THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFRONTATION

INTRODUCTION

This study proposes to examine the factors and elements which were responsible for the Arab Israeli conflict with the aid of authentic records and to explain and examine the position of the two contending parties, i.e. Israel and the Arabs in the United Nations, particularly with reference to the attempts of the world body to solve the Palestine problem, which threatens peace and stability of the Middle East.

The response of people towards various problems should result from a study of the genesis and an understanding of the true nature of these problems. It should follow moral principles and support legal issues with a deep consideration for justice, truth and peace.

Even though it is almost impossible to be objective yet this work essentially aims to ascertain the facts dispassionately regarding the rival claims of the Arabs and the Israelis concerning the Palestine question. It is assumed that the solution of this problem would satisfy all the peace-loving people, who confirm their faith in solving world problems through peaceful means in accordance with the United Nations Charter. Such an endeavour would further strengthen their belief in the principle of peaceful coexistence among nations and their desire to achieve dignity and prosperity for the human family.

The motivating forces behind the Arab Israeli antagonism
which caused the West Asian crisis would best be understood if the historical background is kept in mind.

The distant past is related with both the recent past and the present. Since time immemorial the two communities - the Arabs and the Israelis - regard Palestine as their homeland. The Zionists call it Israel, but to the Arabs it is Palestine.

The Arabs have no quarrel with the Jews, as members of a religious faith, or as members of a particular race. As for religion, the Arabs consider Jews to be members of the Monotheistic Community of the "People of the Book", and as such they are accorded reverence. Both religions have many patriarchs and prophets in common. As for race, both Arabs and Jews are Semitic in origin.

But when the Zionists intended to create and then succeeded in establishing a state of their own in Palestine by driving out about one million Arabs who had been living peacefully in their own homes and their own land, that they had inherited from their forefathers, the Arab-Israeli conflict started. It is a conflict between two nationalist forces, i.e. Arab nationalism and Zionism, it is essentially a political and ideological conflict caused by the damage done by the Zionist movement to the indigenous population of Palestine, also to the Jews and to Judaism. Professor Toynbee was subscribing to this point of view, when he spoke at the Annual meeting of the American Council for Judaism held at Philadelphia in May 1961. The world renowned historian warned: (1)

"The watchword of anti-Semitism is "Back to Medieval apartheid", the watchword of Zionism is "Back to the Medieval ghetto".

Commenting on the establishment of Israel and its possible repercussions on Judaism, he said: "All the far-flung ghettos in the world are to be gathered into one patch of soil in Palestine to create a single consolidated ghetto there."

A new organization, Jewish Alternatives to Zionism Inc. (JAZ), has recently been formed by several prominent American Jews, which is opposing Zionists who, in the opinion of its members, are degenerating Judaism. The main purpose of this organization is to conduct an educational programme revealing the real issues involved in Arab Israeli conflict and thereby promote the cause of peace in the Middle East by rejecting the nationality claims propounded by the Zionist Israel's "Jewish People" group. Elmer Berger, a distinguished Rabbi (high priest) and one of the most eminent Jewish leaders in the United States, acting executive of JAZ, who has been crusading in Europe, against the Zionist attempts to degenerate Judaism into a fanatic and expansionist ideology, says: (2) "Our goal is to destroy this dangerous idea that the Jewish religion should be linked up with Israel and consequently with Zionism. Judaism is a religion, while Zionism is a political idea, initiated by Herzl to solve a certain problem under specific circumstances".

There is a vast difference between a Jew and a Zionist.

2. He was interviewed in Europe by the correspondent of the Egyptian weekly magazine Al-Musawar. Translated into English in Al-Arab, vol. 7, No. 8, August 1968, New Delhi.
A Jew is one who believes in Judaism, which Arabs regard as a noble religion, whereas Zionism seeks to provide Jews with a political and national orientation extrinsic to their normal sense of belonging which seeks to demolish the organic nationality of Arabs. Israel was supposed to "constitute a British imperialist beachhead to the north of the Suez Canal" says Taylor. (3) It professes and preaches the doctrine of a superior race and political supremacy of the chosen few, which is against the principles of love and egalitarianism preached by the Prophets. 

As observed by the British M.P. Ian Gilmour: (4) "The Zionist difficulty was that the country which they aspired to appropriate was already occupied by another people. Hence the setting up of a Zionist state entailed two things: the moving in of Jews and the moving out of Arabs. The second was not an after thought, still less a fortunate coincidence. It was long intended and ruthlessly carried out...." Gilmour adds: "Apartheid was the ideal. Land bought by the Jewish National Fund became legally, racially "Jewish"; and had always to remain so, while Arab tenants and labourers were evicted in large number...."

He had already given an analysis of the problem (5) in an

article to the Spectator Magazine (June 24, 1960), wherein he said: "Since the basis of Zionism is that Jewish assimilation in other countries is in the long run impossible and that anti-Semitism and persecution are bound to break out sooner or later, Zionism has almost a vested interest in racial discrimination. The Israelis mount 'rescue operations' to save allegedly threatened Jews in other countries...." He added: "In the Arab countries, Jewish difficulties and immigration to Israel were the result not of anti-Semitism but of Zionist activities and the existence of the State of Israel. Zionism aggravated the disease that it professed to cure."

The quarrel of the Arabs, therefore, is only with Zionism, which rests squarely on intolerance, bigotry and obscurantism. (6)

Erskine H. Childers, the noted author wrote: (7) "The very basis of the post-war Palestine struggle was an appeal to the world's humanitarianism over a situation deliberately designed to canalize that human instinct into one premise: Jewish statehood in Palestine." "None of us who remember the emotional atmosphere of the time can dismiss the role this Zionist campaign played in all that followed. The evidence of the campaign, though suppressed by Zionists and conveniently forgotten by Western liberals who

6. For a classic account of the rise of the nationalist movement in the Arab World and the vindication of the secular character of Arab nationalism, see George Antonius, The Arab Awakening; The Story of the Arab National Movement (Philadelphia, 1939) and Zeine N. Zeine, The Struggle for Arab Independence (Beirut, 1960).

knew about it, is overwhelming. It is detailed in White House
conversation which was publicly acknowledged, for example, by
Sulzberger of the New York Times, who asked in 1946, "In God's
name why should the fate of all these unhappy people be subordi-
nated to the single cry of statehood."

The Arab-Israeli confrontation is now, in essence, the re-
volt and resistance by the children of Palestine for the liber- 
ation of their homeland, to vindicate their past and nationhood,
and secondarily an Arab-Israeli conflict. "In fact", says an
Israeli lecturer, London University Professor Machower, "The
conflict was always primarily concerned with the Arabs of Pales-
tine stripped off their national rights and driven from their
lands". (8) The Palestine-Arabs struggle to lead both Arabs and
Jews in Palestine to usher in another era of peace, cooperation,
goodwill and prosperity for all the inhabitants of the unhappy
land. The Jewish community had previously lived in the different
Arab countries in harmony and had flourished throughout the cen-
turies of Medieval Arab rule. Moshe Menuhin says (9): "In
Moslem countries (sometimes in Egypt, sometimes in Baghdad and
most of all in the caliphate of Corodoba), Jews were accorded
decent treatment. In the history of the Jews such periods stand
out as "golden ages"."

Ceraetz, the author of a ten-volume classic history of the
Jews, has "pointed out most emphatically, that the legal and

9. Menuhin, Moshe, The Decadence of Judaism in Our Time,
actual position of the Jews during the Middle Ages was much better in the Muslim - Arab countries than in Christian Europe; and the 'Golden Age' of Judaism in Muslim Spain has become a phrase which has found its way even into the most popular accounts of Jewish history." (10)

There has been, in fact, no anti-Jewish feeling among the Arabs. They had full sympathy for the Jews and condemned Nazi Germany and its policy of persecution.

The Arabs received the Jews with open arms and extended to them hearty welcome by granting them places of refuge in their lands. Herzl had taken note of "the friendly attitude of the population" (11) of Palestine. Then at that time the Arabs could not comprehend the Zionist design of establishing a Jewish state by expelling the indigenous people of Palestine. The Zionists had a definite plan of installing a Jewish state. Moshe Menuhin, a prominent American Jew observed: (12) "Dr. Herzl badly wanted to secure Palestine as a homeland for the Jewish people. But he made up his mind, in spite of the stubborn and "benighted" Russian-Polish Jews, that in case he could not possibly secure Palestine for them, they would simply have to accept, at least temporarily,


12. Menuhin, Moshe, op. cit., p. 43.
some sort of Jewish homeland, be it in Syria, Sinai, El-Arish, Cyprus, Tripoli, Portuguese Mozambique, the Belgian Congo, Uganda - in any one of these territories for which he was always "negotiating".

However, to the Palestine Arabs, the rehabilitation of the Jews in their country appears as a gross betrayal and denial of their birth-right. When they were being driven away from their hearths and homes, how could they accept or can accept expulsion, expropriation and tidal waves of Zionist expansionism?

K. K. Nehru (India) former Secretary-General, Ministry of External Affairs, also said: (13) "Is it surprising that the Arabs have reacted strongly to their displacement by a foreign community which is largely of European origin? Would any other country have reacted differently if it had been exposed to a similar experience?"

Up to the Balfour Declaration in 1917, the Jews in Palestine, "who were one twelfth of the population and owned 24% of the total area of Palestine", (14) had always lived quietly and at peace and harmony in Palestine and the wider Arab World.

It is established by the official statistics of the mandatory Government of Palestine, which were submitted to the United Nations in 1947 that Jewish property in Palestine was a meagre 5.66%.


out of the total area of the country. (See Appendix I) The fact that the Jews were never discriminated against by the Arabs is well borne out by Dr Elmar Berger, who quoted in his book Who Know Better Must Say So, a letter written to him by a well-known Jew, Elias Cohen, wherein he said (15) that "Arabs and Jews have always enjoyed in this country complete freedom, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of trade and freedom of commerce ...... as a matter of fact, Jews here have never felt anti-Semitism or discrimination".

The political challenge to Palestine did not come from the Jewish community within it, but from the Zionist Movement which was nourished and fostered from without, always with motives of expansion and aggrandizement at the cost of Arabs. The expansionist design of political Zionist movement was fully supported by British Imperialism which was in an alliance with the Zionist Movement for its own vested interest.

Sir Winston Churchill is reported to have said: (16) "A State under the protection of the British Crown, which might comprise three or four million Jews, an event will have occurred which would especially be in harmony with the truest interests of the British Empire." As a matter of fact the British War Cabinet had received


16. First statement made by Ahmad Shukairy (Chairman of the Executive Committee to Palestine Liberation Organisation) before the Special Committee of the General Assembly at its 399th meeting held on 5 November 1963, at 10.30 a.m. U.N. Doc. A/SPC/PV.399.
a note from no less important a Zionist than Weizman (17) saying: "In submitting our resolution we have entrusted our national and Zionist destiny to the Foreign Office and the Imperial War Cabinet, in the hope that the problem would be considered in the light of imperial interests and the principles for which the Entente stands."

Palestine, due to its strategic position, was of vital importance to the future of British imperialism, which aimed at the consolidation of its presence in India, Egypt and other parts of Asia and Africa. The strategic importance of the Middle East was well described by Secretary Acheson of America when he said: (18) "Middle East is a region of great importance to us because of its people, its resources, strategic position, and vital communication arteries". Anthony Nutting also observed that Palestine was, to Britain, (19) "a base from which to exercise a dominant influence in and around the Arab world". The transplantation of alien people on to the soil of Palestine would, it was thought, serve as the watch-dog of imperial interests in the area; besides the inclusion of Palestine within its sphere of influence. The Zionist enclave would help to control the nascent Arab struggle for freedom.


"But before one is driven to accept the fact of Israel," says one of the few elder statesmen of India, Jaya Prakash Narayan (20): "let it be stated clearly that the transplantation of a foreign people on to a soil to which they had no right, and at the cost of dispossessing the indigenous population was an act of high international immorality. That this operation helped to establish a bridge-head of Western imperialism in a sensitive and strategic area that had risen to throw off the shackles of the self-same imperialism, further compounds that immorality".

Israel in portraying itself as synonymous to Judaism and inclusive of all the Jews bases its claim to Palestine on the following premises:

1. **Religious Feeling and Historical Rights**

   It is claimed that the Bible promised Abraham that Palestine would belong to his seed, namely, to the Jews. They argue, therefore, that the setting up of a Jewish state in Palestine is a fulfilment of God's promise and the attainment of the "Divine Right" of Jews to Palestine.

   A number of distinguished scholars and authorities in religion have carefully studied the Bible and analyzed its contents and their labours have enabled the laymen to understand the deeper meanings of the Bible and to make their goodwill count towards the

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truth and "infuse good blood salutarily into a sickening situation." (21)

They agree on the following: (22)

a) The Biblical prophecy applies to the Arabs, who claim descent through Ishmael, as well as the Jews, who claim descent through Israel.

b) When Abraham made a covenant with God through circumcision, (Genesis XVII, 8) and was promised all the land of Canaan to be his for ever-lasting possession, Isaac the ancestor of the Jews, not born at that time; it was Ishmael the ancestor of the


22. See Dr Alfred Guillaume, Professor of Old Testament Studies at the University of London, Israel According to Holy Scriptures (Cedar Rapid, Ingram Press), pp. 11-15.

Dr William H. Stinespring, Professor of New Testament and Semitics at Duke University, North Carolina and a Minister in the Presbyterian Church, Ibid., pp. 6-9.

Dr Ovid A. Sellers, former Professor of Old Testament and Dean of McCormick Theological Seminary and Minister in the United Presbyterian Church, Ibid., pp. 29-31.

Dr Frank Stagg, Professor of New Testament at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in New Orleans, Ibid., p. 28.


Dr Elmer Berger, a distinguished Jewish Rabbi, Ibid., pp. 19-25.
Arabs who was circumcised. Thus Palestine was "promised" by God, if at all, to the Arabs.

c) Many non-Jews are descendants of Abraham, and a sizeable proportion of Jews are not descendants of Abraham.

d) The divine promises to the patriarchs have been annulled by the apostasy of the Jews.

e) Prophecies once fulfilled need not and cannot be fulfilled again literally, especially in modern times, since the prophecy of the "return" was fulfilled when the Jews returned to Judea after their captivity, re-erected the walls of Jerusalem and rebuilt the Temple. And there is no "Second Return" mentioned in the Holy Scriptures.

f) Trying to make an ancient text fit literally to the geographical, historical and political conditions of today, some three thousand years later, is to deny the processes of change which God has so obviously decreed for human history.

Distinguished scholars have also similarly refuted or rejected the theory of "historical rights" (23) on the ground that Palestine has been an Arab land.


Khouri, Fred J. (Villanova University), The Arab-Israeli Dilemma, Syracuse University Press, pp. 1-2; Also A.S.A. Chari, Historical Background of the West Asian Crisis,

(footnote contd. on next page)
2. **Persecution**

Do Nazi and European atrocities confer on Jews the right to have a separate state of their own in a territory which does not belong to them? Can European or world conscience be salved by the forcible dispossession of the Arabs and rehabilitation of the Jews at the expense of the Arabs?

The *Ceylon Observer* expressed sympathy for the Jews and condemned Nazi atrocities but criticized the Jewish infiltration in Palestine. The Ceylonese newspaper commented that if the Jews were discriminated against "that does not mean that the Jews who made the new State of Israel have a right to deny the Arabs their homes and make them a new persecuted inferior people. This aspect of the problem has been forgotten in the crisis which frequently torment the Middle East." (24)

Moshe Menuhin says: (25) "It would be an offence against the principles of elementary justice if these innocent victims of the*

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(previous footnote contd.)

published by The Indian Preparatory Committee, International Conference in support of the Arab peoples, New Delhi, Nov. 11 to 14, 1967, p. 2.

Shapiro, Harry L., Chairman of the Department of Anthropology at the American Museum of Natural History States that the Jews are not a clan, a tribe or in a strict sense a nation. See Shapiro, Harry L. *The Jewish People: A Biographical History*, UNESCO, 1960. pp. 74-75.


Conflict were denied the right to return to their homes while Jewish immigrants flow into Palestine."

3. The Balfour Declaration

The most serious claim to Palestine by Zionists is based on this Declaration. (26)

On November 2, 1917 the British Government published a statement of policy (later known as the 'Balfour Declaration') in the form of a letter from Mr Arthur James Balfour, then Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to Lord Rothschild, a leader of the Zionist Movement. The letter reads:

Foreign Office
November 2nd, 1917

Dear Lord Rothschild,

I have much pleasure in conveying to you on behalf of His Majesty's Government the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to and approved by the cabinet:

'His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.'

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.

Yours sincerely,

Sd: ARTHUR JAMES BALFOUR

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According to the Arabs (as well as a number of world famous jurists, authors and politicians), the Balfour Declaration was illegal and immoral as it was made without the consent or knowledge of the inhabitants of Palestine. It was contrary to the principles of national self-determination and democracy and was inconsistent with the pledges given to the Arabs before and after the date it was made. (27)

Anthony Nutting who was a minister in the Eden Cabinet was both frank and forthright when he observed: (28)

"Today, after the lapse of five bitter decades the national home for the Jewish people has become the national state of Israel and the civil rights of the Arabs of Palestine lie trampled under the heel of an Israeli army of occupation. How has this seemingly great humanitarian gesture, the Balfour Declaration, turned so sour and left such a trail of bitterness and agony in its wake?

...The national home, the Arabs were assured would not be allowed to become a national state and the civil and religious rights of the non-Jewish communities – which was quaint, if not rather sinister, description of a 92 per cent Arab majority - would be safeguarded...."


Ramsay MacDonald 1922, published by the Daily Star (Beirut), June 29, 1969.

The Times (London), April 17, 1964 - Light on Britain's Palestine Promises, and ensuing correspondence.


Others also wrote about this Declaration:

"The Balfour Declaration must, therefore, not be regarded as a promise given from sentimental motives; it was a practical measure taken in the interests of a common cause at a moment when that cause could afford to neglect no factor of material or moral assistance". (29)

By sponsoring the programme of Zionist colonisation, Britain intended to further reciprocal interests, especially when Sultan Abdul-Hamid of Ottoman Empire refused Herzl's offer: (30) "If His Majesty the Sultan gave us Palestine we could undertake to put the finances of Turkey in order. For Europe, we should form part of its bulwark against Asia; we should be the advance guard of civilisations against barbarism. As a neutral State, we should keep in constant touch with all Europe, which would have to guarantee our existence."

The Sultan's answer was unequivocally firm and definite. (31) "The Turkish Empire does not belong to me but to the Turkish people. I cannot give away any part of it. Let the Jews spare their millions. When my Empire is divided up they can have Palestine for nothing. But it will only be our dead body which is cut up; I shall never agree to vivisection".

The Zionist leaders followed a policy of shifting the emphasis of their aims from a 'home' for persecuted Jews to a full-fledged

During the British Mandate, the aims and ends of Zionism were furthered gradually and piecemeal, despite unrelenting opposition by the Arabs. Arab appeals, protests, arguments and demonstrations failed to make the British Government respect their pledges to protect Arab rights and stop the ever-increasing flow of Jewish immigrants. The British Government went back on its words given to the Arabs. The White Paper of June 1922 gave an assurance that the creation of a Jewish state was 'impracticable' and Britain "have no such aim in view". The White Paper of 1922 further promised not to allow the disappearance or the subordination of the Arabic population, language or culture in Palestine.

The White Paper of 1939 promised to establish "within a period of ten years, an independent Palestinian state in which no more than one third of the population would be Jews". The White Paper further stipulated that 'no further immigration was to be allowed unless the Arabs of Palestine are prepared to acquiesce in it". Great Britain flouted all these promises with impunity and included an alliance with Zionism encouraging in its design of creation a Jewish State in Palestine.

Britain was trying to stand on two stools and following a policy of duplicity. Ramsay Macdonald attacked the British policy of making both the Arabs and the Jews happy. Referring to promises made by Britain to the Arabs and the Jews, he warned (32) the British Government in 1922: "The story is one of crude duplicity, and we

32. The Daily Star (Beirut), June 29, 1969.
cannot expect to escape the reprobation which is bound to follow as a sequel".

"It is not the Arabs who will choose to colonise Palestine, it is us," (33) said Golda Meir.

"The Basle Programme" wrote Davis Triestisch (34) to Theodore Herzl "must contain the words 'Great Palestine' or 'Palestine and its neighbouring lands' - otherwise it's nonsense. You do not get the ten million Jews into a land of 25,000 km."

From the very beginning thus their aim was the Zionisation and de-Arabisation of Palestine.

To enlist general support and wide sympathy the Zionists initially demanded a 'National Home' and denied in public any intention of establishing a political state. In 1942, however, they openly admitted in a Zionist conference held at Biltmore Hotel, New York, known as 'biltmore Program' in which, as General Patrick J. Hurley, personal representative of President Roosevelt, reported to the President: (35)

"The Zionist Organisation in Palestine has indicated its commitment to an enlarged program for:

1. a sovereign Jewish State which could embrace Palestine and probably eventually Transjordan;


2. an eventual transfer of the Arab population from Palestine to Iraq;

3. Jewish leadership for the whole Middle East in the fields of economic development and control."

"Some people tend to think and react as if it were a religious conflict between the Muslims and the Jews and/or a racial one between the Jews and the Arabs"; says Professor S. A. Haqqi in his detached and analytical article "India, Israel and the West Asian Crisis". (36) He continues: "it is neither the one, nor the other."

"It is, on the other hand, a politico-economic struggle between the Arabs who have lived there for centuries and want to live there in peace and with dignity, and the aggressive militant Zionists, who want to colonise Palestine with Jews drawn from all over the world, particularly with Western Jewry, to dominate and exploit West Asia.

The great apostle of peace and justice Mahatma Gandhi said: (37) "I have all my sympathies with Jews. But sympathy does not blind me to the requirements of justice. The cry for the national home for Jews does not make much appeal to me. Palestine belongs to the Arabs in the same sense that England belongs to the English or France to the French. It is wrong to impose the Jews on the Arabs.... nothing can be said against the Arab resistance in the face of overwhelming odds."

"Palestine was an Arab country and Arab interests must prevail there," said Jawaharlal Nehru. (38)

37. The Harijan, November 26, 1938.
38. The Hindu (Madras), December 17, 1938.
After the Allied victory, the Jewish immigration increased rapidly through waves of immigrants which made for a phenomenal increase of the Jewish population in Palestine. Whereas the Jewish population had numbered only 194,610 and of a total population of 1,035,821, in 1931, rose to 554,000 out of 1,764,000 in 1944, it later jumped to 650,000 Jews out of 2,065,000.

Jews built up their military strength through para-military organizations, the Haganah, the Irgun, and the Stern Gang, to use violence and terrorism. They killed many Arabs as well as English personnel in Palestine. The facts were clear - terrorism and expansionism, pure and simple. Even Sir Winston Churchill, then Prime Minister had to say in the House of Commons on November 17, 1944:

"If our dreams for Zionism are to end in the smoke of assassins' pistols and our labours for its future are to produce a new set of gangsters worthy of Nazi Germany, many like myself will have to reconsider the position we have maintained so consistently and so long in the past. If there is to be any hope of a peaceful and successful future of Zionism, these wicked activities must cease and those responsible for them must be destroyed, root and branch."

40. Ibid., p. 143.
42. Government of Palestine, Supplementary Memorandum to UNSCOP, p. 14.
But the Zionist lobby was too strong both in U.S.A. and Britain, and the establishment of a pro-West enclave in Palestine too alluring for Western interests for anything positive to come out of such a scathing appraisal of Zionist activities in the Holy Land. Besides the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. emerged after the war as two Super Powers while Britain was weakened and exhausted and was in no position to carry on the White Man's Burden.

The British Foreign Secretary announced in the House of Commons on February 18, 1947, that His Majesty's Government had found that "the Mandate has proved to be unworkable in practice, that the obligations undertaken to the two communities had been shown to be irreconcilable."

The reason given was that Jews and Arabs "were unable to agree on the solution desired by it." Britain admitted its inability to solve the problem and to administer Palestine indefinitely. The United Kingdom requested the U.N. Secretary-General "to place the question of Palestine on the Agenda of the General Assembly at its next regular session."

44. Palestine, Supplementary Memorandum to UNSCOP, p. 27.