

PLO Central Council Meeting

From March 31st to April 3rd, the Palestinian Central Council held its ordinary (biannual) meeting in Tunis. As the highest decision-making body in the PLO between sessions of the National Council, the Central Council focused its attention on the uprising, as well as the PLO's political moves since the last PNC. The latter topic was the subject of intense debate.

The convening of the Central Council coincided with the 13th anniversary of Land Day and the uprising completing its 16th month. Naturally, the council's agenda was concentrated on the continuation and escalation of the uprising. Related to this, there were long and heated discussions about the results of the PLO's political moves and the means for reaping the political fruits of the uprising on the local, regional and international levels. These moves should be based on the national invariable principles and on the resolutions of the consecutive PNC sessions, in order to accumulate further gains and eventually achieve the Palestinian people's goals of repatriation, self-determination and an independent state. In this light, there was disagreement about the right wing's policies of giving concessions, particularly since the last PNC session, for these policies have grave effects on the uprising and the Palestinian national struggle in general.

In the first session of the council meeting, the participants listened to the report of the PLO's political department read by its head, Farouq Qad-doumi. The report included an overview of the PLO's political moves since the PNC's 19th session, the achievements of the Palestinian cause and the directions of the PLO's political work in the coming period.

The second report was read by Mohamed Milhem, the head of the PLO's department for the affairs of the occupied territories. It concentrated on the uprising, its main characteristics, the role of the masses and the situation of the mass organizations in the occupied territories.

In all of the following sessions, the discussions revolved around the PLO's political moves. The council members mainly discussed to what extent these moves are in harmony with the resolu-

tions of the last PNC and with the demands of the uprising. There was unanimous agreement on the importance of national unity, on consolidating the uprising economically, organizationally and politically, and on adhering to the Palestinian national goals. However, sharp differences surfaced over one main issue, namely the concessions that were given at the expense of these goals. In the discussions, there were two political points of view based on differing understandings of the nature of the enemy and thus of the means of directing the struggle on all fronts.

POLITICAL HASTINESS

The first point of view is that of the right wing within the PLO, which exaggerates the possibility of the enemy forces' recognizing Palestinian rights, provided that the PLO gives concessions in response to their conditions and demands. The advocates of this point of view justify their concessions with their idea that the Palestinian state is within reach. They call for moving quickly to reap the fruits of the uprising before it is too late, meanwhile disregarding the balance of forces and

whether conditions are ripe at this stage.

The right wing tried to distort the truth during the discussions by claiming that the concessions they have given are in harmony with the PNC's resolutions, rather than being contrary to these. In other instances, they tried to retract some of their declared positions that clearly deviated from the resolutions of national consensus, by accusing the international press of having falsified their statements or taken them out of context. PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat was the main advocate of this point of view, and he insisted that his statements had not deviated from the PNC's resolutions, but were rather his own interpretation of these resolutions.

Here we recall that in the press conference Arafat held in Geneva in December 1988, he explicitly recognized the legitimacy of the Zionist entity. In addition, he spoke about «renouncing terrorism» and accepting Security Council resolution 242, without mentioning the Palestinian right to self-determination, whereas the PNC coupled acceptance of 242 with this right. Moreover, Arafat later on expressed willingness to visit Jerusalem - as did Sadat - provided that he has overall Arab support for such a move. He also offered a ceasefire in South Lebanon, i.e., ending attacks on the Zionist occupation forces from there. In March, he proposed an economic union between Jordan, Lebanon, Israel and the State of Palestine. Moreover, on several occasions, Arafat has declared his willingness to have direct

Abu Ali Mustafa, PFLP representative.

