

administration could not, however, make any promises concerning the students under detention. (Present with the administration during the negotiations was Irbid's chief of police, Abd Al Rahman Al Adwan.) The ugliness of the whole situation was accentuated when it was later known that two days before the massacre, Hussein had made arrangements to replace the university president, and given the central intelligence carte blanche to quell the student uprising at any cost.

## THE MASSACRE

Thus it was at 1:30 a.m., when the student delegation had finished negotiating with the administration, that the campus was stormed by central security forces, the special bedouin units and general intelligence forces, armed with machine guns and truncheons. They practiced no restraint-machine gun fire was heard all the way to downtown Irbid; students were teargassed out of dormitories; deadly blows were leveled with clubs at students' heads and backbones; female students were dragged by their hair and physically abused; some students were tied to police cars and dragged around the campus.

The besieged students found that onions were being tossed to them by citizens of Irbid, who had come to join them against the security forces. The students fought back with everything they could lay their hands on. It soon became clear from the ferocity of their attackers, that it was a life or death battle. Two security officers were killed and about 20 were wounded. However, the students, being neither armed nor trained for such an onslaught, began to lose ground. They started to flee the university premises. Some climbed up the minaret of the mosque and used the loudspeakers to rally support and appeal to the families of Irbid for help. Calls of «Save your children from death!» mixed with screaming and machine gun fire.

By dawn, the campus was literally strewn with the bodies of dead or unconscious students, while the security

forces danced «the debkeh of victory» on campus and in the streets of Irbid. By morning, news of the massacre had spread. Students once again closed ranks and demonstrated. Irbid's population flowed into the streets to protest the horrible acts of repression. Again the security forces rushed to disperse demonstrators. The Irbid area was isolated from other cities, while police cars patrolled the streets. The Yarmouk University campus was declared off-limits, and surrounded by scores of armoured cars.

A final count of dead and wounded has not been possible, but eyewitness reports from nationalist forces put the number much higher than the regime's official statement of three dead. The nationalist forces in Jordan estimate that about 18 students were killed and over 50 seriously injured. However, it is hard to get conclusive information, because newspapers were instructed not to publish obituaries for the dead students. Moreover, many of the critically wounded who then died were buried secretly under heavy guard. Their families were not notified until later. Others still missing have been beaten to death or shot off campus. Eight hundred students were held for questioning, while 400 were arrested. Other cities were combed, houses searched and arrests made; 16 members of the Jordanian Communist Party and its general secretary were arrested. (Due to political pressure, the latter was released on grounds of ill health.)

Details of the massacre and letters of condemnation were distributed to associations, institutions and prominent persons. The Yarmouk student council distributed 1000 copies of a statement of denunciation, while 1200 flysheets were dispersed throughout Amman, Irbid and Zarqa, Jordan's three largest cities. Foreign press agencies were notified, while scores of Jordanian political, social and youth organizations issued denunciations. The embassies of all the socialist countries and others were

informed of the atrocities. The Soviet ambassador left for Moscow, carrying details of the student uprising, the subsequent massacre and the arrest of Jordanian Communist Party members. On May 29th, the Soviet Union issued a strongly worded condemnation of the Jordanian regime's repressive measures. UNESCO warned that it would no longer recognize Yarmouk as an accredited university if such repressive measures continued.

## «DESTRUCTIVE ELEMENTS» OR ECONOMIC CRISIS

The tragic events at Irbid's university are not unrelated to the acute economic crisis in Jordan. This crisis is due to a decrease in revenues from expatriates being laid off in oil-rich countries, inflation and rising unemployment, especially among new university graduates. The 50,000 unemployed, most of whom are university graduates, constitute about 10% of the labor force, according to official sources. On February 5th, while visiting London, Crown Prince Hassan made a speech wherein he described unemployment as one of the most «dangerous problems» facing Jordan at present. He also mentioned that the increase in the GNP, which was 12% between 1975-1980, fell to 6% during 1981-86, because of decreasing revenues from expatriates working in the Gulf, and the drop in aid to the Jordanian treasury due to decreasing oil prices. No less indicative of the crisis is the recent suicide of the Jordanian millionaire, Saliba Rizk, because of bankruptcy. The Jordanian press has also hinted at other cases of bankrupt millionaires. The new five-year plan is an attempt to deal with unemployment, especially in the light of the fact that half a million expatriates are expected to return to Jordan in the next five years.

The regime's threats to deal without mercy, with anyone who tampers with national security, obviously fall short of addressing the essence of the crisis. This crisis will continue despite claims that Hussein's forces have everything under control. Feeble attempts have been made to absorb popular anger, by decreasing the prices of electricity and water, while the regime has been generous with promises to release arrested students.

Obviously, the tragic events at Yarmouk University are an indication of internal turmoil which is not to be underestimated. Hussein's ever increasing ties with the Camp David regime in Egypt, his collaboration with the US—Zionist enemy and his obvious eagerness to usurp the PLO's representation of the Palestinian people, have not earned him the popularity he so craves. This is true despite elaborate, fabricated shows of «popular support». Hussein has obviously come up against more opposition than he bargained for. ●

## MORE REPRESSION

In the aftermath of the massacre at Yarmouk University, the Jordanian regime took more repressive measures, aimed especially at journalists, professors and even members of the armed forces.

Tariq Masarweh and Maryoud Al Tell, both members of the administrative council of the Jordanian daily *Saut Al Shaab*, were dismissed because of their refusal to write editorials justifying the regime's storming the university and killing students. Eight professors and other university employees were dismissed from their posts at Yarmouk University, because they had declared support to the students' cause.

Hussein's special forces - «The

Bedouin Army» - set up camp around the university grounds. This indicates that the authorities anticipate a new round of clashes with the students in reaction to the preceding bloody incidents. Furthermore, the Ministry of the Interior issued orders to alter the way that graduation ceremonies are usually held in schools, colleges and universities. Instead of one ceremony for the whole student body of each institution, each class or department is instructed to hold separate graduations. The reason given was: «security considerations».

Moreover, there was a broad campaign of arrests and interrogations among lower officers and soldiers in the Jordanian armed forces, many of whom had defied orders to storm the university and shoot at unarmed students.