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NGOs and Refugee Relief at a Crossroads: The International Committee of the Red Cross, the World Council of Churches, and an emerging United Nations in Palestine 1947-1953

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NGOs and Refugee Relief at a Crossroads: The International Committee of the Red Cross, the World Council of Churches, and an emerging United Nations in Palestine 1947-1953



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List of Abbreviations

AFSC	American Friends Service Committee
CCIA	Commission of the Churches on International Affairs
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross (<i>Comité International de la Croix-Rouge</i>)
IGO	Inter-governmental Organization
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMC	International Missionary Council
IRO	International Refugee Organization
LRCS	League of Red Cross Societies
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
NECC	Near East Christian Council
NGO	Non-governmental organization
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNISPAL	United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine
UNRRA	United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration
UNRPR	United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
US	United States of America
WCC	World Council of Churches
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

On midnight of 14 May, British flags across Palestine came down, marking the end of two and a half decades of the Palestinian Mandate.¹ The territory had become one of the tensest areas in the world, as Zionist settlers sought to establish a new Jewish state in the traditional Holy Land, and local Palestinians fought back against displacement. From the beginning of Britain's rule over Palestine, their control was tenuous at best. Riots between Jews and Arabs broke out in Jerusalem in 1920, well before the League of Nations formally assigned the British the administrative mandate for the territory.² Tensions heightened throughout the 1930's as immigrants from Germany and Poland doubled the size of the Jewish population.³ Over 130,000 Jews fleeing Europe arrived between 1933 and 1936, which caused the British government to adopt a restrictive quota in 1939 of only 75,000 immigration permits.⁴ The Mandate government kept this quota in place not just as the Nazi regime murdered millions, but even after the war, most notoriously turning back 4,500 refugees aboard the *Exodus 1947*.⁵ Despite British efforts, thousands of Jews still immigrated illegally, and hundreds of thousands more refugees would flee Europe following establishment of Israel.⁶

The United Nations (UN) announced a partition plan for Palestine in November 1947, dividing the territory between a Jewish and an Arab state, which immediately caused fighting to break out between the two sides.⁷ The United Kingdom (UK) reported 1,059 Arab casualties and 769 Jewish casualties in the first five weeks after the plan was announced.⁸ Refugees began to flee fighting, but this was only a prelude for the what followed the implementation of "Plan Dalet" in Spring 1948. Under this military plan, regular and irregular Zionist forces leveled over 400 Arab villages and neighborhoods and sparked a mass exodus.⁹ The situation grew worse in May when the British authorities abandoned their posts and gave up even a tenuous attempt to keep the peace. Zionist forces made a push to claim territory, including the proposed international city of Jerusalem, and neighboring Arab nations sent their own armies in. Within a year, over 700,000 Palestinians were displaced into camps and cities in Gaza, the West Bank, and neighboring nations, while many who remained were left destitute.¹⁰

A fledgling United Nations scrambled to respond. The UN was formed just three years prior at the end of the Second World War as a replacement for the League of Nations,

¹ B. Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* (Cambridge 2003) 13.

² D. Rodogno, 'International Relief Operations in Palestine in the Aftermath of the First World War: the Discrepancy between International Humanitarian Organisations' Visions, Ambitions, and Actions', *Journal of Migration History* 6 (2020) 16-39, 21.

³ C. Shindler, *A History of Modern Israel*, (Cambridge 2013) 34.

⁴ A.J. Kochavi, 'The Struggle against Jewish Immigration to Palestine', *Middle Eastern Studies* 34:3 (1998) 146-67.

⁵ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 'Exodus 1947', *Holocaust Encyclopedia* (n.d.), available at <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/exodus-1947>.

⁶ P. Gatrell, *The Making of the Modern Refugee* (Oxford 2013) 124.

⁷ Gatrell, *The Making of the Modern Refugee*, 125.

⁸ UNISPAL Archives, PAL/110: *Palestine question – Casualties in Palestine – Press release*.

⁹ Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, 163-165; Gatrell, *The Making of the Modern Refugee*, 125.

¹⁰ Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, 1.

which many saw as having failed in the inter-war period.¹¹ The UN was still focused rebuilding Europe and resettling the millions of displaced persons across the continent. Its mediators did not just have to come up with new plans for a response, but with entirely new institutions. Though this relief effort happened three years before the 1951 Refugee Convention, it helped inform those debates, and tested the Eurocentricism at the core of the International Refugee Organization and the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA). For the first two years of the response, the UN instead turned to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the League of Red Cross Societies (LRCS), and the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC, also commonly known as the Quakers). These three Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) held responsibility for implementing the first UN humanitarian response outside of European soil, and set an early example that other organizations would follow. The International Committee of the Red Cross started simply with plans to take over operations at three hospitals from the British, but a year later, with nearly a million Palestinian Arabs forced out of their homes, the ICRC was providing humanitarian food, shelter, education, and medical care to nearly 400,000 individuals.¹²

In 1950, responsibility for relief shifted to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). UNRWA was at the center of a second constellation of relief organizations, and the World Council of Churches (WCC) was central among them. This second cohort of faith-based organizations filled a critical gap in UNRWA's relief operations, and themselves shaped the UN strategy. Much like the earlier group, the WCC started its involvement in Palestine with a narrow focus. In 1948 they were mainly concerned with "orphaned" Lutheran churches that had lost their German funding, making sure that their charitable hospitals could stay in operation, and ensuring that church property was not repossessed by either the Israeli or Arab armies. But by 1953, the WCC led a council that distributed thousands of tons of food, blankets, and medical supplies to refugees in Palestine and neighboring countries.

Research Question

With these upheavals in 1948, the ICRC and WCC found themselves at the helm of the relief efforts and a new stage for refugee governance. This paper seeks to answer the question which strategies two organizations used to navigate this new crisis, and which factors from external partners shaped its decision making. Specifically, this paper asks: **Did the ICRC and WCC contribute to the foundations of refugee governance? And if so, how? Why did both choose to use certain forms of authority at different points, and what does the difference in response mean for large NGOs and faith-based organizations in refugee governance?**

¹¹ F.H. Hinsley, "The Failure of the League of Nations." in *Power and the Pursuit of Peace: Theory and Practice in the History of Relations Between States*, (Cambridge 1962), 309–322.

¹² UNISPAL Archives, A/AC.25/SR.26 *Planning for Beirut session, Israeli memo re. refugees, UNCCP Plan of Work, Jerusalem Ctte. Report, Refugee statistics – UNCCP 26th meeting (Beirut) – Summary record.*

Historiography

Two clusters of historical materials are relevant to this study: that of refugee governance and the role of NGOs, and the history of the Palestine and the Palestinian refugees in the wake of the 1948 War. Each of these brings its strengths and archival approaches. This paper draws upon both sets of material to deepen the understanding of the ICRC and WCC roles in a pivotal moment.

T.S. Vosters's expansive study, *NGOs and refugees in European history: assessing NGO influence on international refugee policymaking, 1919-1979*, provides much of the theoretical background this paper draws upon to study refugee governance. Vosters's dissertation unpacks the techniques NGOs use to position themselves within multilevel policy debates and how these positions shifted across 60 years of history. Of particular value to this study is Vosters's shift from a state-centric narrative to a more encompassing history of NGO agency.¹³ This study also draws upon the taxonomy she adopts of three modes of authority: expert, moral, and logistical.¹⁴ Vosters further provides an excellent overview of the historical literature on the refugee regime.¹⁵ However, while Vosters provides immense value in her analytical lenses and approach to studying NGO influence, her study's focus on European governance largely excludes the Palestinian context. It largely frames the period of 1948-1950 as a liminal space where negotiations about new modes of governance were beginning, but does not devote much study to the acts of governance occurring during this period.¹⁶

Wing Sha Lam's thesis, "Going Beyond Relief: The Egyptian Government's Plans for Economic Assistance and Development in Gaza, 1948-1952" is one of the first studies to bring the refugee governance lens to the Palestinian context, focusing on the refugees in the Gaza Strip. Lam examines the Egyptian government's response and receptivity to different actors in the humanitarian and economic response to displacement.¹⁷ Lam finds that the government of Egypt was most receptive to organizations bringing in "hard" resources, while "softer" human resource availability and geopolitics were less influential factors.¹⁸ This study, while limited to Gaza and centering the role of one state actor, still proves a novel and valuable application of governance perspectives to the Palestinian context.

There are several other valuable studies informing the practice and use of resources by NGOs. The first is the work of Gnes and Vermeulen, who further analyze NGO legitimacy and authority, in particular how NGOs can adapt in government contexts and manipulate their own immediate environment.¹⁹ Peter Gatrell identifies the relative impotence of humanitarian

¹³ T. Vosters, *NGOs and refugees in European history: assessing NGO influence on international refugee policymaking, 1919-1979*, (dissertation Universiteit Leiden 2022), 34.

¹⁴ Vosters, *NGOs and refugees in European history*, 35.

¹⁵ For further historiography on perspectives on UN and non-UN organizations, Peter Gatrell's studies of NGOs in the development of modern humanitarianism, Matthew Hilton on the history of NGO strategies in the United Kingdom, and the role of NGOs as norm entrepreneurs, see Vosters, *NGOs and refugees in European history*, 29-34.

¹⁶ Vosters, *NGOs and refugees in European history*, 115-198.

¹⁷ Lam W.S., 'Going beyond relief: the egyptian government's plans for economic assistance and development in Gaza, 1948-1952', (Universiteit Leiden 2022) 7.

¹⁸ Lam, 'Going beyond relief', 59-64.

¹⁹ D. Gnes and F. Vermeulen, 'Non-Governmental Organisations and Legitimacy: Authority, Power and Resources', *Journal of Migration Studies* 5 (2019) 231- 247.

actors in the face of the larger geopolitical trends—particularly the wave of nationalism rising in Europe in the 1930s, that also applies well to the Post-War context of Palestine (his chapter on Palestine itself will be covered below).²⁰

Kerstin Martens provides a strong focus on NGOs as corporate actors, and their incorporation into IGOs. Her work corrects the pluralist model's focus on only NGOs influencing IGOs, but may ultimately focus too much on the influence of IGOs on NGOs, to the detriment of a bidirectional process.²¹ She also does not discuss political motives or personal ties, which it appears are important to understanding the connection points between the ICRC, UN, and national governments. Finally, as with much of the NGO literature, she concentrates the bulk of her analysis on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in the 1990s, which provides an interesting starting point but neglects the earlier histories of NGO and IGO interaction.

Erla Thrandardottir provides another lens through which to view NGO legitimacy. Though her study also focuses on NGOs in the 1990s, with an emphasis on domestic and international development, two of her lenses provide intriguing ways to assess NGO legitimacy: the market model and the new institutionalism models.²² Her analysis of the market model identifies NGOs as actors achieve legitimacy through providing more efficient service delivery than private sector or (inter-)governmental organizations, with a 'complementary' role.²³ The new institutionalism model focuses on NGO's roles enmeshed in a larger international system, and explicitly acknowledges the challenges of squaring that role with sovereignty.²⁴ This frame is particularly relevant for the emerging state of the UN, which while young, challenged notions of state sovereignty more than the League of Nations had, and created new space for NGO legitimacy.

Within the realm of Palestinian history, much of the scholarship overlooks the role of NGOs in governance. Peter Gatrell's chapter in *Making of the Modern Refugee* on dual displacement in Palestine and Davide Rodogno's study of relief operations in the Inter-War period are two of the most evident exceptions to this. Rodogno's work provides a strong overview of humanitarian actors in Palestine in the Inter-War period, with a focus on the American Red Cross. Rodogno documents the American Red Cross expanding their remit from immediate relief to longer-term self-help activities based in modernization rhetoric.²⁵ Rodogno also identifies trends in humanitarian discourse at the first half of the 20th Century, including the persistence in 'Holy Land mania' that are crucial discourses to be aware of in the archival materials.²⁶

Gatrell traces the outlines of the 'Palestinian refugee problem', informed by the displacement of Jews during the Second World War and Palestinians in 1948 and 1967.²⁷ He provides an overview of the actors involved in the initial and protracted responses, including

²⁰ P. Gatrell, 'Western NGOs and Refugee Policy in the Twentieth Century', *Journal of Migration Studies* 5 (2019) 384-411.

²¹ K. Martens, 'Non-governmental Organisations as corporatist mediator? An analysis of NGOs in the UNESCO System', *Global Society* 15:4 (2001) 387-40, 392.

²² E. Thrandardottir, 'ngo legitimacy: Four models', *Representation* 51:1 (2015) 107-12, 107.

²³ Thrandardottir, 'ngo legitimacy: Four models', 109.

²⁴ Thrandardottir, 'ngo legitimacy: Four models', 113.

²⁵ Rodogno, 'International Relief Operations in Palestine in the Aftermath of the First World War', 24.

²⁶ Rodogno, 'International Relief Operations in Palestine in the Aftermath of the First World War', 23.

²⁷ Gatrel, *The Making of the Modern Refugee*, 118.

the ICRC and WCC, though he focuses the bulk of his analysis on the UN bodies, without too much interrogation of the dynamics between the NGOs and the UN.²⁸ He also conducts a valuable analysis of the geopolitical trends' influence on support to refugee response, noting the United States' desire to fund UNRWA as a bulwark against Communist influence.²⁹ More analysis of the geopolitical pressures of the immediate post-War era can be conducted, however, as they were still a core concern of the US and UK, while not as clearly dominated by Cold Warriors eyeing the Iron Curtain. The rest of his history provides an excellent social study, through literary artistic works, of Palestinians in resettlement and the development of their senses of refugee status, home, and displacement, which, while outside the scope of this study, still provides a valuable resource for scholars.

Beyond these two works, there are limited studies of NGO governance in Palestine, particularly for the period of 1948-1950. Dominique D. Junod, in her book *The Imperiled Red Cross and the Palestine-Eretz-Yisrael Conflict 1945-1952*, presents the thesis that the ICRC was amidst a funding crisis after the Second World War.³⁰ This book explores in great detail the internal negotiations of the various Red Cross organizations, including the ICRC's positioning prior to the August 1948 Red Cross Conference in Stockholm.³¹ However, Junod does not directly assess authority models or bring a multilevel governance lens to the different negotiations the ICRC was engaged in. Similarly, Myriam El-Bakry-Esposito in a 2001 dissertation *L'Action du CICR dans le Premier Conflit de Palestine, 1948 - L'Humanitaire au Défi* assesses the moral authority of the ICRC in the refugee response, asking if the organization was operating, “*Au service d'un ideal ou d'une institution?*”, before ultimately concluding that the humanitarian organization was its primary concern.³² El-Bakry-Esposito does explore the tensions with the UN bodies, including a desire to not simply be a body of the emergent UN, and sought independent neutrality, but glosses over questions of logistical or expert authority. This work also frames the relationship with the UN as a unidirectional imposition from above, to the detriment of bidirectional or horizontal relationships.

Maria Chiara Rioli contends that while the “problem of Palestinian refugees” and the origins of the conflict have been well studied by a breadth of fields, these mainly focus on “the question of military and political responsibility.”³³ These works focus mainly on the role of the United Nations and the states themselves.³⁴ Rioli further argues that while much of this new work drew upon history, in particular the work of the “new historians” schools, “there are few historical analyses on the Palestinian refugees.”³⁵ Rioli attributes much of this gap to the challenge of archives, and her study explores the archives of the Franciscan Casa Nova to demonstrate the rich potential of NGO and Church archives for reexamining humanitarian

²⁸ Gatrell, *The Making of the Modern Refugee*, 129-131

²⁹ Gatrell, *The Making of the Modern Refugee*, 130-131

³⁰ D. Junod, *The Imperiled Red Cross and the Palestine-Eretz-Yisrael Conflict, 1945-1952*, (London and New York 1996) 30.

³¹ Junod, *The Imperiled Red Cross and the Palestine-Eretz-Yisrael Conflict, 1945-1952*, 31.

³² M. El-Bakry-Esposito, ‘L'Action du CICR dans le Premier Conflit de Palestine, 1948 L'humanitaire au Défi’, (dissertation International Committee of the Red Cross Genève 2001) 71.

³³ M. Chiara Rioli. ‘Catholic humanitarian assistance for Palestinian refugees: The Franciscan casa nova during the 1948 War’, *Christian Missions and Humanitarianism in The Middle East, 1850-1950* (2020) 253–276, 254.

³⁴ Rioli, ‘Catholic humanitarian assistance for Palestinian refugees’, 254.

³⁵ Rioli, ‘Catholic humanitarian assistance for Palestinian refugees’, 254.

assistance to the Palestinian refugees.³⁶ Maya Rosenfeld also performed a valuable study of a single organization's archive with her work on UNRWA's shifting roles over its 60 years of operation.³⁷ Rosenfeld's study tracks UNRWA operations in light of logistical and financial challenges, though she limits analysis to after the UN founded the agency in December 1949.³⁸

NGO resources, in particular the Red Cross's, occupy a complicated place in the archive for studies on Palestine. Unlike some of the Church materials scholars like Rioli seek to uncover, wires and press releases from the Red Cross make many appearances in the historical literature. Part of this is due to the relative openness of the archives, and the breadth of material retained. However, these archives are primarily being used as a supplementary source. In much of historical literature on Palestine, the Red Cross is treated as a simply a documentary source, or as neutral observers in the midst of the war. These sources include scholars such as Benny Morris, who provides detailed accounts of the war and the subsequent rise of the refugee "problem," but largely ignore the role of NGOs and the Red Cross.³⁹ Beryl Cheal performs a more detailed analysis of the roles of the AFSC and UN Specialized Agencies in the Gaza Strip, detailing some of the shifts in the roles that the AFSC took on as the response continued.⁴⁰ Cheal draws upon the AFSC archive for this study, though the focus is on establishing a timeline of facts in refugee response rather than interrogating the governance relations within and between NGOs.⁴¹

In this respect, approaches like the work of Vosters and Lam have the opportunity to provide a new lens to examine the roles of actors responding to the refugee crisis. This study contributes to the historical record by examining how the ICRC and WCC's positions within multilevel government networks impacted the provision of services, and demonstrate why the organizations shifted their strategies over the course of relief. Further, by zooming in to 1947 to 1953, this study expands the work on practices in refugee governance during a crucial moment. The Palestinian refugees were one of the first major crises to test the post-WWII international order, and its new promises to humanitarian principles. As Rioli argues, the practices of aid to the Palestinians, and the networks that emerged, "contributed to a profound redefinition of the visions and strategies of humanitarian activity after 1948."⁴² The response to the War shaped the next 70 years of UN activity in Palestine and other UN responses to refugee displacement. Moreover, most existing research does not explore just how NGOs navigate the different stages of refugee relief, particularly in the formative years of the modern UN refugee relief regime.

³⁶ Rioli, 'Catholic humanitarian assistance for Palestinian refugees', 256.

³⁷ M. Rosenfeld, 'From emergency relief assistance to human development and back: UNRWA and the Palestinian refugees, 1950–2009', *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 28 (2009), 286–317.

³⁸ Rosenfeld, 'From emergency relief assistance to human development and back', 291.

³⁹ Morris, In *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, cites the Red Cross in their role as witnesses, bringing the first wires out communicating the scale of violence out from villages to the world, but has no discussion of when the Red Cross got involved.

⁴⁰ B. Cheal, 'Refugees in the Gaza Strip, December 1948-May 1950.' *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 18-1 (1988) 138–57.

⁴¹ Lam also provides an overview of studies drawing upon the AFSC and later UNRWA archives, though most of these studies limit their studies of governance practice to Gaza itself. For further detail, see Lam, 'Going beyond relief', 8-11.

⁴² Rioli, 'Catholic humanitarian assistance for Palestinian refugees', 257-258.

Theory

Drawing upon the work on NGO governance, this paper studies three modes of authority that the ICRC and WCC leveraged to gain influence during the British withdrawal and the subsequent Arab-Israeli War: logistical, moral, and expert. Vosters's work discusses the concept of 'windows of possibilities'-- pivotal moments where NGOs can, through rapid action, expand their roles and influence.⁴³ The rapid changes in the Palestinian situation between 1947 and 1953 required the ICRC and WCC to act in different ways and wield all three levels of authority.

As the numbers of Palestinians fleeing the Israeli army increased, Western governments and neighboring Arab nations found themselves unable to respond to the scale of relief needed. This provided a window for the two Western NGOs to demonstrate their logistical and expert authorities. As Gatrell notes, bodies of the Red Cross were stressing their efficiency and accountability in relief efforts as early as 1908, when the American Red Cross aided victims of an earthquake in Italy.⁴⁴ Demonstrating their ability to deliver humanitarian supplies in a more timely and efficient manner than governments gave the ICRC and WCC a powerful seat at the table, with influence over policy and funding decisions.⁴⁵ Similarly, the two NGO's ability to mobilize funds independently gave them

This influence was also deeply rooted in their organizational values. The ICRC and WCC were each at a unique juncture point in the framing and use of moral authority. In the early 20th Century, relief organizations and charities played on tropes of the 'Holy Land' to fund 'proto-development' programs.⁴⁶ These paternalistic development programs were tied to immediate relief following World War I, and involved building health, economic self-sufficiency, and education, with results that fell far short of their ambitions.⁴⁷ The Marshall Plan for Europe was passed by the United States (US) after WWII, but much of the discussion among nations, NGOs, and the emerging UN was on improving coordination for migration regulation.⁴⁸ The ICRC and WCC heard the debates surrounding the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, and saw the potential value in framing their work in terms of immediate relief rather than long-term development. This would have enabled them easier integration into the UN system and more access to international funding. Yet, both organizations had firm internal commitments to protection and help for all those in need. Despite incentives to speak in the terms of the international debate (i.e. resettlement, and 'economic' vs. 'official' refugees), the WCC and ICRC selectively used their moral authority to expand their own scope of work.

Finally, while the WCC and ICRC had distinct histories and were engaged in very different activities in Palestine prior to 1948, both had well-connected leaders that

⁴³ Vosters, *NGOs and refugees in European history*, 21.

⁴⁴ Gatrell, 'Western NGOs and Refugee Policy in the Twentieth Century', 391.

⁴⁵ M. Schrover, T. Vosters, I. Glynn, 'NGOs and West European Migration Governance (1960s until Present): Introduction to a Special Issue', *Journal of Migration History*, (2020), 189-217, 215.

⁴⁶ Rodogno, 'International Relief Operations in Palestine in the Aftermath of the First World War', 23, 39.

⁴⁷ Rodogno, 'International Relief Operations in Palestine in the Aftermath of the First World War', 39.

⁴⁸ Schrover, Vosters, Glynn, 'NGOs and West European Migration Governance (1960s until Present)', 206-207.

contributed to their strategies and authority converging. This draws upon the work of Gnes and Vermeulen, who show the convergence of different organizations based on the shape of their environment and relationship to the surrounding institutions.⁴⁹

These five factors shaped the relief efforts of both the WCC and ICRC: the changing scale of refugee response, the institutional networks of both organizations within the emerging United Nations, economic resources from donor nations, strong private and public moral appeals, and the personal connections of leaders. This study leverages largely unused archival materials to examine these five factors in an understudied turning point for NGO governance.

Material and Method

This study borrows some of the techniques applied by Vosters to NGOs in the West European context, as well as the work of Davide Rodogno examining relief organizations in Palestine from 1918-1929, to study elements of the International Committee of the Red Cross's and World Council of Churches' influence in the response to the Palestinian crisis. First, it traces communications and debates across the ICRC, WCC, UN bodies, and two key donors: the US and the UK. This tracing is adapted from inductive process tracing as described by Trampusch and Palier, particularly the "processes whereby relevant variables have an effect" within a temporal sequence.⁵⁰ This recognizes that there are gaps or ambiguities in any series of events forming a clean causal chain, but this is still one of the clearest methods to approach how individuals and organizations beliefs influenced behavior and outcomes.⁵¹ Other historical studies that have applied this method include Vosters's approach to examining how ideas "'traveled' between individuals and organisations,"⁵² and Lam's study of the "progression of each development project or policy."⁵³ Second, I use a similar approach as Vosters to track influence, particularly via the ICRC's involvement in high level meetings and budgetary allocations.⁵⁴ Finally, I examine the public materials of the ICRC to examine the organization's self-presentation and the issues that it publicly acknowledges as important.

To trace these ideas, this study draws upon several archives. The first of which is the International Committee of the Red Cross Library, which contains annual reports, conference materials, and press releases. From this archive, five annual reports, 22 press communiques, and 6 supplemental conference materials were identified as relevant to the Palestinian response and ICRC planning. Additionally, one short documentary "Homeless in Palestine:

⁴⁹ Gnes and Vermeulen, 'Non-Governmental Organisations and Legitimacy', 225.

⁵⁰ C. Trampusch and B. Palier, 'Between X and Y: how process tracing contributes to opening the black box of causality', *New Political Economy*, 21:5 (2016), 437-454, 450.

⁵¹ Trampusch and Palier, 'Between X and Y: how process tracing contributes to opening the black box of causality', 443.

⁵² Vosters, *NGOs and refugees in European history*, 21.

⁵³ Lam, 'Going beyond relief', 22.

⁵⁴ Vosters asks: "Secondly, NGO involvement in official negotiations indicates a form of influence. Were they present at international meetings and conferences? What did their contacts with policymakers look like? Did they contribute to the official debates about refugee migrations? The answers to these questions create an understanding of their involvement in the establishment of policies." Vosters, *NGOs and refugees in European history*, 21.

aspects of a relief action” was produced for public advocacy during this time. It proved instructive on the shifting narratives the ICRC sought to engage with. The physical ICRC archives in Geneva were consulted for 17 boxes of materials that included telegrams, reports, *aide-memoires*, letters, and financial documents. These materials were from the Red Cross as well as correspondence with the governments, the United Nations, and partner NGOs.

The Archives of the World Council of Churches at the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva were also consulted for internal communications and public relations statements were consulted for documents ranging between correspondence with local church leaders to formal Conference outputs. The WCC archives house the archives of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), including WWII-era relief documentation and early agreements between the LWF and UNRWA, as well as the LWF and Israel. The WCC archives provided 18 boxes of materials that were invaluable to this research, and included personal correspondence, press releases, reports, and financial documents among other materials.

The archives of these two major relief NGOs provide what Davide Rodogno identified as “under-used primary sources,” and build upon his prior study of humanitarian institutions in Palestine during the Inter-War Period.⁵⁵ Rodogno provides a valuable methodological model for this study, using materials from relief workers, memoranda, and fundraising materials.⁵⁶ He also recognizes his own critical position, and the limits of focusing on NGO materials at the expense of local knowledge, which can underrepresent the role of, and organizations’ reliance on, native workers.⁵⁷ Ultimately, both the ICRC and the WCC archives foreground the voices of European development workers over local Palestinians, whether the workers at the hospital or the individuals displaced by the Arab-Israeli War. The lacuna of Palestinian voices unfortunately also permeated many of the rooms where decisions about their fate were made, including those coordinating humanitarian responses. Local perspectives and experience were excluded from these materials, and therefore this study must limit itself to the discussions between organizations and their positioning, while acknowledging that this represents only a small portion of the knowledge from this period.

Further, materials in the ICRC and WCC archives themselves trace the outlines of unknown knowledge. Many telegrams or memos reference conversations or meetings that were not recorded, but played a role in connecting individuals and shaping the agendas of the formal meetings. Dr. Elfan Rees, Geneva Secretary of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA),⁵⁸ ended a summary report on several UN meetings in Geneva with an enthusiastic note: ‘I attended 14 “receptions”!’.⁵⁹ There is no way to know who else attended these, or what was discussed, but clearly some of these ‘receptions’ stood out to Dr. Rees.

The United Nations Palestinian Rights Committee (UNISPAL) archive provided the second major source of materials documenting the role, and negotiations of the ICRC in Palestinian response. These documents included 10 documents published by the UN Relief to Palestinian Refugees (UNRPR) archive, and 107 potentially relevant documents across other

⁵⁵ Rodogno, ‘International Relief Operations in Palestine in the Aftermath of the First World War’, 17.

⁵⁶ Rodogno, ‘International Relief Operations in Palestine in the Aftermath of the First World War’, 17

⁵⁷ Rodogno, ‘International Relief Operations in Palestine in the Aftermath of the First World War’, 20.

⁵⁸ The coordination body for WCC charity response.

⁵⁹ WCC CCIA 42.5.45 Dr E. Rees 1947-1963, 1953-04-30, *Summary Report for April 1953*.

agencies from 1947 to 1952. Of these, 47 proved relevant to this study, including telegrams, draft resolutions, meeting minutes, and memoranda submitted to debate by outside agencies (including the ICRC and WCC). The general UN Archives were also consulted. Targeted searches yielded 42 potentially relevant documents not included elsewhere. However, outside of a letter and a file of press clippings, these files proved either not relevant to the study or were not digitized.

Two legislative sources were consulted as well, to understand the perspective of the ICRC's major donors during this period. The most fruitful of these sources was the Hansard collection of debates in the UK Parliament. Searches and reviews yielded eight relevant debates across both the House of Lords and the House of Commons. The US Congressional archives also included many debates on Palestine. However, only two of these identified debates proved to be relevant to the role of the ICRC within the scope of this paper.

Finally, there is the important element of selection bias within all of these archives. Certain materials may have been filtered, or deemed too sensitive to keep, either contemporaneously or in the following decades of curation, particularly documents that show the organizations' shortcomings. These too cannot be known, so sources are assessed with an understanding that they may be depicting activities with 'rose-colored glasses.' In this respect, the WCC archives appeared to do the least filtration, more contrasting individual voices were captured in the materials than in the ICRC or UN materials. However, this also may reflect organizational norms. ICRC President Paul Ruegger was a seasoned diplomat in a delicate political situation, internally and externally, and likely filtered his words more than most. Dr. Elfan Rees, however, seemed much more comfortable writing his unvarnished opinion in papers, likely a degree of freedom afforded by years of familiarity with his counterparts in the WCC.

While the UNISPAL source proved the most fruitful for this study, it has its own potential drawbacks. Lam has previously noted two main limitations of the UNISPAL archive, which largely echo the limitations of archives discussed above: "Two limitations should be noted in using UNISPAL documents. First, the inclusion of documents in this online platform is selective. Second, the unofficial meetings and communications that the UN and other actors engaged in are not on record, and so UNISPAL does not represent the full picture of the events even within the UN."⁶⁰ Despite this, Lam also contends that the documents included in UNISPAL were likely the most impactful ones, somewhat mitigating the prior concerns.⁶¹ While the inclusion of new material may yield new elements to the findings discussed below, the breadth of material is enough that any new materials will likely build upon the arguments rather than contradict them outright.

⁶⁰ Lam, 'Going beyond relief', 21.

⁶¹ Lam, 'Going beyond relief', 21.

Chapter 2: The International Committee of the Red Cross

*“The Red Cross, both as an idea and an institution, is passing through a period of stress and difficulty after the Second World War, as it did after the First.”*⁶²

In July 1948, two years retired from the Presidency of the International Committee of the Red Cross and two years into his second act as a public author on international law, Max Huber opened his essay in *Foreign Affairs* with an admission the troubles facing the Red Cross. The organization was in dire financial straits. The German funds that the ICRC had expected were frozen as the Federal Government blocked German bank accounts across Switzerland.⁶³ At the same time, the British and American governments blocked a ten million Franc commitment from Emperor Hirohito following the Japanese surrender.⁶⁴ The ICRC took on substantial Swiss debt to remain solvent, but its financial future was by no means certain.

Worse than financial woes, however, was the criticism directed at the ICRC for their failure to help Jews during WWII. Switzerland as a whole acted shamefully during the Second World War, accepting Nazi gold and refusing to admit Jewish refugees even as Swiss authorities knew about the Reich's mass deportations and systematic murder.⁶⁵ The ICRC itself acknowledged its failure in its moral duty to protect Jewish civilians during the war, particularly the deportation of Jews to death camps.⁶⁶ A perversion of their commitment to neutrality led the ICRC to stand idly by as millions of civilians were murdered. Their negligence continued after the war, when the Committee of the Red Cross issued the passports that Adolf Eichmann and Josef Mengele used to escape justice and flee to Argentina.⁶⁷

These external pressures undercut the ICRC's standing within the larger Red Cross movement at a transformational time. After the Second World War, the national Red Cross bodies, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the League of Red Cross Societies planned a 1948 conference in Stockholm to revise the Geneva conventions and chart the future of the humanitarian organizations. One proposal involved fusing the missions of the League and the ICRC.⁶⁸ This merger would immediately help rebuild the credibility of the Swiss humanitarians, as the other national societies had strong public approval earned through daring actions like Count Folke Bernadotte and the Swedish Red Cross's "White

⁶² M. Huber, 'The Principles of the Red Cross', *Foreign Affairs*, July 1948 (1948), available at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/1948-07-01/principles-red-cross>.

⁶³ Junod, *The Imperiled Red Cross*, 30; Independent Commission of Experts Switzerland -- Second World War, 'Switzerland, National Socialism and the Second World War: Final Report', (Zürich 2002), 500.

⁶⁴ Junod, *The Imperiled Red Cross*, 265.

⁶⁵ Independent Commission of Experts Switzerland -- Second World War, 'Switzerland, National Socialism and the Second World War: Final Report', (Zürich 2002), 114.

⁶⁶ Independent Commission of Experts Switzerland -- Second World War, 'Switzerland, National Socialism and the Second World War: Final Report', 67; International Committee of the Red Cross, '1939-1945: descent into hell', (2010), available at <https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/who-we-are/history/second-world-war/overview-2-world-war.htm>.

⁶⁷ Independent Commission of Experts Switzerland -- Second World War, 'Switzerland, National Socialism and the Second World War: Final Report', 384; The International Committee of the Red Cross reaffirms "open door" policy on its role during and after World War II <https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/resources/documents/article/other/57jpu5.htm>

⁶⁸ El-Bakry-Esposito, 'L'Action du CICR dans le Premier Conflict de Palestine, 1948 L'humanitaire au Defi', 11.

Buses” rescue mission.⁶⁹ It would also ease the ICRC’s financial exposure to Swiss regulation. However, fusing with the League would cost the Committee its dual independence-- the ability to operate under its own leadership and a neutrality founded within Switzerland’s neutral foreign policy.

The outbreak of hostilities between the Jewish and Arab communities in Palestine in 1947 gave the ICRC the chance it needed to avoid these fates. The International Committee of the Red Cross could use its long history of attending to hospitals and prisoners of war as a neutral intermediary to reestablish its moral authority. The organization would leverage the strong personal ties and experience of its leaders to step into this role early on, before realizing the scale of the crisis far exceeded its expectations. The ICRC’s mission rapidly shifted from monitoring to refugee relief, aided in large part by the same network and expertise it had hoped to levy for a smaller portfolio. United Nations bodies did not yet have the capacity to run their own relief operations, and so the ICRC stepped into the role of a key logistical and expert partner. It would deliver supplies and run a parallel fundraising campaign that were critical to the first two years of Palestinian refugee relief, which in turn accomplished its internal goals of reestablishing the Committee’s financial base and ensuring its future humanitarian independence.

Moral Authority and rehabilitating the ICRC’s Reputation

The British government announced in September 1947 that it would withdraw from its mandatory authority in Palestine a mere eight months later, on 14 May 1948. The first fighting broke out at the end of November, and the United Nations and NGOs scrambled to piece together a plan to maintain essential services once the British withdrew. During this initial phase, the ICRC focused its energies on its traditional work in hospitals and monitoring prisoners of war. However, these activities, and the efforts of allies in the British government helped garner the Red Cross a central role in the UN response from the very beginning.

After two months of increasing violence, the UN Palestine Commission was formed in January 1948 to plan a political and humanitarian response to the crisis.⁷⁰ Seemingly before the first meeting, however, the British government made their arrangements with the ICRC to take over hospital operations once their officers withdrew, and ICRC delegates R. Marti and Jacques de Reynier made plans for a survey mission in Palestine.⁷¹ By the end of January, Britain’s UN Representative Sir Alexander Cadogan was lobbying the Palestine Commission to provide “after the date of the termination of the Mandate such sums of money as may be required by the International Red Cross.”⁷² In February, Marti and de Reynier sent a report on their mission back to the British, and the UK delegation promptly introduced their work to

⁶⁹ S. Persson, Folke Bernadotte and the White Buses’, *Journal of Holocaust Education* 9 (2/3) (2000), 237.

⁷⁰ UNISPAL Archives, A/AC.21/1, *UN Palestine Commission – First meeting – Provisional agenda* (1948), available at: <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-211388/>

⁷¹ UNISPAL Archives, *Jewish immigration into Palestine/Security force/Financial situation – UNPC 16th meeting – Summary record*, (1948), available at: <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-211675/>.

⁷² UNISPAL Archives, *Jewish immigration into Palestine/Security force/Financial situation – UNPC 16th meeting – Summary record*, (1948), available at: <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-211675/>.

the 19 February meeting of the Palestine Commission.⁷³ Not only did the UK delegate John Fletcher-Cooke convey this reports as a key factual basis to the Commission, he also pressed the UN to provide the ICRC with the £30,000 that Marti and de Reynier estimated the hospital would need for six months' medical operations.⁷⁴ The Red Cross delegates at the time thought they were simply preparing to take over three British hospitals, and were reporting back on potential medical needs, and even when the request was cut to £8,000, it did not appear to raise major objections.⁷⁵ This was a safe approach for the ICRC, still recovering from criticism over its past inaction. Three hospitals were a well-bounded responsibility, but one with a clear humanitarian motive and possibility to fund benevolent operations once again. But it also inadvertently positioned the ICRC in the center of planning. Marti and de Reynier's reports were among the few early expert assessments of the situation on the ground that reached the UN, and through their coordination with the British delegation, they found a platform for the Red Cross within the Palestine Commission.

News spread quickly of the ICRC taking responsibility for hospitals, and they soon received similar requests from charitable organizations. Anxious about being caught in the middle of the worsening violence, in early April the Church of Scotland's Jewish Mission Committee sent an urgent appeal to J. Hutchinson Cockburn of the World Council of Churches seeking an intercession with the ICRC on behalf of their mission.⁷⁶ The Scottish mission requested the protection of the Red Cross flag over their hospital in Tiberias "as a means of maintaining neutrality, or [sic] helping both sides, of preserving out buildings through the bad times, and to enable us to continue our Christian witness."⁷⁷ Within this request, the Jewish Mission Committee explained that they had already arranged for "at least £5,000 for this purpose."⁷⁸ A week later, the ICRC cabled Iain Wilson of the WCC that they were prepared to grant their protection to the hospital, on the "clear understanding such protection purely moral" and that the Committee would accept "No repeat no administrative or financial responsibility."⁷⁹ Iain Wilson wrote again on behalf of a WCC-affiliated hospital in Nazareth, requesting ICRC "cover" for the hospital and its "full staff of Palestinian nurses and servants."⁸⁰ As with the Tiberias hospital, the ICRC was quick to reply that they could not take on the administration, direction, or financial responsibility for the Nazareth

⁷³ UNISPAL Archives, *UN Palestine Commission – Medical services in Palestine – Letter from United Kingdom*, (1948), available at: <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-211814/>.

⁷⁴ UNISPAL Archives, *UN Palestine Commission – Medical services in Palestine – Letter from United Kingdom*, (1948), available at: <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-211814/>.

⁷⁵ UNISPAL Archives, *UN palestine commission – international red cross cttee – letter from United Kingdom*, (1948), available at: <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-211024/>

⁷⁶ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-079 Missions en Palestine : correspondance générale le Conseil oecuménique des Eglises [World Council of Churches], Genève 1948-04-08 *Church of Scotland Overseas Department Jewish Mission Committee. Letter from R. Clephane Macanna to J. Hutchinson Cockburn.*

⁷⁷ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-079 Missions en Palestine : correspondance générale le Conseil oecuménique des Eglises [World Council of Churches], Genève 1948-04-08 *Church of Scotland Overseas Department Jewish Mission Committee. Letter from R. Clephane Macanna to J. Hutchinson Cockburn.*

⁷⁸ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-079 Missions en Palestine : correspondance générale le Conseil oecuménique des Eglises [World Council of Churches], Genève, 1948-04-08 *Church of Scotland Overseas Department Jewish Mission Committee. Letter from R. Clephane Macanna to J. Hutchinson Cockburn.*

⁷⁹ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-079 Missions en Palestine : correspondance générale le Conseil oecuménique des Eglises [World Council of Churches], Genève, 1948-04-16 *Wilson telegram to Macanna.*

⁸⁰ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-079 Missions en Palestine : correspondance générale le Conseil oecuménique des Eglises [World Council of Churches], Genève, 1948-05-19 *WCC Wilson Letter to de Bondeli.*

operations.⁸¹ The Church of Scotland hospitals both hoped to stay open to continue to provide neutral care and to provide some manner of protection to their largely Palestinian nursing staffs. Both sought out the ICRC, even arranging funding, without the Swiss humanitarians making any direct moral appeals. The British hospitals' neutral, humanitarian appeals were pulling the ICRC into an ever-larger role in Palestine, even as they made clear that their involvement would be purely on a moral basis.

Guerilla fighting intensified in the lead-up to British withdrawal, then erupted into full-scale conquest and levelling of villages as the Israeli forces adopted "Plan D" ("Tochnit Dalet") in April 1948, beginning the mass exodus of Palestinian Arabs.⁸² ICRC's moral neutrality was the most valuable asset possible for the local hospitals whose only other option was evacuation.⁸³ On 21 May, the ICRC issued a public humanitarian appeal outlining the four measures they made progress on:

- (1) agreement, of the Arab and Jewish authorities to observe the fundamental principles of the Geneva Conventions;
- (2) the placing under the protection of the International Committee of various hospitals;
- (3) the dispatch of medicaments and other relief supplies intended for both parties;
- (4) individual and constant interventions by their delegates, who have thus been able to save Arab and Jewish wounded during previous fighting.⁸⁴

The Red Cross was also constantly crossing battle lines to move the wounded, dead, and help get women and children out of danger.⁸⁵ Still, these demands exceeded the capabilities of de Reynier and his team, particularly with de Reynier seeking to maintain neutral ICRC "Zones" in Jerusalem.⁸⁶ The Geneva leadership realized they needed a clearer understanding of the situation. So, at the end of May, ICRC President Paul Ruegger took what he called "an unprecedented step" and personally set off for the Middle East.⁸⁷ Ruegger hit the ground running when he arrived in Jerusalem on the morning of 27 May, speaking with as many people as he could and inspecting security zones.⁸⁸ President Ruegger's arrival in Jerusalem

⁸¹ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-079 Missions en Palestine : correspondance générale le Conseil oecuménique des Eglises [World Council of Churches], Genève, 1948-05-31 *Edouard de Bondeli letter to Wilson*

⁸² B. Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, 163-165.

⁸³ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-079 Missions en Palestine : correspondance générale le Conseil oecuménique des Eglises [World Council of Churches], Genève, 1948-04-08 *Church of Scotland Overseas Department Jewish Mission Committee. Letter from R. Clephane Macanna to J. Hutchinson Cockburn.*

⁸⁴ ACICR. International Committee of the Red Cross Archives, *'The Conflict in Palestine: an appeal of the International Committee of the Red Cross to the forces engaged,' Communiqué No 363b*, (1948), available at: https://library.icrc.org/library/docs/DOC/CDP_1948.pdf.

⁸⁵ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-069 Missions en Palestine : correspondance générale avec le Consulat des Etats-Unis à Genève, 1948-05-21 *Relay from Jerusalem via Department Telegram Red Cross Delegate Jerusalem.*

⁸⁶ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-054 Mission de Paul Ruegger, Président du CICR, et de Max Wolf en Palestine (mai 1948) : correspondance générale. 1948-05-31 *Ruegger letter to Bernadotte.*

⁸⁷ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-054 Mission de Paul Ruegger, Président du CICR, et de Max Wolf en Palestine (mai 1948) : correspondance générale.. *Statement Made by Mr. Paul Ruegger President of the International Red Cross Committee*; ACICR B G 059/I/GC-054 Mission de Paul Ruegger, Président du CICR, et de Max Wolf en Palestine (mai 1948) : correspondance générale, 1948-05-24 *Telegram P. Ruegger to Swiss legation Cairo.*

⁸⁸ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-054 Mission de Paul Ruegger, Président du CICR, et de Max Wolf en Palestine (mai 1948) : correspondance générale, 1948-05-29 *Note pour le Comité international de la Croix-Rouge, A l'attention de Monsieur Gallopin.*

marked a key moment in the ICRC's work in Palestine, as he put his personal energies, attention, and crucially, connections to work for the relief effort.

Personal Connections and government surprises

During the early months of their crisis response, the leadership of the ICRC levied their personal connections to the benefit of the organization. These relationships were both vertical, as Ruegger, secretariat members Wolf, and de Bondeli reached out to governments for funding and crucial technological assistance, as well as horizontal, navigating tensions with the other Red Cross entities. The leaders also demonstrated tactical flexibility, using formal letters and telegrams alongside softer personal ties.

Above anyone else, the relationships with the UN leaders, particularly Trygve Lie and Count Folke Bernadotte was central to the early stages of ICRC response. With the end of the British Mandate on 14 May, the UN General Assembly appointed Bernadotte as the new UN Mediator for Palestine, the successor to the UN Palestine Commission.⁸⁹ Fresh from his leading role in the Swedish Red Cross, Bernadotte was the established diplomat, comfortable in war zones and with personal integrity built up over years, that the UN needed. Both fortunately and unfortunately for the ICRC, he was also still deeply involved in the international Red Cross movement. Publicly, he held many of the same humanitarian principles as the International Committee of the Red Cross. Internally, however, leadership was wary of his influence at the upcoming Stockholm Conference, as he had been a proponent of a plan to internationalize the International Committee.⁹⁰ Ruegger in particular was concerned about the potential confusion between the political UN and his neutral Red Cross operations. Wary about again having a humanitarian agenda influenced by a more powerful political entity, one of Ruegger's priorities in Jerusalem was to arrange a meeting with Bernadotte. In a 31 May letter, Ruegger politely made available the ICRC staff and any office facilities Bernadotte may need.⁹¹ He also made very clear that the ICRC "zones" were intended to shelter the civilian population under Red Cross principles, not for any political party to operate out of.⁹² The friction between Bernadotte's political role and the ICRC's desire for neutrality would later grow more heated, ironically in part because of Bernadotte's own affinity for the Red Cross. For the early summer, however, the collaboration with the UN was much more amicable. Ruegger sent a personal telegram of an ICRC and League of Nations joint appeal to UN Secretary-General Trygve Lie, which the UN immediately republished to their own audience.⁹³ This funding appeal immediately brought in "substantial donations."⁹⁴ And through July, Bernadotte even sought to borrow ICRC and WCC volunteers

⁸⁹ UNISPAL Archives, *Palestine question/appointment of UN Mediator/Palestine Commission relieved of responsibilities – GA resolutions*, (1948), available at: <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-176207/>.

⁹⁰ El-Bakry-Esposito, *L'Action du CICR dans le Premier Conflit de Palestine, 1948 - L'Humanitaire au Défi*, 7.

⁹¹ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-054 Mission de Paul Ruegger, Président du CICR, et de Max Wolf en Palestine (mai 1948) : correspondance générale, 1948-05-31 Ruegger letter to Bernadotte.

⁹² ACICR B G 059/I/GC-054 Mission de Paul Ruegger, Président du CICR, et de Max Wolf en Palestine (mai 1948) : correspondance générale, 1948-05-31 Ruegger letter to Bernadotte.

⁹³ UNISPAL Archives, *ICRC appeals for security zones in Jerusalem – Press release - Reintroduced after cable from Paul Ruegger was sent to Trygve Lie*, (1948), available at: <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-205824/>.

⁹⁴ ACICR, International Committee of the Red Cross Archives, *Report on general activities (July 1, 1947 -*

to help distribute supplies to refugees.⁹⁵

While the ICRC had received an unexpected amount of support from the UK, they also requested any available support for Ruegger's trip from the governments of Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, and the League of Arab States.⁹⁶ This fundraising circular met with mixed success. Hamid Frangie, Lebanon's Minister of Foreign Affairs quickly replied that they could not adhere to cooperation with the Red Cross as the Israelis were not, while the Syrian response was "extremely brief."⁹⁷⁹⁸ The Provisional Government of Israel was slightly more interested in speaking to the ICRC, thanks in large part to their operations tracking prisoners of war. On 28 and 31 of May, Israeli Foreign Minister Shertok sent repeated telegrams requesting that the ICRC ensure the safety of Jewish prisoners of war, in particular 23 Jews, mainly students, who were detained in Beirut.⁹⁹ The ICRC's unique ability to cross the battle lines made them extremely valuable to the Israeli leadership in the early days of the war. However, the relationship with the Provisional Government swiftly deteriorated. By November, Wolf reported that the Israeli authorities were requesting that the central ICRC delegation in Beirut be liquidated and a new, "independent" delegation be set up in Israeli territory-- albeit with the Israeli government covering all the costs of that Bureau.¹⁰⁰

It is notable that while Max Wolf considered the Provisional authorities moving the goalposts for their mission largely within the reality of Jewish *de facto* victory,¹⁰¹ he attributed this deterioration to the person of de Reynier. Wolf reported that the Israelis saw de Reynier as partisan toward the Arabs (possibly a consequence of his decade of experience in North Africa), and the ICRC staff in the country thought that his continued presence would jeopardize their operations' political future.¹⁰² This was a rare misstep for the ICRC, but an early one that underscores the importance of personal ties. Conversely, it is somewhat surprising that Wolf's own connections did not allow the ICRC to navigate their relationship

December 31, 1948), (1949), 113.

⁹⁵ UNISPAL Archives, *Mediation, truce supervision, refugees, proposals for peaceful settlement (a.k.a. "Bernadotte plan") – UN Mediator on Palestine – Progress report*, (1948), available at: <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-198227/>

⁹⁶ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-054 Mission de Paul Ruegger, Président du CICR, et de Max Wolf en Palestine (mai 1948) : correspondance générale, 1948-05-26 *Gloor Telegram to Trygve Lie*.

⁹⁷ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-054 Mission de Paul Ruegger, Président du CICR, et de Max Wolf en Palestine (mai 1948) : correspondance générale, 1948-05-31 *de Bondeli forwarding Lebanese Telegram to Ruegger*.

⁹⁸ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-054 Mission de Paul Ruegger, Président du CICR, et de Max Wolf en Palestine (mai 1948) : correspondance générale, 1948-05-31 *Gallopín Letter to Ruegger*.

⁹⁹ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-072 Missions en Palestine : correspondance générale avec le Gouvernement d'Israël, première partie, 1948-05-28 *Shartok Telegram to ICRC Geneva*; ACICR B G 059/I/GC-072 Missions en Palestine : correspondance générale avec le Gouvernement d'Israël, première partie, 1948-05-31 *Shartok Telegram to ICRC Geneva*.

¹⁰⁰ "Les Autorités juives suggèrent l'établissement, pour le territoire israélien, d'un Bureau de secours à Haïfa, ou toutes les marchandises destinées au pays d'Israël seraient centralisées. Elles proposent de couvrir tous les frais de ce Bureau." Paul Ruegger indicated the absurdity of this suggestion with "??!!" written large in the margins. ACICR B G 059/I/GC-054 Mission de Paul Ruegger, Président du CICR, et de Max Wolf en Palestine (mai 1948) : correspondance générale, 1948-11-18 *Confidential Report from Max Wolf to Paul Ruegger*.

¹⁰¹ "Pour les Juifs, la guerre est virtuellement gagnée." ACICR B G 059/I/GC-054 Mission de Paul Ruegger, Président du CICR, et de Max Wolf en Palestine (mai 1948) : correspondance générale, 1948-11-18 *Confidential Report from Max Wolf to Paul Ruegger*.

¹⁰² ACICR B G 059/I/GC-054 Mission de Paul Ruegger, Président du CICR, et de Max Wolf en Palestine (mai 1948) : correspondance générale, 1948-11-18 *Confidential Report from Max Wolf to Paul Ruegger*.

with the Israelis better. Junod notes that Wolf married the daughter of prominent banker Max Warburg, and contends that this connected him into the “veteran Zionist society” in Germany prior to WWII.¹⁰³ It is possible that Junod overstated these ties, and in either case, most of the preserved correspondence from the provisional government of Israel was directed either to Ruegger as President, or the organization as a whole.

Technological assets also played a key role in Committee communication. The ICRC secured two agreements to use the American Department of State and the Swiss Short-Wave System broadcast facilities. Through an unspecified arrangement with the Department of State facilities in Jerusalem and the American Consul in Geneva, the ICRC was able to send a huge number of telegrams and telephone relays more quickly than other organizations could get out at the time, as early as spring 1948. The American Consuls forwarded the first recorded message under this arrangement on 18 May 1948-- a telegram from de Reynier describing the outbreak of battle in the Old City of Jerusalem, and that staff member Gaillard had been “slightly wounded... Please notify insurance company he is well and morale high.”¹⁰⁴ The Red Cross actors, both ICRC and LRCS, were therefore able to communicate near-daily updates on the situation, the safety of their staff, and survey the needs in Jerusalem.

By 22 May, Geneva received information from de Reynier on a population of “about 50 non-Jewish refugees” in a security zone along with a request for 150,000 doses of anti-typhoid serum.¹⁰⁵ On 10 June, the ICRC added a second broadcast channel after the Swiss Short Wave System agreed to let them send daily transmissions through their station.¹⁰⁶ This speed of information aided greatly in the ICRC's early logistical strength, and helped them to make the argument from an early stage that they should be central to the refugee response efforts. Furthermore, it aided their expert authority, as the ICRC leadership in Geneva was able to speak to specific needs and numbers of displaced people when appealing for funding. In mid-August, de Reynier wired the ICRC in Geneva a telegram that contained an estimate of 300,000 Arab refugees, the urgency of the food situation, and discussions with the UNO where the ICRC was proposed to send medical teams and “bring immediate help to certain categories refugees such as children.”¹⁰⁷

The archival documents did not record how the ICRC arranged for this important technological aid, but the leadership in Geneva certainly had a cordial relationship with the American Consul. Both Paul Ruegger and E. de Bondeli wrote extremely appreciative telegrams to Consul Harry L. Troutman, thanking him for the American aid in transmitting their messages.¹⁰⁸ Notably, this arrangement was solidified before Ruegger and Wolf's June

¹⁰³ Junod, *The Imperiled Red Cross and the Palestine-Eretz-Yisrael Conflict 1945-1952*, 44.

¹⁰⁴ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-069 Missions en Palestine : correspondance générale avec le Consulat des Etats-Unis à Genève, 1948-05-18, *De Reynier Telegram, Department Relay from Jerusalem*.

¹⁰⁵ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-069 Missions en Palestine : correspondance générale avec le Consulat des Etats-Unis à Genève, 1948-05-21, *De Reynier Telegram, Department Relay from Jerusalem*.

¹⁰⁶ ACICR, International Committee of the Red Cross Archives, *The International Committee of the Red Cross in Palestine*” *Communiqué No. 368b*, (1948), available at: https://library.icrc.org/library/docs/DOC/CDP_1948.pdf.

¹⁰⁷ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-069 Missions en Palestine : correspondance générale avec le Consulat des Etats-Unis à Genève, 1948-08-15, *De Reynier Telegram, Department Relay from Jerusalem*.

¹⁰⁸ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-069 Missions en Palestine : correspondance générale avec le Consulat des Etats-Unis à Genève, 1948-07-23, *Ruegger Telegram to Troutman*; G-059-I-GC-069, 1948-06-01, *de Bondeli Telegram to*

fundraising trip to the US, but it is quite likely that Ruegger's personal diplomatic contacts, either from his posting in London or connections in Geneva, helped the ICRC President maintain a direct line to Jerusalem while he conducted his personal inspection.

Negotiating the UN system

Starting in June, the ICRC viewed the sometimes-blurry lines between the UN and itself with growing anxiety, and spent the following months building up their own operations and working on an independent financial base. With an eye toward the latter, Paul Ruegger and Max Wolf left for the United States in the second half of the month fundraise. Over the course of the trip, the ICRC delegates met with the leadership of the American Red Cross, the US Department of State, and even President Truman on 30 June.¹⁰⁹ Unfortunately, the details of their meeting with Truman were not recorded in the archive, nor did the ICRC receive any funds from the US government in 1948. This was not a total loss, however, as it appears that these meetings deepened ties between the ICRC and the Americans. In 1949, the State Department became a leading advocate pushing Congress to fund the Red Cross, likely with Truman's blessing. This trip also marked a shift in strategy as the ICRC realized it could not rely just on the unsolicited funding from UK organizations, and the UN was itself scrambling to pull together resources for all of its operations.

The ICRC leaders also spent the summer working to protect and differentiate their own moral authority. In early June, Ruegger requested that the Geneva office publicize the ICRC's role in establishing a new security zone around the Hadassah University and Hospital, "despite the new efforts and burdens for ICRC."¹¹⁰ Jacques de Reynier also had more disagreements with Bernadotte's use of the Red Cross symbol. The Count arrived in Palestine wearing a Red Cross uniform, rather than UN identification.¹¹¹ Worse, in the eyes of de Reynier, Bernadotte often travelled with armed guards in vehicles marked with the Red Cross.¹¹² Bernadotte was not only conducting political work under the neutral symbol, but he was also travelling with arms under the moral protection that the Red Cross earned through peaceful, impartial aid work. These worries appeared to be resolved ahead of the Red Cross conference in Stockholm. On 4 August, de Reynier reported to Geneva that he had "two friendly talks with Count Bernadotte who approves all ICRC actions in Palestine" and received his guarantee for any facilities their "independent mission" needed.¹¹³

ICRC leadership sought to balance the risk of the UN's political mission with the advantages of Bernadotte's affinity for the Red Cross mission. In preparation for the Stockholm Red Cross conference, the Committee prepared a report on its work for the

Troutman.

¹⁰⁹ Junod, *The Imperiled Red Cross and the Palestine-Eretz-Yisrael Conflict 1945-1952*, 244.

¹¹⁰ "Ceci vu intérêt général en cause et malgré efforts et charges nouvelles en résultant pour CICR." ACICR B G 059/I/GC-054 Mission de Paul Ruegger, Président du CICR, et de Max Wolf en Palestine (mai 1948) : correspondance général, 1948-06-07 *Ruegger Telegram to Geneva*.

¹¹¹ El-Bakry-Esposito, 'L'Action du CICR dans le Premier Conflit de Palestine, 1948 - L'Humanitaire au Défi', 24.

¹¹² El-Bakry-Esposito, 'L'Action du CICR dans le Premier Conflit de Palestine, 1948 - L'Humanitaire au Défi', 7-28.

¹¹³ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-069 Missions en Palestine : correspondance générale avec le Consulat des Etats-Unis à Genève, 1948-08-04 *De Reynier Telegram Jerusalem via Department*.

conference delegates, stressing its heroic, persistent, and humanitarian work in the “Holy Land.”¹¹⁴ The report emphasized the bravery of the ICRC volunteers in tense situations worsened by the UN’s inability to secure a ceasefire prior to Bernadotte’s arrival, leaving the Red Cross to set up their own security zones.¹¹⁵ A year prior, the Red Cross movement had been considering folding the International Committee into the LRCS. In July 1948, the ICRC argued that it was the most effective humanitarian actor in the crisis.

Folke Bernadotte seemed to agree. The UN Mediator spent the weeks prior to the Stockholm Conference finalizing his draft plan for Aid to Palestine Refugees, which he submitted to the UN General Assembly four days before the start of the conference.¹¹⁶ This plan appeared to draw on the International Committee’s report, and praised them for organizing 21,000 inoculations.¹¹⁷ Bernadotte proposed Red Cross organizations were not just partners to help run hospitals and organize exchanges across battle lines, but he placed them as a second pillar in a three-part relief effort composed of governments, the Red Cross, Crescent, and the local Red Cross affiliate in Israel, the Shield of David, along with other voluntary organizations.¹¹⁸ Bernadotte’s plan and the conference also calmed the tension between the International Committee and the League. The ICRC had worried that the LRCS would gain official recognition at the UN before it did,¹¹⁹ but the conference gave them a chance to coordinate, and Bernadotte including both organizations in his UN plan seems to have addressed their fears.

ICRC leaders accepted Bernadotte’s plan, and the central responsibility it entailed. Wary of the earlier confusion, they issued a report on their relations with the United Nations Organization and specified that their “anxiety to affirm the traditional neutrality” limited collaboration with the UN to “strictly within the limits of the humanitarian field and carefully abstaining from any political Implications.”¹²⁰ Tragically, just weeks after issuing this statement, the Red Cross’s fears about animosity against the UN mediation mission were realized. Folke Bernadotte was travelling with members of his mediation team out of the Red Cross Zone in a UN/Red Cross convoy when they were stopped by three men in Israeli Army uniforms.¹²¹ The assailants opened fire into the back of Bernadotte’s UN-marked car, killing him and French Air Force Colonel Andre Serot.¹²² The Red Cross car, however, was

¹¹⁴ ACICR, International Committee of the Red Cross Archives, *The International Committee of the Red Cross in Palestine*, (1948), available at: https://library.icrc.org/library/docs/CI/CI_1948_150_ENG_001.pdf.

¹¹⁵ ACICR, International Committee of the Red Cross Archives, *The International Committee of the Red Cross in Palestine*, (1948), available at: https://library.icrc.org/library/docs/CI/CI_1948_150_ENG_001.pdf.

¹¹⁶ UNISPAL Archives, PAL/247, *Palestine question – Mediator’s plan for aid to Palestine refugees – Press release* ‘, (1948), available at: <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-195721/>.

¹¹⁷ UNISPAL Archives, PAL/247, *Palestine question – Mediator’s plan for aid to Palestine refugees – Press release* ‘, (1948), available at: <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-195721/>.

¹¹⁸ UNISPAL Archives, PAL/247, *Palestine question – Mediator’s plan for aid to Palestine refugees – Press release* ‘, (1948), available at: <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-195721/>.

¹¹⁹ El-Bakry-Esposito, ‘L’Action du CICR dans le Premier Conflit de Palestine, 1948 - L’Humanitaire au Défi’, 22

¹²⁰ ACICR, International Committee of the Red Cross, *Relations of the International Committee of the Red Cross with the United Nations and other international organizations : report of the International Committee of the Red Cross (under item XVI of the agenda of the [General] Commission)*’ (1948), 1.

¹²¹ C.D. Stanger. ‘A Haunting Legacy: The Assassination of Count Bernadotte.’ *Middle East Journal* 42-2 (1988): 260–72, 262.

¹²² Stanger. ‘A Haunting Legacy’, 262.

untouched in the ambush.¹²³ Bernadotte's death cost the whole Red Cross movement a valuable supporter. The entire International Committee mourned his death.¹²⁴ The organization was galvanized afterward, and recommitted itself to the work with the UN in a new central role.

Fall 1948-1949 - Transition, and pushback on the UN

Now formally at the center of the UN refugee relief in Palestine, the ICRC's role grew significantly. It took responsibility for the refugees in Palestine, the vast majority of the displaced in 1948, while the LRCS coordinated activities in the neighboring countries, outside of the fighting.¹²⁵ By November, the ICRC alone had distributed over a million Swiss francs worth of supplies: over fifty tons of food, medicine, and other essential goods.¹²⁶

Taking stock of this massive increase in mandate, the ICRC leadership started to examine their own efficiency. This was less important when they were trying to bring hospitals under the Red Cross flag and establish ceasefire zones as quickly as possible, but with huge shipments of relief material coming in, humanitarian and logistical motives pushed the ICRC to reassess its approach. Max Wolf went on a solo trip back to Tel Aviv to find the source of delays in getting supplies to Palestinian refugees. His confidential report back to Ruegger discussed the blackballing of de Reynier by the Israeli authorities, as discussed above.¹²⁷ The other snag was the Israeli opposition to the ICRC delegation having a centralized office in Beirut.¹²⁸ The Israeli government tried to pressure the Red Cross into running two separate delegations, one for Arab territories and one for Jewish territory, which Ruegger's notes in the margin of the report flatly refused.¹²⁹ Coming fresh out of the Stockholm conference, and now coordinating with the UN, AFSC, and Red Cross League, the ICRC was wary of fragmenting its operations or response any more. Indeed, Wolf kept an eye out for complicating divisions. Arriving in Washington a few months later, he reported back to the ICRC leadership his concerns over the British and American Red Cross Societies being unable to agree whether to divide responsibility across territories or operate mutually.¹³⁰

The ICRC was also concerned about overly fragmenting aid beneficiaries. In his second dispatch from Tel Aviv, Wolf discussed with Ruegger the challenges of interned

¹²³ ACICR, International Committee of the Red Cross Archives, *Report on general activities (July 1, 1947 - December 31, 1948)*, (1949), 113-114.

¹²⁴ ACICR, International Committee of the Red Cross Archives, *Report on general activities (July 1, 1947 - December 31, 1948)*, (1949), 114.

¹²⁵ ACICR, International Committee of the Red Cross Archives, *Report on general activities (July 1, 1947 - December 31, 1948)*, (1949), 112-113.

¹²⁶ ACICR, International Committee of the Red Cross Archives, *Report on general activities (July 1, 1947 - December 31, 1948)*, (1949), 114.

¹²⁷ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-054 Mission de Paul Ruegger, Président du CICR, et de Max Wolf en Palestine (mai 1948) : correspondance générale, 1948-11-18 *Confidential: Mission A Tel-Aviv*.

¹²⁸ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-054 Mission de Paul Ruegger, Président du CICR, et de Max Wolf en Palestine (mai 1948) : correspondance générale, 1948-11-18 *Confidential: Mission A Tel-Aviv*.

¹²⁹ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-054 Mission de Paul Ruegger, Président du CICR, et de Max Wolf en Palestine (mai 1948) : correspondance générale, 1948-11-18 *Confidential: Mission A Tel-Aviv*.

¹³⁰ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-057 Mission de Max Wolf en Israël (anciennement Palestine), à Londres (Grande-Bretagne) et à Washington (Etats-Unis) : correspondance générale, 1949-01-25 *Extract of a letter from M. Max Wolf, Washington, of January 25th, 1949*.

civilians and whether to give them aid as prisoners of war under the doctrine of the ICRC.¹³¹ Someone, presumably Ruegger, wrote in the margins that the International Red Cross generally sought to extend its protection to civilians with P.O.W. status, but would defer on a concrete decision at the moment.¹³² The division between civilians and P.O.W.s foreshadowed the later, and much larger, concerns about differentiating “official” and “economic” refugees in Palestine, with strict legal divisions creating challenges for organizations trying to reach as many people as they could.

Yet again, the ICRC was pulled into a debate it seemed more comfortable avoiding by eager British philanthropists. In the spring of 1949, the Jewish Society for Human Service reached out to the ICRC about transferring payments in support of the refugees in the Jericho camp and in support of non-refugee Arabs across Palestine.¹³³ Two years out from the passage of the 1951 Refugee Convention, there were still debates about whether to target aid to just those who had been forcibly expelled or the thousands more who were left without livelihoods. But Paul Ruegger took on the additional chance to help the general population in distress.¹³⁴ The British Red Cross Society coordinated the transfer of £1,000 for the refugees in and £1,500 for relief of non-refugee Arabs.¹³⁵ Wolf was initially unsure about how to proceed with this unexpected windfall, but the British Red Cross wired an additional £2,500 from the Jewish Society for Human Service on 20 April, and £750 from the Society and the W.A. Cadbury Trust on 23 May.¹³⁶ These were the only funds that appeared in the ICRC archival materials specifically earmarked for the non-refugee Arabs, and outside of the church relief discussed below, appear to be the largest Western donations going to this broader relief. It is worth noting that the push to include all Palestinians in need under a relief regime preceded UNRWA’s own reforms to do the same by years. And while the NGOs held onto this dual-relief on moral principles, the Jewish Society for Human Service’s donations were what translated those morals into action.

1949-1950 -- Return to Moral Concerns

Throughout the late summer and into the Fall of 1949, the ICRC worked together with the other relief NGOs to get supplies to the Palestinians and push back on the UN’s plans to wind down the UNRPR prematurely. This was the greatest test of the Red Cross’s moral authority

¹³¹ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-054 Mission de Paul Ruegger, Président du CICR, et de Max Wolf en Palestine (mai 1948) : correspondance générale, 1948-11-18 *Confidential: Mission A Tel-Aviv Rapport No 2*.

¹³² ACICR B G 059/I/GC-054 Mission de Paul Ruegger, Président du CICR, et de Max Wolf en Palestine (mai 1948) : correspondance générale, 1948-11-18 *Confidential: Mission A Tel-Aviv Rapport No 2*.

¹³³ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-169 Commissariat pour l'aide aux réfugiés en Palestine : questions spéciales, deuxième partie, 1949-04-04 *British Red Cross, Thompson, letter to Hunziker*.

¹³⁴ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-169 Commissariat pour l'aide aux réfugiés en Palestine : questions spéciales, deuxième partie, 1948-04-06 *Paul Ruegger letter to the Countess of Limerick*.

¹³⁵ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-169 Commissariat pour l'aide aux réfugiés en Palestine : questions spéciales, deuxième partie, 1949-04-14 *Letter British Red Cross Jones to ICIR*.

¹³⁶ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-169 Commissariat pour l'aide aux réfugiés en Palestine : questions spéciales, deuxième partie, 1949-04-20 *Wolf Note pour Monsieur le President Ruegger*; ACICR B G 059/I/GC-169 Commissariat pour l'aide aux réfugiés en Palestine : questions spéciales, deuxième partie, 1949-04-20 *British Red Cross Society letter Werner to ICRC*; ACICR B G 059/I/GC-169 Commissariat pour l'aide aux réfugiés en Palestine : questions spéciales, deuxième partie, 1949-05-23 *British Red Cross Society letter Werner to Kuhne*.

since it established ceasefire zones and traversed active battle lines. The ICRC and its partners leveraged the credibility and expertise they built up over a year of relief, logistically necessary to the UN operations, to push on the UN as it was debating the future of Palestinian relief and codifying the Refugee Convention. The ICRC in particular was coming in to these debates stronger than before, the US finally cleared the 10 million Francs from Japan, a testament to Ruegger and Wolf's trips finally bearing fruit.¹³⁷ The Committee paid off their accumulated debts, and set up a trust that took care of operational expenses until 1952.¹³⁸ Together, these gave the ICRC some long-awaited breathing room, and the confidence to push back on what it saw as inadequate UN policy.

In June, the ICRC, League, and AFSC had a meeting with Stanton Griffis, head of the UNRPR in Geneva, and stressed the inadequate stores of medicine and clothing to last the winter.¹³⁹ They successfully convinced the UN body to sustain operations through 31 October.¹⁴⁰ The UNRPR also approved the ICRC's July budget for \$213,000.¹⁴¹ Instead of taking this as a victory, Paul Ruegger wrote back to Griffis as soon as he received this update to inform him that the ICRC "repeatedly expressed their determination not to abandon their activities in mid-winter."¹⁴² The ICRC had teamed up with the League to issue a direct appeal to Trygve Lie in May, making clear that abandoning the relief efforts in December would cause untold difficulty, and upon receiving no response sent another appeal on 11 July.¹⁴³ The UN offices in New York only acknowledged receipt of these in August, at which point the ICRC sent another direct appeal to the Secretary-General on 2 August.¹⁴⁴ This tested how far Ruegger could take his personal relationship with the UN head, but on 22 August Lie invited him to an Ad Hoc advisory committee to plan for the future of Palestine relief.¹⁴⁵

The internal pressure from the Red Cross seemed to work. In September, the Ad Hoc council meeting agenda, prior to the meeting itself, admitted that though NRPR was "always on the verge of bankruptcy," Lie felt comfortable extending their operational runway for three

¹³⁷ Junod, *The Imperiled Red Cross and the Palestine-Eretz-Yisrael Conflict 1945-1952*, 265.

¹³⁸ Junod, *The Imperiled Red Cross and the Palestine-Eretz-Yisrael Conflict 1945-1952*, 265.

¹³⁹ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-167 Commissariat pour l'aide aux réfugiés en Palestine : passation et transmission du mandat du CICR concernant les réfugiés palestiniens à l'UNRPR [United Nations Relief for Palestinian Refugees], correspondance générale 3, 1949-06-16 Ref. No: P/2.20 UNRPR Prolongation Letter.

¹⁴⁰ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-167 Commissariat pour l'aide aux réfugiés en Palestine : passation et transmission du mandat du CICR concernant les réfugiés palestiniens à l'UNRPR [United Nations Relief for Palestinian Refugees], correspondance générale 3, 1949-06-16 Ref. No: P/2.20 UNRPR Prolongation Letter.

¹⁴¹ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-167 Commissariat pour l'aide aux réfugiés en Palestine : passation et transmission du mandat du CICR concernant les réfugiés palestiniens à l'UNRPR [United Nations Relief for Palestinian Refugees], correspondance générale 3, 1949-06-17 Letter Parminter to ICRC.

¹⁴² ACICR B G 059/I/GC-167 Commissariat pour l'aide aux réfugiés en Palestine : passation et transmission du mandat du CICR concernant les réfugiés palestiniens à l'UNRPR [United Nations Relief for Palestinian Refugees], correspondance générale 3, 1949-06-22 Ruegger letter to Griffis.

¹⁴³ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-167 Commissariat pour l'aide aux réfugiés en Palestine : passation et transmission du mandat du CICR concernant les réfugiés palestiniens à l'UNRPR [United Nations Relief for Palestinian Refugees], correspondance générale 3, 1949-08-01 United Nations Acknowledgement of Receipt of Two Cablegrams

¹⁴⁴ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-167 Commissariat pour l'aide aux réfugiés en Palestine : passation et transmission du mandat du CICR concernant les réfugiés palestiniens à l'UNRPR [United Nations Relief for Palestinian Refugees], correspondance générale 3, 1949-08-02 Telegram Francois, Poncet, Ruegger, de Rouge to Lie

¹⁴⁵ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-167 Commissariat pour l'aide aux réfugiés en Palestine : passation et transmission du mandat du CICR concernant les réfugiés palestiniens à l'UNRPR [United Nations Relief for Palestinian Refugees], correspondance générale 3, 1949-08-22 Lie Telegram to Ruegger.

additional months.¹⁴⁶ In the meeting itself the ICRC did not take this for granted, and ramped up fundraising efforts as the winter approached. At the meeting itself, the ICRC's Middle East Field Commissioner Alfred Escher made clear that the ICRC "was not willing to stop the action in mid-winter" and that it is "absolutely impossible that the financial provisions for the forthcoming months should be under what they were so far."¹⁴⁷ The International Committee offered an ultimatum, they would either end their activity at the end of the month, or the UN could continue relief through the winter.¹⁴⁸

In late October, the ICRC sent Max Wolf on a mission to London to follow up on fundraising opportunities. He found that a letter about the poor in Jerusalem run in the *Times* managed to raise £6,000, and thought that the British charitable spirit ahead of Noel season could bring in even more.¹⁴⁹ Wolf had meetings with several publications to make sure similar appeals went out in November, including to the *Times*, *New Chronicle*, and the novel *Picture Post*, showing the situation of refugees.¹⁵⁰ Even with a strong British Pound, these sums were tiny in comparison to the six-figure budget the ICRC needed for monthly operations in Palestine. Yet, these public efforts showed an independent ability to fundraise, and the breadth of British society willing to contribute to relief. Much as it had done before the Stockholm Convention, the ICRC worked to position itself on a strong footing prior to the conference in Lake Success to plan the successor of UNRPR.

At Lake Success, Paul Ruegger continued to push for expanding the UN relief in time and scope. He argued that it was impossible for the UN to reduce its rations in January 1950, and that it would be very difficult for the ICRC to leave in the winter in light of the need.¹⁵¹ He also pressed the UN on the issue of non-refugees. He argued that 15,000 non-refugees in Jerusalem alone could not understand why they were deprived of UN relief, when it would be a "modest" action compared to the other works the voluntary agencies were undertaking.¹⁵² The League backed the International Committee up in this respect, stating that roughly ten percent of their relief was going to people in need who were not "real" refugees, but they

¹⁴⁶ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-167 Commissariat pour l'aide aux réfugiés en Palestine : passation et transmission du mandat du CICR concernant les réfugiés palestiniens à l'UNRPR [United Nations Relief for Palestinian Refugees], correspondance générale 3, 1949-09-30 *Hill Letter to Secretary-general UNRPR Ad Hoc Advisory Committee, Tuesday, 4 October, 10:45am.*

¹⁴⁷ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-164 Commissariat pour l'aide aux réfugiés en Palestine : documentation éditée par l'Organisation des Nations Unies, première partie, 1949-10-04 *Draft Text Verbatim Proceedings of Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on Relief to Palestine Refugees Second Session.*

¹⁴⁸ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-164 Commissariat pour l'aide aux réfugiés en Palestine : documentation éditée par l'Organisation des Nations Unies, première partie, *Commissariat pour l'aide aux réfugiés en Palestine : documentation éditée par l'Organisation des Nations Unies, première partie, 1949-10-04 Draft Text Verbatim Proceedings of Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on Relief to Palestine Refugees Second Sessionc.*

¹⁴⁹ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-057 Mission de Max Wolf en Israël (anciennement Palestine), à Londres (Grande-Bretagne) et à Washington (Etats-Unis) : correspondance générale, 1949-11-11 *Wolf Rapport pour Monsieur le Président Ruegger sur ma mission à Londres du 28 octobre au 11 novembre 1949.*

¹⁵⁰ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-057 Mission de Max Wolf en Israël (anciennement Palestine), à Londres (Grande-Bretagne) et à Washington (Etats-Unis) : correspondance générale, 1949-11-11 *Wolf Rapport pour Monsieur le Président Ruegger sur ma mission à Londres du 28 octobre au 11 novembre 1949.*

¹⁵¹ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-172 Commissariat pour l'aide aux réfugiés en Palestine : questions spéciales, cinquième partie, 1949-11-25 *Texte du discours prononcé le 25 novembre 1949 à Lake Success par Monsieur P. Ruegger.*

¹⁵² ACICR B G 059/I/GC-172 Commissariat pour l'aide aux réfugiés en Palestine : questions spéciales, cinquième partie, 1949-11-25 *Texte du discours prononcé le 25 novembre 1949 à Lake Success par Monsieur P. Ruegger.*

were not comfortable abandoning them, arguing even that it would endanger the “present position of the League and UN in the Middle East.”¹⁵³ This question was particularly pressing for the ICRC, as they were supporting 12,000 Bedouins with the funds from the Jewish Society for Human Friends.¹⁵⁴ But these grants had stopped in August, and thousands were in danger of losing relief and medical care.¹⁵⁵

On 8 December, the UN General Assembly granted half of the voluntary agencies’ requests, establishing the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and prolonging the relief effort through the spring. Trygve Lie personally wrote to Paul Ruegger to provide updates on the transition to the new agency, assuring him that funding would be available for the immediate future.¹⁵⁶ On 15 December, the three voluntary agencies had their first meeting to discuss the transmission of their work to UNRWA, and while they had sufficient rations for the first quarter of 1950, there was still no word on whether relief to economically displaced civilians would continue.¹⁵⁷ This uncertainty later vexed the World Council of Churches as it stepped in to relief efforts in the 1950s.

1950 -- Handoff of relief

While the Red Cross was preparing to hand off its operations to UNRWA in the spring of 1950, it did not slow down its efforts. The ICRC Palestine Commissariat was deep in the red, spending thousands of francs more than it brought in each month from November to March, when a fresh round of UNRPR funds finally got it back into the black.¹⁵⁸ The unfrozen Japanese funds certainly gave them the confidence to absorb these debts, but it is also a testament to ICRC priorities right up to the end of their mission. Ruegger had long stated that the International Committee was only there for “provisional relief work,” and the work was “essentially temporary.”¹⁵⁹ Yet their humanitarian principles ensured that they pushed to deliver as much relief as possible while they were there, as they had been pushing the

¹⁵³ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-167 Commissariat pour l'aide aux réfugiés en Palestine : passation et transmission du mandat du CICR concernant les réfugiés palestiniens à l'UNRPR [United Nations Relief for Palestinian Refugees], correspondance générale 3, 1949-11-23 *De Rouge letter to Nicholson*.

¹⁵⁴ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-168 Commissariat pour l'aide aux réfugiés en Palestine : questions spéciales, première partie, 1949-10-19 *Munfer Note à l'Attention du Comité International de la Croix Rouge - Genève*.

¹⁵⁵ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-168 Commissariat pour l'aide aux réfugiés en Palestine : questions spéciales, première partie, 1949-10-19 *Munfer Note à l'Attention du Comité International de la Croix Rouge - Genève*.

¹⁵⁶ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-167 Commissariat pour l'aide aux réfugiés en Palestine : passation et transmission du mandat du CICR concernant les réfugiés palestiniens à l'UNRPR [United Nations Relief for Palestinian Refugees], correspondance générale, 1949-12-13 *Lie letter to Ruegger*.

¹⁵⁷ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-167 Commissariat pour l'aide aux réfugiés en Palestine : passation et transmission du mandat du CICR concernant les réfugiés palestiniens à l'UNRPR [United Nations Relief for Palestinian Refugees], correspondance générale 3, 1949-12-16 *Ruegger Aide-Mémoire Décisions communes arrêtées par les trois Agence de distribution des Secours UNRPS au cours de la séance du 15 décembre 1949*.

¹⁵⁸ ACICR B G 059/I/GC-172 Commissariat pour l'aide aux réfugiés en Palestine : questions spéciales, cinquième partie, *Rapport sur la vérification comptes pour la période allant du 1er octobre 1949 au 31 mai 1950*.

¹⁵⁹ UNISPAL Archives, 'Refugee relief, statistics, proposals for repatriation and resettlement – Meeting with relief organizations (UNRPR, Red Cross, AFSC) – UNCCP 17th meeting (Lausanne) – Summary Record', 7 (1949), available at: <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-210816/>; ACICR, International Committee of the Red Cross Archives, *Relations of National Societies with government and international relief organisations (item II on the agenda of the relief commission)*, (1948,) available at: https://library.icrc.org/library/docs/CI/CI_1948_081_ENG_001.pdf, 30.

UNRPR for the past year. Even as they were a leading logistical partner of the UN, when they wrapped up their operations, the ICRC turned their attention to their moral obligations and moral authority.

To publicize their moral authority with the public one last time, the ICRC produced a documentary on their efforts, “Homeless in Palestine: aspects of a relief action.”¹⁶⁰ This short film showed the good works that ICRC supported in Palestine, emphasizing the moral necessity of the support it provided. The documentary closed by discussing the transition to UNRWA leadership, and admitted that “reestablishment of the refugees is a problem for governments, and is beyond the scope, as well as the resources, of the Red Cross.”¹⁶¹ The organization had exceeded its own capacity for logistical authority, and was at risk of getting pulled into political processes.

After spending so much effort reestablishing its reputation as a neutral humanitarian actor, the ICRC was careful to protect its moral standing. It was, after all, the Committee’s moral authority that got it a seat at the table with the UN, well before it demonstrated its logistical competence running massive relief operations. And this moral authority would serve it well, both in Palestine and as a leading partner of the UN for decades to come. Moreover, it did not leave Palestine entirely once it stopped administering camps. Instead, the ICRC adopted a “new” role. It returned to its traditional portfolio of transmitting prisoner messages, family reunification, and locating missing persons.¹⁶² It continues this neutral humanitarian work today through its office for Israel and the Occupied Territories, and helped arrange 3,500 family visits to detainees in 2022.¹⁶³ In this more limited role, the ICRC continues to leverage its moral standing to help Palestinians access an essential service, even as many are the children or grandchildren of those first displaced in 1948.

¹⁶⁰ ACICR, International Committee of the Red Cross Archives, *Les errants de Palestine : aspects d'une de ses actions = Homeless in Palestine : aspects of a relief action*, (1950), available at: <https://avarchives.icrc.org/Film/5504>.

¹⁶¹ ACICR, International Committee of the Red Cross Archives, *Les errants de Palestine : aspects d'une de ses actions = Homeless in Palestine : aspects of a relief action*, (1950), available at: <https://avarchives.icrc.org/Film/5504>.

¹⁶² ACICR, International Committee of the Red Cross Archives, *Echoes of Events in the Near East, 'Communique No 427b, 14 June 1950*, available at: https://library.icrc.org/library/docs/DOC/CDP_1950.pdf.

¹⁶³ ACICR, International Committee of the Red Cross Archives, *Israel and the occupied territories*, (2022) available at: <https://www.icrc.org/en/where-we-work/middle-east/israel-and-occupied-territories>.

Chapter 3: The World Council of Churches

*“It would be a tactical error for us not to take part in relief.”*¹⁶⁴

Created in 1946, the Commission of Churches on International Affairs (CCIA) served as an advisory body to the World Council of Churches (WCC) and International Missionary Council (IMC) and represented the two Councils at United Nations as their consultative body. CCIA would cede responsibility for refugee relief to the Department of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees of the World Council of Churches, but all three bodies (WCC, IMC, and CCIA) worked in conjunction to address the needs of Palestinians. Given the WCC refugee department’s primacy in response, this section will refer to the coalition’s activities as WCC actions, except where needed for clarity.

Compared to the Red Cross bodies, refugee work for the WCC was a new competence, starting with refugee ministry but eventually growing into larger-scale relief efforts.¹⁶⁵ Due to this novelty, and internal coalescing, the WCC took much longer to join in relief efforts for the Palestinian communities. Instead, the Council took years to study the crisis, advocate on moral grounds, and develop the arguments that would win them sustainable funding. While they were sidelined from the Refugee Convention debates in Europe, the WCC eventually came to be a core part of Palestinian relief efforts. Particularly when other European organizations were fighting claims of not doing enough during the Second World War, and the UN was viewed as a hostile entity in Palestine, the WCC successfully differentiated itself and became a key partner for distributing relief goods to the displaced population. Though it started slow, by 1953 the WCC was responsible for distributing over half a million pounds of clothing and nearly three million pounds of food to refugees. Its path to large-scale relief mirrors that of the ICRC in many respects, including well-connected leaders and deft translations of moral authority into logistical and expert authority. But the differences in institutional goals and relationship to the early UN also cast an informative light on the evolution of the current global refugee aid regime.

1947-1948 -- Studying, External Concerns

The World Council of Churches provides an illuminating counterpoint to the ICRC during the early period of the Palestinian refugee response. Their early activity overlaps somewhat with the Red Cross organizations, and, like the ICRC, they had their own internal organizational challenges pulling attention away from their humanitarian objectives. However, like the ICRC, the ecumenical organization benefited from the experience of a seasoned diplomat, Dr. Elfan Rees. Coming to the WCC fresh from the Balkans as a Senior Specialist with the regional Mission of UNRRA.¹⁶⁶ Rees was a constant advocate for refugees, and in constant

¹⁶⁴ WCC CCIA 42.5.45 Dr E. Rees 1947-1963, 1948-12-13 *Rees Letter to Visser ‘t Hooft ‘Palestine Refugees’*.

¹⁶⁵ WCC CCIA, ‘History’, available at: <https://www.oikoumene.org/about-the-wcc/history>.

¹⁶⁶ WCC CCIA 428.10.04 Elfan Rees Papers, 1944-05-16 *Telegram ‘It is announced that Mr. Elfan Rees...’*.

movement during this time.¹⁶⁷

Unlike the ICRC, the WCC was in a strong moral and mostly stable financial position after the Second World War. In large part, this is because it did not carry forward any associations with WWII failures. The organization was officially formed in 1948, though it traces its lineage back to the 1910 Edinburgh World Mission Conference, and earlier decades of ecumenical cooperation. As early as 1947, for example, Rees, who had been appointed director of the nascent WCC's Refugee Division, and Visser 't Hooft coordinated funding to support Jewish refugees being brought into the Netherlands under work schemes with the support of Hilda Verwey-Jonker,¹⁶⁸ and was helping the UNRRO, IRO, and WCC Refugee Commission recruit field workers.¹⁶⁹

With regards to Palestine, the emerging World Council of Churches had much of its attention bound up in concerns coming from its Lutheran partners about the "orphaned churches." These Lutheran missions in the Palestinian Mandate encountered dire straits during the Second World War due to freezes on German funding. After the war, Protestant organizations scrambled to find funding to meet salaries, pay down debt, and continue the operation of hospitals and orphanages.¹⁷⁰ Further complicating this headache, the WCC leadership complained about the Lutherans at times acting unilaterally.¹⁷¹

In planning their response, the WCC intentionally moved slowly, and spent most of 1947 and 1948 working to better understand the situation, or to help arrange Red Cross protection for their local hospitals, as discussed above. In June 1947, Kenneth Grubb sent a memorandum to the Executive Committee of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs detailing the "story of the Palestine question," though this document did not foresee mass displacement, and was more concerned with matters of religious freedom.¹⁷² Geoffrey Fisher, Archbishop of Canterbury and President of the WCC, personally reached out to Trygve Lie to express the WCC's desire for "truce in Palestine without prejudice to either party" and their dismay at "fighting in the Holy Land," but made no specific remarks committing the WCC to charity or relief work.¹⁷³ One of the earliest reports on support for Arab refugees came from British Missionary Winifred A. Coate, then head of the CMS Girl's School in Amman. Coate detailed several concerns early in her 30 July report, though it appears that these took months to be accepted by the WCC leadership. Coate's needs assessment for Transjordan detailed meager food supplies and medical conditions but stressed that "The greatest need is for money," and that "all the missions are in financial difficulties" (emphasis original).¹⁷⁴ Coate also stressed that the churches "should not set up elaborate

¹⁶⁷ For more on Rees in Europe, Vosters has previously explored his role in the European debates on refugee governance. Vosters, 'GOs and refugees in European history', 31.

¹⁶⁸ WCC CCIA 42.5.45 Dr E. Rees 1947-1963, 1947-09-23 "Katz" fund' letter from Rees to Visser 't Hooft.

¹⁶⁹ WCC CCIA 42.5.45 Dr E. Rees 1947-1963, 1947-12-23 Rees Letter to H Hirschwald.

¹⁷⁰ WCC CCIA 26.14.11 War and missions 1939-1945: Near East, NECC-1946-06-03 Minutes of the United Missionary Council Orphaned Missions Committee Held at Tabor.

¹⁷¹ WCC CCIA 42.5.45 Dr E. Rees 1947-1963. 1948-05-19 Rees Letter to Visser 't Hooft.

¹⁷² WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1947-06-18 Grubb Memorandum for Executive Committee.

¹⁷³ WCC CCIA 301.5694.2 Country files and correspondence 1932 - 1957 : Israel, 1948-05-28 Archbishop of Canterbury Telegram to Trygve Lie.

¹⁷⁴ WCC CCIA 301.5694.2 Country files and correspondence 1932 - 1957 : Israel, 1948-07-30 Winifred A. Coate letter.

organisations of our own” but should help cover the salaries of volunteers working with the Government, and to have WCC administration ensure that there is no “overlapping”, or duplication of efforts with other organizations.¹⁷⁵ Coate also raised concern over a strong “anti-British and anti-western feeling” among the Arab population, keeping an eye on geopolitical conditions, but stopped short of mentioning a fear of Soviet influence. As the WCC slowly moved toward response, the organization would hold on to most of the concerns outlined by Coate, particularly the concern for efficiency and need to mobilize funds stayed at the core of the WCC’s response efforts. Curiously, however, the geopolitical lens did not resurface as a main concern moving forward, as the WCC instead focused on moral claims grounded in Christianity.

In August of 1948, an assembly met in Amsterdam to discuss the church in relation to the Provisional independence of Israel. In their early statements, the WCC explicitly steered away from discussing the war in terms of political or economic rights, but rather sought to frame it as a “moral and spiritual question that touches a nerve centre of the world’s religious life.”¹⁷⁶ The Amsterdam Assembly resolved to appeal for more humanitarian supplies, though at this point it did not commit itself to large-scale support.¹⁷⁷ The WCC also resolved to include “the native poor of Jerusalem” among any group they helped.¹⁷⁸ The WCC’s strong stance on helping the poor in Jerusalem, while framing the city as a “nerve centre” are an early claim to a unique moral authority in response to the crisis. As an assembly of churches, the WCC announced its duty to act to help the cause of faith in Christianity’s holiest city, something they underscored with their additional aid to Jerusalem’s poor. Moreover, helping the poor framed this action in reference to millennia-old traditions of Good Samaritan charity. The WCC certainly appreciated the urgency of the crisis, but this argument allows them to subtly differentiate their moral claims from the UN or ICRC, even as they waited to act.

By mid-December, Rees and Visser ‘t Hooft were still in consultation with local organizations to understand a role for the Refugee Division of the WCC. Rees’s hesitance itself reveals an adroit appreciation of the WCC’s position. In a 13 December letter to Visser ‘t Hooft, Rees expresses his view “that U.N. action absolves the Refugee Division from any responsibility for contributing to a disaster relief project as such” and they should focus instead on “the spiritual needs of the Arab Christians.”¹⁷⁹ This letter threaded a narrow needle, officially committing the WCC Refugee Division to the minimum required to sustain its moral seat at the table. Indeed, Rees was concerned that “Protestantism is losing face in the

¹⁷⁵ WCC CCIA 301.5694.2 Country files and correspondence 1932 - 1957 : Israel, 1948-07-30 Winifred A. Coate letter.

¹⁷⁶ WCC CCIA 425.5.095 Near East Palestine Refugee Programme: Complete Set of Cyprus Consultation Papers, 1969 - *Palestine Refugees – Aid With Justice: The Report of the Consultation on the Palestine Refugee Problem* (WCC Nicosia, 1969); *Statements from the Amsterdam Assembly 1948: Report of the Committee IV: Concerns of the Churches*.

¹⁷⁷ WCC CCIA 425.5.095 Near East Palestine Refugee Programme: Complete Set of Cyprus Consultation Papers, 1969 - *Palestine Refugees – Aid With Justice: The Report of the Consultation on the Palestine Refugee Problem* (WCC Nicosia, 1969); *Statements from the Amsterdam Assembly 1948: Report of the Committee IV: Concerns of the Churches*.

¹⁷⁸ WCC CCIA 425.5.095 Near East Palestine Refugee Programme: Complete Set of Cyprus Consultation Papers, 1969 - *Palestine Refugees – Aid With Justice: The Report of the Consultation on the Palestine Refugee Problem* (WCC Nicosia, 1969); *Statements from the Amsterdam Assembly 1948: Report of the Committee IV: Concerns of the Churches*.

¹⁷⁹ WCC CCIA 42.5.45 Dr E. Rees 1947-1963, 1948-12-13 Rees Letter to ‘t Hooft ‘Palestine Refugees’.

Middle East.”¹⁸⁰ The moral authority Rees sought for the WCC only required them to attend to religious affairs and deferred the rest to UN leadership. This was a politically astute way to protect the WCC from overcommitting itself, particularly its staff, as their time was still claimed by issues in Europe, the lingering orphaned churches, and formalizing the organization itself in its first official year.

Yet, despite these other pressures calling for the WCC’s attention, Rees immediately undercut the limits he outlined by emphasizing the opinion of Tracy Strong, director of War Prisoner’s Aid for the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA), that “it would be a tactical error for us not to take part in relief” (emphasis in original).¹⁸¹ Rees also acknowledged that the ICRC was leading the UN response, and left the door open for further “integration or co-operation with I.R.C.”¹⁸² Rees seemed to be looking ahead and felt the pressure comping up from local partners who saw that the scale of need for the Arab refugees far exceeded the UN’s capacity.

Part of the WCC’s trepidation with jumping right into an active response role appears to be tied to their own concerns about fragmentation of relief efforts. In a May letter to Visser ‘t Hooft, Rees lamented the multiplication of refugee agencies in France.¹⁸³ Considering his other recommendations to support ICRC and UN operations, it does appear that Rees was concerned about the inefficiencies that come when too many organizations crowd into the same sphere, the same concern expressed by Coate’s July needs assessment. The concerns of the WCC leaders likely reflect the recent experience of establishing a unified organization out of numerous denominations, and also seem to echo the contemporary anxieties of the ICRC surrounding the transition between UN agencies. Further, Rees had an eye toward the moral authority of the larger WCC in negotiations with other organizations and pushed for giving funds “ecumenically rather than denominationally.”¹⁸⁴ In presenting itself as a representative body of the breadth of Protestant churches, the WCC necessarily had pressure to make sure its grant funding practices represented a broad base of support. While bolstering the WCC’s position at the negotiating table, this unified approach also foreshadowed the organizations’ concerns with efficiency and efficacy that emerged in the next two years.

1949 -- Re-evaluating the “Machinery”

In late 1949 and into 1950, WCC leadership began to be more directly involved in planning relief services for Palestinian refugees, and WCC partners started to implement their own support projects. A key pivot point appears to be in May 1949, when the government delegations of the UN Ad Hoc Political Committee called for the active consultation of faith bodies on the question of Jerusalem. The governments requested opinions from the Holy See, the Orthodox Patriarchate, Muslim leaders, and the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs.¹⁸⁵ It is unclear exactly how the CCIA managed to secure this request for

¹⁸⁰ WCC CCIA 42.5.45 Dr E. Rees 1947-1963, 1948-12-13 *Rees Letter to Visser ‘t Hooft ‘Palestine Refugees’*.

¹⁸¹ WCC CCIA 42.5.45 Dr E. Rees 1947-1963, 1948-12-13 *Rees Letter to Visser ‘t Hooft ‘Palestine Refugees’*.

¹⁸² WCC CCIA 42.5.45 Dr E. Rees 1947-1963, 1948-12-13 *Rees Letter to Visser ‘t Hooft ‘Palestine Refugees’*.

¹⁸³ WCC CCIA 42.5.45 Dr E. Rees 1947-1963, 1948-05-19 *Rees Letter to Visser ‘t Hooft*.

¹⁸⁴ WCC CCIA 42.5.45 Dr E. Rees 1947-1963, 1948-05-19 *Rees Letter to Visser ‘t Hooft*.

¹⁸⁵ WCC CCIA 301.5694.1 Country files and correspondence 1932 - 1957 : Israel, 1949-05 *Memorandum: The*

consultation, but this charge began the steps toward the WCC taking an active role within the UN response, setting out their unique principles and, in a remarkably short period time, showing signs of chafing within the UN response system.

The first steps that the WCC took following the UN request were to issue a memo in which Kenneth Grubb and Frederick Nolde, heads of the CCIA, outlined their concerns and presented their particular moral claim. The memo avoided treading into policy options, but instead stated that the primary concern of the WCC was “with people, not places, and therefore we have stressed first of all the rights and freedoms of all men.”¹⁸⁶ The memo stressed concerns over human and religious rights in occupied areas, in line with Grubb’s report on the situation in Palestine two years prior. The authors included one line for the rehabilitation of Arab refugees, but their main points were the internationalization of Jerusalem and halting the occupation of church properties by the local governments and militaries. Indeed, this latter point is the closest the WCC came to overt “political” statements, noting that “Practically all the reported violations have occurred in areas occupied by Jewish authorities.”¹⁸⁷ The CCIA had yet to appreciate the scale of displacement in Palestine, and so issued memoranda that emphasized their moral claims as advocates for ecumenical Christian issues.

The WCC’s engagement matured in October 1949, as partner initiatives began to gain traction and Elfan Rees undertook his own consultative mission to visit churches in Palestine and the neighboring Arab states. The October edition of an ecumenical newsletter publicized the school for Palestinian refugees opened up by the YMCA (a WCC member) in cooperation with UNESCO and the League of Red Cross Societies, employing experienced teachers from among the displaced Palestinians.¹⁸⁸ This school was in some ways a trial for multi-organization cooperation, with the WCC’s partner helping arrange use of land from the Orthodox church for the school, while the Red Cross and UNESCO furnished supplies.¹⁸⁹ This article also revealed some of the tropes that the WCC turned to in efforts to fundraise—it focused on the cleanliness and desire to learn of the children, and the parallels with the Western readers’ own families: “Most of the children in this camp come from middle-class Christian homes in the larger cities.”¹⁹⁰ This appeal made no mention of the Muslim Palestinians in need. In framing its partners’ early response efforts, the WCC continued to use a moral appeal to Christian sensibilities and solidarity. However, the article also criticizes the

Protection of Religious Interests and Activities in Palestine, Kenneth Grubb and Frederick Nolde Commission of Churches on International Affairs (WCC and IMC).

¹⁸⁶ WCC CCIA 301.5694.1 Country files and correspondence 1932 - 1957 : Israel, 1949-05 *Memorandum The Protection of Religious Interests and Activities in Palestine, Kenneth Grubb and Frederick Nolde Commission of Churches on International Affairs (WCC and IMC).*

¹⁸⁷ 3 WCC CCIA 301.5694.1 Country files and correspondence 1932 - 1957 : Israel, 1949-05 *Memorandum The Protection of Religious Interests and Activities in Palestine, Kenneth Grubb and Frederick Nolde Commission of Churches on International Affairs (WCC and IMC).*

¹⁸⁸ WCC CCIA 301.5694.1 Country files and correspondence 1932 - 1957 : Israel, 1949-10-01 *A YMCA School for Palestinian Refugees.*

¹⁸⁹ WCC CCIA 301.5694.1 Country files and correspondence 1932 - 1957 : Israel, 1949-10-01 *A YMCA School for Palestinian Refugees.*

¹⁹⁰ WCC CCIA 301.5694.1 Country files and correspondence 1932 - 1957 : Israel, 1949-10-01 *A YMCA School for Palestinian Refugees.*

“countless *frangi* (sic)”: the waves of Western workers that visited the children but did not deliver any of the aid they promised.¹⁹¹ Elfan Rees made this critique quiet. At the time, the WCC was too tactful to air dirty laundry in a public fundraising call against any one partner, and instead directed it at the whole response apparatus.

On 11 October, Rees left Geneva to visit Palestine and its Arab neighbors. He wasted no time and dove right into consultations with the key actors in the area, including the UN’s Clapp Mission, UNRPR, United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the LRCS, and numerous British diplomats.¹⁹² Leveraging his connections to British diplomats, Rees noted that the trip was “much helped” by the British minister in Damascus, the Counsellor in Baghdad, and John Troutbeck, head of the British Middle East Office in Egypt.¹⁹³ With this diplomatic support, Rees conducted fieldwork that left him extremely dismayed. He sharply criticized the “clumsy and ponderous” administrative machinery existing between the UN bodies, AFSC, ICRC, and the LRCS, going so far to remark that “In the face of such cumbersome machinery, it is remarkable that UNRPR has done so good a job,” meeting a third of the current needs.¹⁹⁴ Rees’s fear of top-heavy administration and duplication of effort, shared by the WCC more generally, came to bear as he examined the state of affairs in 1949. Later in the report, Rees added context for his resistance to this cumbersome machinery. Rees called for specific needs, “clothing and blankets in almost limitless quantities,” along with more general grants for education and subsistence projects.¹⁹⁵ When detailing recommended distribution channels, Rees recognized the cost and efficiency benefits of using “existing official distribution machinery,” but also expressed a desire that aid should also highlight that it was donated by the WCC, and the local churches should “be more closely associated with distributions and projects.”¹⁹⁶ Tactically, Rees knew that the WCC would reap positive sympathies from the Palestinians if they attached their name to clothing and grant donations. Further, his aim of local churches as the end-point distributors would help them appear to their communities as supportive and capable leaders. While he was concerned with getting aid to people efficiently, Rees seems to admit that bolstering the reputation of the WCC and member churches among the Palestinians was worth relinquishing some efficiencies.

Rees’s concession to local churches, ensuring that they gained legitimacy in the eyes

¹⁹¹ WCC CCIA 301.5694.1 Country files and correspondence 1932 - 1957 : Israel, 1949-10-01 *A YMCA School for Palestinian Refugees*.

¹⁹² WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1949-11-15 *Report of Elfan Rees to the Department of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees of the World Council of Churches*.

¹⁹³ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1949-11-15 *Report of Elfan Rees to the Department of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees of the World Council of Churches*.

¹⁹⁴ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1949-11-15 *Report of Elfan Rees to the Department of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees of the World Council of Churches*.

¹⁹⁵ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1949-11 *Report of Elfan Rees to the Department of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees of the World Council of Churches*.

¹⁹⁶ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1949-11 *Report of Elfan Rees to the Department of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees of the World Council of Churches*.

of the local community, also appears to be tied to internal WCC debates about inter-church aid versus refugee relief. At the time, the WCC faced the problem of many churches appealing for refugee support, but instead using the funds for traditional church activities.¹⁹⁷ Rees accepted this as a consequence of the financial strain the churches themselves were under, but it remained a concern for the WCC, which expected funds to be cleanly categorized. Indeed, the WCC would continue to debate inter-church aid for the next few years, wrestling with dual needs to be efficient financial stewards while appeasing their co constituent churches in Palestine. Rees's frustration with the cumbersome UN relief apparatus may have emerged in part from the realization that WCC's own response had some politically necessary inefficiencies, and the UN's own logistical shortcomings reduced the margins that WCC could operate within while still delivering meaningful refugee service.

1950-1951 Becoming core partner of UNRWA, debating entanglement with UN Agency

The World Council of Churches's strategy continued to evolve in 1950. The organization shifted from a consultative body focused on religious affairs to closer collaboration with the United Nations. This led to new frustrations with the UN machinery, but also set the WCC up to begin applying some of its moral authority to shape discussions in 1951 and 1952.

In September, Elfan Rees returned to the Middle East to conduct a second round of consultations for the WCC. He saw a stagnating relief effort for the refugees, calling the situation "tragically static" when compared to his visit a year earlier.¹⁹⁸ In his report to WCC leadership, he called for a conference to better organize aid to the refugees and sort out the problems of inter-church aid.¹⁹⁹ He also expressed uncertainty about the new role of UNRWA, founded in December 1949, and just how the WCC ought to work with them. As with the ICRC, the WCC was skeptical about partnering with an organization that may not exist in a year. Still, Rees believed that discontinuing relief was "out of the question," and recommended that the WCC urge the UN to continue aid at least through 1951.²⁰⁰ Shortly after he sent along this report, Robert Mackie wrote to Rees about having the WCC beginning to fundraise in earnest and working out an operational budget.²⁰¹ Mackie, as WCC's director of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees was weighing different funding pools as well as different geographies (Rees was also examining the situation in Korea), but stressed a hope

¹⁹⁷ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1949-11 *Report of Elfan Rees to the Department of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees of the World Council of Churches*.

¹⁹⁸ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1950-09-21 *Summary Report of a Mission to the Middle East Rees*.

¹⁹⁹ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1950-09-21 *Summary Report of a Mission to the Middle East Rees*.

²⁰⁰ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1950-09-21 *Summary Report of a Mission to the Middle East Rees*.

²⁰¹ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1950-10-31 *Letter Robert Mackie to Elfan Rees*.

“that this new initiative is not going to slip through our fingers.”²⁰² Even after four years of studying the needs in Palestine, and partner organizations like the YMCA beginning new projects, that WCC was still hesitant about committing itself to refugee relief, at least until, as Mackie wrote, they had “a little more assurance about American participation in the meeting.”²⁰³ The WCC recognized the competing budget pressures of church aid and refugee service, not just in Palestine but also in Korea, and continued their controlled entry into the relief efforts.

As Rees and Mackie were plotting a path through the WCC’s internal challenges, the Council also began a dual level strategy of pressure on the UN itself. In late October, four WCC leaders, F.M. van Asbeck, Kenneth Grubb, Frederick Nolde, and Elfan Rees, wrote an appeal to Eduardo Frei, the Chilean delegate to the UN. In this letter, they urged Frei to vote to extend the mandate of UNRWA until the crisis was resolved and ensure that the agency received regular budget contributions.²⁰⁴ The WCC leaders leaned on the moral necessity of helping the hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees and were extremely worried about the onset of Winter. Frei does not appear elsewhere in the WCC archives, and it is unclear if any of the leaders had a personal connection with the Chilean, but Rees and Nolde were both at the Fall session of the UN General Assembly themselves to lobby for WCC objectives.²⁰⁵ The CCIA sent a delegate to six UN conferences between June 1950 and April 1951, which makes the direct appeal all the more interesting.²⁰⁶ The WCC appeal to a UN delegate marked a shift to a more personal set of insider tactics, which the Council leaned on as they grew more enmeshed in the UN networks.

The WCC’s shift to a strategy of “insider” tactics was not immediate, and the organization leveraged at least one more public appeal to put pressure on the UN. On 19 November, the same four leaders who had sent discrete requests to Frei issued a WCC Press Release calling the UN aid proposals for refugees in Europe, Palestine, and the Far East “inadequate and incomplete.”²⁰⁷ The authors of the press release expressed concern about the disbanding of the IRO, and called on the UN to ensure that the new High Commission for Refugees was built around an inclusive definition that included people who may become refugees in the future.²⁰⁸

Rees crusaded for the inclusion of new groups in the Convention on the Status of Refugees nearly until its signing. On 26 July 1951, well into the UN Conference and just two days before delegates signed the Convention, Rees wrote Nolde to argue that the WCC

²⁰² WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1950-10-31 *Letter Robert Mackie to Elfan Rees*.

²⁰³ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1950-10-31 *Letter Robert Mackie to Elfan Rees*.

²⁰⁴ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1950-10-28, *van Asbeck, Grubb, Nolde, Rees letter to E. Frei Delegation of Chile to the United Nations*.

²⁰⁵ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1951-04-16 *Rees Letter to Nolde*.

²⁰⁶ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1951-04-16 *Rees Letter to Nolde*.

²⁰⁷ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1950-11-19 *Press release*.

²⁰⁸ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1950-11-19 *Press release*.

should express its concern over the proposed document only ensuring protection to refugees displaced before 1 January 1951.²⁰⁹ Instead, Rees urged Nolde that the Convention “should contain provisions which would make it possible to add in the future other categories of refugees.”²¹⁰ While Rees failed to sway delegates to strike the date provision from the final Convention, he proved ahead of his time, as the later 1967 UN Refugee Protocol would eliminate this restriction. For the WCC more generally, this was indicative of the contested cooperation they engaged in with the UN bodies.

Part of this contested cooperation with the UN may have been connected to uncertainty about the future of the UN relief “machinery”. In a January 1951 letter to an American missionary in Beirut, Elfan Rees quipped that “the UN decisions and other happenings may mean some variation of emphasis” and a change in the plans.²¹¹ Even as UNRWA appeared to be a more stable partner than the short-lived UNRRA, UNRPR or the toothless UNCCP, the WCC had doubts. The WCC’s report on their conference in Beirut also opened with a critique of the UN support to UNRWA, stating that the “inadequacy and uncertainty” of the Agency’s finances held it back from pursuing any solution other than keeping refugees alive in camps, and that refugees were deeply angry with the United Nations “for its failure to do justice and remedy their situation.”²¹² While Rees and Nolde had previously been concerned about local churches receiving the credit for donations of clothing, blankets, food, and medical supplies, then learning the full extent of Arab distrust of the UN likely further contributed to the WCC seeking to differentiate itself. WCC leaders advocated for the necessity of cooperating with the UN in undertaking projects and “forming public opinion,” but took care to frame the Voluntary Agencies as holding separate competencies from the United Nations.²¹³ The Council would cut down on public mentions of the UN’s inadequacy after 1951, whether as part of outsider criticism or as part of a fundraising appeal, and Elfan Rees continued to argue on behalf of the CCIA that the machinery for refugee management should be internationalized and within the ambit of the UN.²¹⁴ Nonetheless, the uncertainty around the UN organization, and continued pressure to morally differentiate Christian relief efforts saw the WCC turn more actively to the US as a key funding source in 1951 and 1952.

²⁰⁹ WCC CCIA 42.5.45 Dr E. Rees 1947-1963, 1951-07-26 *Rees Letter to Nolde re: Diplomatic Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Statue of Refugees and Stateless persons.*

²¹⁰ WCC CCIA 42.5.45 Dr E. Rees 1947-1963, 1951-07-26 *Rees Letter to Nolde re: Diplomatic Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Statue of Refugees and Stateless persons*

²¹¹ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1951-01-02 *Elfan Rees letter to W.G. Greenslade.*

²¹² WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1951-05-08 *Interim Report on the Conference on the Palestine Refugee Problem.*

²¹³ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1951-05-08 *Report of Working Party III – United Nations Action – as adopted by the final Plenary Session.*

²¹⁴ WCC CCIA 42.5.45 Dr E. Rees 1947-1963, 1951-10 *Statement by Elfan Rees, representing CCIA at ILO Conference on Migration.*

1951-1953 -- American Outreach, Pivoting within UN Partnership

Doubts about the future of any single UN Agency, and a clear vision of how strained existing UN finances were, led the WCC to follow a similar path as the ICRC and investigate new American sources of funding. Personal connections again proved useful for the WCC, as did the active engagement of their large congregational base of potential donors.

In March 1951, the WCC leadership was already presenting the organization as a source of expert authority to the US State Department. Despite Rees's connections in London and Geneva, the American leaders in the WCC took the reins on fundraising and advocacy over the next few years, in large part due to their personal connections. Alford Carleton wrote a five-page confidential letter to the Assistant Secretary of State for the Near East George McGhee, following up on a conversation a week earlier with his analysis of geopolitics in the region and the future of independent Arab nations.²¹⁵ Carleton had been president of the Aleppo College since 1937, and in 1950 published an article on Syrian politics in the *Middle East Journal*.²¹⁶ But the personal outreach by a senior US diplomat exposed just how unseasoned US diplomats were in the region, and how highly they esteemed Carleton. His March letter did not contain a specific appeal on behalf of the WCC, but it did mark the start of a period of more intense diplomatic outreach by the Council. In May 1951, Elfan Rees sent copies of the WCC's Beirut conference reports to George McGhee and forwarded the contact information of WCC leaders based in New York, helping pollinate the State Department point of connection across the organization.²¹⁷

The American Delegation of the WCC, the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., followed up the Beirut conference with a full-court press once they returned back across the Atlantic. The delegates talked with the Israeli government about resettlement and compensation in May, organized a conference at the US State Department with McGhee in attendance on 11 June, held a dinner with Egyptian, Saudi, Syrian, Iraqi, and Lebanese representatives to the UN on the same evening, and presented testimony before the House of Representative's Committee on Foreign Affairs on 26 July.²¹⁸ Walter Van Kirk's testimony before Congress and the WCC's press release "Christian Responsibility for Palestinian Refugees" are notable for their critiques of the UN and the geopolitical arguments buried within. In the press release, publicizing the outcomes of the Beirut conference, stressed the WCC's moral duty to lobby on behalf of refugees: "In so far as Christians by their action, or inaction, have failed to influence in the right course, the policy and decisions of their governments and of the United Nations, they too are guilty."²¹⁹ They followed this with clear calls on governments to mobilize resources and for the UN to reorganize its agencies in the

²¹⁵ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1951-03-31 *Carleton letter to McGhee Asst Secretary of State*.

²¹⁶ A. Carleton, 'The Syrian Coups D'État of 1949', *The Middle East journal*. 4 (1), (1950), 1–11.

²¹⁷ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1951-05-25 *Elfan Rees Letter to George McGhee*.

²¹⁸ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, *Follow Up of the Beirut Conference by Members of the U.S.A. Delegation*.

²¹⁹ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1951-05-25 *Christian Responsibility for Palestinian Refugees*.

field to separate relief “from long term integration and development plans.”²²⁰ Tactically playing to the American audience, however, the WCC ended the release by warning about “the disposition among many of the Arabs to look toward Moscow for leadership in their hour of need” as they felt that the UN and the West had abandoned them.²²¹ Van Kirk repeated these lines nearly verbatim in his July testimony before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, adding that the US had failed to create a situation of strength in the Middle East.²²² There are very few references to Russia or Communism in the materials covering WCC planning and early response, so these two strong statements intended for public circulation stand out.²²³ The WCC, particularly Carleton and Van Kirk, seized the opportunity to be experts advising the US government, and stressed a geopolitical argument that they knew would resonate with bureaucrats more than the moral track they had relied on thus far.

Van Kirk did not bring up global security or the specter of Moscow for purely academic reasons, however. He also pressed Congress to pass legislation mobilizing 50 million dollars for the Arab refugees, and strongly opposed the equal allocation of economic aid (23.5 million dollars) to Israel and to all the Arab states as incommensurate with the scale of need on the two sides.²²⁴ Fundraising dominated the WCC’s agenda in 1951 and 1952 and kept its American delegation active throughout the year. The WCC’s Americans used the Beirut Conference report to pitch stories to the religious press, including *Presbyterian Life*, *Christian Century*, and *Protestant World*, as well as the secular *New York Times*.²²⁵ This media coverage of the Palestinian refugees set the stage for broad fundraising appeals, not all of which were successful. In the late summer, the CCIA appealed to the Ford Foundation for a significant amount of aid, which did not come to fruition.²²⁶ Still, Van Kirk leveraged his clerical position and personal connections to bring the WCC’s concerns to powerful ears. In August, Van Kirk officiated the wedding of UN Undersecretary Andrew Cordier’s daughter and presented the findings of the Beirut conference to Ernest Gross, the US Deputy Ambassador to the UN.²²⁷

The informal networks of New York high society were a significant asset to the WCC, echoing Rees’s London connections that proved so useful as the WCC first began assessing the scale of need in Palestine. Frederick Nolde evidently had ongoing communication with

²²⁰ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1951-05-25 *Christian Responsibility for Palestinian Refugees*.

²²¹ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1951-05-25 *Christian Responsibility for Palestinian Refugees*.

²²² WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1951-07-26 *Statement by Walter W. Van Kirk Before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, July 26, 1951*.

²²³ In a 8 January 1952 letter to Reinhold Niebuhr, Frederick Nolde referred to the “threat of Communism in the Near East” on the psychological and political factors complicating the WCC proposals from the Beirut conference.

²²⁴ CC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1951-07-26 *Statement by Walter W. Van Kirk Before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, July 26, 1951*.

²²⁵ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, *Follow Up of the Beirut Conference by Members of the U.S.A. Delegation*.

²²⁶ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1951-09-05 *Van Kirk letter to Nolde*.

²²⁷ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1951-09-05 *Van Kirk letter to Nolde*.

Elanor Roosevelt, then with the US Delegation to the UN in Paris, and kept her apprised of the WCC's support for an "International Assistance Fund" for refugees.²²⁸ In January 1952, Frederick van Asbeck, Kenneth Grubb, Frederick Nolde, and Elfan Rees sent a formal appeal to the UN Ad Hoc Political Committee urging the body to support a three-year program for UNRWAPNE and that "adequate provision should be made for continuing services of relief" (emphasis original).²²⁹ The WCC leaders immediately followed this with a wire release of the letter to the Religious News Service wire, again seeking to leverage both "inside" and "outside" appeals for more UN funds.²³⁰

Building on this, in early 1952, the WCC, the International Missionary Council, and representatives from "all non-Catholic bodies in the area concerned with the problem of the Palestine refugees" organized the Near East Christian Council (NECC) Committee for Refugee Work, emphasizing that there should be equal numbers of foreign and national personnel.²³¹ This coordination body finally put the WCC in a position to move beyond public lobbying and into coordination and implementation, as the Committee, with a WCC-appointed Executive-Secretary, S.A. Morrison, and a pool of funds to allocate toward buildings, social welfare projects, educational work, "Hard Core Cases," and "Propaganda against Subversive Tendencies".²³² The Committee also declared its mandate as helping "officially-recognised refugees," "the so-called 'economic' refugees," and "Arabs who were formerly officially-recognised refugees in Israel."²³³ The NECC Committee's choice to include "economic" and non-recognized refugees, as well as the reference to "subversive tendencies" in its organizing documents is a surprising formalization of two strands of the WCC's arguments for relief efforts. On the one hand, the WCC had argued for years that relief should not differentiate between groups of Arabs in genuine need and had couched this argument in moral terms that it was Christian duty to support the vulnerable as early as the organization's 1948 appeals to help Jerusalem's poor. On the other, it seems that the more recent appeals to fears of Soviet influence, originally intended for an American audience, had worked their way into the core concerns of the Christian voluntary agencies. Particularly as the organizing document for the NECC Committee clearly stated that their key funders were coming from the local churches of the US and UK, continuing to stress the geopolitical angle may have expanded fundraising opportunities for the Committee. Ultimately, this may have been yet another political consideration, as geopolitical issues did not appear in any of the NECC Committee's meeting minutes among the points of discussion.

The NECC cleared the way for the WCC to formally cooperate with UNRWA and other UN agencies in relief efforts. From their earliest meetings, as the Committee was still

²²⁸ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1952-01-03 *Nolde letter to Roosevelt*.

²²⁹ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1952-01-08 *van Asbeck, Grubb, Nolde, Rees Letter*.

²³⁰ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1952-01-09 *Press Release: Church Commission Asks UN Action for Arab Refugees*.

²³¹ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1952-09-19 *Objectives & Procedures of the NECC Committee for Refugee work*.

²³² WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1952-09-19 *Objectives & Procedures of the NECC Committee for Refugee work*.

²³³ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1952-09-19 *Objectives & Procedures of the NECC Committee for Refugee work*.

coalescing into a formal body, a representative from UNRWA sat in on the meetings.²³⁴ This was initially met with some ambivalence, as the delegates from the WCC's voluntary agencies were hesitant about allowing clothing distributions to be totally run through the UN, even as they conceded that care for the aged and infirm was "too large for the voluntary agencies to give more than a token service."²³⁵ The NECC also formalized steps to distance itself from the political elements of the UN, though in a less pointed manner than earlier critiques, nothing that the Committee "in no way commits itself to identification with the policies underlying the activities of any of these UN organizations."²³⁶

By March 1952, the relations between the NECC Committee and UNRWA had clarified in a politically palatable, if not entirely efficient, fashion. Instead of UNRWA leading clothing distribution in camps and the voluntary agencies leading distribution outside of camps, the Committee required only that the agencies consult UNRWA on areas of "greatest need."²³⁷ Yet, in the same meeting, the Committee authorized 67 thousand dollars from their rehabilitation funds to organize vocational training in support of UNRWA's office placement program.²³⁸ Devolving clothing distribution to the local area committees appeared to be UNRWA's own preference. In May the Social Welfare Committee sent Morrison a proposal to pool all clothing distribution under voluntary committees or geographical sub-committees.²³⁹ This proposal handing clothing responsibility over to the NECC Committee, and volunteered UNRWA help in planning or distribution as necessary. The letter also expressed a quiet frustration with "duplication" as the number of agencies active in any one area increased.²⁴⁰ This sentiment from UNRWA hints at them growing tired of a disjointed response effort, and that the UN Agency was more than willing to let the NECC Committee try to corral the dozens of voluntary agencies. In the next NECC Coordination meeting, the Committee voted to run with the UNRWA proposal, but only after voting to expand the number of NGOs involved and invite in the British Red Cross to be a member of the coordinating committee.²⁴¹ By July, the NECC Committee had organized and accounted for 5353 bales of clothing, blankets, and shoes across themselves, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), UNRWA, the Pontifical Mission, and the Save the Children Fund.²⁴² The lion's share

²³⁴ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1952-01-23 *Meting Minutes Near East Christian Council Committee for Refugee Work Meeting in Beirut, Jan. 23, 1952.*

²³⁵ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1952-01-23 *Meting Minutes Near East Christian Council Committee for Refugee Work Meeting in Beirut, Jan. 23, 1952.*

²³⁶ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1952-09-19 *Objectives & Procedures of the NECC Committee for Refugee work.*

²³⁷ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1952-03-05 *Meting Minutes The N.E.C.C. Committee for Refugee Work, March 5, 1952, Jerusalem.*

²³⁸ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1952-03-05 *Meting Minutes The N.E.C.C. Committee for Refugee Work, March 5, 1952, Jerusalem.*

²³⁹ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1952-05-05 *UNRWA Social Welfare Division Beirut letter to Morrison.*

²⁴⁰ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1952-05-05 *UNRWA Social Welfare Division Beirut letter to Morrison.*

²⁴¹ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1952-06-11 *Meting Minutes Meeting of the Central Co-Ordinating Committee held at the Greek Orthodox Archbishopric, Beirut, at 8.30 A.M. on Wednesday, June 11, 1952.*

²⁴² WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1952-07-21 *Meeting Minutes Meeting of the central Committee on Clothing Distribution America*

of these were provided by the NECC and LWF (over 2700 bales each), compared to UNRWA's 115, and so those two NGOs led allocation of clothing, usurping some logistical coordination authority from UNRWA.²⁴³ Still, the NECC was constrained in its distribution by the agreements UNRWA had signed with Arab governments stipulating that its supplies would only go to "official" refugees.²⁴⁴

Despite the continued UN distinction between "official" and "economic" refugees, the WCC used the seat at the table it had earned through moral and now logistical work to continue to press for their needs. In September, the NECC assigned 10 thousand dollars, for immediate use, to support economic refugees, and organized plans for the West Jordan area committee to plan a general conference on the question.²⁴⁵ This advocacy, and his own advocacy for Palestinian refugees would eventually get the WCC's S.A. Morrison barred from the Kingdom of Jordan.²⁴⁶ Despite the short-term challenges this posed for the NECC coordinating the distribution of clothing, it appears to have bolstered the moral standing of the Committee among Palestinians themselves—the secretary of the Arab Refugee Congress of Palestine praised Morrison's efforts and stressed that "the most real relief need" was a political solution.²⁴⁷ And beyond the short-term leadership issues, the NECC only scaled up its operations.

By 1953, the NECC, led by the WCC's Carleton since Morrison was reassigned to Europe, had taken over the logistical mandate for a wide range of relief activities. That year, the NECC oversaw medical work, educational programs and scholarship schemes, and massive distributions of food and clothing. To get a sense of the scale of the NECC relief efforts, their Central Committee received and distributed 270 tons of clothing, valued at half a million US dollars, and 1,386 tons of food to supplement UNRWA rations.²⁴⁸ Nearly half of the NECC's budget of 278 thousand dollars came from the US (over 127 thousand dollars), which also supplied surplus foodstuffs in kind.²⁴⁹ The NECC's main focus was on West

Mission Building, Beirut. Monday, July 21st, 1952, at 10.00 A.M.

²⁴³ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1952-07-21 *Meeting Minutes Meeting of the central Committee on Clothing Distribution America Mission Building, Beirut. Monday, July 21st, 1952, at 10.00 A.M.*

²⁴⁴ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1952-07-21 *Meeting Minutes Meeting of the central Committee on Clothing Distribution America Mission Building, Beirut. Monday, July 21st, 1952, at 10.00 A.M.*

²⁴⁵ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1952-09-05 *Meeting Minutes Meeting of the Central Co-Ordinating Committee held at the Greek Orthodox Archbishopric, Beirut, at 8:30 A.M. on Wednesday, Sept. 3, 1952; 428.15.7.3 1952-09-05 Meeting Minutes Meeting of the Central Co-Ordinating Committee held at the Greek Orthodox Archbishopric, Beirut, at 8:30 A.M. on Wednesday, Sept. 3, 1952.*

²⁴⁶ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1952-12-16 *Meeting Minutes N.E.C.C. Committee for Refugee Relief Minutes of Meeting Held in Jerusalem, December 16, 1952.*

²⁴⁷ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1952-12-16 *Meeting Minutes N.E.C.C. Committee for Refugee Relief Minutes of Meeting Held in Jerusalem, December 16, 1952.*

²⁴⁸ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1954 *Programme of Service to Palestine Refugees in the Near East (NECC Committee for Refugee Relief).*

²⁴⁹ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People 1954 *Programme of Service to Palestine Refugees in the Near East (NECC Committee for Refugee Relief).*

Jordan (later the West Bank), with the largest population of refugees. The NECC Committee budgeted three times as much for West Jordan as it had for Syria, and ended up spending eight times as much, in part due to the Syrian Government setting up the Palestine Arab Refugees' Institution to control work with the refugees.²⁵⁰

The NECC Committee's relief work also ran into the tensions between providing aid to "official" refugees and "economic" refugees. In some instances, the NECC was able to develop projects with a dual mandate. The NECC estimated that there were as many as 75,000 "economic" refugees and 208,560 "official" refugees in Gaza alone.²⁵¹ To meet these dual needs, the NECC and the YMCA leadership in Egypt opened a welfare center organizing boys' leadership programs and camping trips for youth from Egypt and Gaza.²⁵² This dual-purpose model was supported by NECC and Lutheran collaboration. The two opened soup kitchens in Qibya, Samaria and Hebron, and the LWF operated two orphanages that cared for 748 children, sixty percent of whom were refugees.²⁵³ The NECC also engaged in direct support to Arabs still in Israel. In 1953, the NECC spent 4,572 dollars, mainly on scholarships for 43 students, subsidies for local schools, and summer camps for 450 children.²⁵⁴

Other blended relief efforts met persistent barriers. In addition to the Arab governments' opposition to supporting economic refugees, and UNRWA's limited mandate, material restrictions forced the NECC to limit the number of its beneficiaries. In West Jordan, despite allocating a third of its budget to medical and non-medical relief supplies, the local NECC committee reported that "Medical needs of economic refugees, ineligible for UNRWA aid are still beyond the resources of the committee."²⁵⁵ The NECC also attempted to pursue agricultural schemes in Gaza as "about the only hope for social assimilation" for the refugees, but it does not appear that the Committee made significant strides with these schemes.²⁵⁶

As they took on a larger role, the WCC leadership appeared to unconsciously model

²⁵⁰ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1954 *Programme of Service to Palestine Refugees in the Near East (NECC Committee for Refugee Relief)*.

²⁵¹ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1954 *Programme of Service to Palestine Refugees in the Near East (NECC Committee for Refugee Relief)*.

²⁵² WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1954 *Programme of Service to Palestine Refugees in the Near East (NECC Committee for Refugee Relief)*.

²⁵³ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1954 *Programme of Service to Palestine Refugees in the Near East (NECC Committee for Refugee Relief)*.

²⁵⁴ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1954 *Programme of Service to Palestine Refugees in the Near East (NECC Committee for Refugee Relief)*.

²⁵⁵ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1954 *Programme of Service to Palestine Refugees in the Near East (NECC Committee for Refugee Relief)*.

²⁵⁶ WCC CCIA 428.15.7.3 Cooperation with Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees Migrants and Uprooted People, 1954 *Programme of Service to Palestine Refugees in the Near East (NECC Committee for Refugee Relief)*.

themselves on the example of the ICRC in the early stages of refugee relief. Directly, Visser 't Hooft wrote a July letter to the WCC leadership discussing the ratification of the Geneva conventions in which he noted that Henri Dunant was “not only the pioneer of the Red Cross but at the same time a great pioneer of the ecumenical movement,” and argued that the WCC “ought to hold onto that early combination of ecumenical concern with the kind of concern for which the Red Cross has stood and still stands.”²⁵⁷ Elfan Rees, occupied in Geneva with chairing the General Conference of Consultative Non-Governmental Organizations and the ECOSOC conference, took steps to protect the WCC’s funding and degree of independence in relief efforts. In a letter to Frederick Nolde, Rees described a push to extend UNHCR’s mandate by five years, and how he and Van Kirk used their insider ties to cable the US State Department to reverse budget cuts to the Technical Assistance Committee.²⁵⁸ Now within the core group of decisionmakers charting the future of NGO cooperation with the UN, the WCC leaders levied personal connections and a seat at the negotiating table earned by their relief work to push for a more sustainable relief “machinery” than the one they had worked with in Palestine. Revealing a final shift of thought in 1953, Rees sent WCC leadership a memorandum on their relations with the International Labour Organization (ILO). In it, Rees objected to creating confessional liaisons between the UN IGOs and NGOs, arguing that “an overall secularism is much more satisfactory.”²⁵⁹

While the WCC never relinquished its essential Christian identity, its push for secularism in the IGOs helped prevent the NGOs from being shunted to faith-based silos. Rees’s own experiences with the issues of corralling NGOs representing different branches of Christianity likely fed part of his fear of religious factionalism at the UN. Further, this choice echoes the example of the ICRC, which stressed its humanitarian impartiality instead of the political entanglements of the UN. The WCC embraced its role as a UN partner, but was now able to claim, when it chose, a similar sort of moral authority based on impartiality. This in turn was thanks to its logistical work in raising funds and delivering relief without regard to religion.

This new moral impartiality, built as it was on years of strongly religious moral appeals, served the WCC well in continuing its projects in the years to come. WCC and UNRWA relief efforts for Arab refugees continued to evolve over the years, rapidly in the wake of the 1967 War, but the formation of the NECC Committee and their projects in 1953 laid a foundation for the decades that would follow. To this day, UNRWA still works closely with NGOs to deliver supplies and projects. Moreover, the legacy of the WCC’s coordination bodies lives on. NECC is still active in Gaza, with all local leaders.²⁶⁰ Its projects still focus on medical care, education, and training, including vocational training projects in collaboration with Islamic Relief.²⁶¹ Now, however, the NECC can overcome the barrier

²⁵⁷ WCC CCIA 42.5.45 Dr E. Rees 1947-1963, 1953-07-03 *'t Hooft Letter Concerning Red Cross Conventions*.

²⁵⁸ WCC CCIA 42.5.45 Dr E. Rees 1947-1963, 1953-08-07 *Elfan Rees letter to Frederick Nolde 'Economic and Social Council – Sixteenth Session'*.

²⁵⁹ WCC CCIA 42.5.45 Dr E. Rees 1947-1963, 1953-12-18 *Memorandum from Rees to Visser 't Hooft re: Relations with the International Labour Office*.

²⁶⁰ NECC Gaza, 'Gaza Area Committee' (n.d.), available at: <http://www.neccgaza.org/Committee.aspx>.

²⁶¹ Near East Council of Churches (NECC), 'Department of Services to Palestinian Refugees DSPR/Gaza Area, Annual Report 2020' (2020), available at:

between “economic” and “official” refugees, and offers services to anyone in Gaza in need, of any status or faith.²⁶² The mandate of UNRWA itself also gradually expanded to include family members and, from 1993 to 2002, general social support and economic development.²⁶³ Though the WCC and ICRC leadership of the 1950s did not see this expansion during their terms in office, their calls for need-based support proved prescient. They successfully predicted the unworkable nature of support to only part of the displaced population.

As ambitious as UNRWA’s mandate was when it took over relief from the ICRC, LRCS, and AFSC, it was quickly exposed as inadequate. A new cohort of largely faith-based agencies stepped in to fill this gap, and though it took its time, the WCC eventually became a leading actor in this second constellation of agencies. In reaching this point, the WCC followed a similar playbook as the ICRC. It first leveraged its moral authority early on to get to the table with the UN, then began to develop a deeper logistical expertise, buoyed by successful fundraising. The WCC too struggled with being amalgamated into the UN “machinery,” and turned back to its moral principles to reestablish authority. And much like the ICRC, though it took on a smaller portfolio in later decades, it remains an active partner to many Palestinians today.

<http://www.neccgaza.org/images/Reports/79a3658b-a276-4717-a40e-06921bad6b01/Annual%20Report%202020.pdf>

²⁶² Near East Council of Churches (NECC), ‘Department of Services to Palestinian Refugees DSPR/Gaza Area, Annual Report 2020’ (2020), available at:

<http://www.neccgaza.org/images/Reports/79a3658b-a276-4717-a40e-06921bad6b01/Annual%20Report%202020.pdf>

²⁶³ L. Bartholomew, ‘The Mandate of UNRWA at Sixty’, *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 28 (2009): 452-474. 460.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

The International Committee of the Red Cross and the World Council of Churches entered into their relief efforts from dramatically different starting points. The ICRC sought to rebuild its financial and moral credibility after failing Europe's Jewish community, and faced internal threats of reorganization and absorption into a single Red Cross body. The WCC, on the other hand, was a younger council of many organizations that had done different relief work in the past. Building on this past work, it threw itself into global refugee relief before the WCC founding documents had even been signed. Yet both anchored their work in a strong moral imperative: impartial humanitarianism for the ICRC and Christian charity for the WCC. As Vosters detailed in the European context, the authority coming from strong moral claims served both of these NGOs well. It enabled both to gain a position of prominence in relief efforts through "insider" appeals to the UN and "outsider" tactics of public appeals and, in the case of the WCC, criticism. As the scale of their operations increased, both organizations established strong logistical authority as key pieces in the UN relief distribution scheme, but both returned to moral claims as the basis of their involvement. This return to moral authority helped them differentiate themselves, and their objectives from the political goals of the UN. Moreover, the ICRC and WCC prioritizing their moral, rather than logistical, duties helped them to make future claims as necessary partners in IGO relief efforts.

For both organizations, the personal connections of determined leadership served as a key conduit to let them exercise this authority. The social networks of leaders such as Paul Ruegger and Elfan Rees gave the ICRC and WCC an edge in fundraising and an ability to push back on the UN when they felt it was not falling short. In this respect, this thesis aims to add to the literature on NGO governance, echoing the work of Vosters who also detailed the importance of personal ties to cross the NGO-IGO divide. More broadly, it also hopes to show how this leadership, paired with moral authority, gave the NGOs a means to influence the evolution of IGOs. Much of the existing research details the influence of IGOs on NGO policy, but the process certainly worked in both directions. Countering Martin's approach, this study demonstrated that the NGOs both played an important role in expanding the time horizon of UN relief activities while ensuring that they were not subsumed into the UN apparatus.

The differences between the two NGOs also proves instructive for refugee governance. The ICRC began its activity in Palestine in tension with the League of Red Cross societies, and both were territorial over their operations. However, over the course of the response, the ICRC, LRCS, and AFSC coordinated to effectively push UN policy and define their own roles. The WCC, meanwhile, had its role defined in large part by the coalition that it worked with even prior to increasing relief efforts. This group of smaller charities and churches had dozens of competing claims and component activities. In the early stages, this slowed WCC relief, as they sought to find a useful way to contribute. But later, the complexity of the WCC's network of local partners gave it a useful tool to push for its agenda, as the UN did not want to coordinate across the NECC's many partners. For both the WCC and ICRC, this finding expands Gnes and Vermulen's argument that NGOs adapt to

governments to show that IGOs and governments in the late 1940's and early 1950's were themselves adapting to the unique desires and compositions of NGO coalitions.

Independent funding and the time it afforded to wait and study the situation also contributed to different outcomes between the two NGOs. While the ICRC was desperately in need of funds and reputational rehabilitation, it got pulled beyond its intended involvement. Ultimately, the ICRC successfully argued that relief and works programs for hundreds of thousands were a responsibility that would pull it into a political role, and that responsibility should be in the hands of the IGOs. The WCC took more time to join, but was able to enter the UN relief apparatus with a clearer definition of their goals and the ability to turn down responsibility if they felt it necessary. Both of these approaches are striking in the modern era, where NGO competition for funding feeds an imperative to be the first involved, and to accept any role the UN will fund. NGOs are also loath to relinquish any responsibility once they get it. While the model of UN-NGO partnership in relief operations grew in large part from the examples of the ICRC and WCC in Palestine, the financial incentives of the modern relief regime have clearly undercut the likelihood that all but the most morally determined organizations follow the same trajectories of caution or downsizing their roles.

The study of these factors also contributes to the literature on Palestine. Previous research has focused on the activities of NGOs, but less frequently addresses the motivations and debates across the refugee relief regime. The ICRC worked through conflicts with governments that sought to undermine its neutral humanitarian authority, and helped emphasize the UN's own role as a political mediator in contrast. The WCC, meanwhile, worked with an amazing range of faith-based organizations in the middle of a war many still view as a synecdoche for conflict between Judaism and Islam. There is certainly a wealth of further study that can be done with the WCC archives on this front, but this study hopes to add pieces of historical evidence to this overlooked area of study.

Finally, the debates surrounding the division of "official" and "economic" refugees that harried the early NGOs in Palestine continues to resonate today. Now, however, the debate is of different refugee statuses and nationalities. The countries that host the largest Palestinian communities now also host refugees from Syria, Iraq, Sudan, and Yemen, among others. The fragmentation of the UN system still means that different groups have different protections and support, and it is worth revisiting the work of organizations that argued that this need not be the case.

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