

International Women's Day

On March 11th, the PFLP women's branch organized a public meeting to celebrate International Womens Day. Comrade Leila Khaled chaired the meeting and introduced Comrade George Habash who delivered the following address on the women's question.

The women's question is no less important than the question of the current political situation. On this occasion, it is your right that I speak on the subject of the Palestinian woman. I convey heartfelt greetings on behalf of the PFLP's politbureau and central committee. We salute our women comrades in the jails of Zionism and reaction. We remember the women martyrs who sacrificed for the Palestinian and Arab liberation cause. I will speak on women's liberation and the main tasks towards achieving this. I chose this subject not only because of the occasion, but due to my conviction in its importance, and our need to emphasize it so as to release the potential of this large sector of our people. We will speak of how to release women's potentials and enable them to participate in liberating Palestine and building a socialist society. We are for a comprehensive change in the women's role in the liberation process whereby they take a full place as citizens with complete rights and duties.

When we speak of liberating Palestine from Zionism, we speak of liberating all the people - men and women. When we speak of liberation from a class viewpoint, we speak of liberating all the Palestinian masses from the exploiting classes. When we speak of women's liberation, we mean liberating women from their social status, as being unequal to men in terms of rights and duties. More frankly, we mean liberating women from men and how men look upon women.

We experience this inequality constantly in everyday life. The boy, when born, is welcomed with joy - the girl, maybe with anger, with sorrow, or at best with grudging acceptance. Inequality is seen on many levels. Male youths can go and come as they please - the girl does not. It also applies in inheritance. I remember I inherited two times as much as my sisters. We want to explain this phenomenon of inequality so as to be able to remedy it.

Revolutionary work is struggle to eliminate the exploitation of man by his fellow man. On this basis, we struggle to

liberate Palestine, because the Palestinian people are oppressed by 'Israel'. On this basis, we will continue to struggle in the process of class liberation, to end exploitation. This must continue to end any kind of social exploitation of women by men.

Inequality has its roots in a stage of history when a division of labor occurred whereby men began to be responsible for productive tasks, while the women's task was to provide services, mainly domestic duties. This is the root of the inequality. There is a great difference between production and services. Goods come by way of production - industrial or agricultural or crafts. This gave man greater value than that accorded woman. This historical process left its mark on women and their status.

Accordingly, women will be liberated only under socialism which provides women with productive work whereby they provide goods. Thus, a new understanding will prevail whereby women will be regarded as people with full rights and duties. Thus we would have ended inequality which even affects women's honour. You may have heard the expression: «Women are half-

wits.» Yet medical research indicates that women, from a biological viewpoint, have the same mental capacities as men. You should have faith in women's capabilities and right to equality.

However, the importance of women's liberation does not mean that it takes priority over the liberation of Palestine and all other political tasks. It would be a great mistake to draw this conclusion. I warn against infantile left misinterpretation of what I have just said. Women's total liberation can only be achieved after liberating Palestine and building a socialist society. If we forget the dialectical relationship between the liberation of Palestine and the liberation of women, we would be making a big mistake. Through liberating Palestine and then building a democratic, socialist Palestine, we will have genuinely contributed to liberating women.

Until that time, shall we leave this important task aside? No. We can begin now to forge a path towards liberating women, linked with national liberation, then social liberation. There are three main tasks which we can start now.

One is the ideological task which means spreading the ideas I mentioned above. We must constantly speak of the woman's right to equality, of her ability, whether or not we can find solutions to these problems or not. This is a main task for the PFLP, for the women's branch and for all Palestinian women's organizations, so that there will be a

