

relief programme organized by the Mediator began to operate in September. Red Cross and other voluntary organizations were already active.

The General Assembly first took up the refugee question during the autumn of 1948. On November 19 it adopted a resolution approving the Secretary-General's estimate of \$32,000,000 as the amount required to provide relief from December 1, 1948 to August 30, 1949 for the 500,000 refugees needing help at that time. The Secretary-General was authorized to advance from the working capital fund of the United Nations a sum not exceeding \$5,000,000 to United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees, a body which took over the disaster relief programme on December 1, 1948. All governments, whether members of the United Nations or not, were urged to make voluntary contributions, and the assistance of specialized agencies and of voluntary organizations was invited and received. Relief was administered by UNRPR but field work was entrusted to the International Committee of the Red Cross, the League of Red Cross Societies, and the American Friends Service Committee.

In another resolution, adopted on December 11, 1948, the General Assembly asserted that Palestinian refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date. Compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of, or damage to, property. The Assembly asked the Palestine Conciliation Commission set up under this resolution to facilitate the repatriation, resettlement, and economic and social rehabilitation of Palestinian refugees, and the payment of compensation, keeping in close touch, meanwhile, with the Director of UNRPR.

Between April and September 1949, the Conciliation Commission carried on parallel discussions of the refugee problem at Lausanne with representatives of Israel, interested Arab states and certain voluntary relief organizations. Here Israel insisted that the refugee problem should be treated as part of a general political settlement, while the Arabs maintained that no progress could be made towards a political settlement until Israel accepted the principle of repatriation of Arab refugees. This the Government of Israel refused to do. The Conciliation Commission itself observed that the refugee problem had a definite relation to the political settlement, since the location of Israel's boundaries would determine to a certain extent the number of displaced persons who would be separated from their homes by an international frontier.

On May 12 the Commission obtained the signatures of Arab and Israeli representatives to separate protocols providing for simultaneous discussion of the problem of refugees, frontiers and an international regime for Jerusalem. As a point of departure for these discussions it was agreed that the boundaries described in the General Assembly's original partition plan of November 29, 1947, should be used. Beyond this, however, there was little progress towards agreement.

The Arabs proposed that Israel should accept the immediate return of all refugees whose homes were in the territory allotted to the Jewish state under the Assembly's partition resolution. Israel refused this, but offered to accept a total of 100,000 Arab refugees to be settled in designated localities. Between one-third and one-half of this total would be made up of refugees who had already contrived to return home by irregular means, and those who would be admitted under a plan for reunion of separated families negotiated with the aid of the Conciliation Commission.