

The founding leaders of the Kata'ib were young men in their early twenties. They were imbued with extreme political ideas during their bitter experience as volunteers fighting side by side with the regular Arab armies in Palestine. On the battleground they viewed with alarm the contrast between Israel's strength and the miserable weakness of the divided Arab armies. The forceful evacuation of Palestinians from their rightful realm exasperated their painful experience. Dr. George Habash, later recalled:

I was humiliated by the events of 1948. The Israelis came to Lydda and forced us to flee. It is a picture that haunts me and that I'll never forget. Thirty thousand human beings walking, weeping ... screaming in horror ... women with babies in their arms and children tugging at their skirts ... and the Israeli soldiers pushing them with their guns. Some people fell by the wayside, some never got up again. It was terrible. Once you have seen this, your heart and your brains are transformed ... what's the point of healing a sick body when such things can happen? One must change the world, do something, kill if necessary, kill even at the risk of becoming inhuman in our turn.³

The author has no means to verify the authenticity of the above reminiscence, but this is beside the point. The important thing we are concerned with here is to understand the psychological impact of the Zionist occupation of Palestine and the humiliating defeat of the Arab armies on the Arab youth who later raised to defend their homeland with vigour and enthusiasm. Hani al-Hindi

³ Oriana Fallaci, "A Leader of the Fedayeen: 'We Want a War Like the Vietnam War'" in Life, June 12, 1970, p. 34.