

Jordan

The Parliament and the National Movement

In late February, Lina Al Aswad of *Democratic Palestine* had the opportunity to interview Theeb Marjeh, a progressive Jordanian MP.



What exactly is the role of the parliament today, and is it what you've hoped for?

The parliament is exercising its role in legislation and supervision of the government. At this stage, in my opinion, the parliament is searching for ways to involve the masses in Jordan in the decision-making process. For example, we publicize in the media that the parliament is planning to discuss a certain issue in order to encourage all concerned people to write their opinions, whether in the papers or directly to us. The parliament also invites experts in different areas to give their opinion about the issues being discussed. Of course, we realize that through this process the popular representation within the parliament remains incomplete, because not all the masses are educated and aware. Therefore, the country needs the mobilization drive that is taking place nowadays. The different student and trade unions and other mass organizations, such as the women's union, are currently engaged in this process. In addition, the Writers' League was recently revived. I feel that this process is an important one in order to shape a strong public opinion that will eventually influence the parliament's decisions.

In your view, will this experience continue, or will it be aborted as happened with Nabulsi's government in 1956?

The situation in Jordan, in the Arab world and internationally is different today. Therefore, I believe that this

experience will and should continue. Our main task right now is to do everything possible in order to consolidate this experience. We must work to make all citizens realize that it is in their interest. When we reach this stage, we will reach the point of no return.

Regionally, we believe that Israel and the Arab regimes, that fear the spread of democracy to their countries, were put at a disadvantage by the recent elections. In your view, who are the domestic forces that were put at a disadvantage?

Some of the candidates who represented certain social strata and interest groups, but weren't elected, were definitely harmed by the experience. There are also some tendencies in the ruling alliance who, due to the revival of parliamentary life, have lost their influence and control. I believe, however, that some of the tendencies within the ruling alliance, who may have partially lost influence, do have an interest in the economic reforms.

As for the external dangers, I would like to confirm that the Israeli threat is not only to the regime, but to the people as well. Therefore, I believe that this factor will contribute to the maintenance of the experience, because the people will defend it.

What must the national forces do in order to consolidate this experience and to involve the popular masses in the political life and democratic process?

First I would like to say that the experience is only three months old, and you can imagine the size and nature of the problems we are facing in Jordan. Yet, right now in the parliament we are focusing on the issue of democratic freedoms. This issue is the basis of all the others. Since the opening of the parliament, we have emphasized the need for democratic freedoms: the end of martial law; freedom of movement; the right to hold a passport, etc. In my view, many positive measures have been taken in this direction. For example, all passports confiscated by the intelligence apparatus have been returned to their holders. Also, all applications for new passports or renewals have been granted, to the best of my knowledge. In addition, the interference of the security forces in issuing work permits has been completely stopped.