

for elections under occupation, and hindering the efforts to convene an international peace conference.

WORKSHOPS

Six workshops were originally scheduled and a seventh was added, to discuss the following topics: protection of the Palestinian population, the role of NGO assistance in meeting the future economic development, mobilization for the release of Palestinian prisoners and potential deportees, mobilization of international support for Palestinian education and cultural institutions, building support for an

independent Palestinian state with the Jewish communities and Israelis, the promotion of the peace process and the role of the mass media. The seventh workshop, which was added, was on the right of return for Palestinians who have been uprooted and expelled from Palestine since 1948.

FINAL DECLARATION

The final declaration of the international NGO meeting expressed support to the continuing struggle for freedom and independence, and the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right of return. It upheld

the proclamation of the independent State of Palestine, and called on all member states of the UN who have not yet recognized the State of Palestine, to do so «in unequivocal terms and without delay.»

The declaration renewed the call for an international peace conference on the Middle East with the participation of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and all parties to the conflict, in order to achieve «a just, comprehensive, peaceful and permanent settlement.» Reaffirming recognition of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, it urged all governments to do the same.

The declaration rejected the «spurious plan for so-called elections put forward by the prime minister and government of Israel, and whose principal international advocate is the government of the United States.» It labeled this plan the «opposite of democracy» designed to prevent Palestinian independence, and called for Israeli withdrawal from the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967, in order for free elections to take place.

The declaration condemned the numerous acts of Israeli repression and appealed to the Security Council to establish a UN presence in the occupied territories to protect the Palestinian people and «bring the perpetrators of these practices to justice.» It also condemned Israel's attempt to destroy the Palestinian society by depriving children of an education, calling on international educational and cultural institutions to pressure Israel to reopen all educational institutions in the occupied territories.

Israel's introduction of nuclear weapons into the Middle East was deplored in the final statement, and Israel was called on to sign the treaty on non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Finally, the declaration requested the chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to convey the declaration to the 44th session of the UN General Assembly.

The following statement was circulated in the Vienna meeting by the Abna Al Balad Movement, and signed by scores of democratic Israeli groups, Palestinian organizations and solidarity and peace committees from a number of countries.

The uncompromising sacrifice of the Palestinian people living under the 1967 occupation has put the Palestinian question and its just solution back at the top of the regional and international political and diplomatic agendas. It has broken the false consensus which Zionism has created as to the future direction of the Palestinian struggle. The international community is being forced to recognize that there will only be a solution when the Palestinian people achieve their inalienable rights to return and to self-determination and to an independent state on Palestinian soil with Jerusalem as its capital under the leadership of the PLO.

On the basis of the unity of the Palestinian people we identify these three fundamental elements:

1) *The Right of Return*

Half of the Palestinian people are refugees. Their right to return is fundamental and must form a cornerstone of any resolution to the conflict.

2) *Palestinians in Israel*

Given that Israel is officially proclaimed as a Jewish state; and given the official denial by Israel of the national rights of the Palestinians in Israel; and given the official racist policies against them, the struggle of the Palestinians

inside Israel as an integral part of the Palestinian people for their national, civil and democratic rights must be recognized.

3) *End of Occupation*

The immediate withdrawal of all Israeli forces from the 1967 occupied territories, including East Jerusalem, is a precondition for the establishment of an independent state, for the achievement of the rights of the Palestinians inside Israel and for the return of the refugees and deportees.

The efforts of the PLO and all progressive and democratic forces to achieve the International Conference on the Middle East under UN auspices with the participation of all parties to the conflict including the PLO on an equal footing and with the participation of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council to achieve the fundamental aims of the Palestinian people deserve utmost support at all levels: regional, national and international.

The Intifada has made new initiatives possible; the strengthening and reinforcing of the Intifada is a paramount duty of all who support the Palestinian people.