

All in all, what was seen in call no. 3 as a remote dream has become a realistic possibility, after the Jordanian step.

The second qualitative step towards freedom and independence was the Palestinian National Council's extraordinary session in Algiers, and the historical decision it adopted on November 15, 1988, to declare the independence of Palestine and the establishment of the independent Palestinian state. This was the logical culmination of the intifada, the raising of the slogan of freedom and independence, and the Jordanian decision. The declaration of independence was met by broad Arab and international recognition and increasing support. This laid siege to the Zionist dreams of expansion, and made the continued occupation of the Palestinian territories a very expensive enterprise for which Israel pays the price in terms of its international reputation in the international arena and among Jewish communities abroad.

Today, the following questions are posed to the Palestinian revolution, leadership, cadres and masses: How can we transform national independence from a declaration to a reality? How can we bridge the gap which separates us from establishing the Palestinian state on Palestinian land? To what extent is there a realistic possibility of attaining full independence? What are the obstacles facing us and how can we overcome them?

THE HISTORICAL POSSIBILITY AND THE REALISTIC POSSIBILITY

Naturally, the slogan of freedom and independence was prominent throughout the course of the Palestinian struggle against the Zionist invasion and gradual occupation of Palestinian land. The Palestinian people were governed by colonial mandate authority when the first world war ended. They were unable to attain political independence as did other peoples in the area, because they were confronted by the Zionist invasion which uprooted them and constructed a colonial entity on about 80% of their land in 1948. With the war of 1967, Israel occupied the rest of the land and drove more than half of the inhabitants into Arab and foreign countries where they lived between the hammer of the Zionist occupation and the anvil of the conspiracies of subordination, annexation and the confiscation of their national identity. Although the contemporary Palestinian revolution, led by the PLO, has until now been unable to expell the occupation from any piece of Palestinian land, still it revitalized the Palestinian identity and the concept of national independence as the only acceptable solution for the question of Palestine and the aim which we will not relinquish.

In the two preceding decades, the Palestinian revolution has experienced ups and downs; it has experienced conducive conditions as well as obstacles, but never before was there a realistic possibility of attaining independence and establishing a state on our national land. Although each round of confrontation brought us closer to this cherished aim, still it remained in the realm of historical possibility until the intifada erupted to accentuate realities which the enemy had always worked to negate. The uprising asserted to the world that Israel cannot absorb the results of the 1967 war, and that the Palestinian people will refuse any option that detracts from their legitimate rights to their land and state, as enjoyed by other peoples of the world, in accordance with international law.

The uprising proved to the world that the Palestinian revolution is not a set of centers and offices which the Zionist

army can destroy and occupy as happened in 1982 in Lebanon. Rather it is a living expression of the Palestinian people's will for survival and their yearning for freedom and independence. The roots of the revolution in the occupied territories are no less deep than in other areas. The struggle of the Palestinian people will continue, using all available means until achieving their aims. The outbreak of the intifada in the occupied territories, its broad mass character and its use of strikes, stones and molotovs as weapons, elicited great support for the Palestinian cause. For the first time, the fascist face of Israel was broadly exposed - a characteristic which Zionist and imperialist propaganda had tried to hide by lies and false allegations. The Palestinian demand for freedom and independence has now become more understood in the international arena than ever before.

Monitoring European and American popular reactions to the uprising, which have begun to influence governmental positions in these imperialist centers, shows the extent of the change in international public opinion in favor of our cause. The same applies to Jewish communities around the world, as well as to Jews in Israel where more are calling for dialogue with the PLO or accepting a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, especially after the Jordanian decision which reinforced the independent Palestinian option. However, we also realize that the uprising has created a situation wherein a large section of the Zionist public has moved further to the right.

OBSTACLES

Saying that there is a realistic possibility for attaining a Palestinian state does not mean that we should belittle the obstacles to this goal. No one should underestimate this task as if the state were within reach. The distance between the declaration of independence and its actual achievement is very difficult and long. Bridging this gap requires overcoming two main obstacles: the US and the Israeli positions.

THE US POSITION

To date, the US continues to base its policy on the following premises:

1. commitment to helping Israel be absolutely superior to the Arabs and the Palestinians;
2. considering the Palestinian state as a destabilizing element in the region, which must not be allowed to happen;
3. considering an international conference to be premature, and preferring direct, bilateral negotiations; viewing the proposed international conference as merely an umbrella for direct negotiations;
4. promoting certain Palestinian personalities in the occupied territories, and keeping the door open for the Jordanian regime to share in the arrangements of any solution of the Palestinian problem;
5. stopping the intifada is a main aim of US diplomatic maneuvers in the region;
6. the Jordanian option is the preferred solution for the Palestinian problem.

Any observer of US policy, whether at the end of Reagan's term or under the new administration, will have noticed these main lines. From the US side, the first two rounds of dialogue with the PLO focused on these premises. But this should not obscure the change which has occurred in the US stand on the Palestinian question due to the intifada and its repercussions