

Nabih Berri and demanding Syrian deployment.

The residents of Mar Elias camp in Beirut were very active especially the women. Three women's demonstrations were organized and hundreds of women participated. The submitted petitions to Syrian responsables in Beirut, to the ICRC and religious personalities to intervene to stop the siege.

All the suffering did not keep the youth of Burj Al Barajneh from commemorating national occasions. The Democratic Palestinian Youth Organization in the besieged camp held an art exhibition to commemorate Land Day, calling it the «Exhibition for the Defense of Camps Under Siege.» Ironically, Amal's response to the avalanche of activities condemning it was that the Palestinians were «exaggerating and overreacting to divert attention from Palestinian-Israeli contacts»!

## WARY OPTIMISM

On April 5th an agreement was reached as a result of intensive meetings between the PNSF and Amal, under

Syrian auspices, giving hope that the nightmare of the besieged camps in Beirut would be put to an end. The agreement stipulated: (1) a comprehensive ceasefire starting April 6th; (2) lifting the blockade on supplies, allowing supply trucks entry, and allowing women to leave and reenter the camp freely, starting April 6th; (3) designation of the points of deployment for Syrian troops; and (4) evacuation of the wounded, starting April 7th.

This agreement was implemented despite incidents of Amal violating the ceasefire. In Burj Al Barajneh, three Palestinians were wounded, while in Shatila one was martyred and another four wounded. Both incidents occurred on April 6th. In Shatila, supplies could not be completely unloaded because of the intensity of the shooting. At the meeting of all representatives on April 6th, indignation was voiced at Amal's violations. After unanimous condemnation of Amal, the meeting turned to discuss the details of evacuating the wounded and the Syrian deployment.

With the actual deployment of Syrian troops in Shatila and Burj Al Barajneh

on April 7th, calm prevailed. Roads were cleared in preparation for evacuating the wounded, and food and medical supplies were unloaded without incident; 25 wounded were evacuated from Shatila and 47 from Burj.

The black clouds of siege are slowly lifting, and Palestinians are picking up the pieces of their disrupted lives once again. However, their children will forever bear the scars of the daily horrors of death and war. The optimism generated by the new agreement to lift the siege is not based on illusions that Amal has reconsidered its original intent to eliminate Palestinian armed presence in Lebanon. The lifting of the siege is rather understood as a temporary retreat brought about by Palestinian struggle and steadfastness, and the pressure applied by the broad solidarity campaign with the besieged camps, condemning Amal on the political and humanitarian levels. That Palestinian optimism is accompanied by wariness is quite justified considering Amal's violation of past agreements, its initial violation of this latest ceasefire and the numerous veiled threats of Amal officials.

For genuine optimism to prevail, a number of measures must be taken. First and foremost, Syria must oblige Amal to lift the military siege of the Beirut camps. Moreover, there must be guarantees that Amal and its supporters will retreat from the area of the camps, and be permanently prevented from new attempts to carry out their original plans. Only then can one say that the stated purpose of the Syrian troops' entry into West Beirut has been fulfilled. This would be the prerequisite for working towards the implementation of the 1985 Damascus agreement with regard to the Palestinian camps, regulating relations between the Palestinian and Lebanese nationalist forces on a sound basis, to guarantee the rebuilding of the Palestinian-Lebanese-Syrian national alliance. The new agreement must be dealt with on a comprehensive basis, avoiding repetition of tragedy in the future, while ensuring Palestinian rights to self-defense and anti-Zionist struggle in Lebanon. If not, the latest agreement cannot inspire optimism at all.

## MAJOR RESISTANCE ATTACK

At dawn, April 18th, resistance fighters attacked the Israeli forces and Lahd's South Lebanon Army, storming their positions at Al Shrouymiyeh and Olman, in the occupied border zone, South Lebanon. Fierce battles ensued, continuing throughout the morning. The Zionists brought in reinforcements from occupied Palestine, and shelled scores of southern villages, damaging many homes and destroying a mosque. Lahd's army began attacking the Popular Liberation Army at Kafr Fallous, farther north. Israeli helicopters hovered over the occupied border zone, leveling heavy machine gun fire on southern villagers.

The resistance fighters shelled the enemy forces' bases at Olman and Al Shrouymiyeh, besieging them and blocking their retreat. Meanwhile, the Zionist-SLA forces were attacked at six other points in the occupied border zone. The Islamic Resistance claimed responsibility for this massive operation, saying that 30-40 Zionist soldiers

were killed, and the Olman base captured. Over 200 resistance fighters participated in the attack. Three Merkava tanks were destroyed in the battle. Though the Israelis claimed that they lost only four soldiers, it is clear that this is one of the biggest and most successful attacks launched on the Israeli occupiers in South Lebanon in the recent period. The threat it posed to the Zionists was obvious from the fact that both Chief of Staff Moshe Levi and General Peled, commander of the northern front, were directly involved in the battle.

## MORE ZIONIST AGGRESSION

On April 9th, four Israeli Cobra helicopters attacked the Palestinian refugee camps near Sidon, Ain Hilweh and Miyeh Miyeh, in the Zionists' perpetual war against the Palestinian people. This time, however, the Palestinian revolution succeeded in shooting down one of the helicopters, which crashed into the Mediterranean.

