

May 28, 1985

## HOW UNRWA HAS FAILED THE PALESTINIAN REFUGEES

### INTRODUCTION

In June 1982, it was confirmed that facilities of the U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East were being used by the Palestine Liberation Organization for military recruitment and training, weapons storage, and transmitting radio messages. Proof of this, uncovered by Israeli forces in Lebanon, was so irrefutable that a very embarrassed U.N. admitted that it was true. Clearly the U.N. Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) had violated its mandate very seriously.<sup>1</sup>

This should have surprised no one. The almost exclusively Palestinian staff of UNRWA (about 17,000 Palestinians and a mere 120 other nationals<sup>2</sup>) long had cooperated with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in many ways. Under the so-called Cairo Agreement signed with Lebanon in 1969, for example, the PLO itself has been allowed to run many refugee camps, most of them in Southern Lebanon. The PLO also has provided and raised funds for UNRWA.<sup>3</sup>

The confirmed PLO role in UNRWA leaves the U.S. no choice but to limit American backing of the Agency. U.S. law--P.L. 98-164, section 114--prohibits the U.S. from funding any organization used by or of benefit to the PLO. As such, the U.S. in 1982 withheld its annual \$67 million contribution to UNRWA for several months until the June incident had been investigated, and UNRWA pledged that it would monitor its facilities to ensure against

---

<sup>1</sup> UNRWA report of October 18, 1982, LEG 470/6(L-1), paragraph 10: "for around two years prior to 1982 a parallel programme of organized military training by the PLO has been carried out within the Center's premises which is totally incompatible with the Agency's status and functions."

<sup>2</sup> UNRWA: A Brief History, 1950-1982 v. 83-63833, pp. 43 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 233.

their use by sectarian or political organizations or as military recruiting grounds. In a congressional hearing later that year, Jeane Kirkpatrick, who then was U.S. Permanent Representative to the U.N., warned:

I expect that because there is a very large, highly developed bureaucracy with an ideology of its own, the monitoring of the UNRWA operation to achieve the purpose of Congress will continue to be a fairly sizeable task and one which I think we will all want to keep a close watch over.<sup>4</sup>

The PLO's involvement with UNRWA is symbolic of that agency's radical departure from its original mandate. Established in 1949 by General Assembly Resolution 302(IV), UNRWA was to assist the Arabs displaced by the first Arab-Israeli war.

Originally intended as a temporary agency to carry out a relief and works program to prepare the absorption of the displaced Arabs into neighboring states, UNRWA has been transformed into a self-perpetuating U.N. bureaucracy. Its well-paid staff increased threefold in three decades, currently accounting for two-thirds of UNRWA's total budget. In contrast with the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which spent some \$40 per refugee last year, UNRWA spent \$116 per refugee. The reason: UNRWA is not really a "refugee" agency at all. While in 1950, some 69 percent of its budget was spent on relief, today only 22 percent is spent on relief and 59 percent on education.<sup>5</sup> Much of this "education," as the evidence over the years has shown, has been heavily politicized, in favor of the Arab states perspective in the Middle East conflict and against Israel. And while UNRWA in 1984 spent \$121 million on education, almost nothing was spent on "works."

UNRWA has become a political instrument routinely used by the enemies of Israel and of the U.S. to prove the "criminality" of the creation of the state of Israel. UNRWA's very existence is used by Arab states to argue that Palestinian refugees continue to suffer near indescribable hardship. This is puzzling, for when UNRWA concentrates on the task for which it was founded, its record is pretty good. Thanks to \$1.34 billion in U.S. aid over the years, the refugees helped by UNRWA for the most part have attained a relatively decent standard of living for the Middle East. Only about one-third of the two million refugees registered with UNRWA remain housed in camps. The rest have resettled in Arab nations and Israel. At one time about 70 percent of these refugees were ill-educated peasants; today they are largely urban and are among the best educated of any Arab people.<sup>6</sup> The Arab

---

<sup>4</sup> Senate hearings, 98-307, Pr. 1, p. 549.

<sup>5</sup> History, op. cit., p. 221.

<sup>6</sup> See Granville Austin, "The Importance to the United States of the UNRWA," a Study Prepared for the Bureaus of Intelligence and Research and Refugee Programs of the Department of State, June 1984, p. 14.

states ignore this record and insist that the Palestinian refugee problem can be resolved only through the establishment of a Palestinian national homeland--nothing less. None of the world's other 10 million refugees can boast of a political weapon like UNRWA.

Though Arab nations profess concern for the Palestinian refugees, the richest of these countries have contributed little indeed to UNRWA over the years. Of the \$2.53 billion spent by the Agency up to 1984, America's \$1.34 billion contribution towers far above the meager \$142 million from the oil-rich OPEC nations. Israel's \$11 million contribution since 1950, in fact, has been double that of Egypt, three times that of Syria, and was exceeded among Arab nations only by Saudi Arabia, Libya, and Kuwait. The current annual contribution of the U.S. to UNRWA and UNRWA-related projects is an estimated \$70 to \$100 million. Yet this largesse has earned it more contempt than gratitude. The Soviet Union, meanwhile, has yet to pay a single soft ruble, to say nothing of a hard dollar, to UNRWA.

Perhaps unavoidably, UNRWA has become wholly enmeshed in the politics of the Middle East war and peace. Its status as a "humanitarian" relief and works agency has thus been gravely compromised. According to Charles Lichenstein, former U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. for Special Political Affairs, "UNRWA today mirrors the 'rejectionist' agenda of the radical irridentist Arabs and is an instrument of the implementation of that agenda, just as the Palestinians are a weapon in the political struggle." That agenda includes the rejection of the 1947 U.N. Partition Plan that created both the state of Israel and a Palestinian homeland, rejection of the legitimacy of Israel, and rejection of the assimilation of displaced Palestinian Arabs. UNRWA is thus a key instrument for the perpetuation of a permanent Palestinian refugee population.

From humanitarian and political points of view, the U.S. should explore ways to help the refugees other than through UNRWA. A revitalized humane and realistic U.S. approach to the problem of displaced Palestinians would enhance the prospects for Middle East peace. While UNRWA cannot and should not be dismantled immediately, alternative approaches to the problems faced by the refugees should be examined, so that UNRWA may gradually achieve the objective stated in its 1949 mandate, "with a view to the termination of international assistance and relief."

#### UNRWA's HISTORY

The U.N.'s involvement with the Arab refugee problem dates from the creation in November 1948 of the U.N. Relief for Palestine Refugees (UNRPR), UNRWA's parent organization. On December 11, 1948, a General Assembly resolution authorized the creation of the Palestine Conciliation Commission and established certain basic rights for the refugees through resolution 194(III). Paragraph 11 of that resolution, still valid, stipulates:

Resolved that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live in peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of, or damage to, property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the governments or authorities responsible.

The Arab states voted unanimously against this resolution, demanding nothing short of repatriation of all Palestinian refugees without recognition of the State of Israel. This was consistent with their rejection of the Palestine Partition Plan adopted overwhelmingly by the General Assembly (33-13-10 [1 absent]) on November 28, 1947, which had provided for a Palestinian state alongside the state of Israel. The Plan was supported by the West and the entire Soviet bloc. It established parallel Arab and Jewish states as a permanent solution of the Palestine problem. The countries voting against the Plan voted, in effect, against any state for the Palestinians comprehending less than the entire mandate area.

It soon became clear that the Arab refugee problem would not be settled within a year. On December 8, 1949, the General Assembly adopted resolution 302(IV) creating UNRWA.

From the outset, UNRWA ran into the problem of defining who the "refugees" were. UNRWA concedes that no adequate record of the numbers and location of the Palestine Arab population existed at the time.<sup>7</sup> The listing of nonexistent persons and widespread duplication became routine. But even if a legitimate census had been available, questions would remain concerning the meaning of the term "refugee" in that context.

UNRWA defines a refugee as "a needy person whose normal residence was Palestine for a minimum of two years preceding the outbreak of the conflict of 1948 and who, as a result of the conflict, has lost his home and his means of livelihood."<sup>8</sup> One reason for the very short minimal residence requirement is that a large number of Arabs had come to Palestine only after 1934 when Jews began arriving in the area in increasing numbers.<sup>9</sup> Another problem with UNRWA's definition of refugees is that many of the Palestinians displaced after 1948 and thus still listed as "refu-

---

<sup>7</sup> History, op. cit., p. 5. For other sources regarding the problem of actual numbers of Palestinian refugees see: Walter Pinner, How Many Arab Refugees? A Critical Study of UNRWA's Statistics and Reports (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1959); Deborah Kaplan, The Arab Refugees--An Abnormal Problem (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass, 1959); Dennis C. Howley, The United Nations and the Palestinians (Hicksville, New York: Exposition Press, 1975).

<sup>8</sup> UNRWA Interim Report, October 1950, paragraph 15.

<sup>9</sup> See Joan Peters, From Time Immemorial: The Origins of the Arab-Jewish Conflict Over Palestine (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), especially pp. 230-233.

gees," have been living normal and even prosperous lives in Arab lands. Eligibility for registration as a refugee with UNRWA even extends to subsequent generations.

The refugee population today includes a third generation; some 30 percent are under fifteen years of age.<sup>10</sup> About half live in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. Most of the Jordanian refugees registered with UNRWA are in fact Jordanian citizens.

In contrast to the more than one million Jewish refugees who fled Arab countries and have been welcomed warmly into Israel,<sup>11</sup> the Arab refugees met with hostility in the Arab nations. The Arab states generally would not help the refugees into their communities. Arab countries and often the refugees themselves have insisted that the Palestinian refugee problem cannot be solved economically or by humanitarian means, but only politically--by resettlement in what they claim is their Palestinian homeland and the dissolution of Israel.<sup>12</sup> Ahmed Shukairi of the PLO stated in 1966: "The Arab states will not integrate the Palestine refugees because the integration would be a slow process of liquidation of the Palestine problem."<sup>13</sup> That position holds today.

As a result, UNRWA's mandate changed from "relief and works." Refugees became essentially a political weapon. Complained Ralph Galloway, a former head of UNRWA, in 1958:

The Arab states do not want to solve the refugee problem. They want to keep it as an open sore, as an affront to the United Nations and as a weapon against Israel.<sup>14</sup>

Added King Hussein of Jordan, two years later, in an interview with the Associated Press:

Since 1948 Arab leaders have approached the Palestine problem in an irresponsible manner. They have not looked into the future. They have no plan or approach. They have used the Palestine people for selfish political purposes. This is ridiculous and, I could say, criminal.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> History, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> Zivia S. Wurtele and Morton G. Wurtele, "De Facto Population Exchange Between Arabs and Oriental Jews, 1922-1972," Middle East Review, Spring/Summer 1975, pp. 57-59.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Hon. Terrence Prittie and Bernard Dineen, The Double Exodus (London: The Goodhart Press, 1974) for a discussion of Arab opposition to a Palestinian works program.

<sup>13</sup> The New York Times, April 4, 1966, p. 14.

<sup>14</sup> Cited in Prittie, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with William Wynn, Associated Press, January 17, 1960.

## UNRWA's FINANCES

From 1950 to 1984, the total Arab contributions amounted to 5.6 percent of UNRWA's budget. Last year, it dropped to 4.1 percent or less than \$7.5 million.

The annual U.S. contributions to UNRWA today reaches \$100 million if all forms of aid for UNRWA refugees are counted.<sup>16</sup> Yet this generosity is met with scant thanks. Not untypical was the 1983 assertion by Gennady P. Tarasov, a Soviet diplomat at the U.N.:

Elementary norms of justice and law require that UNRWA expenditures for assisting Palestinian refugees should be paid by the Israeli aggressor, which created the problem in the first place, and by those who, with their support of Tel Aviv's policy of plunder, are attempting to perpetuate the Palestinian condition as homeless refugees possessing no rights.<sup>17</sup>

This view is echoed by the PLO and the Arab states.

None of them, however, has criticized the USSR for not contributing to UNRWA. Nor is gratitude expressed to Western nations, whose contributions for the period 1950-1982 totaled: Great Britain, \$202 million; Sweden, \$97 million; Canada, \$69 million; the Federal Republic of Germany, \$66 million. The European Community per se has contributed an additional \$206 million, and Japan, \$70 million.

## UNRWA TODAY

In its 1985 Country Reports on the World Refugee Situation: Statistics, the U.S. Department of State lists the total number of Palestinian refugees as 2,012,700 as of May 1984, using as its definition "those Palestinians registered with UNRWA." This figure is highly misleading and should not be given credibility by the State Department. The number includes, for example, some 750,000 Jordanian/Palestinians, a majority of whom are Jordanian citizens. The figure also obscures the fact that only one-third of the refugees UNRWA registered actually live in camps. And a number of those who do so actually prefer the camps because their shelters are rent free and close to UNRWA schools and clinics. A State Department-commissioned report by Granville Austin concludes that "UNRWA's nutritional/medical and educational programs have helped make Palestinians the best educated and upwardly mobile people in the Middle East after the Israelis."<sup>18</sup> Once registered

<sup>16</sup> See A/CONF. 114/13, August 1, 1983, for a list of other U.N. agencies involved with UNRWA.

<sup>17</sup> A/SPC/38/P.V.29, p. 22.

<sup>18</sup> Austin, op. cit., p. ii.

with UNRWA, refugees stay registered, whatever their economic or citizenship status.

This is not to say that some UNRWA camps are not dreadfully squalid, notably the Rafahs and Beach camps in Gaza. Other camps have surprisingly modern amenities.<sup>19</sup> One problem noted by visitors such as Arnold K. Leibowitz, former Special Counsel to the Senate Immigration Subcommittee, is that camp personnel often show overt lack of concern for the inhabitants. Virtually none of the international civil servants employed by UNRWA speak Arabic, and they apparently delegate the menial and unpleasant jobs, such as moving bricks or lumber, to the Palestinian staff.

Of UNRWA's 17,000 field staff, nearly two-thirds are teachers. UNRWA also operates 98 clinics and makes services available at a variety of government and private medical facilities; some 19 percent of UNRWA's budget is spent on health care. Neighboring Arab states have benefited directly from UNRWA. Its expenditure within Jordan in 1983 was \$52 million; in Syria, about \$15 million.<sup>20</sup> To what extent the financial benefits from UNRWA factor into the Arab governments' opposition to any attempts to make refugees less dependent on UNRWA is difficult to say.

#### STRUCTURAL PROBLEMS OF UNRWA

A U.N. Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) report on UNRWA submitted on August 1, 1983, to the General Assembly noted that most of the refugees do not need food aid. As such, the JIU recommends gradually phasing out the distribution-in-kind program, introducing instead food coupons and, eventually, redistributing resources away from food "in favor of the shelter component of the relief program." The JIU reported that small self-help projects have proved to be valuable means for improving the condition of shelters, school buildings, installations, and environmental sanitation in the camps. Yet UNRWA staffers and officials actively have discouraged self-improvement measures in the camps. Explains Ambassador Harvey Feldman, a member of the U.S. delegation to the U.N.: "It is astonishing to what extent the organization provides outright disincentives for betterment. This, I believe, is probably the most disquieting fact about UNRWA--and represents a radically different approach from other refugee organizations." Because of this, UNRWA lacks the willingness and expertise to generate self-help projects.

UNRWA, moreover, is legally at the mercy of host governments. With no legal powers to function in the territory of a state without the state's consent, UNRWA has on occasion even been prevented from building proper shelters and providing adequate

---

<sup>19</sup> See Milton Viorst, "UNRWA and Peace in the Middle East," Special Study 4, The Middle East Institute, Washington, D.C., 1984, p. 15.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

living conditions for the refugees. In October 1982, for example, Israel offered to provide bulldozers free of charge to help Palestinian refugee camps in South Lebanon get ready for the winter, as well as 500 prefabricated buildings to house refugees. But Dennis Brown, head of UNRWA's Sidon office, refused the offer on the ground that it would antagonize the host government of Lebanon.<sup>21</sup>

Among UNRWA's most significant problems is its inability to protect the refugees. Unlike the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNRWA lacks the right to offer security and to be the legal protector of the refugees. This is one reason why the PLO originally was welcomed by the UNRWA, for it has on occasion protected UNRWA installations. The JIU therefore suggested in its report that UNHCR might cooperate with UNRWA to implement measures to safeguard the safety of the Palestinian refugees. As for the current living standard of refugees in camps, one of the most pressing is temporary housing. Arab nations have resisted fiercely the establishment of permanent shelters.

The General Assembly, for its part, inhibits UNRWA from accepting such shelters. Resolution 39/99 E adopted on December 14, 1984, by 145 in favor and only the U.S. and Israel opposed, states that "measures to resettle Palestine refugees in the Gaza Strip away from the homes and property from which they were displaced constitute a violation of their inalienable right of return." Never mind the improvement in the Palestinian standard of living in Gaza, whose real GNP has more than tripled since 1967. And never mind the fact that the refugees were resettled entirely voluntarily by UNRWA's own account.<sup>22</sup> The GNP per capita in real terms almost tripled as well, and private consumption more than doubled.<sup>23</sup>

It appears that the actual standard of life of the Palestinians is of less concern to the U.N.'s voting majority than an anti-Israel political agenda. This despite the fact that permanent settlements in place of the camps by no means preclude the right of Palestinians to settle in a homeland that would result from a comprehensive peace settlement.

#### POLITICIZATION OF UNRWA

Even prior to the active and direct involvement of the PLO with UNRWA, the agency provided fertile ground for nurturing Palestinian nationalist sentiment. In 1967, for example, the

<sup>21</sup> Jerusalem Post, October 20, 1982.

<sup>22</sup> Press release, HQ/28/23, December 14, 1983.

<sup>23</sup> The Washington Post reported on November 19, 1976: "No one denies that the Israeli government houses are an improvement over the squalor of the camps." See also Viorst, op. cit., p. 42.



Israelis found classrooms in refugee camps on the West Bank and Gaza filled with anti-Jewish and anti-Israeli propaganda. An international commission of educators established under the authority of the Director General of the U.N. Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) found that more than half the textbooks were objectionable on grounds that they gave students a distorted view of history, openly incited to violence, or employed anti-Jewish language.<sup>24</sup>

UNRWA's teachers are among the most militantly nationalistic Palestinians. Middle East analyst and journalist Milton Viorst observes that:

UNRWA's 3,700 teachers in Jordan, most of them young men and women with deeply held nationalist feelings, are a recurring problem to the agency. They are a permanent lobby in behalf of UNRWA's taking positions of advocacy for Palestinian goals. They communicate their nationalism in the classroom, as UNRWA well knows, arousing students who for the most part have already been politicized at home.<sup>25</sup>

The U.N. itself has helped fuel the extremist tendencies of some UNRWA staff. On December 10, 1969, the General Assembly broke precedent on refugee matters and, in resolution 2535, linked the refugee question with the "inalienable rights of the people of Palestine." The resolution contained a strong anti-Israel bias. It was adopted by a vote of 48 for, 22 against, with 47 abstentions. This tone has not changed; if anything, it has become more strident. The most recent General Assembly resolution on UNRWA, 39/99, was passed on December 14, 1984; its eleven separate sections are uniformly critical of Israel, with no criticisms of any Arab governments.

Condemnation of the detention of UNRWA employees by Israel, for example, is never balanced by similar condemnation of detentions on the part of Arab governments. Israel alone is held responsible for the suffering of Palestinian refugees in southern Lebanon. Indeed, numerous speeches in the U.N.'s Special Political Committee denounce Israel specifically for the tragic killings at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps. Ignored is the fact that Lebanese did the shooting.

The UNRWA annual reports often are equally politicized and one-sided. The report for 1982-83, for example, states that "the Israeli invasion of Lebanon on 6 June 1982 and the turmoil which ensued...largely undid the Agency's work of 30 years on Lebanon." Neither the role of Arab governments, mainly that of Syria, nor that of the PLO in that turmoil is mentioned.

---

<sup>24</sup> See Edward H. Buehrig, The U.N. and the Palestinian Refugees: A Study in Nonterritorial Administration (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971), especially pp. 151-166.

<sup>25</sup> Viorst, op. cit., p. 34.

Not mentioned either is the fact that PLO units had settled inside the Palestinian camps and developed a fortified framework of bunkers, supply depots, and gun emplacements. One example is the Ein Hilwe camp, where the PLO took 300 refugees as hostages. The Israeli Army leafletted the camp asking the PLO to lay down their arms and allow the civilians to leave. When some of the hostages attempted to escape, the PLO shot them.<sup>26</sup>

None of this is included in the 1983 UNRWA film entitled "What Sort of Life?" which describes the suffering of Palestinians at Ein Hilweh after the 1982 bombings. The misery of camp residents, the desperation of women whose husbands and sons were held at the Ansar prison by the Israelis, was simply being blamed on the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. No mention is made anywhere in the film of those men's involvement with the PLO.

The extent to which UNRWA has cooperated and still cooperates with the PLO is difficult if not impossible to estimate. PLO involvement in UNRWA camps stems back at least to 1963.<sup>27</sup> Philip Hochstein, a correspondent of the Long Island Jewish World, reported then that the Sibliin Training Center appeared to be dominated by El Fatah, a predecessor of the PLO. In 1982, Dr. Zvi Lanir of Tel Aviv University's Center for Strategic Studies visited the Rashidiye refugee camp on the outskirts of Tyre in Southern Lebanon, where he found various PLO groups active. They had access to huge sums of UNRWA money that they spent liberally, becoming deeply involved in all aspects of the camp's socioeconomic life. The health services provided by UNRWA in the neighboring Ein Hilwe camp were also infiltrated by the PLO.<sup>28</sup>

Many observers believe that the PLO's tactics, which failed to create a "popular army" at Rashidiye, may have been too heavy-handed. The dramatic case of the Sibliin Training Center, where an extensive military training program was uncovered, also disclosed that many students, who had been forced to attend the program in order to graduate, resented the military training.<sup>29</sup>

At the same time, nationalism in the camp population is genuine. Many observers believe that even without the PLO there would be nationalist feelings and a desire for a homeland. But the camps help create and perpetuate a "critical mass" of nationalist fervor. This is not to say that a large portion of the refugees would not prefer more permanent housing and better opportunities for employment, with the understanding that such improvements would not compromise their status as refugees and their right eventually to return to a land they would be willing to consider their rightful home.

---

<sup>26</sup> A/SPC/38/PV.33.

<sup>27</sup> See Philip Hochstein, Long Island Jewish World, November 5, 1982.

<sup>28</sup> Jerusalem Post, August 13, 1982.

<sup>29</sup> Among the many articles on the discovery that UNRWA facilities in Sibliin had been used by the PLO are: The Jerusalem Post, June 23, 1982; Ha'aretz Tel Aviv, July 29, 1982; The New York Times, June 30, 1982.

Currently, however, UNRWA opposes improvements in the refugees' living status, concerned that eventual assimilation would dampen their desire for a homeland and would make such a political solution less likely. The humanitarian aspects of such an attitude aside, there is a real question whether it is even politically desirable. Ambassador H. Eugene Douglas, U.S. Coordinator for Refugee Affairs, for example, is concerned that the refugees should be much better trained and prepared, should there be an opportunity for them to return to a homeland.

In any peace process, moreover, UNRWA would be unmistakably anti-Israeli. Surely the one-sided rhetoric of its reports cannot contribute to an equitable solution to the Palestinian problem. If the U.S. wishes to play a balanced role in a Middle East peace process, it should not be participating at a high level in an organization so unmistakably partisan as UNRWA. Yet UNRWA's Commissioner General or Deputy Commissioner General typically have been Americans. Currently, for instance, Robert Dillon has the post of Deputy Commissioner General. Such a high U.S. profile at UNRWA does not serve the interests of Middle East peace or of U.S. policy in the region.

#### ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS

A variety of approaches could help Palestinian refugees without prejudicing their political aspirations. They also could reduce and eventually end U.S. taxpayer's costly support of the Palestinian refugee population. As a first step, Congress should hold hearings on alternative proposals aimed at ameliorating the condition of the refugees and disentangling the humanitarian from the political dimensions of refugee assistance. Among the alternatives to be considered are:

- The U.S. contribution to UNRWA should not exceed the Arab contribution. If Arab states are concerned about the fate of their fellow Arabs, the Palestinian refugees, they should pay no less than does the U.S.
- Nongovernmental organizations should play a greater role in helping Palestinian refugees.<sup>30</sup> The U.S. could earmark 25 percent of its contribution to UNRWA for the purpose of subcontracting with voluntary organizations to assure more effective delivery of services.
- Impose on UNRWA the high standards of accountability accepted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees with respect to the use of funds.

---

<sup>30</sup> A nearly complete list of voluntary organizations already involved in the Near East is available from the Report of the Second Consultation Between Non-Governmental Organizations and UNRWA, International Council of Voluntary Agencies, June 20-22, 1984.

- Require cooperation between the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and UNRWA to protect the Palestinian refugees. The U.S. could help arrange such joint efforts.
- Earmark part of the U.S. contribution to UNRWA for studies regarding potential development projects for Palestine refugees to be conducted by the U.N. Development Program (UNDP). Among the projects already undertaken by UNDP are: provision of equipment for agricultural demonstration and training plus individual advanced education for 12 agriculturists; buildings, equipment, and training for vocational rehabilitation of disabled persons; training in various medical specializations, industrial management, housing, and youth leadership; and construction of a large medical services training center. The activities of other U.N. agencies in that area could also be expanded.<sup>31</sup>
- Earmark part of the U.S. contribution to UNRWA for improved and more permanent housing facilities to be purchased by camp residents. These purchases should in no way prejudice the residents' political status as refugees or their claims to a possible return to a homeland that would result from a comprehensive settlement.
- Explore means to integrate Palestinian refugees into neighboring states, partly with a view to aiding the labor shortages of capital-rich Arab states.<sup>32</sup>
- Strictly monitor UNRWA cooperation with the PLO. Misuse of UNRWA facilities should be punished severely, including drastic reduction in the U.S. contribution to the agency.

Because of its generosity, the U.S. has enormous leverage over the heavily politicized, in many ways obsolete, UNRWA. To help the refugees lead fuller lives and to enhance the chances of an orderly, just peace process in the Middle East, Washington must begin using this leverage.

Juliana Geran Pilon, Ph.D.  
Senior Policy Analyst

---

<sup>31</sup> See A/CONF. 114/13, August 1, 1983, pp. 28-30 for UNDP contributions, and other sections for activities of other U.N. agencies in that area.

<sup>32</sup> J. S. Birks and C. A. Sinclair, "International migration and development in the Arab region," published by the International Labour Office, Geneva.