

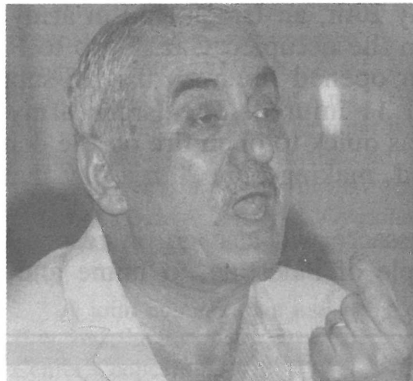
PFLP Press Conference

The day after the May 20th massacre in occupied Palestine, Comrade George Habash, General Secretary of the PFLP, convened a press conference in Damascus. Below we print a summary of the main points.

Comrade Habash began by delivering a short statement stressing that this massacre demands more than an expression of pain, more than comforting words for the families of the martyrs and wishing a speedy recovery for the injured: «What happened yesterday requires that the PLO, the Arabs and democratic and progressive forces internationally shoulder their responsibility for thoroughly examining the implications of this tragedy and the duties to be carried out in this regard. This bloodbath means that the PLO must have no illusions about the Israeli position on the peace process. This would enable the PLO to begin serious work based on the perception that the intifada is the backbone of its activities. In this case, the PLO would begin to think of using all possible means of struggle to guarantee the achievement of our goals, namely freedom and independence.

«To this end, a new session of the Palestinian National Council (PNC) should be convened as soon as possible. This is especially needed since the influential forces in the PLO as of the 19th PNC, adopted a policy based on recognizing UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338. This policy led the PLO leadership to make more and more gratuitous concessions, thinking thereby to bring the Palestinian state within reach. Now, it is our right to ask where this policy has led the PLO. The answer is all too clear: It has led to more intransigence and arrogance on the part of the Zionist enemy. Hence, it is the duty of any sincere leadership to acknowledge this fact and to adopt another political line - one which makes the intifada the focus of its work. This means to escalate and support the intifada so as to force the enemy to yield to our legitimate national rights.

«The PFLP is calling for a speedy convening of a new PNC to discuss the issue of having HAMAS and the Islamic Jihad, and all Palestinian forces who remain outside the framework of the PLO or the United National Leadership,



join these bodies; at the very least, we must find the best means of coordination among the various Palestinian forces inside and outside of the occupied territories.

«We should support the intifada with armed struggle so as to inflict maximum losses on the Zionist soldiers. I do not mean that the intifada should be converted into an armed uprising, but we must fulfill our task across the borders... Thirty months after the eruption of the intifada, the Arab states surrounding Palestine have yet to fire a single bullet to support it. If the Arab armies are powerless, the PLO must undertake this task as it began doing in 1965.»

Comrade Habash called on the Arab summit to shoulder its responsibilities. He stressed that it is the Palestinians' right to call on the international community, specifically the UN, to provide protection for the masses by putting the occupied territories, including Jerusalem, under a temporary international mandate. «We demand that all the states that keep talking about human rights, and specifically the US which pretends to be the foremost defender of human rights, to impose sanctions on Israel which is totally rejecting the Palestinian people's rights.»

Comrade Habash saluted the masses of the intifada, stressing that: «No force in the world, no matter how powerful, can defeat the will of a people who are determined to achieve freedom and independence.» He addressed the Palestinian

masses in the 1948 occupied territories, pointing out what an effective role they could play in support of the uprising; he called on Jewish progressive forces who have protested Sunday's atrocity to intensify their work to expose the Israeli government's criminal policy. He urged the Palestinian masses in exile to continue to search for new ways of supporting the intifada, meanwhile calling on the Arab masses to take immediate action in solidarity with the Palestinians under occupation and to pressure the Arab governments to take practical measures, exerting their influence to force the US to recognize Palestinian rights.

After concluding his opening statement, Comrade Habash answered a series of questions from journalists. To a question about the role the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) in the Arab countries should play to support the intifada, he replied: «Above all, the units of this army should be under the PLO's command, not controlled by the states where they are located. In that case, the PLA would participate along with the other forces of the Palestinian revolution in defending the Palestinian masses and fighting the enemy's troops.»

Concerning the reaction he expected to the massacre from the Palestinians in the occupied territories, Habash said that this was a chance to return to the early days of the intifada which were termed «the days of vast mass explosion. It is natural to expect that the mass reaction may reach the point of employing arms.»

Asked about the PFLP's position on states which resume diplomatic relations with Israel, Habash said: «When the largest Arab state (Egypt) does not withdraw its ambassador from Tel Aviv... what can we expect from Greece, Spain or even the Soviet Union? When the chairman of the PLO Executive Committee does not ask the Egyptian regime to sever relations with Israel, how can we ask others to do so?»

The last question concerned the PLO delegation which was visiting Damascus at the time of the press conference. Comrade Habash explained that the delegation had two aims: normalizing relations between Fatah and Syria, and discussing the upcoming Arab summit. «Concerning the bilateral relations... a step forward has been achieved. But concerning the summit, the official Syrian position is known, and I do not think there was any change.» ●