

SS Report

Not Afraid»

At the beginning, the soldiers tried to force open the shops. Now they don't even try, because they can't. The Palestinians set the schedule. When I was in Nablus, I was just getting out at 10 a.m. and I heard stones being thrown in the air and bouncing off the tin roofs. It was a warning to anyone who still had his shop open. It's amazing how people live up to these closing times. The soldiers are dictated by the closing times. When the shops open, everyone arrives, and so do the soldiers.

THE PALESTINIAN SECTOR

The shops are closed for a number of reasons. First of all, it shows that the situation is not normal and not acceptable to the people. It hurts the sale of Israeli products. It gets the business sector involved in the uprising. That is one thing that is different from before: This is not a revolt led by students, for example. Every sector is involved. Of course, things like pharmacies, hospitals and bakeries stay open - sometimes 24 hours a day. The workers are striking in Israeli factories, but those who work for Palestinian concerns do not strike, because they want to increase the use of the Palestinian sector, and decrease

the use of the Israeli sector. I spoke to people working in the Palestinian sector, who told me that they don't keep their salaries. The money is redistributed by the local committees in their villages, to whoever is most needy. So those who are working are helping those who aren't.

The last week I was there, the Israelis imported about 2,000 Portuguese workers to replace Palestinian strikers. They were put in a settlement in the Gaza Strip to live. But this is not going to work. The Palestinian workers have to provide their own food and shelter. For imported workers, the Israelis have to pay.

When it comes to relief efforts and people want to send medical supplies, the Palestinians now say, «No, we want money so that we can buy from our own factories.» In terms of medicine and medical care, there is enough available if there was enough money. The hospitals are there and there are a lot of Palestinian doctors and nurses. There is only some shortage in specialized areas like physical and occupational therapy, because the many people whose hands have been broken by the Israeli soldiers need this in order to regain their abilities. The Palestinians don't want foreign therapists to come and do the job. They want them to come and train the people there; that's a very clear demand. They want financial relief, not supplies; there are Palestinian medical supply companies there.

CONTROL OF THE STREETS

The Palestinians pretty much control the streets and roads of the occupied territories. One day we were traveling in Gaza on a day of general strike. Since we were a delegation, we wanted to see what was happening, but some children started stoning our vehicle, since no one should be moving on a strike day. It was interesting to see a 50-year-old Palestinian get out of the truck to negotiate with the five-year-old boy who was manning the roadblock. Finally, the man convinced the boy that we should pass. So now there are Palestinian roadblocks where you must get permission to pass, not only Israeli roadblocks.

In a lot of ways, these are for the Palestinians own protection. The soldiers and settlers are quite violent and will spare no lives. By Palestinian roadblocks I mean huge stones placed ►

