

the region. Arab material and political support could greatly boost the masses' potential for escalating the uprising to a state of total civil disobedience. This support must be based on a position which unequivocally recognizes the PLO as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and their right to statehood. Obviously, such support requires definitive rejection of the Schultz plan and other anti-Palestinian initiatives. A key to creating the needed supportive Arab environment is the newly begun PLO—Syrian reconciliation, and the convening of an Arab summit devoted exclusively to supporting the uprising.

## STEPS TOWARDS CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

From the initial period, the uprising has contained the seeds of civil disobedience. This is seen in the workers' strikes and commercial strikes which intermittently merge into days of general strike. The commercial strike has been a constant feature and is now organized to a degree that constitutes a major element in civil disobedience. Total, continuous boycott of work in 'Israel' is a more difficult task due to the large number of families that are dependent on the income this brings. Thus, constant general strike is a process that must be gradually worked up to, in line with the success of the self-sufficiency efforts, the expansion of local production and work opportunities and a Palestinian-administered social security network.

Still, despite the difficulties involved, the days of general strike are on the increase. In March, the United National Leadership called five days of general strike. In April, there were six general strike days. In the first half of May, there were four general strikes. This is in addition to the special Days of Rage when large numbers of Palestinians stay away from work in 'Israel', and a number of workers (estimated at about 40%) who have stayed away since the beginning of the uprising.

By March, major new elements of civil disobedience had been introduced with the United National Leadership's call to the people not to pay taxes, and the mass resignations of tax collectors, the Palestinian police force and the Israeli-appointed village and town councils. All these moves, like the days of general strike, are rehearsals for total civil disobedience.

Concurrently, more and varied mass organizations have been formed, anchored in the popular committees that now exist in all towns, most camps and many villages. The original task-specific committees, related to the popular committees, concentrate on fields related to the immediate needs of sustaining the uprising: medical relief committees, food supply committees, the strike forces and guarding committees. As the uprising has continued, these have become more institutionalized, forming the basis for organizing daily life in all its aspects. They have also been supplemented by committees with new functions.

For example, in Call No.15 issued in late April, the United National Leadership emphasized that workers should form united committees to increase their role in the uprising, and to work for unification of the trade union movement. Palestinians were called on to boycott all work in Zionist settlements in the 1967 occupied territories. Instead, they should concentrate on cultivating the land to enhance self-sufficiency. A total boycott of work in 'Israel' was not called for. Rather the call specified «that the uprising not lose any opportunity for action beyond the green line.»

Call No. 15 also urged the formation of more popular committees, including educational committees, information committees and solidarity committees (for aiding the families of martyrs). The education committees should provide for better organization of the uprising's efforts to break the Zionist policy of enforcing ignorance, following up on previous actions. In Call No. 11, the United National Leadership had designated March 24th as Palestinian Challenge Day, against the Israeli policy of transforming schools into detention centers. Teachers, students and parents staged sit-ins and demonstrations at academic institutions to challenge this attempt to enforce ignorance. In mid-April, in accordance with Call No. 13, there was a day in solidarity with the academic institutions against the occupiers' decision to close them. In early May, Call No. 15 designated a day for breaking the occupiers' decree closing academic institutions, by everyone studying from 9 to 12 noon.

Call No. 15 also directed the popular committees to rename streets and main buildings in their area after the martyrs of the uprising. In Jabalia, the largest

camp in occupied Palestine, this was done on May 12th.

## IMPACT OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

Civil disobedience has been chosen as the major form of the uprising at the current stage, because it most directly challenges the Israeli occupiers' ability to rule, while simultaneously creating new popular structures that insure the continuation of the uprising, and lay the basis for realizing its goal: Palestinian statehood. While depriving the occupiers of substantial revenues and making the occupation less profitable, civil disobedience exposes before the world that the Zionist occupation is not only illegal, but also unworkable in the long and short run. The more total the civil disobedience, the more obvious these effects will become. For all these reasons, the Zionist authorities fear the civil disobedience campaign, and have instituted new measures in an attempt to abort it.

In addition to shooting and beating, the Zionist authorities have mounted a broad campaign of economic and administrative measures to undercut the Palestinians' survival means. In the face of the boycott of Israeli products, Zionist soldiers have simply destroyed locally grown vegetable in the markets of the occupied territories, as occurred in Nablus on May 12th. The occupation troops also destroy attempts to provide social services to the masses, as when they attacked the UNRWA social services center in Jabalia camp on May 15th; they tried to tear down the fence around the center and install a watchtower, to be able to control the center.

In a general attack, the occupation troops are trying to collect taxes by force, using various measures such as revoking drivers and other licenses which are only returned on payment of back taxes. This has so far been most systematic in the occupied Gaza Strip where the identification cards of thousands of residents have been revoked. In mid-May, the Israeli authorities declared that all Gazans will have to obtain new ID cards. Besides trying to involve people in waiting in offices all day to get a new card, this is a method for forcing tax payment, exercising social and political control, making arrests, etc. Each new measure, however, elicits a new Palestinian response. A campaign is being mounted to refuse the new cards.