

# NGO Meeting on Palestine

Linking support to the Palestinian intifada with work for a just peace in the Middle East was the keynote of the 6th UN North American Regional NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine, which was held June 21-23rd in the UN headquarters in New York. Representatives from many organizations in the US and Canada attended the symposium, along with a number of Palestinians from the occupied territories and Israeli peace activists.

The symposium opened with a speech by the chairman of the Committee for the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. Then, Palestine's permanent observer at the UN read aloud a message from PLO Chairman and President of Palestine, Yasir Arafat, wherein he reaffirmed the PLO's commitment to the peace initiative adopted at the November 1988

PNC. The message also reiterated the PLO's refusal of Shamir's election plan, since democratic elections are impossible under occupation.

The next speaker was Jeanne Butterfield, chairperson of the North American Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine. She took stock of the NGO's work to date and outlined their tasks for the

coming period, linking the current situation of the Palestinian intifada and the PLO's peace initiative with the need for action, especially in the light of the increasing Israeli repression. She said, «We are challenged as never before. Time is running out. Mass deportations are possible. Starvation is possible. Genocide is even possible. But peace is possible too, if we will it enough to act effectively to make it happen.»

## MOBILIZING SUPPORT

There were two panel discussions at the symposium focusing on political issues related to NGO's goals and concrete work. The first centered on the topic, The Intifada: Creating a New Context for Peace. Three panelists contributed their viewpoints on this topic: the Rev. Elias Chacour, a Palestinian Melkite priest serving in the Galilee; Zahira Kamal, chairperson for the Federation of Women's Action ►

