

**PALESTINE BOOKS – No. 27**

**BASIC POLITICAL DOCUMENTS  
OF THE ARMED PALESTINIAN  
RESISTANCE MOVEMENT**

**Selected, Translated and Introduced  
by  
Leila S. Kadi**

**Palestine Liberation Organization  
Research Center  
Beirut – Lebanon  
December 1969**

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Armed resistance, contrary to appearances, is not new to the Palestinian people. They have taken up arms against foreign rule since the British Mandate. In the following pages a condensed summary of the background to the present Palestinian armed resistance movement will be discussed.

By 1936 the Palestinian people had had enough of British occupation and a revolution broke out. This revolution represented the peak of the Palestinian struggle against both the British Mandate and Zionism. The 1936 revolution followed a long period of political struggle by the Palestinian people exemplified in memoranda of protest, demonstrations, strikes and attempts at dissuading Britain from supporting the Zionist movement.

The distinguishing feature of the 1936 popular revolution is that the traditional Palestinian feudal, religious and bourgeois leadership had nothing to do with its outburst. The man who played a leading role in preparing for the revolution was Izz al-Din al-Qassam, a simple man who had contacted Hajj Amin al-Husseini requesting an appointment as a roving preacher to prepare for the revolution. Al-Husseini refused this request saying: "We are working for a political solution to the problem."

Such an answer did not discourage Qassam who went ahead and organized secret cells among the poor workers and peasants. On 14 November 1935, Qassam fought his first battle against the British forces in the Jenin area where he was killed. Although the Qassam movement was unable to achieve any of its major aims, yet it challenged the traditional family leaders before the people.

The second phase of the revolution started on 15 April 1936. Qassam's secret organizations renewed their operations from the rural areas and the revolution spread from the north of Palestine to the south. On 19 April, the city of Jaffa witnessed a massive popular uprising. The British forces reacted

by blowing up whole quarters of the city. This action on the part of Britain prompted the "national committees" of the people to declare a general strike.

On 25 April, the national committees forced the Islamic Council (Hajj Amin al-Husseini), the Defence Arab Party (Ragheb al-Nashashibi), the Reform Party (Hussein al-Khalidi), the National Bloc Party ('Abd al-Latif Salah), the Arab Palestinian Party (Jamal al-Husseini), the Independence Party ('Awni 'Abd al-Hadi), to disband their political organizations and form the Arab Higher Committee to lead the people's struggle through a general strike and armed revolution. The above-mentioned leaders succumbed to the proposed radical measures under the obvious massive popular pressure generated by the Qassam's armed resistance movement.

When the British failed to crush the revolution or prevent it from spreading, they turned to the pro-British Arab rulers to use their influence to convince the Palestinian people to end the revolution and negotiate peacefully with Britain. The Arab rulers' response, headed by Nuri al-Sa'id, was positive. Sa'id visited Jerusalem on 26 August 1936, and asked the Arab Higher Committee to take all measures to end the strike and disturbances promising that the Iraqi Government would negotiate with the British Government to fulfill the legal demands of the Arab people of Palestine.

The Palestinian people rejected the principle of Arab mediation and carried on their armed struggle until the rulers of Trans-Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and the Yemen intervened and sent cables to the Palestinian people calling them to "keep quiet."

In spite of the popular rejection of Arab mediation, the Arab Higher Committee issued a statement announcing its approval of the principle of Arab mediation, and urging the Palestinian people to end the strike and the disturbances as of 12 October 1936. With this statement the second phase of the Palestinian revolution came to an end. It clearly revealed the Palestinian people's readiness to adopt the method of armed struggle and reject the logic of negotiations with Britain by foiling the efforts of the Arab rulers to mediate between them (Palestinians) and the British Government who had refused to stop Jewish immigration into Palestine. Moreover, the second phase gave clear indications of the hesitation and continuous efforts of the traditional Palestinian bourgeois and feudal leadership to agree to any media-

tion to end the revolution and start political negotiations with Britain. The important element which was witnessed during this phase is the interference of the Arab rulers, who belonged to the same class structure as the Palestinian leaders, to impose their attitude on the Palestinian people.

The third phase of the Palestinians' armed revolution is marked by the assassination, on 27 September 1937, at the hands of the revolutionaries, of L. Andrews, Acting District Commissioner in Nazareth. The Arab Higher Committee issued a communiqué condemning this act. In this phase the antagonism between the rural masses and the bourgeois feudal family leadership came out into the open. The British authorities reacted by escalating their acts of repression and terror. Members of the Arab Higher Committee were imprisoned and others fled the country.

The people's revolution spread and was concentrated in the provinces of Nablus, Galilee and the northern district. At the beginning of 1938 the revolutionaries were in full control of the villages of these areas where they had wide influence.

The weak point of the revolution was the absence of a unified politically aware leadership which could be responsible for coordinating military action between the different areas. As for the traditional feudal bourgeois leadership, some of its members were in exile while others were cooperating with the British authorities to destroy the revolution. The revolution suffered under some severe handicaps. First of all there was the constant personal bickering for leadership by the bourgeois and feudal Palestinian parties and their attack on the revolution itself both in terms of condemning it before the Palestinian people and then by conducting negotiations with Britain. Then there was the lack of any proper military coordination on the different fronts. Thus gradually the revolution became weaker and less effective. With the outbreak of World War II the revolution came to an end. The reactionary traditional leadership continued its efforts to solve the problem through negotiations with the British Government. The latter sent commissions of enquiries and then issued the White Paper of 1939 which limited Jewish immigration and promised Palestinian independence in the hope of securing a calm situation in Palestine throughout the war years.

The occupying power imposed rigorous laws against the Palestinian people. It meant death for a Palestinian Arab to be found carrying a gun.

This penalty, however, was not imposed on the Jews. Thus during the course of the war, it was the Jews who were being armed often with British assistance, while the Palestinians were kept under surveillance.

The war period witnessed in Palestine an alliance between the traditional Palestinian leadership and the other Arab rulers who wanted the Palestinian people to terminate all violence against British rule.

By the end of the war the Zionists were ready to fight the now-unarmed Palestinians. The Palestinians were in no way ready to face the Zionist onslaught that was unleashed against them and the Arab armies that eventually came to their aid were too inefficient and ill-equipped. In addition the Arab feudal and bourgeois regimes were primarily concerned with maintaining close relations with Britain and the United States of America. The Palestinian leadership in turning over the fate of the Palestinian people and their struggle to the reactionary Arab rulers went back to the same tragic course of 1936.

The year 1948 saw the establishment of the state of Israel and the Arab Palestinian people's loss of their homeland and dispersal.

The first reaction of the Palestinian people after this disaster was to resist any kind of rapprochement that would lead to a final settlement with the state of Israel. Examples of this opposition are to be found in the following:

- (1) The publication in 1952 of a secret weekly bulletin *Nasbrat al-Thar* by the Committee for Resisting Peace with Israel. This committee was mainly composed of students at the American University of Beirut (AUB). These same students were among the group that formed the nucleus of the Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM) founded by a Palestinian, Dr. George Habash. He obtained his degree in medicine from the AUB in the early fifties. After his graduation Habash practised in Amman for a few years. Then he devoted himself to the ANM and became one of its key figures. *Nasbrat al-Thar* was very effective and had a widespread distribution among the Palestinians in the camps up to 1954. It played a role in uncovering various secret attempts to liquidate the Palestine problem on the basis of a final settlement with the state of Israel. Such a settlement could only mean that the Palestinians would remain forever

after in a state of diaspora. The bulletin's effect was mainly among Palestinians in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, while its influence on those in the Gaza Strip was negligible.

- (2) During the years 1953-54 UNRWA put forward many projects aiming at the rehabilitation of the Palestinian refugees by constructing permanent residence units. They regarded these projects as having one aim, namely, the liquidation of their problem. Rehabilitation meant the end of their existence as refugees and their acceptance of the state of Israel as a *fait accompli*. This ultimately meant the loss of Palestine to them. In order to counteract the rehabilitation projects, the Palestinians launched mass demonstrations, organized general strikes, and destroyed many of the housing units set up by UNRWA, thus putting an end to such projects. The rehabilitation projects were put forward again by Dag Hammarskjöld in 1959 in the form of a plan for the integration of the Palestinians in the economic life of the Middle East. They opposed this plan by holding the Arab Palestinian Conference in Beirut in 1959. The rejection of the plan by Palestinians compelled the Arab governments to oppose it, thus forcing the UN to withdraw the plan.
- (3) Alongside the political struggle of the masses of the Palestinians, small Palestinian groups residing in the Gaza Strip, Syria and the West Bank took the initiative by undertaking commando action inside Israel. These commando raids, which penetrated deep into populated areas of Israel, prompted the latter to carry out a large scale raid on Gaza on 28 February 1955. It also caused Israel to assassinate two commando leaders, Salah Mustafa and Mustafa Hafez. These guerrilla groups were not based on, connected to, or part of any political organization, but were trained and led by Egyptian army officers. These groups were disbanded after the 1956 tripartite aggression on Suez.

Politically active Palestinian groups considered that the Arab governments were mainly responsible for the 1948 defeat and thus they became affiliated to, and actively participated in national Arab parties such as the Ba'th and the Arab Nationalist Movement. These parties called for Arab unity which Palestinians believed was the road to a strong unified Arab state capable of confronting Israel and liberating Palestine.

With the establishment of the United Arab Republic, 22 February 1958, the Palestinians were convinced that they were on the brink of liberating Palestine. Historical developments proved them wrong. During the three years of unity the UAR Government attempted to build up popular Palestinian organizations such as the Palestinian National Union in Syria and Gaza. These organizations were unpopular and ineffective since they were imposed from above.

At the same time, in 1959, a secret monthly magazine of limited circulation *Our Palestine* (Filistinuna) began publication in Beirut. *Our Palestine* called for the Palestinization of the Palestine problem. This meant that the Arab governments should give the Palestinians a free hand to work for the liberation of their country. Later on, it became known that the sponsors of *Our Palestine* were the Al-Fateh group. This group came into existence out of the discussions of Palestinian students in the Gaza Strip who had suffered under the Israeli occupation of 1956, and were concerned with the problem how best to win back Palestine admitting the Arab governments' inability to do it for them. Little by little, they became convinced that the Palestinians must take their cause into their own hands. Yasser 'Arafat became their leader.

'Arafat (his code name is Abu 'Ammar) was born in Jerusalem in 1929. His career, in a way, mirrors the history and thrust of the Palestinian commandos. He spent his early childhood in a house within a stone's throw of the Wailing Wall. When the Arab-Israeli fighting of 1948 ended 'Arafat found himself with his parents a refugee in Gaza. He managed to go to Cairo to study engineering at Fuad I (now Cairo) University, where he majored in civil engineering. As chairman of the Palestinian Student Federation he helped, in his own words, to "lay the basic foundation for our movement." While studying he also acted as a leader and trainer of Palestinian and Egyptian commandos who fought the British in the Suez area, served the Egyptian army as a demolitions expert and fought against the British and French at Port Said and Abu Kabir in 1956. After a brief period as an engineer in Egypt he obtained an engineering job in Kuwait in 1957, where he stayed until 1965. Meanwhile he travelled among the scattered Palestinians to recruit members for the organization. Soon cells were formed in Kuwait and among students in West Germany. The initial development was slow and went against the trends of the period. This could be linked to the belief that Arab unity was the only road to the liberation of Palestine, and any

claims to unity boosted this belief. Thus slogans and aspirations to unite under the leadership of President Nasser, made themselves felt strongly during the years 1957-1958, culminating in union between Syria and Egypt.

Between 1957 and 1967, talk about Arab unity reached its climax but, at the same time, rivalry between the various Arab governments became even more acute. But aspirations for Arab unity were so deeply held by the people that they constituted a reality which had to be taken into consideration. Also significant was the interaction and confusion of the various political movements: Nasserist, Ba'thist, Arab Nationalist . . . etc., regardless of their country of origin. In this context, the Palestinian national question was not a simple one, even more so because, through the idea of unity, the existence of Israel made it possible for many Arab governments to redirect popular aspirations towards external objectives and an outside enemy. Certain Arab states accused the militants of Al-Fateh of being agents of CENTO. One can relate such an accusation to the United Arab Republic's and Tunisia's policies during the early sixties. President Nasser realized that the war in the Yemen had dragged on for a much longer period than was expected and was thus costing the UAR treasury more than it could afford. This led to pressing internal economic problems which threatened the effectiveness and development plans of his regime. President Nasser was of the opinion that the industry and economy of the UAR should be more developed before embarking on a war against Israel. The UAR was of the opinion that Al-Fateh was trying to involve it in war with Israel at a time when Arab unity had not yet been achieved and the UAR's economy was not yet well developed. Thus in his opening speech to the Second Palestinian National Congress which was held in Cairo on 31 May 1965, President Nasser declared: "We do not have a plan for the liberation of Palestine." Moreover, 1965 witnessed the first Arab leader who publicly declared that the Arabs should solve the Palestine problem by signing a peace treaty with Israel. Thus the strictly clandestine character of various Palestinian resistance movements until 1967 was less due to the Israeli enemy than to the attitude of Arab states where Palestinian militants were often put under house arrest, thrown in jail or even worse. To this effect, Al-Fateh still remembers that one of its first partisans was killed in 1965 by the Jordanian army.

With the failure of the Syro-Egyptian union in 1961, the concept of unity as the road to the liberation of Palestine collapsed. Palestinians realized



that the attainment of unity was an almost impossible task; and that they could not afford to wait until all of the Arab world was united. They started to talk of an independent Palestinian entity and action. As a result, more than thirty Palestinian organizations, most of which had only a small membership, were set up. This large number of organizations was ample proof of the Palestinians' desire to work seriously and independently for the liberation of their homeland. At the same time it indicated that a strong effective organization was lacking.

The triumph of the Algerian revolution in 1962 gave more weight to the principle of independent Palestinian activity. The Algerians were able to recruit material and moral support from various Arab regimes and, through armed struggle, to attain their independence. Some Palestinians thus believed that they could adopt the same kind of policy if they took the initiative and maintained their freedom of action.

During this period Al-Fateh, which is the reverse initials of *Harakat al-Tabrir al-Watani al-Filistini* (Palestine National Liberation Movement), strove to create the nucleus of a political organization recruited from among the Palestinian intelligentsia. Since 1962 Al-Fateh has concentrated all its efforts on starting military action but was faced with the problem of the shortage of means to embark on such an activity. In 1964 Al-Fateh held a conference to discuss this question and the majority of the members voted for starting military action on 1 January 1965 in spite of the shortage of means. Those who opposed this decision proposed that military operations should be started under another name, rather than Al-Fateh, so that, in the event of failure, Al-Fateh might continue its preparations and its secret activities. The proposal was accepted and it was agreed to use the name of al-'Asifah for the first military operations. Al-Fateh announced that it was al-'Asifah after the tenth military communiqué. Al-Fateh's leadership decided to continue using the name of al-'Asifah because it had become a historic name.

The first Arab summit conference, held in Cairo between 13 and 16 January 1964, was convened to discuss Israel's progress in its plan for the diversion of the waters of the Jordan River. The UAR was of the opinion that Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia were trying to involve it in war with Israel in order to stab it in the back. The UAR held that it would not let itself be pushed into a battle with Israel before the attainment of unity

between all the Arab countries. Thus President Nasser was suspected of having no intention of getting into war with Israel when the latter would start pumping water from the Sea of Galilee down to the Negev. Under these circumstances, President Nasser, in a speech delivered on 23 December 1963 on the occasion of the seventh anniversary of "Victory Day," said: "In order to confront Israel (which put a challenge to us last week, and whose Chiefs-of-Staff stood up and said 'we shall divert the water against the will of the Arabs, and let the Arabs do what they can'), a meeting between the Arab kings and presidents must take place as soon as possible, regardless of the strife and conflicts among them."

The conference was held, and at the end of its meetings issued a communiqué in which it decided to organize the Palestinian people to enable them to play their part in liberating Palestine and in determining its future.

The immediate background of this decision can be found in the 40th session of the Arab League Council held on 15 September 1963. At that session, the Council studied the problem of Palestine in a more constructive manner than usual by affirming the "Palestine entity" at the international level; by establishing the bases for action through the organization of the people of Palestine; and by making them assume responsibility for their national cause and the liberation of Palestine.

The first decision taken by the Council of the League was the appointment of Ahmad Shuqairi as the representative of Palestine at the Arab League. Shuqairi is a Palestinian lawyer who had been Assistant Secretary General of the Arab League; had later become a member of the Syrian delegation to the United Nations; and then became the delegate of Saudi Arabia to the UN. The Council also asked him to carry out consultations with representatives of the people of Palestine for the formation of a new general government in exile. Furthermore, he was asked to visit various Arab capitals to discuss the means which the Arab governments would place at his disposal for the fulfillment of this task.

Shuqairi began his tour of the Arab states on 19 February 1964, to discuss with Palestinians and the Arab governments the drafting of the Palestine National Charter and of the draft constitution of a liberation organization, on which the "Palestine entity" would be based.

Shuqairi visited Jordan, Syria, Bahrain, Qatar, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon and the Sudan. He met the then President of the Yemen Republic, 'Abdullah Sallal, in Cairo. His tour ended on 5 April 1964. Upon his arrival in Cairo, Shuqairi made a statement in which he announced that he had held about 30 conferences with the Palestinian people, during which he had met thousands of them. At these conferences he had explained the Palestine National Charter, and the basic system of the liberation organization.

On 28 May 1964, the Palestine National Congress, in which members of Al-Fateh participated, opened in Jerusalem. It unanimously elected Shuqairi as Chairman of the Congress. It was held under the supervision of the Arab League, and under the auspices of King Hussein, and attended by 242 Palestinian representatives from Jordan, 146 from Syria, Lebanon, Gaza, Qatar, Kuwait and Iraq. The most important resolutions adopted by the Congress were the following:

- (a) Establishment of a Palestine Liberation Organization to be set up by the people of Palestine in accordance with its statutes.
- (b) Appeal to all Palestinians to form professional and labor unions.
- (c) Immediate opening of camps for military training of all Palestinians, in order to prepare them for the liberation battle which they affirmed could be won only by force of arms. The Arab governments were urged to admit Palestinians to their military academies.
- (d) Establishment of a Palestine National Fund to finance the PLO. The sources of revenue would include annual subscriptions, to be paid by every Palestinian over 18 years of age, loans and grants to be offered by Arab and friendly states, contributions to be collected on national occasions, and the revenue from issuing Palestine Liberation Bonds by the Arab League.
- (e) Election of Ahmad Shuqairi as Chairman of the Executive Committee of the PLO.

The second Arab summit conference, which was held in Alexandria from 5-11 September 1964, welcomed the establishment of the Palestine Liberation

**Organization.** (It also fixed the obligations of each Arab state towards the PLO.) The conference endorsed the decision taken by the PLO Executive Committee to establish a Palestine Liberation Army to be stationed in the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula.

The creation of the PLO raised the hopes of the Palestinian people. It absorbed a number of the small organizations that had been set up earlier in the sixties. Al-Fateh, which was at that time operating only on the political level, clandestinely, and the Palestinian branch of the Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM), and a few other small organizations maintained their separate identity, in spite of the fact that they participated in the PLO national congress.

\* \* \*

Up to this time Al-Fateh was the sole organization which called for the adoption of the principle of armed struggle as the only means for the liberation of Palestine. Furthermore, Al-Fateh believed that the Palestinians should start armed struggle irrespective of the reaction or plans of the Arab regimes. The Palestinian branch of the Arab Nationalist Movement called for coordination between the Palestinian armed struggle and the plans of the progressive regimes, mainly the UAR. The logic behind this thinking was to avoid a premature confrontation between Israel and the Arab states. They feared that Al-Fateh's action would force the involvement of the Arab states, and the UAR in particular, in a war with Israel. Yet despite this Al-Fateh embarked upon reconnaissance operations inside the occupied territories in 1963. On 14 July of that year Al-Fateh lost its first two casualties, 'Audah Swailem Sa'd and Salem Salim Sa'd.

In 1964, the Palestinian branch of the ANM formed a military group to undertake reconnaissance operations inside the occupied territories and to establish network and arms caches. This decision was adopted at a conference held in September 1964 that included representatives of all the Palestinian members of the ANM. The basic principles that were adopted at this conference were the following:

- (1) Armed struggle is the only way to liberate Palestine.
- (2) All secondary conflicts should be subordinated to the conflict with imperialism and Zionism.

(3) The different revolutionary groups should be unified.

On 2 November 1964, the first casualty claimed by ANM—Khalid al-Hajj—was killed by the Israeli army in an unplanned clash. At that time the ANM refused to disclose the name of the man or to give any details about the circumstances that led to his death. This was done to avoid any hindrance of its preparations and to maintain secrecy.

On 1 January 1965, Al-Fateh's first communiqué was published in the Lebanese press announcing the start of its military activities in the occupied territories. At this early stage these activities were not clearly described for the reason that the Arab regimes and their mass media were tacitly opposed to the principle of Palestinian guerrilla warfare. The Palestinian people remained passive awaiting the Arab states, especially the UAR, to bring a favorable end to their problem. Al-Fateh was an isolated movement trying to prove that Palestinians could fight, could confront their own problem and could escape the control of the various Arab states, especially Jordan which was hostile to any possibility of a change in the status quo.

Jordanian police checks on the refugee population made any political activity extremely difficult. In Cuban terminology, the Palestinian resistance began as a "foco," as a nucleus employing armed violence without any political preparation of the population it was trying to involve. But while the strategy of the "foco" as applied within the framework of class struggle has shown itself to be ineffective in Latin America, the armed nucleus of the Palestinian resistance, due to the military collapse of the Arab states, has been successful within the framework of a national movement. Naturally this strategy was imposed by the circumstances and by the nature of the national movement of which Al-Fateh is the nucleus.

The Arab regimes continued to oppose independent guerrilla warfare until 5 June 1967, except for Syria which found in Al-Fateh the embodiment of its slogan repeated since 1965 (without being applied), calling for a popular war of liberation.

The military grouping of the Palestinian branch of the ANM came to be known as *Abtal al-'Audab* (Heroes of the Return). It started its military operations in November 1966, under internal pressure from the members of

the ANM who urged that the reconnaissance activities should be transformed into actual military operations. A few months after its emergence *Abtal al-'Audab* became associated with the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) for financial reasons. Shuqairi welcomed this step because he wanted to bring the commando organizations under the control of the PLO in order to compete with Al-Fateh. The Palestinian branch of the ANM then formed another military group which carried out its first operation in the occupied territories a few days before the June war. This group was called *Munazamat Shabab al-Tbar* (Youth of Revenge Organization).

Another organization emerging prior to the June war was *Jabhat Tabrir Filistin* (Palestinian Liberation Front), headed by Ahmad Jibril and Ahmad Za'rur. Jibril is a graduate of the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, and a former officer in the Syrian army. Za'rur is a former officer in the Jordanian army. The organization is strictly military.

The Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) did not play an active role prior to 5 June 1967. Yet in the six-day war the PLA troops stationed in the Gaza Strip fought bravely against the Israeli forces.

\* \* \*

The overwhelming defeat, in June 1967, of the Arab regimes took the Arab people by surprise. This defeat proved that dependence on the Arab governments and armies for the liberation of Palestine would lead nowhere. It proved that the idea of Arab unity, which was considered to be the road to Palestine, was far-fetched under existing conditions. The Arab masses were isolated and could not play their proper role in the war because the existing regimes feared their people — in case they armed and trained them — more than the enemy. Thus the role of the people was limited to observing the defeat of their armies, the occupation of the whole of Palestine, Sinai and the Golan Heights. The Palestinians took it upon themselves to act, continue the war against the enemy, rally the Arab people to their side and make them play their proper role in retrieving Palestine, Sinai and the Golan Heights from Israeli occupation. Thus directly after the June war a number of conferences were held (in Damascus) in which representatives of *Al-Fateh*, *Munazamat Shabab al-Tbar*, *Abtal al-'Audab* and *Jabhat Tabrir Filistin* participated. The PLO was in touch with what was going on. The purpose of

these conferences was to formulate a Palestinian response to the defeat. The only formula that was approved was that of armed struggle. Nearly half of the Palestinian Arab people were now under the yoke of direct Israeli occupation. However, these meetings did not lead to any practical results; Al-Fateh renewed its military operations unilaterally in August 1967.

The other three organizations *Jabhat Tabrir Filistin*, *Munazamat Shabab al-Tbar* and *Abtal al-'Audab* continued to hold meetings and agreed to merge together into the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). PFLP started its military operations on 6 October 1967 and the first military communiqué was published on 21 December 1967.

The re-emergence of several Palestinian politico-military organizations underlined the need to coordinate and unify their activities. This prompted Al-Fateh to call on 4 January 1968 for a meeting of all Palestinian organizations, including the PLO and PFLP. The conference was held in Cairo between 17 and 19 January 1968. The PLO and PFLP refused to attend this conference on the grounds that some of the organizations invited did not have a significant military or political weight. Nevertheless, Al-Fateh held the meeting at the end of which the Permanent Bureau for the Palestinian Armed Struggle was set up. This Bureau included, in addition to Al-Fateh, eight lesser organizations. It ceased to exist on the political level shortly after the convening of the fourth Palestinian National Congress, held in Cairo in July 1968. However, on the military level, the military wings of these organizations merged with al-'Asifah.

Early in September 1968, *Jabhat Tabrir Filistin* (Ahmad Jibril) seceded from PFLP and continued to operate on a limited scale under the name of PFLP—General Command. It designed for itself a new emblem to distinguish it from PFLP.

In February 1968, the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) started its commando activities under the name of Popular Liberation Forces (PLF). This is a commando organization operated under the auspices of the Palestine Liberation Army within the political framework of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

\* \* \*

On 10 July 1968, the fourth Palestinian National Congress was held in Cairo and was attended by representatives of the different commando organizations, including al-Sa'iqah. Al-Sa'iqah is a Palestinian group which has very close associations with the Ba'th Party, ruling in Syria. The fourth National Congress was held in the absence of Ahmad Shuqairi, who had been forced to resign from the presidency of the PLO after a long struggle between him and the majority of the Executive Committee backed by the rank and file of the PLA in Syria. Some other Palestinian organizations had played a role in the pressures which caused his resignation. They accused him of having single handed leadership harmful to the Palestinian struggle. They also believed that he subordinated the struggle to political maneuvering.

The Congress elected Yehya Hammouda as Acting President of the PLO Executive Committee. Formerly he had been president of the Jordanian Lawyers' Association, however, since 1957 he had been barred from Jordan because he was accused of being a communist. Hammouda was given the job of contacting the Palestinian commando organizations and holding the fifth Palestinian National Congress within a period of six months.

\* \* \*

With the collapse of Arab military strength, the Palestinian guerrilla movement gained momentum and strength very quickly. This was most obvious in Jordan where there was no fast military build-up of the conventional armed forces as was the case in the UAR. The commando organizations armed themselves with great rapidity and in only 18 months, Al-Fateh, for example, was able to train thousands of combatants while, before the defeat, it had taken the same organization seven years (1958-65) to complete the structure of its first politico-military nucleus. Soon the commando organizations came to control the mass of the Palestinian population especially in the refugee camps in Jordan. With the battle of Karameh, 21 March 1968, the commando groups (and particularly Al-Fateh) emerged as undisputed leaders of the Palestinian population. Political education was intensified among the refugees with the aim of rediscovering their Palestinian identity. It was also about this time that the resistance was able to consolidate its military bases, the state of Jordan included, and to turn them into relatively secure bases, first of all in the Ghor mountains where a great number of fighters have been trained. The resistance movement, in short, asserted itself in the Arab world,



obliged Israel to take account of its existence, began to mobilize the Palestinian population, and set up the beginnings of an administrative infrastructure.

The armed struggle, intended to win popular support, began to bear fruit. Soon, the impression made by the resistance on Arab public opinion overtook the influence of Ba'thism and Nasserism and imposed itself upon the mass of Palestinians. All this led even King Hussein to declare in one of his press conferences after the Karameh battle "we are all *fedayin*."

Under these quickly changing circumstances a potential conflict was developing between the resistance movement and the Jordanian regime. One manifestation of this conflict was the official acceptance by the Jordanian regime of the peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of the UN Security Council resolution of 22 November 1967. In contrast to this we have the firm and unambiguous rejection by the entire Palestinian resistance movement of this sort of settlement. Another manifestation of the conflict was the confrontation which occurred in October 1968 between the commando organizations and the Jordanian authorities. The commandos were anxious about rumors of contacts between Jordanian and Israeli officials for a peaceful settlement. This led Al-Fateh and PFLP to issue separate statements proclaiming their determination to carry on the struggle at all costs.

Al-Fateh issued a statement on 20 October asserting that it was not opposed to peace and stability in the area; what it did oppose was surrender and acceptance of the *fait accompli*. It rejected any attempt by the United Nations to find a peaceful solution on the basis of the UN Security Council resolution of 22 November 1967. Further it declared that it was determined to continue fighting at all costs.

The statement of the PFLP issued on 22 October 1968 accused the "reactionary Palestinian right" of selling out the true interests of the Palestinian people to "counter-revolutionary forces." It compared the proposed peaceful solution to the disaster of 1948.

It also asserted that these were critical moments for the Palestinians; and it was up to the liberation movement to resist with all the means at its disposal the Security Council's resolution, and to condemn outright any Arab country that adopted a hesitant attitude to the Palestinian problem. Any attempt by

the "reactionary Palestinian right" to depict this attitude as an "interference in the internal affairs of the Arab countries" was part and parcel of the "reactionary Zionist imperialist" conspiracy to liquidate the Palestine problem.

The first open and serious clash between the commando groups and the Jordanian Government occurred on 4 November 1968. Tahir Dablan, a close associate of the Jordanian intelligence services, who had set up an armed group *Kataib al-Nasr* (Battalions of Victory), provoked an incident with Jordanian security forces to provide them with a pretext for opening fire on the Palestinian organizations. Immediately the Jordanian Royal Guard took up positions in the streets of Amman and around three camps—al-Wahadat, Hussein and Schneller. They shot at the people there and several deaths resulted. In addition, they bombarded the arms and food depots belonging to Al-Fateh. A curfew was imposed in Amman by the Jordanian authorities. King Hussein urged Yasser 'Arafat to negotiate a compromise. Shortly afterwards a Palestinian emergency council was set up which, in principle, was composed of all the Palestinian unions, parties, organizations and armed groups.

This council included a bureau of military coordination which was dependent upon it. The Palestinian organizations were driven to tighten up their ranks by the political context as well as by the necessity of uniting to form a national force in the face of Israel. The palace made the various Palestinian movements sign an agreement of fourteen points which, among other things, stipulated that there should be coordination between the military forces of the Palestinians and the Jordanians and which called for the formation of a unified staff and prohibited commando operations south of the Dead Sea. The agreement served the purpose of restoring peace between the commandos and the regime and was never implemented.

The guerrilla groups issued a statement announcing that agreement had been reached between the two sides, but without giving any details. On Wednesday evening Al-Fateh, in a broadcast from Cairo, had this to say in the wake of Jordanian events: "Al-Fateh does not accept to commit suicide with Arab bullets. The Palestinian organizations are alone competent to punish those Palestinians who deviate from the revolutionary line and we reject controls which, under slogans of 'coordination' and 'cooperation,' are designed to liquidate us." Al-Fateh went on to say that "Arab frontiers must remain open for our operations and we demand the immediate liberation of Palestinian

revolutionaries detained in Arab prisons. The insecurity of Palestinian fighters inside Arab frontiers cannot continue and we cannot guarantee to remain quiet in the future. We shall not pay the price of a peaceful settlement and we call on all Arabs to disown the Jarring mission."

One of the most interesting aspects of the crisis was the attitude taken by Egypt. According to *al-Abram* of 7 November, the guerrilla organizations dispatched an open letter to President Nasser asking for his personal intervention to settle the crisis. Nasser, however, took the position that, despite his anxiety at what was going on, he did not wish to interfere for fear that his move would be misconstrued; also Jordanian sovereignty had to be taken into account.

Meanwhile, in Cairo itself, President Nasser addressed a meeting of the Central Committee of the Arab Socialist Union with the following reference to events in Jordan: "Our stand regarding Palestinian resistance and commando action is one of complete support and assistance in their rightful struggle against Israeli occupation. The basis on which we must work is to maintain the unity of the Jordanian front and preserve the relations of confidence between the Jordanian people, government, army and commando organizations, and also to support the unity of the eastern front."

Finally, on 10 November a decree was issued by the Jordanian Minister of the Interior to the effect that arms could only be carried by those given a special permit by the government. This decree was in blatant contradiction to the agreement concluded between the Jordanian authorities and the principal guerrilla organizations.

\* \* \*

In accordance with the resolution adopted by the fourth Palestinian National Congress the PLO Executive Committee held several meetings with the different commando organizations. From these meetings a formula of representation for the National Assembly of the PLO was drawn up. This formula gave 33 seats to Al-Fateh, 12 seats to PFLP, 12 seats to al-Sa'iqah, 11 seats to the Executive Committee of the PLO, 5 seats to the PLA, 1 seat to the National Fund of the PLO, 3 seats to students', workers' and women's organizations, 28 seats to independents.

PFLP rejected the formula and refused to participate. It proposed to estab-

lish instead a front for all organizations to be formed on an egalitarian basis, i.e., one organization one vote. Al-Fateh, on the other hand, agreed to the formula and issued an important political statement a few days prior to the convening of the Congress. In this statement Al-Fateh announced its belief in the PLO as a general and proper framework for Palestinian national unity and said that it would participate in the conference and the PLO Executive Committee.

The fifth Palestinian National Congress was held between 1 and 4 February 1969 in Cairo. At the end of the Congress a new Executive Committee was formed headed by Yasser 'Arafat—official spokesman of Al-Fateh.\* The new Executive Committee was composed of four representatives of Al-Fateh, two of al-Sa'iqah, three independents and one from the old PLO executive committee.

At the end of this Congress a statement was issued. It declared that the Palestinian cause was facing the danger of liquidation in the interests of Zionism and imperialism through the UN Security Council resolution of 22 November 1967. It further warned against everything that went under the name of peaceful settlements including the Soviet project to lay down a timetable to implement the Security Council resolution. It also rejected any Arab policies or international interventions which contradicted the Palestinians' right to their country. It objected to any form of tutelage over Palestinian affairs and particularly over the development of the rising Palestinian resistance movement.

The statement called on the Palestinian masses, in particular, and the Arab masses, in general, to mobilize all their resources and put all their forces at the disposal of the armed Palestinian resistance, and to consider that the Palestine liberation movement was part of the overall Arab revolution.

The statement went on to say that the aims of the fighters should be directed against one target only—the Zionist enemy. The fundamental conflict

---

(\*) The present Executive Committee is composed of Yasser 'Arafat (president, Al-Fateh), Mohammad Najjar (Al-Fateh), Farouk al-Kaddoumi (Al-Fateh), Khaled al-Hasan (Al-Fateh), Youssef al-Bourgi (al-Sa'iqah), Ahmad al-Chehabi (al-Sa'iqah), Bilal al-Hasan (PDFLP), Kamal Nasser (independent), Hamed Abu Sette (independent), Yasser 'Amr (independent), Khalid Yashruti (treasurer, independent pro-Al-Fateh).

was with Zionism. All other internal conflicts should be shelved because they were secondary.

The statement warned against the "defeatist deviationists" who wanted to liquidate the Palestinian cause in favor of a spurious Palestinian entity subservient to Zionism and imperialism. Furthermore, the Congress drew up a plan to augment the effectiveness of the Palestinian resistance. This included, above all, a call for the unification of guerrilla action and financial resources, and the strengthening of the Palestinian Liberation Army.

Since this plan required additional finances the Palestinians were called upon to give more money and the Arab states to meet all their financial commitments to the Palestinian Liberation Organization. It urged Arab states to facilitate the residence, work and movement of Palestinians found on their soil.

After the fifth Congress Al-Fateh announced that it would retain its organizational independence.

\* \* \*

Towards the end of January 1969 an open conflict arose within the ranks of the PFLP. As previously mentioned the Front had originally consisted of three separate groups which had agreed to operate together. These were *Sbabab al-Thar*, all of them members of the Arab Nationalist Movement; *Abtal al-'Audab*; and *Jabbat Tabrir Filistine* (i.e., Ahmad Jibril's and Ahmad Za'rur's group).

As mentioned before the Jibril and Za'rur group split off from the others, though it continued to use the name "Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine" adding "General Command" to distinguish itself from the others. The split took place after the arrest of three of the Arab Nationalist Movement's leaders in Damascus: Dr. George Habash, Fayez Qaddurah and 'Ali Bushnaq. Ahmad Jibril's group refused to condemn the arrest on the grounds that it might have been the result of party political disputes only. However, this, probably, precipitated the split and did not simply cause it.

Moreover, during the month of August 1969, PFLP General Command witnessed another split. The group led by Ahmad Za'rur called itself the Arab Palestine Organization, while Ahmad Jibril's group retained the name of PFLP General Command.

Meanwhile, the Arab Nationalist Movement as a whole was undergoing a sharp shift to the left. This did not happen with the same speed and decisiveness everywhere in the Arab world, but it became clear that with the internal splits taking place most ANM members were in the leftist camp, whose organ of expression is the Beirut weekly *al-Hurriyab*. It was only to be expected that this conflict should make itself felt in the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The conflict persisted until Dr. Habash returned to Amman after being freed from Damascus. However, the Front refused to participate in the Palestine National Congress under the pressure of the left-wing group.

On 10 February 1969, the Beirut weekly *al-Hurriyab* carried a statement by the left-wing faction of the PFLP (under the leadership of Nayef Hawatmah who is a Jordanian and a graduate from the Arab University in Beirut, joined the ANM in the fifties, and early in the sixties became one of its leading members) pointing out that at a decisive PFLP conference held in Amman in August 1968\* the progressive-wing gained the day in its call for a revolutionary policy linked with the toiling masses. According to *al-Hurriyab* although the moderates had ostensibly approved the conference proposals they had acted in a manner which is contrary to these proposals. For example, on 28 January 1969, they arrested three members of the progressive-wing in the cultural club of one of the refugee camps in Amman. Then five more were arrested in al-Baqa' camp, and six others in various places.

The progressives called for an immediate meeting of the coordinating bureau of the resistance which the moderates refused to attend. The bureau strongly condemned the arrests and sent a delegation to the moderates to ask them to release the prisoners. The request was turned down.

In a communiqué published on 15 February 1969, George Habash, leader of the moderate-wing of the PFLP, declared that while the front had been exposing the "reactionaries" and "petit bourgeois" and their luke-warm attitude towards the Palestine cause, while it had been challenging the Zionist enemy in the occupied territory and outside it, "opportunist pockets" had appeared

---

(\*) The (August) political statement of PFLP published in this book is the second part of the report of the August conference. The first part has not been published yet. In any case the first part deals with the internal affairs of the ANM and is not directly relevant to the subject of this book. The program outlined in the Basic Political Report of PFLP (August) is associated with the progressive wing of the Front which has become now the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP).

within the Front's own ranks who sought to impede its revolutionary progress. These were a group of "adolescent cafe intellectuals" who subscribed to scientific socialism in name only.

On 24 February, the Beirut weekly *al-Hurriyah* officially announced that the progressive-wing of the PFLP had broken away and formed an organization to be known as the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP).

The causes behind this split can be summarized as follows:

The Marxist group led by Nayef Hawatemah, who was behind the split, called for breaking off of all relations of subservience with the Arab regimes whether they were progressive or reactionary. Furthermore, this group strongly criticized the other Palestinian organizations, especially the PLO and Al-Fateh, on the grounds that, like the progressive Arab regimes, they were led by the "petit bourgeoisie" and its ideology, which had proved its failure in the 1967 defeat. The new Marxist group called for a long-term war of popular liberation against imperialism and Zionism. They also called for the establishment of a Marxist-Leninist party completely committed to the ideology favorable to the dispossessed peasants and workers (the Asian proletariat).

On the other hand the majority of the PFLP, led by George Habash, while agreeing to the basic analysis of the Hawatemah group, believed in maintaining certain relations with the progressive Arab governments. These relations they see as necessary to secure financial and military support vital for the survival of PFLP and the resistance movement in general.

As for the Palestinian people, Habash maintained that the war with Israel is a national liberation war which requires the recruitment of the widest sections of the Palestinian people, a great number of whom are "petit bourgeois." Thus to alienate and antagonize the "petit bourgeois" class would bring a heavy loss to the national cause. At the same time, Habash stressed that the leading cadres of PFLP should be in the hands of those who are committed to the ideology of the proletariat.

\* \* \*

On 3 April 1969, the PLO Executive Committee issued a statement in

which it stated that the PLO had established a new command for a number of Palestine guerrilla groups. It would be called the "Command for Armed Palestinian Struggle" (CAPS) and would include al-'Asifah, the Popular Liberation Forces, al-Sa'iqah, and the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine.\* The PFLP under George Habash has not agreed to participate in the Command for Armed Palestinian Struggle. The establishment of the Command was described as an "essential step towards the unification of commando activity and armed struggle." The Executive Committee took this decision because it was profoundly aware of how necessary it was that the Palestinian revolution should be unified in order to escalate and develop guerrilla activity.

The PLO had decided that from now on all reports of the operations of forces attached to the new command would be exclusively issued in the form of statements in the name of a military spokesman speaking for the new command, instead of the communiqués hitherto issued by each commando organization individually.

\* \* \*

In addition to the above-mentioned Palestinian commando organizations, towards the end of 1968 the Egyptian daily newspaper *al-Abram* announced that there had been in existence a resistance organization known as the "Arab Sinai Organization." This organization coordinates its activities with other Palestinian resistance groups in the Gaza Strip.

\* \* \*

On 10 April 1969, the "National Command" (pan-Arab) of the Ba'th Party, backing the faction ruling in Iraq and opposed to the party regime in Syria, announced that they had formed their own commando organization called "The Arab Liberation Front."

The new organization was not intended to replace existing commando activity but to give it wider (inter-Arab dimensions). It is formed of Pales-

---

(\*) The Arab Liberation Front (*Jibhat al-Tahrir al-'Arabiyyah*) joined CAPS in July 1969, the Arab Palestine Organization (*Munazamat Filistin al-'Arabiyyah*) in August 1969, Popular Struggle Front (*Jibhat al-Nidal al-Sha'bi*) in September 1969, PFLP General Command (Ahmad Jibril's group) in October 1969.



tinians and nationals of various Arab countries who are members of the Ba'ith Party.

\* \* \*

On 10 April, King Hussein addressed the National Press Club in Washington. In his address Hussein presented a six-point program for settling the Middle East conflict. He declared that he spoke for President Nasser as well as for Jordan. The program promised to end the state of belligerency, recognize the existence of the state of Israel, and guarantee Israel freedom of navigation in the Suez Canal and Gulf of 'Aqaba.

On 15 April 1968, the Popular Liberation Forces of the Palestine Liberation Organization, al-'Asifah, al-Sa'iqah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP) issued a statement rejecting King Hussein's six-point Middle East plan. The statement was distributed after a meeting held on 14 April to discuss what was termed as "the grave and dangerous situation through which the Palestine issue is passing due to plans being put forward, especially the latest Jordanian plan, which affects the fate of the Palestine issue and the future of the armed resistance to Israeli occupation."

The statement said that the five organizations decided the following at their meeting:

1. To reject the Jordanian plan in its entirety, and to reject also all plans for the liquidation (of the Palestine issue) as well as all solutions proposed earlier. The organizations have also agreed to a unified plan to face this serious situation.
2. To form delegations which would contact certain Arab countries seeking a clarification of their position concerning the proposed plans rejected by the resistance movement.

In spite of the existence of numerous differing commando organizations there is complete agreement among them concerning the rejection of a political settlement of the Palestine problem to which they do not fully agree. Finally it should be noted that all these organizations have made it very clear on numerous occasions that their war of liberation is not directed against the

Jews as such but against the Zionist state which has rendered the Palestinians a homeless and dispossessed people.

Yasser 'Arafat of Al-Fateh in his press conference held in Damascus on 28 October declared: "The Palestinian revolution is against Zionism and not the Jews. Our Jewish brothers the sons of the Israeli sect are Egyptians in Egypt, Syrians in Syria, Lebanese in Lebanon, Palestinians in Palestine. We welcome every free and honest person of any nationality and religion to work within the framework of our humanitarian revolution, which aims at liberating our occupied lands and establishing our Palestinian democratic state."

The Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP) presented the following proposed solution at the sixth Palestinian National Congress held in Cairo between 1 and 4 September 1969: "The establishment of the people's democratic state of Palestine in which Arabs and Jews will live without any discrimination whatsoever. A state which is against all forms of class and national subjugation, and which gives both Arabs and Jews the right to develop their national culture . . . The people's democratic state of Palestine will be an integral part of an Arab federal state in this area, . . . hostile to colonialism, imperialism, Zionism and Arab Palestinian reaction."

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) in its February 1969 Political, Organizational and Military Report states: "The aim of the Palestinian Liberation Movement is the establishment of a national democratic state in Palestine in which both Arabs and Jews will live together as citizens equal both in rights and in duties. The state will form an integral part of the progressive democratic national Arab entity which lives in peace with all the progressive forces in the world."