

Palestinian hospitals and harassing, beating and arresting patients.) There are merchant committees that organize the strikes and provide for limited openings so the population can get food; they also enforce price control, and see that, whenever possible, Palestinian goods are sold rather than Israeli ones.

After the PLO United National Leadership's call for the formation of popular committees, these were formed locally with the initial task of co-ordinating the work of the already existing committees. With the uprising moving in the direction of mass civil disobedience, these popular committees can provide the infrastructure for the population's sustenance, while serving as a popular, alternative authority to the occupation authority.

FORMS OF STRUGGLE

While a broad spectrum of forms are being used in the current uprising, they all have a common denominator which is mass participation. Direct confrontation of the enemy occurs via stone-throwing whether by hand or using different kinds of slingshots. Another widely used weapon is the molotov cocktail, thrown to burn Israeli vehicles. The strike forces barricade the entrances of the towns, villages and camps with burning tires, boulders and barrels, to delay the approach of the enemy soldiers, giving time to strike at them. Until now, the main trend has clearly been to fight with weapons, such as stones, which are accessible to the masses at large. The collective decision to concentrate the battle against military targets is equally clear. While the decision on targets is likely to prevail, future needs to protect the masses and to escalate the confrontation radically and quickly, may lead to the use of more advanced weaponry, relying on cadres experienced in military operations.

Demonstrations and sit-ins have been frequently staged, but the most effective struggle form used so far is the strike. Gaza workers stopped reporting for jobs in the initial week of the uprising, as students also went on strike. On December 21st, a general strike was called. Sectors of the Israeli economy were paralyzed as workers living in the

1967 and 1948 occupied territories stayed away. A total strike reigned for several days. Then, economic necessity brought some back to work, but some are striking until this day. One-day total strikes are held for special occasions. The January 31st edition of *Al Fajr* reported that nearly 70% of Palestinians working in 'Israel' had been on strike almost continuously since the uprising's start. A rotation system of sorts prevails, whereby workers take turns striking according to area, or those with a family to support return to work, while single workers continue the strike. At the same time, the local committees provide a support network for strikers and their families.

It is estimated that the strike cost the Israeli economy \$2 billion in the initial period. Israeli high school students were mobilized to harvest the citrus crop, while more south Lebanese villagers were commandeered to work in Israeli factories. While demonstrating the vulnerability of the Israeli economy to united Palestinian action, the general strike also provided a practical solution to a long-standing organizational problem for the Palestinian liberation movement. The Palestinian trade union federations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip have been prohibited by the occupation from organizing those who work in 'Israel'.

It has moreover been difficult to organize these workers, since their long working hours and commuting time means that they literally are only at home for sleeping hours. Under the impact of the uprising, these workers were automatically organized in the framework of the United National Leadership. This has important implications for the future.

POLITICAL DIRECTION

Clearly, the overall thrust of the uprising is to end the occupation. All the demands that have been raised point in this direction:

- respecting international law, especially the conventions pertaining to the protection of civilians and their property under occupation;
- immediate implementation of UN Security Council resolutions nos. 605 and 607, requiring that 'Israel' abide by the Geneva Convention, and calling for a just and permanent solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict;
- release of all those detained during the uprising, and annulment of the sentences of those convicted;
- a stop to the deportation policy and allowing all deportees to return to their families and homes; releasing all administrative detainees; annulling house arrest orders; approving all the applications for the reunion of families

Israeli soldier shot in Bethlehem March 20th - the first Israeli casualty in the current uprising.

