

relations with the masses who, via organization in the bodies of the intifada, should «participate in the decision-making process...» This means «rejecting bureaucratic ways of dealing with the masses, activating their role and responding to their demands, because they are the great power of determination that keeps the intifada going on.»

Call no. 71 also banned the wearing of masks when dealing with the masses, as one of a number of measures aimed to end undisciplined behavior, including «to stop acts of kidnapping, interrogation and killing unless there is agreement among the various Palestinian organizations to do so...» This is part of the move to restore the intifada's campaign against collaborators to its original principled basis, which aimed to neutralize or eliminate, if necessary, those who worked with the occupation authorities and thus damaged the popular struggle.

Masks were originally donned by intifada activists who knew they were wanted by the occupation forces, in an attempt to avoid arrest while remaining active in the mass struggle. However, as the Zionist policy against the intifada evolved, relying more and more on undercover operations to arrest and kill militants, the wearing of masks had to be reconsidered. Thus, the ban on wearing masks among the masses also aims to guard against the attacks of the Israeli Shin Bet. Palestinians in the occupied territories and human rights organizations have long been reporting assassinations carried out by undercover agents. A few years ago, the Israeli authorities revoked the press credentials of two Western journalists who reported on Israeli death squads in the occupied territories. However, on June 21st, the truth – or rather part of it – was broadcast on Israeli television in a short documentary showing soldiers dressing as Arabs, sometimes as women, in order to approach and arrest intifada activists. At about the same time, a masked intifada activist was shot by another masked man in Kafr Malik, near Ramallah. Also in June, the PHRIC in Jerusalem published a list of 47 Palestinians killed by Israeli undercover agents. The author of the report, Lee O'Brien, wrote that the great majority of the victims were engaged in activities such as writing slogans on the walls, when they were killed.

The role of Palestinians outside

Though the national movement in occupied Palestine is best qualified to

formulate solutions to most of the intifada's current problems, it cannot alone resolve them in practice. In fact, part of the background of the current crisis is the mistaken assumption that the intifada alone could achieve its goals, even if these were restricted to ending the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The PLO and all Palestinian revolutionary organizations outside the homeland must shoulder the main responsibility not only for substantially upping financial and military support to the occupied territories, but also for ending factionalism and redressing the imbalance between the leadership inside and outside. The time has come for the Palestinian leadership inside (the UNL) to gain relative autonomy, making day-to-day decisions itself, based on PNC decisions and overall PLO directives. In the context of reforming the PLO and forming a new PNC, serious consideration should be given to increasing the representation of Palestinians in the occupied territories, commensurate to their role in the struggle.

In a communique issued June 14th in Damascus, the PFLP's Politbureau called for making the development of the intifada a top priority: «However, this task cannot be carried out by wishful thinking or focusing on minor aspects of the intifada, as many Palestinian forces and nationalist personalities are trying to do right now. Rather, there must be hard and responsible work to back the intifada by more vital means, and a responsible, revolutionary and daring process of self-criticism that highlights the primary issue, because we think that the outside is mainly responsible for providing the intifada with the means of continuation and development.» It has become quite clear that the obstacles that hamper the intifada's progress stem not only from the brutal policies and practices of the Zionist entity; but also from the wrong policies and practices of the dominant circles of the PLO leadership and of the various Palestinian organizations as well.» Besides calling for rectification of the PLO's political line and practice, and an end to the organizational factionalism that has alienated the masses and reduced their participation in the intifada, the PFLP Politbureau advocated: «Developing a comprehensive national economic policy to back the economy inside [the occupied territories], by putting all the capacities of the PLO and the Palestinian people worldwide at the disposal of this policy, and by investing the little aid extended by some Arab brothers and other friends to

the same end.»

Intifada as the center

The importance of coupling concrete solutions to the intifada's problems with political rectification is dramatically highlighted by the emergence of some very incorrect responses to the current crisis. Prime among these is the declaration of the so-called Palestinian National Unity Party (PNUP) in Ramallah, by Kamal Tabanji, based on negation of the Palestinian national liberation movement's past and principles. This party proclaims that the role of the PLO and armed struggle has expired. Instead it calls for direct negotiations with Israel, relying on forging close ties with the US and asking Jordan to reverse its decision to sever ties with the West Bank. What appears to distinguish this party is that it encompasses a number of Palestinians who have served long terms in Israeli prisons, in addition to some West Bank professionals. But the PNUP's real promoter is Salah Al Khalili, a Fatah official who resides in London, where he intends to ply his contacts with the British and US governments.

The dangers of this tendency are manifest. Not only does it violate principles long upheld by Palestinian freedom fighters and the masses alike; it addresses false problems. The current problems of the intifada and the overall weakness of the Palestinian cause is not due to the employment of armed struggle as a necessary instrument for change. Rather these problems stem from shortcomings in terms of political clarity, a firmly embedded mass line and finding new ways of practicing revolutionary violence to bolster the popular struggle. Instead of addressing these problems, the tendency represented by the PNUP brings new divisiveness to the Palestinian arena. It moreover plays into the hands of the Israeli and US governments who have long sought an alternative to the PLO.

Dealing with the current problems must begin with recognition of the centrality of the intifada in the national liberation struggle to fulfill Palestinian rights, and building on the experience of this struggle, as was expressed by the UNL in call no. 70: «... a comprehensive, just solution of the Palestinian question cannot be achieved through the proposed negotiations only, in the absence of struggle in the field, which is the spearhead of political activity... the political and militant processes are organically and dialectically linked.»