

plete civil rights, particularly the right to work and move about freely, since there are many companies, organizations and workshops which do not employ Palestinians.

We asked his mother, Um Khalil, about her social conditions: «Our living conditions are terrible. When we go to get medical treatment, they don't give us any. Sometimes they ask for a paper from another official; when we bring it, they say that they aren't able to treat us.» Um Khalil adds that Gaza hospital is no longer free: «A visit would cost 100 Lebanese pounds. If my husband makes 1000 pounds monthly and we have eight children, how can we go to the hospital?»

**«The Palestinian should be treated like any Lebanese citizen.»**

Adeeb Ibrahim is a worker and lives in Shatila refugee camp. he emphasized the harassment to which Palestinians in Beirut are subjected from different movements, groups and the Lebanese authorities: «This is a very important matter that our leadership must discuss with those concerned, so that our youth will not be subjected to beatings or detainment inside the camps...We cannot go visit our relatives in the Beqaa Valley without being harassed. I am a Palestinian residing in Lebanon. I have a right to go to the north, south, east or west of the country. I have legal residence and should be treated like any Lebanese citizen.»

**«God only knows where our next place of refuge will be.»**

Lemyaa Ahmed is 20 years old and works at a factory *Samed* (the PLO's economic institution). She lives in the sports stadium on the edge of Shatila camp, which was heavily bombed in the 1982 Israeli invasion and where over 30 families now live in the worst conditions. Lemyaa said, «Before the 1975-76 civil war, we lived in Tel al Zaatar refugee camp (which was destroyed by the Phalangists). We left there for Damour and then to Beirut. During the invasion we came to where we now are. Only God knows where our next place of refuge will be.»

**«We must organize committees to help the needy.»**

Zaineb Khalil is 18 years old. She discussed the importance of devoting attention to social problems by organizing committees concerned with the most needy: those who are on the verge of starvation or who lack ability to care for themselves. She also mentioned the need to give attention to schools and to building social and cultural clubs. Describing the situation, she said: «There is no work, no security; our salaries have been cut and the PLO does not seem to be concerned. The number of missing and detained Palestinians is in the hundreds if not thousands. There is daily harassment from the authorities and different groups.»

**«No work, no security, no guarantees, no freedom.»**

Anxiety was plain to see on the face of a high school student who refused to give his name; he spoke about the almost total lack of social life at home or at school: «There is no security, no guarantees.» He then asked sarcastically about the guarantees agreed upon between the Lebanese government and the PLO.

Um Shehadeh is 70 years old. She lives with her daughter and has no one to support her. The different episodes of the tragedies of the Palestinian people are written all over her face. She said, «We left Nabatiyeh after the war to go to Shehim, then to Beirut. We lived in a building inhabited by

refugees. Our entire life has been torturous. This is the fate of the Palestinian people.»

**«I can still envision what happened during the massacres.»**

The story of Um Atiyeh, 65 years old, does not differ much from that of Um Shehadeh. Um Atiyah told how she left Tel al Zaatar in 1976 without any compensation. She went to Damour, then to Shatila after the invasion. She witnessed the Sabra and Shatila massacres. «I can still see the children, women and girls before my eyes.» After the massacres, Um Atiyah searched for a home, but found only a single room where she and her family lived for a long time. She finally left it because she could not pay the rent. Today she too lives in the sports stadium near Shatila. At the end of her talk she said bitterly: «I am an old woman but I still hold the PLO responsible for forgetting its people.»

**«Killing a Palestinian became easier than killing a bird.»**

Sabah Ahmed works as a seamstress in her home. She said, «Palestinian workers have great difficulty in finding a job especially as the Lebanese authorities forbid any Palestinian to work without a work permit. It is usually quite difficult to get this permit, since it costs a lot, too much for the average worker to pay.» Concerning the security situation after the departure of the Palestinian resistance, she said bitterly: «It became easier to kill a Palestinian than to kill a bird.»

Mahmoud Ali, an accountant, answered our questions by saying: «There is no security; any problem can result in the death of Palestinian youth. This in turn is due to the absence of anyone being willing to protect the Palestinians. Since the departure of the resistance, we have been humiliated. When the resistance was present, we knew where we stood and who would protect us from the Lebanese authorities, the Zionist enemy or the fascist parties.» Concerning the social conditions in the refugee camps, he said, «Our people are destitute...there are no jobs and we are constantly harassed. This has led some Palestinians to leave the area.» He added that if the revolution's structures were present, they would have provided some employment. As for UNRWA, he mentioned that there is a great deal of carelessness. The financial aid formerly granted to Palestinian refugees has been cut.

**«Where is the PLO?»**

We then discussed the PLO's responsibility for defending the camps, securing a livelihood for the people and guaranteeing their political and civil rights, with these same people. Everybody agreed that the PLO is absent and has relinquished its most basic obligations to its people in Beirut.

Khalil Atiyah said that the PLO should contact the Lebanese government to secure acceptable living conditions for the Palestinians in Lebanon, including freedom of movement and study. He demanded that special committees be established to seek out those families in most need. He also called for reforming popular committees to carrying out the various functions needed in the camps.

**«An alternative to Tel al Zaatar must be found.»**

Adeeb Ibrahim said that if the leadership of the revolution could only see how the people of Tel al Zaatar are living, they would not delay in finding a new place for them. «We wonder how the leadership can think about everything except aid to the Palestinian masses still holding out in Lebanon. Aren't the catastrophes we have faced enough to convince them of the need for this aid? People here are dying of hunger and nobody cares...Yet despite what has happened, we maintain our