

# Bir Zeit University Elections

In the January 22nd elections of a new student council at Bir Zeit University in occupied Palestine, nationalist forces won over the Islamic list. However, these elections should also be evaluated in terms of how well they reflected national unity in the field, which is sorely needed in the current phase of the Palestinian struggle.

In terms of Palestinian student politics, the Bir Zeit University elections were held on the backdrop of the October 1986 elections at Bethlehem University. These had embodied the slogan of unity in the field, which is raised by most democratic and nationalist forces, mass organizations and nationalist figures in the occupied homeland. As a result, the National Unity list won the elections. This guaranteed the participation in the student council of all four major nationalist student blocs in the occupied territories: the Palestinian Student Action Front (3 seats), the Student Youth Bloc (3 seats), the Student Unity Bloc (1 seat), and the Progressive Student Bloc (2 seats).

In the election campaign, these four blocs consolidated their unity in the field and behaved in a democratic manner, adhering as closely as possible to the principle of proportional representation among themselves. This unified conduct led to the election defeat of suspicious religious forces that are always seeking to detract from the student movement's positive nationalist role.

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Bir Zeit University's new campus

The results of the Bethlehem elections were welcomed by all Palestinian nationalist forces in occupied Palestine and in exile. It was hoped that this heralded a new phase of greater coordination among the nationalist student blocs, increasing the effectiveness of the Palestinian student movement in the occupied territories. This is very important during this period in particular, as the dangers threatening the Palestinian people and cause are intensifying. This applies in the occupied territories with the increase of Jordanian-Israeli coordination, pushing forward the joint condominium plan for the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This situation means greater oppression of the Palestinian nationalist forces, including the student movement, as Jordan and 'Israel' work to bolster their own stooges. Outside the occupied territories as well, unity in the field is demanded in order to foil the plan of Amal and its supporters, to eliminate the Palestinian nationalist armed presence in Lebanon.

## ELECTIONS AT BIR ZEIT

What happened in the elections at Bir Zeit University was contradictory to

what is required of the Palestinian nationalist forces in the current political situation where comprehensive national unity in the PLO has not yet become a reality. Let's look at what actually occurred...

In the elections, there were three lists: (1) the Martyrs of Maghdousheh list consisting of the Student Youth Bloc, the Student Unity Bloc and the Progressive Student Bloc; (2) the Martyr Ghassan Kanafani list of the Progressive Student Action Front; and (3) the Islamic list.

According to information from occupied Palestine, several rounds of discussions preceded the elections, aimed at uniting the four nationalist student blocs on a single list. There was agreement on adhering to two principles for distributing the seats in the student council among the blocs: (1) participation of all nationalist student forces in the coalition to be formed; and (2) distributing the council seats in accordance with proportional representation as much as possible.

In the light of these two principles, the Progressive Student Action Front presented the following formula: five seats for the Student Youth Bloc, two

