

The Arab Summit

The agenda of the extraordinary Arab summit held in Casablanca, Morocco on May 23-26, 1989, centered on three main issues: the Palestinian question, the Lebanese crisis and the Iraq-Iran dispute. The most prominent event in the summit, however, was the official return of Egypt to the Arab league which took place even before the summit assembled when Egyptian Foreign Minister Ismat Abdul Majid joined a foreign ministry meeting one day prior to the opening night. The last time Egypt was present in an Arab foreign ministers' meeting was in February, 1979 in Kuwait which was convened due to the break out of fighting between the two Yemens.

All efforts to agree on who would represent Lebanon in the summit failed. For the first time since the first Arab summit in 1964, Lebanon's seat remained vacant despite the fact that Lebanon's file was being reopened for the first time since 1982.

CASABLANCA: EGYPT'S SUMMIT

In his opening speech, King Hasan II of Morocco particularly welcomed the return of Egypt to the Arab League and neglected any mention of the Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories. After his short speech, King Hasan II called on President Mubarak to address the summit. Although there was much discussion about whether Egypt should even attend the opening session, Mubarak insisted upon delivering a speech. Mubarak commenced his long speech by saying, «...in the past years, Egypt was the present absentee, due to your continuous efforts and sincere nationalist feelings which was clear through the exchange of uninterrupted visits and contacts!» Mubarak also called on the Arab leaders to agree on a joint peace plan based on the Fez plan approved in 1982. He emphasized that all Arab states should be committed to the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of each other. In the major part

of his speech, however, Mubarak concentrated on issues of peace, prosperity, development and scientific technology, in addition to the threats of natural catastrophes. Meanwhile, he ignored addressing the confrontation with the Zionist enemy and Israel's colonialist schemes in the area.

Concerning the Palestinian question, Mubarak confined his speech with reiterating support of the Palestinian people's right to resist the occupation and to choose the suitable path to achieve their goal, without any mention of the Palestinian uprising.

As far as his position vis-a-vis the Lebanese crisis, Mubarak said that he allies with the Lebanese people of all sects and confirmed the necessity of the withdrawal of all «foreign troops» from Lebanon, and to enable the constitutional institutions to fully practice their legal powers.

Egypt's unconditional official comeback to the Arab League was not a surprise and was not even subject to discussion in the summit. Today, the Arab states discovered that the decision they had taken 11 years ago in Baghdad to boycott Egypt was the wrong decision. In 1978, this decision was considered the minimum platform for Arab consensus in confronting the most dangerous turning point in the history of the Arab-Zionist conflict since the 1967 defeat. Yesterday's minimum platform has become extremism today, and Egypt-still entangled with the Camp David Agreements officially comes back to assume its place in the Arab League. We say «officially» because Mubarak made it clear in his speech that the Baghdad summit resolution was never implemented in reality. Needless to say that the best Arab summit resolutions were those that were never implemented. One example is the resolution of the first Arab summit in 1964 concerning the formation of a united Arab front in order to confront Israel's plan to detour the Jordan River. A better example is the decision taken in the last Arab Summit

(Algeria, 1988) that mandates that the Arab states provide all needed financial, political and media support to the Palestinian uprising.

Egypt's official comeback is not astonishing since the 1987 Amman Summit took a decision allowing bilateral relations between any Arab state and Egypt. Sure enough, most Arab states rushed to resume their relations with Egypt after the above-mentioned summit. Of course this is not to say that these relations did not exist before the decision. Many Arab capitals have had covert political and economic relations with Cairo even during Sadat's regime and some became overt after his assassination.

Egypt's comeback was preceded by an earlier one, also in Casablanca, in January 1984 when the Islamic Summit, also headed by King Hasan II, rewarded Egypt its membership in the Islamic Conference Organization. This is to note the role of King Hasan II-the sponsor of the Camp David regime in the area-in orchestrating the scenario we are witnessing today.

Clearly, Egypt's official return to the Arab League is an indication of many things. Firstly, the level of deterioration in the Arab officialdom in the past decade, compared to the threat of the Camp David Agreements not only to Egypt but to the Palestinian cause, the Arab world as a whole and the future of the Arab-Zionist conflict. Secondly, this return sets a precedent for allowing future violations of invariable principles such as violating Arab consensus, particularly when detrimental issues are involved. As well as, the transformation of a national struggle to a political or a border struggle between Israel and each Arab state and therefore giving the right of each state to seek its own suitable solution. Thirdly, there is no doubt that Egypt's return was a diplomatic victory for the US and Israel. Israel can now cross over the Egyptian bridge to the entire Arab world.

If one is in doubt about how some ►