

The Meaning of Solidarity

Staffan Beckman is a Swedish writer who has contributed greatly to the initiation and development of solidarity with the Palestinian revolution in Scandinavia. He sent us the following article which was originally published in «*Palestina Information*».

In a debate in *Palestina Information*, entitled «Liberation Struggle or Terror?», it has been stated that certain Palestinian military actions in occupied Palestine have caused «hesitation among friends of the Palestinian people.»

In my view, it is necessary to emphasize that the only true friends of the Palestinian people are those who are capable of deeply understanding and identifying with the situation of the Palestinian people - with the strivings and struggle of the Palestinian masses, as well as with the state of oppression and misery in which they live. Those who are thus acting out of *solidarity* give the fighting Palestinians the right to struggle on the basis of the existing conditions in each stage (a right which, by the way, the oppressed and fighting people take, regardless of what people outside may think). This does not mean that those acting out of solidarity give up their own right to pronounce criticism. It is, however, their responsibility to start from the reality of the Palestinian masses and from nothing else, and to hand over any criticism to the Palestinians rather than publicizing it in a way that can be exploited by the oppressors.

Many of the «friends of the Palestinian people», who have felt «hesitation» since the development of the Palestinian resistance in the 1960s, have simply not been guided by solidarity but by compassion, feelings of guilt or other interests of their own. They thereby look upon the Palestinians from above, on the basis of interests which do not coincide with those of the Palestinian masses. Of course, that is not friendship. These people could rather be compared with charity ladies who distribute soup



and second-hand clothes to poor workers' children whose fathers are toiling in factories belonging to the ladies' husbands. Such ladies become as upset and frightened as their husbands, when the workers go on strike or make demonstrations. To this category of alleged friends belong, among others, those 'left-wing Zionists' who advocate some kind of homeland for the Palestinians as long as it does not infringe upon 'Israel' within the borders of 1948.

Yet some of those who have 'hesitations' do surely strive to act from real solidarity, but have difficulties because of lack of knowledge or misleading lines of thought.

In looking at the Palestinian actions, the starting point for every person acting in solidarity has to be that the Palestinian people, from the beginning, have been in an extremely difficult situation in relation to the Zionists and their imperialist allies. 'Israel' is still one of the world's strongest military powers, intimately allied to the USA and its interests. So despite the fact that Palestinian resistance has existed for at least seventy-five years, the liberation struggle is still in its beginning.

Starting in 1910, Palestinian peasants repeatedly attacked the kibbutzim which had occupied their lands. They

shot at farming settlers, ambushed transports, and attacked merry and singing Jews on excursions. Men, women and children were killed - and usually also the Palestinian peasants, who were poorly equipped and badly organized.

How do we view such attacks from a standpoint of solidarity? Of course, from this standpoint the actions are only natural. The criticism is not directed against the Palestinian peasants, but against the colonialists who have taken their lands. Concerning the children who were killed, this must be seen as the responsibility of the parents; it was they who brought their children into a situation based on aggression and violence against the native population.

But still, shouldn't these attacks be criticised as being 'useless', because they have death and misery as their only consequence? No, from the standpoint of solidarity it can be seen that they were not useless. First of all, they were not useless for the peasants who made them. For these Palestinians it was necessary not to accept the aggression; it was necessary to resist, and to try to counterattack even if the chances were not very good. The state of deprival, starvation and despair into which these peasants and their families had fallen, was worse to them than the risks involved in the attack. Secondly, these actions were not useless, because they gave an example to others. They inspired other Palestinians to resist, to get out of this desperate situation.

From the viewpoint of solidarity, it is clear that every such action became a link in the sum of the resistance against oppression. Every Palestinian act of resistance, for the last seventy-five years, lingers behind and inspires the