

Editorial

For Palestinian Independence

After the July 31st declaration of the Jordanian regime's decision to end legal and administrative ties with the West Bank, attention focused on the anticipated Palestinian response: Would the PLO bow to US and Israeli demands, in line with the wishes of Arab reaction? Or would it utilize the new situation to make a step forward towards the achievement of Palestinian self-determination and an independent state?

The PLO and the Palestinian people welcomed the Jordanian move, despite King Hussein's motives, for they considered it the most important victory of the Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories to date. The PLO has accepted the challenge and engaged in intense internal dialogue in order to reach consensus on decisions that could have historical import.

Ending legal and administrative ties with Jordan does not mean that the West Bank will be in limbo. Far from it, the Palestinian people in the course of the current uprising have shown themselves more than capable of running their own lives and civil affairs. The popular committees, an offshoot of the uprising, have proven this irrevocably, organizing the people's lives without a trace of the corruption of the Jordanian administration and in diametrical opposition to the fascism of Israeli military rule. The popular committees' truly democratic mode of functioning is perhaps the real reason they were outlawed by the occupation authorities, for they represent a threat not only to the occupation but to the very heart of the racist Zionist ideology.

DIALOGUE FOR CONSENSUS

The Palestinian Central Council was meeting in Baghdad at the time King Hussein announced the new Jordanian move. It thus became the first Palestinian body to discuss the implications of this step. The Central Council debated the issue thoroughly and confirmed the PLO's readiness to shoulder its responsibilities towards the Palestinian people, and to do whatever ... as needed in the new situation, in accordance with previous PNC decisions. The Central Council formed a political/legal committee to study all options open to the PLO and present its findings to the Executive Committee.

Another meeting among Palestinian organizations was hosted by Libyan leader Qaddafi, in an effort to bring back into the PLO those organizations which have remained outside its framework. However, these organizations set conditions that could not be fulfilled. Thus, the discussion on how to respond to the new situation continued among those organizations who are in the PLO. A series of Palestinian leadership meetings in August and September resulted in the crystallization of two trends:

The first trend is represented by some sectors of the Palestinian bourgeoisie outside the occupied territories, who lean towards accommodation of US and Israeli demands, i.e., unconditional recognition of 'Israel' and acceptance of UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338. In addition, they feel that the PLO should seek to revive the Amman accord with the

Jordanian regime and negotiate directly with 'Israel' through a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation. The representatives of this trend find their support in the reactionary Arab regimes who stand doubly exposed in the face of the Palestinian uprising. Their efforts to impede the uprising are futile; they have no mass support in the occupied territories or outside, and their influence within the PLO itself is very limited.

The second trend is represented by the mainstream of the PLO which examined the various options for responding to the new situation in the context of safeguarding the historic achievements and unity of the PLO, and advancing the uprising. The opinions expressed by this mainstream prevailed in the discussions, resulting in agreement on the following as viable options to be presented to the PNC for ratification: (1) Making a Palestinian Declaration of Independence at the upcoming PNC meeting, based on the principles outlined in the UN Charter concerning the right of all people to self-determination, freedom and independence; (2) calling for temporary UN supervision in the 1967 occupied territories, to be followed by Israeli withdrawal and the convening of an international peace conference, attended by the permanent members of the UN Security Council and all parties to the conflict, including the PLO on an equal footing with others; and (3) forming a provisional government at a future date when this would be beneficial as a step for realizing Palestinian rights.

The idea of UN troops in the occupied territories has its origin in the interim demands put forward by the United National Leadership of the Uprising in the spring. At that time, it was proposed as a way of protecting the masses from the unbridled brutality of the Israeli occupation troops. Adopting this position, and combining it with the other points listed above at the proper juncture, would substantially strengthen the PLO's position. It would provide concrete guidelines for combining the mass and militant struggle for a just peace in the region. It would accentuate that it is the Palestinian cause that stands at the core of the Middle East conflict, while simultaneously providing a simple and straightforward platform on which the Palestinian people's allies can base their support.

In the same vein, declaring an independent Palestinian state, to be recognized by friendly countries around the world, would erect a legal barricade against any future attempt by the Jordanian regime to reoccupy the West Bank, and against Israeli annexationist ambitions in the 1967 occupied territories. This state would be born occupied, so to speak, which is all the more reason for the deployment of UN troops, to supervise the withdrawal of the occupation troops.

This set of options is based on the twin priorities of national unity and advancing the uprising. Historically, Palestinian national unity and mass struggle have proven to be the PLO's most valuable assets, and the reason behind its achievements. This has never been more clear than today when the ten-month-old uprising in the occupied territories has opened new horizons for the Palestinian liberation struggle. The upcoming PNC is expected to make decisions that will reinforce these priorities, especially the uprising, at this historical juncture. The challenge delivered by King Hussein is being turned into an opportunity for qualitatively advancing the Palestinian cause. ●