Forgotten Experiment:
Canada's Resettlement of Palestinian Refugees, 1955-1956

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In the summer of 1955, the Canadian government took the "bold step" of admitting displaced Palestinian refugees from the Arab-Israeli war of 1948. The government approved the resettlement of 100 skilled workers and their families. Canadian officials believed that alleviating the refugee problem in the Middle East would help in furthering regional stability. The resettlement scheme remained a politically sensitive issue as Arab governments protested against what they perceived as a Zionist plot to remove Palestinians from their ancestral land. For Canada, the admission of Palestinian refugees in 1956 served as an important "experiment" for the future selection and resettlement of non-European refugees.

À l'été 1955, le gouvernement canadien a fait preuve d'audace : il a admis des réfugiés palestiniens déplacés à cause de la guerre arabo-israélienne de 1948. Le gouvernement a approuvé la relocalisation de 100 travailleurs qualifiés et de leurs familles. Les autorités canadiennes croyaient que d'atténuer le problème des réfugiés au Moyen-Orient contribuerait favoriser la stabilité régionale. Le plan de relocalisation est demeuré une question politiquement délicate, car les gouvernements arabes ont protesté contre ce qu'ils percevaient comme un complot sioniste visant à chasser les Palestiniens de leur terre ancestrale. Pour le Canada, l'admission de réfugiés palestiniens en 1956 a constitué une importante « expérience » en ce qui a trait à la sélection future de réfugiés non européens et à leur relocalisation.

IN THE SUMMER of 1955, the Canadian government took the "bold step" of admitting displaced Palestinian refugees from the Arab-Israeli war of 1948. Canadian officials believed that alleviating the refugee problem in the Middle East would help in furthering regional stability. The resettlement scheme remained a politically sensitive issue as Arab governments protested against what they perceived as a Zionist plot to remove Palestinians from their ancestral land. The Canadian government approved the resettlement of 100 skilled workers

and their families. After several months of negotiations and preparations, a Canadian immigration team was dispatched in January 1956 to Beirut, Amman, and Jerusalem to conduct interviews, medical examinations, and Stage B security assessments.

The resettlement of Palestinian refugees in 1956 receives scant attention from scholars and remains understudied in Canadian immigration historiography. In *The Diplomacy of Prudence: Canada and Israel, 1948-1958*, Zachariah Kay claims that the tentative decision to admit a limited number of English- and French-speaking Palestinian refugees to Canada "was intended to be a modest gesture."[1] In *Strangers at Our Gates*, Valerie Knowles provides a brief overview and wonders why "this period has attracted little if any, attention from historians."[2] Nearly a decade later, David H. Goldberg and Tilly R. Shames mention Canada's "tentative decision to admit a limited number of Palestinian refugees" in their article on Canada's role in the Middle East refugee crisis.[3] By contrast, earlier works such as Freda Hawkins' *Canada and Immigration*, Gerald Dirks' *Canada's Refugee Policy*, Houchang Hassan-Yari's *Le Canada et le conflit Israélo-Arabe depuis 1947*, or more recently Ninette Kelly's and Michael Trebilcock's comprehensive study *The Making of the Mosaic* do not mention this movement.[4] Why is this topic on the periphery of historical enquiry?

In examining the evolution of Canadian immigration policy and practice during the 1950s, this paper argues that the admission of Palestinian refugees served as an important "experiment" for the future selection and resettlement of non-European refugees to Canada at a time when the 1952 *Immigration Act* and its regulations restricted non-European immigration. During this period, the Arab population in Canada numbered approximately 12,300 individuals.[5] From 1945 to 1956, Canada admitted 364 individuals who were identified as "Arabian." With the removal of the term "racial" from the category "Origins of Immigrant Arrivals" in 1952, the Dominion Bureau of Statistics placed "Arabian" and other groups including "Chinese," "East Indian," "Indian (American)," "Japanese," "Mexican," "Negro," "Syrian," and "Turkish" under the subheading of "other."[6] From 1945

1   Zachariah Kay, *The Diplomacy of Prudence: Canada and Israel, 1948-1958* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), p. 26.

2   Valerie Knowles, *Forging Our Legacy: Canadian Citizenship and Immigration, 1900-1977* (Ottawa: Public Works and Government Services, 2000), pp. 73-74, and *Strangers at Our Gates* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2007), p. 173.

3   David H. Goldberg and Tilly R. Shames, "The 'Good-Natured Bastard': Canada and the Middle East Refugee Question," *Israel Affairs*, vol. 10, nos. 1-2 (2004), p. 206.

4   See Freda Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration: Public Policy and Public Concern* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988); Gerald Dirks, *Canada's Refugee Policy: Indifference or Opportunism?* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1977); Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

5   Baha Abu-Laban, *An Olive Branch on the Family Tree: The Arabs in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1980), pp. 58, 64; Paul Eid, *Being Arab: Ethnic and Religious Identity Building among Second Generation Youth in Montreal* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), p. 8; Eliezer Tauber, "The Palestine Question in the 1940s and the Emergence of the Arab Lobby in Canada," *American Review of Canadian Studies*, vol. 40, no. 4 (December 2010), p. 530.

6   Canada, Department of Trade and Commerce [hereafter DTC], Dominion Bureau of Statistics [hereafter DBS], *The Canada Year Book, 1948-1949* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1949), p. 179; *The Canada Year Book,*

to the introduction of the Points system in 1967, a majority of Arabs who settled in Canada were either Christian or Muslim. A large number of these individuals were secular professionals educated in Western-type institutions.[7] Postwar Arab newcomers chose to settle in areas where a pre-existing community existed. Since Montreal was home to the largest Arab population, followed by Toronto, a majority of Arab immigrants chose to reside in these two cities.[8] Did the admission of these refugees alter existing Canadian views towards Arabs, the Middle East, and the Arab-Israeli conflict? Did Canada's socio-cultural composition and economic demands shape the resettlement scheme? An examination of these questions sheds light on our understanding of this period.

Canada and the Partition of Palestine

On November 29, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted Resolution 181, which would divide Palestine, formerly under British mandate, into Arab and Jewish states in May 1948. While a majority of Canadian newspaper editorials approved of the plan, the resolution was contentious from the beginning.[9] The publication of a Gallup Poll in early 1948 indicated that the Canadian public remained largely neutral on the issue of Palestine. Accordingly, 58 per cent of Canadian respondents remained indifferent, saying that their government had done enough to resolve the problem and that they did not wish their officials to become further involved. Nineteen per cent of those polled declared that they were sympathetic to the Jewish cause, while 23 per cent of individuals claimed they agreed with the Arab position. Newspapers across Canada expressed concern about arms shipments, British withdrawal, and foreign enlistments as the situation in the Middle East deteriorated further.[10] Federal Cabinet ministers and officials within the Department of External Affairs believed that partition remained the only viable solution with enough support among the UN (United Nations) member states. Any failure by the UN to address the issue would severely weaken the new international organization.[11]

1950 (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1950), p. 189; *The Canada Year Book, 1951* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1951), p. 146; *The Canada Year Book, 1952-53* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1953), p. 169; *The Canada Year Book, 1954* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1954), p. 163; *The Canada Year Book, 1955* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1955), p. 171; *The Canada Year Book, 1956* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1956), p. 185; and *The Canada Year Book, 1957-58* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1957), p. 181. European ethnic identities were categorized under "British" and "Continental European."

7   Abu-Laban, *An Olive Branch on the Family Tree*, pp. 76-79; Eid, *Being Arab*, pp. 8-9. See also Farid E. Ohan and Ibrahim Hayani, *The Arabs in Ontario: A Misunderstood Community* (Toronto: Near East Cultural and Educational Foundation of Canada, 1993), pp. 23-25.

8   Multiculturalism Directorate, Department of the Secretary of State, *The Canadian Family Tree: Canada's Peoples* (Don Mills: Corpus Information Services, 1979), p. 19; Abu-Laban, *An Olive Branch on the Family Tree*, pp. 63-68.

9   Zachariah Kay, "The Canadian Press and Palestine: A Survey, 1939-48," *International Journal*, vol. 18, no. 3 (1963), pp. 370-371.

10 *Ibid.* Kay notes that those who supported the Jewish cause gave a "common homeland and history, Jewish persecution, and the progress being made in the land" as their main reasons. Conversely, respondents who supported the Arab cause gave "Arab historical claims, [and] anti-semitic feelings" as their main reasons.

11 David J. Bercuson, *Canada and the Birth of Israel: A Study in Canadian Foreign Policy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), pp. 234-235; Anne Trowell Hillmer, "Pearson and Canadian Involvement in the Middle East" in David Taras and David Goldberg, eds., *The Domestic Battleground: Canada and the Arab-*

Arab Palestinians refused to recognize the resolution because it was seen as too favourable to Jews, and many opposed living in what would become Jewish territory.[12] Partition led to a civil war between Jewish Palestinians, who later referred to it as the War of Independence, and Arab Palestinians, who viewed it as the *Nakba* or "catastrophe." Following the announcement of the independence of Israel on May 14, 1948, five Arab states – Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq – invaded the newly founded state. On December 11, 1948, UNGA adopted Resolution 194, which established a UN Conciliation Commission to facilitate peace between the Arab states and Israel. However, Israel and the Arab states refused to accept the resolution. The separately concluded Armistice Agreements between Israel and the Arab states in 1949 brought an end to the hostilities.[13]

As a result of the Arab-Israeli War, approximately 750,000 Arab and Jewish Palestinians fled or were expelled from their homes and land. The UN Conciliation Commission estimated that 711,000 Arab Palestinians and 39,000 Jewish Palestinians were displaced from the area that became Israel.[14] In December 1949, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near

Israeli Conflict (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), pp. 136-137.

12 As president of the Canadian Arab Friendship League, Muhammad Said Massoud asserted in the *Canadian Arab* that the Arab Canadian community was disappointed with Ottawa's decision to support partition. Massoud had hoped that Canada would remain neutral. See *Canadian Arab*, vol. 3, nos. 7-8-9 (October-November-December 1947) in Muhammad Said Massoud, *I Fought as I Believed: An Arab Canadian Speaks Out on the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Montreal: Ateliers des Sourds, 1976), pp. 63-64. See also Houda Asal, "Les premières mobilisations d'immigrants arabes au Canada, à travers l'exemple du journal *The Canadian Arab*, 1945-1948," *Journal of International Migration & Integration*, vol. 9, no. 1 (Winter 2008), p. 13. For Canadian Arab and Zionist perceptions of Ottawa's role in the Partition of Palestine, see Zachariah Kay, *Canada and Palestine: The Politics of Non-Commitment* (Jerusalem: Israel University Press, 1978), pp. 115-126; David H. Goldberg, "Interest Groups and Foreign Policymaking," *Canadian Jewish Historical Society Journal*, vol. 7, no. 1 (1983), pp. 28-35; Baha Abu-Laban, "Arab-Canadians and the Arab-Israeli Conflict," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 10, no. 1 (Winter 1988), pp. 114-116; Hassan Husseini, "A 'Middle Power' in Action: Canada and the Partition of Palestine," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 30, no. 3 (Summer 2008), pp. 49-50; Eliezer Tauber, *Personal Policy Making: Canada's Role in the Adoption of the Palestine Partition Resolution* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2002), pp. 109-115.

13 For an overview of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, see Efraim Karsh, *Palestine Betrayed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); Nur Masalha, *The Palestine Nakba: Decolonising History, Narrating the Subaltern, Reclaiming Memory* (London: Zed Books, 2012); Benny Morris, *1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-2001* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), and *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Ilan Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two Peoples* (Cambridge: Cambridge, University Press, 2006), *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2006), and *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1947-1951* (London: I. B. Taurus, 2006); Eugene L. Rogan and Avi Shlaim, eds., *The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Ahmad H. Sa'di and Lila Abu-Lughod, eds., *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Avi Shlaim, *Collusion Across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionist Movement, and the Partition of Palestine* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988) and *Israel and Palestine: Reappraisals, Revisions, Refutations* (London: Verso, 2009); Mark Tessler, *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

14 United Nations General Assembly, Official Records: Fifth Session, Supplement No. 18 (A/1367/Rev.1), United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine, "General Progress Report and Supplementary Report of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine, Covering the Period from 11 December 1949 to 23 October 1950" (New York, 1951), http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/93037E3 B939746DE8525610200567883 (accessed October 24, 2013).

East (UNRWA) was established to provide relief and human development for Palestinian refugees displaced by the events of 1948. By the mid-1950s, Canada had become the organization's fourth largest financial contributor. The federal government's involvement in the Middle East refugee crisis was predicated on two principles. Canadian officials believed that any resolution to the displacement of Arab and Jewish Palestinians had to be a multilateral effort sanctioned by the United Nations. In addition, officials in Ottawa believed that a resolution of the refugee problem was a "necessary condition" for any comprehensive political and military settlement between Israel and its Arab opponents.[15] In the interim, the Canadian government resorted to practical actions – which included a scheme to resettle a number of Palestinians – in its attempts to alleviate the refugee crisis in the Middle East.

Regulating Immigration from the Middle East
In the summer of 1951, the UN Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons adopted the *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*. The convention defined a refugee as any individual who

> as a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.[16]

Palestinian refugees were originally excluded from the 1951 UN Convention because they were "persons who are at present receiving from organs or agencies of the United Nations other than the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees protection or assistance."[17] There also remains no definitive response to who is a Palestinian refugee. Political sociologist Riccardo Bocco asserts that "the definition and the number of Palestinian refugees can differ according to the approach (administrative, juridical, political) used to define Palestinian refugees and also according to the social context of interaction between Palestinians (registered or not) and others and the actors defining them."[18] On May 1,

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15 Goldberg and Shames, "The 'Good-Natured Bastard'," p. 204.

16 Michael Lanphier, "Canada's Response to Refugees," *International Migration Review*, vol. 15, nos. 1-2 (1981), pp. 113-114.

17 Article 1D of the 1951 *United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* states: "This Convention shall not apply to persons who are at present receiving from organs or agencies of the United Nations other than the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees protection or assistance. When such protection or assistance has ceased for any reason, without the position of such persons being definitively settled in accordance with the relevant resolutions adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, these persons shall *ipso facto* be entitled to the benefits of this Convention." See United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees," http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html (accessed October 17, 2014), p. 16.

18 Riccardo Bocco, "UNRWA and the Palestinian Refugees: A History within History," *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, vol. 28, nos. 2-3 (2010), pp. 237-238.

1950, UNRWA commenced its mandate without a clear definition of who was a Palestinian refugee. In an effort to define the number of relief recipients, an official definition was established two years later and remains unchanged: "a Palestinian refugee shall mean any person whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period June 1, 1946 to May 15, 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict."[19] The UNRWA definition included both Arab and Jewish refugees from Palestine.

The United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees came into force on April 22, 1954. Canada did not become a signatory to the UN Convention, however, because of concerns from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) regarding the admission of undesirable individuals who posed a security threat to the country. The RCMP feared that the UN Convention would restrict Canada's efforts to deport individuals deemed as "security risks" because it guaranteed asylum as an international human right. Officials in Ottawa used the Convention as a framework that would guide their efforts in admitting and denying prospective immigrants, but the Canadian government continued to use Orders-in-Council and Cabinet Directives to grant entry. As a result, Palestinian refugees remained at the mercy of Immigration Branch officials and the RCMP who enforced Stage B security screening.[20] Immigration Branch officials worked closely with the RCMP to implement the immigrant security vetting process known as Stage B. Once an applicant was interviewed by a visa officer and underwent a medical examination, the prospective immigrant was then screened for potential security issues including, but not limited to, criminal activity, espionage, and communist sympathies.[21]

In June 1954, the Department of External Affairs (DEA) informed officials within the Immigration Branch that three new diplomatic posts were to be opened in the Middle East in October with Beirut, Cairo, and Tel Aviv the likely locations. Due to under-staffing and illness, the Canadian Legation in Beirut continued to rely on the Visa Section of the British Embassy to handle immigration cases until January 16, 1955, when Vice Consul Michael Shenstone arrived to manage the portfolio.[22] In Tel Aviv, newly arrived A. J. Desjardins immediately began to deal

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19 United Nations Relief and Works Agency, "Who We Are: Palestine Refugees," http://www.unrwa.org/who-we-are (accessed October 15, 2014). Palestinian Arab and Jewish refugees who fled or willingly left UNRWA's areas of operations were not registered with the agency. The definition also contained a gender bias as Palestinian refugee status could only be passed to successive generations by a registered refugee male. A registered refugee woman who married a non-refugee male lost her status (but could regain it through divorce or widowhood). See Bocco, "UNRWA and the Palestinian Refugees," pp. 237-238.

20 In June 1969, Ottawa ratified the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

21 See Alvin Finkel, "Canadian Immigration Policy and the Cold War, 1945-1980," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 21, no. 3 (1986), pp. 53-70.

22 Library and Archives Canada [hereafter LAC], Immigration Branch fonds [hereafter IB], RG 76, vol. 785, file 541-25-7, part 1, "Canadian Embassy, Beirut, Lebanon – General File," letter from R. M. Macdonald for Acting Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to Deputy Minister, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Ottawa, June 23, 1954; "Canadian Embassy, Beirut, Lebanon – General File," memorandum no. 27 from Chargé d'affaires, Canadian Legation in Beirut, Lebanon to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, November 9, 1954; and "Canadian Embassy, Beirut, Lebanon – General File," memorandum no. 27 from Elizabeth Pauline MacCallum, Chargé d'affaires, Canadian Legation in Beirut, Lebanon to Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, January 14, 1955.

with the backlog of applications from Canadians seeking to sponsor an Israeli relative.[23] In the early 1950s, Canadian policy towards the Middle East mirrored initiatives in London and Washington. Ottawa had yet to implement an advanced policy for the Middle East and maintained few representatives in the region.[24]

In assessing Arab-Israeli relations, Under-Secretary for External Affairs Jules Léger concluded that, to ease tensions between Arab states and Israel, a solution to the refugee problem had to be found. In a memorandum to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Léger argued that "before any positive step can be taken the Arabs must accept two facts: that Israel has come to stay and that, except for a very few, most of the refugees will be resettled in Arab lands. Even at the risk of antagonizing the Arab leaders, no opportunity should be lost to persuade them to move in that direction."[25] A day later, on March 25, 1955, before the House of Commons, Leader of the Official Opposition John Diefenbaker asked government members how long Ottawa had contributed to international efforts on behalf of the Palestinian refugees and how many of these refugees were beneficiaries of Canadian grants. Minister of Finance Walter Edward Harris replied that, since the inception of UNRWA in 1949, Canada had contributed annually for a total amount of $3,555,929. Harris also noted that Canada had become the fourth largest contributor to UNRWA after the United States, the United Kingdom, and France. In his response to the Minister of Finance, Diefenbaker stated:

> There is no more difficult problem anywhere in the world, I would think, than one dealing with refugees. I personally spoke with a number of the refugees and learned that they realized Canada was making this contribution toward the alleviation of their condition ... certainly there is no sorer spot than these camps which, as one visits them and leaves them, cannot help but impress one with the awfulness of the situation in which these people find themselves. The minister mentioned Canada's contribution, and I think that is one contribution that does leave an impression upon the people who receive it. In addition, it is building a bulwark against the spread of communism in these areas.[26]

In his question to the Minister of Finance, Social Credit Leader Solon Earl Low demanded to know whether Canadian officials "made fairly strong representations" as to whether contributions for Palestinian refugees were for simple maintenance

23   LAC, IB fonds, RG 76, vol. 785, file 541-25-7, part 1, "Canadian Embassy, Beirut, Lebanon – General File," letter from Laval Fortier, Deputy Minister, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to Ottawa, November 25, 1954.

24   Robert Bothwell, *Alliance and Illusion: Canada and the World, 1945-1984* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007), p. 264; Michael Carroll*, Pearson's Peacekeepers: Canada and the United Nations Emergency Force, 1956-67* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2009), p. 10.

25   Canada, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade [hereafter DFAIT], Documents on Canadian External Relations [hereafter DCER], vol. 21, chap. 6, Middle East, part 2, Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, file DEA/50134-40, secret memorandum from Jules Léger, Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, to Lester Bowles Pearson, Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, March 24, 1955, http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/206/301/faitc-aecic/history/2013-06-03/www.international.gc.ca/department/history-histoire/dcer/details-en.asp@intRefid=1623 (accessed November 6, 2013).

26   Canada, Parliament, House of Commons, *House of Commons Debates: Official Report, Second Session – Twenty-Second Parliament, Volume 3* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1955), p. 2400.

or for their rehabilitation. In his reply to the Social Credit leader, Harris indicated that the Canadian government was "satisfied that there is good evidence that the problem now is being looked upon as one which must be solved by way of rehabilitation and in other ways." Before his fellow members, the Minister of Finance declined to state what solutions Canadian officials were contemplating.[27]

On April 6, Social Credit MP for Wetaskiwin, Ray Thomas, declared:

> I think too, it is about time that we told them that unless the United Nations rehabilitation contributions to the Arab refugees are used for rehabilitation they will be stopped. I believe these payments have gone on long enough for the maintenance of those people in the refugee camps. It is about time they were forced to get out and make their own way somehow. It should be made perfectly clear to them that any further rehabilitation grants for the refugees will be used for rehabilitation only and not for maintenance within the camps.[28]

Canadian Public Perceptions and Press Reaction

Throughout 1955, public opinion remained split over the plight of displaced Palestinian refugees. Canadian residents submitted letters to newspapers across the country to express their views regarding events in the Middle East. As two Canadian dailies with large readerships, the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Daily Star* played their part as platforms that published the heated debates between concerned citizens who expressed a multitude of opinions supporting Israeli or Arab interests. Although not entirely representative of all the letters Canadians were sending to their local newspapers, they do give us insight into the content and extent of the debate regarding the plight of Palestinian refugees. The *Globe and Mail* featured letters from concerned Canadians under the headline "800,000 Arab refugees from Palestine." In his letter to the newspaper, H. A. Mowat of Toronto argued that supplies for the Palestinan Arab refugees should come from the Arab governments that had attacked Israel in 1948. According to Mowat, the Arab armies had created the refugee camps and were therefore ultimately responsible in providing for the resulting refugees along Israel's borders.[29] In a more moderate response, Dorothy Johnson of Toronto indicated that she had spent approximately two years among the refugees working for a non-political and non-denominational organization that had welfare and medical teams among the children in the camps in Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. Johnson asserted that, although many of the refugees were illiterate, they were not against progress and were ready to learn. The former aid worker stressed that Western intervention was the wrong course since Arab states viewed Israel as a Western state and a danger to them. In Johnson's view, a solution "can only come with future generations who understand that the interests of their respective countries are allied and that together they may prosper, divided they will not."[30] In his letter to the *Globe and Mail*, C. Horowitz of Toronto argued that "the Jews have a historic right to

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27 *Ibid.*, pp. 2400-2401.
28 *Ibid.*, p. 2882.
29 "The 800,000 Arab Refugees from Palestine," *Globe and Mail*, June 13, 1955, p. 6.
30 *Ibid.*

Palestine." Horowitz claimed that the Arabs "have let the country go to waste, and the land of milk and honey was transformed into a desert, which the Jews are now endeavouring, by the sweat of their brow, to rehabilitate, and are succeeding." The letter also indicated that seven Arab states invaded Israel after its declaration of independence on May 14, 1948, in order to "wipe the Jewish country off the map." Horowitz concluded that the Palestinian refugees found themselves outside Israel's borders due to neighbouring Arab states and, as a result, "I don't see how anyone with any brains can demand that Israel should admit its sworn worst enemies."[31]

In the *Toronto Daily Star*, reader Nadji Shukri of Toronto responded to a letter from a Mr. Singer who claimed that Palestine belonged to the Jews. In his reply, Shukri noted that no form of compensation had been given to displaced Palestinians after 1948 and claimed that Israel "refuses to admit any more than about 34,000 of those who fled. Does Mr. Singer consider this a generous offer?"[32] In a reply to Shukri's comments a few days later, Dave Jessel of University College, Toronto, declared that Arab states prevented the refugees from permanently settling anywhere. Their predicament was being used as a propaganda tool against Israel, while the UN fed and clothed the refugees, thus "handling their troubles for them." Jessel concluded that "it, therefore, appears that those who by their aggression against Israel created the refugee problem are now the injured party which has to be appeased."[33]

Prominent officials, respected religious leaders, and newspaper editors also voiced their opinions on the plight of the Palestinian refugees. In a special feature for the *Toronto Daily Star*, Anglican Canon A. H. Davis reported on his travels through refugee camps in Jordan, where approximately 400,000 displaced Palestinians resided. Davis came away from his experience with appreciation for international efforts to provide financial and material assistance to refugees in Jordan. According to the Canon, "it is obvious to any visitor that a program of resettlement for these refugees is beyond the means of any Arab state, or combination of states, without financial assistance for many years to come."[34] In an editorial published in September 1955, the *Globe and Mail* presented its view of the "Dilemma in the Middle East." With news that Egypt was considering purchasing arms from Czechoslovakia, the newspaper argued, Western powers could not afford to take sides between Egypt and Israel. In essence, the newspaper explored the dilemma of "how to be friends of both Jews and Arabs and how to keep the precarious Middle Eastern peace." The paper concluded that, for the Western powers,

> [the] most fruitful form of intervention, though it would necessarily be laborious and long-termed, is an effort to persuade Jews and Arabs to work together on practical schemes for their common advantage. There is, of course, a strong contrast

31   *Ibid*.
32   "Disputes Israel Claim," *Toronto Daily Star*, October 29, 1955, p. 6.
33   "The Arab Refugees," *Toronto Daily Star*, November 1, 1955, p. 6.
34   "Wall with Sentry Typical of Way Jerusalem Divided," *Toronto Daily Star*, October 28, 1955, p. 16.

between the industrious Jews and the not so industrious Arabs with their ingrained contempt for Western ideas of efficiency and progress. Arabs, however, need food, clothing, and shelter like other people ... it is hard to believe that the Arabs can resist the attraction of the Jordan schemes or would resist plans, put before them with diplomatic skill, for the resettlement of the Palestinian Arab refugees now huddled on Israel's borders.[35]

According to the *Globe and Mail*, peace in the Middle East could only be achieved through economic partnership and advancement.

With public opinion over escalating tensions in the Middle East and the plight of approximately 900,000 displaced Palestinian refugees hanging in the balance, the federal government planned to contribute an additional $500,000 to UNRWA to provide assistance to Palestinian refugees. Approximately, $300,000 of the allocated funds was used to purchase wheat. The DEA also noted that Ottawa would contribute an additional $125,000 to the 1956 programme of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).[36] On May 26, 1955, the Director of Placement Services in the Rehabilitation Division at the headquarters of UNRWA asked the Canadian Legation in Beirut, Lebanon, whether Canada would be willing to resettle a "moderate number of refugees as immigrants."[37]

A month later, Egyptian Foreign Minister Dr. Fawzi made an official visit to Ottawa. In his discussions with the Egyptian minister, Secretary of State for External Affairs Lester Bowles Pearson indicated that the claims of Palestinian refugees to full compensation for material damage would have to be "admitted and met" before any negotiated settlement could take place. In his reply, Fawzi declared that such compensation would most likely not be met. Fawzi concluded that, if Israel was not willing or able to pay compensation, then the UN should accept some part of the obligation. According to the Egyptian Foreign Minister, "it would be a small price to pay for peace."[38]

Resettlement of Palestinian Refugees to Canada

On September 8, 1955, the Under-Secretary of State for External Affaires, Jules Léger, sent a confidential letter to the Deputy Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Colonel Laval Fortier. In his letter, the under-secretary indicated that Canada had contributed approximately $4 million for Palestine relief and it was in

35 "Dilemma in the Middle East," *Globe and Mail*, September 29, 1955, p. 6.
36 "Canada Plans $500,000 Relief Aid to Palestine," *Vancouver Sun*, November 4, 1955, p. 49. The article noted that Canada remained the fourth largest financial contributor to the fund. In previous years, Canada's contributions totalled $4 million.
37 LAC, IB fonds, RG 76, vol. 865, file 555-54-607, part 1, "Refugees in Palestine – General File," despatch no. 33 from Elizabeth Pauline MacCallum, Chargé d'affaires, Canadian Legation, Beirut, Lebanon to Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, February 6, 1956.
38 Canada, DFAIT, DCER, vol. 21, chap. 6, Middle East, part 3, Egypt, section A, Visit of Foreign Minister to Ottawa, June 28-30, 1955, file DEA/10170-C-40, confidential memorandum from Lester Bowles Pearson, Secretary of State for External Affairs, to Jules Léger, Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, July 1, 1955, http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/206/301/faitc-aecic/history/2013-06-03/www.international.gc.ca/department/history-histoire/dcer/details-en.asp@intRefid=1626 (accessed November 6, 2013); John English, *The Worldly Years: The Life of Lester Pearson*, *Volume II: 1949-1972* (Toronto: Vintage Books, 1993), p. 123.

Canada's interest "that the refugees be resettled as soon as possible since the only practical alternative is for members of the United Nations, including Canada, to continue to share in the cost of maintaining them indefinitely."[39] Headquartered in Beirut, UNRWA sought to resettle Palestinian refugees permanently on a "highly selective basis" with backing from the United States.

Canada's Director of Immigration C. E. S. Smith wrote a confidential letter to the RCMP Special Branch on September 15, 1955, regarding a question that UNRWA had sent to the DEA "whether Canada would consider accepting a limited number of Palestinian refugees for resettlement in Canada." According to UNRWA, 905,986 registered Palestinian refugees were residing in camps in Jordan (499,606 – 55.2 per cent), Gaza (214,601 – 23.7 per cent), Lebanon (103,600 – 11.4 per cent), and Syria (88,179 – 9.7 per cent).[40] Smith noted that these refugees were predominantly unable to secure employment in their host country due to a lack of technical skills and professional training. In some cases, the refugees were taught English and acquired training from UNRWA staff. The Director of Immigration concluded his letter to the RCMP by requesting an analysis of the Stage B (medical and security screening) considerations prior to the possible movement of Palestinian refugees to Canada.[41]

Three weeks later, the Canadian Legation in Beirut informed the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs in Ottawa that UNRWA officials continued to pressure Canadian diplomats for a response regarding the "emigration to Canada of selected Palestine refugees." Legation officials were concerned that UNRWA would also contact other Commonwealth governments in the hopes of resettling refugees. Canada's first female Head of Mission and Chargé d'affaires in Beirut, Elizabeth Pauline MacCallum, indicated that the informal scheme favoured by UNRWA should be seen as an advantage to Canada, in that the agency would complement its assistance with Canadian immigration regulations.[42]

39   LAC, IB fonds, RG 76, vol. 865, file 555-54-607, part 1, "Refugees in Palestine – General File," confidential letter from Jules Léger, Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, to Colonel Laval Fortier, Deputy Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Ottawa, September 8, 1955.

40   LAC, IB fonds, RG 76, vol. 865, file 555-54-607, part 1, "Refugees in Palestine – General File," confidential letter from C. E. S. Smith, Director of Immigration, to Officer-in-Charge, Special Branch, RCMP, Ottawa, September 15, 1955; LAC, Department of Citizenship and Immigration fonds [hereafter DCI], RG 26, vol. 121, file 3-32-2, "Admission to Canada of Displaced Persons – General File," memorandum from Laval Fortier, Deputy Minister, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, to Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Ottawa, September 21, 1955, p. 1. After the Arab-Israeli War of 1948, Gaza went from being a part of the British Mandate of Palestine to Egyptian administration.

41   LAC, IB fonds, RG 76, vol. 865, file 555-54-607, part 1, "Refugees in Palestine – General File," confidential letter from C. E. S. Smith, Director of Immigration to Officer-in-Charge, Special Branch, RCMP, Ottawa, September 15, 1955.

42   LAC, IB fonds, RG 76, vol. 865, file 555-54-607, part 1, "Refugees in Palestine – General File," numbered letter 396 from Elizabeth Pauline MacCallum, Chargé d'affaires in Beirut, to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, October 3, 1955; Michael Malloy, "Forgotten Refugees: The 1956 Palestinian Refugee Movement to Canada," *CIHS Bulletin: The Newsletter of the Canadian Immigration Historical Society*, vol. 56 (September 2009), p. 5. On October 19, 1954, MacCallum was appointed Chargé d'affaires to Lebanon. In the *Montreal Gazette*, the president of the Canadian Arab Friendship League, Lebanese Canadian Muhammad Said Massoud, asserted that "administrators of the Canadian government, through this choice of their representative to Lebanon show that Canada is on the march to fulfil a mission of goodwill destined to rectify past miscalculations, and bring about good relations between Canada and the Arab world." See Massoud, *I Fought as I Believed*, p. 271.

In their informal discussions with Canadian representatives in Beirut, UNRWA officials indicated that the desire to resettle Palestinian refugees came from officials within the agency's Division of Placement Services. These officials pointed out that the Director of UNRWA had not participated in planning this scheme, as the agency's success in receiving cooperation from other refugee organizations and Arab governments was contingent on "maintaining a strictly neutral position on the vexed question of permanent resettlement of refugees outside of Palestine."[43]

As discussions were taking place between UNRWA and Canadian legation officials, the United States government undertook a scheme to resettle 2,000 Palestinian refugees who received non-quota visas as sponsored immigrants under the 1953 *Refugee Relief Act*. In shedding light on the type of immigrant Palestinians could be, MacCallum wrote to Pearson arguing that the Palestinian refugees were

> extremely fine people, well educated, efficient, hard-working, adaptable and capable of enduring stoically a great deal of hardship. Some are "graduates" of UNRWA, having escaped from relief either by their own efforts or through training given by the agency. In a country like Lebanon, where work is not available for all, and competition for jobs is intense enough even among members of the indigenous population, it is greatly to the credit of the community that so many Palestinian refugees are allowed to make a living, despite the difficulty of obtaining citizenship and work permits. In Jordan, where refugees are welcomed as citizens, the labour that only a small population of those refugees not on relief can regard their economic position as being anything but precarious.[44]

The majority of Palestinian refugees living in Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria were agricultural workers and peasants with no formal education or language training. Most sought to remain and cultivate the land of their ancestors. Conversely, a minority of the refugees acquired skills, professional training, and the ability to work in the English language. Canadian officials were to select prospective refugees for resettlement from this small group who desired to secure employment and a better life for themselves and their families in Canada.[45] Officials were concerned whether they would be able to ascertain the status of each applicant for resettlement. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency proposed facilitating Canadian immigration authorities with certificates that would authenticate each Palestinian applicant. In turn, Canadian officials were well aware that they would need to amend their administrative regulations in order to attract "the best type of immigrant." A Palestinian refugee who – prior to the partition of Palestine – had resided in territory now comprising the state of Israel and who was now living in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, or Gaza would be considered as a refugee. Additionally, every Palestinian refugee certified by UNRWA would

43   LAC, IB fonds, RG 76, vol. 865, file 555-54-607, part 1, "Refugees in Palestine – General File," numbered letter no. 339 from G. F. G. Hughes, Chargé d'affaires, a.i. in Beirut, to Lester B. Pearson, Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, August 10, 1955.
44   *Ibid.*
45   *Ibid.*

be considered eligible for resettlement in Canada.[46] Cases in which resettlement was uncertain would be referred to Ottawa and adjudicated on an "ad hoc basis." For those Palestinian refugees whom the Canadian government deemed to be "economic refugees" because they had inhabited land near the demarcation line and were without a livelihood, further analysis was required to move forward. Approximately 100,000 individuals found themselves in this predicament and were without UNRWA assistance.[47]

Canadian diplomats in Beirut were well aware that many of the Palestinian refugees seeking resettlement did not possess valid travelling documents. In Lebanon, many refugees were forced to purchase Lebanese passports with falsified information to establish residency and be able to gain employment. According to Canadian Chargé d'affaires G. F. G. Hughes, the American Embassy in Beirut "attempted to be as lenient as possible in such cases" as the travel documents were acquired for the purposes of sustenance and not to enter the United States illegally.[48] Canadian officials in Lebanon were interested in American procedures towards preparing their own scheme for the resettlement of Palestinian refugees. Under the *Refugee Relief Act*, American officials granted visas only to applicants who could guarantee that they would be readmitted back into the country from which they had come, and Canadian officials also found this measure necessary. Hughes argued to his superiors that, if Canada were to accept Palestinian refugees, "it would presumably be necessary to ensure that Canada had the right to return refugees to their country of last permanent residence within a stipulated time of say, one year, if the immigrants proved to be unsuitable in one way or another."[49]

The Canadian Legation in Beirut forwarded to Ottawa a list containing the names of 27,335 Palestinians registered for employment with UNRWA. These persons were classified by trade and country of residence. As UNRWA had agreed to facilitate the testing of registrants to guarantee their skills and training, Canadian officials sought to resettle refugees through sponsorship or as open placements in particular trades. The list indicated that most of the registrants were artisans including plumbers, painters, mechanics, fitters, riveters, and surveyor assistants, primarily in their twenties, forties, or fifties.[50] In terms of assistance, UNRWA was prepared to pay for the passage of individuals who received their visas from Canadian authorities and were in receipt of food rations. The agency was willing to provide medical examinations and to give every head of household $28 and $14 for each dependent upon departure.

On the morning of October 26, 1955 an interdepartmental meeting was held to discuss the potential of selecting Palestinian refugees for resettlement to Canada.

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46 *Ibid.*
47 *Ibid.*
48 *Ibid.*
49 *Ibid.* The Canadian government would need to request that Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria issue one-year re-entry permits for individuals without the proper travel documentation. The Canadian Legation in Beirut was also interested in promoting the resettlement of Palestinian refugees to Canada through sponsorship. Although the Palestinian community in Canada was relatively small, Canadian diplomats floated the idea of soliciting applications from relatives who could ascertain a prospective refugee's identity.
50 *Ibid.*

In attendance were C. E. S. Smith and four representatives from the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Paul Malone from the United Nations Division within the DEA, W. W. Dawson from the Department of Labour, J. W. Temple from the Unemployment Insurance Commission, and Inspector G. H. Ashley from the RCMP. As Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, John Whitney Pickersgill led the federal government's efforts to accept and resettle Palestinian refugees. Pickersgill sent the members a memorandum informing them of the federal Cabinet's view of the issue. The meeting was to decide whether Palestinian refugees would be permitted to enter Canada and, if so, how many. Since the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration was responsible for crafting a resettlement policy and shaping its implementation, Pickersgill requested that departmental representatives resolve the issue of how the refugees "could be integrated into the Canadian economy, the sources from which such refugees should be selected and the timing of the movement."[51] The meeting resulted in a consensus that a small number of Palestinian refugees be admitted to Canada. Federal Cabinet ministers believed that accepting refugees from Palestine might lead other countries to do the same and concluded that reducing the refugee dilemma in the Middle East was a "useful piece of strategy," given that the large number of Palestinian refugees in Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria posed a threat to regional stability.[52] The departmental representatives agreed that, since the federal government could not ascertain individual levels of trade proficiency, a small "experiment" of admitting only 100 workers and their families would be allowed to evaluate how a relatively small group of Palestinian refugees, numbering approximately 300 to 400 people, would integrate into the Canadian economy.[53] The federal Cabinet's decision to accept a small number of Palestinian refugees in the fall of 1955 and Pickersgill's role in determining policy and shaping resettlement efforts proved to be an instrumental lesson in refugee resettlement. Less than a year later, the experiment of resettling Palestinian refugees served as an important precedent for the resettlement of tens of thousands of Britons and other Europeans spurred to emigrate during the Suez Crisis, as well as 37,500 Hungarian refugees who fled the Soviet invasion of their homeland in 1956.

The interdepartmental meeting also discussed the timing of the movement of Palestinian refugees to Canada. Representatives agreed that a timeline would be confirmed at a later date once the duration of Stage B security screening, conducted by the RCMP, became clear. Inspector G. H. Ashley argued convincingly that the Palestinian refugee should be defined as "any Arab displaced as a result of the Israeli-Arab war" of 1948. The inspector's definition was approved by the other representatives. Those refugees chosen for resettlement were also to receive a

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51 LAC, IB fonds, RG 76, vol. 865, file 555-54-607, part 1, "Refugees in Palestine – General File," minutes of meeting, October 26, 1955, with letter from C. E. S. Smith, Director of Immigration, to Jules Léger, Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, November 2, 1955.

52 *Ibid.*

53 *Ibid.* Chargé d'affaires G. F. G. Hughes indicated that a "token number of 500 refugees" could be brought to Canada.

medical pre-screening by UNRWA that would be reviewed by Canadian doctors upon their arrival in Canada.[54]

On October 27, 1955, director of Immigration C. E. S. Smith wrote to Paul Malone at the DEA informing him that the Immigration Branch had reclassified the Palestinian refugees from UNRWA's list in accordance with the International Labour Organization's *International Classification of Occupations for Migration, Employment and Placement*. Of the 23 occupations listed, the largest group of refugees with a particular trade consisted of 738 carpenters and joiners, followed by 629 automotive mechanics and 487 stonemasons and construction workers. Conversely, Canadian immigration authorities identified only five electrical engineers, 10 mechanical engineers, and an additional 10 draughtsmen for placement in Canada. The remaining Palestinians on Canada's short list included tailors, typists, pipefitters, welders, painters, non-professional nurses, housekeepers, cooks, and bakers.[55]

On November 9, Deputy Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Colonel Laval Fortier informed his minister that Canada would admit 100 Palestinian refugees and their families for a total of between 300 and 400 people. This wave of immigration would be considered experimental, and the admission of future refugees depended on the success of the first group to arrive in Canada. The selection of refugees was to occur only in Jordan and Lebanon as facilities for the security screening of individuals were considered to be inadequate in Syria and Egypt.[56] In a confidential memorandum to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, DEA officials noted that "as a rule, largely because of a lack of facilities for the security screening of persons wishing to immigrate into Canada from Egypt (a reason *not* disclosed to applicants nor presumably to the Egyptian authorities), no encouragement is given to such immigration."[57] A Canadian immigration

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54   *Ibid*. At the meeting, officials representing the Immigration Branch were also concerned with the ability of selected Palestinian refugees to speak either English or French, their adaptability to life in Canada, and the average size of their families.

55   LAC, IB fonds, RG 76, vol. 865, file 555-54-607, part 1, "Refugees in Palestine – General File," letter from C. E. S. Smith, Director of Immigration, to Paul Malone, United Nations Division, DEA, Ottawa, October 27, 1955.

56   LAC, IB fonds, RG 76, vol. 865, file 555-54-607, part 1, "Refugees in Palestine – General File," letter from Laval Fortier, Deputy Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, to John Whitney Pickersgill, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Ottawa, November 9, 1955; LAC, Department of Citizenship and Immigration fonds, RG 26, vol. 121, file 3-32-2, "Admission to Canada of Displaced Persons – General File," memorandum from Laval Fortier, Deputy Minister, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, to Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Ottawa, November 10, 1955.

57   Canada, DFAIT, DCER, vol. 21, chap. 6, Middle East, part 3, Egypt, section B, Visit of Secretary of State for External Affairs to Cairo, November 10-12, 1955, file DEA/50134-40, confidential memorandum for Lester Bowles Pearson, Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, October 20, 1955, http://epe. lac-bac.gc.ca/100/206/301/faitc-aecic/history/2013-06-03/www.international.gc.ca/department/history-histoire/dcer/details-en.asp@intRefid=1631 (accessed November 6, 2013). In a confidential memorandum prepared for the Secretary of State for External Affairs' official visit to Cairo on November 10-12, 1955, DEA officials indicated to Pearson that Egyptian and Syrian applicants and officials were not informed of Canada's lack of immigration screening facilities. For Pearson's reflections on his meetings with Egyptian officials, see Lester B. Pearson, *Mike: The Memoirs of the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson Volume 2, 1948-1957* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), pp. 220-222; Geoffrey A. H. Pearson, *Seize the Day: Lester B. Pearson and Crisis Diplomacy* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1993), pp. 137-139; Houchang Hassan-Yari, *Le Canada et le conflit Israelo-Arabe depuis 1947* (Montreal: Harmattan, 1997),

team was to be sent to Jordan and Lebanon in late January or early February 1956 to process refugee applications pre-selected by UNRWA. The immigration team and the agency were to process these applications with "extreme caution" to avoid criticism from Arab governments and refugee applicants themselves.[58] The Canadian government required successful Palestinian applicants to speak either English or French, to have occupations for which employment possibilities existed as identified by the Canadian government, and to be able to adapt to life in Canada and become good citizens.[59]

Canadian officials were cognizant of the fact that UNRWA's status with Arab governments in the Middle East could suffer should it be seen as taking the initiative in encouraging and resettling Palestinians abroad. In representing Arab governments, the Arab League urged for the repatriation of Palestinian refugees in accordance with UNGA's resolution of December 11, 1948. The Arab League remained concerned that the resettlement of refugees abroad would adversely affect their ability to return to their pre-1948 homes. Canadian officials were forced to maintain that they only sought to resettle individuals who desired to reside permanently in Canada.[60] In a confidential telegram to the DEA, Canadian Chargé d'affaires Elizabeth Pauline MacCallum suggested that the Canadian government permit the embassy to issue a press release on behalf of UNRWA that would "protect its position and prevent criticism from disappointed applicants" and from Arab governments by indicating that a large number of Palestinian refugees had requested immigration to Canada and that Ottawa had "tentatively decided to admit a very limited number of applicants" residing in Lebanon and Jordan who spoke either English or French and held relevant technical skills.[61] MacCallum noted that UNRWA officials felt confident that a press release would eliminate most ineligible applicants as well as criticism of both Canada and the agency. The Canadian Chargé d'affaires also asserted that UNRWA's experience in resettling Palestinian refugees to the United States had indicated that refugees who were rejected did not publicly resent the American government.[62] In Ottawa, federal officials recognized that UNRWA's position in the Middle East remained delicate. One of the main accusations made by Arab governments in the region

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p. 35.

58 LAC, IB fonds, RG 76, vol. 865, file 555-54-607, part 1, "Refugees in Palestine – General File," message C-71 from Jules Léger, Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, to Canadian Legation, Beirut, Lebanon, November 4, 1955; LAC, IB fonds, RG 76, vol. 865, file 555-54-607, part 1, "Refugees in Palestine – General File," numbered letter C-373 from Jules Léger, Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, to Canadian Legation, Beirut, Lebanon, November 2, 1955.

59 LAC, IB fonds, RG 76, vol. 865, file 555-54-607, part 1, "Refugees in Palestine – General File," numbered letter C-373 from Jules Léger, Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, to Canadian Legation, Beirut, Lebanon, November 2, 1955.

60 LAC, IB fonds, RG 76, vol. 865, file 555-54-607, part 1, "Refugees in Palestine – General File," numbered letter no. 460 from Elizabeth Pauline MacCallum, Chargé d'affaires, Canadian Legation, Beirut, Lebanon, to Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, December 1, 1955.

61 LAC, IB fonds, RG 76, vol. 865, file 555-54-607, part 1, "Refugees in Palestine – General File," telegram no. 73 from Elizabeth Pauline MacCallum, Chargé d'affaires, Canadian Embassy, Beirut, Lebanon, to Department of External Affairs, November 9, 1955. Pre-selection of Palestinian applicants would be conducted by UNRWA, while Canadian officials would "make [the] final choice of immigrants."

62 *Ibid.*

was that the organization was an "Anglo-American tool designed to frustrate the recognized right of the refugees to return to their Palestinian homeland by encouraging them to seek permanent resettlement elsewhere." Both UNRWA and the Canadian legation in Beirut agreed that full publicity of the plan to resettle Palestinian refugees to Canada would limit criticism.[63]

Accordingly, in the early morning of December 2, 1955, the DEA issued a press release in Ottawa and Beirut announcing that Canada had "tentatively decided to admit a limited number of Palestinian refugees as immigrants to Canada." The press release noted that, since Canada was the fourth largest financial contributor to UNRWA, it sought to promote the welfare of Palestinian refugees. While Canadian officials were crafting the press release, Moshe Sharrett, Israel's Foreign Minister, visited Ottawa where he engaged in talks with Pearson. Sharett informed Canada's Secretary of State for External Affairs "how impossible it would be for Israel to take back a large number of refugees and, apart from the security problem, there was simply no place where they could be resettled." The Israeli Foreign Minister stated "that Israel was ready to pay compensation for their lands and to help in their resettlement in the Arab countries as part of a general settlement."[64] In the following days and weeks, newspapers across the Middle East reacted to Canada's press release. In Beirut, *Al-Jarida* (December 3) claimed the Canadian resettlement scheme was made public during the visit of Israel's Foreign Minister, as if to suggest it was in part an Israeli plot. *Al-Yom* (December 4) viewed the Canadian plan unfavourably and through interviews noted that "not a single refugee in Syria had asked to emigrate to Canada." In Damascus, *Alef-Ba* (December 3) "violently criticize[d]" the Canadian announcement under the headline "Dangerous Western Plot to Expatriate Refugees and Bury Them in Oblivion in Canada." A week later in Jerusalem, *Falastin* (December 10) published an article entitled "Arab Refugees: Forbidding Them from Emigrating to Canada." In the feature, the paper claimed that Damascus planned to request other Arab governments to prevent the emigration of Palestinian refugees to Canada.[65]

Due to a lack of Canadian immigration facilities in Lebanon and Jordan, UNRWA remained responsible for pre-selecting Palestinian candidates for immigration to Canada.[66] The team of immigration officials dispatched to approve UNRWA's selections were to be sent to the large refugee centres of Beirut, Amman, and Jerusalem. A medical officer was to accompany the Canadian team and assess reports from UNRWA's medical examinations, which included an examination of

63   LAC, IB fonds, RG 76, vol. 865, file 555-54-607, part 1, "Refugees in Palestine – General File," numbered letter no. 448 from Elizabeth Pauline MacCallum, Chargé d'affaires, Canadian Embassy, Beirut, Lebanon, to Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, November 17, 1955.

64   Canada, DFAIT, DCER, vol. 21, chap. 6, Middle East, part 4, Israel, Visit of Foreign Minister to Ottawa, December 1-2, 1955, file DEA/10963-40, secret memorandum from Lester Bowles Pearson, Secretary of State for External Affairs, to Louis St. Laurent, Prime Minister, Ottawa, December 5, 1955, http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/206/301/faitc-aecic/history/2013-06-03/www.international.gc.ca/department/history-histoire/dcer/details-en.asp@intRefid=1627 (accessed November 6, 2013).

65   LAC, IB fonds, RG 76, vol. 865, file 555-54-607, part 1, "Refugees in Palestine – General File," report, "Press Coverage of Canadian Scheme for Immigration of Palestine Refugees, n.d.

66   LAC, IB fonds, RG 76, vol. 865, file 555-54-607, part 1, "Refugees in Palestine – General File," Press Release No. 100, Department of External Affairs, December 2, 1955.

each prospective Palestinian candidate's chest x-rays, a radiologist's report, and tests which looked for evidence of syphilis and checked faeces for parasites. In Ottawa, the Department of National Health and Welfare informed immigration officials that further tests were to be conducted including an urinalysis for sugar and albumin (globular proteins).[67]

Aside from medical examinations, Canadian officials also focused on selecting prospective candidates with linguistic abilities and trade experience. They were also concerned with the socio-economic impact of this wave of immigration since each successful candidate would be permitted to resettle in Canada with his or her immediate family. In her correspondence with the DEA, MacCallum noted that the average size of Palestinian refugee families was 4.5 persons, of which the nominal head was a male aged 50 to 55. Due to past uprootedness, many of these families depended largely on a younger male between 25 and 30 years of age as the "eligible immigrant" who would bring his immediate family, including a father and a mother, to Canada. MacCallum also counselled officials in Ottawa – who worried about the lack of private sponsorship – that an earlier American scheme to resettle 2,000 Palestinian refugees had also suffered from a lack of private interest. With the arrival in the United States of the first group of refugees, private citizens and non-governmental organizations began to show interest in the form of increased sponsorship. According to the Canadian Chargé d'affaires, Americans had previously envisioned Palestinians as "a type of wild Bedouin," but were now "enabled to see with their own eyes that the Palestinian Arabs are, on the contrary, a civilized and assimilable group."[68] Even as linguistic ability and skills experience were heavily considered, the DEA informed the Canadian Legation in Beirut that the main criterion in selecting Palestinian refugees for resettlement remained their "over-all suitability and adaptability to life in Canada." As a result, only "normal family units" comprised of a wage earner and his wife and children would be considered eligible.[69]

The Immigration Branch informed its Officer-in-Charge in Athens on December 15, 1955, that a federal Cabinet directive had been issued to "admit a limited number of specially selected Palestinian refugee for permanent resettlement in Canada." The directive noted the Cabinet's decision was based on two points. First, through UNRWA, Canada was the fourth largest financial contributor to Palestinian relief, and, in attempting to resettle these refugees, Canada hoped that other countries would also implement resettlement schemes. Second, the significant number of Palestinian refugees in the Middle East represented a threat to regional stability. Federal Cabinet ministers believed that, with the region's

67 LAC, IB fonds, RG 76, vol. 865, file 555-54-607, part 1, "Refugees in Palestine – General File," letter from C. E. S. Smith, Director of Immigration, to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, December 8, 1955, p. 2; and "Refugees in Palestine – General File," memorandum from C. E. S. Smith, Director of Immigration, to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, December 29, 1955.

68 LAC, IB fonds, RG 76, vol. 865, file 555-54-607, part 1, "Refugees in Palestine – General File," numbered letter no. 448 from Elizabeth Pauline MacCallum, Chargé d'affaires, Canadian Embassy, Beirut, Lebanon, to Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, November 17, 1955.

69 LAC, IB fonds, RG 76, vol. 865, file 555-54-607, part 1, "Refugees in Palestine – General File," message no. C-82 from Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, to Canadian Legation, Beirut, Lebanon, December 9, 1955.

increasing strategic importance, relieving the refugee problem would improve the political situation. The directive incorporated recommendations from Canadian officials in Beirut and the interdepartmental committee and went further to suggest that the age limit of heads of household not exceed 45 years. Assisted transportation would not be provided, and successful candidates and their families would be expected to pay for their passage to Canada. Sponsorships would only be accepted after Palestinian refugees arrived in Canada. The Cabinet expected immigration officials to complete their selection of Palestinian refugees prior to January 30, 1956.[70]

Canadian immigration officials believed that successful Palestinian refugees should be resettled in Central and Eastern Canada as far west as Port Arthur, Ontario. Director of Immigration C. E. S. Smith informed his colleagues in the DEA that his department envisioned that 100 heads of household would permanently reside as follows: 25 persons each in Montreal and Toronto, 10 each in Port Arthur and Quebec City, and five each in Hull, Trois-Rivières, Hamilton, London, Ottawa, and Windsor. Upon their arrival in Canada, Palestinian refugees were to report to their local Immigration Office, which would be responsible for finding accommodations and employment. Short-term assistance in the form of food and shelter would be handled by Immigration Halls in Montreal and Quebec or through private assistance.[71]

Throughout January 1956 Arab newspapers across the Middle East published articles in an attempt to shed further light on the Canadian resettlement scheme and to promote popular opposition to the movement of Palestinian refugees to Canada. In Amman, *Al Difa'* (January 26) noted that the Jordanian Minister of Social Welfare had called on Arab governments to thwart the Canadian plan. In Beirut, the *Daily Star* (January 26) argued that Palestinian refugees in Syria had protested to the Syrian and Lebanese government to prevent young refugees from immigrating to Canada. *L'Orient* (February 1) informed its readers under the headline "N'émigrez pas au Canada" ("Don't emigrate to Canada") that the Palestinian High Committee led by the former Mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Amin al-Husseini, called on all Palestinian refugees to remain on guard against Canadian efforts in Lebanon and Jordan to resettle them.[72]

In Canada, members of Parliament continued an intense debate on the situation in the Middle East. In his address before the House of Commons on January 18, 1956, Co-operative Commonwealth Federation MP for Winnipeg North, Alistair McLeod Stewart, declared that, while over 900,000 Palestinian refugees lived in poverty and misery, Arab nations had failed to improve their situation. Stewart asserted that

70 LAC, IB fonds, RG 76, vol. 865, file 555-54-607, part 1, "Refugees in Palestine – General File," memorandum from G. R. Benoit, Chief Operations Division, Immigration Branch, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Ottawa, to Officer-in-Charge, Athens, Greece, December 15, 1955.

71 LAC, IB fonds, RG 76, vol. 865, file 555-54-607, part 1, "Refugees in Palestine – General File," memorandum from C. E. S. Smith, Director of Immigration, to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, December 29, 1955.

72 LAC, IB fonds, RG 76, vol. 865, file 555-54-607, part 1, "Refugees in Palestine – General File," report, "Articles which Appeared in the Newspapers in the Near East, n.d."

lists of refugees have been padded. The United Nations pays out some $2.50 a month per capita to feed these unfortunate people, but the lists are padded. I am told it was reported last year that out of 900,000 refugees, only 400 died. The comparable death rate in this country, which is infinitely better off than the refugee camps, would be 8,000. I should like to know where that money is going.... We speak a good deal about assuming the obligations which are ours under the United Nations charter. One of our obligations is to do everything in our power to see that war does not break out. Therefore I believe that Canada can do much more than it has done.[73]

In his own address before the House of Commons, Secretary of State for External Affairs Lester Pearson indicated that a "fair and honourable solution" had to be found for the plight of the Palestinian refugees. Pearson went on to note that shelter and an allowance were "pitiful substitutes for a permanent home and opportunities for gainful work."[74]

Amid this tense political climate, Paul Fortin, Officer-in-Charge in Athens, arrived in Beirut with Dr. Y. Dupuis as Medical Officer and Roger Shorey as Stage B Officer on January 13, 1956. Three days later, the Canadian immigration team commenced examining Palestinian refugees.[75] Shortly thereafter, UNRWA informed the Canadian representatives that no pre-screening had taken place. With a rise in hostility to the Canadian plan across the Arab world, UNRWA officials declared that their position was "politically too delicate for them to undertake the responsibility of refusing to accept applications." In reality, UNRWA was in no position to process any applications for pre-screening due to Arab hostility towards the resettlement of Palestinians abroad.[76] Initially, 188 cases representing 575 persons were selected by UNRWA in Beirut, Amman, and Jerusalem. By far the largest portion of applications came from Beirut (103 representing 332 individuals), followed by Jerusalem (43 cases representing 127 individuals), and Amman (42 cases representing 116 individuals).[77] Cases were divided according to those "pending" (based on issues with travel documentation and Stage B clearance), those "rejected," those "found not acceptable after pre-interview," and "applications withdrawn."[78] The Canadian immigration team

73 Canada, Parliament, House of Commons, *House of Commons Debates: Official Report, Third Session – Twenty-Second Parliament, Volume 1* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1956), pp. 264-265.

74 *Ibid.*, p. 468.

75 Initially, Canadian Immigration and Stage B officers were to leave Athens, Greece, on January 6 and commence their work in examining Palestinian refugees in Beirut on January 9, 1956. See LAC, Department of National Health and Welfare fonds, RG 29, vol. 3400, file 822-1-X047, part 1, "Medical and Dental Arrangements, Immigration Medical Office, Beirut, Lebanon," telegram from W. H. Frost, Assistant Chief, Quarantine, Immigration Medical and Sick Mariners Services, Department of National Health and Welfare, Ottawa, to Torosus Audley, London, December 15, 1955.

76 LAC, IB fonds, RG 76, vol. 865, file 555-54-607, part 1, "Refugees in Palestine – General File," report from Paul Fortin, Officer-in-Charge, Athens, Greece, to G. R. Benoit, Chief, Operations Division, Immigration Branch, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Ottawa, February 10, 1956.

77 LAC, IB fonds, RG 76, vol. 865, file 555-54-607, part 1, "Refugees in Palestine – General File," despatch no. 35 from Elizabeth Pauline MacCallum, Chargé d'affaires, Canadian Legation, Beirut, Lebanon, to Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, February 6, 1956.

78 LAC, IB fonds, RG 76, vol. 865, file 555-54-607, part 1, "Refugees in Palestine – General File," report from Paul Fortin, Officer-in-Charge, Athens, Greece, to G. R. Benoit, Chief, Operations Division, Immigration Branch, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Ottawa, February 10, 1956.

accepted 53 cases comprising 98 individuals pending further approval.[79] In Beirut, 36 applications were "tentatively accepted" representing 64 individuals. In Amman, 12 applications representing 24 individuals and in Jerusalem five cases representing 10 individuals were also approved.[80]

The Canadian immigration team left the Middle East on February 1, 1956, having tentatively authorized visas for 53 applicants and their dependents out of approximately 100 applications the Canadian government was prepared to receive. In total, 40 out of the 53 successful applicants were single. This figure disappointed UNRWA, which attempted to resettle as many refugees as possible under Canada's scheme. It should be noted that approximately 72 per cent of all applications were rejected because the head of household was over 45 years of age, the limit set by the federal Cabinet, or because of the ill health of one individual, which automatically disqualified an entire family. Successful applicants were also informed that, once in Canada, they would only be permitted to sponsor their children under the age of 18 and any parent too old to work (fathers over 65 years of age and mothers over 60 years of age). Other close relatives including brothers, sisters, or cousins could not be sponsored, even after each refugee became a Canadian citizen, for a period of five years.[81] The Canadian immigration team physician, Dr. Y. Dupuis, remained "nevertheless impressed by the general good health, cleanliness and decency of the refugees he examined." Among the 13 family units of two or more individuals tentatively admitted to Canada pending a successful Stage B examination, Ottawa was slated to receive a house-painter, who would arrive in his new country with his wife and seven children. The 40 single refugees were predominantly welders, diesel and automotive mechanics, house-painters, and typists. Initially, Canadian officials were hopeful that engineers, nurses, tailors, masons, and housekeeping service workers would be among the group of Palestinian refugees destined for Canada.[82] Within the first group tentatively accepted to resettle in Canada were Christian and Muslim Arabs, as well as uprooted Armenians.

In his report to his superiors in Ottawa, Officer-in-Charge Paul Fortin indicated that many applicants were rejected when they attempted to bring their entire families, including distant relatives who did not qualify under the trade criterion. Fortin asserted that "in a few cases, this has caused some ill feelings and, some time, harsh words, as these people had built a lot of hope on the scheme."[83] The Officer-in-Charge continued his assessment by suggesting that many prospective Palestinian applicants arrived at pre-screening with the idea that Canadian authorities would provide them with furnished homes, employment, and other necessities. Only 17 of the pending applicants were able to pay for their passage

79   *Ibid.*
80   LAC, IB fonds, RG 76, vol. 865, file 555-54-607, part 1, "Refugees in Palestine – General File," despatch no. 35 from Elizabeth Pauline MacCallum, Chargé d'affaires, Canadian Legation, Beirut, Lebanon, to Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, February 6, 1956.
81   *Ibid.*
82   *Ibid.*
83   LAC, IB fonds, RG 76, vol. 865, file 555-54-607, part 1, "Refugees in Palestine – General File," report from Paul Fortin, Officer-in-Charge, Athens, Greece, to G. R. Benoit, Chief, Operations Division, Immigration Branch, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Ottawa, February 10, 1956

to Canada. In some cases, UNRWA would pay for the transportation of persons who received rations or were employed by the organization.[84] Among the pending cases were educated individuals who had experience in administrative and clerical sectors. Fortin argued that, since their experience was not in the trades, they "would hardly be suitable for establishment in Canada." The Officer-in-Charge went even further when discussing those individuals with trade expertise by stating that, "except for a few exceptions, the great majority have a much lower level of education and they are far from being fluent in either language."[85]

On February 6, 1956, Canada's Chargé d'affaires in Beirut sent a confidential despatch to Ottawa informing the Secretary of State for External Affairs that the project to resettle Palestinian refugees in Canada "aroused much less political opposition than we had expected." Canadian officials in Beirut had initially been cautioned against the resettlement scheme by Dr. Fouad Ammoun, Secretary General of the Lebanese Foreign Ministry, on November 30, 1955. In her despatch to Ottawa, MacCallum noted that not a single letter of protest had been received by the Legation or the immigration team during the resettlement project. As mentioned earlier, the former Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Amin al-Husseini, voiced his opposition to the resettlement of Palestinians overseas. In reality, MacCallum observed that al-Husseini "waited until the members of the [immigration] team had finished their work before he called upon refugees to be aware of 'this pro-Zionist group,' adjuring them when it was too late to refuse all settlement plans and remain in their demands to recover their property, their homes, and their lands."[86] Consequently, no protests came from the Arab League. In Damascus, UNRWA noted that opposition in Syria was provoked by the Syrian representative of the organization's Advisory Council. When confronted by UNRWA's French representative, who demanded to know why he opposed the best interests of the refugees, the Syrian representative backed down.[87] MacCallum suggested to DEA officials in Ottawa,

> In fact, it has been our general observation here that the Arab governments and refugee organizations, though firm enough on the principle of repatriation itself, are far from being vindictive toward individual refugees who have placed their own personal security above the general interest in repatriation of the displaced Arab population as a whole, although the danger of violence is never completely absent. In this the Arabs seem to be more lenient than were Jewish Committee agents toward those DP's in European camps who accepted offers of resettlement in North America and were made to suffer for having broken the solid front organized for political purposes instead of demanding transfer to Palestine as the only form of resettlement they would accept. Fear does exist, however, among Palestinian Arab refugees in the camps, just as it existed among Jewish DP's who felt themselves to be

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84   *Ibid.*
85   *Ibid.*
86   LAC, IB fonds, RG 76, vol. 865, file 555-54-607, part 1, "Refugees in Palestine – General File," despatch no. 34 from Elizabeth Pauline MacCallum, Chargé d'affaires, Canadian Legation, Beirut, Lebanon, to Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, February 6, 1956.
87   *Ibid.*

continually under the scrutiny of camp organizers who insisted that everyone should tell visitors they would refuse to go anywhere if they could not go to Palestine.[88]

As Arab governments tempered their opposition to the resettlement of Palestinian refugees, two Arab refugee organizations complained of the proposal to their political representatives in the Middle East. MacCallum noted that the Sons of Palestine and Every Citizen a Sentry considered Western resettlement schemes to be a part of a concerted effort to siphon off the Palestinian refugee population from the region and to "settle the Palestinian dispute on Israel's terms." Many Arabs across the Middle East worried that Palestine would be lost forever to the state of Israel. Even as local opposition remained strong, Lebanese and Jordanian officials quietly recognized Canadian efforts to resettle displaced Palestinians.[89] In Ottawa, DEA officials discussed Canada's policy towards the Middle East and concluded that it was in the national interest:

> [T]he world today makes it impossible to disassociate ourselves effectively from the problems of any area.... We also have a certain moral involvement because Canada played a leading role in solving the Palestine problem and helping the United Nations to set up the State of Israel. We cannot now wash our hands of the problem. Nor, for internal political reasons, could we permit the destruction of Israel, even if we did not believe objectively in our moral obligation towards Israel. This moral obligation does not mean blind support of Israel against the Arabs. It simply means that we ought to help, either inside or outside the United Nations, to reach a solution of a problem which we, together with the other United Nations members, recognized as an international responsibility in 1947.[90]

In the eight weeks after the Canadian immigration team departed the Middle East and final authorization was given for visas, a significant number of individuals decided not to travel to Canada. As a result, only 39 heads of families and 37 dependents received their visas, while two individuals were rejected due to Stage B considerations. The remaining persons tentatively accepted for admission to Canada failed to submit the necessary travel documentation for transmission to Canada's visa officer in Athens. The first group of 10 heads of families and their dependents to leave for Canada were met by the Legation's Vice Consul Michael Shenstone who delivered a short speech. Shenstone wished the refugees luck and informed them that their future in Canada would depend on their own efforts. Chargé d'affaires MacCallum noted in her correspondence with Ottawa that Shenstone's words were well received by the refugees, who "seemed to be hard-working respectable people who will give no trouble."[91] The first group of

88   *Ibid.*
89   *Ibid.*
90   Canada, DFAIT, DCER, vol. 22, chap. 1, The Middle East and the Suez Crisis, part 1, Middle East, file DEA/50134-40, confidential memorandum from R. A. D. Ford, Head, European Division, to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, March 13, 1956, http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/206/301/faitc-aecic/history/2013-05-03/www.international.gc.ca/department/history-histoire/dcer/details-en.asp@intRefid=2750 (accessed November 5, 2013).
91   LAC, IB fonds, RG 76, vol. 865, file 555-54-607, part 1, "Refugees in Palestine – General File," numbered

Palestinian refugees left Beirut aboard S.S. *Adana* for Naples, Italy, on April 6, 1956 (see Table 1). Eight days later, the group boarded S.S. *Saturnia* and were scheduled to arrive in Halifax on April 24.[92] The Palestinian refugees were given prepaid railway tickets for their journey from Halifax to Montreal, as well as cash for them to travel to their final destinations. The Immigration Branch informed its District Superintendents that the 26 Palestinian newcomers should be "extended every courtesy and consideration in order that their first impressions of Canada may be favourable."[93] A further nine refugees were destined for Canada in the summer of 1956; however, ship accommodations were not secured, and their arrival was delayed until August 5. Once the refugees were permanently settled in Canada, Immigration Branch officials remained in contact with each family for one year to assess their "aptitudes and adaptability."[94]

Table 1 : First Group of Ten Heads of Household and Their Dependents

Head of Household	Number of Persons in Family	Destination
Bashir, Mahmud	8	Montreal, Quebec
Daou, Youssif	6	Montreal, Quebec
Rahal, Joseph	1	Windsor, Ontario
Bahlawan, Walid	1	Port Arthur, Ontario
Ayoub, Iskandar	1	Montreal, Quebec
Haikal, Zaki	1	Port Arthur, Ontario
Wahhab, Georges	1	Toronto, Ontario
Farkouh, Nicolas	1	Montreal, Quebec
Matta, Georges	1	Toronto, Ontario
Barbarian, Nazar	5	Toronto, Ontario

Source: LAC, IB fonds, RG 76, volume 865, file 555-54-607, part 1, "Refugees in Palestine – General File," memorandum from Acting Chief, Operations Division, Immigration Branch, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Ottawa, to District Superintendents, April 23, 1956.

In the House of Commons, Leader of the Official Opposition John Diefenbaker questioned whether the Canadian government had made any advances towards

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letter 135 from Elizabeth Pauline MacCallum, Chargé d'affaires, Canadian Legation, Beirut, Lebanon, to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, April 9, 1956.

92   As part of the Italian Line, S.S. *Saturnia* commenced its journey in Trieste with stops in Venice, Patras, Naples, Palermo, Genoa, Cannes, Barcelona, Gibraltar, Casablanca, Lisbon, Halifax, Boston, and New York as the final destination. On April 24, 1956, *Saturnia* arrived in Halifax at Pier 21 with 833 passengers. See Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, "Ship Arrival Database," http://www.pier21.ca/research/immigration-records/ship-arrival-search (accessed November 14, 2013).

93   LAC, IB fonds, RG 76, vol. 865, file 555-54-607, part 1, "Refugees in Palestine – General File," memorandum from Acting Chief, Operations Division, Immigration Branch, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Ottawa, to District Superintendents, April 23, 1956.

94   LAC, IB fonds, RG 76, vol. 865, file 555-54-607, part 1, "Refugees in Palestine – General File," letter from C. E. S. Smith, Director of Immigration, Department of Citizenship and Immigration to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, April 25, 1956.

improving the Palestinian refugee situation in the Middle East. Diefenbaker claimed that, "as one visits these camps, one cannot but be impressed by the need for their existence while at the same time realizing that they constitute festering sores among the individuals occupying them." Secretary of State for External Affairs Lester Pearson replied that Canada continued to contribute to UNRWA for the relief and rehabilitation of refugees, but concluded that resettlement in other parts of the Middle East or elsewhere was discouraged by Arab governments, and the refugees themselves were reluctant to leave the camps.[95]

Canadian Legation officials in Beirut continued to view the Palestinian refugee resettlement scheme as a successful experiment. Larger events in the Middle East precluded any further attempts to bring Palestinian refugees to Canada. On July 26, 1956, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal after Britain and the United States decided to withdraw their offer to fund the construction of the Aswan Dam in retaliation for Cairo's increasing ties with Moscow. On October 29, 1956, British, French, and Israeli forces attacked Egypt. Several days later on November 6, the British government announced a ceasefire. Coupled with these events, in Europe in early November Soviet forces invaded Hungary to crush a revolution against the Communist regime. Approximately 200,000 refugees fled their homeland. With the assistance of Canadian immigration officials, 37,500 Hungarian refugees were resettled in Canada. In 1957, Canada received 282,164 immigrants, representing 1.7 per cent of Canada's population. As a result, Canada witnessed the largest annual flow of immigrants since 1913.[96] The same year, the economy declined into a recession, and the long-serving Liberal government was replaced by John Diefenbaker's Progressive Conservatives.

In his maiden speech before the UNGA, Minister of External Affairs Howard Green informed delegates that Canada "made substantial financial contributions" to UNRWA, to the UNHCR, and to the Far Eastern operation of the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration. Green stated that "Canada can be counted on again this year to assume its share in maintaining these international programs."[97] During the UN International Year of the Refugee in 1960, the Canadian government announced that it would contribute a further $1.5 million for Palestinian refugees in addition to Ottawa's annual commitment of $500,000.[98] Although several members of the federal Cabinet felt that Canada had

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95   Canada, Parliament, House of Commons, *House of Commons Debates: Official Report, Third Session – Twenty-Second Parliament, Volume 7* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1956), p. 6878.

96   Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Research and Evaluation Branch, *Canada Facts and Figures: Immigration Overview Permanent and Temporary Residents 2012* (Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services, 2012), p. 3, http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/research-stats/facts2012.pdf (accessed November 4, 2013).

97   "Text of External Affairs Minister Green's Maiden Speech at UN," *Globe and Mail*, September 25, 1959, p. 11.

98   In 1959, the United States, Great Britain, France, and Canada were collectively contributing $30 million annually to sustain approximately one million Palestinian refugees. The United States provided roughly 70 per cent of the total. The Palestinian refugee subsisted on an "eight-cent-a-day dole." International funds designated for UNRWA supplied the organization with approximately $37.50 per year for each Palestinian refugee. See William R. Frye, "Will Dag Find a Home for Million Arab Refugees? U.N. Chief to Try Where All Failed," *Toronto Daily Star*, January 3, 1959, p. 7; George Bain, "In a Year of Peace, War-

adequately supported the International Year of the Refugee, Green announced on June 30 that Canada would also send $1.5 million worth of flour to UNRWA. As Ottawa continued to promote a foreign policy for the Middle East that remained impartial, critics of Canada's contributions towards the Palestinian refugees argued that its approach towards the refugee crisis was far from balanced. Zachariah Kay notes that, since Canadian funds were destined for Palestinian Arab refugees, an equivalent amount should have been allocated for Jewish refugees displaced by the events of 1948. Kay asks how Canada could remain impartial if it had an "overabundant response" to the plight of Palestinian Arab refugees and did not recognize all the refugees in the region.[99]

Conclusion

In the 1950s, the Canadian government's preferred form of refugee acceptance was permanent resettlement. Through federal Cabinet directives, Canadian diplomats and immigration officials abroad were given regional and situational quotas for their respective resettlement schemes. In the case of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria, the Canadian government was sensitive to the volatile political environment and the need for a humanitarian response to the plight of refugees in the Middle East.[100] Canadian involvement in the Middle East was predicated on two principles. Federal officials believed that any resolution of the refugee crisis required a multilateral effort sanctioned by the United Nations. Similarly, Canadian officials determined that a resolution of the displacement of Arab and Jewish Palestinian refugees would have to precede any comprehensive political and military settlement between Israel and its Arab neighbours.[101] The Canadian government used practical means, including the introduction of a resettlement scheme for Palestinian refugees, in an attempt to help alleviate the refugee crisis in the Middle East.

Arab governments across the Middle East privately acquiesced to Canada's resettlement scheme, while some of their officials voiced opposition to such a plan. Publicly, Arab leaders were concerned that any Western offer to find a permanent solution to the plight of nearly a million displaced Palestinian refugees could be misinterpreted as accepting the status quo. As a result, any scheme to resettle refugees elsewhere had to be publicly repudiated. This duplicitous attitude on the part of the Lebanese, Syrian, and Jordanian governments almost led to the collapse of the Canadian government's plan to resettle approximately 100 breadwinners and their close relatives. Even as interest among Palestinian refugees for permanent resettlement increased, UNRWA attempted to remain impartial before Arab

Scattered Millions are Still Homeless," *Globe and Mail*, September 26, 1959, p. A8; L. W. Brockington, "Journey Among the Homeless: A Welfare State on 7½ Cents a Day," *Globe and Mail*, September 5, 1962, p. 7.

99 Zachariah Kay, *The Diplomacy of Impartiality: Canada and Israel, 1958-1968* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2010), p. 26.

100 Nergis Canefe, "Inland Refugee Claimants from the Middle East and Humanitarianism in Canadian Foreign Policy" in Paul Heinbecker and Bessma Momani, eds., *Canada and the Middle East: In Theory and Practice* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007), p. 208.

101 Goldberg and Shames, "The 'Good-Natured Bastard'," p. 204.

officials across the Middle East. As a result, the organization's publicity of the Canadian offer was poor, and the pool of qualified candidates was smaller than the Canadian immigration team had initially sought upon arrival in Beirut, Amman, and Jerusalem.[102]

Given the short period to select, admit, and resettle successful Palestinian applicants, the Canadian immigration team lacked the necessary time to promote the resettlement scheme properly. In their own assessment of the plan to resettle Palestinian refugees, former immigration officer Michael Molloy and researcher Robin Fraser note that it was largely unexplainable why Canadian officials wasted an entire month attempting to communicate the necessary medical screening requirements, when the process had remained the same for years. Another issue that the Canadian immigration team faced was a lack of proper communication between immigration officials in Ottawa and the Legation in Beirut. Initially, Canadian diplomats and immigration officials in Beirut were not made aware of the 45-year age limit for prospective heads of households. Similarly, Canadian officials failed to inform UNRWA that any male heads of household over 45 years of age would be screened out. This severely hampered the agency's efforts to pre-screen prospective applicants. Molloy and Fraser note that, since Ottawa failed to copy the Canadian Legation in Beirut in its correspondence to immigration officials in Athens, immigration officials in Lebanon were unable to accommodate large multi-generational family structures even though they had been "flagged by the Legation."[103] Canadian officials in Beirut noted that many prospective heads-of-households applied to resettle in Canada as members of multi-generational families. Due to the socio-cultural context of the time, officials in Ottawa could not conceive of large families with a middle-aged breadwinner and working-age children. These families were not considered "normal" and were effectively screened out. This miscommunication cost the Canadian scheme a much larger pool of potential candidates.[104]

Archival records pertaining to the federal government's resettlement of 53 successful applicants and their 45 dependents in 1956 illustrate that Canadian immigration policy and practice had remained largely unchanged since the end of the Second World War. As officials in Ottawa provided political guidance in the form of quotas, definitions, and selection criteria, Canadian diplomats and immigration officers were left in the field to handle local appeals from representatives of international organizations. Similarly, Canadian officials in the field examined, pre-selected, and screened potential applicants based on the age of heads-of-household and their occupations, the composition of their families, any health issues, and whether they or any family member constituted a security risk. Once the 98 Palestinian refugees were pre-selected in early 1956, immigration officials began to plan their travel to Canada, where they were to be resettled

102 David Spurgeon, "Compared to Cancer: Arabs Say Israel Built on Injustice," *Globe and Mail*, May 2, 1956, p. 17.

103 Michael Molloy and Robin Fraser, "Forgotten Refugees: The 1956 Palestinian Refugee Movement to Canada: Part 2," *CIHS Bulletin*, vol. 58 (May 2010), pp. 5-6.

104 *Ibid.*

in Windsor, London, Hamilton, Toronto, Ottawa, and Port Arthur in Ontario and Hull, Montreal, Quebec, and Trois-Rivières in the province of Quebec.[105] However, a significant number of individuals decided not to travel to Canada. Only 39 heads of families and 37 dependents received their visas, while two individuals were rejected due to Stage B considerations. The remaining persons tentatively accepted for admission to Canada failed to submit the necessary travel documentation to Canada's visa officer in Athens.

During the 1950s, Canadian immigration policy and practice still reflected the values put forward by Prime Minister Mackenzie King in the House of Commons in 1947 – that Canada had a "moral obligation" to assist the world's refugees. However, Mackenzie King stated that "the people of Canada do not wish as a result of mass immigration, to make a fundamental alteration in the character of our population."[106] In essence, Canada was to remain a predominantly white, Christian, and democratic society. Less than five years after the 1952 *Immigration Act* restricted non-European immigration to Canada, the resettlement of Palestinian refugees in 1956 remains one of the earliest postwar schemes to resettle non-European refugees in Canada. It is an often-overlooked, if not forgotten chapter in Canadian immigration history. Since Canada was the fourth largest financial contributor to UNRWA in the mid-1950s, officials in Ottawa desired to alleviate the refugee crisis in the Middle East. Although Canadian officials believed it was good foreign policy to resettle refugees from the Middle East – an effort that would also help to ease the region's political instability – their attempts remained largely hollow with the admission of only 98 individuals from nearly one million Palestinian refugees. This figure alone suggests that Canadian officials were not entirely comfortable with permitting a large influx of skilled refugees from the Middle East.[107]

The federal government's scheme to resettle Palestinian refugees proved to be an important precedent in Canadian immigration policy and practice. Less than a year later, Canadian immigration officials successfully resettled tens of thousands of Britons and other Europeans who were spurred to emigrate during the Suez Crisis. In the fall of 1956, over 200,000 Hungarian refugees were forced to flee the Soviet invasion of their homeland. In November 1956, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Jack Pickersgill flew to Vienna and made a number of important decisions on the ground to facilitate the resettlement of 37,500 Hungarian refugees to Canada. Two decades later, the introduction of a humanitarian class in the 1976 *Immigration Act* solidified Canada's obligations under the UN Convention relating to refugees and the 1967 Protocol to protect foreign nationals who feared persecution if repatriated back to their country of origin. The humanitarian class included refugees who fit the UN Convention definition and individuals who were considered persecuted and displaced persons, but did not qualify as refugees under the UN Convention. Prior to the 1976 *Act*, Canadian efforts to

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105 *Ibid.*

106 Canada, Parliament, House of Commons, *House of Commons Debates: Official Report, Third Session – Twentieth Parliament, Volume 3* (Ottawa: King's Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1947), p. 2646.

107 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

resettle refugees and persecuted persons including the 1955 Palestinian scheme fell to *ad hoc* Cabinet decisions and orders-in-council.[108] With the introduction of new immigration legislation in the 1970s, the Canadian government had learned from past resettlement schemes and entrenched its legal obligations to act on behalf of the world's refugees. In 1989, the Canadian government established the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) to assess inland applicants and immigrants' refugee status. In recent years, Palestinian refugees continue to seek asylum in Canada. Since they remain outside the UN Convention definition of a refugee, Palestinian refugees are forced to seek admission through the IRB on humanitarian and compassionate grounds.[109]

Ultimately, the 1955 Palestinian scheme was an important early experiment for the resettlement of non-European refugees to Canada. It would allow Canadian immigration officials to plan, prepare, and carry out future refugee resettlement efforts overseas. Eventually, it also led to a legal framework that formalized how refugees were admitted and resettled in Canada.

108 Canefe, "Inland Refugee Claimants," p. 207; Knowles, *Strangers at Our Gates*, pp. 209-210.
109 *Ibid.*