

the fines imposed on them by the Zionist judicial system, in accordance with the UNL's directives. Also during 1989, Palestinian lawyers staged two month-long boycotts of the Zionist courts, in protest of the total lack of due process.

Solidified unity

The unity in struggle of the Palestinians under occupation, which enabled the uprising in the first place, was substantially bolstered in the course of this year. The major political trends maintained their unity in the framework of the intifada, despite differing views on the PLO's tactics in connection with the Palestinian peace offensive. In February relations of coordination was established between the UNL and HAMAS, to ensure unity of action. Equally significant was the drive towards unification of the mass organizations. This began in late 1988, with the formation of a coordinating council for the various women's organizations in the occupied territories. In January, the writers' union was reunited in the territories. Later on, higher councils were formed grouping the student organizations and workers' committees. The Higher Workers' Council took on particular significance not only to compensate for the continuing division of the trade union federation, but also on the forefront of the major battle of the year. Their protracted strike, to protest the imposition of new ID cards on the Gaza Strip population, spearheaded confrontation of the most sustained Israeli drive to divide the Palestinians and reassert control over the occupied territories, starting with the Strip.

The efforts to solidify unity not only succeeded in thwarting repeated Zionist onslaughts. They also provided an example to the PLO institutions in exile, as to how internal democracy, collective leadership and proportional representation of the active forces, are key links in mounting a struggle equal to the Zionist challenge. A number of national institutions and unions faced a situation during 1989 whereby the

terms of their administrative bodies expired, but the situation of siege, mass arrests and curfews ruled out holding ordinary elections. The UNL issued guidelines for forming new administrative bodies on the basis of competence, proportional representation and assigning top priority to national unity, while complying with the respective organizations' bylaws.

Political cohesion

Also on the political level, the intifada and the UNL provided an example from which the entire Palestinian revolution can benefit. The calls of 1989 devoted more attention to political issues than those of the previous year. The focus was on registering the progress made by the PLO's diplomacy, and charting the intifada's overall course and tactics in accordance with achieving Palestinian rights. The focus on unity organizational and political - was essential in a year when the Zionists' main target was exactly Palestinian unity, as the means for penetrating, weakening and then crushing the intifada. Call no. 41, issued June 13th, stressed that «our national struggle is facing a critical moment. The enemy has resorted to the idea of defeating the intifada through political means after being convinced that repression alone had failed to affect it.» This was mainly in reference to the Shamir election plan which, while only a rehash of the Camp David formula, was introduced with the intention of deflecting international criticism of Israel, dividing the PLO on how to react, and fabricating an alternative «leadership» in the territories.

Of course, the Shamir plan was rejected by the PLO and Palestinian people, as a fraudulent attempt to market the impossible idea of «free» elections under the guns of the occupation army. However, subsequent attempts to keep this plan alive have been multiple, ranging from the Mubarak and Baker proposals, to Israeli officials meeting with notables in the territories to try and show that

the Palestinians could be drawn into the game. In this situation, the UNL has shown great political firmness and tactical wisdom. The UNL forbid all meetings with Israeli officials, mandating meetings only with Israelis who advocate unconditional withdrawal from the occupied State of Palestine, as well as the Palestinian right to self-determination and statehood. This decision was made in knowledge that the Israeli government would use meetings with Palestinians to show its international allies that there were supposed non-PLO'ers ready to cooperate on the elections. At the same time, the UNL mitigated its ban to allow for the conditions of occupation: Palestinians who were summoned (i.e. forced) to meetings were obliged to report their contents to the public and speak only on the basis of national consensus (the Palestinian rights to repatriation, self-determination and an independent state, via an international conference). By the same token, the UNL announced the reasons that the Mubarak and Baker plans were unacceptable, immediately upon publication of these plans.

Rising Israeli repression

Of course, the Zionist political onslaught did not preclude continued repression. On the contrary, Israeli soldiers, Shin Bet agents and various special forces pursued the activists of the uprising even more relentlessly in 1989; if anything, the occupation authorities broadened the ongoing campaign of collective punishment, especially the total imposed in the Gaza Strip.

Approximately the same number of Palestinians were killed by Israeli soldiers, settlers and agents in the second year of the intifada, as in the first year. Thus, the intifada enters its third year on the backdrop of the martyrdom of over 800 Palestinians. Most telling was the abrupt rise in repression connected with the introduction of the Shamir plan. The Jerusalem-based Database Project on Palestinian Human Rights issued a table entitled «Human Rights