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ASPECTS OF ASSISTANCE TO THE PALESTINIANS
THAT MIGHT EFFECT OTHER NON-PALESTINIAN RECONSTRUCTION
EFFORTS

INTRODUCTION

The humanitarian and reconstruction assistance given to the Palestinian refugees must be examined in light of overall reconstruction efforts in Lebanon. Concern over the plight of the Palestinians, heightened by the Beirut massacres, has tended to obscure the fact that other major reconstruction efforts and humanitarian assistance activities are taking place on behalf of the Lebanese. In many cases, assistance to the Palestinians has been more rapid, due to the fact that a United Nations agency (UNRWA) was already in place with an existing structure to provide assistance. The swiftness of this response and the fact that UNRWA was able to deliver services directly to the families is laudable, but it must be recognized that reconstruction efforts on behalf of the Lebanese will be measured against this standard of service. The number of Lebanese in need of reconstruction and humanitarian aid is much greater and more widely dispersed than the Palestinians. This makes relief logistics much more difficult and slows delivery of materials and services. AID should be aware of the possibilities that certain problems may occur and that certain issues may arise.

CURRENT ISSUES IN HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

The following problems and issues involving humanitarian assistance to Palestinians can be identified through discussions with the Lebanese.

A. Equity in AID. Throughout the Lebanese community there is a feeling that the Palestinians are receiving excessive attention and assistance in comparison to the Lebanese who have also suffered in the war. This resentment is harbored not only in the Christian community, but also in many of the Moslem communities, especially in the areas immediately adjacent to the Palestinian camps that were heavily damaged. Numerous comments were heard that the Palestinians received aid faster, and at much higher levels, than people in the surrounding communities. Particularly resented is the fact that Palestinians have received cash payments for damaged buildings, while government reconstruction programs for Lebanese are still being planned. There is an impression (although false) that people within the camps are receiving large amounts of money from the PLO, and that the majority of this money has been provided by Palestinian sympathizers in western Europe and in the Arab countries. Many Lebanese seem to expect aid from the United States and western Europe to match the contributions that the Palestinians are receiving.

This resentment of the attention given to the Palestinians is evident not only within the general populace, but also with government officials. The author attended an earthquake engineering conference where a high-level ministry official made several comments that "Americans and Europeans seem only interested in helping Palestinians and not the Lebanese". The story of how the Minister of Health attended a conference on emergency health needs in Lebanon, where the first day was devoted solely to discussing the situation of the Palestinians, is well known and only serves to heighten the resentment.

- B. Land Problems. In clearance and reconstruction of the Palestinian camps, UNRWA failed to maintain control of land redevelopment planning; thus many Palestinians were able to take extra land to amplify their previous sites. In addition, many Palestinians who lived outside the camps have returned, either voluntarily or after being forced from their homes by occupation authorities. A review of redevelopment plans indicated that the camps would not be able to absorb all the persons currently registered in the camps together with those expected to return; thus new land areas may have to be acquired. Land acquisition on behalf of the Palestinians is normally handled by the government who acquires a tract of land and then dedicates it to UNRWA on a long-term lease. In all likelihood, UNRWA will have to go to the government to request more land for the Palestinian refugees. It is unlikely that the government will be willing to provide new land and this may become an issue, or at least a bargaining chip in future reconstruction activities. The AID Mission should try to keep abreast of this issue and prevent it from becoming an obstacle to other activities.
- C. Reconstruction of Communities Adjacent to the Palestinian Camps. Most Palestinian camps were built on locations that are now surrounded by non-Palestinian communities. Some of these areas were heavily damaged in the attacks on Palestinian settlements. A great deal of resentment is harbored against the Palestinians in these areas, especially since reconstruction activities have already commenced within the camps. Special efforts should be made by AID to initiate reconstruction activities in these areas as soon as possible, in order to reduce problems and the appearance of preferential treatment to Palestinians.

D. Standard of service to the Palestinians. Prior to the war, the standard of service to Palestinians was exceptionally high. UNRWA and the PLO provided a comprehensive program of health, education and welfare. From the moment a Palestinian child was born, he had access to some of the best social services in the Middle East. The level of service exceeded the level provided to Lebanese. As reconstruction and humanitarian assistance to Palestinians progresses, the old level of service may become a major issue. AID should anticipate this, and may wish to coordinate with the State Department to determine which of the services provided to Palestinians are really necessary and which could be cut back without concern. For example, the supplementary feeding programs of the Palestinians are often provided to persons between the ages of 5 and 15. Supplemental feeding is questionable beyond a certain emergency period. Even if it is necessary, it is generally only required for persons 5 years and under. Basic rations is another service where cuts could be contemplated. Again, it is doubtful that many people would require basic rations once the economy gets moving again. By reducing the standard of service to reasonable levels, some of the animosities may be reduced.

E. Security and Control of the Camps. At the present time, only a handful of humanitarian agency personnel are regularly involved in camp operations. UNRWA has withdrawn most of its expatriate staff from the camps as engineering and site clearance activities have been completed. Only a few nurses and public health personnel are working in the camps. ICRC's visits are minimal. Thus, no effective

redevelopment or land use control is being established.

The lack of land use control means that people are likely to rebuild in such a way that they will either take more land than they are allocated, or erect their buildings in such a way that government or occupation authorities will demand that they demolish all or a portion of their buildings. Should this occur, trouble in the camps and the surrounding communities can be expected.

The Palestinians are also likely to try to reconstruct their houses to afford maximum protection. If these installations are detected, occupation or security forces may try to tear down the installations. If they are not detected, the Palestinians may again develop armed camps which could challenge the Lebanese Government's authority.

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INTERTECT

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