

The first priority in our schedule is fortifying our positions - digging trenches, building embankments for mounted weapons, and shelters. There is a saying that a drop of sweat saves a pint of blood. We work on fortifying from 8 a.m. until 1 p.m. when we have a lunch break. During the break, we discuss what we accomplished and our plan for the next period. We usually continue fortifications work until 5 p.m. At suppertime, the comrades rest. We discuss different issues. We exchange visits with our allies of the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) at nearby bases. Before going to sleep, we organize our guard duty for the night.

What are your activities on a weekly basis?

Malek: Every week we have an administrative day when comrades rest, clean their weapons, the base and personal belongings. We have weekly practical and political meetings, and weekly organizational meetings for party members. Every day one comrade has comradely service which means he or she stays on the base and takes the responsibility for cooking and cleaning.

What is the difference between party members and non-party members?

Abu Lena: Many people join the PFLP's military forces for nationalist reasons. The PFLP devotes a great deal of effort to develop these comrades ideologically, so they understand the basics of Marxism-Leninism. After comrades reach that level, they are accepted in the party organization. Party members have the same duties as other comrades, but they have extra responsibilities in terms of setting an example in discipline and dedication, and educating others. They also bear responsibility for strengthening ties with our local allies.

What do you do in your spare time?

Salameh: We sit together and discuss the political and military situation. We also discuss our personal and family lives.

Faraj: We play chess and dominos, read and do physical exercise.

Sarah: I read and collect flowers.

What problems do you face in your daily life?

Abu Lena: We have problems with the availability of fortifications materials - sacks, cement, gravel, wood, etc. On any given day, we can have a new military situation. This is how Lebanon is. We get our materials from the PSP, and usually they are not very late.

Ziad, a platoon leader: Here we cannot move safely in the day by car, so food and water arrive at night. We must cook meat or fish at night, so it doesn't get bad. We also have problems with water. Some nights there is heavy bombardment and it doesn't reach us until late, so we are careful with water. A liter of water can sometimes cost a liter of blood. Another problem is when new comrades join us in this area, we have to work hard to teach them where they can walk and where are the danger spots for sniping.

Adonees: Every base has small problems in carrying out duties and living together. New comrades need a lot of work to develop a sense of initiative which is a manifestation of developed revolutionary consciousness. In such cases, we interact with the new comrade and explain any mistake made. If it is repeated, we call a practical meeting; the base as a group discusses the problem.

What social problems do comrades generally face?

Kifah: The distance from our families and our Palestinian people and civilians in general.

Abdel Hamid: Our people support us politically and materially and by continuously giving new fedayeen. But you know a fedayee's life is always at risk. So when a military comrade wants to marry, people are skeptical. The parents ask: If you die, what would happen to our daughter? The only way to overcome this is to have a strong relation with the woman and that is difficult because we only have four days vacation every month.

Adonees: I am married and have two children and am expecting a third. My wife is also in the military forces. We coordinate our vacations. It is important to coordinate your personal life with your revolutionary duties. A small number of comrades don't do that, and that is a problem. The Front is very understanding and arranges child care for working women.

Sarah: I had some problems in the beginning being accepted as a fighter. Some of the less educated comrades ask why I don't limit my work to the Front's women's organization, because it's easier. Others expected that my role is to cook or make tea on the base. I was able to solve these problems by interacting with the comrades and sometimes involving the local leadership. These problems are a result of the backward social beliefs that exist in our area. It is hard for men to accept women as equals in work, and this is especially true in the military, because we are brought up with the belief that women must look nice and stay at home... The PFLP does a lot of work to change this, but it cannot totally change until we change the social system itself.

Ziad: The question of women is not an easy subject. It is important to practice our theoretical belief on women's liberation. Women are half the society and must have the same rights and responsibilities. Having a woman comrade is an experiment that must succeed. It is an educational experience for both the female and male.

Why did you join the PFLP's military forces?

Jihad: I joined the Front because of its mass support, its Marxist-Leninist line and alliance with communist forces internationally, its military achievements inside and outside Palestine, its practice of democratic centralism in meetings, and the mutual respect that exists between people in charge and the fighters.

Salameh: I joined the Front because of its principles, the positive relations between comrades and its firm position against the existence of the Zionist state.

Sarah: I believe that fighting is the duty of men and women alike. When Zionists and fascists kill, they don't differentiate between men and women. We saw that in Sabra and Shatila. The Front, by following Marxism-Leninism and practicing this in its internal relations, gives both sexes an equal chance to carry out their duties. For me as a woman, the Front is the most logical organization to belong to.

How is coordination with the Lebanese national forces in this area?

Adonees: Our cooperation is based on the PFLP's political position of support to the Lebanese national movement. The dominant force in the Mountain is the PSP. The Lebanese Communist Party (LCP) also has bases in this area. Here we are under the PSP's leadership from a military aspect. We