

Songs of the Uprising

The uprising has inspired an outburst of popular revolutionary songs by Palestinians in the occupied territories as well as songs of anguish by popular Jewish singers within 'Israel'. Music has always played a historic role in reflecting social realities. In this light, we see singers, musicians and artists utilizing their art to express the current situation in the occupied territories. Pop singers, both Palestinian and Jews, say they simply cannot separate their high-running emotions from their work.

A ballad, released this year by well-known Jewish pop singer Sy Hyman, lamenting Israeli handling of the uprising, was banned from the Israeli Army radio network. Her single, «Shooting and Crying» had the following lyrics:

«When did we learn how to bury people alive? When did
We forget that our children have also been killed?»

After much dissent from radio listeners the network banned the song and mailed back the promotional copies.

Cassettes are smuggled into Palestine from groups such as Palestine Roots, the Lebanese progressive musician Marcel Khalifa and his group *Mayadine* and the Damascus-based *Ashiqeen*. Meanwhile, underground recordings are made of local groups in Palestine, such as *Firkit Al Fanoun Al Shabia* (The Palestine Popular Art Ensemble), to be distributed there and to Palestinians in the diaspora. According to the *International Herald Tribune* (September 16th), almost every week, Israeli police seize hundreds or sometimes thousands of pre-recorded cassettes, the favoured method of distributing Palestinian popular music, claiming they contain songs with inflammatory lyrics.

Mustafa Al Kurd, a well-known Palestinian pop singer from Jerusalem, said he, too, cannot separate the uprising from his art. Kurd, who mixes traditional Arab songs with modern western tones, released his latest album «The Children of Palestine» in June; it includes songs with such lyrics as:

«From the top of the minarets I will call people, we
will have hope» and «My loved ones walked a journey
from the top of the Mount of Olives.»

Kurd said in an interview in the *International Herald Tribune*, «the intifadah is a very dangerous subject for us. When the words are too direct, they become dangerous. The police say they are inciteful.» Kurd's nationalist feeling was reflected in his artistic activities from the first years of the occupation. He is quoted in *Al Fajr* (July 29th, 1983) as saying, «I am a singer and I will continue to sing for man against oppression, against killing, and I believe this is stronger than the weapons of the oppressor.»

Suhail Ali, another popular singer of traditional Arab music, was arrested earlier this year because his lyrics were deemed too direct. He is presently in jail.

Even during demonstrations we see this art practiced in the chanting of songs by demonstrators. The various chants are used as a form of encouragement to the *shabab* to continue their struggle against Israeli occupation. The chanting is rhythmic and in accordance with the realities the

demonstrators are confronting. They sing in loud voices describing various political stands. These are popular chants, and although not recorded on cassette or albums, are known to all. Below, we print a verse from the song «Stone and Onion» by Mustafa Al Kurd, as it was translated in the *Guardian*, July 11th. The song takes its title not only from the uprising's primary weapon and symbol, the stone, but from the onion, the homemade defense method used by the masses as a protection from tear gas.

From «Stone and Onion» by Mustafa Al Kurd

Dead is the fear that lived in our hearts
that killed the hopes and blocked the paths
that put out the lights
Fear is dead and I buried it with my own hands
Fear was a monster that oppressed us, was cruel to us,
that smashes the jar and spilled the oil
Fear is dead and I buried it with my own hands.

