



*Will they survive the coming winter?*

## *An Open Dialogue with Popular Committees' Members*

Abu Kassem, a member of the Popular Committee of the Shatila camp, spoke about the conditions of the camp and the problems facing the population. He said: «We were left in a very difficult situation. Living conditions have deteriorated, while restricting laws have increased. For example, 6 months ago, a number of people submitted applications to obtain ID cards. You know how important the ID cards are for being allowed to move around even inside the camp and for being allowed to work. But until now we are unable to get them. It is possible to get them in two hours only, if one has 70 Lebanese pounds. No exaggeration; people don't have this amount of money, because of unemployment. Now there are new rules concerning employment such as obtaining a permission to work, and the question is, who will grant us this permission? Lately piles of trash has been scattered throughout the camp. This forced a large number of our children to do the clean-up work. However, they were imprisoned, because they don't have a permission to work. The following day an armed group arrived in the camp and announced through loudspeakers: «Palestinians are not allowed to work».

What did the Palestinian organizations do concerning all this? Nothing. They have to pay more attention to their own people. Everyday we expect a massacre. I'd like to say, there are women who fought closely with the revolution. Now they have no food for their children. Frankly, they work as prostitutes. Does this satisfy Abu Ammar in Tunis or any other leader in Damascus? Finally I'd like to say, if the PLO will not pay attention to these problems, let them leave us alone, and we will act on our own.»

Abu Saleh, another member of the committee viewed the present tasks of the Popular Committee in the following way: «Presently the role of the Committee is limited to trying to solve

problems far away from anything concerning financial needs. Due to the lack of financial and moral support, our committee differs from the previous ones which were supported by all PLO organizations. We made several attempts to contact the PLO in order to solve this problem, but no results. The PLO Executive Committee does not convene, and no one else is authorized to take such decisions. Therefore all we do now is to negotiate with some forces to solve problems that occur in the camp. Moreover, the Committee tries to help in solving problems related to electricity and water. However we can only appeal to individuals for these matters. I hold all organizations, with no exception, responsible for this state we have reached. None of them are working seriously to alter the existing situation facing our masses in the camp. There are water and electricity shortages, and the Palestinian hospitals are already

*Who is responsible for the Palestinian camps in Lebanon?*

