

1969, at which Fatah assumed the leadership of the PLO. The PFLP boycotted this session on the basis that the PLO should be an embodiment of national unity. The PFLP advocated extricating the PLO from its bureaucratic structure which kept it from being a framework for national unity. We also criticized the classical nature of the PLA. We insisted that unless the PLO was revolutionized in line with its stated purpose, we would not participate in its institutions. The PFLP advocated recognition of all armed Palestinian organizations and not dissolving them into the *Kifah Musallah* (literally *Armed Struggle* - a body formed in Jordan to coordinate between these organizations), for this could lead to the dissolution of their military power. The Executive Committee, however, looked upon the *Kifah Musallah* as a suitable body for resolving other problems.

The PFLP considered it pointless to participate in any institution tied to the Executive Committee without being actively represented in the PNC. A declaration to this effect was issued during the 6th session of the PNC, in which the PFLP did not participate fully. The declaration stated: «The PFLP did not participate in the PNC session, the Executive Committee or the leadership of the *Kifah Musallah*, because we are convinced that our remaining outside the PLO, in its present state, is to the long-run advantage of forming a more solid, clearer and more efficient formula.»

National Unity in the PLO

After the February 10, 1970 fighting between the Palestinian resistance and the Jordanian regime, and the escalation of events in Jordan, the various factions of the Palestinian resistance movement intensified their contacts and their discussions. They formed a unified leadership which reached agreement on several points as was declared in a communique on May 6, 1970. This communique stated that the PLO constituted the broad framework for national unity; it emphasized participation in the coming PNC and the institutions that grew out of it.

In this context, the 7th PNC was convened, resulting in the formation of a National Central Committee which replaced the unified leadership. The National Central Committee consisted of the Executive Committee, representatives of all the organizations, the head of the PNC and of the PLA. However, the representation of the PFLP was symbolic, to test the seriousness of intentions and practice.

The PNC defined the National Central Committee as the supreme leadership of the Palestinian struggle in the matters proposed to be in its jurisdiction. The Executive Committee was obliged to carry out the decisions of the National Central Committee. The Central Committee could present its proposals directly to the PNC and moreover had the power to freeze the membership of the Executive Committee.

This phase was distinguished in that it injected a spine into the body of the PLO, which had been a flabby mass. The PLO gained two feet to stand on. However, this period of national unity was short-lived and full of ambiguity about the question of unity on the part of the PLO leadership and the organizations themselves. The Executive Committee wanted to simplify our struggle through the *Kifah Musallah* (which eventually came to play the role of a military police). It belittled the importance of looking for a united front which could fulfill the tasks of that stage. However, the Executive Committee's proposal about *Kifah Musallah* was not implemented. Instead, they formed a coordinating body which aimed to restrict the size of the military forces.

Factional, individualistic mentality dominated in the Fatah leadership. While it was their right as the largest organization to be the leadership, the fault lies in their not searching for a viable unity formula. The National Central Committee was forgotten without anyone giving an explanation. Also forgotten was military unity, although decisions were made regarding it from the PNC's 7th session and onwards.

There is no doubt that the blame for these breaches rests with the executive leadership of the PLO. However, this does not exempt us from specifying our responsibility as the PFLP. We made the political mistake of refraining from entering the PLO and waiting for it to become revolutionary, instead of participating in the revolutionizing process and practicing the policy of unity and conflict. An idealistic mentality prevailed in the PFLP, and we did not treat matters scientifically. The PFLP was aware of matters of utmost importance as seen in the communique of January 16, 1968, stressing revolutionizing the PLO, including the active forces, organizing elections for the leadership bodies, and stressing that the PLO is the broad framework for a national front. Yet in practice we overlooked these matters as seen in the contents of the other communique which stated: «Our remaining outside the PLO, in its present state, is to the long run advantage of forming a more solid, clearer and more efficient formula.»

Our explanation for this is the organizations' fear of losing their identity within the framework of unity. However, unity should have been understood as a common denominator which is complemented by ideological and organizational independence, leaving room for discussion and contradictions. Whether we are talking about the mentality of the PLO leadership and its methods of work, or the thinking of the PFLP at that time, there was an absence of the maturity needed for a united front in the stage of national liberation. Conflict overshadowed national alliance at a time when a balance should have been maintained between the two. National alliance should have usually taken priority over conflict, while secondary conflicts should have been subordinated to the demands of the main conflict with the enemy.

Unimplemented decisions

The third period was between 1971-1982, after the bloody events in Jordan and the massacres which the regime perpetrated against our people and patriots. Looking back, we find that the documents of the PNC's sessions, from the 8th until the 15th, unanimously agreed on the importance of national unity and bringing about a qualitative leap in the PLO's form. In the 8th session, under the title of organizational structure for national unity of the Palestinian revolution's forces, the following six clauses were adopted:

1. *The PLO is the framework which includes all the Palestinian revolution's forces which practice armed struggle for the liberation of all of Palestine. The PLO has a charter which governs its course, specifies its goals and organizes its work. It has a national council which chooses its leadership. This leadership is the highest executive authority of the organization as stated in the basic program. The leadership draws up an overall united plan for Palestinian work in all different fields, which is carried out by the PLO's institutions which include all the instruments of the revolution.*

2. *All national guerrilla organizations and fighting forces, unions, associations and figures participate in national unity on condition of complete commitment to the Palestinian* ▶