary usage, it is important to distinguish differences of form and content between them. The nation marks a cultural and political bond; the state refers to a juridical and administrative structure that, according to Max Weber, holds a monopoly over the legitimate use of force within a specific territory. The *state* is "a legal concept describing a social group that occupies a defined territory and is organized under common political institutions and an effective government (Connor, 1994: 40).

¹⁹⁹ A meeting with community leaders, Al-Souf refugee camp, Jarash, Jordan, July 30, 2005.

Palestinians who did not live in them, it was the “poorer face of society.” My observation of the camp however, points to a temporal place where the refugees have been reaffirming their distinctiveness with an eye on returning one day to their land. My study indicates that neither the refugees nor the Palestinians at large ever considered the refugee camp to be a permanent resident or a source of pride. The camp has been always conceived as a step for the second stage: independence. In the camp, the refugees began setting the vision for their own state by telling their children stories about the past, but instilling in them the dream of the future.

For instance, a shopkeeper from Al-Wihdat refugee camp, located on the outskirts of Amman, spoke about his love and yearning to live and see Palestine with avid description, although he has never been there. He said:

My father who passed away, may he rest in peace, used to think about our home in Jaffa all the time to the extent that he wished to be buried there when he dies. His wish and many others did not come true. He was buried in Amman as many were. My father always spoke about our village and the herbs it was famous for: Thyme, Sage, mint, and chamomile. We grow up longing for seeing and visiting my father’s village.²⁰⁰

Similarly, another sales person emphasized the significance of the homeland he has also never seen.

For me, I would rather own a small farm in Bisan, [a main agricultural city in Israel now], rather than own half of any other Arab Capital. Indeed, all Palestine is dear and important to me and my family, but I rather Bisan the place where my father was born, the land that my parents and uncles and cousins always talked about when we gathered to eat dinner in the camp every night. Their constant talks and memories imprinted a glorious picture of Bisan and Palestine in my mind and heart. I am proud to be a Palestinian; this is a fundamental principle that will never ever be

²⁰⁰ A meeting with some merchants, Al-Wihdat refugee camp, Amman, Jordan, August 2, 2005.

compromised, no matter what happens. I must confess that Palestinian also has a spiritual meaning in my heart and mind besides the physical one.²⁰¹

Both the shopkeeper and the salesman love for Palestine can be explained by the role memory and oral history play in the hope to one day go back to their homes. More than any other factor the collective memory of the exodus has shaped the identity of the Palestinian refugees as a people. And there has been a conscious effort among Palestinians to sustain that memory, especially among younger generations.

According to Alistair Thompson, oral accounts are cultural forms that exhibit contemporary consciousness and they should not be viewed as meandering or forgetfulness. Thompson suggests that popular memory is useful precisely because it rejects the notion of memory as a historical record. The distortions in oral history locate the dynamic of the past and present and are produced by the effect of public upon private memories (Thompson, 1990: 77).

It seems that life histories and oral narratives are tools through which memory-identity is expressed. They interweave the past-present, private-public, individual-collective and the personal political in a dynamic and ever changing dialectic. What an individual articulates or does not, the way that he/she constructs his/her narratives, or the way that the community organizes its local space, is a way that synthesizes present concerns with the past experience in particular cultural type or means of inscription. A teacher, originally from West Jerusalem, now resides in the Souf refugee camp almost 40 miles north of Amman, said:

We cling to our suffering and the camp because it is our identity. The word camp is sufficient to give me a push, that I am the son of a camp, notwithstanding the fact that I am a Palestinian and an Arab, but I am also the son of the camp. We

²⁰¹ Ibid.

Palestinians, I do not know if we are cursed or blessed, our lives are different from all other people in the camps anyway, there are no Jordanians, when I go outside the camp I am not influenced by Jordanian society, intermarriage with Jordanians is rare. However, I have many Jordanian friends, I love the Jordanian people very much.²⁰²

The teachers account fosters the bonds between the individual and the collective and makes such an integral connection, for there is no individual that exists outside a social network: more generally, the self of memory can be imagined as a player in the larger narratives of a community. Memory becomes a locus of struggle over the boundary between the individual and the collective or between distinct interest groups in which power becomes the operative factor (Antze and Lambek, 1996: xx).

The drama of the Palestinian narrative and its capacity to be related to direct family experience has caused Palestinian collective memory of the catastrophe to be highly durable, despite the passage of over fifty years and generational changes. The narrative has withstood controversies over the nature of the historical record, the inadequacies of oral histories and individual recollections, and the increasing disintegration of the personal records that could be used to verify at least some of the individual memories of the event.

Oral history and the camp as a place engendering national belonging was further explained by one who suggested that there are several factors that enhanced nationalism among the refugees: the role of the first generation, their memories, oral history, and love for the homeland; the significance of the camp as a place and environment; and UNRWA schools, especially the many committed and motivated teachers. One recounts his conversations with his father, who left Al-Dwaymeh, a village 25 miles south of Hebron. He says:

My father resides in the Qalandia refugee camp, ten miles north of the holy city of Jerusalem, approximately 50 miles of his original residence. For him history stopped

²⁰²

A meeting with several educators, Al-Souf refugee camp, Jarash, Jordan, July 29, 2005.

after 1948. He recalls in specific details all the incidents and the events that took place before 1948, but after that he lost interest in everything. I tell him, let's leave the refugee camp and buy a house on the outskirts of the camp but he refuses. To him the camp is a symbol of right to return and the only factor that connects him to other refugees.²⁰³

For the younger and the older generations the camps constitute the primary reference point for reconstructing their identity, history and social, cultural, and political views. As we will see, it is the refugees who transformed the humanitarian services of UNRWA into highly politicized categories. UNRWA schools became mobilizing arenas in the national struggle, and the tent became a central symbol of resistance. For the younger generations the camps also represented a symbol of a temporary exile and gave hope to the right of return. While their parents narrated and reminisced about the homeland, children drew pictures and images of the land and the peasants' way of life, which were based on the stories of struggles against British and Zionist settlers. Comparisons were always drawn between the imagined life in Palestine and the miserable conditions of the camp.

To the refugees, the camp became synonymous with their identity. The refugees tried to reconstruct their past through the present in the camp. They called their alleyways with names similar to their villages in Palestine and named their daughters and sons the same way. In addition, the social structure in the refugee camp after a while reflected the social structure in the village of origin. That was possible for the camp provided the refugees with a sphere where people from all socioeconomic backgrounds, affiliations, and geographic locations became neighbors. This situation fostered interaction among them. Cohabitation between former country and town inhabitants, between agricultural workers and traders or officials, has given birth to a belief in the importance of remembering the homeland. These

²⁰³ A meeting with some refugees, Ramallah, West Bank, July 30, 2003.

feelings were captured by Fawaz Turki who has written about the role of memory in the maintenance of Palestinian identity:

The meetings were no longer restricted to family members, but the entire camp was welcome to participate in them. This process gave the younger generation the opportunities to listen to and interact with the elders and learn from them about the past. The young listened many times to the same stories recounted by their elders concerning the events, the exodus, the farms, the houses, the orchards and the wells. They also listened to how each Palestinian sees himself. The emergence of a sentiment of a connection to a home geographically and the emphasis on the right of return...was also mentioned all the time (Turki, 1988: 122).

Official ties were created and encouraged among the camps of the same region, or between the camp inhabitants and the refugees residing in neighboring camps. Steered by sentiments of family solidarity or by common interests and political preoccupations, this geographic extension of refugee networks was favored, as early as the 1950s, by two factors: one regional, the other local. On the local level, cadres of UNRWA who came from rank and file refugee: doctors, teachers, camp leaders and officials or area officers made sure to connect people together. They ensured that the refugee populations of different regions communicated and maintained ties. On the regional level, the initiative by the refugees and UNRWA to organize summer camps for the refugee children in Jerusalem and Ramallah favored the geographic extension of the refugee network (Plascov, 1981: 67).

Given these circumstances, the refugees have been stamping the camps with a Palestinian identity in order to protect themselves from melting into Jordanian or other nationalities. Through narratives refugees provided their children and grandchildren with a history that they will never forget. It is highly likely that second and third generation refugees will impart the same messages on their children. The story of the exodus of the Palestinians from their homeland is not likely to die until a just and a comprehensive solution is reached.

The refugees have been able to reconstruct a sense of nationhood despite the geographical fragmentation that was imposed on them after 1948.

UNRWA's homogenizing process reinscribed popular memory with a shared refugee experience, a sense of collective belonging through labeling and categorizing, but also by fragmenting daily living in ways that were different to traditional village life. Routine practices like regular visits to clinics, registration processes and living in shelters of equal sizes were quite different from the practices of agricultural work and village life. Critically important, however, is that these practices encouraged a sense of sameness among Palestinian refugees in UNRWA's five fields of operation.

UNRWA and Palestinian Nationalism

The primary factor that distinguishes Palestinian nation-building apart from most other Arab nation-building processes has been the need to development of a unified Palestinian national identity in the absence of centralized institutions and processes. As Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm, and other theorists of modern nationalism assert, "official" historical narratives propagated by the state often shape national development.²⁰⁴ Palestinians were excluded from this pattern of nation-state formation due to the shape of their particular colonial heritage. But the presence of UNRWA since the 1950s partially substituted for that. UNRWA has been the sole institution or agency that Palestinians looked to for education, training, employment, health care, and personal and human development, and representation at the UN and other international forums. UNRWA became the quasi-

²⁰⁴ The absence of sovereignty precluded Palestinian control over the mechanisms of authority – e.g., education, museums, archaeology, postage stamps, currency, and the media – which are essential for disseminating and imposing uniform criteria of national identity (Khalidi, 1997:10). Even in the period before the independence of other Arab states, Palestinians were at a disadvantage in comparison to their Arab neighbors. The mandate for Palestine contained no League of Nations stipulation, included in other mandate agreements, that the British create structures to be transferred to the Palestinians (Ibid., 25).

political representative of Palestinians on the international stage, as a witness to the refugees' plight, as a reminder of their right of return, or as an advocate of finding a comprehensive solution to their situation. This situation was reinforced by the sympathy that was expressed for refugees in the annual reports of UNRWA's commissioner-general beginning in the mid-1950s. While the early reports had presented the refugees as individuals who lacked unity, later reports regularly expressed sympathy for their political demands and, in particular, their desire to return. UNRWA reports even came to be quoted in Palestinian official's speeches at the UN and other international arenas.²⁰⁵

To help Palestinians cope with their harsh realities and find and encourage a sense of solidarity among them, UNRWA established separate youth centers for boys and girls in the refugee camps in the five fields of operations. The girls' focused on vocational training, especially sewing, while electives for boys were more diverse, including sports teams and a wide range of cultural and social programs. The only condition for membership in the centers was that one is a Palestinian refugee.

The cultural and sport centers were created for another reason – to prevent jobless refugees from roaming the streets of the camps. Accordingly, UNRWA authorized the creation of the Haifa Muslim Sport Association in Nablus and the Jaffa Muslim Sport Club in Ramallah. UNRWA helped in creating both clubs soon after the refugees left their land. In fact, the Jordanian government prevented any Palestinian association from being formed outside the parameters of UNRWA.

According to William Lee, many of those sport clubs were managed and run by UNRWA employees at the beginning, but after the 1960s, they became self-managed centers

²⁰⁵ *UNRWA Annual Report* (1950), paragraph 32.

while remaining formally linked to the agency.²⁰⁶ UNRWA made sure that each club would focus on cultural and physical activities. Each center was led by an unpaid administrator trained by the Universal Alliance of Christian Unions, and assisted by a committee in charge of the administration of entertaining activities and of community services.²⁰⁷ In addition to traditional entertaining activities, the clubs performed community services: cleaning the streets and schools of the camps, watching water resources, monitoring distribution centers, planting olive and vine trees in the camps, and, most importantly, solving local disputes.

In the 1970s UNRWA funding cuts deprived the centers of paid staff to direct activities. The center members were therefore forced to assume responsibility for running the programs, including some fund-raising to cover minor expenses. As a result, on many occasions, refugees were forced to take matters into their own hands, thus strengthening their own political and national identities. Moreover, this situation helped build the refugees' capacity to develop and pursue their own agenda. The sport clubs in Jordan represent a case in point. By 1970, due to such regional upheavals as the 1967 war, civil wars in Jordan and Lebanon, the transfer of UNRWA's headquarters from Beirut to Vienna, and the relocation of the PLO from Jordan to Lebanon, UNRWA resources were diverted to more essential services (e.g., medical care, food, education, and relocation of refugees from war zone). Thus, the agency could no longer afford to finance "luxury" activities. Consequently, club members assumed responsibility for all aspects of organizing and operating sports leagues, which competed with each other in annual soccer, volleyball, basketball, ping pong, chess, wrestling and boxing tournaments. In 1975, the camp teams decided to compete with other Jordanian clubs on the East Bank. This situation became explosive in 1980 when Wihdat

²⁰⁶ Interview with William Lee, Coordinator of UNRWA Headquarters, Amman, Jordan, June 12, 2004.

²⁰⁷ *UNRWA Annual Report* (1958), p. 18.

defeated Ramtha 3-2 in a soccer match. The Palestinians' defeat of the Jordanian team emboldened Palestinian refugees in Jordan to openly differentiate themselves from Jordanians. Many of the refugees I interviewed in the camp still remember the incident. When asked about their jubilation, they affirmed that it was the first time we felt vindicated after the massacres committed against them by the Jordanian army during the civil war in 1971.²⁰⁸ One shopkeeper in the refugee camp, recalled the day by saying:

When the massacres in the refugee camp took place I was nine years old, but my father always mentioned those days as "Black September" nicknamed in the narrative of all Palestinians as the darkest in Arab and Muslim history. Palestinians never expected the Jordanians to carry out such massacres against them. When our team won, it was the first time that we felt vindicated. Many of us were ready to go to the streets and affirm our identity once and for all after it has been suppressed for so many years. The victory send a clear message to the king that we are here and we are different."²⁰⁹

Supporting Wihdat or Ramtha became a national act of loyalty to one's Palestinianness or Jordanianness, respectively. Games of this sort occasioned Palestinian protests and assertion of national identity. Many fights and clashes broke out among Jordanian and Palestinian fans, leading to the arrest of many. Laurie Brand argued that "for many fans, Palestinian and Transjordanian alike, each time a refugee camp team locked horns with an East Bank squad, it was, on a very basic and emotional level, as if the civil war were being fought again (Brand, 1988: 183).

After one of the games and following a particularly bloody confrontation in 1986, the Jordanian Ministry of the Occupied Territories' Affairs (MOTF) asked UNRWA to surrender legal and political control of the youth centers. The ministry moved in and

²⁰⁸ It is estimated that more than 3500 Palestinians were killed in the 1971 civil war between the Jordanian Army and Palestinian Loyal to Yasser Arafat.

²⁰⁹ A meeting with some shopkeepers, Al-Wihdat refugee camp, Amman, Jordan, July 30, 2005.

dissolved the administrative councils of the centers, replacing them with new councils consisting of many high-ranking government officials. Crown Prince Hasan renamed the Wihdat Youth Center as “*Nadi al-Diffatayn*” or “The Two Banks Club” (Ibid.: 183). Jordanians became part of the management of the club for the first time, since 1953, in line with the Ministry of Youth’s recommendation. With government pressure and the reorganized administrative council, a majority voted in favor of the Crown Prince’s bid for renaming the center. The situation lasted only briefly, as people continued to refer to the club and the team as Wihdat. In 1988, following the disengagement from the West Bank,²¹⁰ the government and the center’s administrators restored the original name of the club and the team – Nadi al-Wihdat.

The example of the Wihdat sports team demonstrates how UNRWA unintentionally, at least at the beginning, fostered and strengthened Palestinian nationalism by creating an institution that the agency thought might serve the refugees socially. As some community leaders said, “the purpose of establishing these clubs was; to keep the refugees physically fit and give them something to do.”²¹¹ The agency never thought that after three or four decades these institutions would become fertile grounds for Palestinian nationalism.

Palestinian sport clubs in the refugee camps in the host countries have been playing a central role in asserting Palestinian nationalism. The sport clubs in Jordan are a point of contention between Jordanians and Palestinians in the East Bank. In 2002, during a soccer match between Wihdat and Faysallee, a Jordanian team, emotions ran high after Wihdat scored its first goal. The Jordanian crowd became very upset and began shouting “*wahad*

²¹⁰ By the disengagement plan I am referring to King Hussein’s announcement in August of 1988 of his desire to limit his kingdom’s ambitions to control the West Bank or negotiate on behalf of West Bank Palestinians. For more details, see *Al-Quds*, August 20, 1988. 14

²¹¹ A discussion with community leaders in the Ayda refugee camp Bethlehem, West Bank, July 2004.

teneen wahad teneen lazem a'talkha ya Abu Hussein" or "one two one two, you must divorce your wife father of Hussein." The crowd was calling on King Abdullah II to divorce his wife Queen Ranya, who is a Palestinian.

In addition to establishing sport clubs and schools after the exodus of 1948, UNRWA authorized or helped in the creation of a number of refugee organizations. For instance, in the mid-1950s UNRWA employees created the first Palestinian teachers' unions in Gaza and Jordan within the framework of the agency's school system. The unions were set up to handle the employment matters between the refugees and the agency. The unions also served as a political forum for debates among refugees. Under the watchful eyes of the Jordanian government and the supervision of UNRWA, the refugees succeeded in establishing few institutions in the East and the West Bank before the June 1967 War. For instance, Palestinians women created the General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW). The union was founded under the auspices of the PLO in Jerusalem in 1965. While Jordan refused to recognize the union, the union grew, offering a range of services from literacy classes to military training.

Furthermore, a group of Palestinian doctors developed a network of hospitals and clinics in the camps and throughout the kingdom (East Bank-West Bank) to serve the needs of all neglected sectors in Jordan. Thus was born the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS), an institution that has branches throughout the WBG and all refugee camps in the Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. The PRCS, also has a branch in Egypt and it has been a member of the larger Arab and Muslim Red Crescent Societies.²¹² After 1948, many Palestinians wanted to reconstruct the Palestinians Arab Workers Society (PAWS), which was originally established in Haifa in 1925. The union's leadership developed a program that reflected a

²¹² A discussion with several members of the PRCS, July 20, 2001, Amman, Jordan.

nationalist orientation rather than a class one: the leftists and the Communists who dotted the ranks of the PAWS joined because of the lack of an alternative. Despite the union's name, the majority of its members were Palestinians (Brand, 1988: 210).

The fact that UNRWA facilities provided a socio-economic basis and institutional framework for the preservation of refugee identity had political consequences. UNRWA facilities provided the institutional means for creating and sustaining pockets of Palestinian civil society, through which refugee political aspirations were preserved. Those aspirations, and the Palestinian refugee political culture of which they were part, emphasized the distinctiveness or at least the particularity of interests and concerns of refugees from other Arabs in the host countries. Thus, the place of UNRWA in reconstructing Palestinian nationalism is central, and its role in preparing them for future independence is clear. It is to the relationship between UNRWA's education system and Palestinian nationalism that I now turn.

UNRWA's Academic Services and Palestinian Nationalism

UNRWA's educational system became an integral part of Palestinian daily life in general and in refugee lives in particular. According to Kabeer Sheik, a former Indian diplomat and the current head of UNRWA's education services, "the agency is now giving services to almost half a million students and administers more than 650 schools in its five fields of operations." Kabeer said that "UNRWA provides a variety of courses that included vocational training for electricians, radio mechanics, wire mechanics, fitter mechanics, blacksmiths, welders, plumbers, carpenters, builders, and craftsmen."²¹³ The agency also provides training for other areas such as engineering, secretarial training, health, nursing,

²¹³ Interview with Kabeer Sheik, UNRWA HQ, Amman, June 16, 2004.

pharmaceuticals, civil aviation, agriculture, dressmaking, and statistics. Moreover, while UNRWA has awarded almost 1,000 university scholarships per year to outstanding refugee candidates in the past, the numbers have decreased due to financial and political constraints.²¹⁴ Sheik indicated that UNRWA recently introduced new programs into its curriculum, such as conflict resolution and human rights. UNRWA officials are pleased with the addition of these subjects in light of September 11, 2001 and the global war on terrorism. Sheik also explained that the Israeli and American governments have charged that incitement, hate, violence, and anti-Semitism are being taught in UNRWA classrooms. Sheik categorically denied this allegation, nor did I see any evidence to support this claim. He remarked “we give clear instructions to our teachers and principals about what is acceptable and what is not.” Sheik believes that the new programs will help in the peace process between the Palestinians and the Israelis. William Lee, Coordinator of UNRWA Headquarters in Amman, Jordan, who accompanied me to the interview with Ambassador Sheik, said, “the ultimate objective of UNRWA’s academic services has been “to improve the human capacity and training of the refugees and to make them able participants in their respective communities.”²¹⁵

Furthermore, elementary, secondary and vocational school education and training became very significant components of the regional education program of UNRWA. While vocational education focused on the teaching of very specific skills that are needed for the improvement of the community, to make it more independent, flexible and adaptable to change, primary education shaped its loyalty and love for the homeland. While in Jordan, William Lee invited me to attend Human Rights Day at UNRWA schools. The first meeting

²¹⁴ By political, Ambassador Sheik was referring to the constant interference by some host and donor countries in the services of UNRWA.

²¹⁵ Interview with William Lee, UNRWA’s HQ, Amman, Jordan, June 16, 2004.

took place at Naour's Teachers College also known as Amman Teachers College.²¹⁶ I walked into a huge hall full of students, teachers, administrators, television celebrities, and journalists. On the walls I saw portraits of the homeland, the holy places, the flag, and many drawings that left no doubt about what those students know. The Master of Ceremonies (MC) was an influential Jordanian television personality who worked as Queen Nour's chief of staff for many years. He began asking students about what they consider a human right. His question prompted many students to raise their hands. When students began talking, they spoke only about two rights: the right of return and the right to a state. The MC was irritated by the students' answers. He asked the question again and instructed students not to give a political cover to their answers. The students began arguing with him about what they considered their right to choose what they want to answer, rather than having him telling them what to say. The confrontation between the students and the MC lasted for nearly one hour. In the end, the students stood their ground.

The second segment of the day was reciting poetry and performing. The students preformed a play titled "Lost Birds," which was written by one of their teachers. Sixteen students, eight boys and eight girls preformed in the play. With the exception of one boy who was dressed in black, the boys were dressed in yellow, the girls in green. On stage were two nests, one green, and the other yellow. Hiding inside the green one was the boy dressed in black. The play began by showing how happy the birds were singing, dancing, and flying back and forth with no limitation. All semblance of that normal life ended when the black bird emerged from the nest and began accosting the other birds. The black bird demanded that the girls surrender their nests or face death. Scared and baffled by the threat, they

²¹⁶ Amman Teachers College is located almost 25 miles South West of Amman. It has more than 500 students studying more than 30 different majors ranging from nursing to computer science. The college has a four story library with almost 50,000 books. The head of the school Dr. Najee Salh holds a PhD in history from the University of Cairo, Egypt.

agreed. Thus, the problem of refugee displacement began. All the green birds began asking where they would go, how they would eat, and to whom they should turn to solve their problem. One suggested that they talk to the yellow birds, but by the time they reached them, their nests were taken, too. The two flocks agreed that they must talk to the black bird peacefully to regain their homes. But the black bird did not listen to them. After a long period of negotiation, the black bird agreed to give one nest back with conditions and to keep one. Although the two teams were not fully satisfied, they reached a compromise.

After the play finished, I spoke with the teacher who had written it. When asked about the characters and the meaning behind each move, the teacher answered: “The birds are the Palestinian people/refugees, the black bird is colonialism and the occupation. The reason we asked students to negotiate rather than resist was so they understand that the Palestinians and the Israelis and many other conflicts around the globe can be solved peacefully and through negotiation.” She added that the approach is in conformity with UNRWA’s conflict resolutions courses. When asked about the title of the play, she remarked that “Lost Birds” refers to the refugees. After I finished talking with the teacher, I spoke with some of the administrators at UNRWA’s Teachers College in Amman, Jordan. When asked about the reactions of the students to the MC, they said “we expect students to know that education is a right, clean water is a right, to live in peace is a right, and to be treated as a human being is a right, too.”²¹⁷ They also said that “we encourage students to think for themselves and we help them do that. In this day and age with the Internet, cable TV, the Information Age, it is very hard to convince students to do or not do anything. They see everything on TV and they chat with their cousins in the other refugee camps in the WBG,

²¹⁷ A discussion with several administrators at Naour Teachers College, Amman, Jordan, June 14, 2004.

Lebanon and Syria. No government can do anything about that. Internet cafés are in the camp, next to the school, and next to their homes, if not in their homes.”²¹⁸

According to another administrator in UNRWA’s headquarters in Amman, the hopes and aspirations of many Arab states that Palestinian nationalism would slowly fade away have been dashed by camp life and UNRWA. Arab countries were hoping that Palestinian students would forget about their homeland. As a result, all host countries insisted that the agency’s education programs should follow the host country. Little official freedom has been given to the agency to determine its own curriculum in most Arab countries. Thus, the term Palestine was not officially taught to Palestinian children the way it should have.²¹⁹ The administrator’s argument was supported by a PLO’s survey, which was published in 1972. The survey revealed that only 1.3 percent of all geography books and about 1.9 percent of all history books in Jordan made reference to Palestine. It also showed similar patterns in other Arab countries. For instance, the term Palestine appeared only 1.9 percent of books in Lebanon and 2.7 percent of books in Syria.²²⁰ Also unmentioned was the exodus of Palestinians from their homes, their suffering, their humiliation and their aspiration. Finally, in most, if not all, Arab countries, the harsh living conditions of refugees’ and their desire to reorganize their communities are poorly documented.

In the meantime, the main objective of Jordan, Israel, and Syria was to force Palestinians to forget their homeland and assimilate and integrate themselves into their host societies. The Egyptians had the same goal, as was demonstrated by their curriculum in the

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ A meeting with few UNRWA educators, UNRWA’s HQ, Amman, Jordan June 22, 2004.

²²⁰ Al-Maousou’a al-Filistinya, *Palestinian Encyclopedia*, Vol. 3 (1990), pp. 143-144.

Gaza Strip.²²¹ The Egyptian curriculum taught very little about the exodus of the Palestinians from their homeland, their misery, hardship and their poor living conditions. Egyptian history books, however, spoke about Gaza's industrial importance, irrigation systems, and historic links to Egypt.

I brought such questions and concerns to one of UNRWA's academic experts in Jordan Mahmoud Atayh. One of the many positions Atayh has held during his 35 years long career with UNRWA was Head of Ramallah Teachers College. When asked how the refugee children in the five fields maintained a sense of belonging to a land they have never seen, he said "the fact that the teachers were refugees themselves made it natural for them to communicate their experiences with the students."²²² He observed that although UNRWA and the host countries resisted Palestinian nationalism at the beginning, they failed for several reasons: (1) the refugee camp preserved Palestinian identity; (2) the refugees school nurtured that identity; and (3) oral history and narratives kept memories alive. Each night in every refugee camp first, second and third generation refugees gathered and repeated the same stories. Finally, the international community financed the agency, not the host states. Atayh added that the narratives of the second and third generations at UNRWA sites formed the basis upon which refugees reconstructed their identity. For the refugees, UNRWA camps, schools and alleyways provided the sites where their experiences and their sense of belonging to Palestine were cemented. UNRWA schools have been an important part of mobilization where most teachers were Palestinians from the camp and thus advocates of Palestinian nationalism. When students talked about their teachers and schools, they

²²¹ Palestinian students were forced to use the Egyptian curriculum in the Gaza Strip after the 1948 war, for Gaza fell under Egyptian administrative control.

²²² Interview with Dr. Atayh, Amman, Jordan, August 2, 2005.

described UNRWA teachers as being fully devoted to the cause and credited them for instilling Palestinian nationalism in them, just as they credited their parents with telling them about their origins and their identity.²²³

When asked whether UNRWA ever intended to use education as a tool of state-building, Atayh talked about the unintended consequences of UNRWA education on Palestinian people and society. He mentioned many of the institutions that the agency has built in and outside the WBG. He also mentioned the tens of thousands of cadres that UNRWA has trained. For instance, he said “if we look at the Palestinian National Authority, we find that it has at least two high-ranking ministers that were educated and trained by UNRWA: Dr. Imad Al Faloujee and Yahya Kalaf. Faloujee, the PA’s Minister of Communication, was educated and trained by and received a scholarship from UNRWA to finish his graduate studies in Egypt. Yahya Khalaf, the PA’s Cultural Minister, was also educated and trained by UNRWA. Atayh also mentioned that Dr. Ismaeel Abu Shanab, a former Hamas leader in the Gaza Strip, was trained and educated in UNRWA schools. Dr. Abdel Aziz Al Rantisi, a former Hamas leader in the Gaza Strip, also received education and training from UNRWA schools. In addition, the head of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Kmal Sa’dat, was educated and trained in UNRWA schools. Finally, Atayh observed that many of the PA’s junior and senior officials were also trained and educated in UNRWA’s educational system. Thus, according to Atayh, UNRWA has been playing a crucial role in setting the foundation to a Palestinian state by preparing Palestinians for their future independence.

As a sign of UNRWA’s contribution to Palestinians political maturity, Atayh shared the following insight:

²²³

Ibid.

“when I ran UNRWA’s teachers college in Ramallah in 1971, the students asked to establish a student government. I asked for a constitution for it before I could say yes or no. When the students framed the constitution and sought my approval, I brought their concerns to the regional office of UNRWA’s education office at the headquarters in Jordan. Due to bureaucratic measures, Jordan’s Ministry of Education had to approve the project. The ministry refused the whole scheme categorically for security reasons.”

Atayh believes, however, that the issue had “nothing to do with security; it had to do with forming a different political identity in the West Bank.” He said that because the PLO was new at that time, it was attracting most of the younger generation. Therefore, Jordan wanted to curtail such moves whenever possible. Nonetheless, he said the students went ahead and created a student government. In less than three weeks, he added, all of its members had been arrested and the Israeli government had ransacked its offices. Despite the reaction of the Israelis, the students continued to form unions and pockets of civil society whenever possible.

Atayh asserted that the refugee camp and the refugee symbolize many things: a distinct nation, class, social status, a place of exile, a temporary state, a pre-1948 village, a place of political resistance and so on. Writers, intellectuals, poets, artists, resistance leaders, and political leaders have emerged from camps (e.g, Ghassan Kanafani, Samih Alquasm, Mahmoud Darwish, Yasser Arafat, Mahmoud Abbas, and many others). These individuals, in turn, have become key players in Palestinian society and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, advocating a distinct Palestinian identity in the last five decades. All their activities were carried out in the host countries, especially Jordan and Israel, which opposed the development of Palestinian nationalism.

The UN, Jordan, and Israel and the Curtailment of Palestinian Nationalism: UNESCO and UNRWA's Academic Programs in the Host Countries

UNRWA's use of the curriculum of its host countries has a certain and important history in relation to the development of Palestinian nationalism. Before the Six-Day War in 1967, UNRWA had been using the Jordanian curricula to educate Palestinians in the OPT. After the war, however, Israel began voicing its opposition to the Jordanian curricula within the UN and UNRWA, arguing that it promoted hate, violence, and anti-Semitism. Responding to Israel's complaints, the UN asked UNESCO to help UNRWA remodel its textbooks to satisfy Israel's conditions.²²⁴ Gradually, UNRWA accepted the Israeli censure, while continuing to educate some 55,000 Palestinian children in its schools and training centers. It acknowledged that there was some relationship between the existence of hostility towards Israel and the type of education that was being taught in Arab countries. However, it also stated that the feelings of Arab people toward Israel were rooted in the political history of the region since the beginning of the century. Thus, it reject any kind of responsibility for Arab hostility toward Israel, claiming instead that its status as a UN subsidiary organ did not allow it to be involved in such political considerations with the host countries (Buehrig, 1971: 155-157).

As a consequence, in 1968 the UN appointed a commission of foreign experts (three Arabs, one American, one French, and one Turkish) to examine the books used in UNRWA/UNESCO schools. The commission was instructed to evaluate the books in light of ethical ideals of comprehension, of tolerance and friendship between racial or religious groups, as written in the preambles of UNESCO and in article 26 of the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights. The commission was also asked to decipher whether

²²⁴ *UNRWA Annual Report (1967)*, p. 17.

UNRWA schools were in fact advocating violence against the state of Israel. Israel looked for suggestions or indication of the expulsion or extermination of Israelis.²²⁵ Between November 1968 and February 1969, the commission examined 127 textbooks, which were being used in Egyptian, Lebanese and Jordanian schools. Of this total, the commission recommended the use of 48, the modification of 65, and the total exclusion of the remaining 14 (Buehrig, 1971: 155). Oddly, the commission criticized the use of terms such as liberation, independence, and the right of return, exile, massacres, ethnic cleansing, refugees, and revolution, labeling such terms as conducive to or provoking violence.

Given Jordan's historical link to the West Bank, the commission paid special attention to books used in Jordan.²²⁶ After its examination the report showed that, taking into consideration the context in which the books were written, the texts were relatively moderate in their depiction of the Israeli-Arab conflict or the Palestinians' struggle against occupation. But since the commission found that much emphasis was given to the bad treatment inflicted upon the Prophet Muhammad by the Jewish community in some ancient religious texts, it warned that such language might give the conflict a distinctly religious connotation.

Naturally, the recommendations of the commission did not sit well with some Arab countries. The Syrian ministry of education refused the censure, claiming that the UN was being used by Israel to violate its sovereignty. Indeed, Syria had refused to submit its schoolbooks for evaluation and scrutiny by UNRWA and UNESCO. Eventually, however, Syria agreed to modify the language of its books in accordance with the recommendations of

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ By historical link I am referring to Jordan's actual control of the OPT before the 1967 and its administrative control after of the area until 1988.

UNESCO.²²⁷ Despite the formal change, neither UNESCO nor UNRWA was able to control what happened inside the classrooms. In fact, the battle over UNRWA's classrooms dates back to the beginning of the agencies operations in the region. After all, UNRWA cannot deploy an officer in each classroom to control what teachers say in the classrooms.

By contrast, in Jordan the denial of Palestinian history was a well-established fact. From the 1950s to the 1980s the Kingdom's policy toward Palestinians centered on the suppression of Palestinian nationalism and the promotion of integration and assimilation. Jordan's suppression of Palestinian nationalism is exemplified by the case of the Committee for the Annual Palestinian Folklore Day. Established in 1981 by Nimr Sarhan, who worked in conjunction with other Palestinian institutions, the committee promoted the remembrance of Palestinian folklore. Sarhan, himself a specialist in Palestinian folklore, was detained and later imprisoned by the Jordanian government. His passport was confiscated, and he was prevented from returning to his job. Moreover, his folklore exhibits and other cultural events were canceled by the police or were the objects of police harassment (Brand, 1988: 181).

Other expressions of solidarity with Palestinians outside Jordan were also silenced. During Israel's 1978 invasion of Lebanon, and when the 2000 Intifada broke out in the WBGS, many Palestinians in Jordan wanted to go to Lebanon or to the WBGS to support their brethren. However, the Jordanian government prevented them from traveling. Although massive demonstrations resulted, the Jordanian government responded with bullets, killing a number of demonstrators and arresting a large number of them.

In addition to suppressing Palestinian nationalism by preventing art shows and traditional folklore, the Jordanian government also tried to omit references to Palestine from

²²⁷ *UNRWA Annual Report*, (1970), paragraph 26.

books and in schools. For instance, Jordan pressured UNRWA in 1968 to impose massive curriculum changes. After a review of textbooks, UNRWA decided to delete or replace such word as *Tabrir* (Liberation) and *Fida'i* (literally, one who sacrifices oneself, the word used by Palestinians to describe their fighters). The same was true in Israel where courses on Palestinian history were canceled, and the Arabic names of Palestinian towns and villages on maps used in geography classes were replaced by their equivalents in Hebrew. As a result negative reactions erupted, in many places especially in Syria, where UNRWA employees completely rejected the new system (Khalaf, 1985: 125). In early 1968 UNRWA teachers in Lebanon began a one-month strike. In Jordan teachers reacted to the proposed changes by forming a committee which met with UNRWA and government officials. Unfortunately, the meeting produced no tangible results. Consequently, refugee leaders in the camps called for strikes to protest UNRWA and the Jordanian government and succeeded in gaining the support of all UNRWA teachers. Although the strike was limited to the East Bank, it affected UNRWA teachers elsewhere. East Bank representatives made direct contacts with teachers in Lebanon, Syria, and the West Bank and threatened UNRWA with an open strike in the five fields. Meanwhile, the Arab Teachers Federation (ATF), a teachers union that represents all countries of the Middle East, threw its support behind UNRWA teachers. Finally, the strike also was supported by many pockets of civil society in the region, including newspapers, artists, poets, and writers who unconditionally sided with UNRWA's teachers against the agency.²²⁸

UNRWA reacted to the pressure by opening a dialogue with the teachers' union and agreeing to almost 80 percent of the refugee demands. The strike also led to the PLO's intervening on behalf of the refugees. The Palestinian organization rewarded the refugee

²²⁸ A meeting with several activists in the Palestinian Communist Party, Al-Hussein refugee camp, Jordan, Amman, Jordan, August 3, 2005.

leadership by helping to draft by-laws for their new union and by promising to make their union part of the larger Arab teachers union.

Reacting to UNRWA's attempt to prevent Palestinian history from being taught in schools in the camps, employees of the Department of Education (primary school teachers, administrators, headmasters, VTC, TCs etc.) as well as the officials in other departments renamed centers, schools, and families after their towns and villages in pre-1948 Palestine, the exception, as always has been Jordan. By doing this Jordan was responding to Israeli pressure and its own ambitions to control the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Israel moved aggressively after the 1948 and 1967 wars to demand the removal of certain language and terminology from textbooks. The UN responded positively by dispatching a team of experts from UNESCO to deal with the matter. The UNESCO team coordinated with UNRWA and the host governments to do a total review of all the books used in UNRWA school. The Jordanian government collaborated fully with the UNRWA/ UNESCO program of rewriting the academic curriculum to meet Israeli prerogatives. But rewriting the academic curriculum was not going to change any of the facts inside the classroom. Interaction among teachers and students was essentially unimpeded.

The Role of UNRWA's Teachers in Reconstructing Palestinian Nationalism

As discussed, many UNRWA teachers defied the agency's curriculum inside the classroom. The teachers wanted to educate students about Palestinian geography and history as they saw fit, despite the fact that host-country' textbooks ignored specific details. Through their direct relationships with students, UNRWA teachers were able to circumvent obstacles posed by the curricula of UNRWA and the host countries. Teachers in different UNRWA schools in

the five fields made sure to refer to Palestine, exodus, independence, and the right of return.

According to some teacher at al Baqa refugee camp.

We strived to give to our student's elements of their history, so that they would not forget about their homes. We explained to them where they came from, why they were there, and what the right of return meant. All of that technically was prohibited. But that could not be prevented, there was indeed the control of the host countries and the agency on what should be said and done, but the teachers did what they had to inside the classroom. Nobody could control what the teacher could tell the student inside the classroom.²²⁹

The teachers affirmed that geography and history classes were the best vehicles for using their own experience with students. Teachers talked to students about the physical features, climates, bodies of water, and natural resources of the homeland. Geography class represented a time where teachers and students engaged in discussions about memory, identity and oral history. Subjects like the exodus, the fight against assimilation and integration, and the distinctiveness of a Palestinian nation were discussed with regularity in these classes. In addition, teachers talked about the natural resources of Palestine, as compared to Jordan, Syria, or Lebanon. When I asked students in Jordan about Palestine's greatest resource, they answered its land and agriculture followed by animal husbandry, mining, and industry. Tellingly, the details of their answers do not appear in the students' textbooks. When asked about the exodus, twelve- and fourteen-year-old students mentioned specific details of how their grandparents left their villages, town, and cities. They spoke about the color of the window curtains, the shape of the windows, the size of the gardens, the color of the flowers, the size of the doors and the keys to their families farms and houses in the most astonishing details. In fact, in the houses I visited in the camps I saw many keys that belonged to houses and farms in Jaffa, Haifa, Bisan, Lidd, Ramlah, and many other

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A meeting with several educators, Al-Baqa refugee camp, Amman, Jordan, August 1, 2005

towns and cities. According to some educators and community leaders at Al-Aroub refugee camp, six miles north of the city of Hebron, students are expected to contribute to the development and independence of the Palestinian people regardless of their background, age, or gender. Besides locations and resources, students are also taught work ethic with stories about other formerly colonized people like South Africans, Algerians, Egyptians and Iraqis. Along with work ethic, steadfastness was taught and explained as a condition for liberation.

They asserted that although geography and history were not taught in the lower grades, topics related to these courses were. The group observed that history is very important for nationalism because it provides a point of origin and ancestry upon which a nation may build or draw upon for inspiration and identity. The lack of a Palestinian state placed students at a disadvantage in relationship to their counterparts. Modern states use television, radio, schools, national anthems, flags, and national curricula to ensure loyalty at all levels. Although Palestinians did not have all that, but the presence of UNRWA since 1950 in their midst provided them with possibilities to develop and express their views. To many Palestinians, refugees and nonrefugees, UNRWA's work in refugee camps has been similar to a welfare state providing services directly to its citizens. These services are carried out from various regional offices, clinics, hospitals, economic development centers, ration distribution centers, Teachers Colleges and Vocational Training Centers, and human development centers in the refugee camp and out of it. In other words, the presence of the refugee camp and the central office (headquarter) gave the agency a territorialized domain, in which the camp, the refugee and the services converged. The presence of the UN flag with the abbreviation of UNRWA in it gave the refugees that sense of security and mental

sovereignty in the five fields. UNRWA represents a state for the stateless people within nation-states in the WBGS, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon.²³⁰

Another group of educators at the Dehisha refugee camp, six miles south of Bethlehem, agreed with their colleague's observation regarding UNRWA's educational services and the future of the Palestinians. They believe that:

an educated population with a vision for a future to building a state has more chances to do so than a population that lacks education. Education he emphasized is essential for establishing, maintaining, and developing the state we long for. As a vehicle for the creation of the state in the last two decades, UNRWA modernized its educational programs to meet the many needs of the refugees. UNRWA is no longer focused only on the three basics, reading, writing and arithmetic's but also has embarked on teaching skills required for the economic political and social development of the society at large. Education has been very important for the economy and the general development and progress of the OPT. Much of the area that formed the OPT had little or no education or physical infrastructure essential for building a state before UNRWA began its services in the region. UNRWA mobilized all men, women, and children in the region.²³¹

The political role of teachers in UNRWA's schools can hardly be exaggerated. Schools and teachers have constituted one of the structuring elements of the sociopolitical environment in which the refugee children have evolved since 1948. The family, the clan, the clinic, the ration distribution center, the teachers colleges, the vocational training centers, and even political organizations, have all reconstructed the identity of the refugee. These social entities have represented tangible and stable sources of political socialization and mobilization between the refugees and the agency and among the refugees themselves. Given the unique relationship between teacher and student, schools have been most

²³⁰ A meeting with several educators and community leaders in, Al Aroub refugee camp, Hebron, West Bank, August 20, 2000.

²³¹ A meeting with educators and community leaders in the Dehisha refugee camp, Dehisha, West Bank, August 10, 2004.

important sites for these processes. Schools have constituted the nucleus in the refugee camp, the point around which all other centers revolved. They have been a key factor in the reproduction of a specific Palestinian identity especially the emergence of the PLO in 1964. In fact, for many years the PLO has been lobbying UNRWA's teachers to be part of its mission, but due to security, stability, benefits, and salary concerns, UNRWA teachers remained with the agency.

The relationship between UNRWA and the PLO has been strained by the latter's intervention in the formers' daily operations, as well as competition between the two for the loyalty of refugees. The official relationships between the PLO and UNRWA in the late 1960 and early 1970s gave the Palestinian organization little leverage over UNRWA's educational policies in the host countries and very little in the WBG. But through the years the PLO found its voice in the curriculum of the agency. This change is attributable to the dual loyalty of teachers and changing political circumstances in the area. Over time, the close relationship between the PLO and many UNRWA teachers allowed the PLO more influence over the education that was being given to the refugees. In other words, the PLO encouraged the Palestinization of UNRWA's education programs in Lebanon but not in OPTs. The PLO's lack of influence at the beginning could be best explained by its weakness as a non-territorial entity. The PLO decided to compete with UNRWA or work with it very closely after the 1970-71 civil war in Jordan. It was essential for the PLO to keep its influence and domination over the camp even if it was away from it.

For years the PLO lacked international legitimacy as a non-territorial organization, possessing power but no real sovereignty or authority over land or people. UNRWA and the PLO collaborated, competed and clashed. In refugee camps they sometimes cooperated to deliver services to refugees. At other times, however, they competed over how much

authority and involvement to give to the other. At still other times they both complied with host governments. PLO officials claimed the right to interfere in such matters as distribution of tents and rations, while many of its cadres worked with UNRWA officials to politicize history lessons and use schools to mobilize Palestinians for the Resistance Movement in Lebanon. As explained in chapter four the PLO and UNRWA worked together on many projects in the OPT, but it was not until 1994 that the two began coordinating their efforts to create the state.

Following the PLO's expulsion from Lebanon in 1982, it appeared that only the establishment of an independent nation-state would enable the Palestinians to develop an education system to fit their political aspirations and socio-economic needs. The reports of the PLO on refugee education in 1980 expressed this desire. The PLO kept showing interest in the problems related to the education of refugees, and particularly to the reconstruction of the educational infrastructure in Lebanon as early as 1984.²³² But from then on, the PLO focused on the development of academic institutions in the OPT, which was seen as having greater potential for a future Palestinian state. The PLO's vision for the WBGS was not possible without a total understanding and a firm relationship with UNRWA. Through UNRWA, the PLO encouraged massive international financial support for the territories, preparing the WBG for independence. In fact, the PLO financed the development of many Palestinian universities that were built in OPT. For example, Birzeit was created in Ramallah, Al-Najah National University in Nablus, and Bethlehem University in Bethlehem, Hebron Islamic College in Hebron, and The Science and Technology University in Jerusalem.²³³

²³² *Al-Fajer*, 1984.12

²³³ *Al Bayadeer Al S'yasee*, Vol. 25 (1990), p. 23.

By 1992-1993 the PLO and UNRWA explored ways of restructuring academic curricula in the OPT to fit the modern era. Consequently, UNRWA and the PLO formed new committees to propose reforms. The PLO dispatched Yasser Amor to the OPT to meet with his UNRWA counterpart to discuss the issue. Amor met with UNRWA officials on several occasions to convince them to change the curricula to include material on the Intifada. The PLO relied heavily on Palestinian cadres to help her achieve this objective. The communication between the PLO and UNRWA on that subject reflects the influence of Palestinian cadres on the education department who were able to convince the agency to consider new changes to its curriculum. In fact, as early as 1989 senior Palestinian officials at UNRWA requested that the agency take into account the implications of the Intifada and develop, with the political and financial support of the PLO, an educational system that would promote Palestinian desire for independence. UNRWA and the PLO arrived at an understanding as early as 1993 and agreed that the education department can move to Amman so that more expertise could be exchanged between the two organizations.²³⁴ The close coordination between the two organizations has brought back to the surface the question of the transfer of UNRWA's institutions into the emerging Palestinian state. On more than one occasion the various UNRWA commissioner-generals have expressed their readiness to transfer all the agency's offices and facilities to a new Palestinian state.

There is not a shadow of a doubt about what UNRWA will become at last: it will be dissolved and its installations, structures and services transferred to the Palestinian institutions that will be created. That day will be a joyful day for the organization, for we will feel that we have carried out its mandate.²³⁵

²³⁴ PLO Documents, "The Need for New Curricula in the Occupied Territories," (1992), p. 3

²³⁵ UNRWA Documents, "UNRWA Serving Palestinian Refugees," (1990), 2.

Many UNRWA officials look at the transfer of the agency's institutions to the Palestinian authority as a good opportunity for the future Palestinian state. UNRWA's Commissioner-General Iltar Turkmen believes that the transfer will aid the development of an independent Palestinian state tremendously. In 1994, Turkmen was referring to a massive infrastructure of services including 250 schools, 160 medical centers (hospitals, specialized clinics, rehab centers and laboratories), and 29 centers for women activities and 25 youth centers.²³⁶ In addition, Turkmen was also referring to the thousand or so civil servants and professional that UNRWA has been training. The CG also mentioned the demographic, socio-economic and historical records that have been accumulated by UNRWA since May of 1950. The unique involvement of UNRWA in the daily lives of the Palestinians made it acquire "a precise knowledge of all questions pertaining to the Palestinian society, thus positioning UNRWA to play a vital role in their lives for a long time to come" remarked some UNRWA Public Relations officials.²³⁷

UNRWA provided an education to the Palestinians to help them achieve their ideals. This type of education had to reach the masses and provide knowledge and skills necessary for the economic, political, and social life of the OPT. UNRWA's primary, secondary and vocational adult education became a very significant component of the national education program. While vocational education taught very specific skills needed for the survival of the refugees and to help in the development of the national economy, primary and secondary education were concerned with shaping the loyalty of the refugee to his past and his community.

²³⁶ UNRWA Annual Report of the CG 1993-4: PP 59,60,63 and tables 4,5, & 8).

²³⁷ A meeting with some UNRWA Public Relations Officials, Jerusalem, August 27, 2002.

Conclusion

This chapter chronicled the role of Palestinian refugees in preserving their national identity. Paramount among their efforts were the lengths to which they went to preserve their national identity by sharing of memories and passing them on to younger generations, at locations provided by UNRWA. UNRWA's ration distribution centers became places where oral history was exchanged, corroborated, and passed on to younger generations. Apart from highlighting the importance of education centers, this chapter also focused on UNRWA's social services, particularly educational services, which helped foster Palestinian nationalism. In addition, the chapter showed how the refugees used UNRWA services to maintain aspirations for a homeland, despite the fact that the agency was supposed to resettle and reintegrate the refugees in the host societies. Because of the proactive approach of the refugees, UNRWA was forced to change its agenda. In changing its agenda, UNRWA accommodated the wishes of the refugees more so than the host countries. Challenges that host countries presented the refugees were met with stiff resistance. Finally, the chapter demonstrated how socio-economic sites like schools, ration distribution centers, clinics, and job centers became places where oral history, memory, and identity were exchanged, verified and repeated in front of second and third generation Palestinian refugees. The elderly shared with children their recollections of their history and homeland, and children and teachers recounted this history and memory of homeland through poetry, drawings, plays, writings and oral history.

While UNRWA is not solely responsible for reconstructing a Palestinian national identity, the agency played a major role in the development of Palestinian diasporic identity. Through its historical involvement as a relief agency, UNRWA succeeded in delineating particular spaces, sites, and places but refugees resisted assimilation and

integration and instead reconstructed their own national identity. Schools and vocational training centers also played a central role in reconstructing Palestinian nationalism in and outside the refugee camps. UNRWA's impact on refugees may be summarized as simultaneously enhancing collective action and individual mobility. UNRWA and Palestinian refugees have been interlocked in a constant struggle. While UNRWA camps represent a place for the control, management, and administration of refugees and the provision of humanitarian aid to them, the camp itself became a Palestinian territory representing a political identity. Thus, for over the last six decades, imagery associated with the events of 1948 has galvanized and sustained political energy among the refugee population. Given that the camp dwellers strove for continuity rather than change and toward the conscious preservation of an identity as refugees, it is hardly surprising that the Palestinian collective memory has been preserved. The trauma of those massive flights of ordinary people from their homes, the prevention of their return, and the shock and bewilderment that was part of the tragedy of 1948, remain engraved in the Palestinian historical narrative.

Meanwhile, UNRWA's academic and socio-economic services have played a major role in mobilizing the majority of the Palestinian refugee population into the political process. This effort was not in accordance with UNRWA's mandate but came as an unintended consequence of it. As neutral as education sounds, UNRWA's education system was instrumental in training leaders as well as rank-in-file members of the Palestinian Resistance Movement. The relationships between refugees and UNRWA's teachers reshaped UNRWA schools into places where teachers imparted on students a love of homeland and a desire to one day return there. Between October 1950 and January 2005, UNRWA's educational services served millions of refugees throughout the Middle East. Undoubtedly, the refugee camps and the schools not only provided physical protection to Palestinians, but

they also enabled the refugees to resist assimilation and integration, thus fostering a greater sense of distinctiveness among Palestinians all over the Middle East. As a result, not only has Palestinian history, geography and identity been preserved, but Palestinian nationalism flourished in the process.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

This dissertation analyzed the relationship between the UN and the Palestinian refugee problem since 1948, focusing particularly on the role of one UN agency, UNRWA, in providing humanitarian relief and other services to the refugees. It found overwhelming evidence that UNRWA's socioeconomic services and activities in connection with the Palestinian people – whether institutional capacity-building, development, or infrastructural improvements in and around the camps – went hand in hand with the aspirations of the Palestinian people to establish a state of their own. Many of the activities carried out by other UN organizations, particularly in the development sector, complemented UNRWA's efforts and thus greatly enhanced the human and physical infrastructure of WBG. Hence, the PLO was granted observer status at the UN in 1974, and UNRWA began laying the groundwork for a Palestinian state by building institutions essential for the delivery of basic public services. It gained enough credibility among Palestinians and the international community of states over the years to help establish and enhance internal capacity to coordinate, absorb, and effectively use the considerable amount of external assistance that was channeled to the region, especially after the first Intifada in 1987 and the Oslo Peace Agreement in 1993. Recognizing that the OPT would take a long time to recover from occupation and intentional neglect by Israel (e.g., expelling able cadres, not allowing an airport or a seaport to be constructed, limiting the export and import of essential goods and materials, ransacking and closing several key institutions on several occasions and imposing many other socioeconomic measures), the UN through UNRWA and UNDP focused on strategies to develop state capabilities. Indeed, it succeeded in establishing community

development projects, local cooperatives, and small-scale production. UNRWA's work resulted in social mobilization and advocacy in the camps and the surrounding areas for a state.

UNRWA began preparing Palestinians living in the OPT for independence as early as the first Intifada. In 1993 the General Assembly asked the agency to contribute to efforts to support the peace process after the Oslo agreement was signed between the Israeli government and the PLO. UNRWA responded positively to the UN request and began a mission of socioeconomic improvements among the Palestinian refugee population in the WBG. UNRWA also undertook other activities, directed more toward improving the OPT physical infrastructure, including a sewerage system, schools at all levels (e.g., vocational training centers, VTCs, and teachers colleges, TCs, health care facilities (e.g., clinics, hospitals the largest in Gaza with a 240-bed capacity is being build by UNRWA), agricultural equipment, and housing units in refugee camps. These activities supported the aspirations of Palestinians to create their own state. The activities also made the Palestinian National Authority better able to perform its duties when it entered the OPT after the Oslo agreement. After Oslo the UN/UNRWA became a full partner with the PNA in building or rebuilding roads, ports, airports, bridges, water wells, water purification facilities, communication facilities as well as various other state utilities. As Chapter Two demonstrates, UNRWA carried out such activities despite objections by Israel, Jordan, and the US. Analysis of the activities of UNRWA from 1951 to 2005 show clearly that the agency, an inter-governmental organization, changed its agenda from assimilating and integrating the refugees into host societies to advocating Palestinian interests at the UN and state-building in the OPT.

In addition to assisting Palestinians in laying the groundwork for the establishment of an independent state, UNRWA was instrumental in fostering Palestinian nationalism in its five fields of operations. Chapter Seven traced the various ways in which UNRWA encouraged Palestinian nationalism, particularly through education and other cultural activities. For example, UNRWA played an important role in the evolution of Palestinian nationalism through education. The interactions between refugee teachers and refugee students turned UNRWA schools into places where teachers imparted on students a love of homeland and a desire to return there. VTCs and TCs also served as sites where all refugees, regardless of their background, would come to share their experiences. Depending on the program, students learned, ate, traveled, and conversed together in the VTCs and TCs for two to four years, paving the way for subsequent generations of refugees to assemble, remember, and share the past as well as their hopes and aspirations for the future. Undoubtedly, the refugee camps and the schools not only protected Palestinians but also enabled the refugees to resist assimilation and integration, thus fostering a greater sense of distinctiveness among Palestinians all over the Middle East.

Rather than being a passive observer in regard to the provision of various developmental services in the OPT in the last half-century, Palestinians sought to shape their own destiny by resisting the policies of UNRWA and host countries with which they disagreed, thus affecting how various governments and international agencies dealt with them. For instance, Chapters Two and Five showed that the agency was influenced from below by the refugees more than by donor or host countries on many issues, including settlement, employment, and education curriculum. As regards settlement, the refugees resisted any program that deviated from their desire for repatriation or independence. In respect to education, Chapter Seven demonstrated how the refugees refused to use materials

imposed on them by host states or UNRWA. Besides, the refugees declared strikes and refused to carry out many of their duties when they felt that the agency was not responding to their needs. These strikes, in turn, forced the UNRWA to appease the refugees on other occasions.

These findings contradict the state-centric bias of much of international relations theorizing. Indeed, mainstream international relations posits that states support only what they perceive to be in their narrowly-defined interests and that inter-governmental organizations thus are able to pursue only a very limited range of tasks that are permitted by member states. However, Chapter Two showed that UNRWA succeeded in introducing new terminologies into local and international relations surrounding the Palestinian problem. In turn, these concepts directly conflicted with the policies of host countries of Palestinian refugees. Ideas like Palestinian self-determination, the right of return, the acceptance of distinct Palestinian identity, human rights and Palestinians as civilians living under occupation have become widely accepted as part of the foreign policies of Western and Middle Eastern governments. This change in how the Palestinian problem is approached by the international community of states owes much to the efforts of UNRWA, which has advocated on behalf of Palestinians within the UN and other international forums for decades – even before the rise of the PLO. In addition, Chapters Two through Six demonstrated that the premises of neorealism – security, survival, balance of power, and relative gains – are not the only explanatory factors that influenced the behavior of states concerned with the Palestinian case. Norms and pressure from below by the refugees have played a major factor in shaping and changing the behavior of Israel, Jordan, and the US in regard to Palestinian independence. UNRWA's constant bringing of the question of Palestine to the General Assembly has been conducive to the establishment of an acceptance

within the region and more broadly of the reality of Palestinian identity, independence, and statehood. This development contributed to Israel's and the US's gradually accepting and respecting the will of the majority of states expressed in resolutions of the GA. The adoption of resolutions 1514 and 1541 by the General Assembly, in particular, armed the Palestinians in latter years with a precedent.

The theoretical import of these findings for the field of international relations is that neoliberals and neorealists should consider more seriously factors other than interests, security, relative and absolute gains, and balance of power as their main explanatory variables. Domestic factors and norms significantly influence the course of world politics. Neoliberals contend that norms create incentives and constraints for states to behave in ways that do not necessarily reflect the interests of the most powerful states and argue that states might change their behavior due to regime pressure. However, they also argue that state interests are essentially static. Neorealism, on the other hand, argues that states will agree to a norm only when they find identical or complementary interests. Constructivists, by contrast, focus on the influence of norms on state behavior and are closer to the weak in understanding the core of political stability. These theorists argue that identities and norms are made through the daily interaction of states in domestic and global politics. Like self-interest, state behavior cannot be understood as separate from a state's identity or identities, or how it regards itself in relation to others states. Wendt describes the daily life of international politics as an ongoing process of state's taking identities in relation to others, casting them into corresponding counter-identities, and playing out the result. Constructivists believe that through socialization, states can grow to develop a sense of collective identity or community and transcend the security dilemma. In contrast with both neoliberals and neorealists, constructivists argue that interests can be redefined. Thus, the

adoption of many resolutions at the GA and SC in the last two decades in favor of Palestinian independence represents clear evidence of such a definition. While the US and other major powers objected to the creation of an independent Palestinian state for years, these countries now ensure that eventuality by drafting resolutions to that effect. SC resolutions 1397, 1403, and 1515 are distinct cases in point.

The human aspects of the Palestinian refugee problem are the most difficult to because they are the least amenable to a solution. They are also the most important because they have a direct bearing on all other aspects of the conflict. After the 1948 war, Palestinians were uprooted from their normal life and found themselves suddenly as refugees mainly in surrounding countries. Everyday life for them became a constant struggle to find food, work, clean water, safety, and shelter. Their plight was the direct result of their expulsion by Israel from their homeland. As Chapter Three demonstrated, historical circumstances did not favor the Palestinians for most of the twentieth century. Unfortunately, countries around the world knew very little about modern Palestine or the struggle that had been taking place there in the decades leading up to World War Two. Specifically, little was known about the immigration of Jews to Palestine and their efforts to create a Jewish state on Palestinian territory. Most people in the US did not hear the Arabs' side of the story presented accurately.

This situation made it very difficult for the US government and the American people, for example, to see both sides of the argument. The horrific images of World War Two garnered sympathy for the Jewish people around the world at the expense of the indigenous population in Palestine. In December 1945, the US House of Representatives and Senate passed resolutions encouraging the immigration of Jews to Palestine to establish a Jewish state. The West constantly saw itself as the guardian of the orient and its master.

The future of the orient was determined without consultation with its citizens. Their land was divided and sold without their permission. They were constantly dehumanized for their reactions to occupation. The UN, like its predecessor the League of Nations, passed resolutions regardless of the indigenous people's feelings and wishes. The western world's solutions to the problem of Palestine could be best explained by a trial-and-error approach. If one institution failed (UNRPR, UNSCOP, UNRWA, and others), then another was tried regardless of the human cost. If one resolution did not solve the problem (UN resolutions 181, 194, 302, 212, 242, 338, 1397, and so on), then another was drafted. And if one mission failed (the White Paper, the Green Paper, the Hope Simpson Mission, the Peel Mission, the Quartette group, or the Road Map), then another was proposed.

No mission or resolution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict ever introduced by the major powers or the UN held the violator, in the case Israel, accountable for violating United Nations resolutions. Palestinian refugees continued to resist large-scale development projects that involved permanent resettlement. In other words, the refugees tended to resist development schemes that they perceived to imply the disappearance of a Palestinian state. For the refugees, repatriation to their historic homeland was the primary political goal. Although the refugees have been sheltered by their host countries, with the exception of Jordan, have been denied the benefits of full citizenship. The refugees thus aspired to Palestinian statehood.

This dissertation has shown that UNRWA played a positive role in helping Palestinians to create state institutions. In fact, in the decades following their expulsion from Palestine in 1948, many Palestinians clung to their only evidence of nationality – UNRWA's ration cards – in the context of the suppression and disenfranchisement that they have experienced while being displaced throughout the Middle East. In Lebanon, for instance,

Palestinian refugees are denied working permits and are legally barred from holding jobs. In Egypt, Palestinians cannot receive agency relief and assistance unless they are physically located in the five-by-25-mile Gaza Strip. In Syria, while Palestinians are permitted to work, they are denied citizenship. In Jordan, although possessing full rights as Jordanians, Palestinians are concentrated in such vast numbers and offered such meager economic opportunities that very few refugees have become self-supporting.

However, from the first Intifada onward, these three countries had little choice but to accept Palestinian nationalism. Jordan preceded the US and Israel in acknowledging that Palestinian nationalism was a reality that they needed to recognize rather than deny. While Jordan recognized the strength of Palestinian opposition to its involvement in their lives, Israel failed time and again to eradicate Palestinian nationalism. A case in point was when Israel demanded that all geography books and maps substitute the term Israel for Palestine and replace all the names of Arab villages with Hebrew one.

As a result, Israel had no choice but to accept Palestinian nationalism, especially after it was unable to secure a separate peace deal with King Hussein of Jordan. Indeed, both Israel and Jordan underestimated the role of the social and economic services that UNRWA had been providing for Palestinian civil society. Neither Israel nor Jordan predicted that UNRWA or the camps that it administered would play such a pivotal role in reconstructing Palestinian nationalism. By contrast, the US government took longer than both Israel and Jordan to realize the depth and the strength of Palestinian nationalism. Due to intense lobbying by religious groups, including hard line Jewish groups and Evangelical Christians, it was virtually impossible for an American administration to support any solution to the Palestinian question that involved an independent state.

The two Intifadas and the Oslo Accords gave UNRWA a new role to play in Palestinian lives. In the 1950s and 1960s, the refugees viewed UNRWA relief as a Western conspiracy to keep them as refugees. However, after the 1970s – especially after the PLO was admitted as an observer at the UN – the refugees softened their opposition to the UN and thus began seeing UNRWA as a witness to, rather than source of, their plight and misery. Besides, the emergence of the PLO from the refugee camps gave refugees the necessary political and military cover to use UNRWA in their favor. In addition, from time to time, the PLO used UNRWA employees to carry out its agenda. Similarly, the refugees looked to UNRWA employees to achieve their objectives, whenever possible, which were not necessarily the same as the PLO's. Thus, the PLO, the refugees, and UNRWA developed an interdependent relationship during the last half of the twentieth century.

As Chapters Five and Six demonstrated, the evolution of the Palestinian question within the UN over the last six decades has been shaped greatly by UNRWA activities and services. These chapters also highlighted the positive role that UNRWA played in keeping the question of Palestine alive within the UN, particularly through GA resolutions. UNRWA succeeded in helping to lobby for UN resolutions in the General Assembly that reflected its own interpretation of the refugee situation. These chapters also demonstrated how UNRWA's flexibility and adaptability enabled it not only to serve Palestinian interests in founding a state, but also reinterpret its mandate to reflect its support for Palestinian statehood. The agency reacted and dealt with most situations in the region with professionalism and candor. Clearly, UNRWA was more sensitive to the concerns of Palestinian refugees than any single host or donor country, particularly in regard to the issue of resettling refugees in neighboring countries. Although both Israel and the US used their financial power to influence the appointment of UNRWA's commissioner-general, as in the

case of the dismissal of Peter Hansen, they could force the GA to dismiss Palestinian claims or aspirations.

Another important finding of this dissertation is that UNRWA's education system and socioeconomic services have been key factors in the emergence of a new and more politically-aware generation of Palestinian refugees, a key asset for state-building. UNRWA alone was not responsible for producing fostering this development. Rather, Palestinian refugees themselves showed a steadfast determination to preserve the memory of the 1948 catastrophe through narratives, oral history, and photographic displays. In this regard, UNRWA's photo archives were an indispensable source of material for chronicling this phenomenon. Cultural celebrations in schools invariably commemorated refugee origins in Mandate Palestine, including the wearing of Palestinian costumes from villages and towns of origin.

Likewise, UNRWA's academic and socioeconomic services have been a force in mobilizing the majority of the Palestinian refugee population into the political process. This effort was not a natural outgrowth of UNRWA's mandate, but was rather an unintended consequence of it. Between October 1950 and January 2005, UNRWA's educational services have served several millions Palestinian refugees throughout the Middle East. In the process, education services and programs have emphasized Palestinian history, geography, and identity. Education was an essential method by which Palestinians kept their identity alive. Social clubs and sporting clubs, clinics, and rations distribution centers comprised other important sites for Palestinians to assemble and share experiences. As Chapter Six showed, the refugees used these institutions to reaffirm their identities and nationalism.

The findings of this dissertation directly speak to students of international organization about the relationship between international norms, and institutions on the one

hand, and domestic politics on the other hand. Although scholars have touched on the role of the UN in state-building, little consideration has been given to the possibility that inter-governmental organizations might not only influence the domestic affairs of individual states but might also construct the institutional structures of these states in accordance with prevailing international norms – whatever the views of donors and major powers. In the case of UNRWA annually it brought the question of Palestine to the GA, and kept the question alive at the UN and pressed countries to find a solution in accordance with UN norms regarding decolonization. In addition, the case of UNRWA provides policy-makers with practical advice for improving the well being of refugees around the world, not only by providing them with essential needs but also by preparing them to become more self-sufficient. UNRWA's focus on human development, after losing its battle with assimilation and integration, enabled the refugees not only to survive their daily hardships but also to forge an independent identity.

This study of UNRWA also provides the UNHCR with methods and techniques to handle other pressing refugee problems around the world. In the absence of a definitive solution for forced displaced populations from many natural disasters and civil wars around the world, UNHCR should emphasize building training centers to prepare refugees to become productive members of their own communities. Indeed, as the case of Palestinian refugees shows, there is more room for independent action by international agencies than is commonly thought.

Appendix A

UNRWA's Directors and Commissioner-Generals and Their Deputies

Howard Kennedy, Canadian, 1950-1951.

John Blandford, Jr. US, 1951-1953.

Hennery Labouisse, US, 1954-1958.

Dr. John Davis, US, 1959-1963.

Dr. Laurence Michelmore, US, 1964-1971.

Sir John Rennie, UK, 1971-1977.

Thomas McElhiney, US, 1977-1979.

Olof Rydbeck, Swedish, 1979-1985.

Giorgio Giacomelli, Italian, 1985-1991.

Ilter Turkmen, Turkish, 1991-1996.

Peter Hansen, Denmark, 1996-2005

Karen Koning AbuZayd, US, 2005-present.

UNRWA's Deputy Commissioner Generals

James Keen, UK, 1950-1952.

Leslie Carver, UK, 1952-1959.

A.F.J. Reddaway, UK. 1960-1968.

John Rennie, UK, 1968-1971.

William Knotos, US, 1972-1974.

Thomas McElhiney, US, 1974-1977.

Alan Brown, UK, 1977-1984.

Robert Dillon, US, 1984-1988.

William Eagleton, US, 1988-1996.

Dr. Mohammed Abdelmoumene, Algeria, 1997-2000.

Karen Koning AbuZayd, US, 2000-2005.

Appendix B

Comay-Michelmores Agreement

Text of an Agreement Between UNRWA and the Government of Israel Embodied in an Exchange of Letters Dated 14 June 1967 for the Purpose of Enabling UNRWA to Continue to Provide Services to the Refugees in Areas under the Control of the Government of Israel.

Dear Commissioner-General,

I wish to refer to the conversations I have had with you and your colleagues within the last two days, and to confirm our agreement that, at the request of the Israel Government, UNRWA would continue its assistance to the Palestine refugees, with the full co-operation of the Israel authorities, in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip areas.

For its part, the Israel Government will facilitate the task of UNRWA to the best of its ability, subject only to regulations or arrangements, which may be necessitated by considerations of military security. On this understanding, we are prepared to agree in principle:

- a. To ensure the protection and security of the personnel, installations and property of UNRWA;
- b. To permit the free movement of UNRWA vehicles into, within and out of Israel and the areas in question;
- c. To permit the international staff of the Agency to move in, out and within Israel and the areas in question; they will be provided with identity documents and any other passes which might be required;
- d. To permit the local staff of the Agency to move within the areas in question under arrangements made or to be made with the military authorities;
- e. To provide radio, telecommunications and landing facilities;
- f. Pending a further supplementary agreement, to maintain the previously existing financial arrangements with the governmental authorities then responsible of the areas in question, concerning:
 - i. Exemptions from customs duties, taxes and charges on importation of supplies, goods and equipment;
 - ii. Provision free of charge of warehousing, labor for offloading and handling; and transport by rail or road in the areas under our control;
 - iii. Such other costs to the Agency as were previously met by the governmental authorities concerned;
- g. To recognize that the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations of 13 February 1946, to which Israel is party, shall govern the relations between the Government and UNRWA in all that concerns UNRWA's functions.

The present letter and your acceptance in writing will be considered by the Government of Israel and by UNRWA as a provisional agreement, which will remain in force until replaced or cancelled.

I have the honor to be,
(Signed) Michael Comay
Political Advisor to the Foreign Minister and Ambassador-at-Large

Your Excellency,

I refer to your letter of today's date, and wish to confirm that UNRWA is willing to continue its assistance to the Palestine refugees in the West Bank and Gaza Strip areas on the basis proposed to your letter. This will be subject to such further supplementary agreements as may be required, and to detailed arrangements which UNRWA representatives will make with the authorities in the two areas concerned.

Naturally, this co-operation implies no commitment or position by UNRWA with regard to the status of any of the areas in question, or of any instrument relating to them, but is concerned solely with the continuation of its humanitarian task.

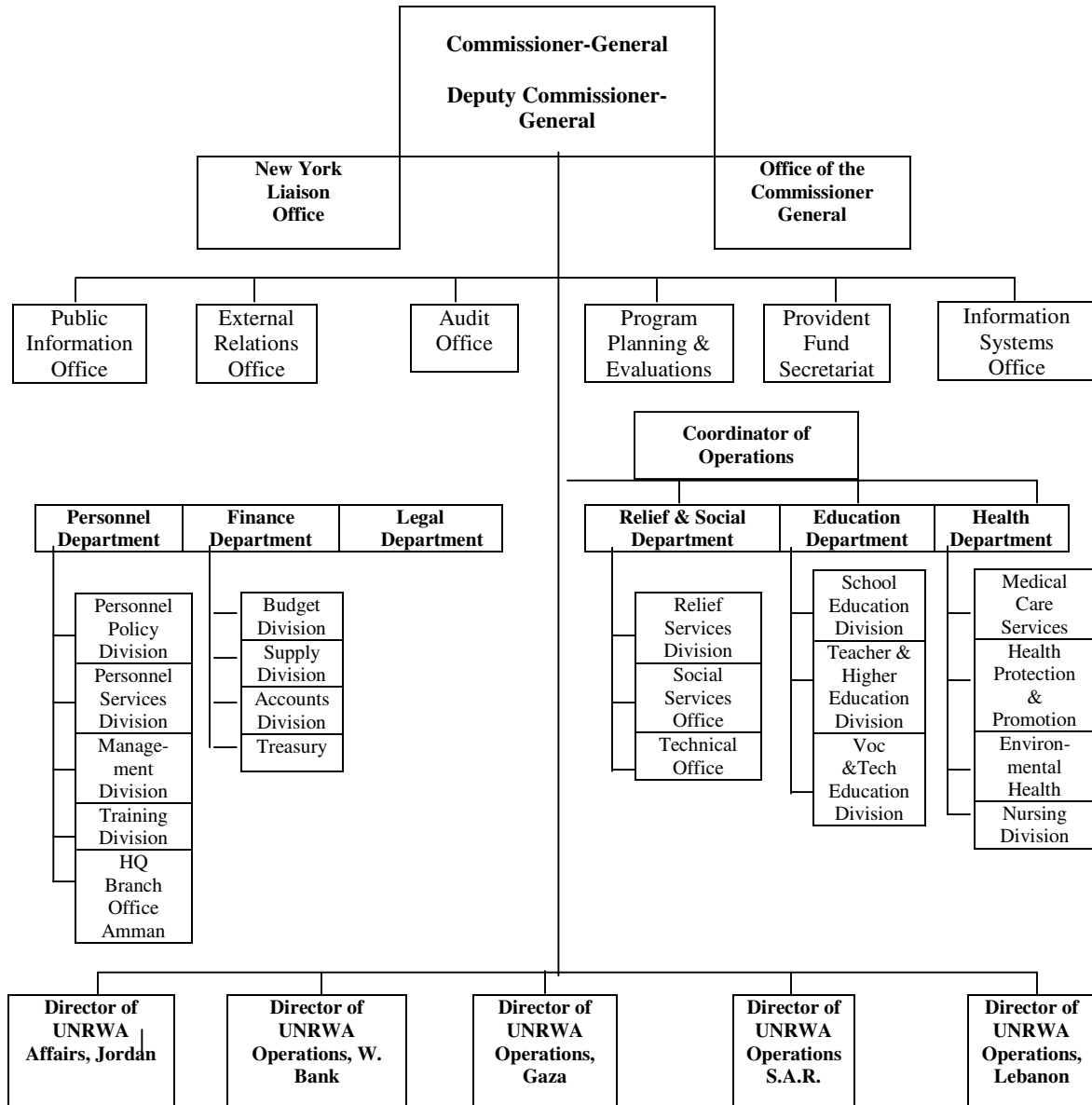
As I explained in our conversation, the facilities enumerated in paragraphs (a) to (g) of your letter are essential if the Agency is to operate effectively. For this reason I expect that such restrictions as may for the time being be placed on the full use of those facilities will be removed as soon as considerations of military security permit this.

I agree that your letter and this reply constitute a provisional agreement between UNRWA and the Government of Israel to remain in force until replaced or cancelled. UNRWA's agreement is subject to any relevant instructions or resolutions emanating from the United Nations.

I have the honor to be,
Yours faithfully,
(Signed) Laurence Michelmore
Commissioner-General

Appendix C

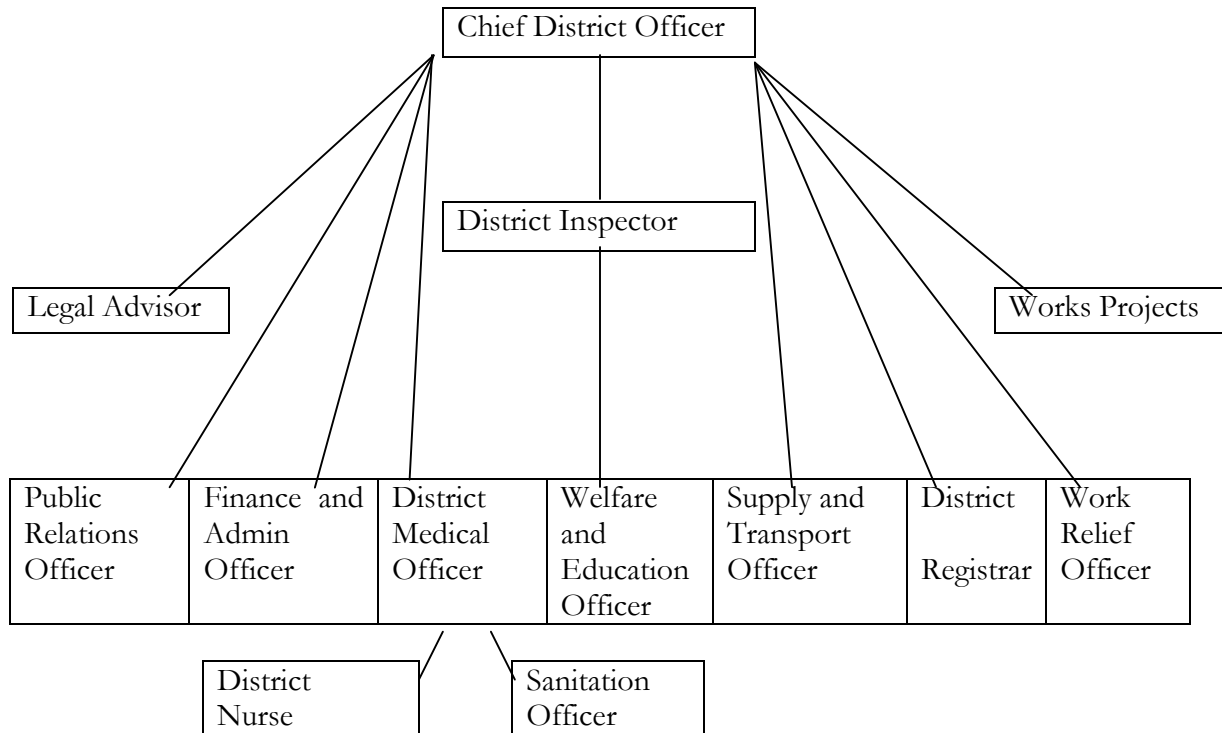
UNRWA Headquarters Organization, 1990



Source: UNRWA Management Services Division

Appendix D

Organization of a Typical UNRWA District Office, 1950



Source: UNRWA, "United Nations Palestine Relief Agencies, A Survey" (Beirut, 1950)

Appendix E
Contributions to UNRWA by Member and Non Member States of the United Nations

	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960
Australia	112500	112500	212000	195200	190400	95200
Austria	700	700	1050	1400	2000	
Bahrain			1960			
Belgium	30000	30000	50000	20000	30000	
Burma		3528	2972			
Canada	515000		1208125	2138750	2075000	458333
Cuba					5000	
Denmark	86956		86956	50680	43440	43440
Finland					3000	
France	2730	6000	11000	16500	39000	15000
Germany	1657219	368276	24997	190476	238095	238095
Haiti		30000	60000			
Holy See					2814	7000
Honduras		5138	3350	5333	8332	3000
Indonesia	20000			39953		
Iran	10000	10000	20000	10000	10000	2500
Ireland			174403	100935	99045	49410
Israel					1000	
Italy	13689	12164	11652	7788	23844	11922
Japan				5000	6500	5000
Jordan					10000	
Laos		4000	2000	2000	2000	
Lebanon	28800	11409				
Liberia		286	572	2381	203	204
Libyan Arab			5714	4762	4796	
Luxembourg	25000	57895	64474	32895	65790	65790
Mexico	11200	168000	210000	168000	140000	168000
Monaco	42135	42135	63202	49000	21000	42000
Morocco	67991		62964	20964	20964	22014
Netherlands			1250			
New Zealand			2000			
Norway		19600				
Pakistan	40000	40000	114668	174046	138833	
Philippines						16667
Qatar				4200		148200
Republic of	57915	57915	86872	96873	57915	35046
Saudi Arabia		5357	5000	10402	5000	5000
Spain	277143	224924	182182	228850	326324	195524
Sweden	167000	167000	306220	237460	230000	222291
Switzerland		550000	810000	560000	540000	607400
Thailand	40000				2500	13500
Turkey		80000	40000	80000	40000	388700
United						
United States						

Source: UNRWA- Annual Report of the Commissioner General 1955-1960

Contributions to UNRWA by Member and Non Member States of the United Nations

Pledge Contributions > \$200,000

	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
Australia	202	213	214	240	321	341	369	419	490	474
Austria										
Belgium		507	382	262	647	771	996	1108	1036	1774
Canada	1262	1330	1555	2050	2094	3121	3646	3689	4520	4306
China										
Denmark	643	715	914	890	1109	1186	1567	1795	1726	2094
Finland				210	258	293	298	251	250	313
France	1383	1445	1262	1269	1343	1295	1568	1324	1385	1728
Germany	3161	3476	3430	4965	2963	3304	3312	3324	5057	5624
Greece										
Iraq					240					
Iran										
Ireland										
Israel										
Italy	481						200	253	241	
Japan	350	550	762	350	5750	5000	5500	5975	6500	6999
Jordan										
Kuwait	220	400	400	220	400	400	1600	600	600	2100
Lebanon										
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya		250	600	600	600	602	600	1000		
Luxembourg										
Morocco										
Netherlands					565	1561	1837	2008	2751	2460
New Zealand										
Norway	182	601	691	845	1402	1843	1980	2025	2990	3350
Pakistan										
Palestine										
Qatar						1060	500			
Republic of Korea										
Saudi Arabia	297	297	347	397	947	11200	11200	3341	6300	3500
Spain	705	783	743	828	1000	1000	1000	1000		
Sweden	2193	2450	3000	3719	4193	5562	6072	8092	8508	9932
Switzerland	513	878	927	1233	1545	1181	1548	1572	1709	5524
Tunisia										
Turkey										
United Arab Emirates				220	250	2275	270	270	270	
United Kingdom	4692	4512	4886	4960	4760	6809	6929	8231	7729	9350
United States of America	22750	22981	23908	23200	28285	42055	38000	54700	51500	52000

*Source: UNRWA- Annual Report of the Commissioner General 1970-1979

** Countries that pledged less than \$200,000 were not included on this chart. These countries included: Bahrain, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Chile, Czech Republic, Holy See, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Mexico, Monaco, Panama, Philippines, Portugal, Senegal, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Syria, and Thailand.

**Contributions to UNRWA by Member and Non Member States of the
United Nations- Pledge Contributions > \$200,000**

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Australia	466	572	902	1748	2201	1754	1324	343	1007	2174
Austria										
Belgium	1932	1943	1301	973	283	325	439	478	485	486
Canada	4877	6147	6487	6551	8062	6220	6117	7729	9123	9479
China										
Denmark	2186	2187	2526	3255	2945	2622	4484	5207	5942	5930
Finland	275	378	297	582	530	528	1099	1701	2433	3203
France	1865	1930	1640	1555	1108	1196	1773	1754	1638	2533
Germany	5776	5808	5036	3591	3573	3110	4850	5189	7708	8073
Greece										
Iraq	5122		500						3200	
Iran										
Ireland										
Israel										
Italy	773	1167	1402	1403	1311	3665	5721	13394	18840	26106
Japan	8211	10682	11468	12040	2679	14500	18945	18051	19627	28465
Jordan										
Kuwait	2100	2100	2100	1100	1100	1100	1100	2000	7600	1500
Lebanon										
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	1250	4250		1432	927				2799	1000
Luxembourg										
Morocco										
Netherlands	2852	2202	2297	2422	1437	1731	2996	3535	3063	2771
New Zealand										
Norway	3920	4681	5710	7689	7671	7249	8848	9717	9761	10715
Pakistan										
Palestine										
Qatar	250	500	600						2000	
Republic of Korea										
Saudi Arabia	5000	6200	6200	1200	7200	2200	1000	1200	1200	1200
Spain	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1954	1382	1449	2107	2147
Sweden	11235	10117	10414	7914	7475	7942	9517	13168	13516	15559
Switzerland	4590	4142	4304	4600	3997	3663	3512	6496	7665	5684
Tunisia										
United Arab Emirates	670	800	800		800				3000	
United Kingdom	10442	10027	7211	8842	7995	6556	7147	8262	9118	9171
United States of America	56200	62000	67000	70750	67000	75330	67000	70000	63300	65300

*Source: UNRWA- Annual Report of the Commissioner General 1980-1989

** Countries that pledged less than \$200,000 were not included on this chart. These countries included: Bahrain, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Chile, Czech Republic, Holy See, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Mexico, Monaco, Panama, Philippines, Portugal, Senegal, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Syria, and Thailand.

Contributions to UNRWA by Member and Non Member States of the United Nations Pledge Contributions > \$200,000

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Australia	2245	2177		2349	2164		3610	2089	2253	2469
Austria		490		1500	2751	833	503	509	350	547
Belgium	609	457		4239	3746	1321	2725	3307	4287	1195
Canada	8834	9479		12776	9645	9832	10755	9032	8061	7608
China		717			654	673	392			
Denmark	5556	547		2841	1009	2626	10254	8051	11514	13607
Finland	4555	3052		5785	3615	1120	1945	1648	14565	2503
France	2292	1749		2978	2067	3203	3923	2428	2720	3473
Germany	9998	6966		12289	8535	7617	7949	10889	9447	8457
Greece		435						200		
Iran		330								
Ireland						230	717	934	1130	738
Israel						1422				
Italy	27296	12997		19976	2174	21216	10472	7453	5798	5135
Japan	20397	26466		27297	16267	21705	41083	29837	22815	28600
Jordan		336				326				
Kuwait	1100	1500		1515			1500	3000	1030	4500
Lebanon							1043	347		
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	1000	1000		1000						
Luxembourg									209	907
Morocco		1052		1177	326	829	9956	242		
Netherlands	5598	2770		7591	7289	6469	292	1623	13851	9351
New Zealand						240	11408			284
Norway	10046	9433		11045	10484	8424		15494	17827	14029
Pakistan		301					222			
Palestine										
Oatar		200								
Republic of Korea							1200			
Saudi Arabia	1200	1200		1200	2400	1200	2183	7926	4633	7596
Spain	2362	2146		2268	2606	2518		3332	3184	4122
Sweden	21552	15559		26195	26314	16336	8849	22594	23390	18820
Switzerland	9074	5313		5570	8307	9339		7580	4773	7613
Tunisia						258	1000	593		
Turkey							901		300	
United Arab Emirates					500				1500	1000
United Kingdom	9274	9123		10672	10431	10433		10713	10708	13768
United States of America	57000	65300		75600	69000	68588	81322	80676	92256	84689

* Source: UNRWA- Annual Report of the Commissioner General 1990-1999

** Countries that pledged less than \$200,000 were not included on this chart. These countries included: Bahrain, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Chile, Czech Republic, Holy See, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Mexico, Monaco, Panama, Philippines, Portugal, Senegal, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Syria, and Thailand

Contributions to UNRWA by Member and Non Member States of the United Nations Pledge Contributions > \$200,000

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Argentina					
Australia	25359	1696	2445	2308	2363
Austria	460	357	339	645	801
Belgium	2169	736	2177	1558	3985
Canada	8456	10067	10754	883	7764
China					
Denmark	7971	8931	8479	9430	7723
Finland	2012	1952	1807	2717	2819
France	2394	4579	4809	11743	6099
Germany	8557	8531	5663	6500	9247
Greece	300	400	400	400	400
Iraq					
Iran					
Ireland	565	539	839	2299	2483
Israel					
Italy	4481	3545	5296	9196	10841
Japan	18516	25617	10324	16535	11404
Jordan					203
Kuwait	1500	2637	2003	1500	1499
Lebanon					
Libyan Arab				1000	
Luxembourg	396	1218	1663	1604	2388
Morocco					
Netherlands	7415	10853	22221	16792	14104
New Zealand					292
Norway	13150	13037	12731	12476	14689
Pakistan					
Palestine	685	964	372	2548	2999
Qatar				200	
Republic of					
Saudi Arabia	4984	7823	3621	2548	5430
Spain	5328	3165	2642	4496	3068
Sweden	18239	18250	18504	16873	20155
Switzerland	3311	7521	5513	7743	6754
Tunisia					
Turkey	200		412	200	399
United Arab Emirates		1099	500	500	500
United Kingdom	13768	13007	27549	37262	30648
United States of America	80411	80861	89299	114780	127687

* Source: UNRWA- Annual Report of the Commissioner General 200-2004

** Countries that pledged less than \$200,000 were not included on this chart. These countries included: Bahrain, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Chile, Czech Republic, Holy See, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Mexico, Monaco, Panama, Philippines, Portugal, Senegal, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Syria, and Thailand.

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