

## HUMAN RIGHTS HEARING

### HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE HEARS TESTIMONY

(The following article by David Binder appeared in *The New York Times*, April 5, 1974, page 4.)

A House subcommittee heard testimony today on alleged maltreatment of Arab civilians by Israeli authorities in occupied territory, including bombing of civilian targets, use of other weapons against civilians, demolition of Arab homes and widescale deportations.

Some of the sharpest accusations were leveled by Israel Shahak, professor of organic chemistry at Hebrew University in Jerusalem and chairman of the Israeli League of Human and Civil Rights.

Dr. Shahak, a 41-year-old survivor of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in Germany in World War II, said "I didn't have any such experience in my life that shocked me so much" as witnessing the blowing up of Arab houses by Israeli demolition squads in the occupied territory of the West Bank of the Jordan River.

He said it had been the practice of Israeli authorities since the 1967 war to seize Arabs deemed undesirable on the West Bank or in the Gaza Strip and deport them, after which their homes were destroyed.

"It is stupid, futile and causing untold suffering," he said in testimony before the Subcommittee on International Organizations and Movements of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

#### Challenge by Lawmakers

He and other witnesses were challenged with some asperity by Representatives Jonathan B. Bingham of the Bronx and Lester L. Wolff of Great Neck, both Democrats, who suggested that time should be spent dealing with charges of Arab abuses of Israelis. Representative Bingham got up and walked out as W.T. Mallison, a professor of law at George Washington University, was answering his question.

Mr. Bingham had inquired what sort of security Israel would have if she were to deal with the occupied territories differently and walked out as Professor Mallison replied that a Middle East peace settlement would provide the best security guarantee.

In reference to repeated questions about the actions of Palestinian terrorists, Dr. Shahak said, "I expect that any human being and Jew who condemns acts of terror by Palestinians also condemns acts of terror by Israel."

He said he also opposed Israel's Law of the Return, which grants citizenship to any Jew who emigrates to Israel and declares his intention to live there. "I don't see how I can be for the right of Soviet Jews to come to Haifa and be against the right of Palestinians to come back to Haifa," he said.

At a news conference earlier, Dr. Shahak said 50 copies of his testimony had been seized Tuesday by Israeli authorities at the airport as he was about to depart for Washington.

#### Other Testimony

In other testimony on Arab civilians in the Middle East conflict, John P. Richardson, president of American Near East Refugee Aid, said more than 5,000

Egyptian civilians had been killed in the war last October, as well as several hundred Syrians and Lebanese.

He said the fighting had displaced 23,000 Syrian civilians who had lived for the most part in the Golan Heights.

Mr. Richardson asserted that Israeli forces had used anti-personnel weapons against Arab civilians, including small bombs that spray steel arrows also used by the United States forces in Vietnam and "condemned by concerned Americans." Charging that there had been "silence" in the United States on deployment of these weapons by Israel, he asked if "a moral double standard is in effect."

In his testimony Professor Mallison asked the Representatives to "stand up and be counted" on the issue of use of "prohibited weapons" by Israel.

Dr. M. Cherif Bassiouni, an American of Arab descent who is a professor of law at DePaul University, urged the subcommittee to consider the national rights of the Palestinian people when dealing with requests by Israel for military and economic aid.

The hearing was led by Representative Donald M. Fraser, who has been steering the subcommittee toward detailed studies of human rights problems in foreign countries since last summer.



If the current UNRWA financial crisis is not met, thousands of refugee families such as this one will face a drastic reduction in UNRWA services, including the elimination of the three year preparatory cycle in the UNRWA/UNESCO general education program.

# CROSSROADS FOR UNRWA

by John P. Richardson

President of ANERA

UNRWA, the agency responsible for providing basic services—education, health and relief—to over a million Palestinian refugees, is in critically serious financial trouble. UNRWA is entirely dependent on voluntary contributions, almost all from governments. While these contributions have increased in recent years, they have fallen far short of the need because inflation and currency changes (particularly the dollar devaluation) have sharply diminished the agency's purchasing power. The October war has aggravated this problem. In 1973 the budget was \$62.5 million. The year ended with a deficit of \$2.9 million and with no reserves left. The 1974 budget is estimated at \$75.3 million, with a projected deficit of \$12.5 million. In addition a minimal need of \$16.5 million is required to carry out much-needed work in ameliorating the conditions in the camps, to add additional classroom facilities and to carry the agency through the year without a breakdown.

If \$12.5 million is not forthcoming by late spring, cuts must be made in the minimal services refugees have received for the last 23 years. Since a sizeable part of the UNRWA budget is in food contribution, cuts must be made on the cash side of the Budget. For example, in order to save \$7.5 million the last three school years (grades 7 to 9) would have to be stopped. This would lay off 2,000 teachers and affect 56,000 students. The rest of the deficit must be covered by cuts in health and welfare services. If the deficit must be absorbed, a deep cut in services must be made. The disruption caused by layoffs and closing down of schools and clinics would be deeply resented by the refugees, who would see it as a politically inspired act. Such a move could have severe repercussions in the camps and among Palestinians throughout the Middle East. Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria would have to cope with the problems that would arise as an aftermath of such cuts. This is no time to permit an inherently destabilizing set of circumstances to overtake UNRWA. ANERA strongly supports all efforts to assure UNRWA of adequate operational income in the months ahead.



Destruction of civilian homes in Abu Rumannah, a residential section of Damascus, Syria, October War of 1973.

## INFORMATION

The Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Near Eastern Affairs has released a staff report on the aftermath of the October War in 1973. The report is based on the travels and findings of Seth Tillman, Staff Assistant, and George Ashworth. The title of the Staff Report is "The Middle East Between War and Peace, November-December, 1973". Free copies may be obtained by writing to: Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510.

## CONGRESSIONAL CONTACT

For the information of *Newsletter* readers, members of the House Subcommittee on International Organizations and Movements of the House Foreign Affairs Committee (See story, page 1) include: **Donald Fraser (D-Minn)**, **Dante Fascell (D-Fla)**, **L.H. Fountain (D-NC)**, **Benjamin Rosenthal (D-NY)**, **Jonathan Bingham (D-NY)**, **Ogden Reid (D-NY)**, **H.R. Gross (R-Iowa)**, **Edward Derwinski (R-Ill)**, **Paul Findley (R-Ill)**, **Robert Mathias (R-Calif)**, **Larry Winn, Jr. (R-Kans)**, and **Robert Lagomarsino (R-Calif)**.

Congressmen who were present for the testimony on the problems of protecting civilians under international law in the Middle East conflict, were: Fraser, Fountain, Bingham, Winn, Lagomarsino, **Charles Wilson (D-Texas)**, **Lester Wolff (D-NY)**, and **Benjamin Gilman (R-NY)**.

states represented by a congressman may wish to comment on the hearing by contacting individual congressmen, c/o U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515. Readers from states not represented may wish to contact: Robert Boettcher, Subcommittee Staff Consultant, Subcommittee on International Organizations and Movements, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515. The report on the hearing will be available from the Subcommittee in May, 1974.

## MABROUK/WITH THANKS

- **AMER Division's Cambridge Committee** has raised \$800.00 to sponsor a year's vocational training scholarship for a Palestinian student in an UNRWA training program. This scholarship program is administered jointly by ANERA and UNRWA. Further information on scholarship sponsorship may be obtained from the ANERA office.

- **Georgetown Student Near East Relief Fund** contributed an additional \$255.00 for civilian relief in the Middle East. This brings the total amount contributed this year by the student organization to \$605.00.



# REFUGEES---WAR OF 1973

During the October War of 1973, civilian populations of Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon were attacked by Israeli forces. The following individual accounts illustrate the personal—yet typical—catastrophies faced by these civilians. The accounts were compiled by Kathleen Phipps and appeared in *The Daily Star*, Beirut, Lebanon, February 3, 1974, page 7:

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"I come from Mazarat Beit Gin, a village of about 3,000 people. My name is **Attieh Abu Assaf** and I have a family of six children, and work on my farm. The Israelis began bombing our village on October 10th and I think about 95 per cent of the houses were totally destroyed. About 20 people were killed including some of my relatives. Many were shot in cold blood, for example I remember one friend of mine, Khazen. He was ordered to halt by the Israelis one day in a street in the village. He didn't so the Israelis shot him straight through the eyes. He was 70 years old—he probably didn't even hear the order to stop....

"After that we went out to bury the body, but while the people were gathered around the grave, the Israelis opened fire. Another man, Elie Shabi was killed.

"After that I escaped into the hills with my family. There was no use in staying because my village was almost totally destroyed. But I used to creep down to look at my house every night and safeguard my land. I saw the Israelis carting away my rugs and furniture....They were also burning furniture.

"During the occupation the Israelis took over the mosque as a dormitory. I saw them take the rugs of the mosque and the tape recorder."

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"My name is **Mohammed Rajab Yunis**. I come from Jabata Al Hashab near the ceasefire line of the 1967 war. When the Israelis came into the village I was in my shelter with my family where I had been for some days. I could see from a crack in the shelter an Israeli tank drawing up quite close to

us and four Israelis got out. They shouted to me to come out.

"I came out and they ordered me to put my hands behind my head. One of them forced me to kneel at his feet by bashing my head with a gun. He spoke Arabic with a Hebrew dialect and asked me if the house nearby was mine. I said it was, so he then shouted at me to go and bring all the furniture out of the house. I did this, while they stood laughing.

"When everything was outside they found some kerosene and poured it over the chairs and cushions and set light to it. I shouted to them that they could not do that. They just laughed at me and said, 'It doesn't belong to you.'....I could hear my wife screaming and my boys crying from the shelter as this was going on....

"Next they burned all the cereals and foodstuffs which we had stored for the winter. I kept on crying and begging them not to do it, but they just laughed.

"Many people were taken from the village and were not seen again....I haven't seen these people since.

"They then forced us onto some Israeli buses and took us away."

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"I come from Jabata also and though the Israelis had repeatedly bombed our village, I refused to leave. When they eventually took the town, the army told us to stay where we were and that no harm would come to us....For three days we stayed locked in our houses but on the third day of the occupation, they came and broke the door down. About three of them came to me,....and said if we didn't all come out they would blow the house up with us in it. I told them I would only come out if the Red Cross was there, and they laughed, 'We are the Red Cross.'

"When we came out, they told us to bring all our belongings to the square at 1:00 PM. We packed up what we could and went, and there the rest of the village was waiting. I saw three Israeli buses draw up and they pushed us all in, prodding everyone with guns as they tried to get everything in the bus. They then took us to Mazarat Beit

Gin, a village....on the present ceasefire line. They made us all get out and stand outside the buses with our hands up. Then some Israeli soldiers began to search us and one of them took my watch, and my worry beads. I saw one young Israeli with six or seven worry beads which he had strung round his neck.

"When we were all out, the buses suddenly turned round and went off in the other direction toward Israel. Many people began to cry as they had stuffed their money in mattresses which were in the buses. They then told us to run away and we all did, running through this apricot orchard. They fired at us, and threw hand grenades. I knew they weren't only firing in the air just to scare us, for many people fell. There were many injured.

"I realized when I got on that bus that my life as a refugee had started."

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"The bombing of my village started the Sunday after the war," said **Mohammed Naurweh**, a peasant with six young children. "It is only a small village of about 1,400 people and I came to live there about 13 years ago...My house there has four rooms and a stable.

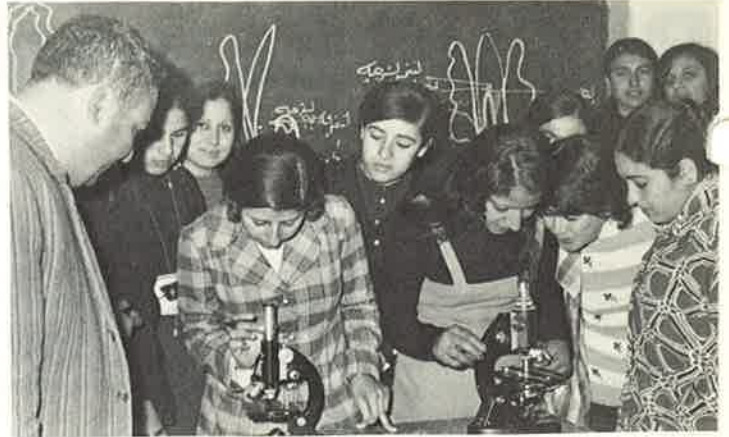
"The Israelis bombed the village for six days, very intensively. Then I saw the Israeli tanks advancing toward us—it was the first time I had ever seen an Israeli. Everyone in the village panicked, and started running. We had nothing virtually to defend ourselves with—I had a gun, but it dates from the Second World War, I think.

"I had no time to pack anything, so my family and I began running along this road....

"I never thought I would end up in a camp. I only fled because I thought that lines during a battle change, advance and withdraw. I thought I would be going back within a couple of days. I never realized I would become a refugee like this....

"Each day I keep telling my children we are going back soon but I do not hold out much hope. Israel could not have done it without American help. I pray for peace and my return to my village."

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Students at Gaza College in the Gaza Strip conduct experiments in electricity and biology, with equipment provided by funds from ANERA donors. During the current fiscal year, ANERA has provided a grant of \$5,000 for this high school. With an enrollment of approximately 350 Palestinian refugee students, Gaza College is the only high school which is not operated by the Military Government in Occupied Gaza.

**IN MEMORIAM**

ANERA was saddened to learn of the death of *Ali Mahadeen* on January 9, 1974. Mr. Mahadeen was a founder and charter member of AMER. In the past he served as chairman of the Executive Committee and as an Honorary Director. Dr. Onver Mahadeen, his son, is presently serving on the AMER Medical Committee. ANERA and AMER would like to express our sympathy to the Mahadeen Family and our appreciation for his invaluable contribution.

• **Dr. Gerald Dorman**, member of ANERA's Board of Directors and Chairman of the AMER Medical Committee of ANERA, was recently invested and decorated as Officer Brother of the Venerable Order of St. John of Jerusalem. The Order was founded in the sixth century A.D. and operates extensively through voluntary medical emergency teams and services, in England and countries of the British Commonwealth. In Jerusalem, the Order of St. John operates a modern ophthalmological hospital which serves over 100,000 patients per year—mostly Palestinians and mostly without charge in the case of the refugees. This honor has come to Dr. Dorman in recognition of his distinguished medical career and his special interest in the health problems of the Palestinian refugees.



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