

Lebanon Palestinian Camps

The Palestinian camps in Lebanon are still heaving under the heavy shackles of Amal's brutal siege imposed almost six months ago. Although some relief has been allowed into the camps in the form of minor quantities of food and medical supplies after the entry of the Syrian troops, various ploys have been used to circumvent agreements and measures taken, rendering them useless.

Disease and sickness have spread rapidly, not only because of severe shortage of medical and food supplies, but also because of inability to give proper burial to the dead. More women have been exposed to death while trying to secure food than if they had carried arms; 90-95% of the wounded and martyred from mid-February to mid-March are women.

The atrocities perpetrated by the Amal gangs inevitably resulted in solidarity campaigns with the besieged Palestinians, which Amal and its backers could not ignore. In an effort to relieve these pressures, Amal mobilized the media in an attempt to show that they had taken a 'big step' towards restoring their 'humanitarian standing'. Nabih Berri has declared more than once that the blockade on food and medicines had been lifted from all the camps - however, Amal reserves the right to impose a military siege. These tactics are obviously designed to put the wool over the eyes of the public, thus allowing the Amal gangs to pursue their acts of brutality without being scrutinized.

Demonstrators in Hamburg, West Germany, demand an end to the siege:
«Hands off the Palestinian refugee camps!»



A number of other factors have molded a new situation which, though not forcing Amal to retreat, has forced it to resort to tactics of deceit, i.e., making a pretense of allowing in food and medicines, only to launch attacks on unsuspecting mothers and other civilians. The first of these factors is Amal's inability to break the Palestinians' spirit of resistance, or to score any major victory in the camp war begun two years ago. Second, the falseness of all pretenses given for the continuance of this ugly war has been exposed to the Lebanese masses, including the Shiites whom Amal boasts of representing. Third, Amal's credibility suffered when it decided to open fire on all Lebanese nationalist and democratic forces in West Beirut.

How serious Amal is about lifting the siege can only be measured by the steps it takes in practice. So far, the entry of Syrian troops into Beirut has had no major deterrent effect with regard to the camps. In many instances, the military siege on the camps in West Beirut has been intensified. Amal's intentions can no longer be misinter-



زهدي العداوى

Zuhdi Al Adawi

preted. It aims to break the camps' resistance from within in order to avoid storming them, for that would have unwanted international and regional repercussions. Most crucially, the Amal forces would suffer heavy losses if they chose a head-on collision with a people well-versed in warfare.