

it constructive to assess the initial reaction of the mass movement because «the scope of the destruction inflicted on Iraq by the aggressive imperialist coalition caused shock and a mechanical reaction. But after exposure of the objectives of this aggression, the masses in general and the political forces in particular began a process of reconsidering and rearranging their priorities in order to confront the imperialist – Zionist plan. Immediately after the war, the imperialists and Zionists sought to capitalize on the new situation in the region in order to promote their control over the oil and the region, and to liquidate the Palestinian cause. Our masses became even more conscious of these plans and this issue will be a major pillar of the mass movement in the future.»

Tayseer Al Zabri conceded that one cannot compare the mass mobilization during the crisis with the present situation, «Our people were astonished by what happened. They anticipated a long battle, but no battle occurred and they are suffering as a result. As the [Iraqi] troops were withdrawing from Kuwait, people here were in the streets shouting that we are winning the battle, not knowing the battle had already ended, because we did not trust the Western media when it reported the results of the war. It was horrible...Now the people have stopped some of their activities because they are watching what the Iraqi government has done – accepting resolution 687 and the troops in the North. But I think the people are still ready to struggle against imperialism and Zionism. They are now watching for the time when they will get their strength in battle, but what can they do when there is no battle?»

«While our people were looking to the Iraqi leadership to face the battle, in Jordan we are seeking democracy, pluralism and the cancellation of martial law, connecting these national demands to our position towards Iraq and the Gulf crisis, and focusing on the intifada to the same degree. We said that Jerusalem – Amman – Baghdad is our line of battle. Now one line of the battle has stopped, but Amman still requires our forces, and the intifada still needs Palestinian – Arab joint struggle against Israel.»

Lua'y Dabbagh of the Unity Party evaluated the aftermath of the Gulf war as follows: «We have to accept the reality that the level of activity and great enthusiasm has declined, because the masses feel more defeated than do the political parties and movements. During the war, there were many committees of many types and their main interest was to support Iraq and mobilize the people to defend Jordan in case of war. Such committees dissolved by themselves. We have the duty to revive the mass movement by a major initiative – a political, economic initiative, using the social struggle as an instrument to mobilize the people to struggle for their own interests in the face of the acute economic crisis. We are working on how to defend the political and civil rights of women in particular, as well as of other social sectors. The masses are ready to be involved when the political parties and movement are mature and have a response to the issues that concern them.»

«Mounting a major initiative depends on how the political parties view the new era. The main thing is to protect democracy, to pressure the bourgeoisie and government to resolve the economic crisis, taking into account the interests of the popular classes. The initiative of the political parties and popular forces must revive mass mobilization in order to protect democracy, support Iraq's reconstruction, defend its territorial integrity and resolve the Kurdish question in the framework of an internal solution based on democracy and self – determination of the Kurdish people, but protecting Iraq's integrity. We are now working on part of this initiative, concentrating on defending the right of Palestinians and

Jordanians in Kuwait. This is a prelude to raising other questions.»

At the time of this interview, protests were at a height against the death sentences handed down by martial courts in Kuwait against 29 Iraqis, Jordanians, Palestinians and other Arabs for such «crimes» as writing or making lay – out for a pro – Iraqi newspaper. This made front – page headlines as the Jordanian government called for international intervention to reverse the death sentences. PNC members directed an open letter to Kuwaiti officials demanding that these arbitrary and excessive sentences be rescinded and torture ended. On June 19th, 150 relatives of the condemned staged a sit – in at the Red Cross building in Amman, accompanied by representatives of popular committees and unions, as well as three MPs. They then headed toward the Kuwaiti embassy, intending to present a petition demanding fair trials, reversal of the death sentences and an end to acts of revenge and torture. Kuwaiti officials tried to keep the people off the embassy grounds and refused to receive the petition, leading MP Mansour Murad of JANDA to call for Jordan to sever ties with Kuwait if the latter did not respond to the appeals.

In late June, Kuwait commuted all 29 death sentences to life imprisonment in response to the appeal of the UN Secretary – General and other international organizations. However, no other steps have been taken that would indicate fair treatment for all. On the contrary, discrimination against non – Kuwaiti Arabs has accelerated, leading to a mass exodus of as many as 5,000 people from Kuwait in two weeks. In Amman on July 4th, 2,000 protested the mistreatment of Palestinians and Jordanians in Kuwait, along with the Lebanese Army's shelling of Palestinian camps near Sidon, in the biggest demonstration in Jordan since the end of the Gulf war.

The Islamic forces

Until the new democratic era, the Muslim Brotherhood was the only organized force allowed to work openly in Jordan. With the 1989 elections, the Islamic forces gained roughly one – third of the seats in the parliament, constituting the single biggest bloc. They were subsequently prominent in the mass mobilization against the imperialist attack on Iraq and, in January, Prime Minister Badran brought the Brotherhood into his cabinet. In answer to a question as to whether the Islamic forces have gained or lost influence as a result of the outcome of the Gulf war and their own participation in government, Lua'y Dabbagh said: «It is clear that the Islamic forces are becoming weaker, but that does not mean that the left or other nationalist forces are stronger. In the aftermath of the war, mass participation and enthusiasm are less, as I explained, because the masses feel the defeat. To some extent they hold the political forces responsible for this. Since the Islamic forces are the biggest group among these forces, they suffer the impact [of this blame] more than others. Also their participation in government negatively influenced their mass support, because they diverted the struggle from facing the big problems our society has. They worked to reinforce their presence in the ministries they controlled and to limit the role of women. In addition to their policies in the field of education, they segregated employees in the Ministry of Social Development. In a ministry that really depends on women – over 60% of the employees are women – this obviously had a negative impact.»

Tayseer Al Zabri insisted that the relative decline in the Islamic forces' popularity was almost solely connected to their record in government: «The people saw that they gave nothing. In the social field, they confronted the women's union. In the field of education, they elicited the opposition of hundreds of