

confiscated like what prisoners had written, paintings, letters and books. In this case, we sent protests to the administrator of the prisons and to the Red Cross.»

«Also, the enemy tried to make some of the prisoners collaborate. We worked to prevent this through political education among all the prisoners. To improve the bad living conditions, we engaged in different forms of struggle: banging on the cell doors, strikes, petitions to the Red Cross and international organizations. Often the enemy would move people to different cells or prisons, to break the prisoners' solidarity or just to disorient people. We protested to the administration about such moves.»

Zakaria felt that the others had generally covered the problems with the enemy, so he focused on the problems among prisoners, saying, «The problems we had among the imprisoned nationalists were mainly because of political differences between organizations. We were able to solve these problems easily because of the democratic atmosphere established among the different organizations in the jails. Moreover, all realized that our efforts should be concentrated against the Zionist enemy and prison administration. Our constitution clearly stated that problems outside the prison among the organizations should not reflect on life inside the jails. When there was the split in Fatah after the 1982 invasion of Lebanon, some problems occurred. These were contained and solved democratically. The comrades of the PFLP started a strike and all the detainees joined in; this defused the problem among the Fatah prisoners.»

We asked the comrades what kind of cultural life they were able to have in view of the Zionists' restrictions. Abu Waffa told that in the beginning of his detention, pens, paper, newspapers and all books were forbidden. «Later, as the result of fierce struggle, the Zionists were forced to allow some books and pencils and paper to be brought by the Red Cross. We should know that the Nazi-like enemy was afraid of us being educated. There was always censorship.»

Zuhdi added, «In the beginning of my detention, there were only some ridiculous books, but after our struggle, the situation improved. We also had secret ways to bring in certain political books.»

Abdul Hamid explained, «Education and culture are the spiritual bread of the militant, especially in jail where the enemy aims to destroy our revolutionary spirit. For that reason, we considered education and culture as important weapons. At the beginning of my incarceration, the administration allowed only a few religious books.

After some struggle, we were allowed stupid books, but our struggle intensified and we gained the right to receive Marxist books via the Red Cross. We particularly enjoyed receiving books published in the Soviet Union.»

«After winning certain rights, we increased our activities. The detainees' central edition of *Al Hadaf* (PFLP magazine) was issued regularly in the jails. It was a vanguard among the Palestinian publications. There were also joint publications published in each prison. During the time of the joint leadership between the PFLP and DFLP, we issued a joint publication called *The Path of Unity*. Of course, these publications were not allowed by the enemy. In fact, they considered them a major security problem. Still, imprisoned comrades worked on these, while others wrote poetry, books and studies about our national cause. We also had great painters among us, like Zuhdi and Mohammad. Our political and ideological education also became more deliberate. Some cells had eleven meetings every week.»

Zakaria added, «When we were able to obtain a nationalist book about our cause, or a book from our organization, secretly of course, we spent time copying it by hand, so that we could all read it and send it to the prisoners in other jails as well.»

We asked the comrades about recreation opportunities in the jail. Zakaria began: «The enemy aimed to destroy us physically and mentally, and therefore forbade all recreation. This was something we struggled for. With our struggle and the help of various humanitarian organizations inside and outside occupied Palestine, including the Red Cross, we got the right to some sports like table tennis, volleyball, basketball and also chess. In 1984, the year before our release, radios were permitted. Before that, they were considered a security issue, a means of communication with our organizations outside.»

Abdul Hamid said, «I was told that after our release, the Zionist administration withdrew the right of having radios. I hope that international organizations will move to help the prisoners reinstate that right.»

Mohammad told that it had taken individual and group struggle to get the right to paint in the prisons. «As a result we have made a series of beautiful paintings which were published in the book *Palestinian Art Behind the Bars*.»

We asked about the different forms of struggle employed to obtain these rights from the Zionist administration. Abdul Hamid responded, «Our life in the prison was a chain of confrontation and struggle against the enemy. The struggle of the imprisoned national

movement took a variety of forms. There was the hunger strike which we called strategic struggle, i.e., our last resort and the form that required the most preparation and commitment. Short hunger strikes were also used as political manifestations, to mark national occasions. The purpose of such a strike is to mark our position and show our support to our people and revolution outside on the propaganda level. Such strikes were made after the 1982 invasion of Lebanon and the Sabra-Shatila massacre.»

«In terms of struggling for specific demands, there are six forms which we consider tactical: refusing to go to the daily exercise break; refusing to see visitors; refusing to shower, shave or wash our clothes; refusing a meal or two; refusing to meet with the prison administration; and refusing medicine. Sometimes we would concentrate on one form; other times, we used them in combination, as part of struggling for specific demands. The imprisoned national movement played a role in igniting and participating in the struggle of our people. When we go on hunger strike, our people under occupation increase their confrontation of the enemy; also media coverage increases.»

«The first stage of the imprisoned national movement's struggle started in 1967. There were landmark hunger strikes: in Ashkelon prison in 1976, in Nafha in 1980, in Jenin in 1984 and others. That first stage ended with our release in 1985. (Approximately one-third of the Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli jails were liberated at that time.) Now other detained comrades and brothers have entered the second stage.»

LIBERATION

In conclusion, we asked each comrade to describe his feelings upon receiving information about the possibility of being released, and upon being released and received by his comrades outside. Zakaria began, «I would like to explain that we had been disappointed several times before, not least by the way Arafat has dealt with prisoner release negotiations. In 1979, there was an exchange, but many long-term prisoners, some critically ill, stayed behind. Then in 1983, Arafat released six Zionists for those imprisoned in Ansar, but they had only served one year. More shocking to us was that this was arranged to insure Arafat's safe passage from Tripoli by sea to Egypt. That was a political move, at the expense of the detained national movement. The third time we were disappointed was when Arafat exchanged an Israeli captive and an Israeli spy for only two imprisoned