

What do you want from the revolution?

We want more arms to defend ourselves, from Lahd's forces in particular.

How are relations with the Lebanese in Sidon?

They are very good. My son-in-law is from Sidon.

Um Hussein's son-in-law was present and intervened at this point: I am from Sidon and a member of the Popular Nassarite Organization. Our relations are very strong because we have the same aim, the same enemy - we are the same people. We also have a special view of the PFLP members.

Do you want your daughters to work when they finish school?

I don't mind. I would prefer they work with the PFLP.

«We cannot liberate Palestine with negotiations.»

Ahmad Muhammad Abu Karsh is 75 years old and the father of fourteen children. He had to leave one of his sons in Palestine in 1948.

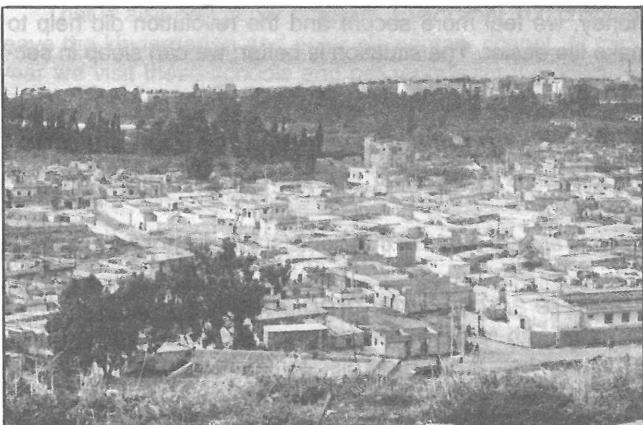
Did your situation improve after the return of the revolution?

Of course. The Phalangists had taken our house and terrorized us. We had to leave. My son, Walid, who was one of the fiercest fighters against the Zionist invaders, was taken by them on June 13, 1982. We stayed in Jiyah (town on the coast north of Sidon) until September 9th. The Phalangists kidnapped my other son who was a teacher. I could only return here when the revolution returned. I think the situation would be better if the revolution was united.

How can we liberate Palestine?

I was in the 1936 revolt in Palestine with Ez Al Din Al Qassam, and I fought against the British and against the Zionists. There were two trends prior to 1948. One was that of Haj Amin, refusing the partition of Palestine and wanting an independent state. The other was that of collaborating with the British and joining the Jordanian kingdom. We will liberate Palestine with Islam and on that basis, fight Zionism. We cannot liberate Palestine with negotiations; it is impossible. I am from Safouria in the Western Galilee which the Zionists took in 1948. The only way for me to go back to my home is by war - if the Arab governments are sincere about defeating 'Israel'. That's how we liberate Palestine.

Ain al Hilweh



Popular Committee

Interview with Abu Atef Rezek, member of the camp's popular committee

Could you give us an idea of the popular committee - how it was formed and its work?

After we returned from Ansar, we found committees established by the Zionist occupation forces in the camp. Heading these committees was a group of Palestinian collaborators. We started to think of how we could confront these collaborators who had been oppressing our masses. Contacts started between nationalist figures in Ain al Hilweh, Miye and Sidon. The popular committee was established on June 2, 1984, with the full support of the masses. We started working publicly by providing services for the masses. The committee represents all the masses with some representation of the Palestinian revolutionary organizations. We started to face the problems resulting from the occupation, especially the need to rebuild homes and other vital institutions that had been destroyed.

We had difficulties with UNRWA. We had to pressure UNRWA to continue providing the assistance and services they are supposed to provide, like health and education, but UNRWA policy was to cut back services. The popular committee had to struggle for two years to get UNRWA to fix the roads and the sewer system. We try to solve other problems, like the masses' economic problems. The occupation destroyed agriculture in the area, where a great percentage of our people were employed. Palestinians still cannot move freely outside the Sidon area to search for work. This problem can only be solved with great efforts to build production institutions. There is some positive work now in the camp, like the hospital named for Dr. Wadi' Haddad, and the cooperative that the PFLP is building. I can say that the PFLP is the most serious organization when it comes to dealing with these problems. The PFLP is thinking seriously of building a workshop for women because of conviction in the importance of women being productive in our society.

What was the effect of Palestinian organizations' returning to work openly in the camp?

Our masses were not surprised by the return of the revolution. After the invasion, people started organizing military and mass resistance against the Zionist army, although most men were in Ansar. The area was under the control of the fascist Lebanese Front and Zionist army, but the mass struggle grew. The demolished camp was rebuilt through the efforts of women, children and elderly. Military operations began against the Zionists right after the invasion. I mention these facts to clarify that we were not surprised by the return of the revolutionary organizations. This public return was the culmination of our struggle under the occupation.

After the forced withdrawal of the Zionist army, we started to increase our military abilities, especially during the fascist Geagea's war against our people and camp (in April 1985). Generally, our masses and the Lebanese masses were happy about the return of disciplined Palestinian armed presence to the area. Our masses are the revolution, and the revolution is their dignity. In this period, we want new behaviour and discipline, without the mistakes of the pre-1982 period. This is what the Palestine National Salvation Front is stressing in the security forces.