

all over the world. People are disillusioned. Look at what happened in the socialist countries; the situation has regressed much and there is no longer socialism in Eastern Europe. In the Soviet Union, thousands of people are turning to the Quran and the Church - turning to God. As for our Islamic forces, the Israelis dealt with them in the same way they dealt with Hamas - they turned a blind eye and let them receive money from Germany, America, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and even from the West Bank. They've built 13 mosques in Um Al Fahm in the last ten years. We are only 26,000 persons, but we have 13 mosques. One of them is four stories high, with each story being 500 meters square. It is a big center for sports, it has a library, health facilities and the mosque itself. We haven't a real club in Um Al Fahm, only a basement apartment that serves as one.

Also, we made very big mistakes in Um Al Fahm under the leadership of the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (DFPE). The man who had been mayor since 1972 belonged to the DFPE, and they made very many mistakes. As well, *Abna Al Balad*, during the past five years, was in a position that obliged us to support a coalition with the Communists. This was terrible; they didn't do anything in Um Al Fahm. We criticized them but the people didn't differentiate between us and them and they punished all of us. We failed in Um Al Fahm. This was a very big problem within *Abna Al Balad* that I discovered only after the election, I must say. They took 75 percent of the votes - it was a revolution. Fifty percent of the people who voted for the Islamic forces had supported the national and democratic forces - *Abna Al Balad*, *Ansar*, the CP, et. al. All of them shifted their support. They punished us because we made many mistakes.

### What were these mistakes?

We didn't do anything as a council. We didn't have projects. There was open sewage flowing through the streets all the time. The high schools were closed for three months by strikes because the teachers weren't being paid. The 15 primary schools didn't even have chalk. The situation was very bad. And the Islamic movement was giving money to the schools before they entered the council. They succeeded in controlling all the parents' committees in the schools. They were the leadership before the election; the election only formalized their position. But besides Um Al Fahm, they only succeeded in the small villages in the Triangle because there all of the population is Islamic and it is a very traditional society. In the Galilee, they succeeded to win six out of 18 seats in Nazareth. They didn't succeed in Kufr Kana or other places in the Galilee because there it is a mixed Christian-Muslim population, and they are less traditional than the Triangle.

### What are you doing in response to this?

We're not doing much locally, but they are making many mistakes. They promised the people everything - not to collect taxes, for example, and they must. They also promised not to collect interest on loans because this is forbidden by Islam, but the law obliges them to do so. It is very easy to be outside the council and to speak, then everything you say is correct. But when you are the regime, it is different. Now the people are beginning to reconsider, but they're still strong, I must say. They are new and the people understand this. They say to us: You did not do anything for ten years, so how can you criticize them so much, they've only been in power for one and a half years - wait. This leadership change has a strong connection with what happened and what will happen in the West Bank and Gaza. If there is no solution, no independent state and we stop struggling, then Hamas will be the major power in the West Bank and Gaza. And it will be a black day if this happens.

How does *Abna Al Balad* view the importance of the intifada and how do you support it?

Our analysis is that an intifada only in the West Bank and Gaza will not succeed without support from Palestinians living inside the green line, in Jordan and all the Arab world. But our situation is not objectively ready to make an intifada. This is a fact. But this doesn't mean people don't want to support the intifada politically. The strikes that we have organized show that the people are ready to do everything that the leadership of the Arabs inside Israel call for. When we asked the people to strike, they did and more. When the official leadership called for a peaceful strike, the people faced and fought Israeli police and soldiers on «peace day,» Land Day and during the last strike. It was like the intifada: people with their faces covered with *kufiyehs* throwing stones and raising flags. The people are willing, but they can't make an intifada because politically and economically we are not ready. We don't have a unified national leadership. We don't have a strong organization that wants to struggle more. We are pushing all the time for more struggle.

So you don't think that the intifada has crossed the green line.

There is not an intifada going on there; it is the beginning of what's going to happen in the future, no more. That doesn't mean I don't want it to happen - I really want this. But we don't have an organization that wants to do this, except *Abna Al Balad*, and we alone can't make an intifada; no group alone can make an intifada. Even if the CP wanted to, they couldn't do it alone. The people are always looking for unity; psychologically and politically it's correct, but we haven't the organizations that have the desire and are planning for this.

As well, the new government in Israel is an example of how the Jewish community in Israel is moving to the right. And the right wing is strong and very clear in its designs: they want to annex the West Bank and Gaza Strip to make a «big Israel.» And the so-called left wing - the left Zionist parties - are hesitant and afraid of the right wing, and they don't state clearly that they support self-determination for the Palestinians - a Palestinian state. Only about 25 Knesset members have agreed to speak with Arafat and support the idea of a Palestinian state. So you have about 95 members who are against the establishment of such a state and against negotiations with the PLO. With the new government, the coming days and months will be very dark. It's a very dangerous time. I think that now the Israeli government will increase its racist behavior against the Palestinians in Israel. Then you will not find left and right; you will not find *Abna Al Balad* on one side, and the head of the Local Arab Councils on the other. All of us must struggle together for our national rights against this racism. The Israelis are very stupid - they push us to struggle. The worse things get, the more people will struggle. For this reason, I feel optimistic about the future in the long term.

They will kill more Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, but I don't think our people there will stop the intifada - they will fight more. Previous to this crime in Rishon Letzion, the intifada was slowing down; but afterwards all of Israel said: Oh, the intifada has begun all over again. More killing only means more struggle against the occupation. I'm not afraid of people dying; we must pay the necessary price. We must fight - we have no choice.

### Correction

In DP no. 39 we mistakenly identified the village of Um Al Fahm as being in the Galilee. It is actually located in the Triangle. We regret this error.