

# Demonstrations in Yarmouk University

*In late February, the University of Yarmouk, in Irbid, Jordan, witnessed a mass student movement, the broadest and most active since the University was established. Students moved to oppose certain measures implemented by the University Administration, and demanded reforms in the University curriculum. Also there were demands for democratic rights for students and trade unions in Jordan.*

## 470 students suspended

This protest movement arose when the University Administration launched an attack against the students. According to University sources, 470 students were suspended. They are enrolled in different colleges and years. A great part of them are in their 4th academic year - 72 engineering students, 174 students enrolled in the College of Sciences, 122 enrolled in the College of Administrative Sciences, 74 enrolled in the College of Literature, 10 enrolled in the Schools of Medicine, Pharmacy, and Medical Technology.

The suspensions included some prominent student leaders who have strongly opposed the security agents' interference in the affairs of the students.

The University Administration enacted the suspensions on the grounds that the students' Accumulative Grade Point Averages were below the University's minimum, which is known to be 70%. In comparison, the minimum at the Jordan University in Amman (the only other university in Jordan), is 60%. This argument of the University Administration was rejected by the majority of students and some faculty members. Some faculty members protested the suspensions to the President, Mr. Adnan Badran, and described them as unconvincing, inhuman and dubious. A statement issued by the students and

sent to the Popular Forces in Jordan, called attention to the fact that the administration's decision has grave implications on the future of many students: «If this direction prevails in the University Administration, great numbers of students will be exposed to final suspension at the end of every semester».

In fact, this year's action is not the first in the history of the university. For instance, 520 students were suspended at the end of the first semester of the Academic Year of 1982-83. This was followed by suspending 180 students at the end of the 2nd semester of the same year.

## Defect lies in the curriculum

This humiliating situation facing many students in Jordan has deep-rooted causes. The above mentioned students' statement asks: Where is the defect and why do so many students get suspended? Apparently, this deteriorating situation is a reflection of the hard curriculum followed at the university, which is the major reason for the suspensions of the 470 students, if not more. It is well known that it is the best students of the secondary schools who gain admittance to the two universities in Jordan.

We notice this phenomena of suspending students in the University of Yarmouk, but not in the Jordanian Uni-

versity. Therefore, the main defect must lie in the curriculum and the regulations imposed on students.

## Students go on strike

As a result of the enduring problem, the students at Yarmouk University moved to protest these measures of the University Administration, the university regulations and the curriculum. On February 6th, the events began when a big number of students met in the main yard of the university. They raised banners emphasizing the nature of their protest as an academic demonstration. Other banners were raised condemning the suspension of the 470 students due to the nature of the curriculum. Later they organized a committee, representing the suspended students and the others, to meet the President of the university. However, Badran refused to meet with them. Instead, the Director of Student Affairs came out, threatening the participants of the demonstration. The students continued their protest and threatened to go on strike until the following demands were met: 1. The return of all suspended students without any conditions; 2. Modification of the curriculum to provide a good level of education that includes practical courses related to the needs of the Jordanian society; 3. Modifications in the system of the university, so that it will coincide with that of the Jordanian University, concerning the Accumulative Grade Point Average.

Gradually, the demonstration expanded. Students were leaving their lecture rooms to join the demonstration on campus. In this process, the Office of Admissions and Registration was forced to close by the students, while the process of payment of registration fees was taking place. The demonstration passed through the university, by almost every college, and students joined until the number of demonstrators reached 3000-4000.

As a result of the active mobilization, some faculty members joined as well, and submitted the students' ►