

In addition to the deterioration of living conditions, the siege makes it impossible for us to move and travel. It forces the camp population to consume food reserves and medical supplies. The shelling causes the destruction of the houses, water pipes and electricity network. Therefore, rebuilding the camps has become a major task to which we must devote attention.

Despite all of these negative effects and the worsening of the conditions of their life, the morale of our people, both civilians and fighters, was very high during the battle of self-defense. This consolidated our steadfastness in the worst conditions.

Could you give an idea about the Palestinian losses, material and human, and estimate Amal's casualties?

To be objective, we are unable to estimate our casualties and material losses inside and outside the camps. This needs a scientific field study, and a complete count of the number of houses, schools, clinics, etc. that were destroyed, but the losses definitely toll in the tens of millions of dollars. The human casualties, as given by the Palestinian Red Crescent, are as follows: In Bourj Al Barajneh camp, there were 67 martyrs and 460 wounded. In Sabra-Shatila, there were 26 martyrs and 135 wounded. Moreover, there are many detainees, and we don't have the exact number. We also don't know how many were killed outside the camps. By the same token, we cannot estimate Amal's casualties.

What is the Syrian role in this period? Are you satisfied with their efforts to end the camp war?

We wish the Syrian officials has used their influence to pressure the Amal leadership into adhering to the Damascus agreement which was signed with Syrian guidance and guarantees. We wish the Syrians would have stopped Amal's continuing siege of the camps, their aggression against the residents and harassment of people entering and leaving the camps. Eliminating these conditions would prevent the continued eruption of fighting around the camps.

Nonetheless we did feel the Syrian attempts to end the camp war in this period. The Syrians played an effective role and made various efforts which involved their top leadership. On the political level, Vice-President Abdul Halim Khaddam helped directly in reaching a ceasefire. On the military level, Syrian observers participate actively in the tasks of the observation committees around the camps. Brigadier Gazi Kanaan, head of the Syrian military intelligence in Lebanon, went to Beirut to observe the ceasefire. Clearly, there is a central Syrian decision about the importance of freezing the state of war between Amal and the Palestinians in the camps.

What is the position of the Lebanese progressive and nationalist forces and parties towards the camp war?

The PNSF delegation communicated with the various Lebanese progressive and nationalist forces and parties. They all confirmed their positions against the war and those who wage it. They all work to end this war and preserve the camps. They all work to implement the working paper that was approved by the Lebanese National Work Committee, in the presence of the PNSF delegation, for organizing Lebanese-Palestinian nationalist relations and enabling the Salvation Front to play its role in leading the Palestinian masses in Lebanon. This is based on clause 12 of the Damascus agreement of June 17, 1985, which reads: "The Lebanese National Democratic Front and the Amal movement consider the Palestine National Salvation Front as the recognized national political leadership of the Palestinians in Lebanon. It is so until it is possible to return the PLO to the nationalist line. This is confirmed in the PNSF's political platform."

How do you evaluate the position of the Palestinian organizations, that are outside the PNSF, towards the agreement?

In the light of the contact we had with the local Palestinian factions, outside the PNSF, in the camps, we were able to confirm that all are committed to the ceasefire decision. In fact, these factions have in practice shown their commitment to all decisions approved by the PNSF.

What is the relation between the 1985 Damascus agreement and the latest agreement to end the camp war?

We want it to be understood by all that the 1985 Damascus agreement is the basis. We still demand total commitment to this agreement, and that Lebanese-Palestinian relations be organized on this basis. The agreement that was reached on June 14, 1986, is not something new. Rather, it represents a decision to renew the mechanism for implementing the terms of the 1985 agreement. We consider it a decision for implementation, not a new agreement. It is known that the 1985 Damascus agreement came about as a result of dialogue between the Lebanese National Democratic Front, the Amal movement and the PNSF leadership, with the guidance of Syrian Vice-President Khaddam. The three forces signed the agreement with Syrian guarantees.

What about the rumors of the possibility of internal Palestinian fighting in the Beirut camps?

These rumors are being spread by our enemies. We rely on political struggle to resolve the political differences which exist in the Palestinian arena. In its political program, the PNSF defined its position on Arafat's trend; it defined the means for achieving its program for restoring the PLO to the national line. We differentiate between the leadership of the deviationist political trend, and the base of Arafat's supporters in the camps. We will struggle politically to mobilize our Palestinian people against the deviationist trend and its leaders. We do not approve of any other means that would lead to internal Palestinian fighting. This is based on our conviction that the revolution cannot be eliminated even by the large enemy camp, but it would be eroded and eventually eliminated if armed violence replaces political struggle within its ranks.

Do you believe that the recent agreement provides a permanent solution for the camp war?

Once again, we confirm our commitment to the 1985 Damascus agreement. We demand that Amal make the same commitment and implement all the terms of this agreement. As we explained, the recent agreement was a decision to implement the principles confirmed in the Damascus agreement. We are determined to reinforce the Palestinian-Lebanese-Syrian alliance for confronting the imperialist-Zionist-reactionary schemes. These schemes aim at liquidating the Palestinian cause, striking the progressive nationalist forces in the region, and imposing imperialist hegemony in order to continue exploitation and protect the Zionist entity.

With this understanding, we will devote every effort to reinforce militant relations between the Palestinian masses and the Lebanese masses and their national and progressive leadership. We hope that we will not be forced, once again, to confront Amal militarily, in order to defend our people in the camps. Fighting between two peoples, who are in the same trench, means a loss to all nationalists and a benefit to our enemies. We hope that the Amal movement has realized that political dialogue is the correct means for resolving differences between nationalists, and that internal fighting intensifies differences rather than help in resolving them.

If the Amal movement comes to this realization, we will succeed in our efforts to unify Lebanese and Palestinian nationalists to confront the fascist scheme on the one hand, and to restore healthy relations between our peoples in the camps and in Lebanon. This should be a guideline for all responsible leaders in order to avoid repeating the bloody tragedy to which both Palestinians and Lebanese fell victim.