

establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital.

The communique called for «escalating the popular intifada in order to end the Zionist occupation,» and for protecting the intifada politically by confronting the autonomy plan and other liquidationist projects aimed at creating false alternatives to the PLO. The conference rejected Shamir's plan, because elections should be free and held under international supervision - conditions that can only be fulfilled after the Israeli withdrawal. Instead, the conference declared «total commitment to a fully empowered international peace conference on the Middle East, convened on the basis of international legitimacy and UN supervision, with the participation of the five permanent members of the Security Council and all concerned parties, including the PLO on an equal footing and with equal rights as the other parties.»

Concerning the controversial issue of what conditions should be set for meeting with Israelis, the conference adopted a very positive position: «to continue dialogue with the democratic Israeli forces that reject the occupation; support our people's inalienable rights, including repatriation, self-determination and the establishment of an independent state;» and that recognize the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. However, this issue is not solved via adopted resolutions. The PNC previously defined the basis for relations with the democratic Israeli forces. Nonetheless, some in the PLO leadership have used these resolutions to make contacts with outright Zionists, including members of the Likud. It is this practice that needs to be addressed and rectified.

Despite our reservations about the term *armed action*, it was positive that this was related to asking the Arab states which border on Palestine to respect the Palestinian revolution's right to practice its militant tasks across all the Arab borders and to mobilize the Palestinian masses in the struggle for freedom and independence. This could be the point of departure for a common Palestinian plan for revitalizing armed struggle across the Arab borders with Palestine, beginning with the most concrete possibility we have, which is Lebanon.

On the Arab level, the conference defined the PLO's position in the Arab liberation movement and confirmed the need to «consolidate relations with the national democratic forces, movements and parties in the Arab homeland.» It defined the position of Palestine on the Arab official level, by confirming commitment to the Arab Summit decisions. The statement called on the Arab states to implement these resolutions, especially in terms of their financial commitment to the intifada. Such a statement was needed in view of the Arab states' negligence in carrying out the summit's resolutions.

In particular, the conference called on «the Arab confrontation states to unify and mobilize the parties and masses in order to face the Israeli aggression.» The statement also confirmed the special relations between the Palestinian and Jordanian people, and the need to develop these relations in harmony with the national interests. The form of relations between the two people was defined as a Palestinian - Jordanian confederation, although it was not specified that this should follow the establishment of the Palestinian independent state.

Concerning Lebanon, the conference expressed support to the Lebanese people for the achievement of national unity, sovereignty and an end to the Zionist occupation of their land. However, the statement did not take a stand on the current war in Lebanon. Avoiding a definite stand with the Lebanese national forces in this crucial battle does not benefit the Palestinian revolution or the Palestinian presence in Lebanon.

It is also a problem that the conference chose to explicitly condemn Syria, while remaining silent on the specific role of other Arab regimes, even the Egyptian regime that signed the Camp David accords with the Zionist occupier.

On the international level, the conference defined its position towards international and regional organizations in accordance with their stand on the Palestinian cause and the people's struggles in general. It confirmed the continuation of the PLO-US dialogue, but at the same time indirectly criticized the US policy because it does not recognize the Palestinian people's rights to self-determination and an in-

dependent state. It noted that the US has a totally biased policy of supporting the Zionist occupation forces and covering up their violations of our people's rights. It rejects an effective international conference and the UN resolutions that favor the Palestinians, while denying the PLO's representation of the Palestinian people. The conference put the US in the corner that it deserves. This being the case, Fatah's policy should be based on the fact that the US remains as the main enemy of the Palestinian people, which merits denunciation, not false hopes and appellations. Accordingly, ways must be found to force the US to submit to our people's rights and to stop its total alignment with the Zionist enemy.

The most prominent point in the final communique was about laying a plan for «escalating and guaranteeing the continuation of the intifada. We must enhance the United National Leadership's role through developing the popular committees and the popular and union activities, including the strike forces. In addition, we must undertake to guarantee material, informational and political support to the intifada from the Arab nation and international community.» The communique confirmed the conference's denunciation of «terrorism and especially state terrorism,» referring to the Zionist enemy, and insisted on the Palestinian people's «right to practice all forms of struggle, including armed struggle, against the Zionist occupation,» despite this being omitted in the program.

Generally, the fifth conference renewed Fatah's commitment to the principles for Palestinian national work. This can serve to strengthen overall Palestinian gains under the PLO's leadership. National unity in the PLO is a key to upgrading the Palestinian national work and escalating the intifada to be even more effective in the struggle against the Zionist state and its ally, the US. Armed struggle must be intensified in the occupied homeland and from the surrounding countries in order to create the conditions for enforcing our people's rights to repatriation, self-determination and an independent state. Hopefully, there will be a dialogue among the organizations of the PLO on how to best work together to achieve the national tasks stressed by the conference. ●