

On January 9th, six Zionist fighter planes raided three Palestinian positions east of Sidon. In seven minutes, 10 rockets, weighing 500-1000 pounds, were fired on the area, resulting in great material damage; three Palestinians were martyred and five others injured. Less than 72 hours after the first raid, Israeli planes, on January 12th, again raided the area east of Sidon, inflicting heavy material damage; two persons were killed and several injured. Twenty-four hours later, Israeli planes raided a Palestinian position in the Yanta area of the western Bekaa Valley. Two people were martyred and eleven injured, while there was heavy material damage.

AMAL OBSTRUCTS A SOLUTION

On January 28th, Palestinian fighters completed their withdrawal from positions in Maghdousheh, to be replaced by the forces of the Popular Nasserite Organization of Sidon. This was an effort to foil any attempt by Amal to extend the siege and war on the camps under the pretext of fighting the «Palestinian occupation» of Maghdousheh. It was also intended to counter attempts to incite inter-Palestinian fighting. However, Amal continued the war of attrition against the Palestinian camps after the withdrawal, only proving that this war did not stem from November 24, 1986, when Palestinian fighters entered Maghdousheh in a move to defend the besieged camps. Amal's actions also proved that this war will not end when Palestinian defenders withdraw from Maghdousheh. As in the past, Amal's plan is to eliminate the Palestinian nationalist presence in Lebanon, as a step towards creating a sectarian canton and imposing its hegemony on the entire Lebanese nationalist bloc.

After the Palestinian withdrawal, Amal's new pretext was that this «withdrawal was a conspiracy»! Amal also insisted that its own forces - and no others - should replace the withdrawing Palestinians. And during all these who-should-replace-whom deliberations, the primary victims were the Palestinians still living under siege. Once again, the goals lurking behind Amal's rhetoric were exposed.

On February 3rd, a ceasefire agreement was reached between Palestinian organizations and Amal, but Amal's definition of the word *ceasefire* has always been that the other party holds its fire, but not Amal. Thus, one day after reaching the agreement, Amal thugs escalated the heavy, destructive shelling of Burj Al Barajneh and Shatila camps.

INHUMAN CONDITIONS

The suffering of the Palestinian residents of Rashidiya, Burj Al Barajneh and Shatila camps reached a peak in February. Aside from the devastation of the camps, besieged Palestinians are facing the atrocity of death by starvation. Food supplies have run out; there is no electricity or clean water.



Palestinian mother and her children from Shatila

These daily sufferings threaten another kind of death besides being shot. The following covers only a few examples of the suffering that the camp Palestinians are now enduring daily, in addition to the fact that Palestinian children and youth are missing a whole school year due to this dirty war.

On February 11th, a statement issued by Rashidiya's popular committee told how some of the camp residents tried to gather grass from the nearby Al Shawakir area, to feed themselves. Amal's gangs fired at them, leaving several people injured.

On February 14th, Dr. Pauline Cutting, a British surgeon working at Burj Al Barajneh's Haifa clinic, said that refugees were beginning to die «directly or indirectly because of malnutrition.»

She told reporters by radio that «a Dutch nurse has seen five children cooking a rat and eating it hungrily.» Dr. Cutting is one of four foreigners on the medical staff of this clinic where the top floors have been destroyed by bombardment. The medical staff has confirmed that people were starting to eat dogs and cats. A few days later, there were no more dogs and cats.

On February 14th, a Palestinian woman burned herself and her four children in Burj Al Barajneh, rather than face death by starvation.

The most horrifying aspect of the war of attrition against the Palestinians was seen in the dispensation sought by the residents of Burj Al Barajneh to eat human flesh. Responding to these calls, Nabih Berri, calmly sitting in his luxurious apartment, said in an interview with the Voice of the South radio station: «As long as Yasir Arafat does not want to reconcile, let the Palestinians eat their flesh; we will not allow them to occupy Lebanon.»

Upon mounting international and Arab protest over the human tragedy occurring in the Palestinian camps, Amal pretended to allow a food convoy to enter Burj Al Barajneh. This was later proven to be a trick. Dr. Cutting said that «seven people lost both their legs because of bombing during the time when the trucks were due to come into the camp... six people were killed and 24 wounded.»

On February 15th, Amal announced a partial lifting of the siege on Rashidiya camp. Refugees were allowed to leave the camp for five hours to buy food. On February 17th, Nabih Berri said that the siege around Burj Al Barajneh would be totally lifted. Ironically, this statement was made as fierce battles erupted between Amal militiamen on one side and the fighters of the Lebanese Communist Party and the Progressive Socialist Party on the other. Berri attempted to cover up his dirty tactics by saying that his decision to lift the siege was «taken secretly two days ago,» i.e., before these battles. Despite this promise, the siege continued, as did heavy shelling.

AMAL'S NEW WAR

The sectarian Amal movement has evolved into a force complementary to ▶