

No. 431

320.2 AA/5-852: Circular airgram

*The Secretary of State to Certain Diplomatic and Consular Offices*¹

SECRET

WASHINGTON, May 8, 1952—4:45 p. m.

With reference to despatch No. 268 from Amman of April 3, 1952, the Department fully shares the Legation's concern at the slowness of the pace with which it has been possible to move forward with refugee resettlement, and it greatly appreciates the Legation's constructive thinking on this question. In view of the fact that refugee resettlement is necessarily a long-term problem, however, the Department does not feel that it would be justified in minimizing the progress which has been made to date, and it accordingly shares the Legation's doubts concerning the desirability of Mr. Furlonge's proposal as a means to force a greater acceptance of responsibility for the refugees by the individual Arab states.

In 1949, as the Legation knows, no less than 1,019,000 people were receiving rations from United Nations sources. When UNRWA took over from UNPR on May 1, 1950, 957,000 people were on relief, and this figure has since been cut to roughly 850,000. In view of the great difficulties involved, this reduction constitutes a genuine accomplishment. Perhaps even more important to the eventual solution of the problem has been UNRWA's activity in negotiating with the host governments for public works projects on which the refugees might be employed. These negotiations, although beset by annoying delays, the obstinacy of many local officials and the non-cooperation of a large part of the population, have helped to bring about changes in the climate of Arab opinion which are essential to a realistic approach to the refugee problem.¹

As recently as two years ago, the leaders of the Arab states were virtually unanimous in declaring that no solution to the refugee problem would be acceptable other than the return of the entire refugee population to its former homes. Through UNRWA's continuing negotiations on immediate, down-to-earth problems which have focused attention on the realities at hand, and through patient diplomatic efforts over a period of time by our missions and the missions of friendly governments, most responsible Arab leaders have now come to realize that, as a practical matter, arrangements must be made for the resettlement of substantial numbers of the refugees in the Arab countries. The recognition has slowly but

¹ Sent to Amman; repeated to Paris, Ankara, London, Tel Aviv, Baghdad, Cairo, Jidda, Beirut (for the Legation and for Locke), Damascus, and Tripoli.