

Occupied Palestine

Appointment in Nablus

On November 26th, the Israeli occupation authorities appointed the pro-Jordanian businessman, Thafer al Masri, as mayor of Nablus, the largest city in the occupied West Bank. The members of the Nablus Chamber of Commerce, which Masri heads, were appointed as the new municipal council. This ended the form, but not the content, whereby Nablus has been run by an Israeli army officer, installed after the military government fired the popularly elected mayor, Bassam Shakaa. The Israeli colonel, who heads the 'civil' administration in the West Bank, connected the appointments with Prime Minister Peres' promise to «improve the quality of life» or «improved autonomy» for the residents of the occupied territories. Such jargon noticeably corresponds to the phrases used by US officials when trying to cloak their drive for hegemony in the mantle of 'peace'. However, the gist of this matter is not providing public services, as Israeli and Jordanian officials, as well as Masri himself, have claimed.

It is a dangerous precedent when a Palestinian steps into public office for the sake of beautifying the occupation. It is even more dangerous in the light of the increasing, though undeclared, coordination between the Zionist and Jordanian regimes, which has also been evidenced by the three visits of a delegation from the Jordanian Agriculture Ministry to the occupied West Bank. Such coordination aims to develop an alternative leadership willing in the future to 'represent' the Palestinians in Israeli-Jordanian negotiations.

No one would have dared to take this step were it not for the prevailing disarray in the Palestinian arena, caused by the PLO leadership's deviating and divisive policies. In fact, Masri applied for the job on Jordanian urging. He assumed office amid popular rejection, for the masses adhere to their elected mayor, Shakaa, and to the nationalist position of the West Bank municipalities generally. Moreover, 33 members of the PNC publicly declared their denunciation in a communique in early December.

However, efforts to mobilize an all-out campaign to block the appointments were hampered by the position of the PLO leadership. Instead of determining to confront this joint Israeli-Jordanian move, they opted to promote their own candidate, Basel Kanaan. Not only did they lose the appointment race, they also once again compromised the position of the PLO. The winners were the Israeli occupation and the Jordanian regime who also plan to divide the spoils (the West Bank) in the 'peace' process sponsored by the US. Masri's status as a successful businessman points to the class aspect of the US settlement plan, aiming to coopt the Palestinian and Arab bourgeoisie to reconcile with Zionism.

Cross-border iron fist

The masses and progressive forces are experiencing this 'peace' process in the form of increased repression. Recently, the Israeli iron fist was complemented from across the border by the Jordanian regime's extensive search and arrest operation. In late November, over fifty nationalists were rounded up by the Jordanian intelligence service. These included leaders and cadres of Palestinian and Jordanian parties, and the activists in mass organizations. Clearly, the aim is to clear the way for the regime's enacting its policy of entering a unilateral settlement with 'Israel'. (See

statement from the Committee for Democratic Freedoms in Jordan in the following pages.)

In Palestine, the iron fist has been raised over the heads of our people since the establishment of the Zionist state. The intensity of its application depends on political necessity. In the recent period, dating back to last summer, we have witnessed a more violent implementation of this policy to counter the mass struggle and the escalation of anti-occupation military operations. During the recent period, the iron fist has been brought down on all parts of Palestine. In the past four months, sentences have been passed on 500 Palestinian citizens; over 1000 were arrested, 102 under the administrative detention law, and 23 were deported.

Threatened deportations

Deportation is now pending for four Palestinian citizens who were arrested October 27th, by a military order based on the British Emergency Regulations of 1945. The four are: Dr. Azmi Shuaibi, dentist and member of Al Bira municipal council; Ali Abu Hilal from Abu Dis village near Jerusalem, member of the Executive Committee of the Federation of Trade Unions; Hassan Abdel Jawad, journalist from Duheisheh refugee camp; and Zaki Statieh of Jabalia refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, who was liberated from the Zionist jails in the prisoner exchange this spring.

All are charged with nebulous offenses such as «inciting» against the occupation, a euphemism for defending Palestinian national rights. However, the evidence against them is kept secret, complicating their appeals to have the

