

Editorial

Palestinians in Lebanon are a Main Force in the Process of Liberation and Unification

In mid-July, the Lebanese Front for Liberation and Unification was declared. It was formed in difficult and complex circumstances, the most important of which are the following:

1. Continued Israeli occupation of large areas in southern Lebanon: The Israelis are currently attempting to enlarge their occupation by expanding the so-called security zone. The new 'security' areas would be controlled by Lebanese forces other than Antoine Lahd's South Lebanese Army (SLA). Moreover, the Israeli forces continue to launch attacks on Lebanese villages and citizens inside and outside the areas they control.

2. The Lebanese fascists' calls for the partition of Lebanon: These calls have recently been advanced more vehemently as with the call of Samir Geagea, commander of the Lebanese Forces, for a «cabinet of independence.» Promoting an alternative to the existing government is obviously an attempt to divide the country. By raising such issues, the fascists aim to intensify the prevailing crisis to the point of chaos. This would give 'Israel' free reins in South Lebanon, while strengthening the fascists' hand in relation to next year's presidential elections.

3. The deepening Lebanese economic and social crisis which threatens tens of thousands of Lebanese citizens with starvation, especially in the poor areas. Today, Lebanon's inflation rate is among the highest in the world.

In its first statement, the Front for Liberation and Unification evaluated these circumstances in depth and expounded its main tasks in the current stage. The most urgent tasks were specified as continuing the liberation process, unifying Lebanon in opposition to all the calls for partition, resolving the economic crisis and overthrowing the sectarian regime.

THE PALESTINIAN ASPECT

The Palestinian masses in Lebanon view the urgent tasks of the Front for Unification and Liberation as being in line with their interests. They view the liberation of occupied Lebanese territory as being their task as well. The Palestinian masses have always been opposed to sectarian plans and partition. They are among the first to be hit by the economic crisis. In a nutshell, the Palestinian masses approve of all the issues in the program concerning the Lebanese internal situation.

However, the Palestinian masses are worried by the section in the Front for Liberation and Unification's statement pertaining to the Palestinian presence in Lebanon. This section clearly represents the viewpoint of one particular Lebanese faction, the same faction that has waged a savage war on the Palestinian camps for the past two and a half years. A thorough study of this section of the statement reveals the following shortcomings:

1. Failure to recognize the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian masses in Lebanon. This incorrect position is especially glaring because it occurs at a time when the forces of peace, progress, liberation and socialism worldwide recognize the PLO, particularly after the unification session of the Palestinian National Council.

2. Accusing the PLO's current leadership of being deviationist and capitulationist. The Front for Liberation and Unification ignores the fact that the current PLO leadership is composed of representatives of the main organizations in the Palestinian national movement. This includes those which have close relations with many Lebanese organizations who are members in the Front for Liberation and Unification.

3. Explicit approval of the abrogation of the Cairo agreement. The abrogation of this agreement was never before a demand of the Lebanese national movement. On the contrary, it was the demand of the fascist forces. In fact, the Lebanese national movement always fought any attempt to abrogate this agreement.

4. Ignoring the numerous episodes of the Amal movement's killing, dispersing, arresting and torturing Palestinians in Lebanon. These episodes continue, especially in South Lebanon. The statement did not call for an end to these crimes, or an end to the continuing siege around the Palestinian camps. Instead, it referred only to the issue which is wrongly termed 'Palestinian armed expansion outside the camps'. This is exactly the pretext used by the Amal movement to launch its savage attacks on the Palestinian masses in the camps.

5. An unrealistic assessment of the steadfastness of Beirut during the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, and the ensuing anti-occupation resistance. The statement minimizes the militant role of the Palestinian revolution, side by side with Lebanese nationalists, at that time. It ignores the fact that the decision for the Palestinian fighters to evacuate Beirut was not taken by the PLO alone. It was a decision of both the PLO and the Lebanese National Movement.

All in all, the Front for Liberation and Unification's statement takes only the position of the Amal movement into consideration when dealing with the question of the Palestinians in Lebanon. The Palestinian masses now have reason to be afraid that Amal will continue its aggression against their camps under the banner of the Front for Liberation and Unification.

Our masses in Lebanon are ready to march under the banner of the Front for Liberation and Unification, to struggle with it for a democratic, independent, unified Lebanon. At the same time, they seek a serious discussion with this front. Dialogue should start immediately between the Palestinian national movement, the Lebanese nationalist forces and Syria, aimed at regulating relations among these forces. Relations should be based on a common line, free of sectarianism. The experience of the last two and a half years has shown that no one force is capable of imposing its viewpoint on the others. This is particularly the case when the viewpoint concerned is based on wishful thinking that the Israelis will withdraw from South Lebanon if the Palestinian movement is eliminated in Lebanon. ●