



THE PALESTINE NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT

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I. INTRODUCTION

"For twenty years our people have been waiting for a just solution of the Palestine problem," wrote a graduate student at the American University of Beirut in a letter to his parents. "All that we got was charity and humiliation while others continue to live in our homes. I refuse to remain a 'refugee'. I have decided to join the freedom fighters."

Meanwhile, in a refugee camp near Amman, Jordan, the mother of a freedom fighter who died in action on occupied Palestinian soil says: "I am proud that he did not die in this camp. The foreign press comes here and takes our pictures standing in queues to obtain food rations. They publish these photographs, giving the impression that we are a 'nation of beggars'. This is no life. I am proud of having sent my second son to replace the first; and I am already preparing my eight-year-old boy for the day when he can fight for liberation too."

Thousands of Palestinians have since joined the ranks of the Palestinian freedom fighters.

They are carrying on an armed revolution aimed at establishing just peace in the Holy Land. Most of them are young. Their overwhelming majority is below 30 years of age and they represent Palestinians from all walks of life, including university graduates and camp refugees. Their will to sacrifice stems from a deep sense of patriotism and rebellion against injustice and humiliation. They breathe the same national aspiration and

are haunted with nostalgia for their wrested homes and homeland.

For twenty years the Zionist propaganda machinery succeeded in concealing from world public opinion the plight of these dislodged people. But Palestinians still possess an undiminished faith in a better future and the knowledge that the means to this future is the liberation of their homeland.

With this firm conviction, they chose to recapture the initiative in order to liberate Palestine, vindicate the supreme sacrifices of their past generations and realize the hopes and visions of living Palestinians.

The Palestinian revolution is now in full growth.

II. HISTORY OF THE PALESTINE PROBLEM

The Palestine problem is the result of the forcible dispossession of the Palestinian population, their expulsion from their country, and the implantation of an alien sovereignty on their soil to make room for the ingathering in Palestine of world Jewry.

Along with the upsurge of national consciousness in Europe in the course of the 19th Century, a similar national upsurge was crystallizing on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean. It involved a small population of about 700,000 Christian and Muslim Arab citizens living on the Land of Palestine and striving, along with other Arab states, to liberate their country from the yoke of the 600-year-old Ottoman occupation which had tied these countries down to under-development and ignorance.

At the same time that the intelligentsia were returning from universities in Beirut, Istanbul and Paris to lead the Arab revolutionary movement, campaigns were underway in another part of the world to persecute and torture certain Jewish minorities in Czarist Russia. Fleeing these campaigns, the latter sought refuge in the Holy Land.

Typical of Palestinian traditional hospitality we accorded these immigrants a warm welcome on our Land and in our midst, seeking to alleviate their sufferings.

Our love for our homeland, freedom and independence was sufficiently strong for us to absorb these guests in an integrated community. Their numbers at the time of our revolt against Ottoman rule in 1914 did not exceed 50,000 Jews.

Completely engulfed in the revolt against Ottoman rule, our people devoted to it all their energy and effort. They did little heed to the plots that were being brewed against their progress until they discovered on their day of victory that Britain, which had offered to support them as an ally in their war of independence, was actually plotting against them. This plot took place in connivance with alien groups and with the intention of taking over Palestine as soon as it rid itself of Ottoman occupation.

Only then, and just as they were about to realize a new world of freedom following the long and arduous struggle against occupation, did our Palestinian people discover that a congress had been convened in Basle, Switzerland, in August 1897, by Theodor Herzl.

A Jew, conscious of the persecution of Jewish minorities fleeing Czarist Russia and finding refuge on our Land and amidst our people, Herzl convened the Basle Congress. His intention was the creation of a Zionist movement which would endeavor to establish a fanatic Jewish state by usurping the Land of Palestine from its people and granting it to the alien people without a land.

This plot was masterminded by Herzl; Chaim Weizmann, his successor as head of the Zionist movement; and Britain, the state that pretended to be our ally in our struggle for independence. Their aim was to gain control of Palestine and thrust its people, about to reap the fruits of their struggle for freedom and independence, back into the gloom of occupation. Thus, we were confronted with the unconceivable treachery of our ally and welcomed guests.

Our Palestinian people's reaction to this unexpected threat and sudden turn of events following their long struggle for independence was to hold on to their arms in order to resume the struggle. Whereas their former struggle had been directed against the Ottomans for the sake of obtaining their freedom, this renewed struggle was one for existence and survival directed against the British-Zionist alliance. Britain's motive in the alliance was to take over control of the land and the people of Palestine from the Ottomans. The Zionist movement's objective was to clear the coveted Land of its inhabitants. The victim of both policies was the unfortunate native population of Palestine.

Such are the roots of the problem and in this way began the struggle of the Palestine people for their freedom and existence: A population seeking only to live in peace and dignity on its Land and fighting for its independence and sovereignty, and two aliens joining hands -- one with the intent of clearing the Land from whatever existed on it and the other intending to control the Land along with what it held. The Palestinians were left with no choice but to take up arms again.

Our people expressed their unyielding determination to survive on their own Land by the repeated upheavals which marked the first half of the 20th Century. Unfortunately, they were unable to thwart the foreign alliance combining the military strength of the British Empire and the financial might of world capitalist monopolies.

Britain, entrusted by the League of Nations with temporary Mandatory Power over Palestine, succeeded in paving the ground for the establishment of a National Jewish Home in Palestine. This was in fulfillment of a "declaration of sympathy" made in 1917 by her Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Arthur James Balfour, to the representative of world capitalist monopolies at the time, Lord Edmond de Rothschild. The "declaration" was made without the Palestinians' knowledge or consent at the same time that they were engaged in the struggle for independence from Ottoman rule.

Britain subsequently drew on three sources to implement its plan: (1) the prerogatives delegated to it by the League of Nations as the Mandatory power responsible for Palestine, (2) the military strength made available by the possession of a vast Empire, and, (3) the policies formulated by the world capitalist monopolies. The British plan organized the immigration of aliens into Palestine to challenge our native population on its own Land.

Consequently, whereas strict British mandatory laws were vigorously enforced on any Palestinian Arab found in possession of any kind of weapon, a Jewish Agency for Palestine was given legal authorization and allowed to become a state within a state. As such, it claimed its own regulations, army, military setups, officers, armament and stores and operated under various names such as the Irgun, Haganah and Stern.

In the wake of the Second World War, the British government under Lord Bevin felt the first pangs of guilt at the role it had played in Palestine. It had betrayed the people and deprived them of their hard-earned freedom, plotted to evict them and replace them with aliens, and betrayed the League of Nations' directives which called for preparing them for self-government.

However, the "state within the state" could not tolerate such hesitancy on the part of Britain which could lead it to discard the Balfour Declaration and would bolster the determination of the Palestinian people to struggle for their existence and survival on their own Land.

The Jewish Agency swiftly went into action and shifted the center of Zionist influence from Britain to the United States, the dominant power in the post-war period. Simultaneously, the Jewish Agency's Stern and Irgun terrorist gangs struck brutally against British personnel and troops in Palestine. The aim, as expressed by Uri Avnery of the Irgun, was to deter Britain from adopting an even-handed attitude in Palestine and to force her to continue supporting the establishment of the Zionist state.

The war broke out in 1948... Our people fought it out.

In its wake, our people faced wilderness in scattered refugee camps. Those who found shelter, found it in tattered tents. Throughout the early 1950's, they endured hunger and cold. But they still hoped. They hoped that something would be done by world

organizations, institutions and states to restore justice and peace as well as their usurped rights and future. They waited for long but in vain.

Each Fall, and for 20 consecutive years, the United Nations General Assembly convened and resolved that they be repatriated. Yet despite the abundance of repatriation resolutions, the aliens who usurped the Land refused to comply. Others, who could force an implementation, were not prepared to do so. Our people's wait was fruitless and aimless.

Then we were convinced that unless we took our issue into our own hands, others will do nothing for us. Experience had taught us that the usurpers do not understand the language of appeals, statements and petitions. We had to seek a language they would understand -- a language they had used to determine the fate of our Land.

Thus, without much choice, we found ourselves taking up arms again.

This is how the Palestine National Liberation Movement, al-Fateh, was born.

III. EVACUATION OF PALESTINE

Oppression, terror and deceit were the methods employed to accomplish the ultimate objective of the Zionist movement, which was "to give the country without a people to the people without a country". This led the British Historian Arnold Toynbee to state in a lecture at McGill University in Montreal, Canada, that the Zionist treatment of the Arabs was as morally indefensible as the Nazi crimes.

Nathan Chofshi, one of the original Zionist pioneers in Palestine, wrote the following to the editor of the Jewish Newsletter in February 1949:

"If you really wanted to know what happened, we old Jewish settlers in Palestine who witnessed the fight could tell you how and in what manner we, Jews, forced the Arabs to leave cities and villages. Some of them were driven out by force of arms; others were made to leave by deceit, lying and false promises. It is enough to cite the cities of Jaffa, Lydda, Ramleh, Beer Sheba, and Acre from among numberless others. Here we have people who lived on its own land for 1,300 years. We came and turned the native Arabs into tragic refugees. And still we dare to slander and malign them, to besmirch their name. Instead of being deeply ashamed of what we did and of trying to undo some of the evil we committed by helping those unfortunate refugees, we justify our terrible acts and even attempt to glorify them."

A noted Jewish thinker, Professor Erich Fromm, has this to add:

"It is often said that the Arabs fled, that they left the country voluntarily, and that they, therefore bear the responsibility for losing their property and their land. But in public international law the principle holds true that no citizen loses his property or his rights of citizenship, and the citizenship right is de facto a right to which the Arabs in Palestine have much more legitimacy than the Jews".

Suppose the Arabs fled, Professor Fromm goes on, "since when is that punishable by confiscation of property and by being barred from returning to the land on which a people's forefathers have lived for generations?" Professor Fromm adds: "The claim of the Jews to the land of Israel cannot be a realistic political claim. If all nations would suddenly claim territories in which their forefathers have lived two thousand years ago, this world would be a mad house."

The Zionists went about planning their campaigns to vacate Palestine of its people by employing terror, massacres, and deceit.

The pro-Zionist author Arthur Koestler described the April 9, 1948 events at Deir Yassin as the "blood bath that was the psychological decisive factor in the Arabs' spectacular exodus."

On that day, the Zionist terrorist organization, Irgun Zvai Leumi, killed 254 men, women and children and mutilated their bodies. As part of the systematic Zionist plan for the complete evacuation of the Palestinians so that they may be replaced by Jewish settlers, blood baths continued in occupied Palestine after 1948 -- Ikrit (1951), al-Tira (1953), Abu Ghosh (1953), Kafr Kassem (1956), etc...

These were the conditions that forced the Palestinians to leave their homeland.

IV. THE EMERGENCE OF AL-FATEH

The sufferings, frustrations and sacrifices of the Palestinian people over the years have given rise to a new popular-based dynamic movement: the Palestine National Liberation Movement, al-Fateh.

Al-Fateh movement was started in 1956 by young Palestinians during the temporary occupation of the Gaza Strip by Israeli forces.

The military operations of al-Fateh are carried out by its military wing, al-Assifa.

Al-Assifa's first military operation was carried out on December 31, 1964. The first communique was released on January 1, 1965, two and a half years before the June war.

With old rusty weapons and against heavy odds, al-Assifa freedom fighters embarked on the revolution with all the determination and persistence of a long-oppressed people.

During the past four years, Palestinians have sacrificed scores of martyrs on the battlefield. During the same period, many more have died in refugee camps from bitter cold, poor nourishment and disease. As the revolution embarks on its fifth year of struggle, the fruits of its sacrifices have started to ripen.

V. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Al-Fateh aims at the establishment of a unitary, democratic, non-sectarian Palestine State in which all individuals and groups will have equal rights and obligations, irrespective of race, color or creed.

Meanwhile, al-Fateh is doing its best to change the patterns of Palestinian society. Concomitant with the necessity of mobilizing all Palestinians, among other things, it is aware of the need to attend to the social and human needs of the Palestinian refugees. It set up for them medical care as well as educational and vocational training centers.

Its youth movement, Ashbal Fateh, is intended to provide Palestinian youth with proper education and training which would also enable them to be of service to the revolution.

Al-Fateh also supports and helps families of its freedom fighters who die in action or are imprisoned. Rehabilitation and the moulding of better Palestinian citizens are among its primary goals.

VI. THE POSITION OF AL-FATEH

Al-Fateh has a definite stand vis-a-vis the "State of Israel," the Arab countries, and the United Nations.

a) The "State of Israel"

Like the people of Palestine, al-Fateh has not and will never bestow undeserved legitimacy upon the Zionist settler-state of Israel. This state remains a usurper addicted to violence, bent on territorial expansion to occupy all of the so-called "Eretz Israel," and fundamentally motivated by principles of racial and religious self-segregation, exclusiveness and supremacy. Inasmuch as Nazism sought a "final solution" to the Jewish problem in Germany, Zionism has sought a "final solution" to the Arab problem in Palestine. Both concepts have sought to eliminate the unwanted human element by the "Master Race" and the "Chosen People".

While al-Fateh is fighting the constitutional existence of the Zionist State of Israel, it is also fighting to create the new Palestine of tomorrow -- a democratic, non-sectarian Palestine where Jews, Muslims and Christians will work, worship and live peacefully together while enjoying equal rights and obligations. This is no utopia because people of all three faiths had lived peacefully together in the Holy Land until the beginning of Zionist colonization of Palestine. The Arabs of Palestine accorded a hospitable welcome to Jewish refugees fleeing persecution in Christian Europe and to Armenian refugees fleeing persecution in Muslim Turkey.

Al-Fateh does not intend to solve the Palestine problem by creating a "Jewish one." But it also cannot see peace achieved in this area at the expense of the Palestinians.

It is in this spirit that al-Fateh looks forward to the future -- a future in which all factions of the Palestinian communities will unite in a common struggle for justice and peace and against such "isms" as Zionism and anti-Semitism.

Al-Fateh hopes the day will come when the Jewish community in Palestine will share these views. This is not too much to hope for if the Germans were able to "see the light again" after getting rid of Nazi ideology, the people of Jewish faith in Palestine can follow suit one day and rid themselves of Zionism.

b) The Arab Countries

The Palestinian people are part of the Arab World and, as such, wish to play their role in the fulfillment of its goals and aspirations.

Al-Fateh's revolution is thus part of the Arab revolution aiming at independence, the removal of foreign hegemonies, and the active participation in the revival of the Arab World through its interaction with the other active cultures of the world at large.

The mobilization of the Palestinian people should thus be considered, not only as a tool to support the revolutionary efforts of the Arabs, but as part of the Arab World's process of awakening as well.

While this process is taking place, the Palestinian revolution of al-Fateh will not interfere in the internal affairs of the Arab countries. Simultaneously, al-Fateh expects no interference in its own affairs and considers the independence of its revolution as a basic condition for its success.

This does not imply the isolation of the Palestinian people from the Arab World. Believing in the common Arab cause, the Palestine National Liberation Movement expects massive help and support from all Arabs and considers their cooperation as a vital necessity for its success. The Arab people everywhere are the most reliable and permanent source of support for the Palestine revolution.

c) The United Nations

The United Nations Charter recognizes the principle of self-determination of people. The Palestinians have been deprived not only of their inalienable right to self-determination, but also of their elemental right to exist on their own homeland. The Palestinians' right to repatriation has been recognized by the United Nations without qualification or reservation. Resolutions to that effect have been taken at the UN year after year.

The June 1967 aggression was another manifestation of the continued aggression against the Palestinian people. Al-Fateh refuses to consider the 1967 aggression as a separate and distinct phenomenon. Any solution focusing on the results of the last aggression only is thus totally and categorically unacceptable.

The Security Council resolution of November 22, 1967, and all further proposals explaining or modifying it are therefore inadequate and irrelevant.

VII. AL-FATEH AND THE FUTURE

For al-Fateh, the past is full of experiences. The past bears the errors of the militarists and politicians of the old generations. The past also bears the rich experience of Palestinian resistance since 1920 against both the British Mandate and Zionist colonization. Al-Fateh reveres the legacy of the older Palestinian generation which was dislodged indeed, but not without fighting to defend its heritage.

Much more important is the future. To al-Fateh, this future is discerned only beyond the screen of a long and difficult struggle marked by a number of facts. One such consideration is that the problem of Palestine and its evicted native population constitute a threat to peace in the region, if not the world at large.

So far, and for more than 21 years, the world has remained handfolded before this problem. The world wants peace without endeavoring to achieve it and without seriously envisaging how the problem should be solved justly.

The Palestine National Liberation Movement, al-Fateh, which has emerged from the tents to struggle for the existence, survival and future of their occupants did not adopt a similar attitude.

To demonstrate its positiveness and concern about a just peace, it has put forward a solution to the problem applicable to all Palestinian citizens. Whereas the Zionist solution attempts to eliminate the Jewish problem by creating an Arab one, the solution proposed by al-Fateh settles the problem of Christian and Muslim Palestinians without creating a Jewish one.

The solution for which al-Fateh is fighting is the creation of the "Palestine-of-Tomorrow" -- a democratic state capable of holding Jews, Muslims and Christians alike and in which all will have equal rights and obligations, irrespective of race, color or creed.

This solution is not, as some try to argue, a reaction to defeat but a continuation of the old Palestinian solution as proposed, officially and for the first time, to the Peel Commission in 1937. The people of Palestine turned down the Partition Plan because they had advocated and continue to advocate a unitary Palestine State for one and all.

Al-Fateh hopes that its proposal to solve the problem through a democratic state will be appreciated as a positive offer for peaceful coexistence made by the rightful owners of the Land to the aliens who usurped it.