

frameworks. The most prominent is the GUPW. Moreover, every resistance organization has a women's bureau or organization. The PFLP had a women's bureau from 1972 until 1983, especially to organize women's work within the Front. However, with time, our work developed and expanded, attracting women from outside the membership of the PFLP. In order to continue this broader process, the Palestinian Womens Organization (PWO) was formed as a popular democratic framework with its own organizational structure, program and activities. The PWO will be having conferences in Lebanon, Syria and other places where there are branches (Europe, USA, the Gulf and North Africa).

Aside from the PWO, there are the Democratic Womens Organization of the DFLP, which has held three annual congresses; the Palestinian Progressive Womens Organization of the PFLP-General Command, which has held its congress; the Women's Bureau of the Popular Struggle Front, etc. Of course, the ideal situation would be to have a framework for coordination between these organizations, i.e., the role the GUPW should play. The more organized the women's activities, the more progress we make. Yet now that there are congresses and elections, the women's organizations have shed their more restricted role and become popular democratic women's organizations. This is a development of the women's work. It gives the opportunity to all women to be in a women's organization. They need not be members of a resistance organization or party as a prerequisite for engaging in organized women's work. These democratic organizations are ultimately to the interest of the party as well.

Of course, there are discrepancies from one women's organization to another in terms of their internal structure, the nature of their activities and which sector of women they focus on. This is where the difficulty lies. It is beneficial that these organizations exist because it means more women's work, but it is negative that there is a lack of conviction in the GUPW as the representative of all Palestinian women.

Another way to look at this issue is related to the shortcomings of the GUPW, which prompted women to organize popular organizations or institutions particular to their organization, instead of organizing centrally under GUPW auspices. This should have happened long ago so that the various frameworks together would constitute the union. Unfortunately, things took another course. The GUPW has not functioned as the union of all the active women's organizations. Rather women were hastily collected in membership drives just prior to congresses in order to maintain the dominance of a single faction through undemocratic elections. Proportional representation of the active forces and other basics of union work were absent. Rather there was factional domination - I'm the biggest, so I should lead, whether qualified or not. There are many women who are qualified to be leaders in the union, but were put aside for political reasons. This is the problem. The union should be for all Palestinian women regardless of their political affiliation. Otherwise it cannot be called a union, but the women's organization of Fatah or PFLP or DFLP. As a union it should represent all lines in the Palestinian arena. There should be collective leadership, not individualistic decision-making.

Palestinian Womens Organization

The Palestinian Womens Organization is a national democratic, social organization which encompasses in its ranks women from all classes of the Palestinian people, on the basis of free choice. It also includes Arab and non-Arab women

married to Palestinians. The PWO is an inseparable part of the Palestinian women's movement. It is the popular women's framework of the PFLP. It is not a substitute for the GUPW which we consider to represent the Palestinian women's movement. This is the basic definition of the PWO.

The PWO's program is very broad and aims mainly at raising the consciousness of Palestinian women. It is the PWO's duty to provide women with opportunities to learn and be acquainted with all political matters relevant to the Palestinian people's struggle. This can be through workshops, literacy programs, showing political films and exhibitions of Palestinian heritage. We will work to preserve traditional Palestinian embroidery which is based on the cross stitch.

The PWO program takes into consideration the objective conditions of each arena when defining its activities. For example, in the occupied territories, there are 40 committees in the cities, villages and camps of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, including hundreds of women. The women there set their work program, and have been issuing a publication *Women's Voice* for over a year. On August 17, 1985, they held a congress with the slogans: «Cancel the Amman accord» and «For a united women's movement.» The most prominent activities in the occupied territories are production workshops and social projects, including literacy programs, moveable medical clinics, booster lessons for students and community centers for seminars, rallies and courses.

Also of importance is a complete program of activities for children to develop their patriotic awareness. This is essential in order to counter Zionist propaganda and interference in the school curriculum. There are also bazaars and exhibitions where items produced by women are displayed on occasion or on a regular basis, and sold at low prices so that all can afford to buy. Moreover, women organize hunger strikes, demonstrations and sit-ins. They have been particularly active in solidarity with the prisoners in the Zionist jails. March 8th is considered a special occasion and is celebrated in the occupied territories.

Concerning the PWO outside Palestine, we have formed a preparatory committee for our congress. It includes representatives of Palestinian women from all Arab countries and the socialist countries. Elections will be held in the branches in Syria and Lebanon and the external department. This will culminate in the general congress in June. In most PWO centers, we now have a wall newspaper. We will be issuing a bulletin on the occasion of the preparatory committee meeting at the end of January, explaining the purpose of the PWO and the bulletin. We will also have an issue for March 8th, and a third issue will cover the congress in June.

WIDF conference in Prague

We do not envision the PWO as an alternative to the GUPW. However, we will develop relations between the PWO and other women's organizations internationally, especially in the socialist countries. We were invited to the Womens International Democratic Federation's Conference in Prague in November, and benefited greatly from our attendance. There were 111 countries and 136 organizations represented by 260 women. It was very important to discuss with them. We also had the opportunity to discuss with women from the occupied territories, who gave us first-hand descriptions of the problems they are currently encountering.

Unfortunately, Isam Abdel Hadi, who spoke on behalf of the GUPW, objected to the addition of a clause denouncing the Amman accord, in the final resolution of the conference. The