

## **The Usefulness of the UNCCP Archives for Palestinian Refugee Compensation/Restitution Claims**

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Prepared for  
BADIL Expert Forum  
for a Rights Based Approach to the Palestinian Refugee Question  
Geneva Seminar, 2 – 5 October 2003

## **Introduction**

The archives of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP) long have been known to contain the most thorough reckoning of the scope and value of Palestinian refugee land ever undertaken. Although part of the UNCCP “Technical Project” on refugee property losses was made public in 1964, significant details were not. The UN Secretariat Archives in New York, which houses the UNCCP’s archives, has kept very tight control over the records detailing the refugee property since then. It also has not allowed access to other documents that are contained in the commission’s archives. This archival material has assumed an almost mythical status over the years for those studying the refugee property question, and it was long believed that much useful material was secreted away somewhere “at the UN.”

In the late 1990s, the author was granted access to the UNCCP archives, both the land records and other material, in the course of writing a book on the history of the Palestinian refugee property issue. This study is based on that work.<sup>(1)</sup> It aims to do several things. First, it describes that portion of the UNCCP archives that directly relates to the question of compensation/restitution for Palestinian refugees. Second, it offers details of the specific figures on the scope and value both of the refugees’ land, as well as of wider compensation schemes developed by the UNCCP. Third, it discusses what parties have obtained filmed copies of part of the UNCCP archives over the years and what they have done with these. Finally, it discusses the usefulness of the archives for the compensation/restitution question.

## **The UNCCP and its Archives**

The idea of a UN “conciliation commission” was the brainstorm of UN Mediator for Palestine Folke Bernadotte. After his assassination in September 1948, the UN General Assembly voted to create a body it called the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine on the basis of its Resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948. The purpose of the UNCCP was to assume the conciliation mission of the UN mediator. The UNCCP was structured as a body made up of three members responsible to the General Assembly. The members were not persons but member states of the UN: France, Turkey, and the United States of America. The position of chair rotated among the three nations, initially on a monthly basis. As an agency within the UN Secretariat’s bureaucracy, the UNCCP employed the services of UN employees, the highest ranking of whom was the UNCCP Principal Secretary. It commenced functioning in January 1949. While it effectively ceased actively functioning in 1966, the UNCCP continues to exist to this day with American, French, and Turkish membership, and a UN secretariat employee is still tasked to serve as its secretary.

Although it had failed in its wider mission to forge a conciliation between Israel and the Arabs by 1951, the UNCCP decided to undertake significant efforts at tackling a subsidiary issue that it hoped could assist in alleviating some of the effects of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war: trying to effect compensation for the property abandoned by the 726,000 Palestinians made refugees by the first Arab-Israeli war of 1948. As a foundation for these efforts, the UNCCP decided to provide the parties with a professional estimate of the scope and value of these losses. A Briton working with the UNCCP’s Refugee Office, John M. Berncastle, carried out a quick and general study of the refugees’ property losses in 1951. Known as the Global Estimate, this figure was based on maps and printed

British mandatory reports. Beginning in 1952, a new UNCCP office, the Technical Office, undertook a far more lengthy effort to enumerate and value the refugees' losses. This was called the Technical Project. Basing themselves on mandatory land and land taxation records, Technical Office employees like Berncastle, the Palestinian land expert Sami Hadawi, and another Briton, Frank E. Jarvis, oversaw a huge project that lasted until 1964. The purpose was to determine, first, the exact amount of all individually owned Arab land as of 14 May 1948 that lay in the part of British Palestine that became Israel. Beyond that, the Technical Project also sought to determine the value of this property, in P£, as of 29 November 1947 (the Palestine pound was equivalent to sterling at that time; one pound equaled US\$4.03).

The UNCCP released a sanitized report of its final estimate of Arab land in Israel in April 1964, but many details of its study -- particularly the value of the land -- were kept secret and never publicly revealed. Although the UNCCP later sold filmed copies of some of its archival holdings to several Arab parties in the 1970s and 1980s, the vast bulk of these holdings have been locked up in the UN Secretariat Archives in New York for decades away from public view. What is not generally known is that in addition to these land records, the UNCCP archives contain a wealth of other data, including other studies and estimates that also bear directly on the question of compensation/restitution of Palestinian refugee property. This vast amount of material is detailed below.

The UNCCP archival material consists of both paper and filmed records. The paper records consist of 96 linear feet of records, of which 90 feet are documents. Of these, 60 feet consists of R/P1 forms, the form developed by the UNCCP to record the details of specific parcels of Arab property in Israel (one R/P1 form per parcel). The

other six feet of paper records consist of several thousand maps, largely mandatory maps of Palestinian villages. The archives also contain films: 226 rolls of 16mm filmed copies of the R/P1 forms and an owners index, in addition to 1,642 rolls of 35mm films of Ottoman and British mandatory land registers that the British government sold to the UNCCP in 1952. All of these paper and filmed records are stored at the UN Secretariat archives in New York under lock and key away from public scrutiny. The records have been catalogued and stored according to the system of the Secretariat archives, although special permission is required to gain access to them. It should be noted that some of this material relates to subjects other than the UNCCP's efforts on behalf of Palestinian refugee property, and deals with matter such as borders and cease fire lines.(2)

The UNCCP archives thus contain a wealth of data that is directly relevant to the question of Palestinian refugee compensation/restitution. The most widely known data are those detailing the scope and value of Arab property in Israel as of 14 May 1948. The Technical Project never officially differentiated among the land of refugees, of Palestinians who remained behind, or of non-Palestinian Arabs. A public reckoning of the scope, but not the value, of the total amount of this Arab land in Israel was issued in April 1964. Values were kept secret, and have not been published by the UNCCP to this very day. Presented below are the figures generated by the UNCCP for the total scope and value of all Arab land in Israel, as well as the figures for the land of those Arabs it estimated to be refugees. These figures later proved inaccurate (see below):

Table 1: Scope of All Rural and Urban Arab Land in Israel as of 14 May 1948

<u>Sub-District</u>	<u>Total Area (Dunums)</u>	<u>Covered by R/P1 Forms (Dunums)</u>
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(one dunum = 1,000 sq.m.)

## 1. Subdistricts Excluding Beersheba

Acre	795,357	507,707
Baysan	366,095	147,167
Nazareth	490,942	248,345
Safad	696,859	347,710
Tiberias	439,031	194,439
Haifa	972,312	405,580
Janin	257,212	228,407
Nablus	23,414	23,414
Tulkarm	503,676	332,571
Hebron	1,162,336	1,144,808
Jerusalem	296,943	221,482
Ramallah	6,240	6,240
Jaffa	285,084	140,425
Ramla	763,481	569,813
Gaza	815,437	675,983
TOTAL	7,874,419	5,194,091

2. Beersheba\* 12,445,000 64,000

\* R/P1 forms were not drawn up for an additional 1,811,000 dunums of cultivable land in the Beersheba sub-district that were assumed to be cultivated by bedouin Arabs

GRAND TOTAL 20,319,419 5,258,091

FINAL GRAND TOTAL\*\* 7,069,091

\*\* adding the 1,811,000 dunums of land in Beersheba assumed to be cultivated by bedouin Arabs but for which no R/P1 forms were drawn up

Source: UN Document A/AC.25/W.84, "Working Paper Prepared by the Commission's Land Expert on the Methods and Techniques of Identification and Valuation of Arab Refugee Immovable Property Holdings in Israel" (28 April 1964)

Table 2: Estimated Scope of Land Owned by Arabs Still Living in Israel After 1948

<u>Sub-District</u>	<u>Amount (Dunums)</u>
Acre	318,714
Baysan	9,390
Nazareth	190,182
Safad	30,222
Tiberias	50,323
Haifa	170,238
Janin	86,554
Nablus	0
Tulkarm	140,231
Hebron	7,649
Jerusalem	3,186
Ramallah	0
Jaffa	40
Ramla	5,320
Gaza	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,012,059</b>

Source: United Nations Secretariat Archives [hereafter, UNSA], Record Group DAG 13-3, UNCCP. Subgroup: Principal Secretary. Series: Records Relating to the Technical Office/Box 16/1952-57/Land Identification Project/Jarvis Report; Document: A/AC.25/W.83, "Initial Report of the Commission's Land Expert on the Identification and Valuation of Arab Refugee Property Holdings in Israel" (15 September 1961)

Table 3: Scope of Rural and Urban Land Left Behind in Israel by Refugees

<u>All Arab Land in in Israel (Dunums) (on R/P1 Forms)</u>	<u>Land Owned by Palestinians Still Living in Israel (Dunums)</u>	<u>Land Owned by Refugees (Dunums) (on R/P1 Forms)</u>
5,258,091	1,012,059	4,246,032

Table 4: Value of All Rural Arab Land in Israel as of 29 November 1947

(1P£ = 1UK£ = US\$4.03, in 1947 prices)

<u>Sub-District</u>	<u>Value (£P)</u>
Acre	15,051,225
Baysan	3,464,834
Nazareth	5,595,879
Safad	7,323,092
Tiberias	3,805,192
Haifa	11,757,629
Janin	4,357,696
Nablus	540,660
Tulkarm	11,987,299
Hebron	12,443,989
Jerusalem	10,598,408
Ramallah	135,150
Jaffa	23,560,057
Ramla	22,190,429
Gaza	19,579,534
Beersheba	15,000,000
TOTAL	167,395,073

Source: UNSA DAG 13-3, UNCCP. Subgroup: Principal Secretary. Series: Records Relating to the Technical Office/Box 16/1952-57/Land Identification Project/Jarvis Report; Document: A/AC.25/W.83 ADD 1, "Initial Report of the Commission's Land Expert on the Identification and Valuation of Arab Refugee Property Holdings in Israel" (10 September 1962)

Table 5: Value of All Urban Arab Land in Israel as of 29 November 1947

<u>Area</u>	<u>Vacant Lots (£P)</u>	<u>Buildings (£)</u>	<u>Total (£P)</u>
Acre	423,542	919,385	1,342,927
`Afula	984	0	984
Bat Yam	1,683	0	1,683
Baysan	53,691	457,186	510,877
Haifa	4,311,086	10,467,644	14,778,730
Holon	123,441	890	124,331
Jaffa	7,559,740	14,094,203	21,653,943
Jerusalem	6,371,160	12,062,701	18,433,861
Lydda	438,690	1,403,399	1,842,089
al-Majdal	94,960	728,976	823,936
Natanya	36,497	0	36,497
Nazareth	219,907	1,412,635	1,632,542
Ramat Gan	71,447	0	71,447
Safad	157,354	840,675	998,029
Shafa' `Amr	52,814	284,330	337,144
Tel Aviv	2,366,740	134,020	2,500,760
Tiberias	201,253	524,084	725,337
* Beersheba (estimate)			600,000
* Ramla (estimate)			1,850,000
TOTAL			68,265,177

Source: UNSA DAG 13-3, UNCCP. Subgroup: Principal Secretary. Series: Records Relating to the Technical Office/Box 16/1952-57/Land Identification Project/Jarvis Report; Document: A/AC.25/W.83 ADD 1, "Initial Report of the Commission's Land Expert on the Identification and Valuation of Arab Refugee Property Holdings in Israel" (10 September 1962)

Table 6: Value of Rural and Urban Land Left in Israel by Refugees

<u>All Arab Land in Israel (£P)</u>	<u>Land Owned by Palestinians Still Living in Israel (£P)</u>	<u>Land Owned by Refugees (£P)</u>
235,660,250	31,000,000	204,660,190

Source: UNSA DAG 13-3, UNCCP. Subgroup: Principal Secretary. Series: Records Relating to the Technical Office/Box 16/1952-57/Land Identification Project/Jarvis Report; Document: A/AC.25/W.83 ADD 1, "Initial Report of the Commission's Land Expert on the Identification and Valuation of Arab Refugee Property Holdings in Israel" (10 September 1962)

It is not a well-known fact that the UNCCP archives contain other data relating to Palestinian refugee compensation/restitution besides these estimates of individually-owned Arab land. In the early 1960s, UNCCP Land Expert Frank Jarvis studied several methods for estimating the value of moveable property as well. This estimate was never released nor even publicly mentioned. Jarvis used three different methods to determine this amount. His first was to base the value of moveables on the value of the rural land. Using 4.7 per cent as the basis of his calculations, Jarvis came up with a rough estimate of £P5,678,000, excluding the Beersheba sub-district. He then added to this 60.9 per cent of the value of urban land and arrived at approximately £P36,418,000. The total figure was then £P42,069,000 (excluding Beersheba). Jarvis' second method was to determine the value of moveables as a percentage of the Arab share of the national income of Palestine. He came up with £70,000,000 as "...a reasoned guess" for the total Arab share of the national income using this method. Assuming that 700,000 out of 1,124,000 non-Jews became refugees, this left a total of £17,400,000 in moveables. The third method was to base the value of moveables on the ownership of capital. Here Jarvis did have mandatory data on ownership of industrial equipment, etc. He came up with a total figure of £P30,600,000 for the Arab sector of pre-1948 Palestine as follows: industrial equipment (£4 million); commercial stock (£5.5 million); vehicles (£2 million); agricultural livestock (£13.1 million); and household furniture (£6 million). Again deducting a percentage to represent the refugees only left him with a figure of £P19,125,000 in refugee moveables. The three different methods then produced figures of £42,069,000, £17,400,000, and £19,125,000.(3)

The archives contain several other noteworthy studies of Arab property that were

never made public either. In one, Jarvis estimated the value of communally owned Arab land. This issue later would constitute a major Arab complaint against the UNCCP's various public studies of refugee land: they did not publicly study the value of abandoned communal property. Jarvis roughly estimated this land to be worth approximately \$US56,000,000. As an internal 1962 UNCCP document noted, "For the purposes of an estimate a figure of 56 million dollars has been suggested but it is emphasized that this figure has no basis in valuation..."(4)

In addition to the above-mentioned estimates of the value of Arab property, the UNCCP archives also contain an overall plan to compensate Palestinian refugees that was based on the value of property but significantly, included other factors as well. The UNCCP has never publicly made mention of the fact that it devised such a plan, nor has it ever released the total compensation figure (for land, interest payments, etc.). This plan was also devised by Jarvis starting in about 1961, when he began formulating a number of ideas that he hoped would be implemented someday by some type of "UN Repatriation/Compensation Agency." He met with UNCCP Special Representative Joseph E. Johnson, UNCCP Principal Secretary John P. Gaillard, and UNRWA official Sherwood G. Moe in March 1962 to discuss the specifics. The men discussed five types of payment that would be made as part of an overall compensation settlement. The first was compensation for the abandoned refugee land. In addition to the 1947 capital value of the land that he was completing as part of the Technical Program, Jarvis proposed adding an additional 70 per cent of this value. Of this, 50 per cent would account for a four per cent per annum compound interest on the sum while the other 20 per cent would account for changes in the value of currency. The second type of payment would be to

cover the value of moveable property, plus an additional amount to cover interest and changes in currency as noted above. Third, they discussed paying a “disturbance allowance” that would represent the loss of a refugee’s income until s/he could be re-established. The fourth type of payment was an “ex-gratia” payment of between \$US500-1,000 that would constitute a general compensation for hardship. The same amount would be paid to all refugees, and was designed to help with resettlement. Finally was the “reintegration cost,” which would be \$US2,500 per family. The four men could not agree on this point. The reintegration cost would not actually be paid to each family but was instead more of a notional payment. It represented a cumulative amount for all types of compensation. The first four types of payments then would be deducted from this total amount (the total number of refugee families multiplied by \$2,500). Any funds remaining either could be directed toward the refugees or the host governments. They also agreed that they had overlooked the question of compensation for public property. The four thought that perhaps this could form the basis of the \$2,500/family reintegration cost.(5)

Jarvis later developed his ideas. He definitely felt that interest should be paid on the abandoned land and added to its value. Jarvis conceded that this amount would be subject to a political decision but that the principle remained nonetheless. He also insisted that the refugees be compensated for their share of mandatory police structures, schools, public transit, and other forms of public property. He noted that such things “...are an essential requisite of any community and their loss has to be made good wherever the refugees are resettled other than in their country of origin.” Jarvis thought that perhaps a lump sum could be paid to the host countries to cover this amount. Jarvis

also remained committed to a “disturbance allowance” as a way of assisting the refugees in re-settlement.(6)

Overall, he envisioned a grand compensation scheme working like this. Compensation would be paid for property, but only to non-repatriated refugees. “Damages,” on the other hand, was a different matter and could be sought by anyone, including non-Palestinians. Jarvis included moveables in his definition of “property.” He admitted that compensation should be based on more than just the value of abandoned property in order to facilitate wide-scale resettlement. But compensation should “...express the payment as a contribution designed to recompense the recipient, as far as is possible, for the loss which he has suffered.” Should the amount of compensation be subject to negotiation? Here Jarvis conceded that in the case of international contributors to a fund that the answer would be yes. However, he believed that it would not be difficult to convince them that the amount in question was “reasonable.” When it came to negotiations with the refugees, he noted that, “It is a natural characteristic of the Arab to try to drive a bargain.” He also believed that not much would be gained from negotiations with individuals, unless an arbitration tribunal were created, because they inevitably would remember their property as being more valuable than the figures established by the UNCCP. Should payments be made in cash to individual refugees? On this question, Jarvis wanted to avoid having refugees invest money in advanced economies outside of the Middle East, just as he wanted to avoid the inflationary effects of a sudden, massive influx of capital into the area. His solution was that perhaps compensation payments could be made with some type of UN bond. Finally, Jarvis also was willing to incorporate the Arabs’ argument that a property custodian could secure the

income from the refugees' property into his plan. He wrote a memorandum to the UNCCP in November 1961 in which he discussed his idea for connecting a compensation fund with UNRWA's need for operating funds. Jarvis' idea was that the interest earned on the sums contributed to a compensation fund could be siphoned off and directed to UNRWA. This would help meet the Arabs' demand in the General Assembly that the income from the refugees' property in Israel be used to their advantage.(7)

In total, Jarvis' secret plan to pay compensation based on the value of land, moveable property, interest, and so forth, totaled some £P400,000,000, or \$US1,125,000,000. Word of the various general figures being talked about began to leak out almost immediately, and some people with connections with the UN began talking of \$US1,500,000,000 in compensation while other figures cited at that time were between two and seven times as large. But like his estimates of refugee property values, Jarvis' overall compensation plan never was made public and has lain hidden in the UNCCP archives for four decades.(8)

The UNCCP archives thus contain a virtual treasure trove of information relating to the commission's various public and private initiatives aimed at providing data and plans for some type of compensation scheme (the archives reveal that the UNCCP thought largely in terms of compensation, not restitution). Given the difficulties in accessing these archives, are there other sources for this information?

### **Copies of UNCCP Archival Material Outside the UN Archives**

Various parties have managed to obtain copies of some of the UNCCP's archival material over the years. Most of these have been Arab actors with a direct connection with the refugees. The Arab states first began demanding copies of the UNCCP's

material on refugee property in the early 1950s. Starting in 1961, the UNCCP and various Arab states began a lengthy correspondence over whether the commission would grant them their request. Nothing came of the matter until November 1972, when the Lebanese ambassador to the UN spoke with the US Ambassador to the UN, George H.W. Bush, about whether the United States would support a renewed Arab request for copies of the UNCCP records. The UNCCP discussed the matter with the UN's legal counsel and decided to grant permission at long last. The UNCCP agreed to provide the Arab states that were hosts to Palestinian refugees, at their cost, with copies of the following documents: the films of the mandatory land registers; the R/P1 forms; and an index of land owners' names contained in the R/P1 forms. It further asked that any party receiving such material keep the valuation figures confidential.(9) The first Arab state formally to request and receive copies of the UNCCP material was Egypt, which asked for the films in September 1973. They were then duplicated in June 1974. The Egyptians later received a second copy of the films in March and May 1975. In May 1974, Jordan made a similar request and received the films the following year. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) also requested copies of the films in November 1982. Duplication finally was completed in May 1984 and the copies were handed over the PLO. They were stored at the PLO Economics Department in Damascus. Finally, in 1976 the UN's Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People also requested "...an inventory of Arab property in Israel and the territories occupied by Israel." The UNCCP agreed, and provided copies of the same information it provided to the Arabs.(10)

The author is unaware of any serious effort by the Arab states to study the

UNCCP films in a systematic way during the 1970s and 1980s. Some of the parties that obtained the films granted access to individual Palestinians, including researchers. In the late 1990s, however, the PLO and the UN undertook a massive project to put the UNCCP property data into a more useable form. The PLO wanted the records computerized in a format that was more user friendly for possible use in the future by negotiators. The UN wanted to preserve the records from deterioration. General Assembly Resolution 51/129 of 13 December 1996 was the legal basis for UN involvement in the venture. The resolution, which repeated earlier resolutions calling for the 1948 refugees to be given access to the income from their property, also called for the “preservation and modernization” of the UNCCP’s records relating to refugee property. Starting in August 1997, the Canadian-based TransCad, Ltd. company began several months of work scanning 5,625 maps, 210,000 double-sided owners index cards, and 1,641 35mm films of mandatory land registers in the UNCCP archives into CD-ROMs. The company also scanned the over 500,000 R/P1 forms. Following this, TranCad used the CD-ROMs to create a sophisticated GIS (geographic information system) computer database linking the property records with maps. The project was essentially completed by May 2000, and the resulting computerized database contained all of the property owners’ names, location of properties, and property values contained in the UNCCP’s R/P1 forms and index cards. Both the PLO Observer Mission to the UN and the UN Secretariat archives in New York ended up with copies of the data-base, although neither has thus far allowed unrestricted public access to the records.(11)

This massive and sophisticated computerization project revealed a number of flaws with the original UNCCP Technical Program’s methods and data. For instance,

digitization and computerization determined that not all R/P1 forms contained full information. It was also revealed that despite the Technical Program's methodology to produce one R/P1 form for each parcel of Arab-owned land, the total number of unique R/P1 forms exceeded the total number of unique parcels of land in the database. Thus, the computerization project found that the Technical Program staff had compiled a total of 523,750 R/P1 forms. Of these, only 423,750 represented unique forms while the rest were duplicates, etc. Even considering this, the number of R/P1 forms still did not match the number of unique parcels of land. The Technical Program staff created 423,750 unique R/P1 forms although there are actually 458,210 unique parcels represented in the UNCCP records.(12)

The following data indicate the scope and value of Arab land in Israel after rectification during digitization and computerization of the data:

Table 7: Amended Scope of Arab Land in Israel (both Refugees and Palestinians Still in Israel), not Including Beersheba, as of 14 May 1948 in Dunums

4,851,613.978

Table 8: Amended Value of Land in Israel (both Refugees and Palestinians Still in Israel) as of 29 November 1947 in £P

224,815,931

source: Information provided by the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the UN; interview with Adnan Abdelrazek (September 2001); Adnan Abdel Razeq [sic], "Refugee Property: UN Modernizes Land Records," Pt. II, The Jerusalem Times Insight Report Internet Edition, 10 October 2001 (on-line document: [www.jerusalem-times.net/tjt/insight/main.htm](http://www.jerusalem-times.net/tjt/insight/main.htm)); Adnan Abdelrazek, "Modernizing the Refugee Land Records: Advantages and Pitfalls," Salim Tamari and Elia Zureik, eds., Reinterpreting the Historical Record. The Uses of Palestinian Refugee Archives for Social Science Research and Policy Analysis (Jerusalem: Institute for Jerusalem Studies and Institute for Palestine Studies, 2001); interview with Adnan Abdelrazek (September 2001).

One other Arab party has created a computerized database using the films it purchased from the UNCCP: Jordan. In 1999, the Ministry of Finance's Department of Lands and Survey was approached by the Department of Palestinian Affairs within the Foreign Ministry about undertaking such a project. The Prime Minister's office later provided the funds for the project, and the two departments came to an agreement in March 1999. Thirty-five employees were hired as part of the project that was undertaken by the Department of Lands and Survey's Documentation Department. Data was extracted not only from the films purchased from the UNCCP in 1974 but from original British and Ottoman registers in the land department's possession since 1948. In July 2001, the land department publicly announced that the project had been completed. Like the PLO, the Jordanian government has not yet granted unrestricted public access to its database.(13)

### **Usefulness of the Archives**

Finally, is the information developed by the UNCCP in the 1950s and 1960s useful for the compensation/restitution question today? The answer is most decidedly "yes." The UNCCP archival record is important on two levels. The most basic is that it contains the full details of the most exhaustive, "neutral" reckoning of the scope and value of the refugees' property losses. This is not to suggest that these data have been universally accepted by all parties. Israel and the Arab states registered objections both to the methodology and final estimates. Yet the fact remains that no party has ever matched the UNCCP's Technical Program in a systematic attempt to estimate the value of the abandoned property, including individual parcels of land, based on a careful study of the

best available records: British mandatory land and land taxation documents. The resulting R/P1 forms, while not offering proof of legal title, thus represent a convenient form documenting a parcel's owner(s), share held by each, location (village, block, parcel number), size, value, and other features. The records thus provide both a macro and micro level information on Arab landholdings in what became Israel.

The PLO/UN project to computerize the UNCCP data is particularly important for future researchers' purposes for several reasons. For the first time the Technical Program data has been put into a readily accessible if still not publicly available format. Secondly, the database can serve a number of important scholarly purposes for the study of land in Palestine generally and not just refugee land. Thirdly, aggregate figures derived from the new database provide a more accurate accounting of the UNCCP's original 1964 figures on the scope and value of Arab-owned land in Israel. For example, the figure of 458,210 individual parcels is greater than the general figure of 453,000 publicly cited by the UNCCP when it announced completion of its project in 1964. The new computer program also determined that the actual surface area of these unique parcels was 4,851,613.978 dunums, including the land of Palestinians still in Israel -- less than the figure of 5,258,091 dunums publicly announced in 1964. The project furthermore determined that the value of the land, taken from the owners index cards, totaled £P224,815,931 -- less than Frank Jarvis's unpublished figure of £P235,660,250. Finally, the new database was able to determine that the number of Arab landowners in the part of Palestine that became Israel, including those Palestinians who stayed behind, was less than 100,000.(14)

Secondly, the UNCCP archives are useful for the other studies they contain.

These include careful studies of other types of land that have been the subject of controversy over the decades that the property issue has been alive. Among these are studies of the value of communally owned Arab land, as well as the percentage of the refugees who owned land. Coming once again from the careful, “neutral” study of the UNCCP, such figures must be held in high regard.

Finally, the archives are useful for the detailed total compensation plan that Jarvis developed in the early 1960s, and that he hoped could be implemented someday by some type of “UN Repatriation/Compensation Agency.” The existence of these plans indicates that the UNCCP was thinking beyond simply using the value of abandoned property as the basis for a compensation regime. Jarvis’ ideas can also serve as useful indicators not only of the UNCCP’s historical thinking, but could provide modern day scholars and negotiators with ideas about how to construct a workable total compensation package. Particularly given the emergence, since the Camp David II summit of July 2000, of the idea of an international fund out of which refugees could receive compensation, such ideas could prove useful -- particularly in convincing a skeptical Palestinian population that the fund’s provisions extended out of UN, and not Israeli-American, thinking.

### **Conclusion**

The UNCCP archives are of immense value, both on a historical level as well a practical level, for those concerned with the question of compensation/restitution for Palestinian refugees. The material is there. Studies based on it are beginning to emerge. What is left is for pressure to build on those who hold the data, whether in its original or modernized, computerized format, to allow greater access to the material for scholarly and diplomatic uses, as well as -- above all -- for the refugees themselves and their

descendants to be able to use the data to chronicle the extent of their individual losses. Regardless of compensation or restitution, of return, or creation of an independent state, the refugees of 1948 deserve to have their losses documented and brought to public light, much as other dispossessed and aggrieved populations have in the past decades. To do so will help memorialize and personalize their losses, and further humanize the face of the Palestinian tragedy of 1948.

## Notes

1. Michael R. Fischbach, *Records of Dispossession: Palestinian Refugee Property and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*. Institute for Palestine Studies Series (New York: Columbia University Press, forthcoming October 2003). The author acknowledges the financial support of a Research and Writing Grant from The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, given through the Friends of the Institute for Palestine Studies, as well as a Rashkind Endowment Grant and a Walter Williams Craigie Teaching Endowment Grant, both from Randolph-Macon College. Financial assistance was also forthcoming from the Institute for Palestine Studies, the Friends of the Institute for Palestine Studies, and James Abdo.
2. Based on the author's familiarity with the UNCCP archives.
3. United Nations Secretariat Archives [hereafter, UNSA] DAG 13-3, UNCCP. Subgroup: Principle Secretary. Series: Records Relating to Compensation/Box 20/1961-64/Background Papers; Document: "Discussion of the Valuable of Movable Property" (December 1961), App. I, II, III.
4. UNSA DAG 13-3, UNCCP. Subgroup: Principle Secretary. Series: Records Relating to Compensation/Box 18/1949-62/Selected Documents and Working Papers; Document: "[Draft] Working Paper on the Problems Presented by the Paragraphs on Compensation Contained in the Johnson Proposal" (19 September 1962).
5. UNSA DAG 13-3, UNCCP. Subgroup: Principal Secretary. Series: Records Relating to Compensation/Box 18/1949-62/Selected Documents and Working Papers; Document: "Note for the Record" (14 March 1962).
6. U.S. National Archives and Records Administration [hereafter, NARA] RG 59, POL

27-14 PAL/UN, “United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine. Aide Memoire by Land Expert” (24 January 1964), attached to USUN to Department of State (24 January 1964); UNSA DAG 13-3, UNCCP. Subgroup: Principal Secretary. Series: Records Relating to Compensation/Box 18/1949-62/Selected Documents and Working Papers; Documents: “Working Paper, United Nations Repatriation/Compensation Agency, Questions Requiring Prior Decision” (5 June 1962) and Jarvis to UNCCP (24 November 1961).

7. Ibid.

8. UNSA DAG 13-3, UNCCP. Subgroup: Principal Secretary. Series: Records Relating to Compensation/Box 18/1949-62/Selected Documents and Working Papers; Documents: “The Arab Refugee Problem. A Reappraisal and a New Concept [draft],” “Working Paper, United Nations Repatriation/Compensation Agency, Questions Requiring Prior Discussion” (5 June 1962), and Jarvis’ memorandum to UNCCP (24 November 1961); David P. Forsythe, United Nations Peacekeeping. The Conciliation Commission for Palestine. Published in cooperation with the Middle East Institute (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University, 1972) p. 118.

9. NARA RG 59, REF 3 UNRWA, USUN to Secretary of State (7 November 1972); UN Document A/31/254, 30th UNCCP report (4 October 1976).

10. UN Documents A/31/254, 30th UNCCP Report (4 October 1976); A/38/397, 37th UNCCP Report (13 September 1983); A/39/455, 38th UNCCP Report (6 September 1984).

11. The author served as a consultant on the first stage of this project, and some of his information derives from that involvement. See also Adnan Abdel Razeq [sic], “Refugee

Property: UN Modernizes Land Records,” Pt. II, The Jerusalem Times Insight Report Internet Edition, 10 October 2001 (on-line document: [www.jerusalem-times.net/tjt/insight/main.htm](http://www.jerusalem-times.net/tjt/insight/main.htm)); Adnan Abdelrazek, “Modernizing the Refugee Land Records: Advantages and Pitfalls,” Salim Tamari and Elia Zureik, eds., Reinterpreting the Historical Record. The Uses of Palestinian Refugee Archives for Social Science Research and Policy Analysis (Jerusalem: Institute for Jerusalem Studies and Institute for Palestine Studies, 2001); interview with Adnan Abdelrazek (September 2001).

12. Ibid. Information on this project was also provided by the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the UN.

13. Jordan Times Internet Edition, 26 July 2001; Afaq `Iqariyya [publication of the Jordanian Department of Lands and Survey] 5 (July 1999); interview with `Abd al-Mun`im Samara al-Zu`bi (August 2001).

14. Information provided by the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the UN; Adnan Abdel Razeq [sic], “Refugee Property: UN Modernizes Land Records,” Adnan Abdelrazek, “Modernizing the Refugee Land Records: Advantages and Pitfalls”; interview with Adnan Abdelrazek (September 2001).