



PRESS RELEASE

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The Secretary of State for External Affairs announced today that 600 tons of wheat flour are being shipped at once for the relief of refugees in the Middle East. This shipment, which is in response to a resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations, will be followed by approximately 50,000 cases of canned fish and 50,000 bushels of white beans. Mr. Stanton Griffis, Director of the United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees, has "acknowledged with deep gratitude" the Canadian Government's offer of wheat flour, fish and beans.

An estimated number of 700,000 refugees, both Arabs and Jews, have been driven from their homes in Palestine. Most of them are women, children and old people and are now living in the adjoining states of Lebanon, Transjordan, Syria and Egypt. People in these states have done a remarkable job of sheltering, clothing and feeding the refugees, but they are now near the end of their resources and cannot carry on unless they receive outside help. Transjordan alone, with a settled population of less than 200,000, is now attempting to care for an estimated 100,000 refugees.

To illustrate existing conditions in these Middle East countries, Mr. Pearson quoted from a press despatch:

"Children are said to be dying of measles in considerable numbers. There is nothing particularly virulent about the measles epidemic itself but the children are so weakened by pneumonia and dysentery that they are unable to resist the disease."

In November the General Assembly of the United Nations passed a resolution asking member countries to contribute money, goods and services to a total of \$32 million, in order to keep the refugees until the next food crop in the Middle East becomes available in August, 1949. Some countries have already made gifts of tents, medicines or clothing, according to what each can offer.

Mr. Pearson said that in Canada there are surplus supplies of several kinds of foodstuffs for which no commercial market exists, and arrangements are being made through the various Commodity Prices Support Boards to donate some of these foodstuffs to the United Nations Director for the Relief of Palestine Refugees.

Several months ago the Canadian Government donated about a quarter of a million dollars worth of such supplies to the Canadian Red Cross Society for relief purposes in the Middle East.