

Highlights of Palestinian Struggle

The Fedayeen Rule the Gaza Strip

The revolutionary experience accumulated in struggle is one if not *the* most valuable asset of the people striving for freedom. In occupied Palestine, armed struggle is the fundamental form whereby revolutionary vanguards confront the Zionist enemy. The experience gained through the practice of armed struggle should be documented and shared with our friends around the world. This article was compiled through discussions with comrade Hassan, a Palestinian militant who participated actively in the armed struggle against the Zionist troops in the first years after the 1967 occupation of the Gaza Strip. We hereby continue the series begun in the last issue of *Democratic Palestine* with the accounts of the 1976 hunger strike in Ashkelon prison and of a woman's participation in the resistance in the Gaza Strip. We plan to continue articles about highlights of Palestinian struggle in coming issues. Below comrade Hassan tells his story:

I was born in 1951, one year before President Nasser's revolution in Egypt. (The Gaza Strip was at that time under Egyptian administration). I was brought up in a patriotic environment. Some of my relatives were in the Arab National Movement (to which the PFLP traces its roots). At school, we were taken to visit the tomb of the unknown soldier (a Palestinian who fell in the 1959 Israeli-British-French attack on Egypt). We also participated in the lectures and political activities organized by the Arab National Movement. Such was the atmosphere until 1967, at which time I was 16 years old and in the 9th grade. Prior to the 1967 war, there were preparations that the masses participated in, helping the Egyptian army. We would go and help the army fortify its positions. During the work, we heard the government radio broadcasts which made people believe that a liberation war was coming. I was anxious for the war to break out so we could return to Palestine.

GAZA ATTACKED

When the war started, my father was in Khan Younis, 25 km away from Jabalia camp where we lived. He had to walk that distance to reach us. The Zionist army went into the Sinai first, and then returned to conquer the Gaza Strip. They started their bombardment. Jabalia was bombed fiercely. It was the first bombing I had ever witnessed. Our house was hit by two bombs. My father was killed and nearly all the family sustained injuries. I was injured in the leg. My brother, mother and one year old nephew were injured. My aunt was pregnant; she was hit and gave birth prematurely. My uncle's wife who had come to our house for shelter was killed. After the raid I was bleeding, and one of our neighbors came to the house and took me to the hospital. The hospital was only equipped for first aid, and there were about fifty of us there.

The Zionists came to the hospital looking for soldiers. It was the first time in my life I had seen any Jews. They looked at us. When they were sure that we were all injured civilians, they left. We thought they were going to murder us. They ordered us transported to the hospital in Gaza city. The most serious cases were selected, and I was among them. The convoy was surrounded by the occupation forces' vehicles. At the hospital, I was asked if I would accept having my foot amputated. I

replied that I would prefer death. The doctors' policy was making amputations to reduce the work load.

My mother used to come and visit me in the hospital. She had to walk 30 km because civilian transportation had been halted by the occupation forces. That meant that my nine brothers and sisters, six of them younger than me, were left alone. Though her back had been injured, my mother refused to be hospitalized, because she wanted to take care of the family, especially since my father had been killed. We had to bury him in the yard of the house - that was the only option during the war.

I left the hospital after four months. My family had been forced to move to another house, and our situation was very difficult. My father had been a worker before his martyrdom. My brother was a policeman, but he quit his job after the occupation, so he was unemployed. The UNRWA allowed new examinations after the occupation, so I took my 9th grade exams and passed.

RESISTANCE GROWS

In 1968, the Palestinian resistance began military operations against the Zionist forces in the Gaza Strip. After our experience of defeat and occupation, the sound of each bullet was like a shout of salvation. Our knowledge that the enemy was suffering losses raised our morale greatly. I used to imagine the fedayeen (resistance fighters) as men of iron. By this time, the Arab National Movement had been restructured, its radical Palestinian forces having formed the PFLP. Nobody knew the identity of the fedayeen, not even their own families. I hoped to see a fedayee, so that I could help him and thus join the resistance. At that time, a friend asked me to join the Palestinian Students' Union which was a secret organization; its activities were limited to distributing handbills and staging strikes. A friend brought a hand grenade and asked me to help start a strike. Our plan was to throw the grenade in the market to cause the shops to close down, signalling a strike. We threw the grenade and the shops closed, but the father of one of our friends was injured.

I found out that a friend of mine was in the Popular Liberation Forces (PLF), the guerrilla wing of the PLO's Palestine Liberation Army. Then I realized that the fedayee was one of ►