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The PLO in the driver's seat

Foreshadowing the Palestinian state, Arafat formally assumes responsibility for the legal and administrative affairs of the West Bank

The Palestine Liberation Organization has formally assumed responsibility for the legal and administrative affairs of the West Bank.

In a decree issued in Baghdad, Iraq, on August 23, PLO Chairman Yaser Arafat said that laws regulating the affairs of the Palestinians in that territory would remain in effect until the Palestine National Council said otherwise, and that the PLO would henceforth cover the wages and direct the activities of West Bank civil servants.

The move came 23 days after King Hussein of Jordan publicly announced that he was severing all legal and administrative links with the West Bank and stopping payments to some 18,000 Palestinian civil servants in the territory who had until then received their salaries from the Jordanian government.

FIRST

The Baghdad decree, hailed by many as the first measure undertaken by the PLO as the de facto government of the West Bank, stated:

"The Chairman of the PLO Executive Committee (Yaser Arafat),

"By virtue of the prerogatives delegated to him,

"On the basis of the resolution of the Executive Committee of 21 August 1988,

Intifada multiplies

In response to the large number of requests received by this publication, the *Intifada* fortnightly will be produced on a weekly basis effective immediately.

"And after the decision of the fraternal Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to sever legal and administrative ties with the West Bank, and its subsequent measures,

"Decides the following:

"1. Laws, rules and regulations which were in effect in the occupied Palestinian territories until July 31, 1988 shall remain in force until amended or abrogated by the appropriate Palestinian legislative authorities.

"2. Civil servants employed in public departments and institutions in the occupied Palestinian territories who were affected by the recent Jordanian decisions and measures shall remain in their posts and continue to carry out their assigned duties.

"3. The Palestine Liberation Organization assumed full responsibility toward all civil servants affected by the decree on the basis of their due rights and the terms of their employment.

"(Signed) Yaser Arafat."

TALKS

The decree was preceded by a series of talks between PLO representatives and Jordanian officials during which agreement was reached on a variety of coordination measures to facilitate the transition from Jordanian to Palestinian authority on the West Bank and to avert jolting changes that could increase the problems of the West Bank Palestinians, who are already having to deal with barbarous Israeli oppression.

Several Palestinian leaders, including Arafat, had noted earlier that the PLO had received no prior notice of Jordan's disengagement from the West Bank and that no Jordanian effort had been made to consult the PLO before the disengagement was announced.

All PLO figures, including Arafat, have nevertheless



emphasized the "special relationship" between the Palestinian and Jordanian peoples.

The Unified National Command of the Palestinian Uprising in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, in its two latest leaflets (*see report elsewhere in this issue*)

has hailed the Jordanian move as a Palestinian triumph, and commentators all over the world have noted that the new development puts paid to U.S. and Israeli hopes the Palestinian problem can be settled without reference to the Palestinians or their national aspirations.

Intifada leaders push for statehood

Unified Command defies Rabin's state-busting measures and urges PLO action after Jordan's disengagement

The Unified Command of the Uprising (UNCU) has defied Israeli measures to nip Palestinian government plans in the bud and called on the Palestine Liberation Organization to step into the breach left by the severance of Jordan's ties with the West Bank.

In its 24th leaflet, produced clandestinely and distributed in the Occupied Territories on August 22, UNCU once more hailed the Jordanian disengagement as one of the *intifada's* proudest achievements and expressed confidence that the Palestine National Council, the Palestinians' parliament-in-exile, would now "adopt a clear and comprehensive political program that will mobilize maximum international support for our people's national rights" and "take practical steps to support the *intifada*."

UNANIMOUS

The UNCU statement was seen as a unanimous decision by the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories to back the PLO's reported plan to issue a declaration of independence and form a transitional government.

The PLO's Central Council, which serves as a Palestinian cabinet, released a statement on August 3 convening the Palestine National Council. The PNC is expected to meet in Algiers by October to study steps to be taken in support of the *intifada* after the Jordanian disengagement.

In an interview published in the mid-August issue of *Intifada*, PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat said that the

possibility of declaring independence and forming a government-in-exile had been studied by the organization's legal and political committees, which would submit their findings and recommendations to the PNC at its next meeting. Other senior PLO leaders have since said that they expect the legislative body to issue a declaration of independence and form a government-in-exile.

COMMITTEES

In a move widely interpreted as a desperate Israeli attempt to undermine Palestinian government plans, the Jewish state's defense minister, Yitzhak Rabin, issued a statement on August 18 declaring Palestinian "popular committees" illegal and subjecting their members and anyone who supports them or is found in possession of their literature to severe penalties, including 10-year prison terms and deportation.

To drive his point home, Rabin preceded his ban with an August 17 announcement that 25 members of the popular committees would be expelled from their homeland.

The committees, ubiquitous clusters of Palestinian nationalists, act as the Unified Command's hands and eyes in every village and neighborhood in the Occupied Territories, providing Palestinians with community services designed to reduce dependence on Israel and cushion Israel's economic blows.

UNCU's Leaflet 24, defying the defense minister's new "law," said more popular committees would be

established throughout the Occupied Territories, providing the 1.5 million Palestinians with more "lungs" to sustain them.

Assuring the Palestinians that every committee member deported would be replaced by a dozen, the leaflet informed Israel that its deportation policy "will fail now as it has failed in the past." Rabin's measures, it added, would only escalate the *intifada*, especially with the Palestinian state "no longer a distant goal."

DISOBEDIENCE

In pursuit of that goal, it urged new efforts to buttress the civil disobedience campaign, including the resumption of "popular education" as of the beginning of September.

The leaflet was dedicated to "the martyrs who fell in captivity" - Palestinians who were murdered by Israeli prison authorities while under detention over the past two weeks (*see report in this issue*).

It said torturing prisoners to death and shooting them in cold blood were symptoms of the "hysteria" that had gripped Israel with the escalation of the *intifada*, and it called on the international community to stop contemplating its navel and start intervening to end Israel's expulsion of Palestinians from Palestine and close down the 3,000-inmate, "Auschwitz-like" Ansar-3 detention camp, where Palestinians arrested without charge or trial were receiving inhuman treatment culminating in murder.



'Put your sanctions where your mouth is'

International protests against Israeli expulsion of Palestinians are meaningless as long as the protestors continue to back Israel militarily, politically and economically, Palestinian leaders say

West Bank leaders have dismissed American and other objections to Israel's deportation of Palestinians as an instance of much sound and fury signifying nothing.

August 26 editorials in two Arab East Jerusalem newspapers noted that expressions of Western opposition to Israel's expulsion policy were meaningless when they were accompanied by uninterrupted Western political, military and economic support for the Jewish state.

The commentaries followed an August 22 protest delivered to Israel by the U.S. government, which reportedly warned that Israel's deportation policy, if maintained, "could damage our bilateral relations." The protest, which came from acting Secretary of State John Whitehead, was a reaction to the announcement on August 17 that 25 more Palestinians had been served with deportation orders. It urged the Israelis to "reconsider the expulsion orders or, at a minimum, refrain from

carrying them out."

LAW

On August 23, the 12-nation European Community (EC) issued a statement in Athens, which holds the EC's rotating presidency, protesting the Israeli practice of detaining Palestinians without trial and the recent deportations from the West Bank and Gaza. It called on Israel to "assure the protection of the inhabitants of the occupied territories in compliance with international law and human rights standards."

The U.S., the EC and the International Committee of the Red Cross have said that the deportations violate the Fourth Geneva Convention. Washington has said that if Palestinians facing deportation have committed crimes, they should be formally charged and brought to trial. U.S. government spokesmen have added that 60 Palestinians have been expelled or served with expulsion orders in 1988 alone, which, they note, makes deportations "the

norm, rather than the exception." According to Israeli figures, around 1,000 Palestinians have been expelled since the West Bank and Gaza were occupied in 1967. Palestinian records place the figure closer to 2,000.

The U.S. protest to Israel reportedly said that "an increasing number of Americans are wondering what Israel is doing."

"What we, the Palestinians, are wondering is 'What is the United States doing?'" responded an editorial in the East Jerusalem *al-Fajr*.

It added: "The United States will not qualify as a sponsor of peace in the region as long as it does not end its flagrant pro-Israel bias and curtail its arms shipments to and its political and economic support of the Jewish state."

SANCTIONS

Another East Jerusalem daily, *ash-Shaab*, said the harsh words from Washington, Athens and the ICRC had left Israeli leaders unperturbed, as had repeated UN resolutions condemning the

deportations, all of which "will lead nowhere if they are not backed by political and economic sanctions."

It asked, "Why would the leaders of Israel heed U.S. calls as long as they know that the American veto will shield them from international criticism at the UN Security Council? And why would they take European reprimands seriously when their political and economic interests remain secure?"

In support of the two newspapers' view, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir went on *Israel Radio* on August 26 to assure his people that the deportations would continue and that U.S.-Israeli relations were and would remain solid.

"There is no tension with the government of the United States," he said. "We do not have to agree on everything." Israel, not the U.S., was responsible for order in the Occupied Territories, and since Washington recognized this, there was "no reason to discuss the expulsion policy," he said.

The 25 Palestinians who received expulsion orders on August 17 are to be thrown out of their country because they are said to belong to the popular committees looking after the civil affairs of the people of Gaza and the West Bank.

Israel jails the UN

A United Nations report says that one third of the total number of UN staff detained or imprisoned around the world are in Israeli jails.

The report, released on August 24, states that Israel has arrested 60 employees of the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) since last October.

All arrests were made in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, where UNRWA provides Palestinian refugees with relief aid.



Infanticide

1,800 beating-induced abortions reported to UN as Amnesty International speaks of thousands of bludgeoned Palestinians

As the U.S. continued its heated debate on whether American women should have the right to abortion, hundreds of Palestinian women were being clubbed and gassed into forced abortions by Israeli soldiers, the United Nations was told this month.

In the nine months of the *intifada*, 1,800 Palestinian women have suffered miscarriages due to beatings and use of tear gas by Israeli soldiers, according to figures submitted to a UN human rights panel in Geneva on August 23 by the Palestine Liberation Organization.

In a memorandum to the UN Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, the PLO said that the Israeli occupation forces had, in January 1988, "started to systematically attack pregnant women and beat them up until many of them miscarry. Within days of the beginning of this policy, tens of pregnant women miscarried or gave birth to stillborn babies as a result of savage beatings or deliberate use of tear gas inside their homes... So far, 1,800 such miscarriages have been reported."

REPORT

A report issued by *Amnesty International* on August 17 said that "several thousand Palestinians throughout the West Bank and Gaza," including "women, children and the elderly," had "been injured, many seriously after being beaten by Israeli soldiers."

Some Palestinians were beaten so severely that they died of their injuries, *Amnesty* said.

According to the figures submitted to the UN sub-commission, the Israeli occupation forces have since December 9, 1987:

- Killed 354 Palestinians;
- Injured 12,500, of whom 5,000 were handicapped for life;
- Imprisoned 23,000 without charges or trial;
- Demolished 550 homes in a campaign of collective punishment;
- Deported 28. (The deportation figure covers the period up to August 8 and does not include Palestinians deported or served with expulsion notices since. According to U.S. figures announced in August, 60 Palestinians have been deported or given deportation orders since January 1, 1988.)

The *Amnesty* report, which concentrated on the Israeli policy of beatings, said that in addition to breaking into homes and clubbing their occupants, Israeli soldiers had dragged wounded Palestinians out of hospitals and beaten the doctors and the medical staff in the process.

AFFIDAVITS

The 16-page report, titled "Israel and the Occupied Territories: Excessive Force," included affidavits from Palestinian and foreign victims and eyewitnesses.

In many of them, a pattern of blows to the genitals emerges. In one case, a 33-year-old kicked repeatedly in the genitals had to

have his right testicle removed.

In one of eight documented cases of death by beating, eyewitnesses told how Khader Tarazi, 19, a Christian from Gaza, was beaten with clubs and rifle butts in the living room of his neighbor's home until he was unconscious.

"He lay on the floor," the affidavit said. "One of the soldiers hoisted him up and threw him down on the cement floor. Another soldier kicked him in the genitals. He was then dragged out of the house and thrown on the hood of the Jeep, his hand hanging over the front of the Jeep, his feet up against the windscreen and his arms outstretched. He was again struck on the head, back, arms and legs... There was blood spurting out of his mouth and nose. The soldiers drove off with him."

He was taken to the Ansar-2 detention center, where he was unable to talk to the other inmates. The inmates, continuing the report, testified: "We told the Israeli guards that he might die shortly. They refused to come and take a look at him. Four to six prisoners took the dying man out of the tent... We were ordered to take off our clothes as punishment for having taken out the dying man."

AMBULANCE

Eventually, six soldiers carried Tarazi away but brought him back 20 minutes later: the doctor they had taken him to had given him no medicine and had not called an



The disgusted dozen

12 American eyewitnesses spend two weeks watching Israeli soldiers in action and pronounce them 'worse than animals'

Twelve American human rights activists ended a two-week stay in the West Bank and Gaza Strip on August 26 with the statement that Israeli soldiers were behaving worse than animals.

The 12 Americans are environmentalists, teachers, clergymen and scholars invited to the Occupied Territories by the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) as part of a program called *Eyewitness* designed to show the world what Palestinian life was like under Israeli occupation.

One of the 12, Jacqueline Muth, a freelance writer from West Virginia, said she saw a seven-year-old refugee girl whose teeth were knocked out and lip split by Israeli soldiers because she peeked out of her house during curfew.

The soldiers, she told a *Reuters* correspondent as her colleagues nodded their agreement, "are worse than animals. Evidently they have no conscience whatsoever. I don't know how they could do these things."

SHOT

Norman Finkelstein, a political science professor at Brooklyn College, said that on his first day in the West Bank Israeli plainclothesmen shot dead a 12-year-old boy running beside him in the Jalazoun refugee camp.

The boy, he said, was running away when he was killed.

"I cannot imagine circumstances that justify acts that can only be described as terrorism," he said. "There is simply no excuse for the things we saw."

As the group left Jalazoun, the army imposed a curfew, with "no pretense or reason for it," Finkelstein added. "In my language, those curfews are taking villages hostage."

The 12 American eyewitnesses said they would lecture and write articles about their experiences on their return home.

Their sponsor, the ADC, is an organization established in Washington by Arab-Americans trying to counteract the influence of the powerful Jewish lobby, which has for years convinced Americans that the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories were enjoying improved conditions and content with the status quo.

Earlier in August, the ADC paid for posters in some 300 subway cars serving Washington, Maryland and Virginia. The posters, which showed Israeli soldiers preparing to beat Palestinian women with their rifle butts, urged Americans to witness what the tax dollars they were sending to Israel were doing, and called on the U.S. to judge Palestinian human rights by the same measuring stick they used for human rights in the Soviet Union and other countries.



ambulance. An ambulance did come at midnight. It took him to hospital, where he died at 1:00 a.m.

"A doctor who examined the

body before the funeral said that Khader Tarazi had a fractured spine, right frontal skull fracture, fractures of each arm and right hand, and

multiple lacerations of the back, stomach, face, legs and arms. The extent of his internal injuries could not be assessed."



The Israeli prison guard's handbook

How Palestinians jailed without charges can be killed with impunity

An Israeli inquiry has concluded that Israeli soldiers were fully justified in killing two unarmed Palestinian prisoners who were protesting prison conditions at the Ansar-3 (Ketziot) detention center in the Jewish state.

The two Palestinians were killed, and a third was wounded, on August 16, when prison guards opened fire with live ammunition on a demonstration of prisoners held without charges or trial at the detention center, which is located in the Negev desert close to the Egyptian-Israeli border.

An Israeli reserve soldier who was in Ansar-3 when the trouble started told the Israeli press: "It was not necessary to use live ammunition, since no one's life was in danger. The prisoners were detained behind high fences, and the gate was locked. There was no physical contact between the prisoners and the soldiers, and therefore the shooting was completely unnecessary."

OFFICER

Israeli military police, however, have decided to take the word of a high-ranking Israeli officer, who told them that the soldiers obeyed standing orders and opened fire "only because their lives were in danger." Initial reports of the incident indicated that the shots that killed the two Palestinians, a Gazan and a West Banker, were fired by a high-ranking Israeli officer.

The August 16 prison demonstration was triggered by substandard conditions at Ansar-3, a concentration camp set up around four months ago to absorb the spillover of Palestinians arrested without charges and imprisoned without trial in the West Bank and Gaza. Over 10,000 Palestinians are in Israeli jails now. Around 3,000 of them are

Deadly pattern

Covering up Israeli brutality is a time-honored routine

The Ketziot cover-up is part of a time-honored Israeli pattern.

Similar actions against Palestinians in and out of prison have been routinely covered up, either by imposing news blackouts on them or, when the international outcry was too vehement to ignore, by in-house investigations that invariably declared the perpetrators innocent or let them off with mild reprimands.

Among the more recent incidents that Israel has swept under the rug:

-- *April 4, 1988:* An Israeli battalion commander identified only as "Colonel G" chased a Palestinian resident of Bani Naim. The colonel was in a helicopter. The Palestinian was unarmed and running away from a demonstration in the Hebron area of the West Bank. The helicopter hovered low over the Palestinian and the colonel shot



in Ansar-3, crammed 28 to a tent, with wooden planks for beds. Substandard food, insufficient water for bathing, one bar of soap per tent, a lack of fresh clothes and an absence of reading material have brought protests from civil rights groups in Israel and abroad. Collective punishment has exacerbated the situation, with prisoners being beaten regularly and forced to sit immobile in the sun for long periods. Prisoners who escape these penalties don't have it much better: they sit shoulder-to-shoulder in their sweltering tents, which their guards force them to keep open to the scorching sun for "security reasons."

STRIKE

A week before the demonstration, the Palestinians in Ansar-3 staged a one-day hunger strike to protest prison conditions. Earlier, they had smuggled out a letter describing what they were going through and demanding the closure of the camp.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has repeatedly protested to the Israeli authorities that the Negev desert camp constitutes a violation of international law, with specific reference to the Fourth Geneva Convention, which forbids an occupying power from transferring anyone out of the occupied territories. The violation, it has said, is particularly serious in view of the "harsh climatic conditions" of the Negev facility.

Two days after the Ansar-3 killings, the ICRC issued a statement expressing its "consternation" and noting that it "deplores these tragic incidents and appeals to the Israeli authorities to take the appropriate measures."

The measures Israel deemed appropriate were announced four days later: an inquiry that absolved Israeli soldiers of all blame.

The prison killings came as the entire Gaza Strip was alive with protests and demonstrations challenging Israeli authority in the territory. News of the shootings spread immediately, escalating the protests despite violent Israeli measures that included round-the-clock curfews, mass arrests, indiscriminate beatings, tear-gassing of homes and public facilities, and the use of live ammunition against demonstrators.

him, leaving him there to bleed to death. Loud protests over the murder forced the Israeli army to start an investigation. The investigation, which ended on August 25, confirmed the facts as related by eye witnesses, but the army refused to charge the colonel with any crime, stating that the shooting was "not done maliciously." The officer was reprimanded and given time off to study at a university.

-- *August 17, 1988:* A 15-year-old Palestinian was standing outside his sister's home in the West Bank city of Nablus when he was hit by a rubber bullet fired by soldiers dispersing a nearby group of stone-throwing youths. The boy, Mohammad Jamil Nabulsi, fell to the ground. A soldier ran up to him, held a gun to his face and fired at point blank range. The rubber

bullet hit his eye, which was later surgically removed. Other soldiers then kicked him and showered him with rifle-butt blows, breaking his jaw. He was taken to military headquarters, where he was made to stand for two hours without medical attention. One soldier gave him a dirty rag to hold to his eye. Others beat him for bleeding on the wall. A doctor at St. John's Ophthalmic Hospital in East Jerusalem later confirmed that the bullet that destroyed Nabulsi's eye was fired at close range, and the broken jaw and multiple wounds to the face and body were consistent with eye-witnesses' reports about the beatings. An army spokesman, approached about the incident by a *Reuters* correspondent, said an investigation had indicated that the soldiers had used "reasonable force" and could not be accused of brutality.

-- *August 22, 1988:* Soldiers broke into the home of 42-year-old Hani Shami in the Gaza Strip's Jabalya refugee camp. Shami and members of his family were beaten, and Shami was taken to Israeli military headquarters, where he was "interrogated."

He was beaten so severely in the process that he was dead by the next day. No action has been taken so far.

-- *August 23, 1988:* Israeli soldiers chasing demonstrators in the Gaza Strip's Shate' refugee camp hurled several tear-gas canisters into the home of 13-year-old Ala' Abu Foul, who was handicapped and confined to a wheelchair. Overcome by the gas before he could get out of the house, Ala' fainted. He died overnight. No action has been taken.



Palestine? It's already here

*American-Jewish scholar and Israeli officer
announce the rise of the new state*

The Palestinians "have already created a state," according to American-Jewish scholar Jerome Segal, because they have frustrated Israeli attempts to rule them.

Segal added, "Israel has authority only in the sense that in a stick-up, the criminal is able to force the victim to pay up."

He made the statement in Israel, where he was visiting toward the end of August in an effort to persuade the Jewish state to get out of the occupied Palestinian territories.

Founder of the Jewish Committee for Israeli-Palestinian Peace, Segal is the University of Maryland professor who is credited with inspiring a draft declaration of independence found in a Palestinian leader's office in the West Bank four weeks ago. The leader, Faisal Husseini, has since been slammed in jail for a third six-month term without trial or charges.

Segal is now urging the Palestinians to delay their declaration of independence until after the November elections in Israel, and to accompany it with a peace initiative that recognizes Israel.

He told his interviewer that his message to the Israelis was "to declare victory by leaving the occupied territories and going home," which was the only way they could have security and democracy.

VILLAGES

As the American academician was announcing the existence of the Palestinian state, the Israeli daily *Haaretz* was reporting the first concrete signs of Palestinian independence in the West Bank.

In a front-page story, the paper quoted an Israeli army reserve officer as saying that a number of West Bank villages had declared their own state of autonomy and were flying PLO flags.

The reservist said the villages were located some distance from the main roads, and the army was steering clear of them, its hands being full keeping the traffic flowing along the main arteries and contending with protests in refugee camps and nearby towns.

The policy of non-interference, the reservist said, was being carried out at the cost of losing control of events.

Weiss squad

American Rabbi Avi Weiss is lobbying the owners of a New Orleans motel to demonstrate their support of Israel by changing their establishment's name.

Weiss, a supporter of the lunatic-fringe Gush Emunim, which claims the West Bank as God's gift to the Jews, went down to New Orleans, Louisiana in mid-August to attend the U.S. Republican Party's national convention.

He found himself booked in a motel that proudly advertised itself as the "West Bank Holiday Inn," and the name offended him mightily, although it was a reference to the west bank of the Mississippi River.

When last seen, Rabbi Weiss was trying to persuade the management to change the motel's name to the "Judea and Samaria Holiday Inn."

"If he succeeds," quipped an Arab American, "there will be a Judea and Samaria in every country that has a river, and the Israelis may eventually claim Paris."