

Ibrahim Tawil as well as the elected mayor of Nablus, Bassam Shakaa were targeted for assassination. Although the mayors escaped death, they suffered grave physical injury. Bassam Shakaa lost both his legs when his booby-trapped car exploded, eventually the elected city councils were dissolved.

THE US POSITION

On the eve of Shamir's visit to the US and amidst growing international condemnation of Israeli violence against Palestinians in the occupied territories, the Bush administration was anxiously awaiting an «Israeli peace initiative» in order to justify its continued support to Israel, and its veto of UN Security Council resolutions critical of Israeli practices, and particularly after Sheverdnadze's visit to the region and the declaration of the Soviet peace initiative which is viewed by the US as a threat to its longstanding monopoly on Middle East politics.

The Bush-Shamir meeting on April 6 resulted in agreement on the following principles: that the present situation should not continue, the intifada must be halted, negotiations must begin as soon as possible, these negotiations could include Egypt, Jordan, Israel and the Palestinians, and that the Palestinians who will participate in these negotiations can be either appointed or elected from the West Bank and Gaza.

In reply to President Bush's statement in support of «Land for Peace», Shamir chided the idea claiming that the territories occupied since 1967 are essential to Israel's security.

James Baker who according to the *International Herald Tribune* has used «the bluntest language ever used by a senior US official» before over 1,000 members of the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), called on Israel «to lay aside once and for all the unrealistic vision of a greater Israel.»³

Baker went on to say that Israel should not annex the West Bank and Gaza, stop the settlement activity, and allow schools to reopen.

These statements and other statements by the Secretary of State to the effect that Israel must be prepared to some day negotiate with the PLO in addition to the US-PLO dialogue and the meeting between the US am-

bassador in Tunis and Abu Iyad, the second man in Fateh after Arafat, do not indicate an intrinsic change in US Middle East policy.

Hours before the Bush-Shamir meeting was convened, ABC network announced the results of a nation-wide survey in which eight out of ten Americans favored the inclusion of the PLO in the negotiations for a settlement.

Nevertheless the US administration remains adamantly opposed to the participation of the PLO in the international peace conference, and against the national rights of the Palestinian people.

Despite the superficial difference between Israel and the US administration, the bottom line is that they are both against the recognition of the PLO, and the establishment of a Palestinian state.

THE PALESTINIAN REACTION

The official Palestinian response came from the Executive Committee of the PLO on May 15 in a statement which described the Shamir plan as a «means to deceive world public opinion and consolidate the occupation.»

The statement added that there is international consensus that a just and lasting peace necessitates a realistic solution based on the recognition of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, and national independence within the framework of an international peace conference, and that any interim proposals should be part of a comprehensive plan which would lead to the achievement of a just peace. The PLO's representation of the Palestinian people and the establishment of an independent state are not negotiable.

Subsequent statements by PLO officials did not rule out elections, but stressed the need for withdrawal of occupation troops, international supervision and that elections be part of a comprehensive plan which would lead to the realization of Palestinian national rights, before such elections could be held, for there is a contradiction in holding free elections under occupation.

The United National Leadership of

the intifada (UNL) has also rejected the Shamir plan, declaring in its calls that «the Shamir plan is rejected by the Palestinian people and their united leadership... the plan is designed to bypass the international peace conference.»⁴ A statement was signed by 83 Palestinian leading personalities rejecting the Shamir plan, they include union leaders, political leaders, clergy, educators and elected officials.

A group of prominent Palestinians including Dr. Sari Nusaibeh and Ziyad Abu Ziyad were invited to meet with Dennis Ross in Jerusalem after his meeting with Shamir, they chose instead to send a letter to the US Council General criticizing the plan. The letter noted that the Shamir plan is aimed at deceiving and misguiding the Israeli and world public opinion, it ignores the central issue of the Middle East conflict: the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, a state, and the right to choose their representative which is the PLO.

The Shamir plan is a vain attempt at reincarnating the defunct Camp David agreements which were categorically rejected by the PLO and the Palestinians inside and outside the occupied territories, therefore the plan was dead from the moment it was born.

Shamir is aiming through this plan to achieve the following: to put an end to the intifada, find an alternative to the PLO, ignore the national rights of the Palestinian people, bolster the position of Shamir within Likud, counter the Palestinian peace initiative which has received worldwide support with the exception of the US, silence the criticism of Israel especially from the European community who are pressing Israel to accept the international peace conference as a framework for a comprehensive settlement in the region, cover up for the escalation of repression, and to revive the Jordanian option which King Hussein himself has annulled when he severed Jordan's administrative and legal ties with the West Bank.

Israel's leaders embarked on an intensive campaign to promote the plan which took Shamir, Rabin and Arens to the US, Britain, Spain, Germany, Italy and other countries only to come back ►