

«legalized» the shoot-to-kill policy already in effect, by announcing that Israeli troops can use live ammunition to stop masked Palestinians in daylight or at night.

In accordance with the policy of physical elimination, high casualty rates continued over the summer. Scores of Palestinians were martyred, many more wounded and even more arrested as the occupation army enacted large and constant «security sweeps» under the cover of curfews. As of September 1st, 650 Palestinians had been killed in the course of the intifada.

It was, however, the option of starvation that the Israeli occupation authorities seized upon to implement unconditionally. This began in mid-May when, in an unprecedented move, Gazans working in Israel were rounded up en masse and sent home indefinitely, with the announcement that a new identity card would be needed to enter Israel. So began the battle of the ID's that has become the most concentrated round in the conflict of wills between the intifada and the occupation to date. Noting the overall increase of repression that has accompanied the Shamir plan, the United National Leadership, in call no. 43 of late July, stated: «... the acme of this warfare is to be found in the measure that the authorities are trying to implement in the Gaza area to defeat the will of our people there and force them to take the magnetic identity cards as a means of pressure against the daily bread of hundreds of thousands of our steadfast people in heroic Gaza.»

## A QUESTION OF IDENTITY

Initially, the Israeli requirement of new IDs was presented as a punishment connected to the finding of the dead body of an Israeli sergeant who had been missing since February, and the almost simultaneous disappearance of another soldier. Indeed, it is a punishment of the Gaza Strip for its untiring resistance to occupation, but it is also much more. The occupation authorities soon announced that Palestinians with «criminal records» would not get the new computerized cards, confirming that it is a security measure. But more basically, the campaign to impose IDs

is aimed at creating material divisions among the people, and contradictions between the people and the leadership of the intifada which of course called for rejecting the new cards, knowing this to be a new attempt by the occupation to control the people. Another prerequisite for being issued a new card was paying taxes, so the campaign also aimed to break the intifada's refusal to fund the occupation.

The Gaza Strip was the first target simply because of its poverty. The high population density, the fact that 70% of the people live in camps (being refugees from 1948 occupied Palestine), and the concurrent lack of access to land and agricultural means, make self-sufficiency much more difficult than in the West Bank. So the occupation targeted those most dependent on work in Israel to serve as a test for subsequent plans to enforce new IDs in the West Bank. Another less publicized form of economic warfare accompanied the battle of the IDs: As if to dispell doubts that the the occupation was saying «submit or starve,» Gaza fishermen were forbidden to go out to sea in May and June. The ban was lifted just as the season ended.

Prolonged curfews were frequent in the Gaza Strip throughout the summer as the occupation troops confiscated the old IDs as part of their escalated harassment, ordering Palestinians to wait for hours in the hot sun to get a new card if they wanted to enter Israel for work.

Just as steadily, resistance to the new cards mounted, resulting in frequent clashes with the occupation troops. The strike forces and popular committees spearheaded the campaign on the local level to collect the new cards that had been imposed, while the United National Leadership geared its calls to coordinating resistance to the cards on the national level. A main aim of the leadership's efforts was organizing support, so that this battle between the occupation and the occupied State of Palestine could not be confined to the Strip alone; June 20th, July 3rd-4th and July 30th were observed as general strike days by all the workers of the occupied Palestinian state in solidarity with Gaza workers. The Palestinian

masses in the 1948 occupied territories were called upon to give material support to the Gaza workers through all available channels. West Bankers were under strict orders not to replace striking Gaza workers on the job in Israel; call no. 44, August 15th, called such strike-breaking «national treason.» The same call appealed for the PLO's support to be channeled to the poor, for they are «the base and fuel of the intifada.»

The battle of the IDs came to a head as August 18th approached - the day designated by the occupation for the new cards to be mandatory. In the preceding days, Gaza workers were frequently turned away from entering Israel as a test, and there were daily clashes between the troops and the people. Special cards were issued forbidding some Gaza residents from entering Israel, while the occupation troops also demanded presentation of the new cards for citizens moving within the Strip itself. Three-quarters of the 60,000 new cards distributed by the occupation authorities were handed over the popular committees.

August 18th marked the beginning of the two-week strike in the Strip, and the week-long solidarity strike in the West Bank, as called by the United National Leadership. The strike was almost totally observed throughout, marking a victory for the intifada, and its longest strike to date. Even after the termination of the strike on August 31st, the number of Gaza residents going to work in Israel with the new cards was only a fraction of the number ordinarily working in the Zionist state.

The Israelis seem to admit at least a partial defeat in this battle. In late August, the Israeli daily *Haaretz* quoted an Israeli security source as saying that the Ministry of Defense has tentatively decided to impose new measures that will facilitate control of West Bank residents entering Israel. There are now discussions in the Israeli government about prohibiting Palestinians from entering East Jerusalem.

The battle of the IDs has confirmed once again that the Palestinians have chosen their identity and are willing to fight for its materialization in an independent, democratic state, despite the sacrifices entailed. ●