

The Zionist forces suffered great losses on October 19th, when a Lebanese patriot drove an explosive-laden car into an Israeli convoy near Metullah at the Israeli-Lebanese border. The driver was martyred, and seven Israeli soldiers were killed by the explosion, in an operation claimed by the Islamic Resistance, and dedicated to the Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories.

In the same week, three guerrilla groups tried to penetrate the Israeli security wall in the South, to attack Zionist settlements in occupied Palestine. 'Israel' reacted with a massive upsurge of aggression in the following ten days, shelling Lebanese villages north of the 'security' zone and staging five major bombing attacks, ranging from the Bekaa to just south of Beirut. Meanwhile, SLA militiamen launched an offensive against the Sidon area from their stronghold in Jezzine. This brought to 22 the number of Israeli air strikes on Lebanon in 1988, as of November 1st, causing the death of 108 persons and the injury of 309, according to Lebanese police records.

On November 6th, the Israelis bombed the city of Sidon itself for the first time since the 1982 invasion, and on December 9th, Israeli air, sea and ground forces staged one of their broadest aggressions since that time. Over 200 Israeli commandos attacked positions of the PFLP-General Command in the hills of Naima, south of Beirut. There was a clash lasting several hours during which time Israeli helicopters brought in reinforcements, while fighter planes staged 17 consecutive bombing raids. As the Israeli forces withdrew, they admitted the death of the lieutenant who had led the operation, plus three soldiers. Nine nationalist militants were martyred.

Attacks on the Israeli occupiers and the SLA have continued, with the most outstanding occurring on November 7th, the eve of the sixth anniversary of the founding of the Lebanese National Resistance Front. Soha Beshara, Lebanese Communist Party member and a resident of the occupied village, Deir Mimas, in South Lebanon, shot SLA commander, Antoine Lahd, three times, seriously wounding him, in his home in Marjayoun. She was captured and subjected to interrogation by

Israeli intelligence officers. The Lebanese Communist Party issued a communique terming Lahd the symbol of treason, collaborating as he is with the partitionists in the interior (a reference to the Aoun-Geagea alliance).



Lebanese militant Soha Beshara

THE LEBANESE NATIONALIST FORCES

The opposing pole to the Israeli and right-wing partitionist plan for Lebanon is the Lebanese nationalist forces. Their position is in turn reinforced by strict Syrian opposition to the Aoun government, plus the Palestinian revolution's ongoing struggle against the occupation and partition of Lebanon.

However, at this crucial juncture, the Lebanese nationalist forces are faltering. Though the Lebanese National Movement has historically had a plan for a united, democratic, Arab Lebanon, today they stand without a concrete unified plan for fighting for this in the current situation where partition is a *de facto*. Though there have been some public gatherings of all nationalist forces in West Beirut, their level of unity is not sufficient to surmount the present dangers. This situation contrasts sharply with the earlier

one where broad unity engendered the rise of the Lebanese National Resistance, eventually enforcing Israeli withdrawal from most of Lebanon, and abrogation of the May 17th accord which Gemayel's government concluded with 'Israel'.

One major reason for this is that some in the broad nationalist coalition have yet to surmount sectarian tendencies in their own ranks, in favor of broad united action for the good of the Lebanese people at large. The corollary of this problem has been the flare-up of secondary conflicts. Most recently, the long-standing conflict between the Amal movement and Hezbollah, over who represents the Shiite community, broke out anew. Early in November, Amal leader Nabih Berri openly accused Hezbollah of being behind the assassination of three Amal officials a month earlier. There were clashes in the southern quarters of Beirut, added to the intermittent fighting between the two in parts of South Lebanon.

A united militant nationalist movement dedicated to unifying Lebanon and liberating it from fascist control and Israeli occupation, is the urgent need today. This would promote effective coordination with Syria and the Palestinian revolution, instead of involvement in secondary differences. All efforts could then be put for democratic reform in Lebanon, rather than the present situation where some forces divert energy to false causes, like challenging Palestinian presence in Sidon or other parts of the South, under the pretext of fighting the «resettlement» of Palestinians in Lebanon.

The current deadlock in Lebanon demonstrates that there is no solution without radical democratic reform in the sectarian system. Without such reform, there will not be peace or stability; nor will the energies of the Lebanese people and political forces be concentrated in the essential struggle between a national democratic Lebanon and a fascist Lebanon, tied to 'Israel' and US imperialism. In view of this, it is an essential task to unify the efforts of the Lebanese nationalist forces, the Palestinian revolution and Syria, as a prerequisite for consolidating the struggle for a united national democratic Lebanon.