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# DEMOCRATIC PALESTINE

# ddp



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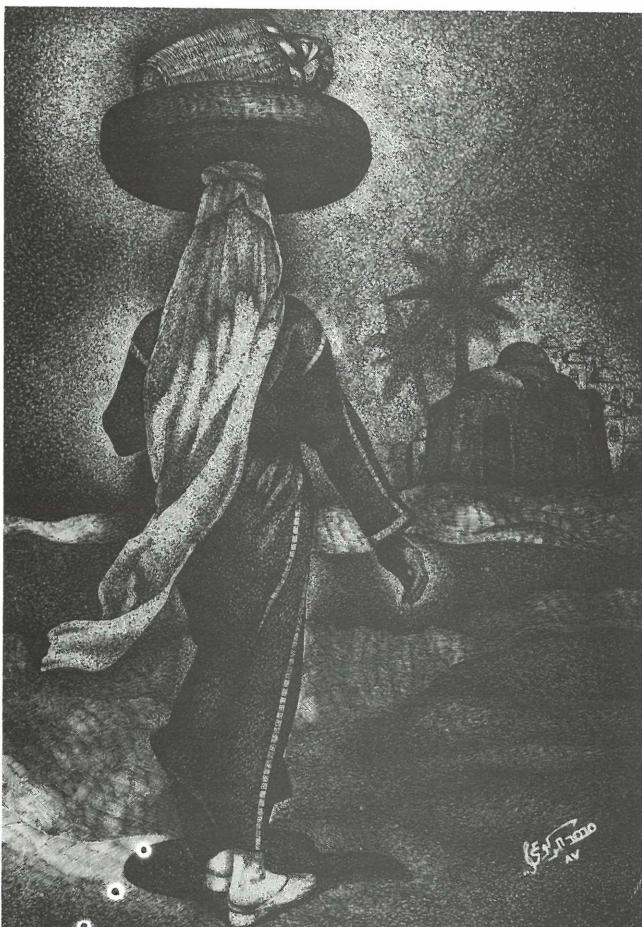
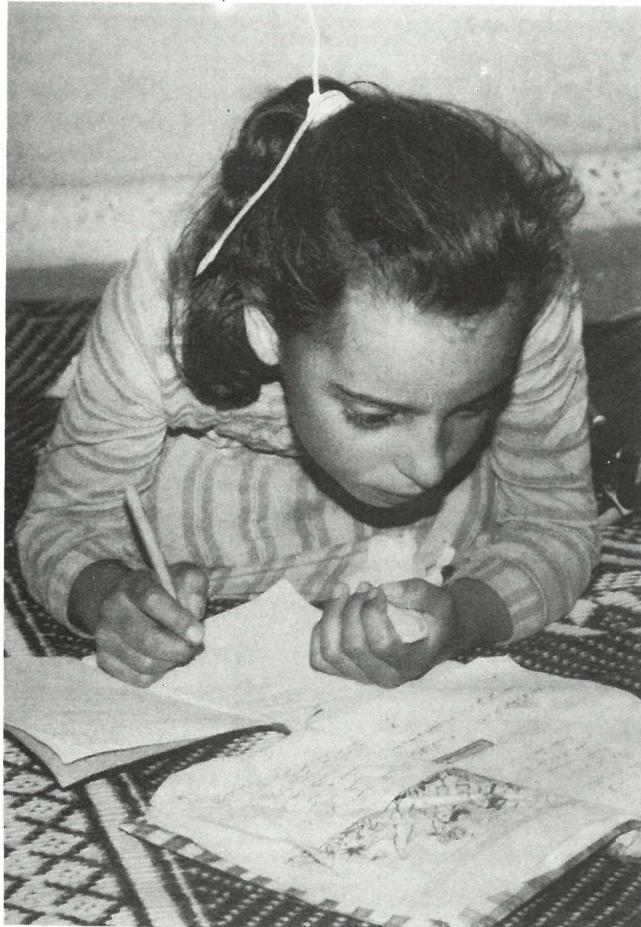
Editor: Talal Ahmed

Assistant Editor: Maher Salameh

Editorial Committee: Ahmed Halaweh, Lina Al Aswad, Farida Al Asmar, Itimad Musa  
 Graphic Design: Jihad Mansour

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# The Intifada Faces New Zionist Violence

Any hope of a breakthrough in the political impasse was thwarted after the formation of the new Israeli government, a coalition made up of fundamentalist and ultra-right-wing parties, including Geula Cohen's Tehiya and Raphael Eitan's Tsomet. Eitan once referred to the Palestinians as cockroaches, and like many other ministers in this new government, he would rather see them exterminated or at least expelled.

by Maher Salameh

The «Greater Israel» government put the issue of immigration and absorption foremost among its national objectives. Despite international protest against the settling of new immigrants in the 1967 occupied territories, Housing Minister Ariel Sharon has planned the building of 20,000 housing units in the Jerusalem area which was annexed by Israel after its occupation in 1967. A map of the occupied territories printed in Russian was distributed to all absorption centers handling Soviet immigrants. The map includes the names and telephone numbers to contact for those interested in settling in the 1967 occupied territories (*Jerusalem Post*, June 20th). During the month of May, 30 families of Soviet Jewish immigrants were settled in the Golan Heights settlement of Kitsrin. In addition, the influx of tens of thousands of Soviet Jews has created a severe housing crisis in Israel, with the housing ministry encouraging Israelis to settle in the 1967 occupied territories by providing them with material incentives.

This move leaves no illusions about Israel's intentions of circumventing any efforts towards a peaceful settlement of the conflict. In the words of Shamir: «It would be madness on our part to agree to any concession whatsoever in an area (the West Bank) which is the soft underbelly of Eretz Yisrael» (*Jerusalem Post*, June 12th). If Israel succeeds in absorbing the projected one million new Soviet Jewish immigrants, perhaps the new «soft underbelly» will be Jordan!

On the military front, the new government's plan was expounded by Defense Minister Moshe Arens. In an interview with Israeli television, Arens

osed in both the Shamir and Baker plans. Arens fears such elections would «create problems and complicate the issues;» such complications would be the presence of a UN team to monitor general elections, making it difficult for the Israelis to rig them.

On the other hand, he is escalating repression through the increased use of collective punishment, such as house demolition, while simultaneously reducing the presence of troops in certain areas, in hopes of dampening popular resistance.

Meanwhile, vigilante violence increased sharply after two Israelis were found dead in the Jerusalem area on August 6th. Upon hearing the news and before the arrest of any suspects, Israeli settlers and vigilantes went on a rampage against Palestinians. In the ensuing frenzy, two Palestinians were killed and over a hundred injured in the Jerusalem area. Another Palestinian woman was killed near the Kiryat Arba settlement in what the Israeli police admitted was an act of revenge. A 40-year-old Palestinian man was killed on August 7th by an Israeli mob inside the green line, when he was dragged from his car and beaten to death. His pregnant wife and their six children also received injuries. The rampage continued for three days in many parts of occupied Palestine, resulting in extensive damage to property and many injuries. The settlers' ►

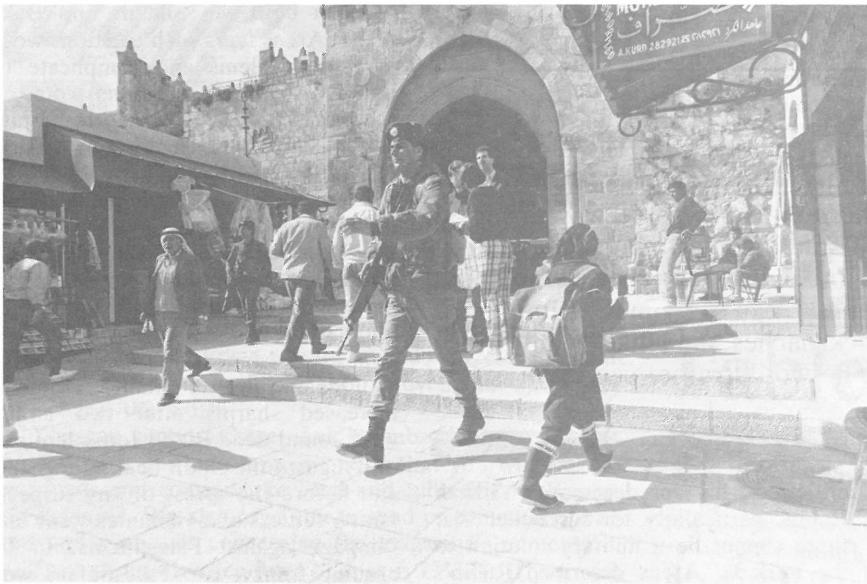
criticized his predecessor, Yitzhak Rabin, particularly for his belief that there cannot be a military solution to the intifada. Arens described Rabin's conclusion as «a fundamental mistake,» and added that «when such a solution becomes possible, we will implement it.»

Arens' strategy vis-a-vis the intifada is two-pronged. On the one hand, he is attempting to revive the Israeli policy of finding an alternative leadership in the occupied territories in a vain effort to exclude the PLO, thereby defeating the intifada politically. After finding «his men,» Arens proposes to conduct municipal elections instead of general elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as propo-

*Israeli patrol in Jerusalem's Old City*

-Tordai





-Tordai

racist violence against Palestinians was followed by a massive arrest campaign in scores of Palestinian cities, villages and camps throughout the occupied territories, in addition to the imposition of curfews on many localities.

### UNL positions

The United National Leadership of the intifada(UNL) expressed its deep concern after the formation of the new Israeli government. In its call no. 59, issued July 1st, the UNL declared that: «The intifada has now entered one of its most critical and dangerous stages...A stage in which the enemy has unveiled its true fascist and racist face.» The call urged the Palestinian masses not to be daunted: «Israeli extremism, the escalation of repression and their adamant refusal to make peace should not lead us to think that we have reached a dead-end. It should enhance our confidence in the correctness and effectiveness of the intifada.»

In call no. 60, issued July 30th, the UNL lauded the stand of the European Community and their continued economic cooperation with the Palestinian people, as well as the decision to send a permanent observer to the occupied territories. The European Parliament passed a resolution in mid-June, condemning Israeli repression in the occupied territories, and calling for an international inquiry into the abuses of Palestinian human rights. In addition, the heads of EC governments meeting in Dublin passed another resolution, calling for the protection of Palestinians, and an end to Israeli set-

tlement of the 1967 occupied territories, including East Jerusalem. Also in call no. 60, the UNL denounced the US position and «its total bias towards Israel which was rewarded with the unilateral suspension of the US-PLO dialogue.» The UNL, for the first time since the beginning of the intifada, condemned the Egyptian regime outright, calling it

*ID check, occupied Palestine*

a puppet of the US administration. Mubarak was accused of attempting to institute the Camp David accords throughout the area.

Also on the international scene, Israel's ambassador to Spain, Shlomo Ben Gali, reported that relations between Israel and most of the European countries are deteriorating. Ben Gali added that in the case of those countries with which Israel enjoys very close relationships, like West Germany, Holland and Denmark, a change in popular opinion is taking place in favor of self-determination for Palestinians, and the need for including the PLO in the peace process(*Haaretz*, June 8th).

In the aftermath of the US military intervention in the Middle East, Palestinians, like the masses throughout the Arab world, demonstrated against the US's aggression and bullying of Iraq. Demonstrations took place throughout the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Golan Heights, while fear of an Israeli attack against Jordan was prevalent. Such an attack would facilitate the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, an act which would be in line with the strategy of the new Israeli government. ●



# Health Care during the Intifada

by Itimad Musa

Among the images the Palestinian intifada has evoked, some of the more vivid show the injuries inflicted by the occupation forces: a nine-month-old baby girl stares blankly ahead with one eye, the other lost to a rubber bullet fired by an Israeli soldier; a bruised and bandaged young man beaten by troops raises two broken arms set in casts to make double victory signs. The struggle to tend the wounded, fight disease and malnutrition in communities frequently besieged and under curfew and, in general, raising and maintaining a healthy population is at the essence of the Palestinian struggle today. With the uprising well on the way to marking its third year, the protracted struggle is emphasizing the importance of issues like health care as vital battlegrounds which will affect the continuation of the intifada, and, beyond that, the future independent Palestinian state.

## Historic battleground

From the beginning of the 1967 occupation, the Israeli authorities have targeted the health care infrastructure in their effort to create a dependent, submissive population. Meanwhile, the accompanying official propaganda about the health care situation in the occupied territories has lauded the «improved health» of the population, presumably as a result of the «enlightened occupation.» But reality tells another story. According to the Popular Committees for Health Services, one of the grass-roots medical committees operating in the occupied territories, several constraints and practices in force since 1967 have hindered the development of the health sector. These include the decline in the number of functional hospitals due to their being closed by the Israeli authorities or converted into detention centers. Coupled with this, prohibiting the expansion of existing hospitals and blocking the construction of new ones has led to a decrease in the ratio of hospital beds per population since 1967 from 1.9 to 1.2 per 1,000. In addition, medical equipment, supplies, work permits and training for health professionals have been consistently blocked by the authorities, creating a situation where even existing facilities are poorly equipped and under-staffed. While the cost of medical services has risen, Israel's expenditure on health services has dropped.

Major negative impact on the health of the occupied population comes as a result of nefarious negligence on the part of the authorities vis-a-vis the environment. Poor sanitation and contaminated water supplies are endemic in the occupied territories, such that leading causes of death among Palestinian children include diarrhea, intestinal and respiratory diseases. Clearly, creating a situation of deteriorating health conditions is part of the Israeli policy of encouraging «voluntary transfer» when Palestinians «choose» to emigrate because living conditions are unbearable.

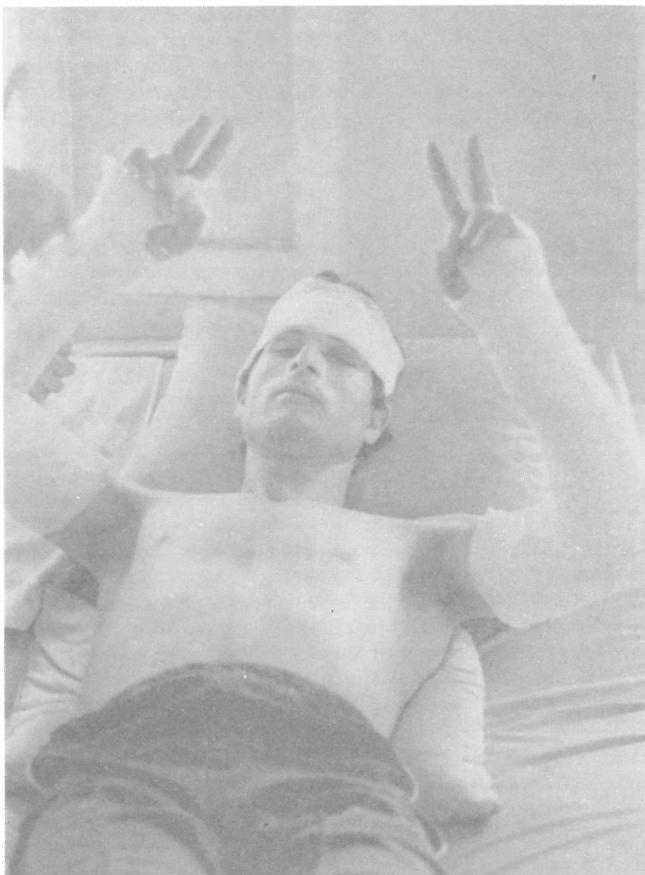
The fight for Palestinian health care is as old as the occupation itself. But the intifada has heightened the stakes in all areas as the embattled population attempts to deal

with its grave medical needs, while asserting its control over this important aspect of life.

Among the major findings of the report issued during the first year of the uprising by the America-based organization Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) were the following two conclusions: 1.) The medical care system in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, of marginal adequacy to begin with, is being overwhelmed by the daily burden of serious trauma. It lacks the resources to deal with injury on this scale and is less and less able to meet the ordinary medical care needs of the population it serves, and 2.) The violence is not only producing injuries with serious short-term consequences. It is steadily creating a cohort of patients with serious long-term orthopedic, neurological and neuropsychiatric injuries. These patients will require prolonged physical and psychological rehabilitation, on a scale which massively outstrips presently available resources and facilities. These findings delineate at least two important issues facing health care workers in the occupied territories: how to respond to the serious medical situation resulting from Israel's attempts to crush the intifada, and what strategies need to be formulated so that Palestinians can look forward to a healthy future.

*A young Palestinian, whose arms were broken by Israeli soldiers, in his hospital bed.*

-Judith Gabriel



## Obstruction of health care

Violations of medical human rights are commonplace in the occupied territories. Medical sanctuary does not exist for the Palestinians, whose hospitals and clinics are frequently raided by soldiers who arrest wounded from their beds. Medical personnel and patients alike are targets of violence in these raids. Troops have beaten doctors and nurses, and in at least one case which occurred on the grounds of Shifa Hospital in Gaza in December 1987, shot dead two Palestinians. Medical equipment has been damaged or destroyed so as to endanger Palestinian lives. Soldiers have even ripped out intravenous drips from patients' arms. As well, ambulances are frequently denied access to the wounded or stopped and searched while transporting them. Such delays have resulted in several Palestinians bleeding to death before reaching hospital. Troops have comandeered ambulances at gunpoint and used them as decoys to enter Palestinian communities to make arrests.

Thousands of Palestinians have been arrested during the uprising and held in Israeli prisons and detention centers where they are routinely denied proper health care. As a result, several prisoners have died after being denied proper medical treatment. One woman administrative detainee from Gaza, Tahani Abu Daqqa, miscarried her baby after being denied medical care when she started hemorrhaging in Ramle prison. When she first asked for treatment, the prison nurse «advised» her to have an abortion, as she was going to lose the baby «anyway.» Tahani refused and was

*Huda Munir, nine months, from Jabalya refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, lost her eye to a rubber bullet.*

-Rick Reinhard



left bleeding on her cell floor. She was eventually taken to hospital where she miscarried her baby.

As well, medical care is severely disrupted during the frequent and prolonged curfews of Palestinian camps and villages. Often health teams are denied entry under curfew. Clinics, if allowed to open, remain empty because the population cannot leave their homes to attend them. Such curfews interfere with care for people with injuries, but also for those with chronic illnesses. Immunization programs have been seriously disrupted, as has prenatal care. Pregnant women are further affected if they go into labor under curfew. There have been reported cases of women being forced to sneak on foot into clinics to give birth to their babies.

Actions taken against medical personnel by the occupation authorities are varied and numerous. Doctors have been barred from their work in villages, refugee camps and hospitals and even punished for performing their medical duties. In one instance, a doctor from a refugee camp in Gaza was beaten by soldiers, tied to the hood of their jeep and driven around the camp after treating a sick child who came to his house under curfew. Physicians trying to reach health centers and hospitals have had their cars stopped and searched, often being humiliated and beaten in the process. It is difficult to know the exact number of medical professionals who have been arrested during the uprising, but conservative estimates range in the dozens, most of whom are held without charge or trial in administrative detention.

Israeli officials have also instituted cutbacks and made medical care more financially inaccessible to the Palestinian community as part of this front against the intifada. In July 1988, the military authorities issued new hospitalization regulations making three days advance payment mandatory for Palestinians upon admission. The cost per night in hospital is about \$150 - an amount which exceeds the monthly income of a large sector of the population. Accompanying this was the cancellation of all health development projects, a 20 percent health care personnel reduction and a two-thirds cut in the number of hospital days allocated for Palestinians in better-equipped Israeli hospitals. With these new measures, the occupation authorities announced unequivocally their intention to use medical care as a weapon against Palestinians in the occupied territories.

## «Epidemic of violence»

«There is an essentially uncontrolled epidemic of violence by soldiers and police in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, on a scale and degree of severity that poses the most serious medical, ethical and legal problems.» This was the first conclusion reached by the PHR delegation after their visit to the occupied territories during the intifada. Then Defense Minister Rabin's infamous statement about using «force, might, beatings» to crush the uprising only made public what had been known to the Palestinians for some time: the policy of the occupation forces is to indiscriminately inflict maximum damage on the population. It has been conservatively estimated that tens of thousands of Palestinians have been injured during the uprising, and about one thousand killed. The number of those injured is particularly under-reported as, fearing arrest, many of the injured do not seek care at formal medical sites.

Methods of violence employed against the civilian population include live ammunition (including plastic bullets), rubber bullets, plastic-covered metal bullets, beating, tear gas and burns. The particular means of violence used by the occupation forces pose severe, problematic medical



«Tear gas» cannisters and rubber bullets

consequences, in addition to the problems already mentioned. The use of high-velocity bullets is a case in point. These bullets essentially explode inside the body, scattering fragments which extensively damage bones, internal organs, nerves, muscle tissue, blood vessels and the spinal cord. The PHR delegation reported that 30 percent of the gunshot injuries over one day old that they saw in hospitals «had resulted in serious long-term or permanent loss of leg function...most of them will never walk again.»

Although tens of Palestinians have died from beatings, the beating policy of the army is systematically designed to inflict maximum damage while reducing the risk of death. A physically or mentally crippled Palestinian is much less likely to receive image-damaging international media attention than a martyr, yet the negative impact on the community is as great, if not greater. Reports from the occupied territories tell of soldiers first ascertaining if their victim is left or right-handed and then proceeding, at the least, to break that limb in a way so systematic as to indicate «training» in the most effective bone-breaking technique. Indeed, the PHR report noted that virtually all the hand and arm fractures they saw were on the dominant side. The beatings meted out in Gaza are particularly brutal, with the resulting injuries being generally more serious and extensive than in the West Bank. Remarking on their observations in Gaza, PHR wrote that «the word *beating* does not properly convey the literal pounding and mauling with clubs and other weapons required to produce the injuries we saw.» That Gaza, whose largely refugee population is concentrated in camps particularly vulnerable to army violence, can be and is frequently closed-off to the media by the authorities is, at least in part, the probable explanation for this.

Whatever the cause of the injuries, the long-term effects are the same on a community whose medical resources are totally inadequate to deal with injuries needing such extensive physical and psychological rehabilitation.

Rubber bullets - actually metal slugs encased in hard rubber - have been largely responsible for the extensive eye injuries and actual loss of eyes suffered by many Palestinians. The deliberate misuse by soldiers of this supposedly non-lethal means of «crowd control» has resulted in the death of at least six Palestinians, four of whom were children aged ten or younger. They died after suffering severe head injuries caused by rubber bullets fired at close range.

Tear gas, another deliberately misused means of «riot control,» has caused at least 88 deaths during the uprising, according to the Palestine Human Rights Information Center report of June. Indeed, «tear gas» is a misnomer for

the toxic gases being used against the Palestinian population with such devastating consequences. Physicians for Human Rights, which studied the massive use of tear gas against demonstrators by the South Korean government in 1987, stated that tear gases should more properly be called «poisonous gases» and should be «banned from further use against human populations everywhere» (reported in MERIP, May-June 1988). CS gas, which is used extensively by the Israeli forces, is more potent and has longer-lasting effects than the other gas - called CN - known to be used in the occupied territories. These gases are potentially lethal in high concentrations and when used in enclosed places. Infants, children, the elderly and those with respiratory and heart disease are particularly vulnerable to the effects of these gases.

Occupation forces routinely throw tear gas into homes, schools, shops, clinics, hospitals and mosques. It sticks to clothing, walls, furniture and carpeting and will remain there for days, contaminating food supplies that can unknowingly be ingested. Apart from the immediate injury these gases cause, the long-term effects of them are not known, including whether or not they are carcinogenic.

In addition to these 88 deaths, hundreds of women have miscarried their babies after being exposed to tear gas. The problem is particularly acute in the crowded refugee camps of the Gaza Strip, where the Popular Committees for Health Services report 630 women having miscarried after exposure to tear gas in the first 14 months alone of the uprising.

Although it is not known exactly how tear gas causes death, medical experts suggest that the resulting oxygen deprivation and the gas's effect on blood circulation are the reasons. The breakdown of the gas's chemicals in the bloodstream into a toxic substance like cyanide is also suspected in causing tear gas-related deaths. In addition, serious injuries have been caused by soldiers firing the metal gas canisters from rifles directly at people from close range, including into their faces. The Israelis have not attributed a single death to tear gas, although the few post-mortems performed by the authorities on tear gas victims list the cause of death as, to give a few examples, heart attack, pneumonia or respiratory failure, without taking into consideration the circumstances of death (Ben Alofs, *More Than Tear Gas: Harassing Agents and Their Use in the Occupied Territories*, 1988, p. 43). It is interesting that the military authorities have forbidden Gaza medical staff to list tear gas inhalation as the cause of death on a child's death certificate.

As well, the Israeli authorities refuse to disclose information about the composition and toxicity of the tear gas being used, although this would be quite helpful in providing proper medical treatment. Even physicians inquiring about this at the Poison Control Center in Haifa were told that such information was unavailable or «classified.»

There is evidence that Israel is using other more toxic chemicals against the Palestinian population. Ben Alofs reported that a doctor at Moqassed Hospital in Jerusalem described the effects of a different gas as causing problems to the nervous system. Also, UNRWA's director of health, John Hiddlestone, reported that Israeli troops were using highly toxic new gases against Palestinians; one kind causes severe abdominal pain and another immobilized its victims by weakening the muscles upon inhalation. He also described an incident in which two Palestinians were beaten and put in a room where Israeli soldiers had sprayed an aerosol. «The room was then shut and after an hour or so

two dead bodies were removed.» Samples of the spray, which formed a reddish powder on the walls of the room, were sent to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) for analysis. Hiddlestone thought the agent was «a sort of nerve gas» (quoted in Alofs, op. cit., p. 45).

Israel's indiscriminate use of these various poisonous gases against the Palestinian population in the occupied territories is a form of chemical warfare. Indeed, Ben Alofs maintains that, «The criminal use of harassing agents, being essentially chemical warfare agents, is a violation of the Geneva Conventions and the Protocol of Geneva on chemical warfare. As such, public or state prosecutors in charge of prosecuting war crimes should investigate whether there is sufficient ground to file charges against Israeli military personnel who are directly responsible, and against the authorities who have political responsibility...» (Alofs, op. cit., p. 51).

Injury that is much more difficult to quantify and analyze is the psychological effect of Israeli violence on the Palestinian population. There is hardly a family in the occupied territories that has been left untouched by the violence in one form or another. At the beginning of the intifada, a Gazan psychologist reported a substantial decrease in cases of anxiety and depression, and related this to the new feelings of empowerment brought by the uprising. But as the brutality of the occupation forces has increased with time, the psychological toll is being felt among the population, particularly children.

PHR reported that such violence derails normal adolescent development, «already distorted by profound feelings of futurelessness, by the prospect of menial employment, even for the highly educated, and by a sense of loss of national identity.» The closing of schools has massively interfered with necessary education and job training, thus making future prospects for thousands of Palestinians even more bleak. When the time comes, readjusting to «normal» life - one without pitched street battles with soldiers, detention and curfews - will certainly prove difficult for many.

For the thousands of small children whose parents are unable to protect them and who have repeatedly witnessed scenes of violence, often against their own family members, the consequences may be profound and long-term, according to PHR. «[They] are at risk of chronic anxiety and irritability, childhood depression, sleeplessness and nightmares, and disturbances of maturation.» The consequences for chil-

dren who have been direct victims of this violence are even more disturbing. PHR maintains that for the children who are witnessing or directly experiencing this violence, «there can be lifelong effects, distorting the perceptions of a whole generation, with consequences not only for their own lives but for the political future and the lives of a next generation as well.» This point was vividly illustrated in a vignette relayed by a West Bank Palestinian to a group of peacenik Israelis: «While walking with my two-year-old son, an army jeep slowly drove past and a soldier in the back began staring at us. I noticed that my son was staring directly back at the soldier, not blinking even for an instant. After a few moments of this, the soldier became visibly nervous and fidgety as my son continued to stare at him. The soldier suddenly burst out singing - whether to distract himself or my son, I'm not sure. You all had better make peace with me now before you're forced to make peace with my son later.»

Negative effects notwithstanding, clearly the Palestinians are willing to suffer the consequences of Israeli violence to achieve their political goals. Indeed, the psychological consequences of giving up and reverting back to the situation under occupation before the intifada would be far more intolerable.

### The international response

Several international organizations have responded to the medical crisis in the occupied territories, including UNRWA, the ICRC and Amnesty International (AI). The responses have ranged from detailed reports condemning the extensive use of force and misuse of tear gas by the Israeli army issued by AI, to direct material aid. The latter has included the transfer of ambulances to the Palestinian Red Crescent by the ICRC and proposed support by UNRWA for an extension of Al Ahli Hospital in Gaza. Most recently, the European Community announced in July that it was contributing \$2.3 million for physiotherapy, basic health care and to train medical staff in the occupied territories. Material aid in this form meets rather than by-passes the commitment to self-reliance that is at the heart of the intifada by supporting existing Palestinian institutions.

UNRWA, in addition, has taken steps to transform its medical services - normally geared towards out-patient and mother-and-child care - to deal with the thousands of seriously injured casualties of the uprising. Clinic hours have been extended, extra medical personnel hired, medical

A Palestinian Red Crescent team in the West Bank

-George Azar



transport services strengthened and additional funds for hospitalization provided. Physiotherapy clinics were opened to help the wounded regain the use of their limbs. UNRWA has also provided local hospitals with specialized medical equipment to treat severe fractures and eye injuries.

Perhaps the most significant response has been the formation of a new organization called The Association of Israeli and Palestinian Physicians (AIPP). The association was formed in March 1988 «in response to deteriorating medical conditions and violations of human rights in the West Bank and Gaza Strip,» according to an official statement released by the group. The association's founding conference was attended by over 100 Israeli and dozens of Palestinian physicians. The AIPP focuses on assisting Palestinian medical personnel who have been subject to harassment, administrative detention and expulsion, fighting cutbacks in medical care to the occupied territories, collecting funds for medical care and medication and monitoring and documenting medical care and rights violations in Israel and the occupied territories. The group's advocacy work is based on the fact that the occupation authorities have been impeding medical care as a tool of political pressure, and as a means of individual and collective punishment. The political stand of the AIPP supports a two-state solution. Such efforts, if developed in the correct political direction, can have a positive impact beyond health care in the occupied territories.

Despite these efforts, the Israeli authorities have done what they can to keep international organizations from addressing the health needs of the occupied population. This is part of their wider policy of isolating the territories from world view to have a free hand, and keeping the population dependent on the occupation infrastructure. Thus, for example, funding to medical organizations is restricted to «approved» sources, training courses by international medical experts have been forbidden, medical professionals have been prohibited from attending international conferences and, perhaps most significantly, the authorities have yet to allow a World Health Organization (WHO) delegation into the occupied territories to investigate health conditions. In addition, the US, encouraged by Israel, has blocked the State of Palestine from being admitted to the WHO.

### **The Palestinian response**

The right to health care and who controls it has always been part of the Palestinian struggle. For a displaced refugee population or a community for whom every aspect of life is controlled by a military occupier, health care takes on a significance far beyond maintaining physical well-being: it becomes an arena for mobilization to achieve radical social and political change. In recognition of this fact, progressive forces in the occupied territories began forming medical committees in the 1980s to serve Palestinian communities. These committees have concentrated their efforts in villages and refugee camps in order to serve the poorer sector of the occupied territories. The grass-roots nature of this movement and the popular response to it certainly influenced the way the population was mobilized during the intifada. In turn, the mass-based character of the uprising has served as an impetus for further development of these popular health care committees as they strive to respond to the great medical needs of the population, as well as create and strengthen independent Palestinian structures in the field of health care.

The work of the two main committees operating in the territories - the Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Com-

mittees and the Popular Committees for Health Services - was originally concentrated in preventive, curative and health education programs. First operating from mobile clinics, the committees later began establishing permanent clinics in addition. Notably, women have had leading roles in these committees, both as medical professionals volunteering their skills, and as part of the grass-roots women's committees who help organize the health education programs and mobile clinics.

Since the outbreak of the intifada, the committees have revised their work to deal with the emergency and trauma care demands of the Palestinian population, while continuing to build an autonomous health care structure. For example, after witnessing hundreds of people flock to hospitals to donate blood on days when there were heavy gunshot injuries, the committees organized blood typing and screening projects to facilitate long-term blood donation. As well, first aid instructions in dealing with fractures, the effects of tear gas and controlling bleeding have been added to the health education syllabus.

Predictably, the occupation authorities have continuously attempted to thwart the committees' work, especially during the intifada. Although the committees are legally established organizations, the authorities' stance towards them does not reflect this. Medical professionals working with these committees have been put in administrative detention, had travel restrictions imposed on them and had their private clinics closed down with a warning to cease all voluntary work. Clearly, these attacks are part of the authorities' attempts to crush the intifada and force dependency on the occupation, thereby controlling the population. They are well aware that the committees are an important part of the Palestinians taking control of their own lives and building the infrastructure of their state.

### **Eyewitness to popular health care**

At the beginning of the intifada, I had the opportunity to observe one of the mobile clinics of the Popular Committees for Health Services in the West Bank. A several-days-long curfew on Jalazon refugee camp near Ramallah had just been lifted, and the five-person medical team would be providing the first health care services in the camp for days. As we approached the camp in the late February afternoon, everyone in the car tensed as we spotted an army roadblock near the surrounding Jewish settlement. If they searched the car and found the «contraband» we were carrying - the trunk-load of medical supplies - how would they react? Luckily, after a cursory identity card check, the soldier waved us through. As the car wended through the narrow streets of the camp, more and more people appeared in doorways and on the street, obviously curious as to who the carload of strangers were. As we got out of the car and began unloading the supplies, someone announced over the loudspeaker of the camp's mosque that the medical committee had arrived, and anyone wishing medical attention should go to a certain house.

We were led into a small camp dwelling and served sweet warm tea by a woman with an equally warm smile. Soon the small children of the household began peeping around corners, checking out the unexpected guests and giggling when we caught their eye. The doctor heading the medical team disappeared with a young man, and upon his return we were taken to another house whose two main rooms had been emptied, except for a few tables and chairs and a bed. The entry room would be the «reception area» and the adjoining one would serve as the examination and ►

treatment room. We quickly set up the supplies and in minutes someone's home was converted into a mini-clinic. Soon patients began arriving, first in a trickle, then in a stream and eventually a flood of people crowded the tiny room and overflowed out the door and down the narrow street. As evening fell, the tension in the reception room visibly rose as camp residents, fearful of not being treated and not knowing when they'd have another chance to be, began arguing among themselves for places in line. More than once the head doctor emerged from the examination room to reassure those waiting that everyone would be treated. As I observed the chaotic but heartening scene around me - crying babies with runny noses, old women complaining of a litany of ailments to anyone who'd listen, nervous mothers clutching their bruised and bandaged children and jittery *shabab* chain-smoking as they peered out the door watching for soldiers - I noticed above the door a portrait from perhaps the last century. A distinguished-looking man dressed in traditional Palestinian garb, gazed out onto the room with a stern but proud face. Most certainly he was the ancestral patriarch of the family whose house-cum-clinic we were using. I wondered what he would have to say about the scene before him.

Near the end of the evening, a young man I hadn't seen around suddenly appeared and asked to see the doctor. He was taken into the examining room and a few moments later re-emerged with the head doctor who was carrying his medical bag. The remaining medical team continued to see the few patients who were still waiting, as he went to tend a gunshot victim who hadn't risked going to hospital and could not make it to the clinic.

Jalazon refugee camp, West Bank



When the doctor returned, we packed up what supplies remained and were served hot Arabic coffee. As we sat around sipping the coffee, the room fell silent, the tired medical team looking understandably dazed: in just over two hours they had seen about 125 patients. After loading the supplies into the cars outside, we looked out onto the camp and were startled by what we saw: several small fires shimmered in the night, dotting the surrounding area in every direction. We quickly got into the cars and began driving towards the camp's main entrance. As we did so, on several occasions *shebab* removed barricades that had been newly erected so we could pass. Around the fires, men and women of all ages stood talking and watching. We could see young boys gathering stones, sticks, cinderblocks and pieces of metal - anything that could be used to defend the camp against soldiers and settlers who frequently attacked the camp. Jalazon was preparing for another night of the intifada.

On the road leading back to Ramallah, at almost the same spot where the roadblock had been earlier in the day, we came across a convoy of army jeeps and settlers' cars speeding towards where we had just come from.

The fight for proper medical care and its administration in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip has essentially just begun. Yet in the face of often brutal measures taken by the occupation authorities, the Palestinian community, with the appropriate help of international organizations, is continuing its struggle to maintain a physically and mentally healthy population. These efforts are inextricably linked with the intifada, and together they are building a healthy future in Palestine. ●

# Interview with Raja Aghbariya

## «We must fight - we have no choice.»

This interview with Raja Aghbariya, secretary-general of *Abna Al Balad*, was conducted in June by DP staff member Itimad Musa in London, where he was participating in the Return group's conference (see DP no. 39). In it, Mr. Aghbariya speaks honestly about the failures and achievements of *Abna Al Balad*, its conflicts with the PLO, the intifada and the future of his organization and the Palestinians inside the 1948 occupied territories.



### When was *Abna Al Balad* founded and why?

Some youths from Um Al Fahm and two or three persons that came from *Al Ard* movement, which had been banned in 1965, began to try to do something after the 1967 war. All the Arabs were shocked. All the time they had been waiting for the Arab countries to liberate them from the Israelis and Zionism. Then in six days something terrible had happened: all the Palestinian land, all the Palestinian people were under occupation. The Palestinians inside Israel had lived under an Israeli military regime until 1965, and two years after that the authorities transferred all the occupation infrastructure to the West Bank and Gaza Strip. So these youth - some Arab nationalists, some Trotskyists, some from the Communist Party - were looking for a new way to express their Palestinian identity and their rejection of the new situation. They knew very well the experience of *Al Ard* movement - which was a Nasserite Arab nationalist organization that had been banned by the Israelis because it didn't recognize the Israeli state. So they began to think of how to create a local organization in Um Al Fahm. Actually, they called it *Abna Al Balad* because the name has two meanings. On the one hand, it means «the sons of the village,» but the real translation is «the sons of the country.» They played with the name because they were afraid of what the authorities' reaction might be to anything other than a local organization.

They began by putting forth a list of candidates in the 1972 local council elections. They succeeded in winning one seat in 1972, and many people began joining at that time because it was a local organization. They raised two slogans: the one against the clan system of representation in the local council, where candidate lists represented families and not political organizations, and the other against the parties that were active in Um Al Fahm. *Abna Al Balad* did not want to operate as a political party. They opened a club after their success in the council and began giving lectures, publishing platforms and leaflets about every subject, slowly beginning to speak about politics.

When the PLO began to say that it represented all the Palestinian people, uniting them politically, this affected the situation inside the green line. Later in 1975, *Abna Al Balad* began saying that the Palestinians inside the green line are an integral part of the Palestinian people and not an integral part of the Israeli people, which is what the Communist Party and all the other Zionist parties had been saying. So this stand is what set *Abna Al Balad* apart at the beginning. *Abna Al Balad* began moving into other villages and the universities, and became very strong after Land Day in 1976 - the first big strike by all Arabs inside the green line. I was a member of *Abna Al Balad* by then, having been active in university and joining the movement in 1975. We published our first national leaflet about Land Day in 1976. I think that was the day *Abna Al Balad* changed from a local to a national movement. After that, the PLO and the Palestinian revolution began to be strong, and all the Palestinian people became infused with a national soul. *Abna Al Balad* was also affected by this and became an organization that represented this soul.

We worked without a political program until 1978. Until then we had positions, but no ideological program. We began to think about a program in 1978 after we succeeded in three out of four universities in winning the leadership of the majority of Arab students. But at that time *Abna Al Balad* wasn't really united and organized. Everybody thought that if you are a Palestinian and believe the PLO represents you, then you are *Abna Al Balad*. When we began to discuss this, we discovered tragic differences between the various positions, especially in Um Al Fahm because that's where *Abna Al Balad* was founded. We succeeded in 1978 to write a primary program, but the differences remained as to whether or not we wanted to form a party and participate in the Israeli elections to the Knesset, and if we are an integral part of the Palestinian-Arab national arena against Zionism. We split in 1983 in Um Al Fahm, because that is where the biggest branch was. The split was over whether or not to take part in Knesset elections, with the other side supporting the Progressive List for Peace (PLP).

### Why did *Abna Al Balad* oppose participating in Knesset elections?

We don't think that we can solve the class and national question from the Knesset. We know that this is a difficult position to explain to the people who have regularly participated in elections. Arabs have, in the past, voted in larger numbers than Jews in Knesset elections. The position of the PLO has also encouraged more people to vote. But what has happened in the past two months with Peres validated our long-held position that this state is racist. As this is a Jewish and Zionist state, we are not, we cannot and they don't want us to be considered as part of the regime in Israel. The last two months Peres hasn't succeeded

in forming a government because there are six Arab members of the Knesset who wanted to vote for him, but all the extreme right-wing parties refused to vote for him if he accepted the support of the Arab members. So what does this mean? You can go to the Knesset if you recognize that Israel is a state for the Jewish people, and you are an outsider. What, then, is the purpose of going to the Knesset? There is no strong democratic non-Zionist party with whom we could possibly form a coalition to establish a new, progressive regime in Israel. That is impossible now. All of them, excepting the Arab members, are Zionists and can form a coalition against us. So, our position in the Knesset is not important. After what happened with the Arab Knesset members wanting to support Peres and the right wing refusing this, a conference was held in Nazareth in which the Arab Knesset members were shouting, after 42 years: This is outrageous! It's political transfer for the Arabs! We replied: Good morning! We've been saying this for 15 years!

From the Palestinian perspective, we think *Abna Al Balad* represents a new thing inside the green line. We represent the strategic solution to the Palestinian question for the Arabs and Jews in Palestine. We are building a national organization for Jews and Arabs to implement this strategic solution, because the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip only solves the problem of the Palestinians in those areas, who make up just 40 percent of all the Palestinian people. What about the refugees?

What are the other main points of *Abna Al Balad*'s program?

The other thing that is important for us is that if we are struggling for national liberation, we also want democracy. We are not against Jews. We are suggesting a democratic secular state for the Arabs and Jews in Palestine. Also, we are socialist. We have been speaking about Marxism-Leninism for the last ten years, which is another point some of the founders of *Abna Al Balad* who left the organization didn't agree with. After they left, we began to build a new *Abna Al Balad* and have been continuing to do so for the past five years.

## What kind of activities do you organize?

Our activities are organized to respond to the objective situation we live in. Therefore, our efforts are concentrated on popular political struggle. We organize strikes and demonstrations. We push for all forces to engage in more militant political struggle than the Communist Party and others have been

organizing. The important thing is the positions we have been representing through unified action. For example, on Land Day the supporters of *Abna Al Balad* raised the Palestinian flag. This means a lot; this is smashing all the other programs that talk about two nations and two states. This is the deep importance of *Abna Al Balad*. We need organizations like *Abna Al Balad* to represent this position, to say to everybody - to the PLO leadership and to the Israelis - that we're an integral part of the Palestinian problem. And without solving *all* the Palestinian problem, there will not be real peace. Peace means a just peace in all Palestine. You won't find another progressive program like *Abna Al Balad*'s inside the green line. During the past few years, all the anti-Zionist Jewish groups have been coordinating with us. This is possible because *Abna Al Balad* is not an Arab nationalist organization; it is for Jews and Arabs alike.

Which anti-Zionist organizations are coordinating with you?

The Trotskyists, for example. All the persons that were in the *Tariq Al Sharara* organization, Matzpen-Tel Aviv. Matzpen-Jerusalem (all three are leftist Israeli organizations) and anti-Zionist individuals. Uri Davis, for example, is not a Marxist but he and some persons like him also coordinate with *Abna Al Balad*. There is no other organization to struggle with them. The Jews in the Communist Party are not anti-Zionist. Now we are having coordinating meetings between *Abna Al Balad* and Matzpen Trotskyists to establish a secular democratic front. We will publish a magazine in Arabic and Hebrew to raise this issue and let people know that there is a strategic alternative.

How did the masses respond to *Abna Al Balad* when it was formed, and how has this response changed over the years?

At the beginning, the response was similar to that to the Palestinian revolution. The masses looked to us as representing the PLO, all the PLO. But many people are afraid to join *Abna Al Balad* because the authorities have jailed our members. About forty active comrades, including myself, were under house arrest for four years without trial. They have prevented us from working or fired us, and have kept us from entering university. We've been suffering and struggling under very difficult circumstances. Other forces besides the authorities are against us as well, like our parents.

*Heads of the Arab local councils at Land Day meeting*



The ironic thing is that if you ask almost anybody what he believes, he will essentially respond with our program. Maybe he's not a socialist, but he wants all Palestine, he wants the refugees to return and he won't say he's against the Jews. Research conducted by a professor at Haifa University concluded that between 30 and 40 percent of the Palestinians inside Israel support the program of *Abna Al Balad*. As well, more than 60 percent of the Arab population inside the green line is under 18 years old. This is reflected in *Abna Al Balad*, the majority of whose members are youths. The future is ours. There have been no immediate results from our program, but if you look to the future you have to be very optimistic. But in the meantime something has happened: the position of the PLO changed. In the past we have supported the PLO's position, but now we're facing political problems with the PLO also, not only with the authorities and other forces inside Israel.

**What, then, is *Abna Al Balad*'s view of the last PNC, at which the PLO accepted UN resolutions 242 and 338 and recognized Israel's right to exist?**

We are against these positions, but the masses began to ask us: Are you more patriotic than Arafat? Before we've represented the positions of the PLO; now we are against them so we have a problem with the masses. When the people see that we're militant - raising the Palestinian flag in every demonstration, etc. - and that the other forces aren't doing anything, they appreciate our sacrifices and continue to respect our position. But they're still afraid to join us because we're suffering attacks from the authorities, firstly, but also because the masses see Abu Ammar as a symbol. They've criticized this position of ours. When the splits occurred in Fatah and the PLO after 1982, and after we strongly criticized Arafat for the Amman agreement (with the Jordanian regime), we lost mass support because people saw us as being against Arafat. But now we're consolidating our mass support in a clear political program. We are not afraid of what is going to happen now. We look towards the future.

The «interim solution» holds nothing for us, nor do the slogans of the intifada - liberation and independence. They speak of liberation and independence for the Palestinians on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and we're not an integral part of the intifada there. Not because they don't want us, but because objectively speaking we are not part of the intifada. So this kind of independence and liberation does not include us. Nevertheless, we are preparing ourselves for the future when the masses will discover that our position is the correct one. Anyway, a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza is now a dream after the formation in Israel of the right-wing government. Shamir and Sharon will agree to a Palestinian state? The whole situation now has changed and every organization must rethink its positions. Our program is the correct one until now, but that doesn't mean the people will join as members. We have organizational problems. Until now we've been able to organize all the people who agree with our program. We haven't cadres who can do this kind of organizing. As well, our financial situation is very bad.

**What repressive measures have the authorities taken against you personally and *Abna Al Balad* in general?**

I was under house arrest for a period amounting to four years during the years 1980 to 1987. I was put under administrative detention at the beginning of the intifada after the big «peace day» strike. Every year, after everything we did - demonstrations, raising flags, writing slogans on the walls - they would come to arrest me and some other comrades for some days. These short arrests - 15 days, 8 days, etc. - have become

part of our lives. Also, I lost my job as a teacher which I had held for 14 years. I was fired by military order while still in prison under administrative detention. It was a gift they presented to me on Land Day 1988.

**Why haven't they just banned *Abna Al Balad*?**

Branches of *Abna Al Balad* have been banned, like the one at Hebrew University. They took a decision in the Knesset to ban it and gave the defense minister the responsibility of carrying it out, but then the government collapsed and he couldn't. Now I guess they'll carry out the banning order. They threaten us all the time with this. I think they learned from the *Al Ard* experience that banning us will not help them. I told them in court that if you ban us, hundreds of youths from our organization will go underground with their activities, which will make them stronger. They don't want this. They want us to continue operating in the open so they can control us. Anyway, the objective situation is not ready for underground struggle. Until now, our only option is to remain legal. This is a balance that has been struck between us and them. Maybe eventually they will do it.

**What are the achievements of *Abna Al Balad*?**

Until now, our biggest achievement has probably been consolidating our program and fighting the authorities and paying the price to make *Abna Al Balad* legal. Don't think that it is an easy thing to say that we want a democratic secular state in Palestine. The authorities interpret this to mean that we want to destroy Israel. Our main achievement, I think, is represented by our statements and positions and the Palestinian flag we raise all the time in every strike and demonstration. We represent something different from all the other forces. We're swimming against the tide: we're against the majority inside the green line, the majority in the PLO, the authorities and Zionism. We're a small organization; don't think that we're thousands of comrades. But we're active like a big party, like the CP. Every place they're fighting we're fighting. We're represented in all the Arab committees inside the green line. We're an integral part of the leadership of the Arabs, and we're the opposition to all the forces there. We're continuing to struggle while waiting for better times. We have an interest in the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. We want to see if this state will help or be a big prison for all the Palestinian left.

**So you do support the establishment of a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza Strip.**

We think that this stage will then pass and other stages will begin. National and political achievements are connected to the refugees. What will happen with them? What will the leadership of the Palestinian people do with them? How will it solve their problem? If one million return to live inside the green line, imagine what will happen. We will immediately become two million inside Israel, and this will open other avenues of struggle. I believe in this; if I didn't, I wouldn't struggle. Why should I be pessimistic? But it is difficult. Nobody imagined this big Jewish immigration from the Soviet Union, not even the Israeli authorities. Everything has changed now.

**In the last local council elections, Islamic forces were successful. How did this happen?**

There are many reasons for it happening. First, there is an increase in the power of Islamic forces not only inside the green line, but also in the West Bank and Gaza. Sometimes Hamas has an equal balance of power with all the PLO factions in calling strikes. Also in Jordan, Egypt, Algeria and Iran they've gained strength. We're not alone; not exceptions in this; it's happened

all over the world. People are disillusioned. Look at what happened in the socialist countries; the situation has regressed much and there is no longer socialism in Eastern Europe. In the Soviet Union, thousands of people are turning to the Quran and the Church - turning to God. As for our Islamic forces, the Israelis dealt with them in the same way they dealt with Hamas - they turned a blind eye and let them receive money from Germany, America, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and even from the West Bank. They've built 13 mosques in Um Al Fahm in the last ten years. We are only 26,000 persons, but we have 13 mosques. One of them is four stories high, with each story being 500 meters square. It is a big center for sports, it has a library, health facilities and the mosque itself. We haven't a real club in Um Al Fahm, only a basement apartment that serves as one.

Also, we made very big mistakes in Um Al Fahm under the leadership of the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (DFPE). The man who had been mayor since 1972 belonged to the DFPE, and they made very many mistakes. As well, *Abna Al Balad*, during the past five years, was in a position that obliged us to support a coalition with the Communists. This was terrible; they didn't do anything in Um Al Fahm. We criticized them but the people didn't differentiate between us and them and they punished all of us. We failed in Um Al Fahm. This was a very big problem within *Abna Al Balad* that I discovered only after the election, I must say. They took 75 percent of the votes - it was a revolution. Fifty percent of the people who voted for the Islamic forces had supported the national and democratic forces - *Abna Al Balad*, *Ansar*, the CP, et. al. All of them shifted their support. They punished us because we made many mistakes.

### What were these mistakes?

We didn't do anything as a council. We didn't have projects. There was open sewage flowing through the streets all the time. The high schools were closed for three months by strikes because the teachers weren't being paid. The 15 primary schools didn't even have chalk. The situation was very bad. And the Islamic movement was giving money to the schools before they entered the council. They succeeded in controlling all the parents' committees in the schools. They were the leadership before the election; the election only formalized their position. But besides Um Al Fahm, they only succeeded in the small villages in the Triangle because there all of the population is Islamic and it is a very traditional society. In the Galilee, they succeeded to win six out of 18 seats in Nazareth. They didn't succeed in Kufr Kana or other places in the Galilee because there it is a mixed Christian-Muslim population, and they are less traditional than the Triangle.

### What are you doing in response to this?

We're not doing much locally, but they are making many mistakes. They promised the people everything - not to collect taxes, for example, and they must. They also promised not to collect interest on loans because this is forbidden by Islam, but the law obliges them to do so. It is very easy to be outside the council and to speak, then everything you say is correct. But when you are the regime, it is different. Now the people are beginning to reconsider, but they're still strong, I must say. They are new and the people understand this. They say to us: You did not do anything for ten years, so how can you criticize them so much, they've only been in power for one and a half years - wait. This leadership change has a strong connection with what happened and what will happen in the West Bank and Gaza. If there is no solution, no independent state and we stop struggling, then Hamas will be the major power in the West Bank and Gaza. And it will be a black day if this happens.

How does *Abna Al Balad* view the importance of the intifada and how do you support it?

Our analysis is that an intifada only in the West Bank and Gaza will not succeed without support from Palestinians living inside the green line, in Jordan and all the Arab world. But our situation is not objectively ready to make an intifada. This is a fact. But this doesn't mean people don't want to support the intifada politically. The strikes that we have organized show that the people are ready to do everything that the leadership of the Arabs inside Israel call for. When we asked the people to strike, they did and more. When the official leadership called for a peaceful strike, the people faced and fought Israeli police and soldiers on «peace day,» Land Day and during the last strike. It was like the intifada: people with their faces covered with *kufiyehs* throwing stones and raising flags. The people are willing, but they can't make an intifada because politically and economically we are not ready. We don't have a unified national leadership. We don't have a strong organization that wants to struggle more. We are pushing all the time for more struggle.

So you don't think that the intifada has crossed the green line.

There is not an intifada going on there; it is the beginning of what's going to happen in the future, no more. That doesn't mean I don't want it to happen - I really want this. But we don't have an organization that wants to do this, except *Abna Al Balad*, and we alone can't make an intifada; no group alone can make an intifada. Even if the CP wanted to, they couldn't do it alone. The people are always looking for unity; psychologically and politically it's correct, but we haven't the organizations that have the desire and are planning for this.

As well, the new government in Israel is an example of how the Jewish community in Israel is moving to the right. And the right wing is strong and very clear in its designs: they want to annex the West Bank and Gaza Strip to make a «big Israel.» And the so-called left wing - the left Zionist parties - are hesitant and afraid of the right wing, and they don't state clearly that they support self-determination for the Palestinians - a Palestinian state. Only about 25 Knesset members have agreed to speak with Arafat and support the idea of a Palestinian state. So you have about 95 members who are against the establishment of such a state and against negotiations with the PLO. With the new government, the coming days and months will be very dark. It's a very dangerous time. I think that now the Israeli government will increase its racist behavior against the Palestinians in Israel. Then you will not find left and right; you will not find *Abna Al Balad* on one side, and the head of the Local Arab Councils on the other. All of us must struggle together for our national rights against this racism. The Israelis are very stupid - they push us to struggle. The worse things get, the more people will struggle. For this reason, I feel optimistic about the future in the long term.

They will kill more Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, but I don't think our people there will stop the intifada - they will fight more. Previous to this crime in Rishon Letzion, the intifada was slowing down; but afterwards all of Israel said: Oh, the intifada has begun all over again. More killing only means more struggle against the occupation. I'm not afraid of people dying; we must pay the necessary price. We must fight - we have no choice.

### Correction

In DP no. 39 we mistakenly identified the village of Um Al Fahm as being in the Galilee. It is actually located in the Triangle. We regret this error.

# US-PLO Dialogue Suspended

The US decision on June 20th, to suspend the dialogue with the PLO, was expected and inevitable in view of Washington's arrogant stance from the beginning of the talks in December 1988. Still one should ask: Why did the US administration agree to talk to the PLO in the first place, and then suspend the dialogue after 18 months of unproductive meetings? To answer this question objectively it is not enough to listen to US officials' statements. Rather one must understand their practice which reveals their real intentions.

by Ahmad Halaweh

It is a fact that the intifada in the 1967 occupied territories had single-handedly restored the Palestinian cause to the top of the Middle East agenda. Its far-reaching achievements had enforced positive changes in international public opinion in favor of the Palestinian people and their legitimate struggle for their rights. It created a new situation on the Palestinian, Arab and international levels. The most important international victory for the intifada was imposing isolation on the position of both the Reagan Administration and Israel, in particular after PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat's historic speech at the special UN General Assembly session in 1988, which was convened in Geneva after the US denied him a visa to attend the session in New York. A few days later, the US administration backtracked: It decided to embark on a «substantive dialogue» with the PLO, having been forced into this decision by the worldwide support of the Palestinian peace initiative. The US found itself in a situation where it had no choice but to give up, at least temporarily, its previous refusal to talk to the PLO. The US ambassador to Tunisia, Robert Pelletreau, was entrusted to begin the talks.

Clearly, the decision to start the dialogue was made as a form of damage control, attempting to refurbish the US's image as a «peace broker» in the Middle East. It was basically a maneuver to avoid further isolation, allowing the US to embark on a new tactic for diverting international pressure away from itself and towards the PLO instead.

Thus, the talks were opened at a particular time to serve certain aims. Nonetheless, the US move was mistakenly viewed in diplomatic circles as paving the way for a breakthrough in the political deadlock in the Middle East. Such faulty views were based on

the belief that the US administration is serious about seeking a just solution to the crisis in the area, even though the US Secretary of State at the time, George Schultz, made it clear that talking to the PLO did not mean US recognition of the Palestinian right to an independent state which, in the US view, remained out of the question. The course of the talks served to confirm the US's hostile policy vis-a-vis the Palestinian people. It became obvious that the US was not serious in its intentions. Reviewing the dialogue from the first meeting in 1988 to the fourth and last one in 1989, a set of points emerges which, taken together, spell out the US's real intentions. These points can be summarized as follows:

1. The US administration dealt with the dialogue as a forum for presenting its own point of view concerning how the Middle East conflict should be settled, rather than engaging in dialogue in the real sense of the word. Accordingly, it was not interested in upgrading these talks above the ambassadorial level, but rather kept them in a framework that could not yield positive results. Meanwhile, Washington was pressuring the PLO via the Egyptian regime, using it as a mediator between the US and the PLO.

2. The US stand, as indicated by Ambassador Pelletreau, is that the Shamir plan is the only vehicle for resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. To attain progress in the «peace process,» the PLO was called upon to be more «pragmatic,» allegedly in order to convince the Israeli public that it was worthy of being a negotiating partner; otherwise Israel would not deal with the PLO at all. The US insisted on the PLO facing up to this «fact,» maintaining that it would not pursue any other than the Shamir plan.

3. The US's mechanism for achieving a settlement in the Middle

East is direct, bilateral negotiations, but on its own terms. Namely, the US and Israel must essentially hand-pick the Palestinian «negotiators,» refusing anyone named by the PLO. It views an international peace conference, at best, as no more than an introduction to direct negotiations between the Israeli government and selected Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The PLO should take this into consideration and not be an «obstacle» to the so-called peace process.

4. Meetings between Palestinians in the occupied territories and Israeli officials were considered by the US as being important for restoring «order and peace» in the area. Yet, many of these meetings took place because Palestinians were «invited» to them by military government officials, whose invitation was delivered by armed soldiers «requesting» their attendance.

The last demand presented by the US ambassador in the final meeting was that the PLO should agree to the above-mentioned points in order not to jeopardize the dialogue.

## The US objectives

From the above, it should be obvious that the Tunis meetings failed to touch on the heart of the matter, namely the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and independence. The fact is that the US cannot accept the Palestinian right to self-determination simply because this would mean an independent Palestinian state - rejected by Washington and Tel Aviv. Since opposition to Palestinian national rights is essential to the US's Middle East policy, why, then, did the administration continue the dialogue with the PLO for 18 months and what were its objectives? The answer is found in Pelletreau's statement after the second round of talks in Tunis, saying that the discussions focused on practical steps which could be taken to ease tension in the occupied territories and pave the way for direct negotiations. His statement confirmed that foremost among the US aims in the dialogue was pressuring the PLO to halt the intifada.

Another major US objective apparent from Pelletreau's statement is the attempt to create an alternative Palestinian leadership in the occupied territories, which the US and Israel could recognize in place of the PLO. This explains the US's insistence on the resumption of meetings between Palestinians in the occupied territories ►

and Israeli officials. This objective is closely tied to the first, namely to abort the intifada politically after the Israeli failure to quell it by military means. Thus, the PLO would be marginalized and the Palestinian people's unity and national identity dissipated.

Concerning the US insistence that the PLO adopt a «pragmatic» approach in order to be acceptable to Israel as a negotiating partner, this is actually a call for the PLO to commit political suicide. It is part of the blackmail designed to pressure the PLO into making more and more concessions, notably to stop its military struggle from across the borders against the Zionist occupation. Such legitimate Palestinian resistance is considered «terrorism» by the US. Meanwhile, nearly 1,000 Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli occupation forces during the intifada, and many thousands more injured, but the US administration has not seriously tried to pressure Israel to cease its constant, systematic violence and violation of Palestinian human rights.

In the end, the US administration suspended the dialogue on the pretext that the PLO continues to engage in «terrorism,» but the real question is the US's double standard when it comes to the legitimate rights of a people to resist occupation. In fact, what the US opposes is not terrorism, but progressive nationalist movements whose aims are genuine independence and utilizing the resources of their country to the benefit of their own people, rather than to the benefit of private American capital. This maxim is also one of the bases of US-Israeli strategic cooperation.

### The US-Israeli relationship

Upon the formation of the «Greater Israel» government, the US did express its displeasure at some of this government's policy. This occurred after the failure of the Baker plan, which was adamantly rejected by the new government even though it aimed to bolster Shamir's own plan and coincided with basic US-Israeli policy.

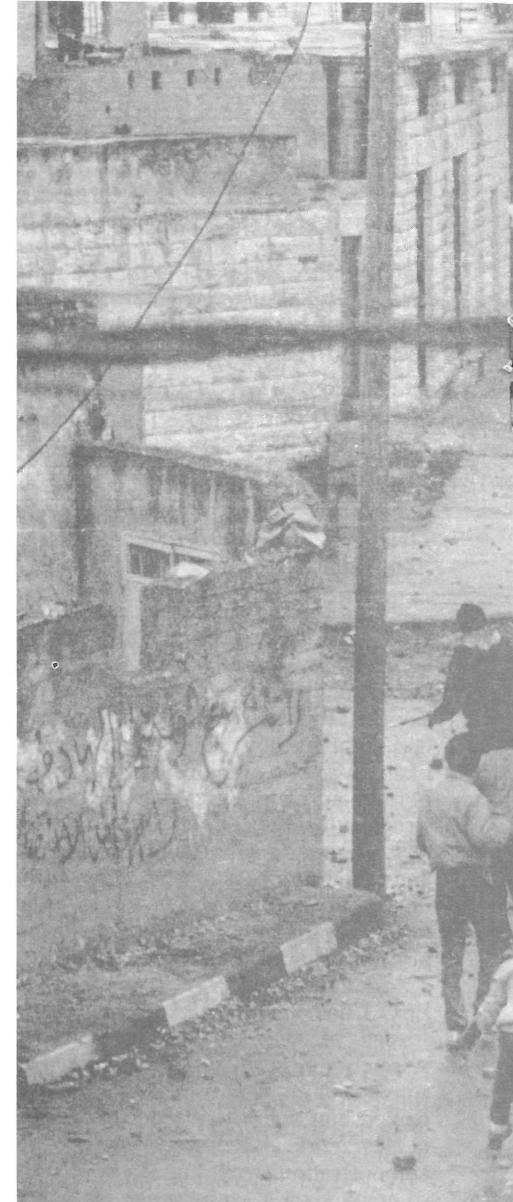
However, US displeasure lasted only a few days, after which the Bush Administration rewarded Israel for its aggression and repression of the Palestinian people with suspension of the dialogue. Instead of taking a balanced position, the US has blatantly confirmed just how biased and unjust its policy in the Middle East is. Once again, it elected to punish the oppressed and reward the oppressor who continues to block peace with impunity. Though US officials often claim to be impartial and desirous of a just peace,

the fact is that the US has seven times vetoed resolutions in the Security Council condemning Israeli brutality in the occupied territories. In reality, it is the special US-Israeli relationship which determines these policies, expressing the organic relationship between US imperialism and Zionist colonialism.

The US needs Israel for protecting its interests in the area, primarily its oil interest, as most recently exhibited by the identity of the two states' positions on the current Gulf crisis and their coordination aimed against Iraq. It is this function of Israel that has earned it the status of strategic asset for US imperialism. Israel, for its part, needs US political, financial and military support to maintain its occupation and pursue its aggressive, expansionist policy.

Regarding the suspension of the US-PLO dialogue, Israel stood virtually alone among the states of the world in welcoming the US decision, and urged the US to terminate these talks permanently. Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Arens expressed Israel's elation when he said: «We see that actually the values and the principles that guide our policy are identical with the values and principles guiding the American policy: you don't negotiate with terrorists» (Associated Press, June 22nd).

The pro-Israeli line of the US government is further bolstered by the Zionist lobby's persistent efforts to shape a positive attitude towards Israel in the US. This lobby, most notably the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), exerts crucial



*The US refused to discuss the demands of the masses of the*





the intifada.



influence in both the White House and the US Congress. Zionist organizations not only control a substantial number of Jewish votes, but are also capable of targeting anyone who opposes pro-Israeli policy. The influence of the Zionist lobby was apparent in the resolutions passed this spring by both houses of Congress, recognizing occupied Jerusalem as Israel's capital, even though this contradicts with stated US policy. Clearly, the pro-Israel lobby also played a role in the US decision to suspend the dialogue with the PLO, having exerted efforts to this end since it started in December 1988.

### The PLO's responsibility

Reviewing the course of the dialogue also reveals that the PLO's activities over the past 18 months fell short of meeting the challenge posed by talks with the US. It was the US that determined the direction, pace and content of the meetings. The underlying reason for the PLO's failure to control the dialogue was the fallacious political approach adopted by sectors of the Palestinian leadership, with the hope of achieving a Palestinian state.

The intifada increased the PLO's stature markedly, giving it more weight on the Arab and international arenas. However, the PLO failed to make full use of the new situation. Some in the PLO imagined that by showing readiness to deal with the US and Israeli initiatives, they could make gains, disregarding the contents and intentions of these initiatives. These forces in the PLO were in a hurry to reap political benefits from the achievements of the intifada, claiming that it would soon be too late and justifying concessions with the idea that a Palestinian state was within reach. They hastened to give concession after concession, without getting anything in return, and ignoring the real balance of forces and whether or not conditions were ripe for fulfilling Palestinian rights at this time. The result was a weakening of the PLO's position in the Tunis meetings, giving the US a golden opportu-

nity to use the dialogue to its ends. The PLO thus shifted from an offensive to a defensive position in the political-diplomatic struggle, which made it easier for the US administration to avoid substantive issues in the dialogue. This also made it easier for the US to continue to exert pressure on the PLO via the Egyptian regime, attempting to extract more concessions and constantly raising secondary issues to divert from discussion of the fundamental issue: the continuation of Israeli aggression and occupation.

The PLO was unable to steer the discussion or even raise the points it found essential; in the end it lost the cards it had brought into the dialogue as a result of its policy of concessions. Thus, when the US realized that the PLO had nothing more to give, it stopped the dialogue, preferring to continue its war on the PLO by other means.

In spite of this, the suspension of the dialogue inflicted no essential losses on the Palestinian people, for it was never an end in itself. The Palestinians refuse such a dialogue if it is only a vehicle for blackmailing the PLO. The Palestinian people were supportive of a dialogue that would serve as a framework for discussing fundamental issues which the US insists on ignoring.

The lesson to be drawn from the experience of this dialogue is that the path of concessions is endless once embarked upon. The US and Israel will not be defeated in the political battle, or any other battle, unless the PLO adheres to the principles of the Palestinian struggle, as set out in the PNC's decisions. Forcing the US and Israel to change their position remains a major aim of Palestinian political moves; but this can only happen by escalating the intifada and bolstering it with armed struggle, until the enemy camp is forced to recognize Palestinian rights. The Palestinian people and their sole, legitimate representative, the PLO, remain key players in the Middle East, and no peace can be achieved without addressing their rights.

## American Public Opinion

On July 9th, the *New York Times* published the results of a poll it conducted in conjunction with CBS television network. In answering the question: «Should the US be more sympathetic to the concerns of Palestinians?» 38 percent answered yes, while 37 percent answered no. The significance of this poll is the different

results for the same question taken a year ago, in which only 26 percent answered yes, while 49 percent answered no. However, decisions taken by the US Congress and administration continue to be more closely aligned to the pro-Israel lobby than to American public opinion.

# Palestinian Women's Committees Congress

by Lina Al Aswad

On August 8th, in the Soviet Cultural Center in Damascus, President Laila Khaled opened the second general congress of the Palestinian Popular Women's Committees (formerly the Palestinian Women's Organization).

The opening session was attended by Dr. George Habash, general secretary of the PFLP, and a number of other PFLP leaders. Also attending were representatives of different Palestinian, Arab and international women's organizations, including the General Union of Palestinian Women, the Jordanian Women's League (RAMA), the Lebanese Women's Rights Committee and the International Democratic Women's Federation. Also present were Syrian MP Ferial Mahayni; Dr. Shafiq Sallah, representing UNICEF; Mahmoud Khaldi, head of the PLO office in Damascus; Lebanese nationalist MP Najah Wakeem and prominent Palestinian women militants, Samira Salah and Widad Qumari.

In the opening speech, Laila Khalid spoke about the significant role played by Palestinian women in exile in support of the uprising. She elaborated on the achievements of the Palestinian Women's Committees in the past four years, since its founding congress. She also emphasized the role of Palestinian women in the battle to defend the camps in Lebanon. To illustrate this point, Laila gave the example of the four members of the Palestinian Women's Committees who were martyred in defense of the camps.

In the next speech, Hind, who was representing the women's committees in the occupied territories, emphasized the distinguished role of Palestinian women in the intifada. She called for more support from outside for the sake of escalating the intifada.

Comrade Nihaya Mohamed, who was representing the General Union of Palestinian Women, called upon all Palestinian women to close ranks and join the union in order to mobilize all efforts for achieving the goals of freedom and independence.

Asza Mruweh, representing the Lebanese Women's Rights Committee, pointed to the role of Lebanese women in the battle for liberating the occupied South. She emphasized that their role complements that of Palestinian women in the confrontation against the US and Israeli schemes in the area.

Palestinian cause into a new stage whereby the Palestinian state became a realistic possibility. He defined the tasks of the new stage to be carried out by the Palestinian masses in the 1948 and 1967 occupied territories and in exile, as well as the responsibilities of the Arab masses and governments. He also focused on the issue of democratic reform in the PLO, urging the speedy convening of a new PNC, so that the Palestinian leadership could seriously review its policies.

Regarding the Gulf crisis, Dr. Habash asserted that the Arab masses are experiencing a new imperialist attack targeting the whole area. He called on them to confront the imperialist military intervention.

The opening session concluded with a performance by the *Haneen* musical group.

## Workshop discussions

The congress continued the next day with workshops in which there were lengthy discussions of the organization's activities, evaluating its progress in all fields since its formation in 1986. The discussions focused on the role of the Palestinian Women's Committees in developing the political consciousness of Palestinian women, and evaluated where the organization had excelled and where it had failed.

The participants unanimously confirmed the necessity of founding productive, rehabilitative and educational institutions for women. They emphasized the need to expand the Palestinian Women's Committees geographically and numerically, in order to mobilize all strata of Palestinian women in the national struggle.

The Palestinian Women's Committee's policy regarding the General



Zahia Safa spoke about the role of the International Democratic Women's Federation in the struggle for realizing the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. She mentioned several examples of the federation's initiatives in support of the uprising and Palestinian women in the occupied territories.

Dr. Hanan Boudri presented a speech on behalf of RAMA, focusing on the role of the Jordanian women's movement at this stage of consolidating democracy in Jordan; such consolidation will ultimately contribute to further support for the uprising.

The last speaker was Dr. George Habash who began by reaffirming that the uprising has provided Palestinian women with a golden opportunity to assume their rightful place in the national liberation process which will eventually lead to social liberation. Dr. Habash devoted the major part of his speech to talking about the achievements of the uprising, which thrust the



Union of Palestinian Women was thoroughly discussed. There was overall consensus in favor of working to increase the union's activities and consolidate democracy.

Four days of discussions resulted in a new work program for the coming four years. The program was inspired by the congress' slogan: «Developing the role of Palestinian women in exile to complement the role of their sisters in the occupied territories, in order to achieve freedom and independence.»

One session was devoted to approving amendments to the internal charter of rules and regulations. These amendments were proposed in response to new demands that have arisen over the organization's four years of experience and expansion.

Parallel to the congress, the Palestinian Women's Committees conducted seven seminars on the following topics:

- Women in the uprising, by Rasmieh Odeh;
- The Jordanian women's movement, the reality and the future, by Dr. Hanan Bouderi;
- The General Union of Palestinian Women, by Nihaya Mohamed;
- The Palestinian declaration of independence, by attorney Thafer Khadra;
- The Syrian women's movement from a historical view, by Nawal Yaziji of the Syrian Women's League for the Protection of Motherhood and Childhood;
- The Lebanese woman's role in the revolutionary process, by Azza Mruweh;
- The influence of the uprising on children's literature, by the writer Nahed Al Rayes.

### Preparing for the future

The final statement issued at the end of the congress commended the uprising and emphasized the role of all sectors of the Palestinian masses in the struggle for achieving their national rights. The statement called on the PLO to upgrade its practice in order to fulfill the demands of the uprising. The statement summarized the discussions that took place at the congress and the content of the reports adopted.

A new general council of 36 members was democratically elected. The new council includes young, qualified women cadres representing the different branches of the Palestinian Women's Committees.

The convening of the second general congress of the Palestinian Women's Committees was a turning point in the experience of this relatively new mass organization, and testified to the success of its work so far. ●

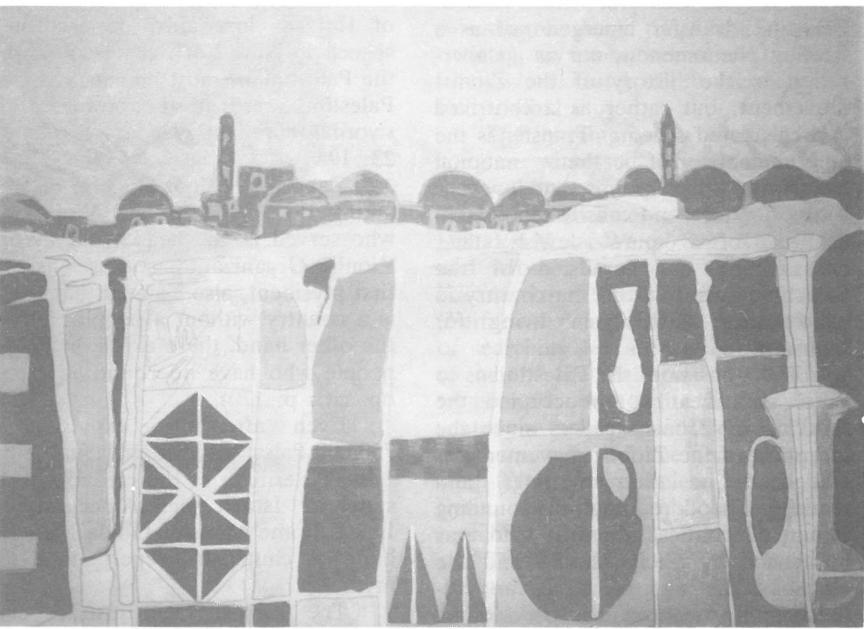
# Japan

## Palestinian Culture on Display

Two events highlighting Palestinian culture took place this summer in Japan. In June, the International Union of Fashion presented a seminar in Tokyo on Palestinian national costumes, and in particular women's dresses (*thoab*). The seminar was followed by a fashion show of Palestinian *thoab* from various parts of Palestine, worn by Japanese models.

In July, an art exhibition was sponsored by the Union of Asia, Africa and Latin America for Japanese

Artists, in the Metropolitan Art Gallery in Tokyo. More than 30 Palestinian artists were among the third world participants, most of whom were from the occupied territories. They included Ismail Shamout, Suleiman Mansour, Fathi Ghabin and Kamal Boullata. Most of the works on exhibition dealt with the intifada. The guest of honor at the exhibition was Tayseer Sharaf, a Palestinian artist from the occupied territories. ●



# The Concept of «Transfer» in Zionism

by Maher Salameh

Transfer - a euphemism for the expulsion of the indigenous Palestinian Arabs from Palestine, has been an inherent component of Zionist ideology from its inception until today. Since the two primary goals of the Zionist movement have been the ingathering of world Jewry and the creation of an exclusive Jewish state in Palestine, transfer emerged not as a fleeting phenomenon, nor as an aberration in the history of the Zionist movement, but rather as a contrived and calculated scheme. Transfer is the embodiment of the national chauvinism which claims that Jews are a superior race and calls for the establishment of a «pure» Jewish state, necessitating the expulsion of the Palestinian Arabs from the country in which they have been living for thousands of years.

The transfer of the Palestinians to other countries has preoccupied the thinking of Zionist leaders since the inception of the Zionist movement, as evidenced in their writings and strategy. Theodore Herzl, the founding father of political Zionism who was influenced by Cecil Rhodes and the ethos of the age of European colonialism throughout the developing world, warned of the danger of colonizing Palestine along with its indigenous inhabitants. His plan was to «spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it employment in our own»(Theodore Herzl, *The Complete Diaries*, Vol. 1, p. 88).

Yosef Weitz, director of the Jewish National Fund, the organ of the World Zionist Organization with the task of land acquisition in Palestine, expressed the sentiment of his fellow Zionists very clearly: «Among ourselves it must be clear that there is no room for both peoples in this small country...The only solution is the Land of Israel(Greater Israel), or at least the Western Land of Israel(Palestine), without Arabs. There is no room for compromise on this point!...and there is no way besides transferring the Arabs from here to the neighboring countries, to transfer them all...And

only with such a transfer will the country be able to absorb millions of our brothers»(Ilan Halevi, *A History of the Jews*, p. 186).

Ironically, the Zionist movement introduced the slogan «Palestine, a country without a people, for a people without a country,» and tried concurrently to expel the Palestinian Arabs from their country. Israel Zangwill, the author of this infamous phrase and one of Herzl's close aids, declared in a speech in New York city in 1904 that the Palestinians must be expelled from Palestine «through the power of the sword»(quoted in *Haaretz*, September 23, 1988).

Zangwill was not alone in promulgating this myth. Chaim Weizmann, who served as the head of the World Zionist Organization and was Israel's first president, also claimed that «there is a country without a people, and on the other hand, there exists the Jewish people who have no country»(Halevi, op. cit., p. 170).

Even after the expulsion of 750,000 Palestinians from their country in the aftermath of the creation of the state of Israel, the American-born Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir still had the chutzpah to perpetuate this myth.

The Zionist logic justifies such concepts in the same manner in which Israel's former Prime Minister Menachem Begin described the massacre of over 250 Palestinians in Deir Yasin in 1948 as justified, and as a victory! Jewish terrorist organizations, whose two most well-known leaders are the present and former prime ministers of the Zionist state, carried out such acts specifically for the purpose of terrorizing the Palestinian Arabs in order to expedite their mass expulsion.

In defending Jewish terrorism, Yitzhak Shamir said, «Neither Jewish ethics nor Jewish tradition can disqualify terrorism...Terrorism is for us a part of the political battle being conducted under the present circumstances and it has a great part to play»(quoted in *Al Hamishmar*, December 24, 1987).

Begin and Shamir's terrorist organizations, the Irgun and LEHI(the Stern Gang), along with other Jewish

terrorist groups were responsible for destroying over 400 Palestinian villages in their drive for an exclusively Jewish state, «as Jewish as England is English»(Chaim Weizmann, *Trial and Error*, p. 244). This frenzy, along with countless massacres, culminated in the uprooting and disenfranchisement of half the Palestinian population, in what is referred to by Palestinians as the *nakbeh*, or catastrophe. It was the Palestinian *nakbeh* which facilitated *aliyah*, i.e., Jewish immigration to Palestine and the creation of Israel.

## Jewish terrorism and «transfer»

The exodus of half the Palestinian nation in 1948 represents a watershed in Palestinian history and in the history of the Palestinian-Zionist struggle. Israeli apologists have always maintained that the root cause of this exodus was the call by Arab leaders for the Palestinians to leave their country. Although Palestinian historians, including Walid Khalidi, Elias Shoufani and others have dispelled these fabrications as part of a concerted Israeli disinformation campaign, new Israeli primary sources have recently become available which irrevocably dispel the long-standing official Israeli version. Michael Palumbo's *The Palestinian Catastrophe*, Tom Segev's *1949: The First Israelis*, Simha Flapan's *The Birth of Israel* and Benny Morris' *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem 1947-49* are among the more recent books written by Israelis and Americans who have utilized the archival material recently made available by the Israel State Archives and the Central Zionist Archives.

Despite the shortcomings of these works, the apologetic tone of some of them and the careful selection of the information made available by the Israeli government, they have, nevertheless, shed some light on the crucial period during the years 1947-48 when the Zionist movement was clearing Palestine of as many Palestinians as possible in preparation for the establishment of their *exclusive* state.

Of particular significance is the role the Haganah, which was the mainstream paramilitary Zionist group and the military arm of the Mapai party(which became the Labor party in



Palestinian refugee camp, Jordan, in the fifties

1968). The Haganah, which in 1948 transformed and became the backbone of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), was recently implicated by its former chief intelligence officer, Yitzhak Levi, who revealed the Haganah's full backing of Irgun's massacre in Deir Yasin, as well as providing them with rifles and ammunition (Nur El Deen Masalha, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, no. 69). Benny Morris also implicates the Haganah in the destruction of Palestinian villages and attacks against their residents (*The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem 1947-1949*, pp. 53-54). The difference, it seems, between the mainstream (Labor) Zionists and the so-called extremists is, in Israel Shahak's words, the better knowledge on the part of the mainstream, or the pragmatists, of how politics operate.

The significance of the Haganah's involvement in terrorism underscores Democratic Palestine, July-August 1990

the perjury of the apologists who have all along vindicated the Haganah from such acts, which were carried out by the «extremists,» like Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir.

#### The planning stage

The Zionist dream of building a «Jewish state» in Palestine remained on the drawing board for decades due to the lack of the most important ingredient - Jewish immigrants. The Zionist movement, despite all its efforts and the financial backing of Jewish capitalists and the imperialist countries, could only persuade a very small number of Jews to go to the «promised land.» It wasn't until the 1930s, after Hitler's rise to power, that Jews began to flock in large numbers to Palestine. During half a century of Zionist efforts to bring Jews to Palestine (1882-1932), only about 150,000 were brought, in comparison with

164,000 in the four years following the Nazi ascent to power.

It was on this background of the sudden and unexpected large increase of Jewish immigrants to Palestine, that the Mapai party, which was then the largest and most influential party, convened its congress in 1937. Having a new-found feeling of confidence and source of power, «it was then that 'transfer' became a policy, planned and supported by most of the highest-ranking leaders and opposed on moral grounds by none» (Israel Shahak, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, no. 71). The few ambivalent voices expressed reservation on practical grounds only. Golda Meir, for example, said: «I would agree that if the Arabs leave the country, my conscience would be absolutely clear. But is there such a possibility?» (ibid.).

The ensuing years after Mapai's congress witnessed a flurry of activity in an attempt to implement transfer. A transfer committee was formed which included Yosef Weitz, Karl Katzenelson and Moshe Sharett, who eventually became Israel's prime minister. Yosef Weitz was delegated the responsibility of searching for an appropriate place to where the Palestinians would be transferred. Although the prevailing sentiment among most Zionists at the time was to expel the Palestinians to Iraq, Weitz, nevertheless, travelled to Syria, Lebanon and Argentina in search of such a place.

The Zionist movement was able to utilize its influence in Europe and the United States in order to gain support for the transfer plan. The British Labor Party declared its support for this plan at its 1944 convention. Then US President Herbert Hoover went further by suggesting the establishment of an international fund to finance the expulsion of Palestinians to Iraq (A. Mohareb, *The Relations Between Militant Zionist Organizations, 1937-1948*, Arabic). Hoover tried to appropriate \$50 million of the money allocated for the Marshall Plan but failed (ibid.).

#### Transfer after the establishment of Israel

The policy continued after the establishment of the state of Israel and the expulsion of 80 percent of the population of the territories occupied in 1948. In the period between 1949-53, 23 Palestinian villages were destroyed in the Galilee and Triangle regions of northern Palestine.

Dr. Abraham Sharon warned about the danger of «peaceful coexis-

tence» with the 120,000 Palestinians who remained on their land after the establishment of Israel. Although this community was small in number and under military rule, Dr. Sharon was concerned with the purity of the new state. The mere idea of having Palestinians within its borders, regardless of their number, contradicts with the Zionist principle of a pure Jewish state.

Weitz recorded in his diaries a meeting which took place in 1955, seven years after the establishment of the Israeli state between himself, Sharett and Levi Eshkol, who later became Israel's prime minister (Yosef Weitz, *My Diary and Letters to the Children*). In that meeting a plan was discussed to «transfer» the Palestinians to Libya which was a monarchy at the time and had good relations with the Israeli leaders. Sharett reported that John Foster Dulles, the US secretary of state, promised financial support for the plan.

Although the plan to expel Palestinians to Libya could not be implemented, in 1967, Israel, after occupying the rest of Palestine, managed to expel an additional 250,000 Palestinians from the newly occupied territories. However, the majority (600,000) clung to their land despite Israeli state terrorism aimed at driving them out. Although Israel's victory in the 1967 war was euphoric, the sobering reality of Israel's inability to expel the majority of the Palestinians from the newly occupied territories began to set in. It meant that the Jewish state could not annex these territories, because doing so would not only dilute the Jewish character of Israel, it would strip the Zionist movement of a majority in a very short period of time. This, in turn, would force the Israelis to deny the Palestinians voting privileges so that they would not be voted out of the government.

This dilemma, which the Israelis refer to as the «demographic bomb» or the «demographic devil,» has beset Israel with a fundamental problem: there exists now about 1.7 million Palestinians in the territories occupied since 1967, while only 200,000 Jewish settlers (mostly religious zealots) have opted to live there, despite the financial enticements from the government designed to lure as many settlers as possible. The new Likud-led government will attempt to solve this problem by settling the new immigrants in these territories, in effect using them as cannon fodder, despite Sharon's promises

that no new immigrants will be settled in the 1967 occupied territories. As well, the new immigrants have to wait one year before they can get an Israeli passport and are not allowed to leave the country for five years after their arrival, effectively trapping them in Israel.

### Selective expulsion

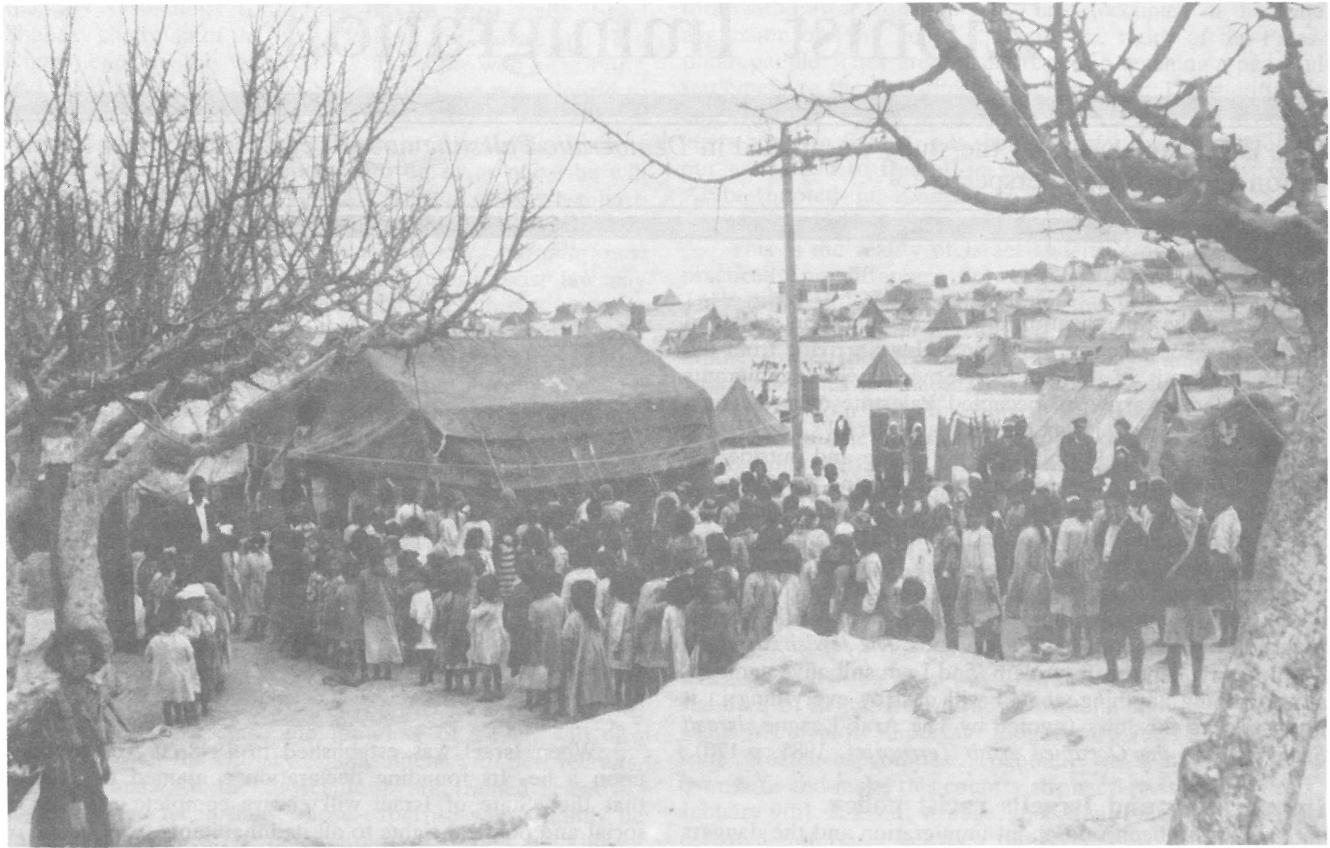
Since 1967, over 1,200 Palestinians have been expelled from the territories occupied in that year. These selective expulsions of leading Palestinian personalities are aimed at destroying the infrastructure of Palestinian society and crushing the Palestinian nationalist movement. The first to be expelled was Abdul Hamid Al Sayeh, president of the Islamic Council. He was followed throughout the years by Rawhi Al Khatib, mayor of Jerusalem, the

mayors of Ramallah, El Bireh, Hebron and Halhoul, Greek Orthodox Archbishop Monseigneur Hilarion Capucci, union leader Dr. Alfred Tubasi, the editor of a prominent Palestinian newspaper, Akram Hanrieh, student leader Marwan Barghouti and educator Dr. Walid Mustafa, to name just a few.

These expulsions, clearly in violation of the Fourth Geneva Conventions, have received special attention during the intifada. In January 1988, the UN Security Council held a special meeting to discuss this matter, and issued resolution number 607 against these illegal expulsions. Needless to say, this did not deter Israel from continuing this practice.

Israeli apologists still maintain that those Israelis who call for the expulsion of Palestinian Arabs are very





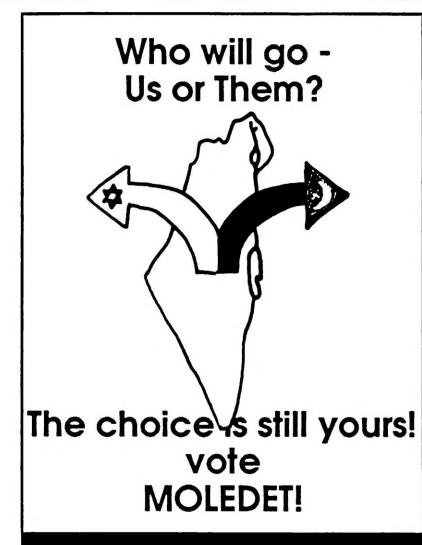
Palestinian refugees, Gaza, early fifties

few and do not represent the mainstream of Israeli society. But according to the Applied Social Research and Communications Institute of the Hebrew University (ASRCI), «Forty-nine percent of Israeli adults believe that the transfer of Arabs from the [occupied] territories would allow the democratic and Jewish nature of Israeli society to be maintained» (*Jerusalem Post*, Aug. 20, 1988). The ASRCI concluded that the subject of transfer «has gained legitimacy, and has become a focus of public discussion» (*Ibid.*).

Zeev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari, two of Israel's foremost journalists, reached a similar conclusion in their new book *Intifada*: «The word transfer has been in the air for quite awhile. At first only fanatics like Kahane had indulged in such talk, but in the mid-1980's the notion spread to other respectable circles of Israeli society.» The «respectable circles» Schiff and Ya'ari refer to include: Raphael Eitan, the former Chief of Staff of the Israeli Defense Forces and current head of the Tehiya Party; Michael Dekel, who served as Deputy Minister of Defense under Yitzhak Rabin and Rahavam «Ghandi» Zeevi, head of the Moledet Party.

With the anticipated arrival of one million Soviet Jewish immigrants over the next eighteen months, the issue of «transfer» is more pertinent now than ever. It raises the specter of a new war which would be employed as a cover for again expelling hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. Former Chief of Army Intelligence Aharon Yariv estimates the number of Palestinians who will be expelled during the next war to be «between 700,000 to 800,000 (quoted by Abdul Jawad Saleh, *Israel's Policy of De-Institutionalization*). Yariv adds that «instruments have been prepared for the contingency» implementation of this mass expulsion plan. In addition, such a war would, as many Israelis believe, or at least hope, put an end to the thirty-three-month old intifada, which has caused the Jewish state much embarrassment and international isolation. The media coverage during the past two and a half years has shown the world what Israel has been doing in the 1967 occupied territories for the past 23 years.

The formation of the new extreme right-wing government in Israel has already set the stage for a third Palestinian «transfer.» The first point of the 23-point plan that the government pre-



Moledet party's election campaign poster, 1988

sented to the Knesset deals with immigration and absorption. The drive to settle the new immigrants in the 1967 occupied territories has already been set in motion by none other than Ariel Sharon, the new minister of housing who has himself taken symbolic residence in these territories.

# Zionist Immigration

This is the conclusion of the study we printed in *Democratic Palestine* no. 38, entitled «Zionist Immigration in Historical Perspective.»

by Ahmad Halaweh

Due to the liberalization of Soviet emigration rules and the US decision to close the door to Jews arriving from the USSR, hundreds of thousands of Soviet Jewish immigrants are expected to arrive in occupied Palestine over the next few years. This mass influx has increased Israel's hostile position towards the Palestinian people inside and outside the occupied territories. In addition to threatening the future of the Palestinians, it also paves the way for many successive wars which could change the political, geographic and demographic map of the whole region. Immigration on this scale means, effectively, the elimination of the Palestinian people and everything non-Jewish about the Israeli state, as indicated by Theodor Herzl in his book *The Jewish State*: «If we, one day, capture Jerusalem, and I am still alive and capable of doing anything, then I will destroy everything in it not sacred to the Jews»(quoted by The Arab League, *Israeli Settlements in the Occupied Arab Territories*, 1985, p.170).

## Immigration and Israel's racist policy

Much has been said about immigration and the dangers it poses to the region in general and the Palestinian people in particular, stemming from the idea of a «Greater Israel.» «We took an Arab country and made it a Jewish one,» thus Moshe Dayan summarized the meaning of the whole Zionist enterprise in 1970, adding, «Do not say, the journey is over! It is still long...»(quoted by Ilan Halevi, *A History of the Jews: Ancient and Modern*, 1987, p.233). The Zionist enterprise, then, has no end. For the Zionists, the road is long, and immigration opens the door to their endless dreams. It was not enough that Palestine was dismantled and its people dispersed. They hope to see all the Palestinians leave the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and Jewish settlers come from all over the world. This objective remains an essential part of Zionism's plan to transform Palestine into «Greater Israel,» although the rulers of Israel know in their hearts that they have no historical rights to Palestine.

Aiming to fulfill their racist aim of a «state of all the Jews of the world,» the Zionists, from the day Zionism came into being, pursued a dual program of «ingathering all Jews» and expelling the Palestinians for the simple reason that they are not Jews. The modern day embodiment of this goal is effectively forcing Soviet Jews to go to Israel against their preference, while Palestinians are denied the right to return to their own homeland. The purpose of this discrimination, of course, is to dispossess the Palestinians of their national identity. From then to the present day, racism has been the dominant characteristic of Zionism's theory and practice. This is evident in Israel, where Zionism is the official ideology shaping the political practice of the ruling parties. Zionism's racist essence is manifested in the treatment of the Palestinians; Arabs are humiliated in the economic, political, cultural and social spheres. Such Israeli practices and many others forced the UN General Assembly on Nov. 10, 1975 to regard Zionism as a form of racism.



When Israel was established in 1948, it was founded upon a lie. Its founding declaration contained the pledge that the «State of Israel will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex» and appealed to «the Arab inhabitants of the State of Israel to...participate in upbuilding the State on the basis of full and equal citizenship...»(quoted by T.G. Fraser, *The Middle East, 1914-1979*, 1980, pp.67-68). This declaration should mean that Palestinians and Jews are equal in the eyes of the law. But this is neither the case in theory or practice, as revealed by Israel's policies in occupied Palestine.

To prepare the way for expelling the Palestinian population and confiscating their property, Israel passed a series of administrative measures and laws. It opened the door for new immigration by passing the «Law of Return» in 1950, which gave any Jew, wherever he might live, the right to immigrate to Israel, settle there and acquire Israeli citizenship. Jews, of whatever nationality, have the automatic right to become citizens, while Palestinians, the rightful owners of the land on which the Zionists settle, are denied the same right. Palestinians in Israel have to fulfill many conditions to qualify for Israeli citizenship in accordance with the «Nationality Law» of 1952, whereas these conditions are automatically waived for Jews. In this regard, Alfred M. Lilienthal wrote: «While the Arab born in Palestine is thus deprived of equality of citizenship, the American Jew, or the Jew from any other country residing in Israel is automatically endowed with Israeli citizenship regardless of whether or not he renounced his original citizenship»(*What Price Israel?*, 1969, p.205).

Israel renamed the Palestinians who remained in 1948 occupied Palestine «Israeli Arabs,» attempting to subvert their Palestinian identity. Those Palestinians who were expelled or forced to flee during the 1948 war, or again in the war of 1967, lost any chance to establish a claim for permanent residency. Israel has consistently prevented Palestinian refugees from returning to their homeland in spite of

the UN resolutions confirming this as their right. Israel Shahak, chairman of the Israeli League for Human and Civil Rights, explains this when he says: «People who were born, and lived most of their life in Jerusalem are not allowed to come back and to settle in their own city, if they are not Jews; of course, if a Dutchman converts to Judaism tomorrow he will not only be allowed to do so at once, he will also get an apartment in Ramat Eschol (an all-Jewish suburb of Jerusalem) built on Arab land conquered and expropriated in 1967»(«What are my Opinions?», *Middle East International*, May 1975). Is there a more racist law anywhere in the world? Undoubtedly, Israel's aim is to preempt any attempt to realize the rights of the Palestinian people, foremost among them the rights to return to and self-determination in their own land. The long-term objective was and remains the elimination of the Palestinians as a people with national rights.

### Immigration and peace

Facts leave no room for doubt that the ongoing mass influx of Jews from the Soviet Union is being used to pursue far-reaching plans, namely the creation of «Greater Israel,» to retain its grip on the occupied Arab lands and to assert its predominance in the region. In addition to changing the demography of the occupied territories, the new waves of immigrants will guarantee a perpetuation of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which means more war and instability. This influx, the biggest since the founding of Israel, will also serve to bolster the military establishment with new recruits. As well, many of the Soviet Jews are trained scientists, engineers and technicians whose expertise will certainly be put to military use. The possibility of achieving any kind of peace was dispelled with the coming of the Soviet Jews to Palestine, for the Israeli leadership is exploiting this influx to maintain their occupation of the Palestinian territories. Shamir's statement about needing a «big Israel» to absorb these immigrants is an obvious indication of this.

Day after day it becomes clearer that Israel has not changed its determination to maintain sovereignty over the occupied territories. Israel is not a state of peace, nor is it capable of making peace; while continuing to talk about «peace» in the region, it has been pursuing a relentless program of settling new immigrants in the occupied territories. Israel's intention is to «create facts» by changing the demographic, historical, natural and legal status of the Arab territories. By doing so, Israel violates international laws and conventions and the authority of the UN, meanwhile creating new obstacles to the peace process.

One of the major hinderances which impedes resolution of the Palestinian question is Israel's settlement policy and its refusal to withdraw from the occupied territories, which is the focal point now of the Middle East conflict. The two main Israeli parties assert that they are unwilling to accept

total withdrawal from the Arab lands occupied in the June aggression of 1967, or to recognize the rights of the Palestinian people. They are not interested in reaching a peaceful settlement to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Their «ultimate aim,» Shamir said in March 1984, «is the same as it was 40 years ago - to fight to put the Land of Israel completely in our hands and to free all its parts of foreigners, that is, of Arabs»(quoted in *Zionism: Enemy of Peace and Social Progress*, issue 5, 1988, p.156).

This is the reality of Israel and its Zionist rulers, with practically no difference between one figure and another. They differ only in details, or in the tactics they use to achieve the same principle aims. If the Likud leaders believe in the sovereignty of the Jews over the whole of «Eretz Israel,» so does the Labor Party. «There is no argument in Israel about our historic rights in the Land of Israel. The past is immutable and the Bible is the decisive document in determining the fate of our land,» said Shimon Peres(quoted by The Arab League, op. cit., p.346). Peres' willingness to accept a «territorial compromise» is aimed at «freeing» Israel of an unwanted Arab population that «would eventually endanger the Jewish character of Israel»(ibid.). Thus the difference is only in the rhetoric they use to describe their tactics to gain a political advantage. Shamir described himself as one of the defenders of «Greater Israel»; Peres did also, but in another way. «Even if we have to cut our standard of living, we will absorb the immigrants,» he said. «This is our most important job, to save Jews and give the state greater capabilities...Together, we shall bring them over here and make this country stronger»(Associated Press, January 9th). It is not strange, then, that Palestinians see no essential difference between the basic views of Labor and Likud on the immigration issue.

Shamir declared that Israel would have to keep the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip in order to accomodate the hundreds of thousands of Soviet Jews. Peres said that immigrants could go and settle wherever they choose, including the occupied lands. Both of them express the same ideology - Zionism. In this regard, the author Noam Chomsky said, «Contrary to illusions fostered here [in the US], the two major political groupings in Israel do not differ in a fundamental way with regard to the occupied territories. Both agree that Israel should effectively control them; both insistently reject any expression of Palestinian national rights west of the Jordan, though the Labor Alignment contains a margin of dissidents» (quoted by The Arab League, op.cit., p.247).

From this brief survey of the Zionists' racist policy, one comes to the conclusion that Zionist allegations about peace are no more than a camouflage for their sinister scheme to Judaize all the occupied territories through the expulsion of the Palestinians and their replacement with the newcomers. Israel's Zionist leaders have their own definition of «peace». For them, peace means Palestinian acceptance of all their terms, including surrendering any right to the land and preferably evacuating it. Anything less than total surrender is unacceptable to them, as Shamir put it saying that, «whoever fights against immigration cannot be for peace with Israel» (Associated Press, January 24th). Shamir wants Palestinians to accept immigration with the dangers it poses to their existence and rights.

This is the true face of Israeli policy-makers who view the West Bank and Gaza Strip as an integral part of Israel and have recently begun suggesting that the need to settle arriving Soviet immigrants is a reason to keep the occupied territories. Israeli planners are, in fact, aware of the impor-

Kiryat Arba settlement, occupied West Bank



tant and decisive role that immigration could play in perpetuating the Zionist occupation and giving it some form of legitimization. Based on this awareness, they proceed to issue statements that immigrants are free to settle anywhere, even in the occupied territories, thereby ignoring the tension and dangers this issue represents to the whole region.

A corollary to this is the policy of «creeping transfer» that is now being enacted. This entails the immigration of many Palestinians to the West or other Arab countries; being unable to bear the harsh living conditions under occupation, they «choose» to emigrate to seek a better life for themselves and their children. Another aspect of this policy targets women and children and involves deporting them to Jordan on the pretext that they were in Palestine «illegally,» although many have been born there. In this way hundreds of families have been separated in the past year alone.

In view of these developments, it is no mistake to regard immigration as a war on the Palestinians and their basic rights. More Israeli settlements and fortifications are being constructed at a very rapid rate. More land is being confiscated from its rightful owners to make room for Jewish immigrants. In addition to perpetuating the Israeli military occupation, this immigration war is intended as an assertion of Israeli sovereignty over the occupied lands and is, therefore, an attack on Palestinian sovereignty and their right to a homeland. Jewish immigration is a threat to the legal and civil rights of the Palestinians, in as much as the real possibility exists that the territories will be annexed and their inhabitants expelled.

There can be no peace without the recognition that the land the Palestinians inhabit belongs to them; but Israel refuses to accept such a peace. Its refusal is derived from Zionist ideology which is based on racism and expansionism. Israel has not only refused to withdraw from the occupied territories, but has even rejected American efforts aimed at starting a dialogue between Palestinians and Israeli officials. Although these proposals are far from recognizing Palestinian national rights, Tel Aviv's rejection of even this minimalist effort only underscores its intransigence regarding the peace process. For their part, the «peace» plans drawn up by Israeli leaders don't take into consideration the elements necessary for true peace, namely the end of Israel's occupation of Arab lands and the restoration of Palestinian rights to self-determination and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on the soil of Palestine. It is evident that any settlement of the Middle East problem promoted by Israel is, in fact, a mere maneuver aimed at diverting the world's attention from the new Israeli expansionist plan.

It is clear that Israel is not a peace-loving state, and does not work for or want peace. The aggressive wars of expansion it started in 1948, 1956, 1967 and 1982, the official declarations made by those in power about annexing the occupied territories and its refusal to carry out UN resolutions 242 and 338 prove that Israel does not want peace but is bent on aggression and expansion. Its objective is to use the immigration issue as a means of foiling any political solution that does not concede full Israeli sovereignty over the occupied territories. Israel is saying through its immigration policy, in effect, that it will accept nothing less than Palestinian surrender, even though it insists on calling this surrender «peace.»

## The US role

The US decision to close its doors to Jews arriving from the USSR may seem unusual; but a careful study of rela-

tions between Israel and the US since the establishment of the Zionist state shows that the US government has consistently helped Israel, in spite of the fact that Israel has followed a policy of expansion and aggression. The US response to Shamir's remarks about «Greater Israel» that they were «not helpful» had no effect on the generous American economic and military aid Israel receives which finances such expansionist plans. Instead of showing good intentions to the Palestinians and exerting some form of pressure on Israel to take a more moderate attitude, America has repeatedly engaged in a double-faced policy of preaching one thing and practicing another. «Our position is clear,» State Department Spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler stated on January 17th, «we do not think that building settlements or putting more settlers in the (occupied) territories promotes the cause of peace» (*Al Fajr*, Jan. 22nd). Months before this statement, the US government had called on the Israeli government to rid itself of the dream of «Greater Israel.» Yet, in spite of their fully realizing Israel's intention to settle the new immigrants in the occupied territories, the US severely restricted the quota for immigrants coming from the Soviet Union, forcing the Jewish immigrants to go to Israel instead. In addition, the US continues to apply pressure on the Soviet Union to allow direct flights between Moscow and Tel Aviv.

Delving into what has been said historically about the US-Israeli relationship confirms that the US is a full partner in the occupation of Arab lands as the main supporter of Israel, providing it with the means to tighten its grip on these territories. A description of this relationship was given by former US President Jimmy Carter in Jerusalem in 1979: «Seven presidents have believed and demonstrated that America's relationship with Israel is more than just a special relationship. It has been and it is a unique relationship. And it is a relationship that is indestructible, because it is rooted in the consciousness and the morals and the religion and the beliefs of the American people themselves...Israel and the United States were shaped by pioneers - my nation is also a nation of immigrants and refugees - by peoples gathered in both nations from many lands...We share the heritage of the Bible...» (quoted by The Arab League, op.cit., pp.357-58). Before he became president, Ronald Reagan pointed out that the US position «would be weaker without the political and military assets Israel provides,» adding that Israel's value, after the fall of the Shah of Iran, had increased «as perhaps the only remaining strategic asset in the region on which the United States can truly rely» (*International Herald Tribune*, Aug.17, 1979).

Calling for providing Israel with additional funds to help settle Soviet Jews, US Senator Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania said, «We are cutting off the opportunities to come to the United States, so if Israel is willing to take these immigrants, it is something which is very helpful to US policy» (Associated Press, Jan.18th).

In the final analysis, without US pressure to change its hardline stand, Israel will not make any moves towards a just and lasting peace. The result of this is more time for Israel to crush the intifada. In other words, America and Israel are opening another front against the Palestinians and the Arabs at large in response to the intifada. In Shamir's words, «They [the Palestinians] feel defeated, because they see that the uprising...is powerless to stop the great, authentic, natural flow of people of Israel to their land...That is what they are trying to prevent» (Associated Press, Jan. 16th).

# US Intervention in the Gulf

With over 85,000 American troops in Saudi Arabia or on warships patrolling the region, the Gulf crisis has reached unprecedented proportions. The massive US intervention has overshadowed the Iraqi-Kuwaiti dispute which precipitated it. This dispute has been removed from the realm of Arab politics and turned into a global contest between the Arab people and imperialism.

by Farida Al Asmar

Though the outcome of the current confrontation is far from predictable, it has already elicited dramatic new alignments in Arab politics. As the crisis concerns global energy politics and comes in the age of perestroika, it will have lasting ramifications for the upcoming reintegration of Eastern and Western Europe, US-Soviet relations and the balance between the US, Europe and Japan. It will also impact on other conflicts, such as the one between Turkey and Greece over Cyprus, and last but not least, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

## New hegemonic crusade

The US intervention, the largest overseas deployment of troops since the war on Vietnam, has now become the central issue. The US administration saw in this regional dispute a golden opportunity to reinforce its military presence, and consolidate its political and strategic control in the Middle East. In the prevailing international situation, the US can work to assert its hegemony without having to worry about an adverse reaction from the Soviet Union. The antagonism between the US and the Soviet Union has given way to the contradiction between imperialism and the third world. The Bush Administration has pointedly singled out the third world as the primary target for potential US military intervention. In the administration's national security strategy report, it was stated: «The growing technological sophistication of Third World conflicts will place serious demands on our forces» (Associated Press, March 21st). The global military build-up and low-intensity warfare strategy cultivated under the Reagan Administration has blossomed into what can only be termed high-intensity aggression.

Why all this fuss over Kuwait? Is Washington really that concerned about the Kuwaiti people? And why

has the US done nothing in the face of 23 years of Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Golan Heights? Is concern for human rights, democracy and recognized borders the real motive for sending thousands of soldiers and the latest military technology to the Gulf?

It is not difficult to answer these questions if we study the record of US military crusades whether in Vietnam, Lebanon, Grenada, Panama or elsewhere. Although this aggression was carried out in the name of lofty principles, the real question was always the naked pursuit of interests - maintaining channels for exploitation and strategic control of resources and territory.

In the case of the Gulf, the US intervened for two major reasons. The first is to exert unconditional control over the oil fields. The second is to maintain the degree of stability in the area needed to protect Israel. Israel is itself charged with protecting the oil fields for imperialism by checking the growth of the Arab national liberation

*USS Wisconsin entering the Gulf, equipped with cruise missiles*



movement and development in the Arab world. However, in the current crisis, this job is too big for Israel, especially in view of its being tied up with combatting the intifada on the one hand, and the strength of the Iraqi army on the other.

## The Israeli role

The participation of Israel in US-sponsored aggression or subversion cannot, however, be ruled out. This will depend on the ensuing course of events. Colonel Rod Paschall, former strategic planner for the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, says: «We'd better start thinking about subversion as soon as we can...and if we want to topple the [Iraqi] regime, we should work with the Israelis to do it» (*International Herald Tribune*, August 9th). The Israeli leadership appears to be mitigating for a military solution to the Gulf crisis. Speaking on Israeli television on August 15th, Housing Minister Ariel Sharon said, «The circumstances necessitate a serious move and very quickly...any move which does not cause immense damage to Iraq, does not eliminate this danger against Israel, and this can only be done through a military strike.»

The first week in August, Israel made it clear that any Iraqi move into Saudi Arabia or Jordan would be considered unacceptable. Based on the Zionists' historical disregard for Arab land and borders, this can only be viewed as a threat of an Israeli invasion of Jordan, if given the least excuse.

Typical of the imperialist-Zionist double standard is the projection that Iraq moved into Kuwait in the midst of a totally peaceful, acceptable situation in the Middle East. The reality is that the chances of war in the area had been building up for some time, mainly due to Israeli sabotage of the PLO's peace initiative and even US attempts to start an Israeli-Palestinian dialogue. A major direction of Israeli political strategy for some time has been to divert attention away from the intifada and resurrect the idea that Israel is threatened by «bloodthirsty» Arab armies, not children throwing stones and waving flags. The crisis also presents the Zionists with a golden opportunity to stop the discussion that had been raised among US policymakers concerning the disproportionately large amount of military and financial aid given to Israel.

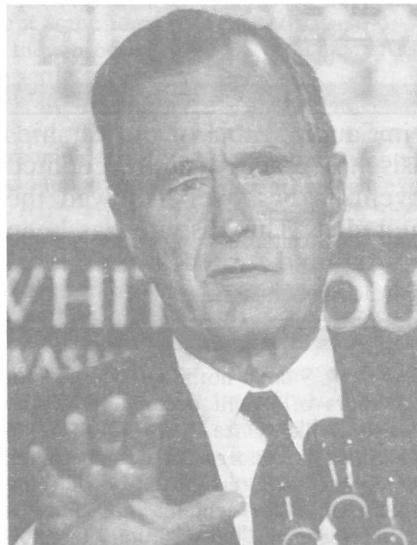
The Gulf crisis provides a conducive atmosphere for enhancing joint US-Israeli military planning in the context of the two states' strategic alliance. The most recent product of this alliance was the August 9th testing of the US-financed, Israeli-developed Arrow missile, in the aftermath of the visit to Israel by Colin Powell, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff.

In the midst of the current anti-Iraqi hysteria, it is not to be forgotten that Israel remains the foremost military power in the region and the sole possessor of a nuclear weapons arsenal. One cannot rule out a new Israeli aggression, which would reaffirm Israel's value as the US's strategic asset in the region.

### US calculations

The US has judged that the time is ripe to reassert its global leadership, and gain broader acceptance of its using military facilities in both Europe and the Middle East as staging posts for intervention. The UN Security Council's imposition of sanctions against Iraq marked the first major issue on which Eastern and Western Europe have united; only Cuba and Yemen abstained. Bolstered by such international consensus, the US proceeded to translate the sanctions into a total economic blockade of Iraq with Britain and Australia joining in the patrols to enforce the blockade. Again the double standard being applied to Iraq is apparent, since the US and Britain resisted imposing sanctions against apartheid South Africa for decades, and never dreamed of such drastic measures to enforce them.

UN Secretary-General de Cuellar declared the blockade illegal in the absence of a new UN resolution allowing for such action, and Europe appeared divided on the issue of how to enforce the sanctions against Iraq. But these hesitations proved insufficient to influence the US to ease its confrontational course. On the contrary, while continuously consulting with its European allies and the Soviet Union, the US's main political activity has been bullying other states to toe the line. The most obvious case is the US bullying Jordan into cutting all trade with Iraq, even though Jordan's crisis-ridden economy is highly dependent on such trade. As well, King Hussein is perhaps the US's only possible go-between if it wanted to head off the confrontation with Iraq. On August 25th, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 665, authorizing whatever



*Can he strangle Iraq?*

steps are necessary to stop and search all ships travelling to and from Iraq; again only Yemen and Cuba abstained. With this resolution, the US, Britain and others have a green light to implement the blockade with military force, thus possibly igniting a war.

The US strategy seems to be based on the possibility of isolating Iraq physically and economically to the point of strangulation, hoping this would lead to an internal collapse which would then result in toppling Saddam Hussein. Bush has issued a secret directive to the CIA on destabilizing Iraq, but is at the same time pursuing a course of provoking direct military confrontation. So far, however, the Iraqis seem determined not to respond militarily to US provocations, such as US planes locking their weapons systems onto Iraqi planes and the August 20th firing on two Iraqi tankers. If the strangulation policy does not work, it is obvious that the US is ready for an all-out conflict with a pre-prepared plan for blanket bombing of Iraqi economic and military installations. According to a report by the US television network ABC, the Bush Administration is not ruling out the use of nuclear weapons against Iraq.

### Divide and rule

Especially with the decision to call up reservists, the American troops, whose numbers may reach a quarter of a million, appear to be digging in for a long stay. In its crusade to exert direct control over Arab oil, the US has obtained official invitations to establish a military presence in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates - two countries that were loath to openly

approve this before; the US already enjoyed such rights in Bahrain. Having preempted the prospects of an Arab solution by sending troops before the Arab League met, the US has succeeded in dividing the official Arab ranks, with some states sending troops to Saudi Arabia under US leadership. In fact, the pro-US Arab regimes only used the summit to give an Arab cover to the US intervention. Chairing the meeting, Egyptian President Mubarak refused to entertain several reasonable proposals, including one forwarded by PLO Chairman Arafat, for finding an Arab political solution to the crisis. Playing on its long-standing alliance with Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Morocco, etc. on the one hand, and the intensity of inter-Arab contradictions on the other, the Bush Administration has broken up the former bloc of anti-imperialist states. It is also working to reverse Iran's anti-US stance and draw Turkey more closely into US military strategy in the Middle East, beyond NATO's traditional sphere of involvement.

Obviously, the greater political clout which the US expects to gain in this realignment will be reasserted to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict to US-Zionist interests. The Palestinians will be the greatest losers in this scenario. With the US previously having suspended its dialogue with the PLO, Saudi Arabia and Egypt are now advising Western Europe to drop the PLO as well, punishing the Palestinian people because their representative did not side with US imperialism and the oil kingdoms in this crisis. These same oil kingdoms have cut all financial aid to the PLO and occupied Palestine.

### As seen from the Middle East

On the other hand, the US intervention has unleashed an overwhelming mass sentiment not witnessed in the area for over a decade. There have been huge demonstrations in a number of Arab countries, condemning the US military build-up and the compliance of some Arab states with the US plans.

Having dealt with the main issue at hand - blatant US intervention in pursuit of hegemonic goals, let us view the current crisis in the Arab context.

Iraq claims Kuwait as part of its territory, and indeed the existence of various tiny emirates, posing as modern states, is the result of colonialism's divide-and-rule policy. In the Gulf, Britain originated this pattern, and the US later moved in to maintain the status quo, keeping the oil in the

hands of rulers who would comply with imperialist interests. This is the background for the ensuing divergence in oil policy between such regimes and nationalist governments which sought economic independence and modernization (Iraq, Algeria, Libya). Kuwait has been part of the traditionalist Arab bloc led by Saudi Arabia, that engages in overproduction of oil, leading to glutting the world market and consequently lower prices. The other side of this policy is the recycling of petrodollars whereby the revenues are

Israel, as well as the fact that Iraq is targeted for the largest direct imperialist attack ever in the Middle East.

In this sense, the current crisis appears as an extension of the struggle between the Arab people and colonialist/imperialist control, which has characterized the area throughout the century. In the second half of the 1900s, with the formation of the Zionist state as imperialism's forward base, this contradiction has taken the form of the Arab-Zionist conflict and

Gulf with the struggle against the occupation of Palestine. Thus, it is totally correct for the Iraqi regime to demand Israeli withdrawal from the 1967 occupied territories, along with the withdrawal of US troops, as conditions for its own withdrawal from Kuwait. However, the Iraqi move into Kuwait was not actually motivated by this demand. Rather the oil question has assumed life-or-death proportions for Saddam Hussein in view of the need to rebuild Iraq from the ravages of the war it began with Iran. On the eve of



Airborne troops prepare for flight to Saudi Arabia.

invested in the capitalist countries or squandered outright on luxury projects, robbing the Arab people of needed resources for development.

In a progressive nationalist perspective, there has long been a need to combat this policy. On the mass level, much of the spontaneous support for Saddam Hussein stems from the resentment of the poor (including Yemenis, Egyptians, Jordanians, Palestinians, etc.) who do the menial work in the oil kingdoms. The other reason for the masses' sentiments is Iraq's declared intention to stand up to

its core, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Today, the most prominent expression of the contradiction is the Palestinian intifada's struggle against the Israeli occupation. Any effort to redress the Arab status quo should therefore be judged in terms of how it affects the progress of the intifada and the Palestinian cause generally, since this represents the vanguard in the Arab masses' struggle against imperialism, Zionism and reaction.

The PLO's line in relation to the current situation is to combine the struggle against US intervention in the

Iraq's move into Kuwait, oil prices had dropped to their lowest in nine years as a result of the glut on the world market caused by overproduction.

Among the negative repercussions of the crisis is that it has overshadowed the intifada, as well as the question of democracy which had become acute in a number of Arab countries. On the other hand, mass mobilization for defeating the US intervention could set new conditions which would positively influence these issues in the future.

# The Peasant and the Land in the Literature of Ghassan Kanafani

This is a translation of an essay written by Dr. Faisal Darraj on the occasion of the eighteenth anniversary of the martyrdom of Ghassan Kanafani, Palestinian author, member of the PFLP's Politbureau and founding editor of its weekly magazine, *Al Hadaf*. Ghassan Kanafani made an immeasurable contribution to both the Palestinian revolution and Arabic literature before his life was cut short on July 8, 1972, when Zionist agents booby-trapped his car outside his home in Beirut.

When Ghassan Kanafani wrote his famous study about the 1936 revolt in Palestine, he did not hide his affection for the peasant masses who were great in terms of their simplicity and readiness to struggle and sacrifice. Their simple consciousness did not allow them to pose many questions, rather it was as if it urged them to wage the battle without speculations of any sort. Also for this reason they were bound to a leadership that knew little about their lives, and did not appreciate their courage and sacrifices. That leadership, as Kanafani stated, was committed to leading, not to fighting. It was motivated by selfishness, assigning the right to lead to the haves and martyrdom to the have-nots, after depriving them of the right to make decisions.

Reading history gave Kanafani knowledge of the peasants and their patriotic role. It also made him feel the bond between the peasant and the land; for the peasant is adept in the language of the seasons, and can read in the book of the land without stumbling as fluently as any studious pupil reads his texts. In Kanafani's novel *The Lover*, we find a portrait of such a peasant, who is exalted to a mythical level. He walks on smoldering embers with confidence, speaking to the wind, seeking impunity in nature, hiding in the foothills and the valleys, chased by the British army that is unable to catch him simply because he is the symbol of the land; and it is quite impossible to arrest the land.

The intimate relationship between the peasant and the land makes their separation tragic, because land, being much more than just property, is a mirror, an identity and a belonging. Kanafani describes this in his short story *Until We Return*. Here land is not a mere landscape or a geographical space; it is a living being. The fields



are full of stories and fables, and abundant with details that constitute his life and history; for land is a mirror of the human being, in as much as the human is a mirror of the land. He recognizes its details as he does the minutia of his own life.

In his collection of short stories entitled *Of Men and Rifles*, Kanafani writes about a peasant «who knows every stone and every tree,» if not the history of every tree, for the trees and the stones are an appendage of him. While they remain silent in his absence, he, on the other hand, dies if he is separated from them. His memory is the mirror of the land, while the land is the substance of his memory. If human memory is the sum of a person's character and if it determines his behavior, the peasant's disposition and demeanor can only be corporeal through his relationship with the land which he ploughed and nurtured. Thus, tending the land conceives the peasant's character and determines his scope.

When the peasant leaves his land, he carries a part of it with him. This linkage of the human being and the

## Kanafani

land is symbolized by the planting of grapevines by Kanafani's character Um Sa'ad wherever she goes. This symbolic relationship makes the poor Palestinian in *Men in the Sun* dream of a house surrounded by grapevines. His recollection of the olive and orange trees is what motivates him to make the fateful journey to Kuwait. The peasant lives the land, and when he leaves he recreates it or carries it in his memory, dreaming relentlessly of returning. In this framework, land appears as a noble being that is superior to other beings. It is the symbol of stability and continuity, and it provides security and a life of dignity.

Expressing the relationship between herself and the grapevine, Um Sa'ad says, «it does not need much water,» because the plant, the marvelous offspring of the land, derives its water from the moisture between the land and air. Thus the plant appears as a secret which cannot be revealed.

Land is the profile of the human; therefore defending the land is, in essence, defending the human. The peasant who becomes a commando does not carry a gun out of love for fighting or for the sake of privileges, but in order to restore that lost part of himself. This made Um Sa'ad speak about two kinds of camps: the first symbolizes humiliation, submissiveness and exile, while the second camp is that of the commando, deriving its beauty and integrity from the intimacy between the Palestinian and the land from which he was exiled. In Kanafani's story *Of Men and Rifles*, the episode does not evolve around the rifle as an object of beauty, but rather around the love of a human for the land. This is essentially the longing for justice and dignity, since land is a precondition for an upright life, free from alienation and exploitation.

In addition to the political form which delineates Kanafani's works, in their essence they deal with positive human values such as dignity, justice and freedom. His novels and short stories defend noble values. Indicative of these values is the extensive role of the peasant and his relationship with the land, particularly his struggle and sacrifice.

The peasant's circumstances elicit sympathy and respect. He lives a hard yet simple life, struggling against

stones and drought, waiting for nature's generosity or stinginess. Yet he is willing to defend his modest plot of land and die for it - for the sake of human dignity alone. The peasant in Kanafani's view is a positive model. He searches for an aesthetic formulation of the peasant, creating him artistically.

This humble and militant human becomes a model for the human value of justice. The beautifully rendered character of Um Sa'ad is one example of such a peasant. A strong woman who defends her dignity tooth and nail, her memory does not forget the lessons of time. She rushes to the miserable tent in the refugee camp to cart out the dust and mud, and hurries to the «new tent» to welcome the commando who is moving nearer to the land, thus exposing the traitors of today and yesterday.

Kanafani is not enthralled with abstractions and does not create aesthetic heroes without a reason. He does so in order to manifest the virtues of revolution and resistance. It's as though one cannot approach true beauty unless his views and behavior approximate the peasants who carry their land in their hearts and never capitulate to their misery, nor to the defeat they have faced.

Resistance is a pre-condition for the existence of the human being who is worthy of his humanity and the land which grants him dignity and stability. Kanafani chose to glorify the peasants because they represent the struggling masses. Historically, the peasants constituted the majority of the Palestinian population and were bound to the land, always ready to defend it. They carry in their hearts and minds the popular national heritage and represent the embodiment of the national culture, personifying the history and civilization of Palestine. They are a peculiar composite of rain, olives, guns, bread and white cemeteries.

It is not by coincidence that Kanafani always dreamt of writing the militant history of the Palestinian peasants. This is manifested in the unfinished novel *The Lover*, where poetic collusion is exhibited between the land and the peasant. This creature with his ragged *kumbaz* (peasant garment) and beautiful adeptness, speaks to the mare and the stone and appeals to the pastures, and they all reply, just as if the difference between the human being and nature had vanished. In *The Lover*, the peasant and the land are

not detached; the land is in the peasant, and the peasant is in the land. They are one entity, entwined and inseparable.

Although Kanafani did not finish this novel, neither did he abandon the original idea, incorporating it later in *Of Men and Rifles*, where the peasant from *The Lover* is reincarnated as a new commando. This character is somewhat different than the peasant in the *The Lover* in his language, attire and setting, for each have their own time and history. This diversion is not intrinsic, however, because the relation between the two is not based on weapons or costume, but on common values shared by both. The first one as well as the second is searching for his land, history and identity, which is restored through his struggle to regain his land.

To Kanafani, the difference between the homeland and exile is the same as the difference between fertile land and the desert. Whereas fertile land is a metaphor for earthly paradise, the desert, on the other hand, is synonymous with death. If relations are defined through their antithesis, the barren and burning desert is the opposite of the green and fertile land. Hence the desert plays an important role in *Men in the Sun*; it is the stage on which the tragedy of exile is performed. Leaving one's country can lead to the desert, where an undignified death awaits. Perhaps the desert is a severe punishment for leaving the

land; that is why Abu Qais remembers the moisture of the land when he is under the desert sun, comparing it to paradise and his wife.

In *All That is Left for You*, Kanafani employs the symbol of the desert again, situating the miserable camp in the midst of it. Returning home requires crossing the desert. This crossing has a double meaning: on the one hand, it indicates the great effort needed to return and, on the other hand, it reflects the imminent punishment which besets Palestinians living in camps in exile.

The eerie desert is silent and frightening. It's full of fear and surprises, and is a constant reminder of gratuitous death. It possesses an ominous solitude in an open space with no walls, all the while reflecting the qualities of the land, human warmth and the rhythm which expresses the time and place.

The peasant in Kanafani's literature is always a human being with a simple consciousness - one who knows the meaning of the land and defends it. Therefore he sadly and often tragically seeks to acquire a weapon, however old or worn-out, even if it means giving up his most valuable possessions for it, as in *The Cannon*, or suffering the most severe hardships, as in *The Bride*.

In all these situations, the peasant does not like weapons; he likes his land which is his identity, his homeland and his means of subsistence. ●





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