

PLO Central Council Meeting

On October 5-7th, in Tunis, the PLO's Central Council held its first session since the April PNC.

The Central Council session was opened with roll call. Present were 66 Central Council members, more than the two-thirds quorum required. Then the agenda of the meeting was announced to be as follows:

1. the Executive Committee's political report and discussion;
2. the situation in the occupied homeland;
3. the situation in Lebanon;
4. the secretariat;
5. internal rules and regulations;
6. selection of the drafting committee;
7. other subjects proposed and agreed upon by the council.

A comprehensive report was presented by PLO Executive Committee Chairman Yasir Arafat, reviewing the political developments on the Palestinian and Arab levels, and the Executive Committee's activities since the April PNC.

Abu Jihad, head of the PLO committee on the occupied land and Fatah Central Committee member, presented a report covering the situation in occupied Palestine. He stressed the necessity of safeguarding the land and developing a Palestinian national economy.

Salah Salah, head of the Palestinian National Work Committee in Lebanon and PFLP Politbureau member, followed with a report on the situation in Lebanon. He emphasized the importance of Amal President Nabih Berri's initiative to end the camp war. He added that nonetheless, given past experience, caution should be exercised, particularly after Amal had sabotaged the implementation of the September 11th agreement signed in Sidon.

Abu Mazen, member of the PLO Executive Committee, presented a report dealing with the PLO's relations with Israeli forces. He attempted to justify such contacts, claiming they would raise conflict in the Zionist entity, leading more Jewish forces to recognize Palestinian rights. Nonetheless,



less, he emphasized that such contacts were not an alternative to armed struggle and other forms of struggle, for without this no Jewish forces would have recognized Palestinian rights. He said that such contacts were not negotiations, but a form of dialogue with forces and figures opposed to occupation.

Discussions followed these presentations. The first to open the discussion was PFLP Secretary General George Habash, who delivered an important, comprehensive speech (see text in this issue). The council's discussions were characterized by seriousness and a sense of commitment, focusing on several topics, the most important of which are covered below.

RELATIONS WITH EGYPT

Concerning this issue, three trends emerged in the discussions.

The first trend rejects contacts with the Egyptian regime as long as it adheres to the Camp David accords. The proponents of this trend argue that such contacts harm the PLO's unity and its international and Arab alliances. This trend was articulated by the Palestinian revolutionary democratic forces.

The second trend was very enthusiastic about the PLO's relations with the Egyptian regime, noting Egypt's importance and weight. The advocates of this trend have the illusion that these contacts will pull Egypt away from Camp David. This trend was advocated

by Executive Committee member Jamal Al Sourani and Fatah Central Committee member Hani Al Hassan who even called for the Camp David regime's return to the Arab fold.

The third trend attempted to set standards and restrictions for the PLO's relations with the Egyptian regime. The supporters of this middle-of-the-road trend don't overestimate the possibility of these relations pulling Egypt away from Camp David. However, they reject severing these relations, in order to avoid negative repercussions for the PLO. They called for establishing standards to govern these relations, and for studying the effects of these relations with the Arab national liberation movement and some regimes.

RELATIONS WITH ISRAELIS

There were four views on this issue:

1. The representatives of the Arab Liberation Front registered reservations on relations with Israeli forces, citing the eventual harm they do to the Arab and Palestinian struggle.

2. Some called for concentrating on contacts with Israeli forces who are serious in their support of Palestinian rights and enjoy a degree of influence. Close coordination with RAKAH, the Israeli Communist Party, was called for.

3. The PFLP's representatives called for limiting these relations to democratic, anti-Zionist, Israeli forces. The PFLP considers that establishing contacts with Zionist forces weakens the conditions for confronting the Zionist project and state, especially given the UN resolution on Zionism as a racist ideology.

4. The fourth trend pressed for going beyond the PNC resolutions adopted on this issue. It called for establishing contacts with any Jewish forces that recognize the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.