

Dr. Ziad Abu Amr

THE INTIFADA

Causes and Factors of Continuity

PASSIA

Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs

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Table of Contents

Introduction	5
Causes	9
(1) <i>Root Causes</i>	10
(2) <i>Immediate Causes</i>	13
(3) <i>Catalysts</i>	16
Factors of Continuity	19
(1) <i>The Israeli Occupation</i>	19
(2) <i>Comprehensiveness of the Uprising</i>	20
(3) <i>The Organization of the Palestinian Society</i>	22
(4) <i>The Unified National Leadership</i>	24
(5) <i>PLO Leadership and Institutions in the "Exterior"</i>	25
(6) <i>National Figures, Intellectuals and Institutions</i>	28
(7) <i>Discovery of Potentials and Mass Creativity</i>	31
(8) <i>The Media and the Press</i>	31
(9) <i>The Israeli Measures</i>	32
Conclusion	35
About the Author	36

INTRODUCTION

The eruption of the Palestinian intifada (uprising) in the West Bank and Gaza and its continuation reflect its authenticity and its relation to its context and the Palestinian society in general. The continuation of the uprising came to refute a number of claims and suppositions by a variety of Israeli, and sometimes, Western circles.

At a point, Israeli circles claimed that an external power, the PLO, was behind the breakout of the "disturbances" in the occupied territories, and that this external power is responsible for directing the uprising and supporting it financially and organizationally, and that it ultimately stands behind its continuation. Consequently, the Israeli authorities tried to stifle communication between the "interior" and "exterior". In spite of all Israeli attempts in this regard, the uprising continued and furthermore escalated.

At another point, the Israeli authorities claimed that local forces and elements, not tied to the PLO, were responsible for the "disturbances". Therefore, the authorities waged successive campaigns

of arrest, imprisonment and deportation of these elements. Yet, the uprising continued.

In a different occasion, the occupation authorities claimed that Israeli and foreign media, TV news and reports in particular, inflamed the sentiments and enthusiasm of the Palestinian population and therefore contributed to the continuation of the uprising. The Israeli authorities frequently closed off the West Bank and Gaza or parts of them and denied the media access to them or censored their reports. That did not stop the uprising either.

Certain Israeli and Western voices suggested that the uprising came as a result of the harsh economic conditions of the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza, and that if economic problems and hardships are solved or alleviated, the uprising is bound to wane. The Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza, whose economic sufferings under the uprising increased, were not prepared to trade their legitimate national rights for an improvement of their economic lot. And for that matter they have demonstrated the willingness and preparedness to take more economic suffering for the sake of achieving their national objectives. This Palestinian attitude was repeatedly demonstrated in the past when they rejected plans for the "improvement of the quality of life" which the Palestinians believed were meant to undermine their national gains and bypass the legitimate national goals of the Palestinian people. The Israeli authorities kept believing and hoping that the economic burdens resulting from the uprising, and the punitive economic measures imposed by the Israeli authorities themselves, will ultimately force the Palestinians to give up and stop the uprising. So far Israeli beliefs and hopes in this regard have not been substantiated.

Other parties contended that the uprising was only another limited eruption which will soon subside, especially if it is confronted with an iron-fist policy and severe repressive measures such as detention, imprisonment or deportation of thousands of leaders, cadres, and

activists, and the application of physical and material punishment against those who are taking part in it. These Israeli calculations also failed, and the Palestinians demonstrated, in spite of their harsh circumstances, a unique ability of tolerance and an unlimited preparedness for further sacrifices. This steadfast and determined Palestinian stand emanates from an unwavering commitment to the achievement of national goals, and from a realization that the Palestinian people have nothing else to lose from the continuation of the uprising other than the Israeli occupation itself.

The Israeli authorities claimed on different occasions that the uprising was a function of extremist fundamentalist groups or certain impoverished social segments of the population. But the Palestinians proved that the uprising was the function of the entire Palestinian people with its various social and political factions in the refugee camp, the village, and the city.

The Israeli authorities occasionally announced, for self-consolation or as part of a psychological war against the uprising, that it had arrested the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising, or that it confiscated the underground printers which were used for publishing the leaflets and other publications of the uprising. And in spite of the massive arrests of leaders and cadres, the uprising persisted and escalated over time. Furthermore, the uprising managed, against all odds and in spite of the adverse circumstances, to build and develop the requirements of covert organizational work in a way which puzzled the Israeli authorities. After months of strict measures, arrests and extensive intelligence work, the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising continued to systematically publish and distribute its underground leaflets. Furthermore, it managed to print on a number of occasions colored posters which usually required extra technical facilities. On the twenty-fourth anniversary of the start of the Palestinian revolution colored pictures of chairman Arafat appeared in the streets of the West Bank.

The Israeli authorities thought that the disappearance of Khalil Al-Wazir (Abu Jihad), the second man in Fatah, would render the uprising a severe blow and cause its demise. Al-Wazir was believed to be the man masterminding the uprising. Yet, the uprising continued in spite of the assassination of Al-Wazir in Tunis on the 14th of April 1988.

Finally, it has become clear to all parties concerned that the uprising was a natural outcome of more than twenty years of foreign occupation and that it is bound to continue, one way or the other, as a reflection of the contradiction that usually and objectively characterized the relationship between the occupier and the occupied. It may however subside, but it is bound to erupt again as long as the contradiction, i.e. the occupation, continues to exist.

CAUSES

From the very outset I would like to say that it is extremely difficult to talk about the popular Palestinian uprising in the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip while this uprising is still going on. It is hard at this point to draw final conclusions or predict the long-term ramifications of the uprising. However, one can determine with certainty that this uprising is quantitatively and qualitatively different from any other form of resistance to Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza since 1967. One can also determine with a degree of certainty the different causes and factors which led to the eruption of the uprising and its continuation.

In order to explain and understand the uprising, light should be shed on its historical as well as its current context. In this regard both the root and the immediate causes will be discussed, as well as the catalysts that precipitated the outbreak of the uprising and the factors that have aided in its continuation.

(1) Root Causes

The root causes of the uprising are embedded in twenty years of Israeli occupation and Israeli policies aimed at undermining the material and national existence of the Palestinians in their own land. Under the guise of maintaining its security, Israel has pursued a host of policies detrimental to Palestinian society. Israel has confiscated Arab land and launched an aggressive settlement policy which has left the West Bank and Gaza fragmented both geographically and demographically. Israeli 'iron-fist' policies - marked by repressive measures and human rights violations - have resulted in loss of life, imprisonment, detention, house or town arrest, house demolition, deportation, fines, interrogation, travel restrictions, curfews, closures of educational institutions, unjust taxes, economic hardships, and the like. Hardly a single Palestinian household has been left untouched.

Unlike classical patterns of colonialism, the Israeli occupation has failed to win the sympathy or support of any meaningful sector of the occupied population. Even those social classes which have traditionally allied themselves to foreign occupation in other colonial setting (the case of the great landlords and the compradore in China during the Japanese occupation, for example) have in the Palestinian context found themselves at constant odds with the Israeli occupation. Under an active policy of land confiscation and Jewish settlement, major Palestinian landholders were the big losers. Even the leading Palestinian merchants were restricted and had to contend with unfair competition from their Israeli counterparts, who enjoyed all kinds of support from their government.

Such attempts to undermine the material existence of the Palestinian people were compounded by continuous Israeli denial of Palestinian national aspiration, self-determination and an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. Israeli denial is perceived

by the Palestinians as a deliberate attitude that blatantly ignores international recognition of Palestinian legitimate rights.

National and political awareness among the Palestinians has gradually evolved throughout twenty years of Israeli occupation. The Palestinian movement and the process of Palestinian nation-building (society and state infrastructure-building) has contributed to the evolution of this awareness. When harsh Israeli occupation heightened state of national awareness among the Palestinians, twenty years of seething discontent ripened into an uprising.

As such the uprising did not come from a vacuum. It was dormant, awaiting the appropriate historical moment to erupt. In fact its manifestations and attributes were somewhat visible and indicated that the uprising itself was imminent. Those who monitored the situation in the occupied territories closely and saw events in continuum were bound to come to this conclusion. Uprisings are not novel phenomena in the Palestinian national history. The December 1987 uprising was not the first in Palestinian history. It may not also be the last. Other uprisings preceded in 1929, 1933, 1935 and during the great revolt of 1936-1939. In 1965 the Palestinians started armed resistance which was occasionally accompanied by limited popular uprisings (in terms of time, space, and popular participation). Such uprisings included those of 1979, 1980, 1982, among others.

In the three year preceding the uprising forms of popular resistance to the Israeli occupation were enforced. The setting for the December uprising was being prepared. One can even venture and suggest that the uprising had actually started, though partially, long before December 1987. The tactics and forms of confrontation employed in the uprising by the Palestinians and the Israeli retaliatory measures, were in fact in place before the eruption of the uprising. One can illustrate evidence from Israeli and Palestinian sources.

In his 1987 report, Israeli researcher Meron Benvenisti, director of "The West Bank Data Project", indicates that in the period between April 1986 and May 1987, 3150 violent demonstrations had taken place, 1870 of which included stone throwing, 60 involved the setting of stone road-blocks and tyre burning, and 665 incidents of raising Palestinian flags, leaflet distribution and nationalist graffiti (writing on walls). During the same period there were 65 incidents of fire arms use, explosives, or stabbings, and 150 instances of Molotov cocktail use. All in all 9 Palestinians were killed by the Israeli army (seven of them during demonstrations) and 67 were injured. Two Israelis were killed and 62 injured¹. On the other hand, 3000 Palestinians were arrested for their participation in demonstrations and 1550 others were arrested because of their involvement in "terrorist acts". The Benvenisti report gives almost similar figures for the 5 years preceding the uprising and indicates that the incidents which took place between April 1986 and May 1987 were in fact less intense than those of the preceding 5 years². Palestinian sources indicate that between 1985 and 1987, 115 Palestinians were killed and 828 were injured, resisting Israeli occupation³. These figures seem to reflect Palestinian casualties inside and outside the occupied territories.

The objective conditions within the Palestinian society for the eruption of the uprising were ripe. The language and discourse of the uprising were being used before the uprising itself. A leaflet distributed in the occupied territories, by the Fatah movement on the 2nd November 1987 only 5 weeks before the uprising, commemorating the anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, read as follows: "The colonizer wanted the 2nd of November to be an ill-omened promise targeting the people, land, civilization and tradition of Palestine ... That was the dirty Balfour

¹. Meron Benvenisti, The West Bank Data Base Project: 1987 Report.

². Ibid.,

³. These figures are taken from a speech delivered by Abu Jihad to the Arab Lawyers Guild on March 30, 1987, Factory Years After the Occupation of Palestine: From the 1948 Disaster to the 1988 Uprising, (June 1988), p. 21.

civilization and tradition of Palestine ... That was the dirty Balfour Declaration ... As for the people of heroism and martyrs, the brave people of the revolution, the anniversary is a fire that burns, kills, and bleeds all the enemies ... Let us fulfil the promise of the revolution and the people ... and defend our holy land ... Let us protect Palestine by blood, fire, and arms ... Yes, revolutionary brother ... think carefully, choose the appropriate time and place ... mask yourself ... carry your bomb and hit the target you have selected, hit the military patrol or the car of the murderous invading settlers ... if you were in a remote area choose a dirty traitor ... make sure that he is a traitor and attack him, burn him ... he does not deserve to belong to our great people"⁴.

(2) Immediate Causes

Twenty years of occupation that not only continuously denied them their national aspirations but also threatened their material existence, produced in the Palestinians a state of deep anger and frustration. Though initially internalized, these pent up emotions sought an outlet through which to explode. The scope, magnitude, and persistence of the uprising attests to the depth and intensity of that anger and frustration. A number of developments in the Palestinian, Arab, and Israeli arenas found their way into the consciousness of the Palestinian people under occupation. These developments came to provide the immediate cause for the uprising.

In the Palestinian arena, the PLO and its leadership have been unable to deliver. Just prior to the uprising, the PLO had reached its lowest ebb. Armed struggle was reduced to an empty slogan. The evacuation of the PLO's military presence in Lebanon highlighted an unprecedented degree of weakness. Splits and lack of meaningful national unity among the PLO factions only exacerbated this weakness.

⁴. A leaflet issued by Fatah and distributed in the occupied territories marking the anniversary of the Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917. (Arabic).

The Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza gradually began to realize that they could no longer count on the "exterior" alone for their salvation.

This realization of the need for increased self-reliance crystallized after the crippling blow the PLO sustained in the aftermath of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. As such, then, Israeli plans to subdue the Palestinians in the occupied territories by undermining the PLO outside have backfired. The uprising illustrates this.

Apart from their growing alarm at the PLO's increasingly obvious military debility, the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza were further alarmed and alienated by persistent attempts to bypass them politically and abort whatever national gains they had achieved over the past twenty years. American notions of "improving the quality of life" for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza and the "Jordanian Development Plan" were viewed in this light and therefore rejected.

In the Arab arena, the Palestinian problem sank for a number of reasons to a position of secondary importance. Among these reasons were the weakness of the PLO itself, the problem of Lebanon, the Iran-Iraq war and the Arab preoccupation with it and its potentially devastating ramifications, and a variety of individual problems facing each Arab nation-state. The Amman Summit Conference of November 1987 fully reflected growing Arab negligence of things Palestinian. The Conference was called primarily to address the Iran-Iraq war. Although the Palestinian question was later added to the agenda, no major resolutions regarding Palestine were issued.

In the Israeli arena, malignant Israeli intentions regarding the future of the occupied territories had become crystal clear, as manifested in the active Jewish settlement of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Palestinian frustrations, doubts, and fears were perpetuated and reinforced by the clear and significant Israeli voices calling for the

"transfer" of Palestinians in the occupied territories to the East Bank of Jordan or for the establishment of an "alternative home" (Watan badil) for them in Jordan. These ideas arose in response to Israeli anxiety over the future of the West Bank and Gaza and over the problem of Palestinian demography which threatens the purity of the Jewish state and its Zionist nature should Israel decide to annex the West Bank and Gaza. According to Benvenisti, Palestinians and Jews in "Eretz Yisrael" will reach demographic parity in the year 2010⁵.

Israeli voices calling for the "transfer" have not been taken lightly by the Palestinians since they are no longer isolated voices. When Meir Kahana first called for the expulsion of the Arabs from "Eretz Yisrael" apologists claimed that Kahana only represented himself. Just a few years later, important figures, political parties, and a large segment of the Israeli society have in fact come to embrace Kahana's views. References in this regard can be made to Minister without portfolio Youssef Shapira, Deputy Minister of Defense Michael Dakel, and most importantly to Minister of Trade and Industry Ariel Sharon, a leading figure in the Likud party. The Tehiya party, Gush Emunim, the majority of settlers and over thirty percent of the Israeli population simply do not object to the idea of "transfer"⁶.

Furthermore, Israel intransigence has only seemed to increase over time, despite what the Palestinians perceive as Palestinian and Arab concessions represented, for example, in the 1982 Fez Peace Plan. The Fez Plan speaks of Arab willingness to recognize Israel as part of a comprehensive peace settlement in the region. What is especially significant about the plan, which accepts Israel's right to exist within secure borders, is the fact that it was authored by the Arabs themselves and not by a third party, as had been the case with previous plans.

⁵. Benvenisti, p. 5.

⁶. The Jerusalem Post, March 4, 1988.

The Palestinian-Jordanian Accord of February 1985 is perceived by Palestinians in the same conciliatory light. The accord makes no reference to an independent Palestinian state. It only speaks of Palestinian self-determination within the framework of a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation.

Yet Israel has adamantly refused to recognize any fundamental change in the Arab/Palestinian position. The net effect has been growing Palestinian certainty that Israel is not interested in a meaningful peaceful settlement to the conflict.

3) Catalysts

Apart from the causes - both root and immediate - a number of developments have acted as catalysts in precipitating the outbreak of the uprising. Shortly before the uprising, a state of anxiety and psychological mobilization prevailed in the Gaza Strip, where the uprising initially erupted. This state of anxiety and mobilization emerged in the wake of the successful escape of six members of the Islamic Jihad movement from the Gaza central prison. The escape was the talk of the town and the focus of the sympathy and admiration of the population.

A short while later, it was realized that members of this group were not only still in Gaza but were also responsible for a number of daring operation launched against the Israeli occupation. One such operation was the assassination of Captain Ron Tal, head of the Israeli military police in Gaza. After this incident, for which the Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility, the Gaza population was mobilized, simmering in a state of tension and anxiety, until the uprising broke out.

Just prior to the uprising, a bloody confrontation between the Israeli security forces and a group of Islamic Jihad members, which resulted in the death of four Palestinians and one Israeli intelligence officer, created an unprecedented state of highly-charged nationalist

sentiments. Demonstrators took to the streets in a number of areas in the Strip, and in a show of solidarity thousands of people visited the homes of the dead to offer condolences and express support. The dead were admired for their courage and particularly for the fact that two of them had decided not to flee the country following their dramatic escape from prison.

Sympathy with, and admiration for, the Islamic Jihad climaxed. One day before the uprising an Israeli was stabbed to death in Gaza, and the next day an Israeli truck hit two vehicles carrying Gaza workers. A number of workers were killed and others injured, most of them were residents of the Jabalia refugee camp. When the news reached Jabalia, demonstrations erupted, marking the actual beginning of the uprising. It was rumored that the road accident had been deliberate and was meant to avenge the death of the Israeli who had been stabbed in Gaza.

A number of other factors also acted as catalysts for the uprising. The November 25 hangglider operation on an Israeli military camp in the Galilee, which resulted in the death of six Israeli soldiers and the injury of seven others, stirred feelings of pride and fired the imagination of the Palestinians. The operation demonstrated that Israel - even with its strong army, advanced weapons and elaborated security measures - was not invincible. It further served to highlight Palestinian courage, which would be demonstrated again and again in the way Palestinian demonstrators and stone-throwers confronted Israeli troops as the uprising spread.

Immediately after the Israeli citizen was stabbed to death in Gaza the day preceding the uprising, Shimon Peres suggested that Israel consider the idea of demilitarizing the Gaza Strip. This announcement did not pass unnoticed by the people of Gaza and was perceived as a fruit of their acts of resistance. It also indicated that Israel can be forced to yield.

FACTORS OF CONTINUITY

After the outbreak of the uprising a number of factors combined to cause its initial continuation and enable it to dig roots and to make it a new way of life after it had become self-regenerating. The following are some of these factors:

(1) The Israeli Occupation

The Israeli occupation constitutes a root cause for the uprising and a main factor for its continuation. The continuation of this occupation, the Palestinian people's will and determination to resist it as long as it takes, along with their aspirations for liberation and the achievement of their legitimate national goals of the right of return, self-determination, and an independent state, have been the strongest catalyst for the continuation of the intifada. The Israeli occupation has been accompanied by Palestinian resentment and national anger that has accumulated during more than 20 years of oppression and persecution. Thus, the uprising came as a translation of that resentment into a positive

act of resistance and a struggle potential endeavoring to put an end to the occupation, the national bereavement and the resulting repression and injustice. In addition, the Palestinians hope that the uprising will become a way for salvation, if not through transforming it into full-scale revolution to bring about national liberation, then at least it would become an instrument of reminding the world persistently of the urgent need for solving the Palestinian problem. Therefore, the continuation of the intifada was an essential requisite that should be maintained at any cost for achieving the legitimate, Palestinian national goals.

(2) Comprehensiveness of the Uprising

All the Palestinian social strata have participated in the intifada in a variety of forms and degrees. However, the lower and the middle social classes in the refugee camps, villages, and the popular neighbourhoods in the cities, have played the greater role. There was a kind of spontaneous labour division as each class did the work or the activity which suited its background, potentials, and position. The young people played a fundamental role in the activities of the daily confrontations such as demonstrations, stone throwing, setting up roadblocks, and also by participating in the strike forces, and the popular and neighbourhood committees. The Palestinian women played a distinct role in all the forms and the phases of the intifada. The participation of women represents a new quantitative and qualitative variable.

Geographically, the intifada spread to every part of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. It also included Jerusalem and various areas behind the "Green Line". This geographic dimension had an important effect in mobilizing the distant areas which remained for years on the margin of the Palestinian national struggle. The distribution of camps, villages, and cities in the West Bank and Gaza, as it is, helped the intifada to continue. The refugee camps constituted the place which ignited the intifada and ensured its escalation and continuity. The Palestinian social classes that have vested interest in the revolution and

rebellion live in these camps, which objectively comprise the proper place for the reopening of the political file of the Palestinian problem. The participation of the Palestinian village, on the other hand, added a new essential dimension to the intifada as another social class, whose existence has always been threatened by an aggressive Israeli settlement policy, live there. This class, therefore, has an equally genuine interest in the revolution. It gave the camps and the popular urban quarters in the city a demographic as well as a geographic depth. The Palestinian villages remained, and still are, strongholds of resistance and confrontation. The occupation forces could not enter them easily as the people live constantly on full alert, and because they have developed a state of intricate organization to control the village. The Gaza Strip is distinguished by the intensity of population and the West Bank by its geographic variation. These two factors help create a conducive objective circumstance for the continuation of the uprising.

On the political level, the intifada left the door wide-open for the participation of all different political groups. None is excluded. The intifada adopted forms of struggle and confrontation that were accepted without reservation by all parties. It also opened opportunities for formation and participation of major forces whose role in confronting the occupation actively had until the uprising been limited. The Islamic movement stands at the top of these forces.

The Islamic movement participated and still participates actively in the intifada despite the political differences with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). It agrees with the PLO on the necessity of terminating the Israeli occupation and achieving the legitimate Palestinian rights.

As for the time factor, the intifada did not cease, even for a single moment, since its outbreak nineteen months ago, despite its diverse methods and various forms. The element of time itself has come to the service of the intifada, turning around it and serving its events and

decisions. For the intifada to undertake such great events and intensive work, it required a longer period of time. The space of time is overloaded with actual deeds.

(3) The Organization of the Palestinian Society

The nationalist groups with their leaderships and experienced cadres, the mass and popular organizations and institutions, and the religious stream as an organized political framework, helped the intifada continue and supervised its course of development. The Palestinian society had achieved in the years before the uprising a state of political, social, and economic organization that has touched the majority of the Palestinian masses in one way or another. This state of organization is being expanded, broadened, and becoming more deeply rooted day by day. The PLO organizations and the Islamic movement have increasingly mobilized the masses through practising different forms of mass action in the cities, villages, and camps, and through means of mass communications such as the leaflets which were used effectively and intensively, and the writing of slogans on walls. The institutions, the labour, trade, women, and student unions and committees throughout the West Bank and the Gaza Strip became active. In addition, the camps and the villages have known different forms of popular and mass organization and self-reliance. This state of organization has facilitated the mobilization of the Palestinian masses and their communications to coordinate their efforts for the continuation of the intifada. Thus, the intifada at the beginning was spontaneous in the sense that its eruption, time and place were not defined in advance by a political decision. Aside from this, one cannot describe the intifada as spontaneous despite the broad mass participation. On the one hand, "the people's memory preserved the experience of the long years of suffering and struggle, and the collective mind of the people planned, devised, and executed the

uprising"⁷. On the other hand, the avant-garde people rose quickly to direct the movement of the revolting masses. Shortly after its outbreak the intifada had changed from being a spontaneous event to a complex political process. Its demands and goals had evolved from tactical pursuits aiming at alleviating the burdens of the occupation policies on the population into strategic ones to achieve independence and establish a Palestinian state⁸. The formation of the national and popular committees came as basic frameworks constituting the organizational infrastructure of the intifada, activating and enhancing the pre-uprising organization, giving it a new dynamic and comprehensive content. Currently, these committees practise national authority in the confrontations with the Israeli occupation in some districts and run part of the daily life in some others.

The Jordanian decision of the legal and administrative disengagement from the West Bank on July 31, 1988, posed an additional challenge to the Palestinians in the occupied territories and outside. The disengagement decision constituted a stimulus to the masses of the intifada and the leadership, for they had to demonstrate their capability to control their own destiny through the continuation of the uprising which will lead in the end to national independence.

The intifada placed an additional responsibility upon the Palestinian masses and their leadership in the occupied territories. With its outbreak, the center of gravity in the Palestinian struggle moved to the occupied territories, and with it the whole world's attention had moved. So the Palestinian masses under occupation and their leadership had to demonstrate that they were up to the central position they began

⁷. Khalid `Ayed, The Revolutionary Uprising in Palestine: The Internal Dimensions. (Amman: Dar Al-Shuruq, 1988), (Arabic), p. 11.

⁸. Ann Mosley Lesch, "Anatomy of an Uprising: The Palestinian Intifada" in Peter F. Krogh and Mary L. McDavid (eds.), Palestinians Under Occupation: Prospects for the Future (Washington, D.C. Georgetown University, 1989), p. 89.

to occupy, and up to the attention given to their uprising and their continuous, daily struggle. This position has consolidated the Palestinians' determination to continue the uprising till their legitimate national goals are achieved.

(4) The Unified National Leadership

The formation of the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising provided a mechanism and a guarantee for the continuation of the intifada. This formation of leadership, in which the four major national factions are represented, is the first such unified leading body in the occupied territories since 1967, from the vantage point of coordination, commitment, and the making of collective decisions. The fact of the matter is that the Unified National Leadership was undoubtedly capable of effecting a miracle by its efficiency and skill in leading the mass uprising. Before the intifada, the experience of the leaderships of the component factions was limited in scope and purpose to their own individual organizational constituencies. The natural aptitude of the people and their commitment to the Palestine Liberation Organization as their sole and legitimate representative, allowed the leaderships of the factions to intervene rapidly in supervising the intifada in the desired direction. The direction of the intifada was against the occupation and its schemes. The mobilized and always-ready leaderships of the national factions have forestalled loosening of control over the intifada, pulverization of its energy, or its deviation from the right track. This leadership also succeeded in assimilating the popular leaderships which the intifada secreted. The miracle of the unified leadership is also manifest in its continuity despite the incessant campaigns of detention, imprisonment, and deportation against the leaders and the activists of the various factions. The continuity of this leadership is mainly attributed to the organizational work which preceded the intifada, to the consciousness of the masses, their commitment to the PLO and its national program, and to their preparedness to abide by the instructions of the local leaderships which represent the PLO factions.

The Unified National Leadership is distinguished by being a young leadership capable of understanding the masses and responding to their needs and mood. It has shown a high degree of wisdom and sophistication in its tactics and strategies. Tactically, it did not demand of the people to undertake difficult tasks beyond their abilities. Strategically, it mobilized the masses around realistic demands, achievable under the present circumstances and balance of power. The formation of the Unified National Leadership reflected an advanced state of the Palestinian national unity which, in turn, reflected a high degree of consciousness and national responsibility by the Palestinian people, their organizations, and leadership. The Palestinians maintained their national unity and did not allow any other issue to mar it.

(5) PLO Leadership and Institutions in the "Exterior"

While the intifada is credited for inspiring the PLO, its leadership, cadres, and institutions outside the occupied territories, the latter acted promptly to offer the required support for the continuation of the uprising on the organizational, leadership, political, and financial levels. Shortly after the outbreak of the intifada, the PLO's factions outside began coordination with their organizations inside instructing them to fully coordinate with each other. All indications show that the PLO's leadership outside played a principal role in deciding and coordinating the format of the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising. In this context, reference should be made to the important role which Abu Jihad had played. Furthermore, the leadership outside established parallel group leadership committees to coordinate and follow up the work of the Unified National Leadership. From the very beginning the PLO's leadership contributed by offering advice and direction and sometimes instructions, to the Unified National Leadership. In spite of its geographic distance, the PLO has a long organizational and leadership experience. Furthermore, it has a broad knowledge of all the dimensions of the Palestinian national struggle. In addition, the deportation by Israeli occupation authorities of national leaders from the

occupied territories who joined the PLO leadership and institutions outside, has contributed in creating a uniformity of the political national outlook between the "exterior" and the "interior", and in coordinating the forms of struggle between them.

Since the Palestinian cause is an undividable whole, and the struggles of the Palestinian people inside and outside complement each other, and since the PLO leadership outside has a comprehensive vision and a relative freedom of movement not available to the leadership of the "interior", the coordination between the inside and the outside was done on all levels. It is said that the PLO leadership outside contributed in many occasions in clarifying some general political positions, in defining positions on certain tactical and nontactical issues, and in supervising or even writing the leaflets of the Unified National Leadership. More than that, the PLO leadership was able to envisage the more comprehensive prospects of the intifada, and its strategy and tactics⁹. It also helped in the process of institutionalization of the intifada and digging its roots on the level of leadership, committees, and popular revolution.

On the political level, the PLO's leadership has translated the achievement of the intifada into political gains without repudiating the national rights of self-determination, return, and the establishment of a national independent state. Up till now, the PLO has succeeded in confining what seems to be political concession to the field of political manoeuvring. It was able to adopt realistic and moderate political resolutions in the 19th PNC meeting in Algiers, November 12- 15, 1988, despite the opposition of some Palestinian factions. The declaration of independence came as clear indication to the Palestinians' need for independence, and to their intent to continue the struggle till that

⁹. See the working paper entitled "The Jerusalem paper" dated February 8, 1988, believed to be prepared by Abu Jihad. Lutfi Al-Khuli, The Uprising and the Palestinian State (Cairo: Al-Ahram Center for Translation and Publishing, 1988) (Arabic), p. 311.

declaration becomes a concrete reality. The declaration of independence has provided the Palestinians with self-satisfaction and psychological comfort. The other resolutions have galvanized more international political, and diplomatic support for the Palestinian cause, and convinced the world with the Palestinians' real and genuine intentions in reaching a just solution for the Palestinian problem and the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The PLO leadership was able to mobilize the Arab and the world public opinion to earn moral and material support for the uprising. We can indicate, in this context, to the Arab summit meeting (the Intifada Summit) which was held in 1988 as a result of the PLO's efforts. It was also able to win the international legitimacy for the intifada and its continuation as a legitimate form of resistance against the occupation without procuring negative effects on the political and diplomatic offensive. The continuation of the intifada became legitimate and has imposed itself on the political initiatives in the United States and Israel.

The PLO leadership offered financial support to the intifada, its masses, and to the Palestinian institutions which were hurt in the process. The PLO used to offer the financial backing to the occupied territories before, but this backing obviously increased during the intifada. Despite the absence of adequate planning for financial support for the uprising in the occupied territories, and although this support has not been as it should because of objective and subjective circumstances, the continuation of the intifada could not have been possible without the PLO's material support for the Palestinian people inside. The material backing was particularly clear in offering financial aid to the families of martyrs, detainees, and those who suffered the Israeli punitive measures such as demolition of houses and closure of commercial and industrial shops. It also backed the various national institutions.

On the media level, the PLO manipulated all the possibilities to convey the message of the uprising to the world public opinion by

sending official delegations, preparing for meetings and conventions, participating in mass activities, and contacting the media and the press.

(6) National Figures, Intellectuals and Institutions

Some Palestinian national figures and intellectuals played an important role in crystallizing the intifada's national demands, introducing and publicizing them in the local, Arab, and international circles, through their numerous activities, contacts, and participation in international panels and conferences. As these figures and intellectuals helped the intifada continue, the intifada, in turn, helped them modify their political outlooks and control the tempo of their political movement, activities, and writings in accordance with the spirit of the mass uprising. The concentration of these figures and intellectuals in Jerusalem and the freedom of movement and travel which they relatively enjoy enable them to carry out their role with less difficulties than their counterparts in the West Bank and Gaza. Their interaction with the uprising has developed in the process. They reiterated some national demands, gradually broadening their margin to include new ones, more appropriate and representative of Palestinians' demands inside and outside the occupied territories. In this context, we can mention a number of memoranda which these personalities have signed since the beginning of the intifada until now. Among these memoranda is the one which was sent by 21 personalities, to the general consuls in Jerusalem on December 22, 1987. In that memorandum, the Palestinian national rights were emphasized. Among other detailed demands the memorandum called for forming an international force to supervise the affairs of the Palestinian people; ending the Israeli inhuman practices against them; forcing Israel to apply the Fourth Geneva Convention and the international accords and conventions which protect the human rights of the civilians; intensifying the efforts for convening the international conference with the participation of all parties to the conflict including

the PLO¹⁰. Among these documents also is the statement which included 14 demands and was read to the foreign press at the National Palace Hotel on January 14, 1988¹¹. Finally, one can point out, in this context to the political document which was signed by 83 Palestinian personalities in which they rejected the so-called Shamir Plan to hold elections in the West Bank and Gaza¹².

The Palestinian press institutions and offices played a positive role in introducing the intifada and carrying its news to the Palestinian people and the world, and enabling the foreign press and journalists to reach scenes of action and take live pictures to the public opinion in their countries.

(7) Discovery of Potentials and Mass Creativity

The intifada provided the Palestinians with a mechanism to gradually discover their latent human potentials and abilities, and to demonstrate their power in resisting the occupation. It also increased their self-confidence and brought to the surface the good side of them. The intifada became a battlefield to prove and assure national pride, to acquire honor, respect, heroism, and other forms of ingenuity. The participation in the intifada was a means of acquiring medals of honor and pride. The intifada has changed old traditional standards of glory and substituted them with new ones glorifying the martyrs and admiring the wounded for their courage. The prisoners had the respect and appreciation of the people and the intifada became an opportunity to win national recognition.

¹⁰. See The Palestinian Memorandum submitted to Foreign General Consuls in Jerusalem in December 22, 1987. *Al-Khuli*, pp. 245-248.

¹¹. See the statement of the Fourteen Demands, issued by a group of Palestinian national figures and institutions. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, June 67, (Spring 1988), pp. 63-65.

¹². See the text of this document dated April 26, 1989 and published in the English *Al-Fajr*, May 1, 1989, p. 4.

The continuation of the intifada constituted an individual and national interest for the Palestinians. After all, almost every household had offered sacrifices in one way or another. The intifada has revealed the ingenuity of the Palestinian collective mind and the values of solidarity, self-abnegation, and the national unity. As the uprising removed the Israeli soldier's facade of sanctity, it freed the Palestinians from the fear of their enemy, and showed their readiness to sacrifice for their legitimate rights. Perhaps every one participated in the activities of the intifada was aware that he or she might have been the following martyr, injured, or prisoner. But this awareness did not deter people from daily participation in the intifada.

The successive achievements of the intifada were one of the factors of its continuation. Its political achievements were a factor in reviving the Palestinian problem moving it to a center stage position in the Middle East and perhaps the world. On the level of the masses, the intifada has developed a parallel authority to that of the Israeli occupation, an authority of the masses, struggling with the occupation forces over the control of the West Bank and Gaza. This duality of authority and the Palestinian experience of ruling themselves in their own country, though partially, along with their desire and persistent attempt to extract more authority and freedom, had an important effect on the course of the intifada.

The human and the material loss caused by the intifada to the Israeli authorities has become a burden for the occupation after the occupation had been a source of profits. This has formed an additional incentive to the Palestinians to continue with the intifada. Symbolism, as well as certain acts of quality, played an important role in inciting the masses, motivating them to participate in the uprising. Certain symbols, such as the Palestinian flag, headdress, the victory sign, the funeral ceremonies, and the repetition of the phrase "Allah Akbar" (God is greater), moved the Palestinian national sentiments and mobilized the masses. The declaration of certain areas as "liberated zones" had a

similar effect. In some places, Palestinian flags remained hoisted on mosque minarets and electricity and telephone poles for several months. This provided the people with a sense of pride and challenge to the occupation authorities. Certain distinct events, such as boycotting the Civil Administration offices, the mass resignation of policemen and customs officers, and the refusal to pay taxes, changed the peoples' emotions, enhancing their spirit of determination and challenge to the occupation authorities. Reference here can be made to what happened in the town of Beit Sahour when about five hundred residents turned in their military identification cards to the authorities in protest against the arbitrary taxation policy. Another admirable attitude was the steadfastness of people in some refugee camps, villages, and popular quarters despite the long curfews and restriction measures.

The first phase of the intifada coincided with a number of national occasions which the people used to celebrate in normal circumstances with mass demonstrations and confrontations with the occupation forces. Of these occasions were the annual anniversaries of the PLO factions and the Land Day. With the continuation of the intifada the people have commemorated the anniversaries of the various national factions and many national and religious occasions by national activities, demonstrations and confrontations with the Israeli army.

(8) The Media and the Press

The important role which the local, Arab, and international press and media has played, has significantly influenced the public opinion. The Palestinians realized the importance of this influence and attempted to promote it. Some Palestinian press centers played an important role in providing information to the foreign media and press, facing the media blackout which Israel imposed in later stages. The Israeli television itself had a role at the beginning in televising the events of the intifada to the people who made these events. And that had a positive effect on the people as it increased their determination to continue the

struggle. The foreign T.V. crews played an important role too. The Jordanian and the Syrian televisions transmitted live pictures and news reports about the intifada. Moreover, the "Voice of Jerusalem" radio station transmitting from Syria played an extremely important role in the first months of the uprising before it was jammed by Israel. Besides publishing the news of the intifada and its leaflets, it helped mobilize the masses through transmitting nationalist songs and lyrics.

The international solidarity as represented in political statements, official government measures, or sympathy demonstrations and popular festivals, condemning Israel and supporting the Palestinian struggle, have a significant influence as the Palestinians realized that what the intifada has achieved on this level, could not have been achieved in years without it.

(9) The Israeli Measures

The brutal suppression with which the Israeli occupation authorities have dealt with the intifada enraged the Palestinians and motivated them not to concede or submit to the Israeli punitive measures. The confrontations, between the two parties had become a test case and a fight of wills. The confused, contradictory statements of the senior Israeli officials and leaders, alongside with the Palestinian realization of the political and economic damage inflicted on Israel, enhanced the Palestinian self-confidence and assured the righteousness of their intifada. From another vantage point, in the face of the Israeli intransigence and denial of their national rights, the Palestinians had no other alternative to continuing the intifada which seemed to them the only way for salvation. This position was endorsed as the United States persistently refused to recognize the Palestinian right to self-determination, and as the American administration closed down the PLO offices in Washington. When the United States opened a dialogue with the PLO, the Palestinians saw in that a substantive achievement of the intifada.

From the very beginning, Israel took provocative measures which intensified the intifada. These included deportations of Palestinian leaders and activists from the West Bank and Gaza, and the moving of Sharon, the Israeli Minister of Industry and Commerce, to the Islamic sector in Jerusalem. The mass arrests which Israel launched to stop the intifada were counter-productive. The detention camps made of these young prisoners politicized cadres and elements more involved in the national resistance. After their release, most of them resumed their participation in the intifada with more awareness and determination to maintain the national experience they passed through and which constitutes a source of pride, i.e. the detention experience. This collective detention experience created a kind of mutual perception, moral and sentimental obligation, besides the national obligation to continue the intifada as a way of terminating the occupation and for the liberation of people.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Palestinians fear the return to the pre-intifada status quo that will expose them to more punishment. If the Israeli authorities control the situation, they will do all what they can to abort any possibility of new uprisings. The Palestinians see in the intifada their historic opportunity to remove the occupation and they are not willing to let this opportunity go. From another standpoint, the intifada is an expression of the contradiction between the occupier and the occupied people, and this contradiction will continue until its causes are removed - the occupation itself.

In this context, the intifada will continue in different forms and tempos. It can be said now that the contradiction has reached the point of no return. This contradiction today is mental, psychological and physical. Whatever the developments will be, there is no return to the situation before the outbreak of the intifada on December 8, 1987.

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