

some of the training and day care these committees were doing is now being deemphasized. Instead, the women are going to villages and camps to find out where the needs are greatest. They are providing a real source of information to the medical committees as to where the needs are.

The existing women's groups have been reoriented to the needs of the uprising. For example, many women are teachers, so many of the women in the committees are now working with the teachers' union to convince them to open the schools, as has been called for by the United National Leadership of the Uprising. It is not easy to force the schools open. You need the cooperation of the teachers and parents, to say that they are ready to open the schools by force.

Now in many places, the schools have been occupied by the soldiers, since so many forces are needed in the occupied territories. It is no longer such that they are soldiers by day and go home at night. They are sleeping in the schools. In Nablus, I saw whole schools occupied by soldiers. In Gaza, I saw camp after camp where soldiers now live. In East Jerusalem, they have taken over a hotel.

To get back to the role of the women: Another thing they are doing is sewing flags, as these have to be produced quickly and in big quantities. Almost all the flags I saw were handsewn. There was a women's demonstration in Jerusalem on International Women's Day. It lasted only five minutes because the soldiers came immediately and started shooting at the women. It shows how threatened they are. They arrested five women who stayed under interrogation for five days. By the way, I didn't see any Israeli female forces in the territories at all.



CONDITIONS FOR SURVIVAL

There is no difference between the West Bank and Gaza Strip in terms of the people's goals, but the situation in the Gaza Strip is different, because the people don't have land, and a higher percentage work in 'Israel'. I think that who is going to survive the Israeli blockade best is the *felah*een (peasants). Even from my own experience, I could see how conditions had become more difficult. Before, when you went to a village, the people brought all the food they possibly could. Now you get what they themselves are producing or able to pick. In the cities and camps where the people have no land, it's going to be more difficult to survive because they have to buy commodities.

There are differences between the situation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It took longer for the West Bank to become totally involved in the uprising, but it's very clear that this has happened. In the West Bank, there is a large business class, a large bourgeoisie, but these people are now clearly part of the uprising, and I think that is the real critical point in the strikes. In the Gaza Strip, the people are under constant attack, but they are constantly revolting. We had more trouble travelling in the Strip than in the West Bank. Even though they are more besieged, they are also more in control of their area. You cannot move in Gaza without getting Palestinian approval.

The hospitals in Gaza are really incredible. We saw horrible things. Al Shifa, the major hospital, has been raided and tear-gassed; wounded have been taken out. We also saw Ansar II prison camp which was built for maximum 200 people, but now holds 800. In the hospitals, it is really horrible to see people with casts from their fingers to their shoulders because of beatings where the soldiers just hold their arms out and beat them. In fact, the soldiers have new clubs now, made of plastic, so they won't break.

THE NEW FASCISTS

The women in our group were all different in some way; they had different levels of knowledge. One of them was a pretty well-known writer in the USA, who happens to be Jewish. On this trip, seeing the victims of the beatings, the razor cuts, boiling water poured on children, she broke down at one point, crying and saying that she was ashamed to be a Jew, and that the Israelis' reign of terror reminded her of Nazi Germany. One day we went to Al Khalil (Hebron). The city was curfewed and she went up to the commanding officer and asked why he was doing this. He said he was just following orders, and she said, «That's what the Nazis said». This is not the kind of woman who would randomly make such a comment; she really believed that what she saw was Nazi-like treatment. Everyone is a potential victim, the soldiers enter any house at random and beat whoever they want. There were people who had been beaten with rifle butts and clubs; then the soldiers take them to military areas and start to slice their backs with razors - this is sick.

About the little girl who had boiling water poured on her: The soldiers were looking for her brother in a Gaza camp. They went into the house and couldn't find him, so they poured boiling water over a four-year-old. I was in one house in a village near Nablus. Soldiers were chasing some children and claimed they were in this particular house, but couldn't find them. Nonetheless, they beat the mother, three of the daughters and one of the sons of the family. The mother suffered a broken wrist; they all had to receive medical treatment. This is the same village where soldiers dropped a couple of kids from their helicopter.

When the group left, they were all strip-searched, even the nuns, and interrogated separately for two hours each. Their notebooks were taken and kept for a long time. I left later, and was escorted by several agents from the airline counter to the plane. I couldn't even say good-bye to the friends who had brought me to the airport. Every single thing in my luggage was taken apart. It was disgusting, and this is what some call «the only democracy in the Middle East.»!!!