

Hunger Strike in Askelon

PFLP holds the Zionist entity responsible for the outcome of the political prisoners' strike in Askelon prison.

Due to the difficult conditions that exist in the prisons of the Zionist occupation, the Palestinian militants in Askelon prison declared a hunger strike on March 5th, to last until the prison administration responds to their just demands. Their demands can be summarized as follows:

1. Provision of the minimum requirements for living in the prisons. This includes food, clothing and sun-breaks.

2. Allowing the relatives of the political prisoners to make regular biweekly visits and increasing the duration of the visit.

3. Stopping the campaign of arbitrary transfers from one prison to another, a practice which has become almost daily.

4. Separation of the political prisoners from the criminal prisoners in Damoun, Neve Tertza, Ramle and Shatta prisons.

5. Provision of medical treatment in all prisons, in particular Askelon.

6. Breaking the isolation imposed on the Japanese militant, Komozo Okonoto, who is in Ramle prison. From his imprisonment in 1972, until the present, he has been in solitary confinement, chained, tortured and forbidden to have visitors.

The Palestinian militants also emphasized that their hunger strike is in solidarity with the women in Neve Tertza prison, who have been refusing work since May 1983.

The PFLP appeals to international public opinion, and to the international organizations that defend human rights, to undertake their duty by putting pressure on the occupation authorities to fulfill the demands of our militants in Aske-

lon prison. Moreover, the PFLP holds the Zionist entity totally responsible for whatever results from this strike, which threatens the life of our militants.



Women Strikers Win

The hunger strike in Askelon prison ended, but struggle for similar demands goes on in many jails. On March 6th, the women in Neve Tertza prison declared a hunger strike in anticipation of International Women's Day. This served to dramatize the work strike they have been waging since May 1983, refusing to cook and serve the guards. The escalation of the strike was apparently the last straw for the prison administration which has unsuccessfully tried to break the work strike with punishments and brutality. Instead, the women continued. Through their determination, they elicited sustained solidarity from outside the prison. The unprecedently broad support given by democratic Israeli women's organizations, and the efficient role of the women's lawyers, has brought their case to public attention inside occupied Palestine and abroad. Accordingly, attention was also focused on the prison administration's brutality, as when the women were teargassed in their cells on October 3rd.

So, this time, the prison administration tried to get the women to send a delegation in hopes of getting them to end the strike. The women, however, have boycotted any contact with the authorities since the teargassing, and thus refused to send a delegation. Instead, they demanded the return of their library which had earlier been confiscated as punishment for the work strike. Finally, this demand was fulfilled, and the women sent a delegation to discuss with the prison governor. Agreement was reached that the women would not be forced to do unreasonable kitchen duty, or to serve or clean up after

the guards and police. At the same time, the prisoners' rights to newspapers, books and radios were recognized and restored.

The victory of the women political prisoners in Neve Tertza, who attained all their demands in this round, points to two elements which are the key to victories in prison strikes generally: First, the organization and determination of the prisoners' themselves, and second, broad, active solidarity from outside the prison. The victory at Neve Tertza should thus be a motivation for escalated solidarity with all political prisoners in occupied Palestine.

Torture factory

Currently, an important focus for solidarity with political prisoners is Fara'a detention center, near Nablus, which was established by the Israeli authorities in 1982, especially for youthful «offenders», i.e. demonstrators and political activists. Heavy torture is applied on detainees awaiting trial, in line with the Zionist authorities' frantic attempts to snuff out the mass demonstrations and stone-throwing which prevail in the occupied territories. At present there are about 150 detainees in this center, which is run by the military police, with a close section run by Shin Bet. As a result of many cases of reported torture, the Israeli League for Human and Civil Rights held a press conference in late March, where Secretary Joseph Algazi accused the authorities of torture and brutality and termed Fara'a «a factory for extracting confessions».