

monarch was referring to the international conference where all parties would meet. Aside from this, he based his assessment of Jordan's policy vis-à-vis the peace process on more overall factors, including the PLO's position: «I don't think Jordan will go it alone, repeating the example of Sadat, but I do think the government is willing to make a joint Palestinian – Jordanian delegation...I cannot emphasize that the PLO will refuse because I think that many in the PLO leadership want this.» He explained that as a Jordanian party, the JDP views this as a matter for the PLO to decide: «We don't intervene, but it is difficult to explain the PLO leadership's position. Here, in secret discussions with the government, the PLO said they are willing to make a joint delegation. In Damascus, they said they wanted an Arab delegation. In Tunis and at the Central Council session, they said they want a solely PLO delegation. We have heard many different things and this makes people doubt...However, I don't think that Arafat and his colleagues will give the final word on this matter without the participation of other parties, especially the PFLP and DFLP. Such a matter requires agreement between the three essential sections of the PLO.»

Commenting on King Hussein's statement, Abdel Rahman Al Majali said, «We do not welcome any statement which could weaken the demand for an international peace conference, as this detracts from creating a united Arab position and coordination between the PLO and Jordanian government. He noted that at present the JCP is not so concerned with the forms of the peace process, but insists on affirming the principles which would guarantee solving the Palestinian cause on the basis of the relevant UN resolutions and restoring the Palestinian people's rights, including the establishment of their independent state. It is thus most concerned with maintaining the soleness of the PLO's representation: «We oppose any impairment of the PLO's independent role in solving the Palestinian cause,» he concluded.

Lu'a'y Dabbagh prefaced his remarks by reminding that the Jordanian government has always been ready to open dialogue on the basis of resolutions 242 and 338. However, there are changes in the regional situation as well as in Jordan's own role. Since the 1988 decision to disengage from the West Bank, the Jordanian role in the peace process is secondary, and it will not negotiate on behalf of the Palestinians, especially if the PLO does not want this. Dabbagh suggested that the king's statements were intended to introduce a new element in the context of the stalemate of the peace process: «There is a move to resolve the problem of the Palestinians' representation in the proposed regional conference. We in the Unity Party are against Jordan participating in such a conference because it is a substitute for an international conference, and aims to focus on bilateral settlements and avoid the Palestinian problem which is central. No major player in the region says it opposes dialogue with Israel, but the question is how. We strongly support the PLO's position for an international conference with the participation of all parties, and the PLO representing the Palestinians.»

Concerning the prospects for a joint Palestinian – Jordanian delegation, Dabbagh noted that the Unity Party is not optimistic about the peace process advancing now due to the Israeli demands. «However, if there really is a peace process, the new Jordanian government has the cards it needs to play in order to ward off US pressure and seek an agreement with the PLO; perhaps then, there would be a joint delegation, but this is not the case now. Some are saying that this is the ideal government to approach the peace process as the US wants, but I don't think it will be as the US wants. We think that there are red lines that Prime Minister Masri cannot cross. The nature of

the forces that support the new government puts some kind of conditions as to what kind of peace it must seek. If the PLO wants a solution to the problem of Palestinian representation, there is the possibility of a joint delegation. As a Jordanian party, we support the Palestinians' rights to independence, creating their state, self-determination and return. In principle we oppose a joint delegation, but we don't oppose the PLO's choice. However, as a Jordanian nationalist party, we seek the liberation of Palestine, notwithstanding the unity [of Palestinians and Jordanians] created in Jordan. No Jordanian can think differently.»

The intifada is the frontline

In Amman you can ask anybody about the connection between Jordan and Palestine, between democratization and the intifada, and they will tell you there is a direct, daily, two-way relationship. The progress of the intifada is front-page news in the press, and reactions to major events in occupied Palestine are immediate and often emotional. This closeness is based on social as well as political realities. Over 70% of the population in Jordan have relatives in the occupied territories. Though Jordan is surely the country in which Palestinians in exile are most integrated, their roots remain in Palestine. Many Palestinians not resident in Jordan come here to meet their families from the occupied territories.

While the intifada was one of the factors motivating the new policy in Jordan, democratization east of the Jordan River also fuels the intifada. According to Lu'a'y Dabbagh, «If there is a revolution in Jordan, a new kind of democracy, this will support the intifada more than anything, providing it with endurance that will rule out any unjust solution. When the Jordanian people have the right to participate in decision-making, the Palestinians are protected, because the people support the Palestinian cause; even if the government changes, this popular support will remain. The popular movement here is deeply affected by the performance of the intifada in facing up to Israel. The movement in Jordan has always had the Palestinian cause as a top priority. In the last three years, the intifada has taken top priority on the agenda of the parties and mass organizations. Mobilizing material support to the intifada and spreading its message all over Jordan has been a main duty of the Unity Party on a daily basis – our main task after defending democracy.»

Something like the majority of families in the West Bank depend on their families in Jordan for economic support, and this has surely increased with the exodus of Palestinians from the Gulf oil states. Sectors of the West Bank economy depend on the Jordanian market and vice versa. This interdependence was devastatingly apparent in 1988, when the Jordanian dinar collapsed, inflicting added economic hardship on the population of the occupied territories. However, Tayseer Al Zabri, who is a member of the Committee to Support the Intifada, noted that even with the economic crisis, people in Jordan are giving more now to the intifada than before under martial law and its restrictions. He also noted the intertwining of the political processes affecting Jordan and Palestine: «We put the intifada as an essential matter for our movement in the wake of the Gulf crisis, along with the defense of democracy in Jordan, because both are effective tools against the US and Israeli plans to dominate the region.»

One comes away with the impression that the intifada is not at all an external matter for people in Jordan, but rather a part of their lives. Abdel Rahman Al Majali spoke for many when he said: «The intifada is the frontline for defending Jordan, while Jordan and its people, Jordanian and Palestinian, are the intifada's strategic depth.»