

social affairs in the camp and for distributing materials we receive as donations. The information committee is preparing to start reissuing the camp bulletin that was published before 1982. During the recent clashes with Amal, we published a newsletter to keep our people informed about the situation. This committee is also responsible for public meetings and rallies... The popular committee supports the political line of the Palestine National Salvation Front, and there is full cooperation. The other organizations adhere to the committee's decisions.»

Mr. Darwish described life in Shatila on the background of events since 1982: «Life is very hard for our people. They suffer from continuous aggression. Our houses were destroyed; every home has been affected. There is a housing problem in the camp. Living conditions outside the camp also affect us - the economic situation in Lebanon and the security problems. Most Palestinians are afraid to go out of the camp. Unemployment is extremely high.»

«One week after the revolution evacuated, the fascist Phalangists, directed and supported by the Zionist forces - with indirect support from US imperialism - carried out the massacre. More than 5,000 people were affected. The main cause of the massacre was that people were not armed. We will never forget that painful lesson. We will never give up our arms, even to our closest ally.»

«After the massacre, there was the repression of the reactionary Lebanese regime. Every house was searched and every youth detained. That was a period of humiliation. It made us determined in our work for the return of the revolution. We worked with our allies of the Lebanese national movement until the February 6th uprising. We played a big role in liberating West Beirut from the fascists... This is one of the reasons we were surprised by Amal's attack on the camp... We had fought together against the fascists and Zionists in Beirut and the South...»

Mr. Darwish explained current problems, such as the harassment people face from Amal when going in and out of the camp: «There is a lot of harassment. There is only one entrance to Shatila open now, though the Damascus agreement (which ended the 1985 camp war) states that all entrances should be reopened. There is almost a state of siege around the camp, even for bringing in food or building materials to repair damaged houses... There were four schools in Shatila, running two shifts each. Now there is only one school with one shift. There used to be 8,000 students. Now there are 500. The schools were destroyed. We rebuilt the one functioning school, but the students in the last year lost one year of instruction.»

Mr. Darwish concluded by saying: «We hope that our friends in the world will increase their understanding of our cause. We are freedom fighters for the

liberation of Palestine, not blood-thirsty criminals. We hope they will pressure their governments and institutions to support our people in their struggle.»

THE HEALTH SITUATION

Dr. Mohammed Al Khatib is assistant director of Shatila hospital, and member of the camp's popular committee. He is from Khalsa in the North of Palestine, and is married with two children. He explained the living conditions now in Shatila: «The living conditions in the camp cannot be separated from those experienced by the ordinary Lebanese citizens. There is unbearable inflation due to the political conflict, and the military and social situation in Lebanon. This inflation is affecting all. The economic crisis endured by the Lebanese citizen is also endured by the Palestinians. Within a few years, the price of the dollar rose drastically. This affects the price of food and all daily life essentials. Inflation hits the poor and middle classes hardest, and the vast majority of the camp residents are poor...»

We asked Dr. Khatib's opinion of the Palestinian resistance's comeback in the camps and how he evaluates the period after May 1985, as compared to the foregoing periods. He replied as follows: «For the sake of argument, I don't say the comeback of the resistance: I say reorganization of the resistance's situation. In 1985, there was not a return of the resistance. There was a group of youngsters of Shatila and Burj Al Barajneh, who defended the camps; they are the sons of the camp residents. The people of the camps had felt the dangers of the Israelis and of the Lebanese fascist authority. The people have a national cause and must therefore carry weapons to defend their rights. The resistance's comeback is a reorganization of the Palestinians' situation inside the camps. I don't see great numbers of fighters or leaders from outside the camps. The vast majority are camp residents. The fighters are from the camp, those who were in the militias or had been trained in the use of weapons.»

«The resistance is not the same as before 1982... With the Palestine National Salvation Front, there is a way of thinking and dealing with people that differs from what it was before 1982. We know how the situation was before 1982. Now there are no offices outside the camps, only inside. With the new trend, the situation is better than it was, naturally with some reservations, such as that we are still living in a camp that is not suitable for living, especially healthwise. The sewage problems are the same as before. With the winter rains, there are still overflows and large pools of standing water. Much effort should be devoted to these problems by the resistance leadership.»

Dr. Khatib spoke of the health situation and services in Shatila: «Now in

the camp, there is a field hospital, along with daily clinics, and we have eight surgeons and six general health doctors. We accept all cases from the camp and outside. It is worth noting that Lebanese people have started coming to this hospital in big numbers, from outside the camp. This hospital treats people and distributes medicine free of charge. People come to the hospital for free treatment, because of the high price of medicine and treatment outside the camp, and because of the high professional standard of the doctors here.»

«As for the health situation, the camp is located in a bad area - I call it uninhabitable, so we have a number of diseases which spread fast, like diarrhea and vomiting in children. Such cases are common. It seems to be the result of impure water and the garbage that piles up in the streets. There are also diseases such as liver and heart disease, which are very common and seem to be the result of the bad health conditions in the camp.»

«For children, there is a big problem. First, children really need great care from the parents, which means the parents should be educated. Because of the low level of education of our people, some are unable to perform parental duties in a good way. As preventive medicine, we give vaccinations free of charge, but families are forced to buy those vaccines which we do not have in supply. Whooping cough vaccine is not available at our hospital, and it costs 800 Lebanese pounds which is very expensive. We distribute milk to children, which is available through the popular committee, UNICEF and the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS). We distribute it by doctor's prescription to poor people.»

«Medicine is necessary for a child; therefore, UNRWA's medical service has to provide these vaccinations. UNRWA, with all its service branches, does not give what is needed locally, whether in terms of curative or preventive medicine. Of course, if UNRWA is not providing, then the PRCS has to provide these vaccinations and services, because it is officially responsible for meeting our people's medical needs.»

Dr. Khatib assessed the process of repairing the damages that the camp has suffered, saying, «Of course, there are now repairs going on for some groups of houses whose occupants can't live outside the camp, especially with winter closing in. Work is going on, but very slowly. The vast majority of houses are damaged. On the outskirts of the camp, you could see houses that are unfit for habitation, especially with winter approaching. The other thing is that it appears that a high-level decision is required, involving the resistance leadership and Amal. It seems that the decision to rebuild is stalled until such a decision is declared.»