

WORLD HEALTH
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DE LA SANTÉSIXTH WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLYA6/37 ✓
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Provisional agenda item 7.3.5

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REPORT ON SITUATION WITH REGARD TO MEETINGS OF THE
REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

In accordance with resolution EBl1.R8 adopted by the Executive Board at its eleventh session,¹ the Director-General, by letter dated 24 March 1953 requested the Member States of the Eastern Mediterranean Region to communicate to him their views on the situation in that region and solutions which they might wish to suggest.

The annexed communications have been received by the Director-General in reply to his letter. Any further communications received will be transmitted to the Assembly.

¹ Off. Rec. World Hlth Org. 46, 3.

THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF THE JORDAN - Letter dated 8 April 1953

"I have the honour to refer to your letter dated 24th March 1953 and to inform you that in the Fifth World Health Assembly all Arab delegates decided not to sit in any regional Committee Session with delegates from Israel. The Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of the Jordan still abide with this decision as regards any such future regional sessions."

EGYPT - Letter dated 23 April 1953 (Translation from French)

With reference to your letter dated 24 March 1953 regarding the measures which might put an end to the suspension of the convening of the Regional Health Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean, I have the honour to inform you that the Egyptian Government is of opinion that the equitable solution for such a situation which is naturally prejudicial to the health interests of the region, is the removal of Israel from the said Committee, seeing that it could be attached to another Regional Committee.

I would request you to be good enough to stress this justifiable attitude of the Egyptian Government in the report which you will submit to the Sixth World Health Assembly.

IRAQ - Letter dated 25 April 1953

"With reference to your letter of 24th March 1953, concerning the resolution adopted by the Executive Board last January on the question of convening a session of the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Committee in 1952, I have the honour to transmit the views of my government on this question requesting that they be included in your report to the Sixth World Health Assembly.

"The Government of Iraq shares with the Executive Board their regret at the prolongation of this situation which it considers as prejudicial to the health interests of the region. It is the sincere and earnest desire of the Iraqi Government that this problem be solved on the basis of justice and in accordance with the wishes of the members of the region.

Annex

"Article 44(b) of the constitution of the World Health Organization has stipulated that the Health Assembly may establish regional organizations with the consent of the majority of Member States situated in the geographical area, where such an organization would be established.

"It is clear from the constitutional provisions referred to above, that majority consent is the basic prerequisite for the establishment of a regional organization. It follows from this that the wish of the majority must be taken into consideration in determining the geographical limitations of the regional organization. The constitution of the World Health Organization envisaged regional arrangements in which the States directly concerned would voluntarily co-operate to promote health conditions in the region and solve the common problems which confront them. This definitely excludes the theory that the World Health Organization has the right to impose regional arrangements which are not acceptable to the majority of the members of the region. Should any difference of opinion arise, then the World Health Organization is under obligation to defer to the wishes of the majority. The Sixth Health Assembly is now called upon to decide this question and the Iraqi Government feels that its decision should be based upon the principles contained in the constitution of the World Health Organization.

"It is common knowledge, that the present difficulty springs from the insistence of Israel on being included in the Eastern Mediterranean region against the expressed wishes of the overwhelming majority of the members of that region. It must be clear by now that the Arab States will never accept Israel as their neighbour and partner in the Middle East and they have expressed their viewpoint on numerous occasions and in every International Organization where the question of Arab-Israeli relations had been discussed.

"The Arab States have not recognized Israel and have always asserted that it was created in violation of the principles of self determination and the basic concepts of justice. Ever since its creation, Israel has pursued a policy which confirmed the worst fears and suspicions of the Arab States. It was a policy dictated by the aggressive nature of Zionism and was in conformity with its narrow racial theories and expansionist ambitions. The Israeli authorities by a systematic and calculated

Annex

reign of terror have driven out a million Arabs from their homes in Palestine and confiscated their lands and properties. These acts of aggression have caused untold misery and forced upon thousands of people a life of utter destitution and human degradation.

"The General Assembly of the United Nations has since 1948 adopted several resolutions calling upon Israel to facilitate the repatriation of those refugees to their homes and give adequate compensation to those who preferred not to return. None of these resolutions has been implemented, they were in fact repeatedly disregarded and violated by Israel. The result is that after five years the refugees are still living in crowded tents under the most unsanitary conditions and existing on the level of bare subsistence. The Arab States cannot be oblivious to the plight of those refugees whose present condition is a tragic but poignant reminder of the crime perpetrated by Israel against the Arab people.

"In view of the foregoing facts, the Government of Iraq finds it impossible to accept the continued presence of Israel in the Eastern Mediterranean region and would therefore suggest that it should be removed to another region where its presence would be not as objectionable as it is in the Eastern Mediterranean region. This is the only just solution to this problem and is fully consistent with the spirit and letter of the constitution of the World Health Organization. It is indeed unfortunate that this region which needs so much assistance in the field of health has been prevented from effective or fruitful co-operation because an unwanted member has sought to impose itself upon a region the majority of whose members have continuously expressed their objection to co-operate with it. It is clear that Israel does not really wish to reach an equitable solution to this problem but would like to perpetuate the difficulties for purely political motives.

"It is the earnest hope of the Iraqi Government that the Sixth World Health Assembly would be able to settle the question of the Eastern Mediterranean region by adopting the only reasonable solution namely transferring Israel to another region.

ISRAEL - Letter dated 26 April 1953

"I am instructed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs to acknowledge receipt of your letter of 24 March 1953 concerning Resolution EB11.R8 adopted by the Executive Board at its eleventh session in January last. In response to your request, I have the honour to submit the views of my Government, as follows:

"The Government of Israel cannot but deplore the prolongation of a situation prejudicial to the health interests of the Eastern Mediterranean Region for reasons which, by definition, have nothing to do with health.

"The Government is of the opinion that the attempt by certain members of the Organization to use it to gain political ends is a travesty of the aims of the Organization and a clear contravention of the letter and spirit of its Constitution.

"The Government therefore suggests that no further notice be taken of the threats of a boycott made by these members, and that the Regional Committee be convened in a place to which all its members have free access for the benefit of those members who wish to take part.

LEBANON - Letter dated 28 April 1953 (Translation from French)

In reply to your letter of 24 March 1953 regarding the resolution (EB11.R8), I have the honour to inform you as follows:

It would be superfluous to emphasize once more the importance of the activities of the regional committees and their contribution to the work undertaken by the World Health Organization throughout the world, in order to bring out the injury suffered by the Eastern Mediterranean Region as a result of the suspension of the regular annual meetings of its Regional Committee.

It is therefore considered that this state of affairs should cease. Basing my action on resolution EB11.R8 adopted last January by the Executive Board recommending that the Sixth Assembly should consider any measure which might put an end to the present situation in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, we feel constrained to recommend the following solution:

Annex

In view of the circumstances at present existing in the Eastern Mediterranean Region as a result of the affiliation of Israel to the Alexandria Office,

And considering that to allow such a situation to continue is to prevent definitively the convening of the annual sessions of the Regional Committee and thereby to prejudice enormously the health interests of the region,

And seeing that the distribution established by the First Health Assembly defining the geographical areas is no longer justified having regard to the order at present existing within the Eastern Mediterranean Region,

I consider that the Sixth Assembly might adopt a resolution on the matter calling upon "Israel" to ask to be finally attached to another region or directly to headquarters, and if necessary (Article 44, (b), of the Constitution), deciding on the formation of a new "Middle East Region" to include Pakistan, Ethiopia, Iran, Egypt, Libya, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the Hashemite Kingdom of the Jordan, Lebanon and Yemen.

However, in the event of the Sixth Assembly failing to adopt this proposal, which moreover reflects the unanimous opinion of the Arab bloc, Lebanon, in agreement with the countries which would have adopted its point of view, would be compelled to bring the matter before the United Nations, the General Assembly of which will give a final decision on this question.

UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND - Letter dated 1 May 1953

"I am directed by Sir Winston Churchill to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 24th March about the difficulties experienced in convening a session of the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Committee.

I am to say that in the opinion of Her Majesty's Government this problem can only be solved by the countries having their seat of government in the Region."