

The Intifada — Battle of Identity

While trying to market the Shamir plan under the guise of «free elections,» the Zionist authorities embarked on the most sweeping measures yet to squash the Palestinian struggle for freedom in the occupied territories, culminating in the battle of the ID cards.

Palestinians under occupation achieved a partial victory on July 22nd, when 200,000 West Bank students returned to elementary schools and high school graduating classes, following a seven-month closure. On August 2nd, 70,000 more went back to school with the reopening of junior highs. On August 30th, 10th and 11th grade classes were finally resumed, but universities and other insitutes of higher learning remain closed.

Reopening the schools has been a persistent demand of the intifada as highlighted by the United National Leadership's call for a day of fasting by Palestinians all over the world (children exempted) on July 19th, to stress this demand, as well as protesting expulsions and the detention conditions at Ansar III.

Having lost four months of the 1987-88 academic year, and all but a month of the current one, it was a top priority for students to resume their education. However, occupation troops continue to be stationed in the vicinity of schools, contrary to the promises of the civil administration. The soldiers' ongoing provocations against students, and the intermittent closing of some schools, are signs that the occupation authorities are hoping for any excuse to close the schools again - and for good. Thus, international vigilance should not slack off in monitoring this basic field of human rights.

In call no. 43, the United National Leadership stressed: «... the occupation authorities decided to reopen schools as an unavoidable result of the persistence of the intifada which gathers increasing international sympathy for its confrontation of the enemy's policy of enforcing ignorance against our people for more than two years in particular.

We call on both students and teachers to condense the curriculum to make up for what has been lost... We call on all to continue the popular education program to make up for gaps in the regular schooling. All international humanitarian and academic institutions are asked to put pressure on the occupation authorities and oblige them to reopen the universities and higher insitutes.»

«TRANSFER, STARVATION... GENOCIDE»

The partial reopening of the schools stands out as the single Israeli concession to date. On all other counts, the intifada is facing a critical juncture, politically and physically. There are few on the international scene who would claim that Shamir's plan is a

peace offer commensurate to the PLO's. Still, there is a real danger that the US's promotion of Shamir's plan will serve to divert from meaningful steps towards peace, giving Israel time and leeway to try once again to beat down the intifada.

The Zionist leadership's sense of urgency about doing away with the intifada has only been increased in the recent period due to a whole array of factors, including the internal effects on Israel itself: declining morale in the army, the resurgence of economic problems as reflected in rising unemployment, and discontent among settlers due to the army's alleged inability to protect them. Behind these factors looms the simple fact that over a year of brutal repression has not dented the intifada's momentum. On the contrary, in addition to ongoing popular organization and recurring demonstrations, there are signs of increasing militancy and radicalization. From May on, there were increased instances of attacking Israelis with knives and firearms, as well as abductions. This led to the death of several soldiers and settlers, and had a noticeable impact on the settler society at large. Perhaps most shocking was the implication of

Starvation - chicken farm destroyed by the occupation forces

