

stituents regarding peace. Isaac Modai, a Likud minister, said that the agreement between Likud and Labor to form a national coalition government, which was ratified on December 22nd, is based on three negatives: No to negotiations with the PLO, no to withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza, and no to the establishment of a Palestinian state anywhere between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. This can best be described as «negative thinking.»

The reaction of the US State Department was that the outcome of the PNC was a «step forward» but did not meet the American criteria. Moreover, Arafat's request for a visa to address the UN session on the Palestinian question in New York was denied. This ill-advised and narrow-minded decision by US Secretary of State George Shultz brought on an unprecedented deluge of international condemnation which culminated in a resounding UN General Assembly vote of 151 to 2, ('Israel' and the US being the only two votes against, while Britain abstained), condemning the US decision, despite the ludicrous argument by Shultz that Arafat was a security threat to the US. *Newsweek* reported: «Among international lawyers, the consensus was that the US had breached its responsibility.» Former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance said, «It is quite clear that the US decision is wrong legally.» The 1947 Headquarters Agreement, which was signed by the US and the UN and later approved by the US Congress, stipulates clearly in Article 4 Section 11: «The Federal, State or local authorities of the United States shall not impose any impediments to transit to or from the headquarters district of representatives of members or officials of the United Nations, or of specialized agencies... or representatives of non-governmental organizations recognized by the United Nations.»

Despite widespread criticism from the US media, the public and the whole world, with the exception of 'Israel', 61 US Senators signed a letter commending Shultz on his move. This is an indication of the influence of the pro-Israeli lobby (AIPAC) within the US Senate, and of AIPAC's ability to pressure elected US officials to take stands, even when such stands are clearly against the prevailing sentiments in the US and throughout the world.



Palestinian West Bankers celebrate the Declaration of Independence.

The State Department's decision resulted in criticism from the US's closest allies. Francois Mitterrand, when asked if he understood the US decision, said «I prefer not to understand it, for if I understand it, it would lead me to pessimistic conclusions» (*International Herald Tribune*, December 2, 1988). The UN gave the US 24 hours to reconsider and reverse its decision. The US response was negative again. Two days later the UN passed another resolution to move the session from the UN headquarters in New York to Geneva; again the vote

was 'Israel' and the US against the whole world (154 in favor and 2 against). The new date set for the session was December 13-15th which coincided with the first anniversary of the intifada.

On his way to Geneva, Arafat made a stop in Stockholm and held a much publicized meeting with members of the International Center for Peace in the Middle East, an organization which has branches in Tel Aviv and New York. The head of the American Jewish delegation was Rita Hauser who was previously a consultant to George Bush