

Palestine - reunited in protest

Within hours of the Rishon Letzion massacre, occupied Palestine was in a turmoil of Palestinian rage and continued Zionist aggression. In a spontaneously organized general strike, later extended to three days by the United National Leadership, Palestinian workers in Israel returned to the territories in cars and buses bearing black flags. The Gaza Strip exploded despite the immediate imposition of a curfew which it took the occupation army all day to enforce. Seven more Palestinians were killed as the army confronted demonstrators in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, bringing the death toll to 14, equaling the highest number killed on a single day previously in the intifada (the April 1988 protests of Abu Jihad's assassination).

In the course of three days, 20 Palestinians were shot dead and over 800 wounded. Meanwhile, 12 Israeli soldiers were injured by stones, four of them seriously enough to require hospitalization. According to an Israeli army spokesman, the «sheer scope and intensity of the rioting has not been seen in at least the past six months» (Associated Press, May 21st).

Palestinians living in the Zionist state immediately declared a general strike, while Palestinian communities from the Galilee in the north to Naqab villages in the south, and the Triangle, Jaffa, Haifa, Ramle and Lydd, took to the streets in protest. The Zionist forces had to take on a nation-wide intifada in what the Israeli media termed unprecedentedly broad disturbances. Nazareth took on the appearance of a West Bank town as masked youth burned tires and threw stones at Zionist police, vehicles and buildings. Protests continued, day and night, for three days, defying curfews, teargas and rubber bullets, and causing Shamir to warn that «Israeli Arabs» had «exceeded the bounds of the permissible» (Guardian, May 23rd).

For the better part of a week, the Israeli army and police were kept busy with having to send reinforcements into a number of places. Even the guard force in prisons was beefed up as Palestinian prisoners, who had been planning hunger strikes to protest their illegal detention, joined in the all-

Palestine protest. Not until May 27th did the army begin to ease its curfew in the Gaza Strip - the longest ever imposed on the whole area. On the same day, the United National Leadership called for a general strike until June 7th in continued protest of the massacre, meanwhile marking the historical Zionist aggressions of June - the 1967 occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the 1982 invasion of Lebanon.

Palestinian militants in the occupied territories staged several attacks in the week following the massacre: a settler was killed in Jerusalem on May 20th, while a bomb in the city one week later killed another Israeli and injured ten others. In the days between, there was an armed attack on an Israeli military patrol in Hebron.

Spillover to Jordan

On May 22nd, *Haaretz* reported that Israeli troops had been put on alert for possible intervention against Palestinians in Israel or Jerusalem, for the first time since the intifada began (*International Herald Tribune*, May 23rd). Israeli political and military leaders expressed unease at the spillover of the intifada to Palestinian communities adjacent to the 1967 occupied territories.

Indeed Jordan joined the intifada for three days, with thousands upon thousands demonstrating in the Palesti-

nian camps and major Jordanian cities. Baqaa Camp near Amman and Irbid in the north were the scenes of the biggest protests against the massacre in Palestine, and also the places where two youths were killed, as the Jordanian security forces tried to keep the protesters within bounds. However, it was obvious that the mass anger at the Zionists' atrocities had linked up with the frustrations of people who until a few months ago had no outlet whatsoever for expressing their political sentiments. There was an attempt to storm the US embassy, and cars, hotels and businesses were attacked.

At the same time, groups linked to the Jordanian intelligence, the comprador class, some Islamic forces, and even the Israeli intelligence, were at work. These groups share a common interest in sabotaging the new democracy as well as Palestinian-Jordanian relations on the popular level. This posed a problem for the nationalist forces whose interests lie in developing the new democracy and exhibiting more solidarity with the intifada, not in promoting violence for its own sake.

The government let out hints that it was prepared to send the army into the camps and cities, and as the protests subsided, a week of mourning for the victims of Zionist terror was declared, with black flags hanging in every street of the Palestinian camps in Jordan.

Funeral in Hitteen Camp, near Amman, of Palestinian youth killed by the Jordanian police.

