

Mass Organizations in Occupied Palestine

Leaders and activists of mass organizations have been prime targets of the Zionist iron fist policy of administrative detention. Nonetheless, these organizations continue their work, embodying the Palestinian people's national identity and striving for liberation.

Since the establishment of the state of 'Israel', successive Zionist governments have enacted policies designed to empty occupied Palestine of its original inhabitants. These policies range from land confiscation and settlement-building, to destruction of the national economy and a whole array of fascist measures—mass arrests, deportations, torture, collective punishment and the banning of nationalist political and social activities. Despite everything, the Palestinian masses have confronted all forms of oppression. They have struggled through mass organizations, committees and trade unions to express their resistance to occupation. The following article is a survey of the activities of trade unions, women's and students' organizations and volunteer work committees in the first half of this year. This period was distinguished by a high degree of political activity on the part of mass organizations, confronting the various schemes aimed against our people, whether by the Zionist enemy or the reactionary regime in Jordan. Most noteworthy is that all mass organizations, regardless of political affiliation, expressed opposition to the Jordanian regime's policy of eliminating the PLO's role.

TRADE UNIONS

Trade union activity in this period centered around specific occasions. It was limited for two main reasons:

First : The Zionist authorities escalated their repression against the unions and union activists, as seen in those deported, arrested and placed under house arrest. Recently the authorities sought once again to implement an old decision to restrict trade unions and mass organizations generally by forcing them to submit reports about their annual activities, in order to obtain permission for new activities. This decision dates back 14 years, but the Zionist authorities have never been able to enforce it.

Second : The trade union movement is hindered by subjective factors, chiefly internal division which dates back to when the Palestinian right wing split the General Federation of Trade Unions in the West Bank in 1981. There were new splits in the recent period, which were reflected in the election results in the various unions. The general tendency today is for the different trade unions to be highly concerned with the major political questions affecting Palestinian struggle. Thus the prevailing divisions coincide with political differences. In the recent elections, single blocs gained the leadership of many unions, without any competition.

The elections preoccupied the unions to a great extent in this period. Besides commemorating May 1st, trade union activities were mainly expressed in political statements about central issues. Despite the prevailing political differences, all trade unions were united in their positions on the main issues.

In Bethlehem, a public statement was issued by popular institutions, trade unions and other mass organizations, rejecting all attempts to eliminate the PLO's role as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people everywhere. The statement emphasized rejection of Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 (which recognize 'Israel', but deal with the Palestinian issue as one of refugees only, not as a national question); adherence to the right to self-determination and an independent state; the importance of Palestinian unity on a nationalist basis,

opposed to all imperialist and Arab reactionary capitulationist schemes; opposition to cooperating with the Jordanian regime. The statement was signed by the Bethlehem branches of the unions for doctors, pharmacists, engineers, dentists, carpenters, tile workers, electricity workers, engineering assistants and tailors, as well the Labor Unity Bloc and the Women's Work Committee of Beit Sahour.

In the Jenin area, trade unions joined popular committees in issuing a statement denying what had been published on their behalf by the appointed municipal council. On February 21st, *Al Quds* daily published a statement of support to King Hussein's speech of February 19th, wherein he demanded that the PLO recognize resolutions 242 and 338, and froze cooperation with the PLO leadership. The slanderous statement had been submitted by the appointed municipal council. The trade union's statement, on the contrary, condemned King Hussein's speech and denied that the municipal council's statement represented the point of view of the people of Jenin. The statement also confirmed rejection of resolutions 242 and 338. It reiterated that the PLO is the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and called upon the Palestinian national leadership to restore the PLO's unity on a national and democratic basis, in conformity with PNC resolutions. The statement was signed by the Progressive Front for Trade Union Action, the Labor Youth Movement, the Labor Trade Union Federation, the Women's Work Committees, the local branches of the unions of engineers and dentists, and the government teachers committee.

The Vocational Trade Union Federation in Jerusalem issued a statement condemning the US attack on Libya, and demanded a boycott of the US and exposure of European hypocrisy. Imperialist aggression against Libya was condemned in another statement issued jointly by the Progressive Front for Trade Union Action, the Progressive Students' Action Front, the Union of Volunteer Work Committees, the Union of Palestinian Women's Committees and the Union of High School Students' Committees.

Prominent trade unionists condemned King Hussein's February speech, among them Younis Tayyem, executive committee member of the General Federation of West Bank Trade Unions; Mustafa Abu Salem, secretary of the Carpenters' Union; Khader Al Murranakh, secretary of the Public Services Union. Their public statements called for cancelling the Amman accord, signed by King Hussein and Yasir Arafat, in order to halt the process of concessions given by the right-wing leadership of the PLO, and to return the PLO to the national line. They also called for cancelling the 17th PNC (held in Amman 1984) and for the necessity of national unity.

MAY 1ST

In the West Bank, there were many festivals on the occasion of May 1st. In Jerusalem, there were celebrations for all labor unions. The Employees and Workers of the Jerusalem Electric Company distributed a special communique: "We celebrate this occasion at a time when our company is facing dangerous attempts to liquidate it. The final decision of the court came to confiscate the property of the company and prohibit the expen-