

Thus the argument that their contents threatened state security seems implausible if not for the fact that any Palestinian nationalist expression is considered threatening by the Zionist leadership that aspires to rule over Palestine without the Palestinians being seen or heard. The charge that *Al Mithaq* was controlled by the PFLP is equally ridiculous. It is moreover an outright insult to our people under occupation, as if they are incapable of sustaining nationalist publications on their own, or producing revolutionary writings without being instructed from Damascus. This trumped-up charge is in line with long-standing Zionist attempts to present a picture of 'benign occupation' over 'happy natives' who would never think of resisting if not

ZIONIST AUTHORITIES CLOSE TRADE UNION OFFICE

The Zionist occupation authorities continue their iron fist policies against all Palestinian nationalist expression, hitting especially hard at those forces who oppose the attempt to impose joint Israeli-Jordanian rule in the occupied West Bank. On August 13th, the Israeli army closed down the Nablus office of the Progressive Front for Trade Union Action which has offices in Bethlehem and Ramallah as well.

An Israeli military spokesman said that these offices were only a cover for secret activities of the PFLP; they were closed down on orders from General Yahoud Barak, military commander of the central sector (of the West Bank).

AL MITHAQ EDITORIAL October 24, 1985 «PERES AND THE IMPROVEMENT OF LIVING CONDITIONS»

The local press, while talking about the so-called Peres peace initiative, did not deal with the way Peres presented his understanding of autonomy and its relation to the 'improvement' policy presented but not put into practice. Peres sees that the improvement of the living conditions is closely connected with the elimination of 'terrorism' in the West Bank and Gaza. This means that according to Peres the struggle against 'terrorism' through the 'iron fist' policy is a means of the improvement of the living conditions of the majority of residents. These remarks from Peres were approved and appreciated by the US Secretary of State George Schultz. These slogans about improvement are nothing more than velvet gloves concealing the hardline policy against the oppressed majority. We have realised this for a long time and will not be deceived by it.

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incited from abroad. This calls to mind the earlier Zionist illusions of breaking Palestinian opposition to the 'autonomy' plan by destroying the PLO's base in Lebanon, based on their supposition that West Bank and Gaza Palestinians were too 'intimidated' by the PLO to make peace with the occupiers.

The Zionists' new attempt to silence Palestinian opposition to occupation, *inter alia* by closing *Al Mithaq*, will be just as ill-fated as was their 1982 invasion of Lebanon. The consistent revolutionary line voiced in *Al Mithaq* is a product of our masses' struggle and experience. It expresses the revolutionary tendency that exists among Palestinian communities everywhere. If *Al Mithaq* is prevented from expressing our people's aspirations to liberation self-determination and a democratic Palestinian state, these will anyway surface - in demonstrations, in mass uprisings and daily steadfastness, with or without the printed page.

WHY NOW?

As irrational as the Zionists' arguments were, the closure of *Al Mithaq* was not due to the whim of some especially mean military officer. It is in line with long-standing Israeli repression of the Palestinian press, which was further tightened with the reactivation of the iron fist policy last year. Moreover, it is one of many steps taken in a current Zionist plan that originates from Prime Minister Peres' desk. It may seem ironic that the closure occurs amid so much talk in Tel Aviv, Washington and Amman, about 'improving the quality of life' for residents of the occupied territories, but that is exactly the point. In the eyes of the enemy forces, such repression is required for 'improving' the situation. This fact was aptly exposed by *Al Mithaq* itself in an editorial last autumn (see box).

Editor Mohammed Khatib attributed the closure of his papers to the prevailing situation of intensified Israeli-Jordanian cooperation to resolve the

fate of the occupied territories to their joint favor. As part of the independent Palestinian press, *Al Mithaq* has been in the forefront defending the national line and sole representation of the PLO. Its editorials have lashed out at all attempts to destroy or compromise these principles, whether by Zionist repression, Jordanian intrigues or the Palestinian right-wing leadership's deviations. It is one of the publications that has most clearly exposed Jordan's special role in implementation of the imperialist-Zionist plan for liquidating the Palestinian cause.

At a time when US imperialism, Zionism and Arab reaction have high hopes for a settlement between 'Israel' and King Hussein, circumventing the PLO, voices like that of *Al Mithaq* cannot be tolerated. For image purposes, the Zionist authorities may refrain from closing down the entire Palestinian press, though the extreme right is calling for just that. The Zionists are hoping that repression, plus greater Jordanian leverage in the occupied territories, can intimidate other sectors of the Palestinian press, or supplant them with yellow journalism. While this might work in one or two cases, the enemy will generally run into a brick wall, for the Palestinian press, like its readership, has persisted in united adherence to the PLO. This was recently underscored by the reaction to King Hussein's measures against the PLO in Jordan. Even papers previously considered as leaning towards Jordan, vigorously protested these measures.

Thus, the Zionist hammer can be expected to fall on other publications that uphold Palestinian rights and adhere to the PLO. Now is the time for an international campaign, protesting the closure of *Al Mithaq* and *Al Ahd*, and the constant Israeli harassment of Palestinian journalists and newspapers. Defending the Palestinian press is a defense of human and democratic rights. It is one way of supporting the Palestinian people's right to self-determination.

Memorandum Terror in Israeli Jails

The Committee for the Defense of Palestinian Prisoners in Israeli Jails would like to inform you about the inhuman conditions for political prisoners in occupied Palestine. In the period following the prisoner exchange in May 1985, a number of repressive measures were taken against thousands of Palestinian prisoners, aiming at depriving them of their basic human rights as confirmed in the Geneva and Lahai conventions concerning the treatment of prisoners-of-war in occu-

pied territories. These resolutions have been approved internationally and confirmed by all democratic institutions, societies and committees in the world, that are working in defense of human rights, and against psychological and physical torture and terror.

All events and facts following the latest prisoner exchange, in which 1,187 prisoners were freed, show that the Zionist authorities exploited the exchange to cancel many of the rights that the prisoners were able to