

Editorial

The Shift in Amal's Role

The fierce battle between the Palestinian resistance and the Amal movement, which is now raging from the Beirut camps to South Lebanon, dates back to Amal's unprovoked attack on Rashidiya camp on October 1st. The very fact that Amal has been besieging this relatively small camp for two months proves that this is no local incident, but one prong in Amal's overall plan. Despite intense efforts by Palestinian and Lebanese nationalist forces to end the war, Amal has persisted in its campaign to enforce the downfall of Rashidiya. To this end, Amal reinforced its murderous shelling with an embargo on food and other essentials, and psychological warfare against the camp residents, using methods reminiscent of Zionist-fascist terror.

When all this failed to cow the people and fighters of Rashidiya, Amal broadened the range of its aggression and attacked the Palestinian camps near Beirut and Sidon. Not even the Popular Nasserite Organization of Sidon, stationed to enforce the mutually agreed upon ceasefire, escaped Amal's aggression. Thus, Amal blocked all efforts at a peaceful solution among allies, and proceeded in efforts to impose its sectarian conditions, not only on the Palestinians, but on Lebanese nationalists as well. In the quest for hegemony over the nationalist areas, Amal has engulfed the anti-Zionist, anti-fascist forces in a side battle and enforced a rift in Palestinian-Lebanese relations. The battle assumed wider, dangerous dimensions as brigades of the regime's sectarian army involved themselves on Amal's side, supplying helicopters, arms and manpower in the Beirut and Sidon areas.

Pivotal to Amal's military campaign were its positions in the hills of Maghdousheh, overlooking Sidon from the southeast - used for shelling Ain Al Hilweh and Miyeh Miyeh camps, and as a connection point for the transfer of supplies from Amal strongholds in Beirut to the South. On this background, the Palestinian resistance undertook an operation on November 24th, designed to enable defense of the camps, and force Amal to accept reasonable calls to end its suicidal project. Palestinian freedom fighters gained control of Maghdousheh from the Amal forces. (It is noteworthy that Amal is not an indigenous force in Maghdousheh which is a Christian village; Amal had simply established military positions in this village because of its strategic location, halfway between Beirut and Tyre, enabling control of the coastal highway.)

From the time of gaining Amal's positions in Maghdousheh, the Palestinian organizations declared their readiness to withdraw immediately in the context of a genuine ceasefire, guaranteeing the camps' security. The Palestinian revolution does not seek to occupy or control any Lebanese territory, and has exerted every possible effort with their brothers in the Lebanese national movement, to bring about a political solution to end this dirty war.

Instead of responding positively to the Palestinian proposals, Amal's leadership escalated its political and military aggression against the Palestinian people and revolution, using the same pretexts as Lebanon's enemies, such as the dangers of Palestinian 'expansionism' and resettlement in Lebanon. The results of the numerous meetings and ceasefire agreements, since the first camp war in 1985, have clearly shown that Amal's leadership is determined to execute its criminal project against our people and revolution. Amal's insistence is due to a set of factors that paved the way for Amal to move from revolutionary positions to counterrevolutionary ones. The main factors in this shift are as follows:

First: Amal's sectarian nature predetermined the future of this movement and the horizons for its development. Sectarianism is an avenue to isolationist and reactionary positions. It leads to a form of harmonizing with the plans of the Zionist

enemy which relies on sectarian divisions to divide and weaken Lebanon, fragmenting it into cantons that would justify the Zionists' own sectarian ideology and existence. Amal's sectarian nature limited the movement's role in fighting for liberation and democracy. Influential circles in Amal assumed a passive position during the 1982 Israeli invasion, in contrast to the nationalist resistance mounted by other sections of the movement. Amal was late in assuming its place in the Lebanese National Resistance Front. Then, as the Israelis began their staged, partial withdrawal, some circles of Amal turned their energies to striking Lebanese nationalist and democratic forces, along with continuous attacks on the Palestinian masses and nationalist presence.

Second: Changes in Amal's structure have created an internal balance of forces, whereby those circles connected to the reactionary Lebanese authority and to the Zionist enemy have augmented their influence in the movement as a whole. A major element in these changes is that Amal members who collaborated with the Zionist occupation forces in the aftermath of the 1982 invasion, have been reinstated in their posts.

Third: During the past few years, Amal's leaders began to feel that there was a possibility for a sectarian solution to the Lebanese conflict in the foreseeable future. Thus, they strove to arrange the conditions in the patriotic and Islamic arenas in a way that would guarantee their own hegemony. With this motive, Amal waged wars on the Palestinian camps, and killed and expelled patriotic Lebanese from West Beirut. In the end, none of the Lebanese nationalist forces were able to operate in South Lebanon. Thus, Amal hoped to usurp the right to speak for the nationalist-Islamic forces, as a prelude to gaining more privileges in the context of the Lebanese regime's sectarian game. Related to this was the feeling of Amal's leaders that it was possible to make a deal with the Zionist enemy in the South, allowing Amal to impose its influence and eventually build its own sectarian canton - the 'Shiite state'. This would mean playing the same role as Antoine Lahd and his South Lebanon Army. This pushed Amal leaders to invent formulas for security arrangements which would guarantee Israeli security upon withdrawal from South Lebanon, in return allowing Amal to build its 'state'. The Palestinians are to be the scapegoats for these security arrangements.

Amal leaders thought that the internal conflict in the PLO, and the PLO's deteriorating relations with some Arab nationalist forces, especially Syria, would enable the execution of their project. Amal tried to cover its dirty actions with slogans such as the «deviating resistance» and opposition to Arafat's policies. Ironically, in reality, Amal's own policy marks a surrender to the enemy conditions and serves to spread the policy of capitulation in the Arab arena.

In the light of all these factors, influential circles in Amal decided that the time had come for executing their campaign against the Palestinians, even at the risk of exposing their true intentions. Recent statements by Amal leaders, though ambiguously worded, confirm that complete control of the South, in preparation for building the 'Shiite state', is at the top of their agenda. To achieve this goal, they will not stop at attacking the Palestinian armed presence, but aim to drive Palestinians to emigrate. The next stage would be eliminating Lebanese nationalist presence in the South as well. The campaign to liquidate the Palestinian revolution as the price for this 'state' will be broadened to include massacres against Lebanese patriots in Beirut and other regions, in order to impose Amal's sectarian hegemony. The fate of the Abu Al Aswad camp, near Tyre, is a clear example of Amal's methods and a warning about its ultimate goals. This small, relatively isolated camp,