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## **"Arab Refugee Arithmetic", a Paper Clipping, The Jerusalem Post, 1962**

Printed in English, this document features a paper clipping of an article entitled "Arab Refugee Arithmetic" published on 10 June 1962 in The Jerusalem Post-previously known as "the Palestine Post". The article discusses the book of Sir. Walter Pinner "How many Arab Refugees?" which questions the data and statistics provided by the UNRWA regarding numbers of Palestinian refugees up until 1958.

Jerusalem Post, Sunday June 10, 1962

VISITORS' GALLERY: Sir Walter Pinner

## Arab Refugee Arithmetic

SEVERAL years ago a mild-mannered middle-aged Birmingham business man decided that he was fed up. But fed up about a matter quite remote from the concerns which might exercise a busy resident of England's industrial centre.

Mr. Walter Pinner, who escaped to England in 1936 from Germany, had decided that he was going to get to the bottom of the sticky question of "How Many Arab Refugees?"

The fruit of his spare-time research appeared in 1959 in a small but trenchant book bearing the above title. The volume is now out of print, and Mr. Pinner, who has a doctorate in economics from the University of Halle-Wittenberg, is presently visiting Israel as a guest of the Foreign Ministry, in preparation for a second edition.

Mr. Pinner's thesis, based upon a close analysis of the yearly reports of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and upon Mandate period statistics, is that the Agency's refugee rolls have from the beginning been grossly inflated. Thus in his book he came to the conclusion that in 1957-1958 genuine refugees numbered 548,610 as opposed to the 983,958 claimed in that year's UNRWA report.

Mr. Pinner argued that the total number of refugees in May 1948 was 589,000. And in the intervening years, because of resettlement and integration into the economy of the host countries, the number of genuine re-

fugees still in need of UNRWA care has dropped to about 350,000 today.

Mr. Pinner states that the vaunted "million refugees" evaporates when examined by a dispassionate eye.

In its report of June 1961 UNRWA claimed a figure of 1,151,024 registered refugees, of which 87,000 had been officially resettled and 16,000 were residents of frontier villages, who, though living in Arab territory had been deprived of their livelihood by the 1948 war. Mr. Pinner asserts that of the remaining 1,048,000, about 425,000 are in fact non-refugees — persons who lived in West Jordan and Gaza even prior to 1948. Of the remaining 612,000 who came from Israel territory or children born to them, a large number, amounting to 50 per cent in the case of Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, have been or are in the process of being integrated.

### Gaza Strip

Only in the Gaza Strip, with its 346,000 genuine refugees (UNRWA claims about 240,000) and total population of 247,000, is the number of integrated refugees small. And since there are few possibilities of economic progress for this crowded area so long as it is cut off from north and south, the prospects for future integration are bleak. Gaza, therefore, is the real heart of the refugee problem, says Mr. Pinner, and only a political solution will be able to ameliorate its conditions.

In May 1961 Mr. Pinner sent a letter to the late Dag Hammarskjöld criticizing UNRWA's false statistics. Hammarskjöld in turn asked the UNRWA Director, Dr. John Davis, to comment, but soon after came the Secretary-General's untimely death. In the 1961 report, however, Dr. Davis did add a revealing comment which astounded Mr. Pinner. The Director admitted that the yearly reports included large numbers who are not actually refugees, but he stated that these "other victims of the conflict of 1948" are also in need of aid, and that it would be shameful to deny it to them because they came under a different classification.

Mr. Pinner considers this a clear case of side-stepping the issue. No one, he says, objects to offering these people assistance, but UNRWA, if it is to be honest and faithful to its mandate, should distinguish in its classifications and statistics between refugees and non-refugees. Yet this is precisely what it fails to do. In the texts of the yearly reports "non-refugees" are termed "economic refugees," but the statistical tables lump them together with the genuine refugees.

### UNRWA's Difficulties

The reasons for UNRWA's difficulties, says Mr. Pinner, are partly administrative and partly political. Firstly, the organization has a small international staff numbering about 150. These people must for the most part be kept at headquarters in Beirut in charge of the overall problems. Day-to-day operations, and contacts with the refugees, are therefore left largely in the hands of the local staffs. By June 1958 these local staffs, mostly made up of refugees themselves, had grown to include about 10,000 persons, many of them in positions of responsibility.

The result of this arrangement, says Mr. Pinner, is tension between the international staff and the host countries, who resent any interference and irregularities in the registration procedures because the local staffs are subject to the pressure of their fellow-refugees as well as the local authorities. In Gaza and Jordan, for example, the local authorities consider eligible for aid all persons who, as a result of the war of 1948, required support whether as refugees or otherwise. Such false mass registrations, says Mr. Pinner, are much more important in distorting the true figures than individual irregularities, such as burying the dead secretly to preserve their ration cards, or lending a baby to another family where stillbirth has occurred until infants' and nursing mothers' ration cards have been obtained.

Mr. Pinner is astonished that the entire international press, including Jewish, Zionist, and even Israel papers, have seen fit blindly to accept and repeat UNRWA's figures and Arab propaganda claims. He is also astounded that the Israel Government has not, either at the U.N. or in any other international forum, formally challenged these figures.

ERWIN FRENKEL

Jerusalem Post  
Sunday, June 12, 1962

### UNRWA FIGURES

Editor, The Jerusalem Post

Sir, — There is one slight error in Erwin Frenkel's report of my visit: I have not been visiting Israel as a guest of the Foreign Ministry. I came and stayed here entirely on my own, for a variety of reasons. One of them was — as Mr. Frenkel quite rightly says — my astonishment that the Israel Government — though occasionally referring to the figures in my book — has never formally challenged UNRWA's "Over a Million" figure.

Yours, etc.

W. PINNER

Tel Aviv, June 10.

