

Interview With Comrade Habash

«Our Masses Can No Longer Live Under Occupation»

In early February, Comrade George Habash, General Secretary of the PFLP, was interviewed by *Al Nida'a*, the Lebanese Communist Party's newspaper, on the uprising in occupied Palestine.

The uprising is the most prominent among current events, attracting great international attention. What are the main characteristics of this uprising?

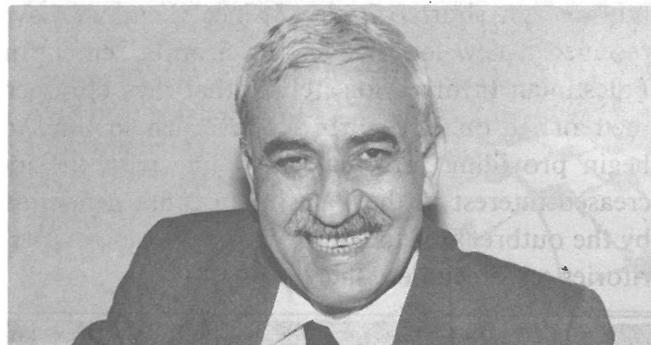
Scientifically speaking, this particular uprising has attained the highest level ever reached by any uprising over the past 20 years of occupation. The first basic characteristic of this uprising is its being inclusive and comprehensive. All classes of the people and all sectors of society have become integral parts of the uprising. All ideological trends are represented. Moreover, the uprising has spread all over the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the Palestinian territory occupied in 1948... Every town, village and refugee camp... the entire Palestinian people, with no exceptions, are taking part in the uprising. There is participation by the old, the children, the Marxists, the fundamentalists, the merchants and the workers alike.

The second basic characteristic of the uprising is its quality and depth. This is mirrored in the political slogans raised by the people. In this particular uprising, the Palestinian people have raised the slogans of freedom and independence, the slogan of an independent Palestinian state. It is true that several other slogans were chanted, demanding the release of prisoners, the lifting of the iron fist and a stop to settlement building, along with various other demands. Yet all these are in line with the essential slogan, namely ousting the occupation, and freedom and independence.

The third basic characteristic of the uprising is its high level of organization. In the first period, there was some controversy about this issue. Yet, I believe that the continuity of the uprising has provided the real answer to this question. After this long duration, no reasonable person can describe the uprising as spontaneous rather than organized. Indeed, the uprising has developed even beyond the expectations of those who originally planned and ignited it. Since then, it has assumed a well-organized form. At present, there are popular committees organizing activities in towns, villages and refugee camps. Efforts are being made to form committees to cover every quarter and every street.

The fourth characteristic is the courage shown by our people in confronting the enemy. 'Israel' employs every available means of oppression. Despite all the brutal Israeli measures, the Palestinian children, women and old people stand firm and continue their acts of defiance.

The particularity of the uprising, then, is seen in these characteristics, namely its being comprehensive, deep,



organized and daring. These characteristics can be attributed to the huge sufferings of the Palestinian people at the hands of the Israeli occupation. Our masses have rejected the occupation and can no longer coexist with it. This is a big lesson that should be taken to heart by the Arab national liberation movements. Our masses now raise the slogan of victory or martyrdom. How do we interpret this? Our masses can no longer continue to live under occupation. They will risk death for the sake of freedom. These are the sole reasons for the uprising: the occupation, and the subjective condition which is the presence of the vanguards, the organizations that lead the masses in order to rid them of their suffering.

TOWARDS CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

What are the chances that the uprising can become comprehensive civil disobedience? Is the uprising capable of paving the way for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip?

At the present moment, the uprising is being stepped up towards total civil disobedience. It still lacks the prerequisites to be developed into total civil disobedience. The Palestinian masses and their vanguards are aware of the fact that several requirements should be fulfilled to make total civil disobedience a success. Foremost among these conditions is national concensus, i.e., agreement among the most important Palestinian organizations on this issue. Moreover, there must be agreement on this issue between the uprising's leadership inside Palestine and the PLO leadership abroad. It also requires popular committees everywhere. Finally, the conditions for survival must be provided.

Civil disobedience basically means total rejection of the occupation, refusing to deal with it in any way. Now, when the Palestinian masses boycott the occupation authority,