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The Conciliation Commission for Palestine
Jerusalem

Gentlemen,

The Arab Refugee Property Owners in Palestine, now refugees in the Lebanon, have the honour to submit the following for your kind and sympathetic consideration.

First and foremost they wish to place on record the desire of all Real Estate Owners to return to their homes and holdings in Palestine. They insist that the decision of the Assembly of United Nations for the return of Arab refugees to Palestine must and should be implemented and at the earliest possible. The determination shown by the United Nations in the Korean affair should be equally shown in the implementation of the Resolution of U.N. for the return of the Arab Refugees. Justice should be dealt and in equal measure.

The Jewish Authorities have passed a legislation known as the " Absentees Property Law, 5710-1950" purporting to deal with the Real and Personal property of those Arabs who are now out of the Jewish Occupied Territory. The least that can be said about this law is that it is a camouflage for a systematic and well planned scheme for stripping the Arab Refugees of their properties .

The exclusivity of the right of sale to certain Jewish Bodies, the basis of the price to be paid, the encumbrancing of the properties with the costs of administration, clerks, guardians 6 % interest etc. and the Custodian's 4% fee, all are tended to drown the properties with such heavy liabilities, in addition to the Government, Municipal and other Rates and Taxes, that there will virtually be nothing left over to pay to the owners, when the time comes for settlement.

It is therefore our humble but fervent submission that steps should be taken by you to stop the enforcement or application of the said law forthwith. So long as the state of War continues and only a truce prevails, the "Status quo" must and should be maintained for all properties of Arab owners who are now refugees outside Jewish Occupied Territory. The terms of the Truce are such that the Jewish Authorities cannot and should not benefit from its occupation of Arab Lands and Properties. Only when final peace is reached can the "Status quo" be varied by joint agreement of the respective interested parties or by the terms of the peace.

On the other hand this piece of legislation is a direct violation of the Human Rights which the United Nations have undertaken to maintain, uphold and defend. We call upon you, Gentlemen, as delegates of the United Nations, to take measures to see that the rights of Arab Refugees in their Real and Personal estates are not endangered and that the said legislation, which tends to despoil the Refugees of their holdings, under the guise of the Law, should not be enforced.

The Arab Refugees now live in the hopes of going back home, reoccupying their properties and holdings and being adequately compensated for their damages. Once these hopes are shattered they will have nothing else to live for and will eventually be driven to embrace and follow political ideas that are adverse to the principles of the Democracies, and thus become a dangerous element all over the Middle East. Indeed, a movement towards that end has started and Communist Agents are busy mobilising refugees to their teachings. This is therefore an S.O.S. to you, Gentlemen, to serve justice to the refugees and thus help in the frustration of those adverse teachings .

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Furthermore it is anticipated that there will possibly be a number of refugees who may chose not go back to their homes in Palestine . Such refugees should therefore be adequately for their Real Estates.

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When speaking of compensation one must realise that it is not only the value of the property that counts. There are the displacement, resettlement and rehabilitation costs, the loss of income from established trades, professions, vocations. industry etc. that must be accounted for and taken into consideration .

In assessing the value of Real Estates an opportunity should and must be given to each individual refugee to put his claim before Special Tribunals or Claims Commissions to be set up for the purpose and to lead evidence, freely, as to the true amount of compensation that is due to him .

In other words, the assessment and settlement of compensation ought to be personal and not collective. Rumours say that an attempt in being made to pay compensation through some Governments or Agencies for distribution to the Refugees. Under no condition will this be accepted by the Refugees. If this attempt was to maintain it would be tantamount to allowing the Jews fix their own assessment thus depriving the individual from rebutting or disproving that assessment. It is tantamount to a systematic looting of our properties for next to nothing. No. Gentlemen, this is neither just or equitable. Refugees should be given the opportunity of each proving his claim before Special Tribunals or Claims Commissions, similar to the procedure followed by the Palestine Government during the Second World War in Palestine.

Towards this end we humbly suggest that such Tribunals or Claims commissions should each be set up and composed of neutral members. Each claimant will have the right of audience to prove his claims.

The basis of compensation should be in accordance with the attached table. It is conceded that in exceptional cases the values indicated may not be adequate. A Table like this cannot be all-embracing. This Table has been established after a minute and carefully considered study of a group of licensed valuers recognised by the Ex-Mandatory Government of Palestine. Consequently these prices are considered moderate and quite fair to form a basis for the payment of compensation to Arab Property Owners who may chose not to go back to Palestine. The basis arbitrarily set down by the Jews in the aforementioned " Absentees' Property Law, 5710 - 1950" is obviously rejected by the Arab Property Owners as it is absurd and very far from the real and true values. The object of the Urban Property Assessment was for taxation purposes only and nothing else. It must be borne in mind that the Rent Restriction Ordinances were still in operation in 1947/48. Those Ordinances generally prohibited the increase of rents and therefore rents paid for properties that fell under the scope of those Ordinances were far lower than the prevailing rents of properties not covered by those Ordinances. Hence it is most absurd to take the Tax valuation of those fettered rents as a basis for compensation .

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If a Sub-Committee is appointed for the study of the values shown in the attached Table, it will be revealed to them that the said values are relatively lower that the current values of properties situated in the Arab Countries, in which the Arab Refugee Property Owners, who may chose not to return to Palestine, are supposed or intend to settle. These values will hardly enable the Arab Refugee Property Owners to buy properties, similar to those left in Palestine.

The Arab Refugee Property Owners urge that payment of compensation should be effected individually and only through the Agency of the Tribunals or Claims Commissions to be set up under the aegis of the United Nations for the assessment and payment of compensation as aforesaid. They strongly and definitely oppose and refuse any payment other than to each refugee individually .

It is sincerely and earnestly hoped that justice will, at long last, be dealt out to the Arab Refugees by acceeding to their requests made in this memorandum to you .

Izzat Tannous.

for Committee of
Arab Refugee Property Owners
in Palestine.

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T A B L E

Suggested price basis for Compensation of Refugee Property Owners who do not wish to return home to Palestine.

1. In Cities

A - Lands for building purposes within Jaffa, Ter-Aviv, Jerusalem and Haifa (including Carmel) Town Planing Areas.

Minimum Five Pounds Sterling per square meter.
Maximum One Hundred Pounds Sterling " "
accordind to the situation of the land.

B - Buildings erected on lands situated within the said Municipal Areas :-

Minimum Ten Pounds Sterling per meter square and per floor
Maximum Twenty Five Pounds Sterling " " " "
in addition to the value of the land under 1 A above.

2. In Towns

A - Lands for purposes within the Town Planing Areas of small Towns such as Ramleh, Lydda, Rehovoth, Acre, Petah, Tiberias.

Minimum Three Pounds Sterling per Square Meter
Maximum Thirty " " " " "
according to the situation of the land.

B - Buildings erected on lands situated within the said Municipal or Towns Areas :-

Minimum Ten Pounds Sterling per meter square and per floor
Maximum Twenty Five Pounds Sterling per square meter and per floor in addition to the value of the land under 2 A above.

3. Jewish Settlements

Lands for building purposes within the Jewish Settlement :-

Minimum Five Hundred pounds Sterling per dunum of 1000^2m.
Maximum Two Thousand " " " " "
according to the situation of the land.

4. Arab Villages

A - Lands for building purposes within the villages :-

Minimum Two Hundred Pounds Sterling per dunum of 1000^2 m.
Maximum Five Hundred " " " " "
according to the situation of the land.

B - Building erected on lands within the Areas of the Arab Villages :-

Minimum Three Pounds Sterling per square meter and per floor
Maximum Ten " " " " " "
in addition to the value of the land under 4 A above.

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5. Plains

A - Lands planted with olive trees, orange trees and other fruit trees :-

Minimum Three Hundred Pounds Sterling per dunum of 1000 square mets.
Maximum Five Hundred Pounds Sterling per dunum of 1000 square mets.

B Lands used for other agricultural purposes :-

Minimum Seventy Five Pounds Sterling per dunum of 1000 square mets.
Maximum One Hundred and Fifty Pounds Sterling per dunum of 1000 s.m.

6. Hilly Country

A - Lands planted with trees :-

Minimum Fifty Pounds Sterling per dunum of 1000 s. m.
Maximum One Hundred Pounds " " " " "

B - Lands used for other agricultural purposes :-

Minimum Twenty Five Pounds Sterling per dunum of 1000 s.m.
Maximum Fifty Pounds Sterling, " " " " "