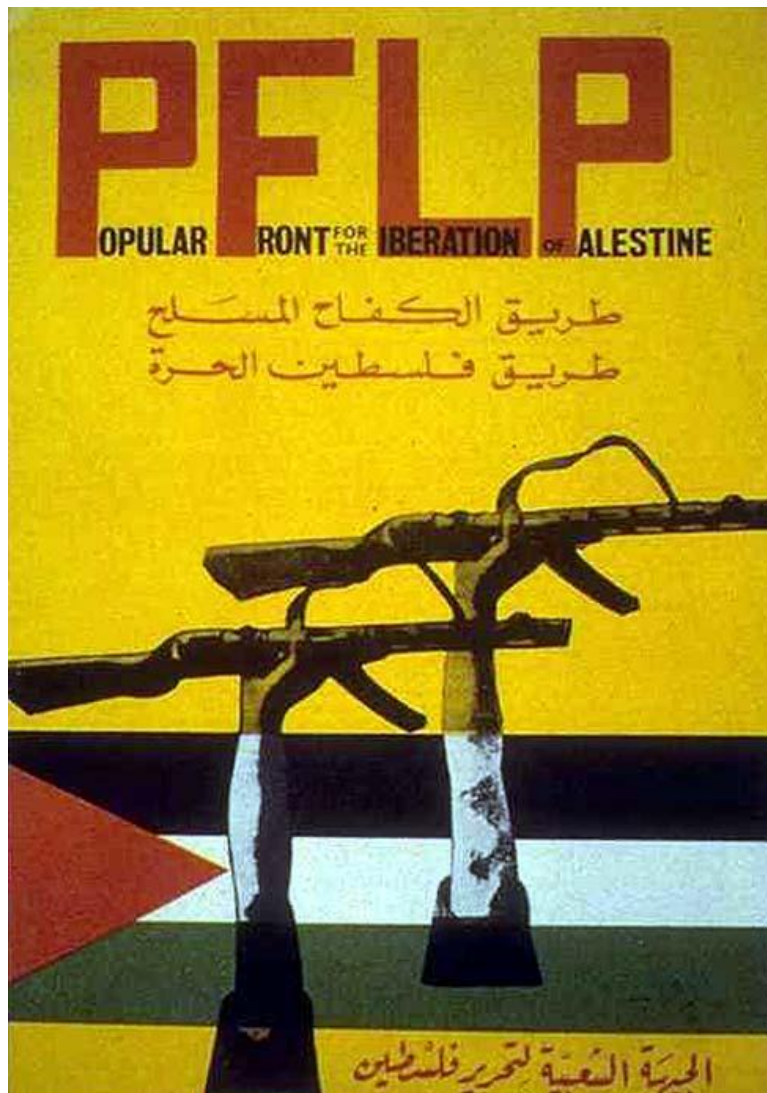


The Decline of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine: A Historical Analysis

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Poster reads: "The Path of Armed Struggle - The Path of Liberated Palestine". By Ghassan Kanafani, 1969. Accessed on the Palestine Poster Project website.

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Preface

In a 1987 essay, As'ad AbuKhalil called for a serious, book-length, English-language appraisal of the PFLP's history and ideology. A decade later, Harold M. Cubert met the bare minimum of that call in writing *The PFLP's Changing Role in the Middle East*. A skim of the academic reviews of Cubert's book betrays the weaknesses of that author and the meager value of that work. Yezid Sayigh's nearly 1,000-page behemoth *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993*, also published in 1997, tells a far more nuanced history of the PFLP in its footnotes alone. But the PFLP is only one of many organizations featured in Sayigh's book, which is primarily a military history with a minimum of critical analysis, and so that work did not fill this gap in the literature, either. Almost five decades since the Popular Front's founding and two decades since its great defeat, the Oslo Accords, the definitive history of the PFLP is yet to be written.

However, in the past decade, a resurgence of interest in the PFLP, or at least in its most prominent members, has become apparent in the non-Arabic publishing world. It began with the fiction of Ghassan Kanafani, former spokesperson of the PFLP, collections of whose novels and short stories were translated and released in three books in 1998, 2000, and 2004. In 2005, a Dutch collective published the second Western-language history of the PFLP, *PFLP - guerrilla in Palestina*, as part of their Bibliotheek van de Guerrilla series. In 2008, George Habash, the Secretary-General of the PFLP, left his name in the author's spot for the first time in a Western language when Fayard published a collection of interviews between Habash (or Habache) and George Malbrunot as *Les révolutionnaires ne meurent jamais*. In 2009, Verso published a collection of cartoons by Naji al-'Ali, a member of the PFLP assassinated in 1987. Through five episodes in 2009 and 2010, a Danish miniseries, *Blekingegade*, recounted the bank robberies committed by the "Left Wing Gang" to fund the PFLP. A 2010 French miniseries, *Carlos*, recounted the spectacular operations of a former PFLP hijacker. And in 2012, Pluto Press

published a biography of Leila Khaled, the infamous PFLP plane hijacker, by Sarah Irving. Not all of the examples listed are academic or political, at least in their intention, but they reflect the appeal of the PFLP's daring and the real challenge it once represented to the centers of power in the Middle East. Though many leftist commentators, including As'ad AbuKhalil, Khalid Amayreh, and Hisham Bustani view the PFLP as a shell of its former self, clearly something about the Popular Front allows it to generate a level of interest today which it hasn't had since the 1970s.

In addition to these recent works, I have taken advantage of the relative abundance of literature on the Arab Nationalist Movement, particularly by Walid Kazziha, Basil Kubaisi, and Tareq Ismael. Chapters and essays on the PFLP by William Quandt, Gérard Chaliand, John K. Cooley, Riad el-Rayyes and Dunia Nahas, As'ad AbuKhalil, and others have also been very useful. Several other writers I relied heavily on include Yezid Sayigh, Frances Hasso, Edgar O'Ballance, Betty Anderson, Tabitha Petran, Rosemary Sayigh, and Maya Rosenfeld. The PFLP's English-language publications, *PFLP Bulletin* and *Democratic Palestine*, have been helpful, though difficult to track down. Much of what I've compiled here, however, is scavenged from footnotes, memoirs, several thousand Google, WorldCat, and JSTOR searches, and hundreds of hours mining the libraries of the Five Colleges. An interview conducted with Elias Emaya contributed greatly to the third chapter and particularly to the section on prisons, which also relied heavily on a lecture by Professor Sa'd Nimr. If there were time and resources, interviews might have played a greater role in this project.

It may also be worth explaining the absence of several sources. I ignore the memoirs of Bassam Abu Sharif, once PFLP spokesperson, because of the absurd level of self-aggrandizement and blatant falsification in his work. I also choose not to use Yonah Alexander or Harold M. Cubert heavily because their biases are so frustratingly obvious that they threaten the academic quality of their work, and because there is an ethics to where one gathers information. Those, like Alexander and Cubert, who seem afraid of interviews with the real

people who make up the movements they write about, who hide behind borders, relying on information gathered by the CIA, Mossad, and Shin Bet, violate that ethics. Sometimes they have access to information that can contribute to clarifying an instance of historical uncertainty, but their analysis is colored by fear and ignorance and the desire to perpetuate, rather than to confront, the violence of imperialism in the Middle East.

Of course the greatest weakness of this essay is the reliance on almost exclusively English-language sources. That most important research, relying on Arabic sources, will have to wait for the next iteration of this project. It is my intention that this essay, too long for a single journal article and too short for a book, will lay the foundation for the latter and contribute to several of the former. The importance of making histories of the Left available seems especially important in this historic moment, when the signs of a Left emergent are appearing across the globe. As someone who believes a just and lasting peace can only be achieved by a movement that fights for a democratic state in all of Palestine, preferably a movement which also questions capitalism, the resurgence of the Left is that much more important. It is my hope that, in recording this history, I can contribute in some small way to continuing it.

A Note on Transliteration

I have given into the temptation to transliterate what Arabic I include in a mostly phonetic style. For definite articles in *shamsia* form, I have gone the phonetic route (e.g. *ash-shamsia* rather than *al-shamsia*). I also lean toward a phonetic approach to writing names, while also recognizing those names which have a common English spelling. In some cases I combine both styles, e.g. Gamal 'Abd an-Nasser, rather than Abdel Nasser or 'Abd an-Nasr. My priority is clarity. In my representation of the dal, Dad, sin, Sad, ha, Ha, ta, Ta, dhal, and Dhal, I don't distinguish between the emphatic and the non-emphatic letter to avoid having to include numbers or symbols. I also use apostrophes to represent both al-'Ain and al-Hamza. As a system, it is imperfect, but I hope that it is at least consistent.

Introduction

This Division III is meant to answer the question of why the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) failed. That failure occurred on two levels; the PFLP never achieved leadership within the Palestinian resistance movement—represented by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)—and the movement, of which the Popular Front was a part, failed in its mission of liberation. In pursuit of an answer to the question of why, I divide this essay into three chapters, each corresponding to a geographic space: Jordan, Lebanon, and the occupied territories. The Palestinian resistance movement was for a long time a movement-in-exile, without the easily delineated borders that most liberation movements navigate. Therefore, the sites of confrontation shifted, with the momentum of the movement usually confined to only one or two spaces at a time, the basis for the arrangement of these three chapters. The momentum is in Jordan from 1967 until 1970, then in Lebanon from around 1969 until 1982, and finally in the occupied territories from the early 1980s onwards.

The narrative of each chapter reflects three common themes: crisis, confrontation, and dispersal. In Jordan, the crisis was the Arab defeat in the June 1967 war, which led to the occupation of the remainder of Palestinian lands. The confrontation was twofold. The newly emergent guerrilla movement fought a war with Israel that lasted from 1967 until at least 1972. At the same time, the guerrillas had to defend their right to resist from Jordanian territory and clashes were frequent with the Jordanian military. The latter confrontation, though latent at first, would have the greater impact on Middle East politics. The dispersal came in 1970, with the Black September massacre and the civil war that followed between the guerrilla movement and the Jordanian régime which ended with the former's expulsion from the kingdom. The Popular Front predicted the showdown with the monarchy, even facilitated it, but was not prepared for the civil war when it came. Its mistake had been to focus on spectacular operations, rather than building a popular base of support.

In the second chapter, the crisis was primarily the dispersal of Black September, in that it forced the movement to relocate to Lebanon and to reevaluate its strategy. Before that reevaluation could fully take place, the Palestinian fighters were drawn into the Lebanese Civil War, beginning in 1975. The civil war was portrayed as a communal conflict between Muslims and Christians, but the role of foreign powers—Syria, Libya, the US, the USSR, and Israel—effectively turned it into a proxy war. As in the previous chapter, the confrontation was not primarily with Israel, but with the host country. However, Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982 and forced the PLO to disperse its fighters and leadership throughout the Arab world, primarily to Tunis and Damascus.

The third chapter is divided into three spaces which collectively comprise the occupied territories—Gaza, the West Bank, and the Israeli prison system—with each narrated consecutively. The crisis within the territories was the occupation itself, which regulated many aspects of the lives of West Bank and Gazan Palestinians and forbade any political expression. The confrontation was *al-Intifada*, the 1987 popular uprising. *Al-Intifada* was a truly popular movement, threatening the foundations of the Israeli occupation, but it did not have a unified goal, largely because all of the major political organizations, including the PFLP, had neglected their supporters in the territories. The dispersal, in a less literal sense than the previous two dispersals, was the 1993 Oslo Agreement between the PLO and Israel, which established a truncated, economically and politically subordinated pseudo-state in parts of the West Bank and Gaza. Only a unified movement and a prominent Left could have prevented it. While each chapter develops several site-specific theses which explain the PFLP's defeat in those spaces, two problems in the Popular Front's strategy are visible in all three chapters.

One of the greatest mistakes of the PFLP in this period was its sense of entitlement to Palestinian leadership which led the Popular Front to essentially chase Fatah, measuring its own actions only by comparison to the increasingly dominant guerrilla force. During the first post-*Nakba* Palestinian revolution, 1967 to 1971, the Popular Front could have ceded the

territories in which Fatah was strongest to that movement while fortifying its own bases in Lebanon and Gaza—discussed in Chapters Two and Three, respectively. If it had, the PFLP may have been in a position to lay legitimate claim to the leadership of the PLO. Instead, the PFLP attempted to compete with Fatah on uneven ground, allowing the latter to dominate the movement. This mistake repeated itself after Black September when the PLO relocated to Lebanon. In spite of an inspiring series of strikes, demonstrations, and suppressed uprisings in the occupied territories covered in the Popular Front's press, the leadership put its energy into actions which tangled it further in the Lebanese Civil War.

The other great mistake of the PFLP was its prioritization—to the point of fetishization—of armed struggle as the only legitimate path to liberation. In Jordan, the PFLP reached a membership of roughly 5,000, of which nearly half were fighters.¹ In Lebanon, the numbers were likely even further skewed toward the military apparatus. In both environments, the PFLP organized hospitals, schools, daycare, and other services, but only as a supplement to the primary strategy of armed struggle. In the occupied territories, the Popular Front was forced to rely on other methods of organization because of the depth and reach of the Israeli military administration. Popular organizing by the PLO factions laid the foundations for *al-Intifada*, but the level of neglect given to those activists organizing under occupation separated the uprising from the existing institutions which might have sustained it and expanded it into a (trans)national liberation movement which could confront the the occupation from a place of strength.

The rivalry between Fatah and the Popular Front—and between the heads of the two organizations, Yasser 'Arafat and George Habash—was the result of two departures in strategy. The first became apparent only after 'Arafat assumed the chairmanship of the PLO: while Fatah hoped to maintain a policy of non-interference in the affairs of Arab states, the PFLP saw interference as a necessity, expressed in Habash's slogan, "The road to Palestine passes through Amman, its passes through Beirut, it passes through Cairo, and it passes through

¹ Chaliand (1972), pg. 83.

Riyadh.”² Palestinian liberation required supportive, secular, democratic governments in all or most of the Arab states. The betrayals in Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria confirmed this view.

The second departure developed in the 1970s over the question of the establishment of a Palestinian state in “liberated territories”. Fatah, as early as 1974, supported a Palestinian state as a transitional stage toward the liberation of all of Palestine. The PFLP recognized the danger of permanency that this represented and rightly predicted that this position would give way to support for a two-state solution and the acceptance of Israel. In both cases, the Popular Front predicted the failures of the Palestinian resistance movement and argued for a different strategy, one that might have succeeded. But the PFLP was far less prophetic in its self-analysis, never righting the problems within its own organization nor displacing ‘Arafat and Fatah from the leadership of the movement. Now, two decades since the Oslo Accords—the event I use to date the PFLP’s final defeat—with ‘Arafat and Habash both gone, the Palestinian Left is showing signs of renewal. If it is to become a mass-based national movement, it will need to confront the mistakes of the past in developing its strategy for the future.

² The capitals were resorted when the needs of the PFLP changed. This phrase, originally penned by the first PLO chairman, Ahmad Shuqairi, and associated with radical Arab nationalists, gained a following in the leftist realm as well. The Israeli Socialist Organization, Matzpen—an anti-Zionist, Trotskyist formation—uses the phrase, for example.

Chapter One: The Popular Front in Jordan: Liberation, Confrontation, and Dispersal

The greatest mistake of the resistance was its failure to appreciate or define scientifically the enemy it faced in Jordan.... It was vital for the resistance movement to realize that the Jordanian regime was founded fifty years ago by British colonialism to ... further Zionist and colonialist plans ... in Palestine.... [I]f it had worked with a full appreciation of these realities it could have made Jordan a base for the revolution, in that we could have swung the balance of power in its favor once and for all. This was its greatest mistake and we, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, do not accept in any shape or form the responsibility for what happened.

—George Habash, Secretary-General of the PFLP, 1973³

This is the first of three chapters which will answer the question of why the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine failed, both as a political contender within the PLO and as part of a broader liberation movement. This chapter concerns the Popular Front's experience in Jordan between 1967 and 1971. In this period, the PFLP suffered two defeats: first, marginalization within the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the unifying body of the armed resistance and, second, the massacres and dispersal of Black September and the Jordanian Civil War. No single error was responsible for the catastrophe that followed. The combination of a series of ill circumstances and mistakes led to the crisis of 1970–1971.

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine emerged at a time when *watani* nationalism was in the ascendant and Arab nationalism was floundering under the weight of military defeat. The Arab Nationalist Movement, precursor to the Popular Front, was evolving into a Marxist organization—minus the dependence on the ruling communist régimes for support—as a way of adapting to the new conditions. The PFLP faced a series of devastating setbacks in 1968 and 1969—mass arrests in the West Bank, the arrest of George Habash in

³ Maksoud (1973), pgs. 69–70.

Syria, two major splits within the organization—while attempting to maintain an already lost position of leadership in the Palestinian resistance movement. The Black September crisis and the Jordanian Civil War were just more nails in the coffin.

The failure to overthrow King Hussain was a result of circumstance, the near impossibility of competing politically while crumbling organizationally, but it also reflected an immaturity of leadership. The Popular Front succeeded in training thousands of fighters, attracting tens of thousands of supporters, and challenging the basis of the Jordanian monarchy, but the opportunities available to the PFLP were not transformed into a national movement which could have absorbed the September crackdown and maintained pressure on the régime. The PFLP was right to question the effectiveness of Fatah's raids and to seek to implement a new strategy, but the tactic of airplane hijackings, so easily denounced as petty terrorism, was no more effective in effecting political change. Spectacular operations amounted to a tactic without a strategy.

Only the popular movement, the mobilization of thousands of Palestinians and Jordanians, could have prevented the expulsion of the Palestinian *fiḍa'i* organizations from Jordan. When the régime confronted the Palestinian commando groups, it was with an army of native Jordanians. That neither the army nor the Jordanian public rebelled against the régime after September 1970 shows the degree to which the Palestinian movement had failed to win popular support among Jordanians, despite the efforts of the leftist groups. In the oft-repeated metaphor of guerrilla warfare, a guerrilla must relate to the masses as a fish to water; when the monarchy brought down its reckoning in September 1970, the Popular Front was left with no room in which to swim.

The failure of the Popular Front in the early 1970s was twofold. As part of a national liberation movement, the PFLP—and the PLO—suffered a painful defeat in the Jordanian Civil War, both military and ideological. The PFLP, as a contender in the Palestinian political field, found its first and gravest defeat in this period, as Fatah succeeded in absorbing many smaller

factions, establishing its control over PLO resources, and partially integrating its informal troops with the professionally trained Palestine Liberation Army. Fatah, which had already assumed the titular basis for leadership of the movement in the form of the chairmanship of the PLO, maneuvered the tragedy of Black September to secure its place as the arbiter and dictator of the resistance movement's ideology and practice. The uneven rivalry between George Habash and Yasser 'Arafat reflected their respective roles, the revolutionary and the politician.

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### *The Arab Nationalist Movement: Unity, Liberation, and Vengeance*

After the 1947–1948 ethnic cleansing of Palestine, a previously contiguous territory was divided up between victors and collaborators, and a people, with centuries of history, had ceased to exist. In the refugee camps of Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, and Iraq, hundreds of thousands struggled to survive without the privileges of citizenship or nationhood, *homo sacer*. To the host régimes, refugees were something between a demographic threat and a pool of surplus labor. Outside of the Arab world, the term “Palestinian” as anything other than a people of history—like the Canaanites or the Philistines—had exited the lexicon.

The loss of Palestine seared into the Arab political imaginary; redemption became a necessity and the western-backed monarchies and ethnocracies could not fulfill it. King Farouq of Egypt lasted only four years from the fall of Palestine until he was overthrown by his own military. The Free Officers' coup led to the presidency of Colonel Gamal 'Abd an-Nasser,<sup>4</sup> who would become the popular face of Arab national unity and Palestinian liberation. It was in this atmosphere that a circle of mostly Palestinian students and graduates of the American University of Beirut (AUB) established *Haraka al-Qawmia al-'Arabia* (Arab Nationalist Movement; ANM) in the early 1950s.

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<sup>4</sup> Gamal 'Abd an-Nasser (often transliterated as Gamal Abdel Nasser), disenchanted by the weakness of the Arab régimes in the 1948 war that resulted in the loss of Palestine, staged a coup in Egypt, deposing King Farouq. Nasser ruled as a populist, and later as a socialist and land-reformer, with two end goals: the unification of the Arab world and the liberation of Palestine.

George Habash and Wadi' Haddad, founders of the ANM, left for Jordan in 1952 to recruit support for the new movement. They set up a free clinic in Amman and cultivated a small following. The ANM gained the sponsorship of *Mu'tamar Amman* (the Amman Conference), a consortium of wealthy Palestinians and Jordanians with Arab nationalist leanings led by Hamad al-Farhan. On the West Bank—at the time a part of Jordan—the ANM found supporters among urban professional Arab clubs. The first confrontation between the ANM and the Jordanian monarchy came in 1955, when the latter banned *ar-Rai* (the Opinion), an Arab Nationalist publication, for advocating the overthrow of the monarchy.

King Hussain I of Jordan came to power in 1952 at the age of seventeen after the abdication of his mentally ailing father. Hoping to develop popular support for his régime—a non-indigenous leftover of British colonialism—the boy king offered to hold open elections in 1956. Despite accusations of royal fraud, the result was a parliament largely filled by Ba'athists, Communists, and Arab nationalists and a prime minister, Sulayman an-Nabulsi, who was seen as an ally of Gamal 'Abd an-Nasser. Nabulsi attempted to strengthen the elected legislature's position in government, unify the military, and develop ties with the USSR and Egypt. Nabulsi also supported Jordan's incorporation into a unified Arab state, which King Hussain interpreted as a direct challenge to his absolute power.

In 1957 the rivalry between Hussain and Nabulsi escalated when the latter resigned in protest of the king's authoritarianism. A national opposition was formed in Nablus which included the ANM, the Ba'ath, the Communists, and Sulayman's party, the National Socialists. George Habash was a member of the executive committee. Strikes and demonstrations followed, but Hussain had prepared. Bedouin legionnaires, staunchly loyal to the king, were brought in to violently put down the rebellion.<sup>5</sup> When Wadi' Haddad and several other ANM members were arrested for subversive activity, George Habash fled to Damascus. Two years

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<sup>5</sup> Kubaisi (1971), pgs. 81–83.



later, Haddad was released and joined him in Syria. They left the Jordanian section of the ANM to the conservative Amman Conference and Hamad al-Farhan.

The charismatic image of Nasser, whose Palestine-oriented rhetoric aligned with the goals of the ANM, influenced the ideology and orientation of the young movement's second generation. ANM activists were particularly impressed by Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal and his rejection of the Baghdad Pact, which established the Central Treaty Organization as a Middle East imitation of NATO. The ANM represented itself as the official Nasserist party as early as 1955,<sup>6</sup> though it would be another four years before Nasser himself offered them more than passive recognition. The formation of the United Arab Republic (UAR) in 1958, a union of Egypt and Syria, solidified the ANM's support for Nasser. For the union's brief period of operation, the ANM sometimes acted as Nasser's proxy in Syria.

The Arab Nationalist Movement relied on a division of power between a formal operational leadership, composed of Habash, Haddad, Hani al-Hindi, Ahmad al-Khatib, and each of the regional commands, and an informal ideological leadership—Muhsin Ibrahim, Hakam al-Darwaza, and Ghassan Kanafani being the three most prominent members—which directed the ANM's periodicals and publishing. Ibrahim, born into rural poverty in South Lebanon, was attracted to the socialist dimension of Nasser's régime, which focused on wealth redistribution. By the mid-1960s, Ibrahim led an informal faction within the ANM—strongest in the Iraqi and Lebanese commands—which sought to incorporate class as a central component of the ANM's political program. The Left faction, as it became known, hoped to change the ANM's motto, "Unity, Liberation, Vengeance", to "Unity, Liberation, Socialism".

To counter the mounting tensions between the ideological leadership and the mostly Palestinian organizational leadership, the latter established a separate Palestinian Action Command (PAC) in 1964, equal in stature to the Regional Commands in each Arab country.

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<sup>6</sup> Nasser's opposition to the 1955 Baghdad Pact, which allied pro-Western régimes in the Middle East with Great Britain, was a major factor in the ANM's warmth toward his régime.

Habash and Haddad could spend most of their energy on the PAC, leaving the ANM to their deputies. The historian Yezid Sayigh gives the membership of the PAC as “several hundred members in Lebanon, some five hundred in Syria, ... at least ‘several hundreds’ in the West Bank (not counting the East Bank of Jordan), a few hundred in Gaza, and dozens in Kuwait ... and Egypt.”<sup>7</sup> The creation of a separate Palestinian structure within the ANM amounted to the adoption of a strategy of armed struggle; the PAC essentially had no purpose outside of armed struggle, as opposed to the other Commands which could participate politically and socially in their regions.

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The Ground is Set: Preparing for a Liberation War

Nasser established *Majmu'a I-Tahrir al-Filastinia* (the Palestine Liberation Organization; PLO) in May 1964 under the authority of Ahmad Shuqairi, a career politician loyal to Nasser, as the Palestinian government-in-exile. The ANM, like other political organizations, was not assured any seats solely on the basis of being a political organization, as would later be the case, but received several seats in the Lebanese and Jordanian delegations⁸ when the first Palestine National Congress gathered in East Jerusalem in 1964.⁹ Within months of the PLO's establishment, Shuqairi was organizing a military wing, the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA). The ANM supported and participated in the PLO, but it also recognized the need to respond to an organization which might displace the Arab Nationalists as the militant wing of an emerging movement. The ANM-PAC launched a reconnaissance mission into Israel to prepare for armed struggle, resulting in the first ANM casualty when the mission was intercepted on 2 November

⁷ Sayigh (1991), pg. 619. His sources are mostly interviews with members and former members.

⁸ Shemesh (2008), pg. 72.

⁹ Two ANM leaders, Ahmad al-Yamani and Ghassan Kanafani, the former a PNC delegate, were banned entry to Jordan and could not attend. Shemesh (2008), pg. 75.

1964.¹⁰ The ANM also attempted to work within the PLO by creating a commando group, *Abtal al-'Awda* (Heroes of the Return),¹¹ officially subordinate to the PLA, but under the direct command of Wadi' Haddad and his lieutenants.

Another ANM rival emerged in the mid-1960s; *Haraka at-Tahrir al-Watani al-Filastini* (the Palestinian National Liberation Movement; Fatah) had existed since the early to mid-1950s, but it only began military operations in 1965¹² after the establishment of the PLO. Fatah represented *watani* nationalism, as opposed to the *qawmi* Arab nationalism of the ANM. The basis for *watani* nationalism lies in a shared national identity distinct from Arab identity. For Fatah, *an-Nakba* distinguished Palestinians in their sense of statelessness and loss. Fatah brought together Maoists and socialists with Islamists, liberals, and nationalists, giving some credence to its claim to be a national movement. But despite its substantial left-wing, Fatah, like the ANM in the 1950s, ignored the issue of class and downplayed ideology in favor of fiery rhetoric about the liberation of Palestine. An ANM leader, 'Abd al-Qarim Hamad (Abu Adnan), described the relationship between the ANM and Fatah:

We first met Yasser Arafat in 1964. At that time he had no mass support, but he asked us to co-ordinate the action of Fatah and the ANM. We agreed, on condition that we could agree on a common political programme. Yasser Arafat then said it was not worth the bother, and that the problem was one of joint armed action, 'blood unity', as he put it. The negotiations failed. From 1965 onwards, Fatah embarked on armed actions whereas we were explaining to our militants that we must wait, that we must train, and so on. Then we saw that our militants were joining Fatah.¹³

The difference between Fatah and the ANM in the mid-1960s, however, was not over who was launching armed operations—though Fatah presented itself as alone in this task—but

¹⁰ Sayigh (1991), pg. 620. The name of the ANM militant was Khalid al-Hajj, though Rosemary Sayigh (1979) gives the name Khaled Abu 'Aisheh.

¹¹ Sayigh (1991) mentions an ANM-affiliated group of the same name from almost a decade earlier, formed from formerly Egyptian-paid saboteurs, which carried out many ANM armed operations. Pgs. 611–612.

¹² 2 January 1965. Sayigh (1991), pg. 620.

¹³ Gresh (1988), pg. 24.

whether these operations were primarily propagandistic, or were an end in themselves. For Fatah, every operation carried out—in addition to many fictitious ones—was celebrated and broadcast through all available mediums across the Palestinian diaspora. The ANM, in contrast, attempted a policy of what Ghassan Kanafani described as “*fawq as-sifr wa taht at-tawrit*” (above zero and below entanglement).¹⁴ ANM commandos would harass the Israeli border without going so far as to drag Egypt into a war it was not prepared for.

Fatah grew substantially over the next two years, recruiting secondary school students and drawing away members of the Ba’ath Party, the Muslim Brotherhood, the Communist Party, and other groups either not focused on the liberation of Palestine or opposed to armed struggle. The ANM, though at a slower pace, was losing Palestinian cadre to the more outspoken movement as well. The Arab Nationalists were partly protected from Fatah’s growth by the looming certainty of a war between Egypt and Israel and the possibility of Arab nationalism’s fulfillment, the destruction of Israel. When the war came, however, it was not the realization, but the termination of Arab nationalism as a popular political force.

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### *June 1967 and the Resistance is Born*

Egypt, Syria, and Jordan were preparing for a war with Israel for years, and Syria in particular had engaged in a number of skirmishes with the Israeli military. By the summer of 1967, the war was imminent. On 5 June, Israel—utilizing an extensive network of spies within the Egyptian and Syrian militaries—sent a barrage of bomber strikes against the neighbouring air forces when they were least prepared to defend themselves, effectively neutralizing them. Despite a significantly larger number of troops, the Arab armies were defeated as soon as they lost their air cover. Gaza and the West Bank, the remainder of historic Palestine, were captured, along with the Golan Heights (from Syria) and the Sinai desert (from Egypt). After years of

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<sup>14</sup> Hasso (2005), pg. 5.

embodying the aspirations of the Arab world, Nasser appeared impotent in his most significant hour. Arab nationalism never recovered from the 1967 defeat, labeled optimistically as *an-Naksa* (the Setback). *An-Naksa* sparked an ideological crisis within the ANM. The unification of Cairo, Damascus, and Baghdad was a fantasy as long as an occupied Jerusalem divided them. The liberation of Palestine, so recently an inevitability in the rhetoric of the Arab nationalists, had become an absurdity to be negotiated away in exchange for peace with Israel.

The ANM Left and Right factions, the inheritors of the ideological-organizational leadership divide, were mixed in their interpretations of the 1967 War. According to Yezid Sayigh, "*Al-Hurria*<sup>15</sup> was absent for a fortnight [after the war], and then reappeared under a sober headline: 'No .. the Arabs have not been defeated, it was not a war with Israel but an all-out war with America.'<sup>16</sup> The Left argued that the Arab nationalist states failed in their attempt to unify and then failed again when tasked with liberating Palestine because, despite their populism, they were irredeemably "*petit bourgeois*". Even as the Arab nationalist régimes pushed progressive reforms, they prevented the ascension of the revolutionary masses, allowing for the expansion of capitalism and neocolonialism in the postcolonial world. This left-leaning ideological trend, born of but in rejection to Arab nationalism led to what was later termed the New Arab Left.<sup>17</sup> The ANM Left had lost all faith in the liberatory power of Nasser and, in the end, both the Left and Right accepted the need for independent, armed Palestinian action.

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<sup>15</sup> One of the ANM's leading publications. Based in Beirut and edited by Muhsin Ibrahim.

<sup>16</sup> Sayigh (1997), pgs. 158–159.

<sup>17</sup> Ismael (1976) documents the development of a New Arab Left, mostly in the 1960s and especially after 1967. Outside of the ANM, sections of the New Left emerged within the Lebanese Ba'ath and the Lebanese Communist Party, as well as within academia. The term fell out of use after most of the successor organizations to the ANM dissolved, with notable exceptions in the Palestinian, Lebanese, and Gulf contexts. Also see Madayan (1999).

In December 1967, negotiations between the two armed wings of the ANM, *Abtal al-'Awda* (Heroes of the Return)<sup>18</sup> and *Shabab ath-Tha'r* (Vengeance Youth)<sup>19</sup>, and a group known as the Palestine Liberation Front (PLF)<sup>20</sup> led to the formation of *Jabha ash-Sha'bia I-Tahrir Filastin* (the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine; PFLP). George Habash described the founding of the PFLP:

The war of 1967 and the new defeat ... brought a full revolution in our thought. We decided to adopt the Vietnamese model: a strong political party, complete mobilization of the people, the principle of not depending on any régime or government. The situation was now clear. The true revolutionary forces began to emerge. *We are now preparing for twenty or more years of war against Israel and its backers. We have the more determination and the guerrilla tactics to do so and we will continue to do so, no matter how much Israel is backed by America.*<sup>21</sup>

After June 1967, though it continued to exist in name, the ANM was effectively defunct. Most of the non-Palestinian branches were either dissolved or consciously separated themselves from the primarily Palestinian leadership, indicating the speed at which pan-Arabism lost its plausibility. The decline of *qawmi* nationalism gave way to a rise in *watani*, or regional, nationalism. Fatah achieved popular support through propaganda-of-the-deed; that is, armed operations against Israeli targets. The concept of liberation was unambiguous for Fatah's

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<sup>18</sup> *Abtal al-'Awda* may have been formed when a group of Palestinian armed infiltrators, paid by the Egyptian régime to launch raids into Israel from Jordan, joined the ANM. Sayigh (1991) p. 611–12. Sayigh (1997), however, suggests *Abtal al-'Awda* was formed in the mid-1960s. Either way, *Abtal al-'Awda* was officially part of the Palestine Liberation Army, but was made up of ANM recruits. According to Shemesh (2008), pg. 102, *Abtal al-'Awda* represented around fifty commandos.

<sup>19</sup> *Shabab ath-Tha'r* was directly under the aegis of the ANM. The use of the the term "*ath-tha'r*" is surprising, given that it had been formally dropped from the ANM program more than a decade earlier, but reflects the context in which the latter group was formed—the build up to the 1967 War. Quandt (1973) and Tessler (1994) claim that Nayif Hawatma led *Shabab ath-Tha'r* from 1966 until it was merged into the PFLP. This, however, seems unlikely as other sources, including Kazziha (1975), claim Hawatma remained outside the PFLP until 1968. Pg. 87. In the 1950s, the Muslim Brotherhood established a commando unit also known as *Shabab ath-Tha'r*. This group did little of note and was dissolved, but one of the three founders of Fatah, Abu Iyad, passed through its ranks. Sayigh (1997), pg. 82.

<sup>20</sup> The leader of the PLF was Ahmad Jibril, a non-ideological career soldier. He would leave the PFLP after a year to form the PFLP-General Command. The PLF is not to be confused with another group by the same name which emerged from the PFLP-GC in the 1970s.

<sup>21</sup> Cooley (1973), pg. 139 from an interview with Habash.

partisans in the 1960s and early 1970s. When interviewed in May 1973, both Abu Iyad and Khalid al-Hassan—two Fatah leaders—were adamant that recognition of Israel and the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza would amount to acquiescence and defeat.<sup>22</sup> Liberation meant return for all the disinherited of 1948, and a unified nation encompassing all of historic Palestine, itself part of the larger Arab nation. To this end, Fatah and the PFLP were in agreement.

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The Armed Struggle Begins

Self-sacrifice, within the context of revolutionary action, is an expression of the very highest understanding of life, and of the struggle to make life worthy of a human being. The love of life for a person becomes a love for the life of his people's masses and his rejection that their life persists in being full of continuous misery, suffering and hardship. Hence, his understanding of life becomes a social virtue, capable of convincing the militant fighter that self-sacrifice is a redemption of his people's life. This is a maximum expression of attachment to life.

—Ghassan Kanafani, novelist and PFLP spokesman, 1971²³

The ANM in the West Bank was in shambles after the 1967 War. The Israeli military administration inherited an extensive network of spies and collaborators from the Jordanian monarchy. It was months before the local ANM could form a trusted and unified leadership to communicate with the movement outside. It took even longer to establish an armed wing. But the leadership of the ANM, desperate to catch up to Fatah, risked an unsuccessful raid in December 1967 which not only failed, but led to the arrest of 187 members of the newly

²² Maksoud (1973), pgs. 38–39 and 63–65.

²³ Kanafani (1973), pg. 30.

established PFLP by the end of the month, including the West Bank commander, ‘Abdallah ‘Ajrami. The remaining ANM fighters not native to the West Bank retreated to Jordan.²⁴

At the same time, Yasser ‘Arafat of Fatah was touring the West Bank, recruiting and organizing *fida’iin*,²⁵ and building his reputation by narrowly escaping Israeli patrols. A minority within Fatah, particularly Abu Iyad and the leftists, urged caution, but ‘Arafat, as Fatah’s commander-in-chief, recognized the propaganda potential in striking early and presenting the *watani* nationalists as the vanguard of the armed struggle. Fatah publications began boasting of hundreds of Israeli casualties at the hands of a few, brave *fida’iin*, even as those *fida’iin* rarely returned in one piece and Israeli sources suggested far fewer of their own killed or wounded. The façade of *fida’i* invincibility proved an extraordinary recruiting tool, but by 1968 Fatah was faltering under the weight of its fighters’ very real mortality.²⁶

On March 1968, an irregularly large contingent of Israeli infantry and tanks crossed the Jordan river and descended on the Jordanian town of Karama, which had served as a launching point for raids by the various armed factions, with orders to crush the Palestinian movement. The Israeli column began systematically dismantling the town, but was met with resistance by 300 Fatah and PLA fighters. The guerrillas were woefully outgunned, but after twelve hours, under pressure from Jordanian mortar fire, the Israeli column was forced to retreat, abandoning four damaged tanks. The Israeli army suffered twenty-eight dead and ninety wounded, while more than one hundred and fifty Palestinians and Jordanians were killed.²⁷

Despite the disproportionate body count, the Battle of Karama became an unassailable victory for Fatah, which joined the PLO that year, along with *as-Sa’iqa*, the Ba’athist militia.

²⁴ Sayigh (1997) provides an account of the struggle between a desperate leadership and an unprepared regional command. Pgs. 165–167.

²⁵ Often transliterated, woefully unphonetically, as “fedayeen”, *fida’iin* (the plural of *fida’i*) is a term that was often used to describe Palestinian guerrilla fighters. The literal translation of the term is “sacrificers”, giving some religious significance to the term, though secularists used it as well.

²⁶ Sayigh (1997), pgs. 154–58.

²⁷ Sayigh (1997), pgs. 178–79

While typically guerrilla fighters faced with superior numbers and arms in a confined space would choose to retreat and regroup, Fatah stood its ground. A small contingent of PFLP fighters in Karama, led by Ahmad Jibril, opted for the more conservative tactic. The contrast between Fatah's poorly equipped hundreds fighting off an Israeli column and the tens of thousands in the Arab armies, so resoundingly defeated less than a year earlier, was not lost on the Palestinian refugee community in Jordan. After Karama, thousands flocked to Fatah's recruitment offices every week. Jibril, formerly the leader of the PLF, was criticized for choosing to retreat, ceding the propaganda victory to Fatah. In response, Jibril renounced his still mostly autonomous organization's connections with the PFLP and took the name PFLP-General Command.²⁸

The Fourth Congress of the PLO gathered in July 1968. Of all the guerrilla factions, the PFLP probably had the closest ties to the PLO because of years of ANM participation and, particularly, military cooperation. Fatah, however, was able to use its victory at Karama and the resultant wave of recruits to insist on a majority of seats in the Executive Committee. The PFLP boycotted the congress in protest of the small number of seats they were granted, but this only left Fatah far more room to maneuver. The Popular Front's underrepresentation and boycott repeated itself at the following two congresses, where Yasser 'Arafat, largely because of his presence at Karama, would become the official and unofficial head of the resistance movement, assuming the chairmanship of the PLO in February 1969.

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### *The Spectacle of the Flying Guerrillas*

While the PFLP was trapped in internal squabbles, Fatah was growing rapidly and taking the momentum of the movement. To counter both an internal left-wing leadership challenge and

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<sup>28</sup> Jibril was also uninterested in the ideological confrontation developing between the Left and Right factions. His choice of the name "General Command" was meant to suggest that he had taken the military apparatus of the PFLP, leaving only the ideological wing to fight itself. Jibril, however, did not have so large a following at the time and the PFLP held onto a sizable military apparatus.

the grander rise of Fatah, Wadi' Haddad organized the Special Apparatus, a wing of the PFLP which carried out international operations, particularly hijackings. On 23 July 1968, two members of the Special Apparatus hijacked an El Al flight, flying from Rome to Tel Aviv. The plane was taken to Algiers where the passengers were leveraged in exchange for the release of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails.<sup>29</sup> In hijackings, the PFLP saw a method for transcending the ineffective guerrilla raids which Fatah and other *fiḍa'i* organizations relied on. While there remained a great deal of overlap in the tactics of the two groups, a distinction emerged between the classification of Fatah and the PFLP, the former being the *fiḍa'i* or the guerrilla and the latter being the terrorist. Over the next two years, the PFLP would expand its international operations dramatically, drawing both support and condemnation from the international community while usurping some of Fatah's limelight. George Habash described the intent behind the tactic of hijackings:

Our action was a symbol, and we said that if the entire resistance movement followed this strategy it would threaten imperialist interests in the Arab world. We do not aim to substitute for the Arab national movement, rather to work at one with it. But there are also the specific characteristics of the Palestinian people and their cause. I believe that the Palestinian people, who do not all live in their own country where they may confront the army of Israeli occupation, are justified in striking at Israeli, Zionist and imperialist interests wherever they may be.<sup>30</sup>

In the fall of 1968, Nasser feared his régime would be blamed for the hijackings and, after the PFLP published a manifesto critical of the UAR, he retracted all military aid—arms, supplies, and training—to the Popular Front, shifting his support to the more moderate Fatah. The Syrian Ba'ath, while ideologically closer to the PFLP, instead supported their own militia *as-Sa'iqa* (Vanguard of the Popular Liberation War), while specifically targeting the Popular Front for harassment. The PFLP might have been left with no outside support were it not for the Ba'athist coup in Iraq in June 1968. The Iraqi Ba'athists, initially lacking a militia of their own and

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<sup>29</sup> Sayigh (1997), pg. 213

<sup>30</sup> Maksoud (1973), pgs. 79–80.

competing with their Syrian rivals, sent money and arms to the PFLP. Libya would become a sponsor of the Popular Front in the 1970s, but at the time, Mu'amar Qaddafi said of the PFLP, "They are not fedayeen. They are really agents. They are advocates of division and theories and not advocates of armed struggle."<sup>31</sup>

Fatah enjoyed the sponsorship of the reactionary oil sheikhdoms as well as some of the "progressive" régimes, including Algeria, Egypt after 1968, and Syria until 1970. The only Arab state threatened by Fatah's ineffective crossborder raids was Jordan, popular neither among its own population nor with the other Arab states. King Hussain feared Israeli reprisals, but the initial popularity of the *fida'iin* prevented his régime from acting. Between Fatah's 1965 debut and the middle of 1970, there were more than 9,000 Palestinian commando operations, of which more than 60% were Fatah's,<sup>32</sup> causing tension to develop between the guerrillas and their host. Fatah hoped to create a balance with the régime which would protect the *fida'iin*. The PFLP was not afraid to make powerful enemies. After Saudi Arabia refused to give them funding, the PFLP dispatched commandos in May 1969 to the occupied Golan to sabotage the TAPLINE oil pipeline, which transported oil from the Gulf to the Saida port in Lebanon, costing the monarchy millions.<sup>33</sup> Forty-eight PFLP members were expelled from Saudi Arabia the following month in retaliation.<sup>34</sup>

Still more troubling for the pro-West Arab monarchies and for the Western governments were the PFLP's external operations. Besides the July 1968 hijack, the PFLP bombed EI Al offices in Europe and attacked Israeli businesses abroad. Four commandos attacked a

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<sup>31</sup> Libyan Radio, 1 August 1971. From Laffin (1973), pg. 135. Strangely, while Laffin dates this broadcast as 1 August 1971, O'Ballance (1973) writes, "It was reported on the 1st March [1971] that Colonel Gaddafi, of Libya, promised to give (pounds) 300,000 to the PFLP." Pg. 171. And on page 178, "It was known that Colonel Gaddafi gave money to the PFLP, as he considered it the only guerilla organization that achieved anything."

<sup>32</sup> Schmidt (1974), pg. 170.

<sup>33</sup> O'Ballance (1972), pg. 78.

<sup>34</sup> Journal of Palestine Studies (1969), pg. 521.

stationary El Al plane at Zurich airport in February 1968.<sup>35</sup> Another plane hijacking on 29 August 1969 brought international attention. The image of one of the hijackers, Laila Khalid, wearing a *kaffiya* as a headscarf and cradling a Kalashnikov, was circulated in the Western press. The PFLP, still a minority faction in Jordan, became the favorite of the international Left. When Fatah brought 145 internationals, mostly students, from Europe to tour the camps in Jordan, the youth were critical of Fatah, preferring the Popular Front.<sup>36</sup>

In April 1969, Fatah, *as-Sa'iqa*, the Palestine Liberation Army, and the PFLP—whose formation is the subject of the next section—attempted to combine their military forces in the Palestine Armed Struggle Command (PASC),<sup>37</sup> but the PFLP refused to participate. Its primary method of confrontation was no longer compatible with the night raids and cross-border shellings of its rivals. Plane hijackings and attacks on oil pipelines represented a tangible threat to Western capital in the Arab world, but they left no space for escalation. They could remain a steady irritation for imperialism in the Middle East, but they could not overthrow corrupt, authoritarian régimes, nor could they liberate Palestine.

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The Uneven Shift to the Left

The PFLP suffered a severe ideological and political loss when, in March 1968, George Habash was arrested in Syria while attempting to garner support from the Ba'athist régime. Habash had been able to mediate disputes and keep the ANM from becoming factionalized, even while he had clearly represented one side of the debate. With the Secretary-General imprisoned, there was nothing to keep an ascendant Left faction and a belligerent Right faction from either splitting apart or escalating their disagreement into violence.

³⁵ O'Ballance (1972), pg. 72.

³⁶ O'Ballance (1972), pg. 88.

³⁷ The PASC was soon joined by the PPSF, the ALF, the PFLP-GC, and the Organization for Arab Palestine. Quandt (1973), pg. 72.

Nayif Hawatma, originally from Salt, Jordan, shifted from the semi-defunct ANM to the PFLP and, along with the Palestinian Yasser 'Abd Rabbo, constituted the leadership of the Left faction. The leftists came primarily from regions where circumstances forced them to work closely with the local communists—Lebanon, Iraq, and the West Bank. Areas where the ANM had a hostile relationship with the communists, as in Syria, or where communists were relatively absent, as in Gaza, the ANM cadre were firmly with the Right. With Habash imprisoned, the Left was able to have its slate elected and became the majority in the party leadership. The Right insisted on new elections and the Left withdrew several candidates to avoid controversy, becoming the minority tendency again. The most significant action of the brief Left leadership was to issue the Basic Political Report³⁸ on behalf of the PFLP. The report called for:

[U]nity of all classes and political forces under the leadership of the revolutionary classes which have carried arms throughout the modern history of Palestine. It is the sons of these classes who have answered the call to arms since June 1967. The modern history of the people of Palestine, and that of popular liberation wars in all under-developed countries, proves that the workers and peasant classes are the ones who are prepared to carry arms and fight a long term war against the enemies of national liberation, namely, imperialism and its agents.³⁹

Though the Basic Political Report was written by a faction, rather than by the PFLP as a whole, it became the organization's ideological contract. While reiterating the need for the movement to avoid becoming dependent on Arab support—either from the reactionary régimes of the Gulf, Lebanon, and Jordan or the “progressive” régimes of Egypt, Syria, and Iraq—the report also criticized both Fatah and the PFLP leadership for avoiding confrontation with the Jordanian and Lebanese régimes. The emphasis on intervention in Arab politics would play a major role in the relationship between the movement and the Jordanian monarchy.

³⁸ The Basic Political Report of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine is available in English in Kadi (1969), pgs. 145–171.

³⁹ Kadi (1969), pg. 163.

In November 1968, Wadi' Haddad succeeded in rescuing Habash from Syrian prison. Upon his return to Jordan, the Secretary-General found an organization riven. The Right had control of the armed wing and of the PFLP's finances, allowing it to isolate the Left, which was forced to act independently. Habash may have hoped to use his mediation to restore some sort of unity, but the Left was already negotiating its defection. With the aid and protection of *as-Sa'iqa* and Fatah, the Left established itself as an independent organization, *Jabha ash-Sha'bia ad-Demoqratia I-Tahrir Filastin* (The Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine; PDFLP⁴⁰) in February 1969. The PDFLP won over no more than 150 members, and far fewer fighters, from the PFLP⁴¹, but wrested control of *al-Hurria* (the Freedom), the Beirut-produced party journal. The PFLP started a new journal, *al-Hadaf* (the Target), under the editorship of the novelist and activist Ghassan Kanafani.

The PDFLP struggled to survive in early 1969, but Lebanese and Iraqi sympathizers loaned cadre and dissident Ba'athists and communists who had formed small breakaway parties joined with the PDFLP. The biggest gain, however, came when the majority of the Maoist Popular Organization for the Liberation of Palestine (POLP)⁴² dissolved itself into the PDFLP, leaving the latter group with at least 400 or 500 members.⁴³ The PDFLP also benefited from Syrian patronage, which included arms and use of Syrian military training facilities.⁴⁴ The PDFLP, though unable to compete with the larger organizations in combat strength, succeeded in pulling the movement leftwards. In the late 1960s, it was one of the most promising developments on the Arab Left, but the costs of maintaining an armed resistance indebted the

⁴⁰ The group was originally known as the PDFLP, but the term "popular" was dropped in the 1970s under pressure from the PFLP.

⁴¹ Sayigh (1997), pg. 231.

⁴² The POLP was established by former Communist Party members sympathetic to Maoism and, at its peak, represented more than 300 in the West Bank and Jordan. It also had some ideological support from Yahya Hammuda, who preceded Yasser 'Arafat as chairman of the PLO.

⁴³ Sayigh (1997), pg. 231.

⁴⁴ Hussain (1973), pg. 2026.

PDFLP to its Syrian patrons. It could not compete with the larger organizations without Syrian support, which was conditional on the PDFLP's actions.

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### *A Lean and Rustic Socialism: Building a Popular Movement*

*This army of commandos [in Jordan] lived very lightheartedly, and my recollection is of a very civilized society.... Volunteers in the ranks of Fateh, the PFLP, Saiqa, and the PDFLP, both commandos and officials, had, with apparent nonchalance, made a start on socialism under the trees, sometimes in the rain—a sort of lean and rustic socialism which boded well for its developing within itself and around itself an ever more complex society. This start on a completely new world was murdered by Hussein, with the complicity of Israel, of many Arab countries and of all the Western countries.*

—Jean Genet, “The Palestinians”<sup>45</sup>

Fatah, the PFLP, and the PDFLP supplemented their military action by making efforts to build mass support for the resistance movement through providing services in the refugee camps and in the villages. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) was responsible for schools and clinics in refugee camps throughout the Arab world. The UNRWA also provided food and other necessities to refugees, who were often unable to find work in their host countries. But the services provided by the UN fell short of the needs of the refugee community, and the guerrilla factions attempted to fill the gap, while indigenizing the services.

Fatah, commanding the most resources, was able to establish two youth camps in Jordan which provided education and basic guerrilla training to 500 refugees in 1969.<sup>46</sup> Unlike in the UN schools, Fatah's teachers taught Palestinian history and, especially, histories of resistance like the 1936–1939 Revolt. These schools were intended to be the training ground for a generation of Palestinian leaders. The Popular Front established and appropriated similar

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<sup>45</sup> Genet (1973), pg. 10.

<sup>46</sup> Chaliand (1972), pgs. 15–18.

programs for refugee youth, the largest in Baqa'a camp, the PFLP's stronghold. They also developed a five-month cadre training courses where members studied Marxist theory, contemporary and historical revolutionary movements, and the history, ideology, and structure of the Popular Front itself.<sup>47</sup> The PDFLP carried on a similar program.

Fatah also used its resources to establish seven clinics and a hospital in different refugee camps in Jordan and to train dozens of nurses.<sup>48</sup> The PFLP, in its meager attempts at establishing support among the Jordanian population, offered medical services in the villages.<sup>49</sup> The PFLP established unions, a women's organization, and a militia in the city of Zarqa, but this never reached a mass level. The PDFLP was more successful in this regard, claiming to have trained a 1,200-strong militia of Jordanian natives in 1969,<sup>50</sup> though the course of events a year later call this number into question. The PFLP and PDFLP were hampered by their limited financial resources. While Fatah could afford to pay its fighters decent wages, the Popular Front could only afford a stipend and the PDFLP did not pay anything at all.<sup>51</sup> The training of Jordanian militias and the establishment of Jordanian women's groups and unions were beginning to lay the groundwork for a popular movement that could overthrow the monarchy and establish a socialist government in Amman, but it never reached a scale capable of sustaining a prolonged revolution.

The breadth of services provided by the PLO and the organizations within it created a situation of *Irnuajia* [help?] *as-Sulta*, or Dual Power. The monarchy and the PLO both displayed features of a functioning state, often redundantly, with neither subordinate to the other. Though 'Arafat refused to acknowledge it, the situation was unsustainable. King Hussain consolidated

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<sup>47</sup> Chaliand (1972), pgs. 156–59.

<sup>48</sup> Chaliand (1972), pgs. 18–19.

<sup>49</sup> Chaliand (1972), pg. 163.

<sup>50</sup> Chaliand (1972), pg. 99.

<sup>51</sup> Chaliand (1972) reports Fatah pay in 1969 at 15 dinar monthly, the PFLP at 7–12 dinar, and *as-Sa'iqa* at 10–15. Pg. 80. John Laffin (1973) reports Fatah pay in 1972 at 150–500 Lebanese pounds monthly, the PFLP and PDFLP pay at 75–150 pounds, and *as-Sa'iqa* at an unspecified, higher number than the rest. Pg. 100.



the military under his most loyal officers to prevent any split from occurring. He also sought to curtail the *fida'i* operations by restricting the spaces which the fighters were allowed to operate in to a few border crossings and arresting those who did not respect these new limitations. Despite the proliferation of hospitals and schools among the refugee community in Jordan, the PLO organizations failed to extend their base into the native Jordanian population. George Habash would later reflect, "the resistance movement behaved as if it were a substitute for the Jordanian national movement, having neither program nor directives to fulfill the duties of that role."<sup>52</sup> This would be the greatest failing of the resistance movement in Jordan.

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Black September and the Jordanian Civil War

In February 1969, Sharif Nasr Bin Jamil, the king's uncle, was named commander of the army. He and the Interior Minister, General Kailani, began a campaign of purging Arab nationalists from the army and gradually confining the guerrilla movement within heavily regulated, non-threatening spaces. A year later, as the government extended its repression to the camps, the PFLP pulled Fatah into confrontation with the régime by attacking a state radio station. In one of the first battles of the Jordanian Civil War, the "PFLP could muster only a few hundred men, but the boldness of its move obliged Fatah to back it up and to commit a thousand men or more."⁵³ On 11 June 1970, the PFLP occupied two Amman hotels, the Philadelphia and the Intercontinental, and leveraged 68 tourist hostages to force the monarchy to dismiss Sharif Nasr and the king's cousin and commander of armored forces, Sharif Zaid bin Shakr, and to end the assault on the refugee camps.⁵⁴ Isolated clashes between guerrillas and Jordanian troops had marred the PLO's relationship with King Hussain, but now a PLO

⁵² Maksoud (1973), pg. 71.

⁵³ Schmidt (1974), pg. 165.

⁵⁴ Quandt (1973), pg. 120 and O'Ballance (1973), pg. 129.

organization was challenging and coercing the monarchy itself. Both parties began preparations for a civil war.

Between August 5th and 9th, several skirmishes occurred between the 700-strong Nasserist Action Organization for the Liberation of Palestine (AOLP)⁵⁵ and the PFLP, which was aided by the Iraqi Ba'athist Arab Liberation Front (ALF). The combined force of the Popular Front and the ALF was at least 5,000 and the battle ended with eight dead and twenty-three captured AOLP fighters.⁵⁶ The battle exposed the tensions between the radical groups—the PFLP, PDFLP, PFLP-GC, and ALF—and the moderates in Fatah, *as-Sa'iqa*, the PLO, and the AOLP. The fighting also led to accusations that the AOLP was acting on Fatah's behalf in attacking the groups outside its control,⁵⁷ though other sources suggest that the PFLP and PDFLP initiated the conflict with the Nasserist organization in response to Nasser's 22 July ceasefire with Israel.⁵⁸

The Palestine National Council met near the end of August 1970 to solve the crisis. Though there is still some mystery as to what was agreed upon, Nayif Hawatma of the PDFLP claimed the PNC endorsed the establishment of a "national democratic government in Jordan and the transformation of Jordan into a revolutionary base."⁵⁹ The Jordanians later claimed that the PNC had endorsed a September coup. On 1 September, the king's motorcade was attacked in a PDFLP-controlled neighborhood by unidentified assailants. The PDFLP suggested that it may have been staged to justify a planned counterattack on the *fida'iin*.⁶⁰ At the time, the Jordanian military was still recovering from its losses in the 1967 War and its rank-and-file were divided in their opinion of the *fida'iin*. Many of the the soldiers were Palestinian themselves. The

⁵⁵ Turki (1972), pg. 106.

⁵⁶ O'Ballance (1973), pg. 132.

⁵⁷ Quandt (1973), pg. 67.

⁵⁸ Sayigh (1997), pg. 252.

⁵⁹ Quandt (1973), pg. 125, note 1.

⁶⁰ Susser (1994), pg. 137.

guerrillas counted roughly 25,000,⁶¹ along with several thousand regular PLA troops, but it wasn't until May 1970 that a Unified Command could be established, and even then, its constituent parts were still mostly autonomous.

On 6 September 1970, anarchy briefly ruled the skies over Europe. Four passenger jets bound for New York changed course mid-flight after gun and grenade-toting PFLP commandos wrested the helms. Two were diverted to Dawson's Field, an abandoned British RAF airbase outside Amman, while the third wound up in Cairo after a brief stop in Beirut. The fourth plane, an El Al jet, made an emergency landing in London after its two hijackers were subdued, one of them killed. The other, Laila Khalid, already notorious for a successful hijacking the previous year, was cast into the role of spokesperson for the Palestinian liberation movement. Khalid drew comparisons as various as "Che" Guevara and Audrey Hepburn from European and American commentators. Though Khalid had not intended to be captured, her public detention in London was more successful than a single hijacking ever could have been; Palestinians were given a human face and Palestine returned to the map.

The PLO condemned the hijackings, and the PFLP had its membership suspended for a week, but for "Arafat, the hijackings helped introduce the name of Palestine to the world and contributed to the creation of the Palestinian identity which he valued above all else. He found them beneficial and could not see the damage they were doing the Palestinian cause."⁶² To the Jordanian monarchy, the Dawson's Field hijackings were an open challenge. By choosing to land in Jordan, the PFLP was ignoring the authority of the ruling régime and undermining its territorial sovereignty. King Hussain had been waiting for an excuse to crush the *fidai'in*; on 6 September he found it.

⁶¹ 10,000 in Fatah, 7,000 in *as-Sa'iqa*, 3,000 in the PFLP, 2,000 in the ALF, 1,000 in the PDFLP, 500 in the PFLP-GC, and the remaining 1,450 divided between the PPSF—discussed in Chapter Three—the Nasserist Arab Organization for the Liberation of Palestine, and the Palestine Arab Organization. Turki (1972), pg. 106. Chaliand (1972) gives the number of fighters in late 1969 as 4,000 to 5,000 for Fatah, 1,200 in the PDFLP and 2,000 in the PFLP, in addition to an additional 2,000 to 3,000 non-fighters in the Popular Front. Pgs. 82, 83, and 90.

⁶² Aburish (1998), pg. 103.

Hussain had good reason to be hesitant about starting a war in September 1970; Syrian tanks lined the northern border, briefly crossing only to be forced back by the Jordanian and Israeli air forces,⁶³ and 12,000 Iraqi troops were stationed in the country. But the indifference of Hafiz al-Assad, who commanded the Syrian air force, and the political circumstances in Iraq prevented either army from making a meaningful intervention in the battles that unfolded. Ultimately more concerning for the king was the refusal of two brigades based in the north to travel to Amman once fighting broke out in the capital.⁶⁴ Bedouin tribesmen were armed as a “People’s Army” to reinforce the standing army, whose loyalty was now called into question. It was these troops who would earn the king’s crackdown its infamous title, “Black September”. Their viciousness in putting down the PLO rebellion led to 3,500 Palestinian deaths.⁶⁵ Near the end of September, Hussain appointed his strongman Wasfi at-Tal⁶⁶ as prime minister in an open recognition of his previously obscured relations.

The Palestinian fighters wrested control of the northern cities of Irbid, Ramtha, and Jerash. The PDPFLP claimed Irbid as the first Arab Soviet, while ‘Arafat declared the city’s independence. On each street, *lijan ash-sha’bia* (people’s committees) were organized. A *Newsweek* reporter who made his way to Irbid at the time described the scene:

Before I left Irbid, a ‘people’s congress’ met in the center of the city and resolved to bar all pro-government officials from the city and to resist any attack by the Jordanian Army. Toward that end, some 1,200 commandos hastily dug trenches along the main routes of attack and set up roadblocks to control movement to and from the city. ‘We are preparing to fight here until the end.’ said Lt. Abu Kussai, a burly 30-year-old Palestinian college graduate who is in charge of the city’s defenses. ‘We are a poor nation in a very big struggle, but we are confident of victory.’⁶⁷

⁶³ It was revealed decades later that Hussain had contacted the UK as a liaison to Israel to ask for air support.

⁶⁴ Schleifer (1973), pg. 125.

⁶⁵ Hussain (1973), pg. 2025. This number is highly contested, both in scale and in the appropriate timeframe. In popular memory, the number reaches into the tens of thousands.

⁶⁶ Wasfi at-Tal, a graduate of AUB, briefly passed through the ranks of the ANM before going on to join the Hashemi régime.

⁶⁷ Jenkins (1970), unpaginated.

In spite of its impassioned defense, however, the Irbid Soviet did not last, nor did PLO control anywhere in Jordan. Most of the PLO's positions were overcome in September and October. Around the time of the first anniversary of Black September, the PFLP bombed a section of TAPLINE,⁶⁸ reminding the monarchies that the front could not be disposed of overnight. The Popular Front, PDFLP, and the Iraq-sponsored Arab Liberation Front maintained a small underground resistance in Jordan for years after 1970, but the bulk of the *fiḍa'iin* had fled or been captured by mid-1971. Fatah and *as-Sa'iqa* had resigned Jordan to the monarchy, working to save the maximum number of their fighters from death or arrest, while all of the smaller *fiḍa'i* organizations had either been eliminated or absorbed into Fatah. The Hashemi régime was firmly established and the resistance was motivated by vengeance rather than an attainable goal. 5,000 pound rewards were offered for the arrests of Nayif Hawatma and George Habash,⁶⁹ but both managed to escape. During this period, one observer noted that, "[a]s of now to belong to the PFLP or DPF means instant death."⁷⁰

The last major battle of the Jordanian Civil War came in July 1971. 200 fighters were killed, 2,300 were captured, and only 200 escaped.⁷¹ Those fighters associated with the more conciliatory factions were disarmed and forced to return home. The fighters from the PFLP, 750 in total, remained in Jordanian prisons.⁷² The last gasp of a challenge to the monarchy came in November 1971 with the assassination of Wasfi at-Tal by members of Fatah, but by that point, the strongman prime minister was no longer needed. The early 1970s saw a temporary shift toward wanton violence against overtly civilian targets. The Black September Organization, unofficially affiliated with Fatah, committed the Munich massacre. The PFLP carried out the Lydda airport massacre. The PDFLP committed the Ma'alot massacre. The resistance

⁶⁸ Time (27 September 1971), unpaginated.

⁶⁹ O'Ballance (1973), pg. 153.

⁷⁰ MERIP Reports (August 1971), pg. 2.

⁷¹ Laffin (1973), pgs. 67–68.

⁷² Laffin (1973), pg. 68.

movement was engaging with a strategy of desperation and revenge which would take years to overcome.

Within the PFLP, Black September had residual effects long after the last *fidai'i* was arrested or fled. In the opening stages of the Lebanon phase—the subject of the next chapter—the Popular Front was uncharacteristically timid. The tactic of airplane hijacking came under scrutiny and was abandoned and condemned at the PFLP's third congress in March 1972,⁷³ leading eventually to the expulsion of Wadi' Haddad. George Habash was only narrowly reelected Secretary-General, and a younger faction within the party broke away to form the short-lived Popular Revolutionary Front for the Liberation of Palestine, which disappeared within its first year. The PFLP's rapid ascendance in the late 1960s had been checked and the time had come for a drastic reevaluation of strategy.

⁷³ Quandt (1973) suggests that this change was agreed upon as early as November 1970. Pg. 144.

Chapter Two: The Popular Front in Lebanon: Revolution, Cooperation, and the Sectarian Divide

It is our opinion in the PFLP—and there is concurrence with our opinion—that the Palestinian resistance movement should be in alliance with but not an alternative to the Lebanese progressive groups. The slogan put forward by the resistance movement is not the downfall of the Lebanese government. The slogan raised in Jordan in 1970—all power to the resistance movement—has proven to be incorrect because it overlooked the role of the Jordanian forces. The resistance movement is not so short-sighted as to make the same mistake in Lebanon.

—Yusif al-Haitham, PFLP member, Beirut, 1976⁷⁴

The events of Black September 1970 left the Palestinian guerrilla movement rudderless. Much of the leadership was imprisoned in Jordan, in hiding, or dead. The loss of the Jordanian border with Israel and the occupied West Bank halved the territory in which the movement could operate before even accounting for the restrictions imposed by the Syrian, Egyptian, and Lebanese governments, none of which intended to play host to an unpredictable army of *fidai'in*. In Lebanon, the ruling Maronite Christians had historical ties to Zionism, a checkered history with the progressive Arab movements, and no communal investment in the success of the guerrilla movement. But the Maronites were also navigating a tangled system of shared communal rule. In 1969, to placate Lebanon's Muslim majority, Charles Helou's government signed the Egypt-brokered Cairo Agreement with the Palestine Liberation Organization which granted the *fidai'in* operational freedom in the refugee camps and across the border with Israel. When the movement was forced to relocate, the obvious choice was to Lebanon.

This chapter begins by tracking the formation and development of the Arab Nationalist Movement in Lebanon in the 1950s and 1960s. Simultaneously, It introduces the confessional political system of Lebanon and summarizes the political developments during this period. The

⁷⁴ al-Haytham (1976), pg. 8.

chapter picks up in 1969, when Lebanon's border was rapidly developing into a battleground. The Lebanese Civil War is divided into three sections. The first covers the years 1974–1976. The second discusses the Syrian intervention and the years that followed. And the third focuses on 1982, when the Israeli invasion ended the *figda'iin* presence in Lebanon.

Between 1969 and 1982, the Palestinian movement faced civil war, massacres, and multiple foreign invasions. Yet the movement also reached its military and political zenith in the 1970s. The PFLP succeeded in uniting much of the Palestinian left in 1974 as the Rejectionist Front, but failed to challenge 'Arafat's leadership or to intercede in his conversion toward a two-state solution. Throughout the 1970s, the Popular Front struggled to overcome the effects of the defeat in Jordan, often substituting its tactical and political conclusions from Jordan into the Lebanese context. But even if the PFLP could not adequately articulate its objectives in Lebanon, it played a major role in the unification of the Lebanese left and the Palestinian movement in the LNM-PLO alliance. Only Syria's intervention in the Lebanese Civil War was enough to divide the coalition. By the time Israel invaded in 1982, the momentum of the guerrilla movement, now fifteen years old, was gone. The PLO's removal to Tunis was as much an escape from Lebanon's sectarian crisis as it was from Israel's military. Though the PFLP and some of its allies on the PLO's periphery would continue to play a role in the Lebanese resistance and in refugee camp politics beyond the 1980s, the site of contestation with Israel moved to the territories occupied in 1967, the site of Chapter Three.

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### *The Palestinian Presence in Lebanon and the Arab Nationalist Movement, 1947–1967*

Lebanese and Palestinian identities, to the extent that they existed at all before the 20th century, often overlapped or were secondary, regional designations subject to a broader categorization—Syrian or Arab or Muslim. But the borders drawn by France and Britain, along with Zionism's slow transformation of Palestine and, finally, the forced expulsion of tens of thousands of Palestinians into Lebanon, permanently changed the dynamics between the two



peoples. In the wake of French colonial rule, Lebanon adopted a communal political system which granted the presidency and a fixed majority in parliament to the Maronite Christian community, leaving the less-powerful premiership and a perpetual parliamentary minority to the larger Muslim community, laying the groundwork for conflict. The 1948 influx of around 110,000<sup>75</sup> Palestinian refugees—most of them Muslim—threatened the tenuous balance Lebanon relied upon. The newcomers were denied Lebanese citizenship and given heavy restrictions on where they could live and how they could make a living, with most ending up densely concentrated in UN-funded refugee camps. Only a lack of political mobilization and honest representation prevented the Palestinians—and the similarly second class Lebanese Shi'a—from confronting the institutionalized inequality and, by extension, the foundations of the Lebanese state.

The American University of Beirut was the site of one of the first attempts to organize the Palestinian refugee community in Lebanon. An idealistic and persuasive medical student named George Habash<sup>76</sup> ascended to the leadership of an Arab nationalist student group, *al-'Urwa al-Wuthqa* (the Firm Tie)<sup>77</sup> in 1951 and from there into a leading position on the Student Council.

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<sup>75</sup> Sayigh (1994), pg. 17.

<sup>76</sup> Habash and several of the other founders of the Arab Nationalist Movement were first involved in a formation known as *Kata'ib al-Fida' al-'Arabi* (Legions of Arab Redemption), which sought to realize the Arab nationalist project through the intimidation and assassinations of reactionary—meaning pro-Western—politicians and leaders. Some would consider *al-Kata'ib* a necessary part of the history of the ANM and, by extension, the PFLP. I choose not to discuss it in because of the brief period of Habash's involvement and the lack of substantive evidence that *al-Kata'ib* was a major influence on the ANM or the PFLP. Those interested in learning more about the organization should look to Abu Khalil (1999), Barut (1997), Ibrahim (1970), and Kubaisi (1971).

<sup>77</sup> *Al-'Urwa* was formed in 1918 to advocate for greater use of Arabic—as opposed to English and French—as the language of instruction at AUB. It may have ceased publication in 1930, but reemerged in 1936 under the tutelage of professor Qustantin Zureiq. Around the same time, *al-'Urwa* expanded from a publication to an associated Arab society of the same name. *Al-'Urwa*, the society, became the leading Arab nationalist presence at AUB until the mid-1950s, when it was dissolved by the administration. In the 1930s and 1940s, *al-'Urwa* hosted a series of discussions about women and Arab nationalism. The journal was also advocating nationalization and Arab socialism in the early 1950s, before the rise of Nasser in Egypt. English-language histories of the ANM tend to miss the potential influence of a socialist presence in *al-'Urwa* on the later development of the ANM. The history of *al-'Urwa al-Wuthqa* can be found in Anderson (2011), Barakat (1977), and Rabah (2009).

*Al-'Urwa* began its transformation from a language and culture-oriented group into a political organization during the 1940s,<sup>78</sup> but it was Habash's leadership that gave it its confrontational nature. AUB was transformed into Beirut's epicenter of protest in the early 1950s and the two organizations leading the movement were *al-'Urwa* and the Student Council—the latter stacked with members of the former. In January 1954,<sup>79</sup> when the AUB administration disbanded *al-'Urwa* and expelled seventeen student members; 200 students, almost 10% of the student body, responded with a sit-down strike.

The more action-inclined among *al-'Urwa* established *Hayat Muqawama as-Sulh Ma' Israel* (the Organization for Resisting Peace with Israel) in 1952 and began regular publication of a bulletin, *ath-Tha'r* (the Vengeance). The Beirut leadership passed to two Shi'a Muslim students, Muhsin Ibrahim and Muhammad az-Zayyat, when George Habash and Wadi' Haddad, a close friend and ally, left to organize a branch in Jordan. *Ath-Tha'r*, unlike *al-'Urwa*, found an audience outside the AUB campus in the refugee camps of Lebanon. Before they left, Habash and Haddad regularly visited the camps to give medical attention and, subsequently, to deliver lectures on the necessity of Arab unity. Soon, the Arab nationalists were recruiting most of their activists from the camps.<sup>80</sup> The ANM became particularly strong among teachers at UNRWA schools, where in 'Ain al-Hilwa camp alone, for example, forty teachers were ANM members in 1957.<sup>81</sup> With a growing number of non-student followers, the *ath-Tha'r* group established *Haraka al-Qawmia al-'Arabia* (the Arab Nationalist Movement; ANM) in 1954.

Early in 1958, Nasser's Egypt and Ba'athist Syria united their territories and governments as the United Arab Republic (UAR) in what would be the boldest—though

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<sup>78</sup> In 1947, for example, *al-'Urwa* joined with the AUB Student Council to organize a blood drive, first-aid training, and a fast in support of Palestinians and Arabs fighting in Palestine. Anderson (2011), pg. 141.

<sup>79</sup> Anderson (2011) places this incident in January 1954 while Kubaisi (1973) cites *Al-Ra'i* claiming January 1955.

<sup>80</sup> Kubaisi (1973), pgs. 68–70, Kazziha (1975), pgs. 30–33.

<sup>81</sup> Sayigh (1997), pg. 74. Included among these forty teachers was Ahmad al-Yamani who was a leader within the ANM and the PFLP.

ultimately unsuccessful—attempt at Arab unity of the 20th century. Virtually all of the Lebanese Muslim community, in addition to some Christians, supported the union and many advocated for Lebanon’s absorption into the UAR. But considering the effort Nasser exerted to avoid incorporating oil-rich Iraq into the union after a coup deposed the Hashemite king,<sup>82</sup> it seems unlikely that he would have risked a war to annex an economically insignificant and politically unstable Lebanon.<sup>83</sup> Yet the pro-Western government of President Camille Chamoun reacted to the UAR as an Arab nationalist conspiracy to absorb Lebanon.

Chamoun was also battling an internal opposition which had coalesced after the sweeping electoral victory of Chamoun’s allies in summer 1957, which the opposition alleged was the result of rigged elections.<sup>84</sup> After the murder of a prominent anti-Chamoun journalist in spring 1958, riots broke out in Tripoli. Before long, the opposition had taken control of cities and towns across Lebanon, including West Beirut, Tripoli, and Saida. The ANM played a major role in the defense of Tyre against Chamoun’s supporters.<sup>85</sup> In the course of several weeks in May, dozens were killed and hundreds injured; the crisis began to look more like a civil war.

Moderate Maronite and Muslim leaders were attempting to negotiate an end to the crisis when news arrived of a coup in Iraq. The king—an ally of the west—and his family were emphatically deposed<sup>86</sup> and a progressive régime took power.<sup>87</sup> The following day, July 15, US

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<sup>82</sup> After the 14 July 1958 coup, the new president of Iraq, ‘Abd al-Karim Qasim, was an Iraqi nationalist and opposed Iraq’s incorporation into the UAR, but his chief aide, ‘Abd as-Salam ‘Arif, was an Arab nationalist and had personally appealed to Nasser in 1958 for Iraq’s incorporation. Michel Aflaq, founder and leader of the ruling Ba’ath party in Syria, also appealed to Nasser, arguing that the UAR had popular support in Iraq. Nasser was already struggling to develop Syria—a precursor to full integration with Egypt—and felt that Iraq would overwhelm the union. Jankowski (2002), pgs. 137–140.

<sup>83</sup> Jankowski (2002), pgs. 133–134 quotes a British report arguing that full economic integration of Egypt and Syria required that the UAR annex Lebanon. Otherwise, exchange across the Syrian-Lebanese border would prevent the adoption of the UAR’s controlled currency. But it would seem far more rational to more heavily regulate a border than to start a war.

<sup>84</sup> Kanaan (2005), pgs. 169–173.

<sup>85</sup> Kazzuha (1975), pg. 32.

<sup>86</sup> “Revolutionaries ... killed the entire royal family, dragging one family member’s body into the streets to be dismembered by a mob.” Kanaan (2005), pg. 188.

<sup>87</sup> See footnote 6.

Marines arrived in Lebanon. Chamoun was an ally of the west, a commodity which had rarified overnight, and one the US could no longer afford to lose. But the brief US intervention had the unsuspected effect of unifying most of the population against foreign invasion. It was not long before Chamoun was removed, a compromise candidate—Fuad Shihab, head of the military and neutral throughout the crisis—was appointed president, and the Marines were sent away.

Fuad Shihab was far more amenable to the Nasserists and leftists than his predecessor. Muslims were given a greater role in the affairs of the state and stronger associations were made with the UAR. The established Maronite parties and press condemned Shihab as a traitor, risking Christian hegemony and Lebanese independence.<sup>88</sup> But Shihab, who only sought to pacify a restive Muslim majority, also recognized the threat posed to Maronite rule by a politicized Palestinian population and sought to prevent this. When an ANM delegation confronted Shihab over his policing of the camps, he responded:

Lebanon is a country of sects; and we treat everyone according to this reality. If we treat you [Palestinians] as a sect, you will dominate the others because of your large numbers, your concentration in the same places, and your passion for politics. The Lebanese state is unable to deal with these problems and thus we have to replace social measures with security measures. In other words, the Palestinian problem is bigger than Lebanon. For Lebanon will either repress the Palestinians or be repressed by them—and no third solution exists.<sup>89</sup>

Though Shihab cultivated friendly ties with Nasser's United Arab Republic, he had no interest in Lebanon's absorption into the UAR. In the camps, the foremost advocates of Nasser—and therefore Maronite Lebanon's greatest challenger—was Habash's ANM. The *Deuxième Bureau*, the military intelligence department loyal to Shihab, opened offices inside the refugee camps in the early 1960s. One ANM partisan, Abu Muhammad Farmawi, described his experiences with the *Deuxième Bureau*:

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<sup>88</sup> Salibi (1976), pgs. 2–10.

<sup>89</sup> al-Sulh (1976), pg. 95. Taken from Brynen (1990), pg. 29.

Membership in the ANM meant that I had political activities, for example organizing demonstrations and distributing pamphlets. This led to my being followed by the Deuxième Bureau. I was arrested many times. There was a law of Permanent Emergency under which the police had the right to break into our homes at any time to search.

They used to come at night to listen under my window, to see who was with me. Once when my son died and people came to condole with me, they broke into my house because they thought I was holding a meeting. They blocked my passport and forbade me to leave Lebanon. Later they tried to force me to leave but they didn't succeed because there was nothing they could accuse me of that would justify deportation.<sup>90</sup>

Farmawi, like many others, faced threats, imprisonment, and deportation from the Bureau. But if the intention was to neutralize camp politics, the opposite effect was had. The camps of Lebanon were some of the most politically active throughout the sixties. The ANM allied itself with the predominantly Druze Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) and the Communist Party (LCP)<sup>91</sup> against the conservative Christian parties<sup>92</sup> which opposed the Shihabist<sup>93</sup> régimes but supported the sectarian division of power. As civil discontent grew across Lebanon, the ANM-PSP-LCP alliance would be joined by Ba'athists, Nasserists, Islamists, and the Syrian nationalists of the SSNP.<sup>94</sup> Despite espousing secular ideologies, most of the groups allied with

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<sup>90</sup> Sayigh (1994), pg. 69.

<sup>91</sup> Petran (1987), pg. 80. Deeb (1980) refers to the ANM-PSP-LCP alliance as the Front of Progressive Parties, Organizations and Personalities (FPPOP). Pg. 62. Though this front may not have accomplished much at the time, it laid the groundwork for the LNM-PLO alliance that emerged in the 1970s in which the PSP, the LCP, and the successors to the ANM played leading roles.

<sup>92</sup> The Tripartite Bloc was composed of Pierre Gemayel's *Kata'ib*, Camille Chamoun's al-Ahrar, and Raymond Edde's National Bloc. The latter two represented the landed ruling class.

<sup>93</sup> Because Fuad Shihab represented an independent current from the traditional Maronite power blocs, his supporters were labeled Shihabists. The compromise candidate who succeeded Shihab, Charles Helou, was also labeled a Shihabist, though he was a founding member of *al-Kata'ib* and often clashed with Shihab.

<sup>94</sup> The Syrian Social Nationalist Party, sometimes referred to by the French of its original name, *Parti Populaire Syrien* (PPS), sought to unify *bilad ash-shams* (Greater Syria)—Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, parts of Iraq, and Cyprus—under a single state. As such, the SSNP was as much at odds, ideologically, with the *qawmi* Arab nationalists as with the *watani* Lebanese nationalists. In 1958, the SSNP aligned with the state against the Arab nationalists, but switched sides in the 1960s.

the Palestinians had Muslim majority memberships.<sup>95</sup> Individual debates and clashes could be attributed to class or ideology, but a sectarian divide was widening between Muslims and Christians in Lebanon.

At the same time, Palestinian attention never left the struggle to return. Palestinian *watani* nationalism—as opposed to Arab nationalism—developed a following in the camps after the 1961 breakup of the UAR. The greatest pole of attraction any organization could offer the refugee community was a self-emancipatory program for the return, something monopolized by the *watani* nationalists, even if their militias were woefully unprepared to confront the Israeli military. As early as 1962, a network of storehouses funneled guns across Lebanon to the camps nearest the Israeli border. Besides the *Deuxième Bureau*, the only thing standing between camp activists and armed revolution was the faith they put in Nasser’s power to militarily defeat Israel.<sup>96</sup> After 1967, the mass adoption of armed struggle was almost as swift as it was in Jordan.

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After the War: The Development of the Resistance Movement in Lebanon after 1967

In the brief course of the June 1967 War, eleven Arab states either engaged directly with Israel or lent some form of military support. One of the very few exceptional Arab states was Lebanon, which remained neutral through the war even after an Israeli fighter jet shot down a Lebanese jet in Lebanese airspace. Tensions which had been simmering since the 1958 crisis between the Israel-friendly Maronites and the rest of the population reemerged in full. Muslim West Beirut was shut down by a general strike in protest of Lebanese neutrality. Palestinians in

⁹⁵ The leaders of the ANM, LCP, and SSNP—George Habash, George Hawi, and Antun Sa’adeh respectively—were all Greek Orthodox Christians, as were Wadi’ Haddad (Habash’s second-in-command) and Naif Hawatma (future leader of the DFLP).

⁹⁶ There were exceptions, of course. In 1965, a group of Palestinian commandos were caught attempting to cross into Israel. One of the commandos, Jalal Ka’wash, died in a Lebanese jail, likely from torture. Salibi (1976), pg. 28.

the south demanded arms and training.⁹⁷ Perhaps the only thing preventing another civil war in 1967 was the mass sense of resignation that followed the 1967 Arab defeat,⁹⁸ euphemistically dubbed *an-Naksa* (the Setback) in the Arab press.

With a guerrilla movement stirring in refugee camps throughout the Arab world, the occupations of Gaza, the West Bank, and the Golan created a territory for armed engagement with Israel that avoided the issue of borders altogether. Initially, Jordan—which still claimed sovereignty over the West Bank—became the launching ground for most commando operations. Lebanon could remain an observer. Only after Israel made a series of mass arrests in the occupied territories and militarized the West Bank-Jordan border did the movement develop a need for more spaces of confrontation. While the bulk of fighters remained in Jordan, dozens of commando operations were launched from inside Lebanon in 1968.

At the beginning of 1967, Fatah had no more than eighty party members in Lebanon.⁹⁹ With the wave of support that followed the battle of Karama,¹⁰⁰ however, Fatah would expand to contend for leadership of the movement in Lebanon. *As-Sa'iqa*,¹⁰¹ benefitting from Syrian support, had a ready supply of arms and finances. The Palestine Liberation Front (PLF), a non-ideological group with ties to the Syrian military, also had a significant following in the camps of Lebanon.¹⁰² But the largest Palestinian faction within Lebanon was the Arab Nationalist

⁹⁷ Petran (1987), pg. 90.

⁹⁸ A survey of AUB students around this time is telling of the shift away from Nasser. Around one quarter of Lebanese Christian students saw Nasser as one of the most important leaders in the Arab world, and more than three quarters of Lebanese Muslims thought the same. But only around half of Palestinian and Jordanian students (grouped together in this survey) saw him as one of the most important leaders, and only a quarter saw him as the most important. Barakat (1977), pg. 77.

⁹⁹ Sayigh (1997), pg. 188.

¹⁰⁰ Discussed in Chapter One.

¹⁰¹ *As-Sa'iqa* was subordinate to the leadership of the Syrian Ba'ath Party, as its representative in the Palestinian political context. Syria also cultivated close relationships with the PFLP-GC, the DFLP, and the Abu Nidal faction within Fatah. To varying degrees, the Syrian régime could control those within its pay. In more recent years, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and the PFLP have also garnered Syrian sponsorship. With the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War, the Syrian régime has only been able to rely on the PFLP-GC and *as-Sa'iqa* for military support.

¹⁰² Sayigh (1997) places the PLF as the second largest faction in Lebanon in 1967.

Movement. In the months following the Arab defeat, a merger was organized between the Palestinian branch of the ANM and the PLF¹⁰³ which created *Jabha ash-Sha'bia I-Tahrir Filastin* (the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine; PFLP).

Over the next year and a half, the PFLP would split into three different formations. First, the PLF, disinterested with the internal ideological squabbles of the PFLP, reconstituted itself as the PFLP-General Command.¹⁰⁴ The PFLP-GC would carry out a number of spectacular operations, but because of its sole dependency on Syria for support, it suffered the whims of a régime which rearranged its own alliances half a dozen times in the 1970s. The PFLP-GC gained a reputation as a Syrian puppet militia.

Since the mid-sixties, a division had existed between a Left faction and a Right within the Arab Nationalist Movement. The Left was composed of most of the Lebanese and Iraqi ANM members, who had worked closely with their regions' communist parties and adopted a favorable view of Marxism. The two foremost ANM leftists were Muhsin Ibrahim, editor of the ANM's Beirut publication *al-Hurria*, and Naif Hawatma, a native Jordanian who played a leadership role in the Iraqi and Yemeni branches. The Right was composed of the mostly Palestinian and Syrian ANM leadership. They subscribed to the vague concept of Arab socialism, but saw communism as incompatible with Palestinians aspirations or Arab nationalism after the USSR endorsed a two-state solution in 1947. By 1968, Habash publicly advocated "eastern Marxism"—something like Maoism—but the divide had taken on a personal dimension and schism had become inevitable. The Left, with the help and protection of Fatah and *as-Sa'iqa*, became the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP).¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ An early example of ANM-PLF cooperation appears in Cobban (1984) when the two jointly released a positive statement on the establishment of the PLO in 1964. Pg. 29.

¹⁰⁴ The PLF's exit may also have been the result of Syrian pressure, evinced by the Syrian régime's immediate adoption of the PFLP-GC and its military and financial needs.

¹⁰⁵ In the previous chapter, the DFLP was referred to by its pre-1973 name, the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP).

On 28 December 1968, two days after the PFLP attacked an Israeli *El Al* passenger jet at Athens Airport, Israeli paratroopers landed at the Beirut airport, destroyed thirteen planes and damaged the tarmac. Because of a series of foul ups, the Lebanese military failed to intervene and the paratroopers escaped. Alleging incompetence or complicity in the military's response to the raid, anti-government demonstrations and strikes broke out. After a group of *fida'iin* were arrested, leftist Lebanese parties joined with Palestinian leaders in a march calling for their release. On 23 April 1969, between 10,000 and 15,000 marchers were met with tear gas and water cannons in Beirut. When the crowd refused to back down, Lebanese soldiers disguised as police opened fire on the demonstrators. By the end of the day at least 20 were dead.¹⁰⁶

In response to the massacre of unarmed demonstrators, the Muslim prime minister, Rashid Karami, resigned. The government was paralyzed. Armed Palestinian insurgents ousted the *Deuxième Bureau* from the camps, which effectively became autonomous Palestinian areas under the authority of the PLO. Rosemary Sayigh observed the transformation of the camps in 1969 firsthand:

Almost as soon as the camps were liberated, popular committees [*lijan ash-sha'bia*] formed which harked back to those formed in Palestinian villages in the last years before 1948. Although their members were inhabitants of the camp, they were chosen by the Resistance groups rather than being elected by the quarters, thus creating a certain gap between the affiliated and the unaffiliated. They took on important tasks of organizing defence, public hygiene, sports and cultural facilities, and facing day to day problems. With support from a united Resistance Movement, the *lijan al-sha'biyyeh* would have evolved into a strong tool of self-government and change.¹⁰⁷

One PFLP guerrilla recalled the homecoming he and other *fida'iin* received upon their 1969 return from Jordan to 'Ain al-Hilwa camp near Saida:

¹⁰⁶ The official figure was 20 dead, 100+ injured, and 200+ arrested. Petran (1987) suggests the numbers were likely much higher. Yezid Sayigh (1997) gives the official figure as 12 dead, 82 injured, and 200 arrested.

¹⁰⁷ Sayigh (1979), pgs. 168–169.

After the Lebanese soldiers left the camps—and relieved the oppression—it was a new kind of freedom. I came back with a large group of *fida'iyyin* and we prepared to enter 'Ayn al-Hilwah.... I was very nervous and scared—we were carrying weapons openly and we still weren't completely sure what the military or local situation was like. As we entered the camp in military formation, I kept my head stiffly looking forward, too afraid to look around me. Then I heard a growing rumble, a din of noise. Slowly I turned my head to the side to see what it was and where it was coming from. I was stunned! People were lining the narrow street and cheering our arrival!¹⁰⁸

Robert Fisk visited the mixed Palestinian and Lebanese Shi'a neighborhood of Sabra, where the PLO had also established its authority, but got a less favorable impression from the experience:

The PLO men ... went on at length about the 'democratic centralism' of the People's Committees [*lujan ash-sha'bia*]. But they did not talk so freely about other camp affairs. Every 50 yards or so through the clogged and muddy streets, guerrillas stood beside sandbagged positions or on the few houses which had concrete roofs. All carried weapons and their uniforms were easily identifiable because Sabra had been ruthlessly if untidily quartered out between the various Palestinian factions. Fatah men wore combat jackets, khaki trousers and red berets. George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine were dressed in grubby brown anoraks.¹⁰⁹

Clashes continued to escalate between Palestinian commandos and the Lebanese army, and in 1969, Gamal 'Abd an-Nasser offered to negotiate a ceasefire. This led to what would become known as the Cairo Agreement. In exchange for some Lebanese supervision and an end to hostilities, the PLO was assured political and military autonomy within the camps as well as the right to continue operations against Israel freely across the border. Neither side, however, was fully in control of its partisans and clashes continued between Christian militias and Palestinian commandos.

The exodus of guerrilla fighters after Black September in Jordan swept into Lebanon in the early 1970s. Though Jordan was not abandoned entirely by the *fida'iin* for several years,

¹⁰⁸ Peteet (2009), pgs. 132–133. Quoting "Abu Salah".

¹⁰⁹ Fisk (1990), pg. 103.

Lebanon had shifted overnight from a net exporter to the primary destination for Arab and Palestinian fighters. The influx of thousands of guerrillas without familial ties to the camps created tensions, particularly because many in the camps identified with the leftist guerrillas; the majority of those arriving from Jordan were affiliated to Fatah and *as-Sa'iqa* while the PFLP and DFLP remained to fight it out with the monarchy. The Cairo Agreement granted the *fida'iin* autonomy within the camps, but this did not always translate into greater autonomy for the camp residents themselves, who were now subject to an undemocratic PLO police force.

In Jordan, the PFLP and DFLP had attempted to foment the overthrow of the Jordanian régime by provoking King Hussain to engage with the PLO—the September 1970 decision to park three hijacked planes in Jordanian territory as the most explicit example. Fatah tried to take a position more amenable to the monarchy, declaring total neutrality in Jordanian internal politics. The conflicting strategies ended in a decisive defeat in Jordan. The roles were reversed in Lebanon; Fatah and *as-Sa'iqa* regularly engaged the Lebanese military in the early 1970s while the PFLP restricted most of its actions to within the camps, arming the population, providing medical services, and establishing popular committees.

When Suleiman Franjia—a Maronite warlord—assumed the presidency in 1970, his mandate was to halt the tide of progressive forces building across Lebanon. Besides the legitimation of the Palestinian resistance movement fostered by the Cairo Agreement, peasants in the Sunni north and workers in the Shi'a Biqa' Valley were organizing, striking, and arming. The poorest Muslim neighborhoods of Beirut, often overlapping with Palestinian refugee camps, were embracing the class-based programs of parties like the Lebanese Communist Party, the Progressive Socialist Party, and the Communist Action Organization.¹¹⁰ The traditional bases of

¹¹⁰ The CAO was the product of the Left-Right split in the ANM/PFLP. Most of the Lebanese branch of the ANM, led by the writer/editor/theorist Muhsin Ibrahim, broke away to form the Organization of Lebanese Socialists. The OLS soon merged with a group called Socialist Lebanon, itself a Marxist splinter from the Lebanese Ba'ath party, as the Communist Action Organization. The CAO shared its publication, *al-Hurria*, with the DFLP and found its strongest support in the Shi'a south and in Shi'a quarters of Beirut.

power in Lebanon were desperate and a Christian warlord like Franjia was more palatable than a progressive Muslim régime.

Franjia and his allies in *al-Kata'ib*¹¹¹ could not muster the militia troops necessary to defeat the combined strength of the Palestinian commandos and their Lebanese allies. The army, which had mostly Maronite officers but Muslim foot soldiers, could not be relied upon either. Instead, Franjia outsourced his security needs to the Israeli military. Tabitha Petran, in her 1987 history of the Lebanese Civil War, notes 6,200 Israeli acts of aggression against Lebanon in the seven years leading up to the civil war as evidence of the deterioration of the state as a competent guardian of Lebanese sovereignty.¹¹² Refugee camps and Shi'a villages were the most common targets of Israeli raids. When the Joint Arab Defense Council pledged \$20 million to build fortifications and bomb shelters in the camps, Franjia refused.¹¹³ It was Franjia's crass abandonment of the South to Israeli aggression which concretized Muslim support for the opposition.

The feigned ignorance of the Lebanese Internal Security Forces allowed Israeli commandos a certain degree of freedom of movement within Lebanese territory. In 1972, a car bomb in Beirut killed Ghassan Kanafani—fiction writer, journal editor, and spokesperson for the PFLP—along with his niece. Soon afterwards, his successor, Bassam Abu Sharif, was the target of a non-fatal letter bomb. In April 1973, Israeli commandos assassinated three Fatah leaders—Kamal 'Adwan, Kamal Nasser, and Muhammad Yusif an-Najjar—in Beirut without

¹¹¹ *Al-Kata'ib* was a fascist-inspired Christian militia associated with the Gemayel family.

¹¹² Petran (1987), pg. 142, also notes that forty percent of the acts of aggression were committed during the seventeen-month period in which Palestinian commandos ceased operations across the border. In other words, Israel committed an average of 74 acts of aggression per month (aapm) between May 1968 and April 1975. During the period of mutual aggression (in which Palestinian commandos carried out attacks across the Israel-Lebanon border), that rate dropped to 56 aapm. When Palestinian commandos ceased offensive operations, the rate jumped to 146 aapm, strongly suggesting Israel was less interested in confronting the threat of guerrilla fighters and more interested in fomenting strife between Palestinians and Lebanese. A 1974 Moshe Dayan quote furthers this argument, "We will make all life impossible in South Lebanon." *Le Monde* April 14–15, 1974. Quoted in Petran (1987), pg. 142.

¹¹³ Petran (1987), pgs. 143–144.

interference from either Lebanese police or military. Each assassination was followed by massive demonstrations against the government and against the security forces, but with dozens dead in the April raid, a breaking point was reached.¹¹⁴ The series of clashes that followed in May between, on the one hand Palestinian commandos and members of the LCP, the CAO, and the Nasserist *Mourabitoun*, and on the other the Lebanese army, *al-Kata'ib*, and various Christian militias, was in some ways the opening salvo of the civil war. The fighting ended after negotiations between the army and PLO representatives produced the Melkart Agreement, which amended the Cairo Agreement by placing heavy restrictions on the operating territory of the PLO groups. While it temporarily ended the fighting, the Melkart Agreement also effectively reoriented Palestinian attention away from Israel and inward toward Lebanon by blocking the commandos from easily crossing the border.

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### *The Early Years of the Civil War, 1974–1976*

The rallying cry of the Palestinian resistance in Jordan was the battle of Karama, in which a small force of Palestinians turned back a massive Israeli assault. In Lebanon, its equivalent might have been Kafr Shouba. Soon after violating a UN-brokered ceasefire, Israel sent at least 300 infantry with tank support to attempt a raid on the village of Kafr Shouba. On 11 January 1975, hundreds of Palestinian and Lebanese fighters rallied and forced an Israeli retreat.<sup>115</sup> The success of the poorly armed guerrilla fighters against the Israeli raiders

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<sup>114</sup> Farid al Khazen (2000), ideologically close to *al-Kata'ib*, gives an alternate history in which the army and the Christian militias are forced to act after a series of blatant abuses of Lebanese sovereignty by the PFLP, the PFLP-GC, and especially the DFLP. Clashes between the leftist *fidai'in* and the military were frequent in the early to mid-1970s. There is definitely some truth to al Khazen's claims, though as a scholar and a source, he is largely discounted by this author as spurious. For example, taking his unlikely projections of the number of PFLP fighters in Lebanon at various points (200 in 1969, 2000 in 1974, etc.), one is curious whether al Khazen was even sure which commando group he was referring to. An email exchange between myself and Lebanese-American academic As'ad Abu Khalil on the subject ended with the latter writing, "Farid khazen [sic] knows shit about the topic."

<sup>115</sup> Sayigh (1997), pg. 360 and Petran (1987), pg. 160.

highlighted the hypocrisy of the neutrality of the Lebanese military in the face of Israeli aggression.

Perhaps emboldened by the wave of support that followed the Kafr Shouba victory, a group of Palestinian or opposition gunmen attempted a drive-by assassination of *Kata'ib* leader Pierre Gemayel. Though Gemayel was unharmed, *al-Kata'ib* responded by massacring more than thirty Palestinians returning from a rally in Beirut. The opening shots of the Lebanese Civil War—what would become a two decade-long tragedy—had been fired. In the first four days of fighting, April 13–16, between 250 and 300 died.<sup>116</sup> Fatah, fearing being drawn into a conflict they could not win, retreated to a defensive role after the first round of fighting.<sup>117</sup> With popular outrage against *al-Kata'ib's* violence, Fatah effectively conceded the momentum of the movement to the PFLP-led PLO opposition, which had come to be known as the Rejectionist Front.

The Rejectionist Front was formed in 1974 after the twelfth Palestinian National Congress in Cairo. The PNC had adopted a resolution put forward jointly by the DFLP and Fatah which stated:

The PLO will struggle by every means, the foremost of which is armed struggle, to liberate Palestinian land and to establish the people's national, independent and fighting sovereignty on every part of Palestinian land to be liberated. This requires the creation of further changes in the balance of power in favour of our people and their struggle.<sup>118</sup>

Though the resolution was worded in the combative language of the guerrilla movement, it implied the possibility of a Palestinian state encompassing only part of historic Palestine. Recognizing the beginnings of Fatah's adoption of the two-state solution, the PFLP led a

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<sup>116</sup> Petran (1987), pg. 166.

<sup>117</sup> Petran (1987), pg. 168.

<sup>118</sup> Cobban (1984), pg. 62.

coalition of *fidai* organizations out of the PLO Central Committee in protest.<sup>119</sup> The Rejectionist Front—which also included the PFLP-GC, the Arab Liberation Front,<sup>120</sup> and the Palestinian Popular Struggle Front (PPSF)—remained within the PLO while boycotting the Central Committee and refusing to support its resolutions. Some Fatah dissidents also supported the front, without joining.

The leftist PLO groups each relied on some combination of three Arab régimes for support: Syria, Iraq, and Libya. For the PFLP-GC, the PPSF, and *as-Sa'iqa*, Syria was effectively their only sponsor, allowing the Ba'athist régime to exercise a great deal of control over them. The DFLP received support from all three, in addition to some weapons and training from the USSR. The PFLP and the Syrian Ba'ath were not overtly hostile in the early 1970s—as they had been the previous decade<sup>121</sup>—but the Popular Front received most of its support from Iraq and Libya. Habash also cultivated ties with the USSR and China, though the latter favored Fatah with its more advanced military hardware.

The Lebanese organizations opposed to the confessional distribution of power unified as the Lebanese National Movement (LNM), including the PSP, *al-Mourabitoun*, Amal,<sup>122</sup> the LCP, the CAO, the SSNP, the Ba'ath, and a number of smaller leftist and Arab nationalist groups. The Rejectionist Front organizations and the DFLP also joined the LNM. The PSP's Kamal Jumblatt played a crucial role in reconciling the contradictory ideologies of the movement's mosaic. In 1975, the majority of the Lebanese army defected to the side of the LNM so that the combined

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<sup>119</sup> Habash's original declaration of rejection—prior to the formation of the Rejectionist Front—can be found translated in *MERIP Reports*, Jan. 1974, No. 24, pgs. 26–27.

<sup>120</sup> The ALF was the proxy Palestinian group of the Iraqi Ba'ath Party

<sup>121</sup> George Habash was arrested in Syria in 1968. After his escape, the PFLP provoked the Syrian régime by launching raids from Syrian territory. Syria did not recognize the PFLP as a legitimate *fidai* organization until the 1970s and arrested its commandos whenever they were discovered in Syrian territory.

<sup>122</sup> *Amal*, meaning “Hope”, was originally formed as *al-Harakat al-Mahrumin* (the Movement of the Dispossessed) in 1974 by the Shi'a cleric and parliamentarian Musa as-Sadr. The Amal movement was the first successful attempt to create a mass organization representing Shi'a interests in Lebanon. Amal has always enjoyed (though not necessarily benefited from) close ties with the Syrian régime.

force of the LNM, the newly formed Lebanese Arab Army (LAA),<sup>123</sup> and their allies in the PLO totalled more than 40,000, almost three times what the Lebanese Front—the coalition of Maronite militias—could muster. As the war in Vietnam continued in full force, Franjeh could not rely on US intervention, unlike his predecessor in 1958, and Israel was similarly unwilling to commit to a full-scale intervention. In 1976, the Maronites' salvation would come from an unlikely ally.

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Syrian Intervention, 1976

Hafiz al-Assad's régime in Syria was invested in the civil war from its beginning; a victory for the LNM-PLO could pose an enormous threat to Ba'athist legitimacy in a period where the latter was in the midst of rapprochement with the US and the west. Assad's professed Arab nationalism and support for Palestinian liberation were hollow propaganda by the mid-1970s, but still more than enough to frighten the Maronite forces. Syria ineffectively tried to play umpire in Lebanon, but neither side saw an ally in Assad. Far more effective was the power Syria gained from its patronage of many Lebanese and Palestinian actors. It was Syrian influence which kept Fatah and *as-Sa'iqa* in passive roles through 1974 and 1975. By the end of 1975, Shi'a Amal, the Lebanese Ba'ath, the PFLP-GC, much of the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA), and *as-Sa'iqa*¹²⁴ were all acting as Syrian proxies. Still, the LNM had the force necessary to slowly gain ground from the faltering Lebanese Front.

The LNM military strategy prioritized limiting the territory of the Maronite militias so that they would not effect a partition of the country but would be forced to accept a non-sectarian

¹²³ Fatah played a major role in the establishment of the LAA, primarily by raiding Lebanese Army posts and returning with Lebanese soldiers who preferred to fight against the Maronites. Because of this and because of its mostly Sunni membership, the LAA was more loyal to Fatah than to the LNM.

¹²⁴ *As-Sa'iqa* was still referred to as a Palestinian guerrilla organization, but the majority of its Palestinian membership had been replaced by Syrian soldiers and mercenaries. Petran (1987), pg. 201.

political system. By the middle of March 1976, the LNM controlled 82% of Lebanon.¹²⁵ All of Syria's proxies had withdrawn from the fighting, some even indirectly aiding the Maronites, and still the LNM was pushing forward. On 9 April, a Syrian ground invasion halted the LNM offensive. After a month of Syrian-imposed ceasefire, *as-Sa'iqa* and the Syrian army launched an assault on PLO and LNM strongholds in Tripoli, Saida, Tyre, and Beirut.

The absurdity of being ordered to attack the same Lebanese who had defended the PLO's right to operate in Lebanon was not lost on those Palestinians who had come to rely on Syrian patronage. The PFLP, DFLP, ALF, and Fatah aligned themselves unequivocally with the LNM. The PFLP-GC split into a pro-Syrian and an anti-Syrian faction. Most of the Palestinian membership of *as-Sa'iqa* deserted and the *Hittin* brigade of the PLA revolted against its Syrian commander. The LNM-PLO maintained control of Tripoli, Tyre, Saida, and most of Beirut.

Most of the LNM-PLO forces were needed to defend against a Syrian takeover of the coastal cities. Maronite militias, still in control of much of Christian East Beirut, bombarded the Tal az-Za'atar camp which lay within their territory. One of the first camps in which the ANM had organized, Tal az-Za'atar was primarily a PFLP and DFLP base, with some Fatah, *Sa'iqa*, and PFLP-GC presence.¹²⁶ Many displaced South Lebanese Shi'a also lived in the camp. The total population of the camp was around 30,000 in 1976. The Lebanese Front created a blockade around Tal az-Za'atar, preventing food and medical supplies from entering for more than five months. A series of attempts by the PLO and *al-Mourabitoun* to break the blockade were repelled, often because of Syrian military support to the Maronite forces.¹²⁷ On 12 August, Tal az-Za'atar fell, somewhere between 1,500 and 3,000 camp residents were massacred, and the rest of the camp population was dispersed among the other camps in Lebanon. Some within the

¹²⁵ Petran (1987), pg. 193.

¹²⁶ According to Laleh Khalili (2007), "[M]ost of the resident families were affiliated with the DFLP, PFLP and PFLP-GC, rather than Fatah." Pg. 179.

¹²⁷ Petran (1987), pgs. 207–208.

leftist factions accused 'Arafat of not doing enough to break the siege,¹²⁸ but Syrian complicity was ultimately to blame for Tal az-Za'atar's fall.

Despite Syria's intervention and despite, or because of, the massacres committed by the Maronite militias, the LNM was still in a position of some power in 1977, controlling most of the coast, the South, and the Biqa' Valley. They had been driven out of the mountains, but only after the commitment of two Syrian brigades were committed to reinforce the Lebanese Front. Two events shifted the tide of the war in the late 1970s. The first was the 16 March 1977 assassination of PSP and LNM leader Kamal Jumblatt. The gunmen were never identified, but it is commonly believed that they were either pro-Syrian members of the SSNP or agents of the Syrian state itself. Either way, Jumblatt's death served the Syrian-Maronite alliance by removing the leader and unifier of the Lebanese National Movement.

The second blow to the LNM came in 1978. The South was so firmly in support of the LNM-PLO that the Syrians and Maronites almost never ventured beyond the Litani River. But controlling the South meant guarding the border with Israel. Nowhere was safe from the Israeli Air Force, which bombed Palestinian bases and refugee camps as far north as Tripoli, but when ground troops and commandos crossed the border, it was usually to raid Palestinian camps and Lebanese villages in the South. The PLO was forced to divert many of its fighters to monitor the border in case of a full-scale invasion.

Some on the Israeli Right saw South Lebanon as a potential territory for expansion. The Maronite-Zionist alliance had prevented an Israeli occupation of Lebanese territory in the past, but now the Maronites had effectively ceded the South to the LNM-PLO. In March 1978, a massive Israeli assault swept across South Lebanon. The majority of the South fell, but the assault fell short of its goals, leaving Tyre in the hands of the LNM-PLO. Negotiations led to the establishment of a UN presence—the UN Interim Force in Lebanon or UNIFIL—in most of the South, while the border zone remained in the hands of an Israeli proxy, the South Lebanon

¹²⁸ Khalili (2007), pg. 179.

Army of Saad Haddad. The PLO officially supported UNIFIL's presence, but the PFLP, DFLP, and ALF saw the return of French troops to a former colony as the creeping hand of neocolonialism. Several clashes between French troops and leftist guerrillas occurred.

After the death of Jumblatt and the loss of the South, the LNM modified its demands from an end to the confessional division of power to a more equitable distribution. The moderation reflected a breakdown in the internal relations of the coalition and infighting divided the LNM back into its constituent parts. The Shi'a Amal militia began attacks against the Iraq-sponsored ALF after the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War in 1980. The ideological contradictions between the SSNP and the Nasserists devolved into street fights. The PLO's disproportionate influence relative to its constituency in Lebanon was also a source of friction as more and more Lebanese saw the Palestinians as an external force manipulating Lebanese circumstances to their own gain. Within the PFLP, a campaign of rooting out paid agents, initiated ironically by Bassam Abu Sharif who would become a pawn of 'Arafat a decade later, led to the execution of Abu Ahmad Yunis and the resignation of Walid Qaddura.¹²⁹ The LNM was saved by the shifting allegiances of Syria and some within the Lebanese Front.

The Lebanese Front was divided between Franjia's pro-Syria camp, Saad Haddad's pro-Israel camp, and the essentially pro-independent action camp of *al-Kata'ib*, Chamoun's National Liberal Party, and the Lebanese Forces, originally the unified militia of the Lebanese Front but now acting of its own accord. The Maronite militias carried out a series of brutal assassinations against each other in the late 1970s which rendered their coalition untenable. The shifting alliances of the late 1970s and early 1980s reflected the competing interests of Israel—which sought a Maronite victory and a PLO defeat—and Syria—which depended on a stalemate. By

¹²⁹ Nasr (1997), pgs. 66, 68, and 105. Nasr is convinced that Qaddura was guilty and that Yunis was likely guilty as well, but the duplicity of Abu Sharif should call both accusations into question. Strangely, Walid Qaddura also appears to have been the leader of the 1972 split which formed the short-lived Popular Revolutionary Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Abu Khalil (1987), pg. 364. It is unclear whether Qaddura rejoined the PFLP, or if Nasr is mistaken about either the basis for, or the time of Qaddura's resignation. Abu Khalil also speculates about Qaddura's connections to Lebanese security. Nasr claims that Qaddura became a leader in the PLF.

1982, Syria put most of its energy into supporting its clients in the LNM, a category which now encompassed Fatah and Amal, as well as the PFLP-GC and *as-Sa'iqa*.

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### *Israeli Intervention*

In its largest military mobilization since at least the 1973 War, Israel launched a full scale invasion of Lebanon on 5 June 1982. Operation Peace for the Galilee had the stated, self-explanatory goal of defending the Galilee—the northernmost corner of Israel—against PLO raids. A nearly year-old ceasefire, strictly observed by the PLO, and the wildly disproportionate violence which Israel perpetrated across the Lebanon border proved Peace for the Galilee a blatant misnomer. Tabitha Petran suggests:

A peaceful border, however, was not the issue preoccupying Israeli decision-makers. Their objective was to exterminate Palestinian nationalism in the West Bank and Gaza by destroying the Palestinian infrastructure in Lebanon—a Palestinian state-in-embryo—and so once again disperse the Palestinian people.... Thus the target of the invasion was West Beirut, where the Palestinian infrastructure was centered; Israel merely called it 'the nerve center of international terrorism.'<sup>130</sup>

West Beirut, however, refused to fall. By mid-August 1982, the Israeli military had not succeeded in overwhelming a small concentration of PLO and LNM fighters. Palestinian historian Rashid Khalidi comments on the implausibility of the PLO's successful defense:

The untold story of the 1982 war is how over a period of ten weeks, [Israeli] generals who had never lost a battle, and who had at their disposal a potential force of half a million men in 70 army brigades, 8000 armored vehicles, more than 550 combat aircraft and 90 naval vessels, and the best weapons in the world, proved unable—using a considerable part of this force—to decisively defeat less than 15,000 men, mostly poorly armed militia, supported for less than two weeks by part of the Syrian army.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Petran (1987), pg. 275.

<sup>131</sup> Khalidi (1986), pg. 43.

The defense of West Beirut was seen as an existential battle for its defenders. Rumors, some substantiated, circulated of massacres at PLO and LNM positions which had surrendered or were overcome. The fall of Beirut would not just have meant the fall of the Fakhani Republic—the name given to the PLO's state-within-a-state in West Beirut—but also the death or arrest of most of the PLO leadership. According to Khalidi, “seven of fourteen Fatah Central committee members found themselves in the Lebanese capital during the siege, as well as five of eight DFLP Political Bureau members, the majority of the PFLP leadership, and only five of fifteen P.L.O. Executive Committee members.”<sup>132</sup>

With Beirut surrounded and little chance of UN intervention, Israel presented the PLO with an ultimatum. PLO leaders and fighters would be allowed to evacuate in exchange for total surrender. The PLO quickly split into two camps, the first advocating qualified acceptance of Israel's offer<sup>133</sup> and the second hoping to hold out for either a better offer or an Israeli withdrawal. The first group was led by Hani al-Hassan, of Fatah, and included the heads of the PFLP-GC, PPSF, and PLF<sup>134</sup> and the PFLP's spokesperson, Bassam Abu Sharif. The leaderships of the PFLP<sup>135</sup> and DFLP,<sup>136</sup> along with the left wing of Fatah and others within the PLO refused the offer. 'Arafat was himself inclined toward the latter group.<sup>137</sup> However, six weeks of failed negotiations, Israeli and US intransigence, and Arab indifference made a negotiated withdrawal

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<sup>132</sup> Khalidi (1986), pg. 106.

<sup>133</sup> The qualifications would include some form of US diplomatic recognition of the PLO, as well as a continued guerrilla presence in Lebanon to protect Palestinian civilians.

<sup>134</sup> Here the PLF refers to a second Palestine Liberation Front which broke away from the PFLP-GC under the leadership of Muhammad Zaidan when Ahmad Jibril, following Syrian instructions, attacked the PLO in 1976.

<sup>135</sup> Robert Fisk (1990) wrote the “PFLP was among the most reluctant to leave.... In the past, [Habash] told his supporters, the Palestinians had to fight their way into Israel to attack the Israelis. Now the Israeli tanks were only yards from their homes and they could at last fight their enemy at close quarters.”, pg. 292.

<sup>136</sup> Fisk (1990) saw Naif Hawatma, and the DFLP by extension, belonging to the first group. Having met with Hawatma during the siege, Fisk described him as “unsmiling”, “grey”, and “shaking from fatigue” after having received word that the USSR would not intervene. “Hawatmeh talked now not of resistance but of surrender, of a Palestinian agreement to leave Beirut.”, pg. 292.

<sup>137</sup> This paragraph draws heavily on Khalidi (1986), pgs. 110–120.

inevitable. 14,000 PLO fighters were scattered across the Arab world. The moderate factions, along with the PLO itself, went to Tunis. The PFLP, and some of the other 'radicals', went to Damascus. George Habash reflected on an exchange with 'Arafat at the time:

[Arafat] had come to see me at the PFLP office at the headquarters of *al-Hadaf*, our official organ. He asked to speak to me in private. He asked me: 'What do you say to us leaving together?' I asked: 'Where to?' He said 'Tunis or Cyprus.' I understood what he was thinking. I told him: 'If you think that the revolution is over, I don't share your opinion. The revolution must go on, even under very difficult circumstances. We must stay, and safeguard national unity and our ties with the only power capable of supporting us now: Syria.' He left after that, but I did not leave with him. It was clear which path he wanted to take.<sup>138</sup>

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Conclusion

Those who argued that the PLO could avoid being drawn into Lebanese issues ... had underestimated the degree to which the Palestinian presence and struggle was, in and of itself, a Lebanese issue.... The PFLP and DFLP had always known this, although their enthusiasm for the Lebanese social struggle often led them to aggravate the problem.... After September 1970, most of this became a moot point.... [M]ost came to accept that in the Arab world the PLO was an essentially disruptive force. A basic contradiction existed between the Palestinians' raison de revolution and the Arab regimes' raison d'etat.
—Rex Brynen, *Sanctuary and Survival: The PLO in Lebanon*, 1990¹³⁹

The removal of the PLO from Lebanon failed to prevent Palestinian participation in Lebanese politics. The siege of Tal az-Za'atar, the occupation of 'Ain al-Hilwa camp, and the massacre in Sabra and Shatila which followed the PLO's evacuation scattered the greatest strongholds of the PFLP in Lebanon, but the Popular Front continued to play a leading role in the *lijan ash-sha'bia* of many of the camps. In 1983, a Syrian-backed rebellion within Fatah

¹³⁸ Habash (1998), pg. 97.

¹³⁹ Brynen (1990), pg. 163.

against 'Arafat's leadership resulted in the evacuation of an additional 4,000 'Arafat loyalists from the Lebanese camps. Afterwards, the PFLP and DFLP were likely the largest factions within the *Iijan ash-sha'bia*, which also included Syrian loyalists of the PFLP-GC, *as-Sa'iqa*, and Fatah al-Intifada.¹⁴⁰ But the decline of the Lebanese left, the demonization of the refugee community, the rise of Islamism, and the development of a Shi'a-Sunni divide have prevented the reemergence of a movement like that of 1969–1982.¹⁴¹

After the Palestinian resistance movement's defeat in Jordan 1970, for which the PLO mainstream had blamed the PFLP, the Popular Front tempered its confrontational stance toward the Lebanese state. In the early 1970s, it was Fatah and *as-Sa'iqa* which fought the street battles against *al-Kata'ib*, while the PFLP retasked itself with providing much-needed services within the camps and creating organic ties with the poor and working class Lebanese whose neighborhoods overlapped with the camps. But after some Maronite militias began advocating ethnic cleansing of Lebanon's Palestinian community, a policy of non-intervention was untenable. Eight years of war left all of the PLO factions with powerful armed wings and weak community ties. Thousands had died and the liberation of Palestine seemed much further from fruition than it had before. But had the PFLP attempted to remain aloof as Nabatia camp was bombed, Tal az-Za'atar was besieged, Kanafani was assassinated, and their allies in the ALF were massacred by *al-Kata'ib*, the Popular Front would have collapsed under the weight of a crass neutrality. The defeat of the movement in Lebanon left no borders open to the *fida'iin*; the only place the momentum of the movement could continue was inside the occupied territories.

¹⁴⁰ The faction led by Abu Musa which broke from Fatah in 1983.

¹⁴¹ The Lebanese National Resistance Front, formed immediately after the 1982 occupation, which directly or indirectly brought together the LCP, CAO, ASAP, SSNP, PSP, Hizballah, and the Palestinian leftists, notwithstanding.

Chapter Three: The Popular Front in the Territories: Resistance, Autonomy, and Collaboration

The steadfastness of the West Bank and Gaza and their determination to grant their full support to the PLO in its various factions also permitted the exchange of one Arab base of operations for another.

Lebanon substituted for the loss of Jordan. But following the tragic Palestinian experience in Lebanon, the PLO was in total disarray and retreat. When the PLO's expulsion from Tripoli appeared to spell the end of its political and military apparatus, the West Bank opened up as a new Palestinian front in the form of the intifada.... Their need for the political and economic support of the PLO made the intifada's grassroots leadership accept the superimposed PLO leadership.

—Ghada Hashem Talhami, historian¹⁴²

When the PLO fled to Tunis in 1982, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine preferred to quarter in Damascus, under the watchful eye of Ba'athist dictator Hafiz al-Assad. Lebanon, Jordan, and Egypt had all closed their borders to the PFLP. If not Syria, then where? At the time, George Habash described Syria as “the only power capable of supporting us now.”¹⁴³ Facing the rise of Islamism, the rapid atrophy of the Arab Left, and a bloated military wing developed through the Lebanese Civil War, the PFLP leadership saw maintaining a border with Israel as the only means of staying relevant. But the Syrian Ba'ath régime, at best a duplicitous and unreliable ally to the Popular Front, immediately barred attacks against Israel from Syrian territory and, after several years, banned the PFLP journal, *al-Hadaf*.¹⁴⁴ Even when Syrian-controlled militias launched a war on Palestinian camps in Lebanon and Popular Front fighters were dying in the camps' defense, the leadership failed to identify an alternative headquarters to Damascus. The PFLP was muzzled and contained and kept as a trophy to boost the Ba'ath's liberationist credentials without threatening to drag Syria into a war with Israel.

¹⁴² Talhami (2001), pg. 217.

¹⁴³ Habash (1998), pg. 97.

¹⁴⁴ Singh (1987), unpaginated.

Through twenty years of occupation, the West Bank and Gaza had gained the distinction of *ad-dakhl* (the inside), and the diaspora in Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, and elsewhere remained *al-kharj* (the outside). The territories which became Israel in 1948, and which previously were referred to as *ad-dakhl*, were rarely referred to at all anymore. While the PLO organizations entrenched themselves in the Lebanese quagmire, a popular movement developed in the territories in the trade unions, women's organizations, student federations, and prisoners' committees which would erupt in 1987 in *al-Intifada* (the Uprising, or literally "the Throwing Off"). The PLO organizations, and the PFLP at least as much as the rest of them, were not prepared to tap into the popular energy of the uprising. Six years after *al-Intifada* began, the Oslo Accords were signed and civil administration of the West Bank and Gaza was passed to *as-Sulta al-Filastinia* (the Palestinian Authority; PA). The Popular Front—its organization, its ideology, its plan for liberation—ceased to be relevant.

This is the third of three chapters which collectively attempt to map the history of the defeat of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine as a meaningful political force. While the last two chapters focused on the PFLP in the diaspora, *al-kharj*—Jordan 1967 to 1971 and Lebanon 1969 to 1982—this chapter concerns the inside, *ad-dakhl*, during roughly the same period, 1967 to 1993. Unlike the previous chapters, which were essentially linear in structure and concerned a single territorial space, this chapter maps three simultaneous and non-contiguous spaces, in succession, as sites of resistance: Gaza, the West Bank, and the prison system. These three sections culminate in the 1987 uprising, *al-Intifada*, which is the subject of the fourth and final section. The 1993 Oslo Accords, arguably the product of the uprising, are here regarded as the final defeat in the same manner that the Black September massacre concluded Chapter One and the 1982 Invasion of Lebanon concluded Chapter Two.

The PFLP leadership abroad, as early as 1967 and as late as after the start of *al-Intifada*, failed to support the movement in the occupied territories. When the local PFLP was leading the resistance in Gaza between 1967 and 1972, the Amman-based leadership focused its

resources on Jordan—including the West Bank—where it was crushed. When trade unionism, women’s organizations, and the self-organization of prisoners opened up avenues for popular resistance and growth in the territories in the 1970s and 1980s, it was left to local activists to take the initiative, sometimes against the orders of the Beirut and Damascus-based leadership. And when *al-Intifada* broke out, the Popular Front scrambled to relate to a popular movement which did not align with its own objectives. The failure of the PFLP to present an alternative plan for liberation to its sympathizers, who had grown tired of subordinating themselves to an absent leadership, allowed for the mass acceptance of a compromise “state”—the Palestinian Authority—and the irrelevance of the Popular Front within it.



The Gaza Strip under Occupation

Gazan political identity was formed by two tragic events and the Gazan response to each. The first was *an-Nakba*, the 1947-48 expulsion of the majority of Palestinians from the majority of Palestine into exile around the borders of their homeland. In Lebanon, Syria, and most of the Arab world, refugees composed a small minority, initially separate from the host populations. In Gaza, however, the population was almost exclusively Palestinian, of whom two thirds were refugees. Egypt had inherited Gaza’s administration from the outgoing British during the 1948 war, but the geographical isolation of the Strip and its inhabitants’ common history allowed Gazans to develop a unique identity.

The second defining tragedy of Gazan identity came in 1956. Gazans had received arms and training from Egypt and had formed *fiḍa’i* units in the early 1950s which regularly crossed the border to harass Israeli settlements and military outposts. In the fall of 1956, a massive Israeli attack, supported by British and French troops, led to the occupation of the Sinai Peninsula, the Suez Canal, and Gaza. In Gaza, mass arrests of Communists, Muslim Brothers, Arab Nationalists, and anyone identified as political prevented an organized local resistance.

4,000 *fidai'in*, Palestinian border guards, and Egyptian regular troops were arrested, while hundreds were killed—mostly civilians—in the days that followed. Many of the deaths came when Israeli troops fired on unarmed demonstrators. Others occurred when POWs were summarily executed. Between 930 and 1,200 Gazans were killed¹⁴⁵ in the course of the four-month occupation which ended in March 1957 after Egyptian-Israeli negotiations led to an Israeli withdrawal.

After March 1957, Gamal 'Abd an-Nasser gave greater initiative to Gazans to run their own affairs, while helping to train the nucleus of a Palestinian military. By the end of the year, almost 4,000 Gazans were trained and armed for the Palestine Border Guard Brigades¹⁴⁶, in addition to hundreds more in the Egyptian police and military. With the 1958 union of Egypt and Syria as the United Arab Republic (UAR), a Palestinian National Union¹⁴⁷ was established in Gaza to represent Palestinians, though elections weren't held until 1961 and Islamists and communists faced repression. In a second attempt at the formation of a Palestinian government-in-exile, Nasser pushed the Arab League to establish the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964, which included representatives not only from Gaza, but from all the countries where there was a substantial Palestinian population. The Palestine Border Guard Brigades and similar units in Gaza and elsewhere were reorganized as the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA).

The relative freedom of the Palestine National Union facilitated the development of an active civil society in Gaza with the founding of the Palestine Student Organization in 1963 and the General Federation of Trade Unions¹⁴⁸ the following year. The three strongest political

¹⁴⁵ Sayigh (1997), pg. 65. In popular memory, the number was much higher.

¹⁴⁶ Sayigh (1997), pg. 66.

¹⁴⁷ In Arabic, *al-Ittihad al-Qawmi al-Filastini*. Notable is the use of the word *qawmi* as opposed to *watani* to represent the Arab nationalist dimension of the Palestine National Union. These terms are discussed in Chapter One.

¹⁴⁸ The GFTU represented six trade unions: public service employees; construction workers; tailors; truckers; metalworkers; and agricultural workers.

forces competing for domination of the new organizations were the Communist Party, the Muslim Brotherhood, and the Arab Nationalist Movement. The ANM benefited from the partial endorsement of Nasser, who was enormously popular among Palestinians in the 1960s, while the Brotherhood and the Communists faced varying levels of repression. Fatah—whose founders were Gazans—and the Ba’ath Party were also present in small numbers in the Strip.

In the June 1967 War, Israeli troops swept through Gaza and the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula in the first days of the war. After four days of pitched battles drove the remainder of the PLA underground, Gazans set to waiting for an Egyptian counterattack to sweep back into Israel, liberating Jaffa and Haifa¹⁴⁹ and carrying them home, but that counterattack never came. The occupation that followed would last far longer than four months. An Israeli military governor was installed and the structures of self-administration which had been developed under Nasser, along with all six trade unions and the independent press, were criminalized and driven underground or into exile.

Initially, the dense presence of Israeli troops prevented either armed or popular resistance from gaining a foothold in the Strip. But once it was clear that liberation would not come from outside, Gazans quietly prepared to take up arms against the occupation. Around the time of the first anniversary of the occupation, a PFLP-laid bomb killed two Israeli soldiers and wounded five more stationed in Gaza.¹⁵⁰ Dozens of similar attacks followed, leading to dozens of deaths and injuries. Gazans who took jobs inside Israel were regarded as traitors and harassed. When an Israeli puppet governor, Rashad ash-Shawa, was installed, he faced death threats and two unsuccessful assassination attempts from the PFLP. “Gaza belongs to the occupation in the daytime,” went a popular saying, “and to the resistance at night.”¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Palestinian cities which had been incorporated into the state of Israel in 1948.

¹⁵⁰ O’Ballance (1973), pg. 58.

¹⁵¹ Matar (2011), pg. 114. Quoting Hani Ahmad Issawi.

While the Communist Party and the Muslim Brotherhood rejected armed resistance and instead focused on popular, unarmed demonstrations, the Arab Nationalist Movement had no reservations about taking up arms. At the end of 1967, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine was formed out of the Palestinian wing of the ANM. The military wing of the ANM had been closely integrated with the PLO-affiliated Palestine Liberation Army, allowing the PFLP access to the arms, troops, and officers¹⁵² of the PLA. When word came of the 1968 Fatah victory at Karama,¹⁵³ it galvanized recruitment the same as elsewhere, but the relative absence of Fatah in Gaza allowed the PFLP to take advantage of its effect. Karama was an affirmation of armed struggle, not of Fatah's parochialism. For the next five years, the PFLP was the uncontested leader of the Gazan resistance. Ghassan Kanafani, novelist and spokesperson for the PFLP, described the development of the Gazan resistance:

Gaza is another story altogether [from the West Bank and Jordan]. The resistance ... escalated suddenly in Gaza in a remarkable way. The Popular Front has the strongest influence in Gaza, so we acted. Let me mention one specific case, that of Youssef el-Khatib Abu Dhumman. He was the head of Popular Front military operations in Gaza, and he was killed at the beginning of December. For six days there were continuous strikes and mass demonstrations in Gaza; so everyone knew that men were still fighting. This raised the level of action in Gaza, although it made our casualties higher than they had ever been before.¹⁵⁴

Outside of Gaza, the PFLP was immobilized by internal debates and splits. Ahmad Jibril's faction—which had existed as a separate organization before merging into the PFLP in 1967—broke away to form the PFLP-General Command in 1968. Soon afterwards, the left wing of the PFLP broke away to form the (Popular) Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

¹⁵² Three notable PLA officers who joined the ANM were 'Abdallah 'Ajrami, Yusif Rajab ar-Rudai'i, and Ramadan Daud, Sayigh (1997), pg. 171. Palestinian officers from Arab armies also joined, including Tha'ir al-'Ajrami, 'Isam al-Qadi, Askram Safadi, and Haytham al-Ayyubi, Sayigh (1997), pg. 182.

¹⁵³ The Battle of Karama, in which Fatah and PLA troops, with Jordanian support, held back an enormous Israeli strike force, is discussed in Chapter One.

¹⁵⁴ Kanafani (1971), unpaginated.

The leadership in Gaza¹⁵⁵ remained unified behind the PFLP, but suffered from the disorganization and desperation of their comrades on the Jordanian front. The capture and interrogation of most of the West Bank leadership facilitated a wave of arrests in Gaza in February 1968, including the "senior organizer and 70 other members".¹⁵⁶

The *fida'iin* benefited from stashes of Egyptian weaponry abandoned during the war, years of experience and training in guerrilla warfare, an almost endless supply of recruits, and the narrow alleys and dense population which turned each refugee camp into a fortress. For the first years of the armed resistance, Israeli forces relied on mass arrests of suspected fighters or activists and deportations of suspected leaders. But the sympathetic refugee population allowed the *fida'iin* to slip away into the unassailable labyrinth of the larger camps. From 1968 until some time in 1970, the PFLP appeared to have succeeded in adapting guerrilla warfare from the Cuban and Vietnamese models to an urban environment.

The brutality of King Hussain's crackdown on the movement and its subsequent collapse in Jordan inspired a change in Israel's administration of the Gaza Strip. Whereas before, activists and combatants were the targets for arrest, after 1970, families of fugitives were subject to imprisonment, and the abuses which that implied.¹⁵⁷ General Ariel Sharon, already infamous for his role in a 1953 massacre¹⁵⁸ and for his brutality in the 1956 Suez War, was tasked with pacifying Gaza. Taking advantage of the experience of the Shin Bet—Israeli secret police—Sharon created a massive network of informers through a combination of incentives and threats. *Fida'iin* were organized into secretive cells, but the sense of security within the camps had allowed fighters to walk around with their faces uncovered. Now that sense of security was

¹⁵⁵ Sabbah al-Thabit and Muhammad al-Musallami, two former Muslim Brothers, Faruq al-Hussaini, Mohammad al-Aswad, and Munir ar-Rais (often spelled al-Rayyis), who may be the same Munir ar-Rais who participated in several Arab revolts in the 1930s and 1940s and wrote several volumes about the experience. A very brief biography of the latter Rais is given in Schaebler (1999), pg. 22.

¹⁵⁶ Sayigh (1997), pg. 167.

¹⁵⁷ Discussed in the *Prisons of the Occupation* section of this chapter.

¹⁵⁸ The Qibya massacre, in which 69 West Bank Palestinians were killed, mostly when Israeli raiders dynamited houses filled with civilians. Shlaim (2000), pg. 91.

gone and mass paranoia overcame the camps. Dozens were arrested on suspicion of collaboration and sometimes executed by the PFLP or other factions.

Still the impenetrability of the camps provided cover for the guerrillas. Sharon used teams of armored bulldozers to plow wide pathways through each of the camps, burying dozens and displacing thousands in the process. With neither cover nor trust in each other, the resistance started to crumble. On 24 April 1970, a PFLP commander was arrested, along with around fifty others.¹⁵⁹ Later in 1970, the former commander of the main PLA guerrilla unit, ‘Abd al-Qadir Abu al-Fahm—who had been arrested two years earlier—died on hunger strike in Asqalan prison.¹⁶⁰ In December 1970, the PFLP military commander, Yusif al-Khatib Abu Dhunnam was killed.¹⁶¹ On 27 October 1971, the deputy PFLP commander was killed.¹⁶² A month later, the head of the PLA, who may also have been a member of the PFLP,¹⁶³ was found dead in the house of Rashad ash-Shawa, the Israel-appointed Mayor of Gaza. He had committed suicide after failing to negotiate his surrender with the Israelis. The resistance only finally came to an end, however, when the head of the PFLP in Gaza, Muhammad al-Aswad, known by his *nom de guerre* ‘Guevara Gaza’, was captured and summarily executed in March 1973.¹⁶⁴ One commentator noted that “[w]ith the death of their own Che the Gazans lost heart and seemed to fall into a long sleep.”¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁹ O’Ballance (1973), pg. 193.

¹⁶⁰ PLO (1979), pg. 11. According to Hassan as-Saghir, a prisoner in Asqalan who also participated in the hunger strike.

¹⁶¹ Kanafani (1971), unpaginated.

¹⁶² O’Ballance (1973), pg. 199.

¹⁶³ Ziad al-Hussaini (Abu Nimr) was the local head of the PLA in Gaza, but several sources also refer to him as a member of the PFLP, e.g. O’Ballance (1973), pg. 200. Edgar O’Ballance seems perfectly capable of making errors about who’s who—he names Ziad as “Said”, though he is referring to the same individual—but one Gazan PFLP member, Nema El Helo, recounts being approached by a “Ziad Hussein, a major leader of the PFLP [in Gaza]”, asked to join the PFLP, and then trained by Ziad and Ibrahim Abu Wael—a *fida’i* she had saved from capture. Gordon, et al (2003), pgs. 78–79.

¹⁶⁴ Lesch (1980), pg. 50. Lesch describes a raid on a bunker under Dr. Rashad Musmar’a’s house in which three Palestinians, including al-Aswad, were killed.

¹⁶⁵ Emerson (1991), pg. 192.

Ahmad Yaghi, a member of the PFLP in Gaza during the period of armed resistance, accused the PFLP leadership of "diverting human and material resources needed for expansion towards building up the base in Jordan instead, in pursuit of the competition with Fateh and the PDFLP."¹⁶⁶ Even if the PFLP had focused its resources on Gaza, where it was strongest, it is difficult to imagine a different result. More money and bigger guns would not have saved the Gazan resistance from the brutality of Ariel Sharon's crackdown. Crumbling relations with Nasser's régime may even have rendered comprehensive material support to Gaza impossible. But the prioritization of the world stage, the outside, *al-kharj*, over the grassroots movement inside presaged a damaging trend in the Popular Front's relationship to its supporters under direct military occupation.

After 1972, Anwar Sadat was president in Egypt, George Habash was in Beirut, and even if the PFLP leadership wanted to send resources to Gaza, their simplest route—the Sinai desert—was closed to them. The Popular Front and the other resistance factions were mostly inactive in Gaza through the 1970s, even during the periods of mass upheaval in the West Bank near the end of the decade. In 1980, the Israeli civil administration responded to pressure and allowed the unions to resume activities, though with absurd restrictions including the imposition of 'Abd ar-Rahman Daraba, a wealthy industrial capitalist, as chairman of the federation.¹⁶⁷ Even strictly monitored and legally hampered, unions became the site for some of the most meaningful organizing in Gaza during the 1972-1986 downturn.

The Popular Front had relied on cell-based clandestine organizing through the 1970s, maintaining its membership but unable to grow or effect meaningful resistance. According to journalist Amira Hass, "a number of activists in the Popular Front ... began to look more closely at their own organization's involvement with class issues; there was a fair amount of working-class sloganeering, but the Front had little real interest in anything other than nationalist

¹⁶⁶ Sayigh (1997), pg. 210.

¹⁶⁷ Hass (1996), pg. 35.

concerns."¹⁶⁸ One PFLP organizer, Marwan Kafarna, involved himself in the recreation of the public service employees' union, which had been closely tied to the ANM before 1967.¹⁶⁹ The local Popular Front leadership ignored Kafarna's organizing, which was seen as a waste of time, but they allowed him to continue his efforts. Kafarna described the conditions under which he organized:

First of all, we just wanted to wake up people's consciousness, get them taking part in the things going on around them, before even thinking of party politics or nationalism. At the time, hardly anyone came to the unions—they were too scared. The ones who did were courageous because they knew they'd have trouble with the authorities.... The ineffable name 'Popular Front' was never mentioned, of course—it was an illegal organization. But everyone—even the civil administration—knew the Front was involved.¹⁷⁰

The public service employees' union, thanks to Kafarna's organizing, became a Popular Front stronghold with a DFLP minority. The PFLP also succeeded in becoming one of the leading forces in the Arab Medical Society, which acted in lieu of a doctors and nurses' union. 1985 elections granted four of eleven seats to a coalition of leftists and 1987 elections gave nine seats to a Left and Fatah coalition, with the remaining two seats going to the Muslim Brotherhood. Dr. Rabah Muhanna was attacked by Muslim Brothers, who were known for using thuggery to support their union wing, for his role in organizing the AMS.¹⁷¹ Muhanna went on to found and direct the Union of Health Work Committees before becoming head of the PFLP in Gaza. Marwan Kafarna would also become a Popular Front leader because of his experience in the workers' movement.

The labor movement in the Strip never reached the same level as in the West Bank, discussed in the next section, but it kept a sense of active resistance alive. Women's work committees, another sphere for popular organizing discussed in the next section, also found

¹⁶⁸ Hass (1996), pg. 35.

¹⁶⁹ Hass (1996), pg. 36.

¹⁷⁰ Hass (1996), pg. 36.

¹⁷¹ Ghazali (1988), pg. 178.

some supporters in Gaza. An activist in the Union of Palestinian Women's Committees (UPWC), the PFLP's front in the women's movement, describes the situation in Gaza in the early 1980s:

[W]e paid a visit to the Gaza Strip and contacted a number of girls who showed an interest in women's activities and who were ready [to organize women]. We agreed on opening a UPWC branch in Jabalya Camp. Two points are noteworthy, however. First, social conditions in the Strip are different from those in the West Bank, and this is reflected in the speed in which committees can be started there, and in the nature of their activities. Secondly, we feel that the responsibility for setting up a women's committee in the Strip falls onto women in Gaza.¹⁷²

Neither the trade unions nor the women's movement approached the same scale as in the West Bank; by 1991, there were thirty-two registered unions and roughly one hundred unregistered in the West Bank, compared to six in Gaza.¹⁷³ Largely, this disparity was the result of differential treatment from the military administration, rather than a difference in the militancy of women and workers. But the lack of material or political aid from the outside leadership—perhaps because of the absence of competition; Fatah, the DFLP, and the Communist Party were minor forces in Gaza—prevented a change in the situation. Particularly in the case of the women's movement, a weak organizational infrastructure in Gaza led to a rollback of the movement's gains with the rise of Hamas and the imposition of conservative values.

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### *The West Bank under Occupation*

When George Habash and Wadi' Haddad expanded the newly formed ANM to Jordan in 1952, they incorporated two local formations into the movement: *Mu'tamar 'Amman* (the Amman Conference) of Hamad al-Farhan<sup>174</sup> on the East Bank and a gathering of nationalists led by Dr.

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<sup>172</sup> Hiltermann (1991), pg. 137.

<sup>173</sup> Lynd, et al (1994), pg. 183.

<sup>174</sup> Discussed in Chapter One.

Salah ad-Din al-‘Anabtawi<sup>175</sup> based in Nablus and in Jerusalem.<sup>176</sup> ‘Anabtawi’s group—which included Dr. Walid Qamhawi and Dr. Samir Ghosha—was the nucleus from which the ANM in the West Bank and Gaza grew. Most of those in positions of leadership were middle class urbanites—doctors, lawyers, academics<sup>177</sup>—but the movement also found support among students, “drivers, craftsmen, and laborers.”<sup>178</sup> The West Bank ANM grew to two or three hundred partisans<sup>179</sup> over the next decade and a half, but the mass admiration for Nasser meant the ANM’s influence far surpassed its formal membership.

The West Bank-Jordan branch of the ANM faced its first major test in 1957 after the dissolution of the Nabulsi government on 10 April.<sup>180</sup> The Arab Nationalists joined with the Communists, Ba’athists, and the Syrian Social Nationalist Party in the West Bank ANM-stronghold of Nablus to form a national opposition to the monarchy. The King responded with organized violence and waves of arrest, but the ANM maintained the resistance through strikes, demonstrations, and bombings, even after Qamhawi and ‘Anabtawi were both arrested.<sup>181</sup> After the outbreak of civil war in Lebanon, the Jordanian opposition petered out, but the ANM continued to play a subversive role in the authoritarian political climate of the Jordanian-ruled West Bank, sometimes acting as saboteurs on behalf of Nasser. The Jordanian command of the ANM was radicalized when Hamad al-Farhan was ousted by Muhammad Rabi’ and the West

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<sup>175</sup> ‘Anabtawi came from a prominent Nablus family. He was an American University of Beirut alumnus and specialized in pediatrics.

<sup>176</sup> Talhami (2001), pg. 174.

<sup>177</sup> A notable teacher and member of the ANM, ‘Abd al-Jawad Salah, went on to become mayor of al-Bira, a member of the EC of the PLO, and a member of the PLC. The only mention of his past membership in the ANM (and the Ba’ath Party) is in Pryce-Jones (1972), pg. 96.

<sup>178</sup> Cohen (1982), pg. 243.

<sup>179</sup> Cohen (1982) estimates that “[a]t the beginning of the 1960s, the Qawmiyun [Arab Nationalists] had several hundred members in Jordan, more than half of them in the West Bank.” Pg. 95, presumably based on Jordanian security documents. Sayigh (1991) estimates the West Bank ANM alone at “at least ‘several hundreds’” by 1967. Pg. 619, based on interviews with members and former members. The ambiguity of “several” and the several years difference between the two estimates makes them mutually plausible.

<sup>180</sup> Discussed in Chapter One.

<sup>181</sup> Mishal (1972), pg. 94.

Bank ANM.<sup>182</sup> The confiscated diary of an ANM member and school teacher, arrested in 1963, describes a failed uprising in the West Bank in the 1960s:

I have never in my life seen so powerful a demonstration as that which took place today. Students, workers, and citizens all took part. The army intervened, using batons and firearms. The people seized control of the government offices and the radio studio. The battle lasted an hour and a half, during which 11 people were killed, 150 were injured and 300 were arrested.... The masses in Nablus declared an insurrection.... Nablus announced: 'This is the capital of the Jordanian Republic.' The number of persons killed in the disturbances came to 300."<sup>183</sup>

Despite a decade of ANM agitation, the Jordanian monarchy had only grown more powerful and more undemocratic by 1967. War with Israel was imminent and the Jordanian monarchy made mass arrests, especially in the West Bank, to prevent a Palestinian fifth column, though the Arab Nationalists, Communists, and Ba'athists arrested were far less amenable to Israel than was the King. False recantations were extracted from ANM prisoners, including Muhammad Rabi' and Dr. Samir Ghosha, likely with the use of torture.<sup>184</sup> Before Israel won the war and occupied the West Bank, the political prisoners were released, but the distrust between ANM members that followed, along with the knowledge that Israel may have captured records of their political participation and the weight of the defeat itself, left the branch wary and demoralized. Ahmad Khalifa, one of the heads of the West Bank ANM, was fatalistically warned by George Habash that, "we have no organization in the West Bank or Jordan, everyone is in prison and those who have escaped have lost confidence and distrust their colleagues."<sup>185</sup>

Resistance in the West Bank initially took a non-violent form, as religious leaders, communists, the old ruling class, and the remaining ANM leaders organized strikes and demonstrations. Salah 'Anabtawi was one of the first signatories to a number of public

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<sup>182</sup> Sayigh (1997), pg. 109.

<sup>183</sup> Cohen (1982), pgs. 97–98.

<sup>184</sup> Sayigh (1997), pg. 135.

<sup>185</sup> Sayigh (1997), pg. 159.

memorandums of protest, along with Walid Qamhawi and Dr. Faisal Kan'an,<sup>186</sup> another ANM leader and a councilmember in the Dentists' Association.<sup>187</sup> A lawyers' strike, refusing to cooperate with the occupation courts, included ANM members in prominent positions.<sup>188</sup> Samir Ghosha, former head of the ANM in Jerusalem, established *Jabha an-Nidal ash-Sha'bi al-Filastini* (The Palestine Popular Struggle Front; PPSF) primarily with other former members of the ANM, but also some communists, Ba'athists, and independents, to organize the West Bank resistance. The PPSF was therefore a separate organization from the ANM and refused to join the PFLP when it was formed at the end of 1967, though it continued to coordinate and share some members with the ANM. Before that time came, however, Ghosha and his deputies, Kamal an-Nimmari<sup>189</sup> and Faisal al-Hussaini,<sup>190</sup> were caught and imprisoned by the occupation authorities.

Meanwhile, 187 ANM members—including 'Abdallah 'Ajrami, ANM military commander after al-Hussaini, and senior leaders Taisir Quba' and 'As'ad 'Abd ar-Rahman—were arrested in December 1967.<sup>191</sup> Within a few months, the PFLP's military leadership had retreated to Jordan and the West Bank had been abandoned until the resistance movement had the strength to return. Members and allies of the PFLP remained in the West Bank, but their non-violent resistance was eclipsed by Fatah's frequent cross-border raids and the PFLP's international

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<sup>186</sup> Kan'an is noted as a member of the "Arab Nationalist Movement (PFLP)" on a list of 1993 returnees. *Journal of Palestine Studies* (1993), pg. 149.

<sup>187</sup> Institute for Palestine Studies (1967), pgs. 15, 22–23, 59, and 63–64.

<sup>188</sup> Tolan (2006), pgs. 141–142 and 152.

<sup>189</sup> Curiously, Sayigh (1997) refers to Nimmari as an ANM-turned-Fatah activist, reaffirmed by his description as the "Fatah Jerusalem Commander" in Benvenisti (1976), pg. 228, but appears in the June 1979 PFLP Bulletin, after his release, as a member of the Popular Front, pg. 25. In the latter, his name is given as "Comrade Kamal Al Nammar", but the description of his "crime" is similar and it is written that he was released in the same prisoner swap. He is also interviewed in PLO (1979), but his affiliation is not given.

<sup>190</sup> Faisal was the son of 'Abd al-Qadir al-Hussaini, a hero of the 1948 armed resistance. Faisal himself had long been a member of the ANM and remained ANM military commander in the West Bank from his arrival in August 1967 until his arrest two months later, while also serving as a leader of the PPSF. After he was released a year later, Faisal avoided the armed struggle and later became a well-respected political independent closest to Fatah.

<sup>191</sup> Sayigh (1997), pg. 167.

plane hijackings.<sup>192</sup> Another wave of arrests in March 1969 led to the capture of at least 150 suspected PFLP members, many of whose houses were destroyed by the military administration as punishment.<sup>193</sup> The Popular Front had a brief resurgence in Jerusalem in 1969, but soon “dozens, including doctors, priests, teachers, university graduates, high school pupils and other professionals” had been arrested for belonging to the PFLP. The head of the PFLP in Hebron, Abu Manzur, was killed in July 1970.<sup>194</sup> 'Anabtawi and Qamhawi, the original organizers of the ANM in the West Bank and leaders of the non-violent resistance, were deported in October 1968 and September 1970 respectively.<sup>195</sup>

The military administration that came with the 1967 occupation drew a small semblance of legitimacy from a system of Palestinian mayors given nominal control over the occupied municipalities. Later the administration was modified to allow for mayoral elections, though all of the popular parties—Fatah, the PFLP, the Communist Party—were banned. In August 1973, a gathering of resistance leaders led to the formation of the Palestine National Front (PNF), a representative body for the Palestinians under occupation. Representing only the trade unions, women’s organizations, and factions within the occupied territories, the PNF initially saw itself as politically subordinate to the PLO, while operationally autonomous. The PLO would organize the armed struggle in the diaspora, and the PNF would organize a popular resistance, in the form of strikes, demonstrations, boycotts, and tax strikes, within the occupied territories.

Three factors led to the decline of the PNF in the mid-1970s: Israeli repression, PLO intervention, and Fatah’s anti-communism. The first usually took the form of arrests and deportations, but the mass-based nature of the PNF allowed new leaders to emerge each time

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<sup>192</sup> Discussed in Chapter One.

<sup>193</sup> O’Ballance (1973), pg. 80.

<sup>194</sup> Institute for Palestine Studies (1970), pg. 497.

<sup>195</sup> Lesch (1979), pg. 114 and pg. 130. Dr. Faisal Kan'an, mentioned earlier, was deported in May 1969. Lesch (1979), pg. 118. Qamhawi—and maybe 'Anabtawi as well—was not a member of the PFLP in 1970, though that was the given reason for his deportation and for five others at the time, the most notable of whom, Haidar 'Abd ash-Shafi, was not a PFLP member either. Qamhawi went on to a career in the PLO, and 'Anabtawi seems to have left politics.

their predecessors were captured. The PLO saw the PNF as a wing of itself which could be controlled and maneuvered from the outside. But the PNF gained its legitimacy from the backing of small, local formations, and the differences in strategy generated tensions between the PLO and the PNF. Fatah, which had comfortably established its hegemony within the PLO, resented the Communist Party's influence in the PNF, and the prominence of PFLP and DFLP activists as well. According to one historian, "Fatah made a deliberate effort to alienate the JCP [the Communists], and although the PLO had endorsed the PNF as the PLO's political arm in the occupied territories, important currents in Fatah opposed the role of the JCP in the PNF, and called for the establishment of an alternative front free from Communist control."<sup>196</sup>

After pro-PLO candidates swept the 1976 mayoral elections, the Israeli military government in the West Bank and Gaza began a campaign of harassment. Two mayors were deported in 1980, and two more were injured in a car bomb attack that same year.<sup>197</sup> In 1981, most had their functions replaced by an appointed Civil Administration. At the same time, Village Leagues were established by the military government. The Leagues received privileges, arms, and training in exchange for acting as an Israeli paramilitary. After rumors spread that Israel was preparing to annex forty percent of the West Bank—including Jerusalem—and return the remainder to Jordan in exchange for peace, students led a small uprising against the plan.<sup>198</sup>

Near the end of the 1970s, the Popular Front shifted from clandestine cell organization to mass mobilization through popular organizations. According to Hasan 'Abd al-Jawad, a West Bank journalist and PFLP activist at the time, "We wanted to abandon the clandestine frameworks, which the Occupation demolishes so easily, and to engage in activities that involve the public as a whole."<sup>199</sup> Elias Emaya, a West Bank PFLP leader, dates the shift toward unions

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<sup>196</sup> Hiltermann (1991), pg. 46.

<sup>197</sup> The work of settler paramilitaries, this attack may or may not have been condoned or organized by the Israeli administration.

<sup>198</sup> Wiles (2010), pgs. 68-69.

<sup>199</sup> Rosenfeld (2004), pg. 224.

and students to 1978.<sup>200</sup> At the same time, the PFLP adopted a far stricter definition of membership which required six months of political training and another six months trial period for potential new members.<sup>201</sup> This may have developed some well-trained cadre and deflected some informants, but it also likely slowed the pace of growth that popular organizing facilitated.

One of the earliest sites of organizing for the popular resistance was on the university campuses of Birzeit University near Ramallah, an-Najah University in Nablus, and Bethlehem University. The PFLP suffered a major setback in the late 1960s when its student organization in the West Bank, the Student Struggle Front, broke away to form part of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine.<sup>202</sup> The Popular Front was also the leading force in the General Federation of Palestinian Students, the smaller of two student federations<sup>203</sup> in the territories, but the GFPS “was crushed in 1969 by Israel because of its militancy.”<sup>204</sup> A decade later, however, the PFLP-affiliated Popular Action Front was head of the Bethlehem University student union and led a five-week student strike which ended in the unionization of faculty and students.<sup>205</sup> PFLP, sometimes in coalition with the DFLP or the Communists, remained head of the student council in Bethlehem until 1987.<sup>206</sup> The leftist parties also held a strong position at the most prestigious West Bank school, Birzeit University, north of Ramallah.

Newspapers and journals were the only regular media produced in the West Bank and Gaza in the 1970s and 1980s. *Al-Quds* (Jerusalem) was the first newspaper to gain a license

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<sup>200</sup> Interview with Elias Emaya (Feb. 2013).

<sup>201</sup> Emaya (2013).

<sup>202</sup> Brand (1988) writes that the SSF “leaned in the direction of” the DFLP, pg. 215, but Nadana Randane, a member of the group at the time, claims in Chaliand (1973) that “the whole of [the SSF] went over to the PDF.” Pg. 123.

<sup>203</sup> The larger being the Communist Party-oriented Jordanian Student Union (JSU). Meron Benvenisti (1976) briefly discusses the important role of the Union of Palestinian Pupils (UPP) in Jerusalem between 1967 and mid-1969, when “dozens of its members, organized in sabotage networks, were arrested.” The UPP was “connected with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and its members, who had leftist leanings, despised the veteran political establishment.” Pg. 210. It is unclear whether the UPP was the same formation as either the GFPS or the SSF or whether it was an entirely different group.

<sup>204</sup> Robinson (1997), pg. 20.

<sup>205</sup> Frisch (1998), pg. 70.

<sup>206</sup> Johnson (1987), pg. 133.



after the 1967 occupation, mostly because of its generally conservative, pro-Jordanian orientation. Its greatest competitor was the pro-PLO, Fatah-aligned *al-Fajr*. Because of the illegality of the factions, papers kept their affiliations secret, though it was widely known that the main leftist organizations each effectively owned their own paper: PFLP, *al-Mithaq*; DFLP, *ad-Darb*; the Communist Party, *at-Tali'a*.<sup>207</sup> *Ad-Darb* and *al-Mithaq* were shut down in 1985 and 1986 respectively because of their affiliations.<sup>208</sup> Several journalists played leading roles in the West Bank leadership of the PFLP, including Ahmad Qatamish and Hasan 'Abd al-Jawad, who was deported in 1985 for "political subversive activities"<sup>209</sup> and was suspected of being the head of the Popular Front in the West Bank.<sup>210</sup>

The Communist Party was strongest, almost hegemonic, within the West Bank labor movement. Most labor leaders were communists in the 1960s and 1970s, without much competition from either Islamists or the PLO organizations. The communists were also some of the earliest organizers of the women's movement in the occupied territories. But the Communist Party was dependent on and subservient to Moscow and its foreign policy, which meant acceptance of the state of Israel and support for a two-state partition. One former supporter of the Communist Party explained her reasons for shifting her allegiance to the Popular Front<sup>211</sup> in the early 1980s:

One was that [the PFLP] was proposing a democratic secular state in the whole of what used to be Palestine, not a two-state solution.... Second, I was introduced to a theory that allowed me to feel that, being a woman, I was a part of society, and that I was part of the human race and the human race was part of me. In the group, there was not the level of discrimination that the society around me practiced.... Another reason I moved toward this trend of thought was that the Communist Party literature said one

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<sup>207</sup> Factions may also have shared papers, to some extent. At least one PFLP member, Ibrahim (last name unknown), was a regular writer for *at-Tali'a* until his arrest in 1983. Wiles (2010), pg. 69.

<sup>208</sup> Orayb, Najjar. "Coverage of Women in West Bank Newspapers" in Sabbagh, ed. (1990), pg. 11.

<sup>209</sup> *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (1986), pg. 236.

<sup>210</sup> Hiltermann (1986), pg. 65.

<sup>211</sup> Sarona (last name unknown) never actually names the Popular Front as her organization, possibly for self-protection, but the PFLP is the only group to which she could be referring. Of the four factions heavily involved in women's committees, only the Popular Front openly and totally opposed a two-state partition.

thing while the individuals were doing something different.... In a demonstration, the Communist Party would pick up a red flag—they thought that had priority over picking up a Palestinian flag.... The Communist Party dealt with Israel as if our history began in 1948.<sup>212</sup>

The DFLP was the first to enter into competition with the communists in the labor movement, organizing West Bank residents who worked inside Israel, a constituency disregarded by the existing unions as “lumpenproletariat. A historian of the Palestinian labor movement, Joost Hiltermann, explains the Democratic Front's motivations, “[m]any of its activists had just been released from prison and were eager to put into practice the strategies they had developed jointly in detention.”<sup>213</sup> After the initial success of the Workers’ Unity Bloc, the DFLP front labor organization, the PFLP, Fatah, and the Ba’ath<sup>214</sup> created their own fronts. The Palestine Unionist Action Front (PUAF) represented the PFLP in its meager union activities.

The undemocratic communist union leadership, fearing the possibility of a takeover of the General Federation of Trade Unions by the PLO organizations, led to a split in the GFTU in 1981. Fatah, and its front organization, split away to form a separate federation. The leftists remained in the original GFTU, which was taken over by the DFLP in 1985,<sup>215</sup> until the fall of the Soviet Union weakened the leftist groups and Fatah’s federation became dominant. Throughout all of this period, the PUAF was a minor player, unable to compete with the deep roots of the communists, the innovative strategies of the DFLP, or the monetary resources of Fatah. The PFLP ceded its natural area of authority, as an ostensibly Marxist organization, to its smaller competitors.

One of the more common forms of popular organizing in the 1970s and 1980s were the voluntary work committees and, in particular, women’s work committees which organized

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<sup>212</sup> Lynd, et al (1994), pg. 83.

<sup>213</sup> Hiltermann (1985), pg. 29.

<sup>214</sup> The Workers’ Vanguard Bloc, the front organization associated with *as-Sa’iqa* may actually have had its roots in the ANM. Hiltermann (1985), pg. 29.

<sup>215</sup> Hiltermann (1985), pg. 30.

collective and voluntary labor in the service of the community. The women's committees organized literacy classes and attempted to aid women in transgressing traditional social and political boundaries in the service of their own liberation. As with the labor movement, women's work committees developed factional affiliations. The original Women's Work Committee, founded in the Ramallah district in 1978, was unofficially tied to the DFLP, while a split from this group affiliated itself to the Communist Party. PFLP sympathizers established the Union of Palestinian Women's Committees (UPWC) in 1981 and Fatah created its own front the following year. Despite the Popular Front's relatively high female membership and some stated commitment to women's liberation,<sup>216</sup> the UPWC remained a secondary force within the West Bank and Gaza resistance.

All of these popular forces—the voluntary work committees, the trade unions, the women's organizations, the student unions, and the print media—organically arose from the organizing of local activists, rather than from the Popular Front leadership in Beirut and Damascus. The one tactic which the outside leadership advocated and was quick to celebrate in its publications was punishment, and particularly assassination, of collaborators. The two most notable collaborators assassinated by the PFLP were 'Abd an-Nur Khalil Janho, who was a favorite of the Western press, a businessman, and an anti-PLO politician from Nablus, in February 1978<sup>217</sup> and Shaikh Hashim Khazindar, who attempted to give religious legitimacy to the occupation.<sup>218</sup> In response to a query about the rising number of attacks on suspected

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<sup>216</sup> George Habash, in particular, attempted to include women's liberation among the PFLP's primary goals, publishing several documents on the subject in the 1970s. A full analysis of the PFLP's stance on the women's question would require an entire separate chapter, outside the purpose of this project. A quote from the November 1979 PFLP Bulletin sheds some light on both the progress and the limitations of the PFLP's position: "Mobilization of our women, carried out with a clear understanding of principles and on a firm organizational basis, is a vital question for us in the PFLP and for the victory of our masses. This emphasis does not treat the question of women as an entity separate from other aspects of the anti-imperialist struggle; rather the women's question is a fundamental element in our struggle for social change." Pg. 21.

<sup>217</sup> Hillel (1998), pgs. 61–62. PFLP Bulletin (June 1979), pg. 12. Janho had also committed a murder two years prior to his assassination for which he faced no punishment after the intervention of the military administration.

<sup>218</sup> PFLP Bulletin (June 1979), pg. 12.

collaborators, particularly in Gaza, Habash responded: "In Gaza there is one struggle against the enemy, another against his agents ... [but] we do not differentiate between the two.... Our terrorism is directed at the agents, not the masses."<sup>219</sup> The emphasis given to executing collaborators reflected the essentially military mindset of the outside leadership.

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The Prisons of the Occupation

*Crush my ribs under the butts of your guns.
Make handcuffs and shackles devour my flesh.
Erect scaffold for me if you wish.
Block the sun's rays from my eyes with a black blindfold that resembles the color of your heart.
Or make the barbed wire thicker and the walls higher.
And bring into my tent the rest of my family and friends.
Or crucify on the thorns, under the blazing sun, a boy.
Or bring to death an old man.
But Ansar shall always sing for dawn.
Can you stop the sun from coming up?
The dawn is mine, the sun is mine,
The land is mine!
—Salah Ta'amari. "Ansar Shall Always Sing for Dawn"²²⁰*

Another distinction between the inside, *ad-dakhl*, and the outside, *al-kharj*, developed in the parlance of the resistance movement after the 1967 occupation: those struggling inside the prisons and those living outside. Between 1967 and 1985, at least 250,000 Palestinians passed through the Israeli prison system.²²¹ Under Israeli occupation, non-violent protest or affiliation with any political party or organization was a crime, and affiliation was a loosely defined term. Convictions were often the result of confessions obtained through torture or from informants. The poor conditions of Israeli prisons and the widespread and arbitrary use of torture were the

²¹⁹ Maksoud (1973), pg. 80.

²²⁰ Ta'amari was a Fatah military commander and a prisoner in South Lebanon in Ansar, the most infamous of all Israel's prisons. He became a leader and a hero for many of his fellow prisoners. Discussed in Palestine Human Rights Campaign and Ansar Resource Center (1985), pgs. 16–29.

²²¹ Tolan (2006), pg. 182.

subject of many reports and condemnations in the 1970s and 1980s.²²² Though prisons were the spaces in which much of the violence of the occupation was concentrated, they also served as the primary site of Palestinian resistance in the occupied territories between the end of the armed resistance in 1972 and the 1987 outbreak of *al-Intifada*. The prisons created a generation of leaders forced to rethink resistance outside the narrow confines of guerrilla warfare.

From a series of interviews conducted and published by the PLO and a prisoner rights advocacy group²²³ with long-sentence prisoners released in an exchange in 1979, several common experiences are worth mentioning. Eleven of the twelve interviewees were active in the armed resistance in the West Bank and Gaza, most taken prisoner in combat in the late 1960s, while the twelfth was arrested after participating in a 1972 plane hijacking. Despite sometimes severe injuries, prisoners were interrogated before receiving medical attention. Each of the detainees faced a period of intense interrogation—lasting between forty-five days and ten months—before going to trial. It was during this period that the most severe instances of torture took place. It is not the purpose of this chapter to enumerate each brutal innovation of Israel's prisoner administrators or the Shin Bet;²²⁴ suffice it that physical and psychological tortures, sexual abuse and rape, humiliation, collective punishment, and blackmail were all consistently cited by former prisoners as common techniques of interrogation in Israeli prisons.²²⁵

Once detainees reached trial, their guilt was essentially a pre-established fact. Most Palestinian lawyers refused to participate in the courts—seventy-five of Ramallah's eighty

²²² The International Lawyers Guild, *al-Haq*, the American Friends Service Committee, Human Rights Watch, and others produced detailed studies on the conditions and abuses in Israeli prisons in the 1970s and 1980s.

²²³ The Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners in Israeli Jails.

²²⁴ Shin Bet, also known as Shabak, is the Israeli internal secret service. It has a long history of human rights abuses, particularly in its interrogation methods and its targeted killings.

²²⁵ For specifics, see PLO (1979), al-Jundi (2011), and Abdo, Nahla. "Palestinian *Munadelat*: Between Western Representation and Lived Reality" in Lentin (2008). The latter specifically discusses the experiences of women prisoners.

lawyers refused in 1967²²⁶—on the basis that occupation courts were inherently illegitimate and that the cases were unwinnable because of institutional biases and the lack of habeas corpus rights. After their inevitable conviction, prisoners were transferred to prison facilities throughout Israel²²⁷ and the occupied territories where they were often divided by political affiliation—one section for Fatah, another for the leftists, etc. Some prisons, like Bir as-Saba', were reserved for Palestinian political prisoners, but in others, political prisoners were mixed with prisoners convicted of criminal offenses, including Israeli Jewish citizens.

At least as early as 1970, the hunger strike became the primary tool of resistance for the incarcerated. Hunger strikes rarely achieved all of their demands—which ranged from better food, sanitary conditions, and an end to torture to full recognition of former fighters as POWs or abolition of the whole prison system—but they drew attention to the wretched conditions of the prisons and allowed the prisoners to move beyond the territory of passive victims. Hasan as-Saghir, at the time a prisoner in Ramla prison, recounts the first strike:

Late in 1970, our fellow prisoners in Ashkelon [Hebrew for Asqalan] prison declared a hunger strike in protest against living conditions in the prison. A meal was not sufficient even for a five-year-old child. They were badly treated: daily beaten and insulted. Health conditions were deteriorating. So we declared a hunger strike in Ramle prison in solidarity with our fellow prisoners in Ashkelon....²²⁸ All the prisoners were participating in the hunger strike. Even those with bad health insisted on taking part. Abdel Kader Abu Al-Fahm, former leader of the popular liberation forces in Gaza in 1968, died while carrying out the strike.... Another militant, Khalil from Khan Younis, suffered health breakdown and had to have his leg amputated.²²⁹

To break the solidarity strike in Ramla, prison authorities gathered those prisoners they identified as leaders—including as-Saghir—and transferred them to Asqalan, site of the original

²²⁶ Tolan (2006), pg. 141.

²²⁷ Several prisoners noted the ironic sense of return that came with imprisonment inside Israel's 1948 borders. One PFLP detainee, Bashir Khairi, noted that Ramla prison, where he was imprisoned, was built on land that his family had owned before *an-Nakba*. Tolan (2006), pg. 18.

²²⁸ PLO (1979), pg. 10.

²²⁹ PLO (1979), pg. 11.

strike. Frequent transfer of prisoners became a tactic for suppressing the development of political networks within the prisons, but it allowed for the creation of networks between prisons. After Asqalan, as-Saghir was transferred to Bait Lid and from there on to Bir as-Saba'. In the course of four years, as-Saghir was immersed in four prison populations and two more before his release, allowing him to share his experiences as a hunger striker and his skills as a former teacher in each new environment.²³⁰

The concentration of highly-politicized, sometimes well-educated, passionately subversive detainees turned the prisons into universities. One of the earliest demands of the prisoners was for access to reading material. The Red Cross agreed to supply some texts, but prison authorities only allowed apolitical books—atlasses, encyclopedias, etc.—and Zionist literature. Anything that the prison authorities wouldn't allow was smuggled in through one of two techniques. Relatives of prisoners sent banned books—Marxist, Arab nationalist, and Palestinian nationalist texts, manifestoes, and stories—with the covers removed and replaced with something inoffensive, but prison authorities quickly caught on. Afterwards, activists on the outside trained themselves in nearly microscopic calligraphy so that an entire, perhaps 200-page text could be fit onto a single sheet of tracing paper. This sheet was folded into a small capsule, encased in cellophane, and swallowed—or otherwise bodily concealed, depending on the length of the text—by someone expecting imprisonment. Others on the inside would copy the text into diaries, sometimes requiring smuggled magnifying glasses.²³¹

As prison libraries, hidden under mattresses or in cracks in the walls, expanded into the hundreds, factions organized study groups and literacy classes to educate and indoctrinate their supporters.²³² The leftists taught courses on philosophy, political economy, and Marxist

²³⁰ PLO (1979), pg. 14.

²³¹ Interview with PFLP leader and prisoner of six years Elias Emaya (Feb. 2013) and a lecture by former DFLP leader and prisoner of seventeen years Sa'd Nimr (April 2012).

²³² A great discussion of political prisoners' co-education can be found in Rosenfeld (2004), pgs. 252–263.

theory.²³³ Fatah barred its members from reading books in the PFLP and DFLP libraries,²³⁴ but many Fatah prisoners ignored the rule.²³⁵ Classes were organized not only in politics, but also in literacy, French, English, Hebrew, education, history, religion, and other subjects, depending on the skills of the inmates and the resources available to them. Kamal an-Nimmari taught advanced mathematics in Ramla prison.²³⁶ Nawaf az-Zaro, also in Ramla, estimated that 90% of his fellow prisoners “got the G.C.E. (General Certificate of Education) level”²³⁷ and were therefore qualified to teach.

Prisoners reminisce of the authors they had read in prison: Marx, Lenin, Hegel, ‘Che’ Guevara, Mao Zedong, Gramsci, Frantz Fanon, George Habash, Salah Khalaf of Fatah, Ghassan Kanafani, Mahmoud Darwish, Jawaharlal Nehru, Gandhi, the speeches of Martin Luther King Jr., Pablo Neruda, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Naguib Mahfouz, Jack London, Tolstoy, Maxim Gorky, Dickens, Homer, Virgil, John Steinbeck, Mark Twain, Nietzsche, Rousseau, and hundreds more.²³⁸ One former prisoner recounted having read the complete works of Fyodor Dostoevsky, hand-copied from tracing paper microprint into notebooks,²³⁹ while another veteran estimated his total literary intake in his six years at somewhere between 1,000 and 2,000 books.²⁴⁰ As for newspapers and journals, prisoners only had access to Hebrew-language, Zionist publications; they learned how to read Hebrew and also how to read critically.

Palestinian political prisoners were not only consumers of information; they wrote and published essays, journals, manifestos, manuals, artwork, and books inside the prisons. One of the most widely read works to originate in the prisons was the authorless *Falsafa al-Muwajaha*

²³³ Rula, who presumably aligned herself with the PFLP when she was imprisoned in 1988, recounts the order of readings for the Popular Front in Nashif (2008), pg. 104.

²³⁴ Hass (1996), pg. 214.

²³⁵ Rosenfeld (2004), pg. 255.

²³⁶ PLO (1979), pg. 42.

²³⁷ PLO (1979), pg. 49.

²³⁸ Lists of authors and books appear in al Jundi (2010), pgs. 337-338 and Tolan (2006), pg. 182.

²³⁹ Nimr (2012).

²⁴⁰ Emaya (2013).

Wara al-Qudban (The Philosophy of Confrontation Behind the Bars),²⁴¹ first published by the PFLP in the early 1980s. *Al-Falsafa* served as a training manual for the newly incarcerated, oriented primarily towards effectively confronting torture and interrogation.

In the interrogation the enemy wants to create an atmosphere of cooperation between the struggler and the interrogator. The latter will order, and the former will obey ... he will ask and the struggler will answer. The intelligence service man will use his famous frightening image, and terrorizing and deceitful techniques. The moment the struggler refuses and challenges the orders, the two conditions of the interrogation process will fall. The only principle is to refuse to cooperate and to bring down the barricade of fear and terror.²⁴²

Multiple generations learned techniques for survival from *al-Falsafa*. The PFLP also produced pamphlets on specific topics—written by senior Popular Front prisoners in notebooks and transcribed by newer prisoners into other notebooks—and at least one regular journal. ‘Abd al-Alim Da’na, a PFLP leader in the West Bank and a former prisoner, described the version of *al-Hadaf*—the PFLP’s journal—published inside the prisons:

We wrote these magazines by hand, with pencils, and some people put drawings in the magazines, and some prisoners wrote poems, some wrote tales and short stories.... [W]e wrote about political theory and philosophy inside the magazines, and political economy, many Marxist-Leninist essays inside these magazines. And we also had essays where we discussed our situations inside the prisons, and news, and our relationship with other organizations.²⁴³

To organize their resistance, prisoners created several levels of self-administration within the prisons. Each prisoner had both a factional affiliation—to the PFLP, Fatah, or another organization—and the broader responsibilities for their cell, prison, and the common lot of all prisoners. The factions elected leaderships inside the prison, but the authority to call strikes and issue statements rested with the non-factional coordination committees. Each cell, representing

²⁴¹ There is a long, difficult discussion of this text in Nashif (2008), pgs. 100–130.

²⁴² PFLP (date unknown), pg. 22. Translated in Nashif (2008), pg. 112.

²⁴³ Interview with ‘Abd al-Alim Da’na by Ben Lorber (2011).

roughly ten prisoners, elected a *shawish* (representative). Above the level of shawish were the committees. In Bir as-Saba', for example, there were four committees: administrative, organizational, interrogation, and culture. The former two organized cooperation between the factions and communicated demands to prison authorities. The latter two led educational efforts and organized events celebrating Palestinian culture and tradition.

Political prisoners were valorized by all the Palestinian factions. Long-term prisoners often assumed leadership positions on the outside upon their release. One commentator notes that “[i]mprisonment did not signify an end to political participation or even a temporary distancing from it, but rather their entrance into a new and enhanced sphere of activism.”²⁴⁴ The strength of the leftists in the prisons is likely what sustained the Popular Front within the territories in the years between the 1972 downturn and *al-Intifada* in 1987. Prison veterans provided a supply of trained cadre that filled part of the void created by the Damascus-based leadership’s neglect. But without significant financial or political support, ex-prisoners alone could not overcome the deficiencies of the PFLP in the territories. Zuhdi Hamouda al-’Adawi, who went on to become the arts director for the PFLP publication *al-Hadaf*, described his experience in prison:

In prison, the struggle continues, but it is not the struggle of carrying a gun. It is the struggle of the storyteller, the painter, the politician and the leader. When the Israelis incarcerated us, they thought we would come out broken, like rotten tomatoes, but we came out apples. The prison is not defined by its walls, but by the relations inside it. They close the gates and you see only iron, no green, white or blue. The plates we eat from are the colour of death, yellow, and the clothes we are given to wear are red. But we were able to imagine the colours of the rainbow.²⁴⁵

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### *Rising Up and Throwing Off: al-Intifada, 1987-1993*

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<sup>244</sup> Rosenfeld (2004), pg. 264.

<sup>245</sup> Matar (2011), pg. 114.

In 1987, Lebanon was the center of attention for Israel, the PLO, and all other interested parties. George Habash and the PFLP leadership were faced with the consequences of tying their fortunes to Damascus when the Ba'ath orchestrated a series of attacks on the camps in Lebanon. The War of the Camps, fought primarily between the Syrian-sponsored Shi'a Amal militia and the PLO organizations, was coming to a conclusion in the summer of 1987. Though it was resolved in the PLO's favor, the effect of the war was to shatter the Palestinian-Muslim-Left alliance against Israel and the Lebanese Right, and to further isolate Palestinians within Lebanon. At the time, few expected the next phase of resistance to emerge from within the occupied territories. The Palestinian Left historian Jamil Hilal has suggested, however, that the inside was the rightful territory for struggle since as early as Black September, 1970.<sup>246</sup>

Gaza was wracked with protest through most of 1987 in response to a series of arrests, deportations, and occupation-related deaths. After four women were crushed by a bulldozer on December 8th and a young man was shot at a demonstration the following day, however, the protests experienced a qualitative change. Mass demonstrations started to reach into the tens of thousands. Palestinian youths, close to half the population, transformed the uprising into a 'war of stones', matching the strength of their slings and throwing arms against the modern military machinery of the occupation forces. One witness observed that "[o]n some days Gaza was so 'hot' that the sky was black with the smoke of burning tires and tear gas wafted in all directions. Experienced eyes often compared the street fighting and the air of anarchy in Gaza to Beirut".<sup>247</sup> The Popular Front and Islamic Jihad were the first to release pamphlets in Gaza calling for continuing the protest, but *al-Intifada*—at least temporarily—had left the narrow domain of factional competition.

*Al-Intifada*, like most semi-spontaneous uprisings, developed organically out of unplanned and impromptu protests—often the funerals of martyred demonstrators—but it

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<sup>246</sup> Hilal (1993), pg. 49.

<sup>247</sup> Vitullo, Anita "Uprising in Gaza" in Lockman & Beinin (1989), pg. 47.

adapted existing structures of resistance to satisfy the need for organization. Birzeit University was forcibly closed for four years after student demonstrations of thousands overwhelmed the occupation forces. Voluntary work committees became support committees for the mass demonstrations, providing for protesters needs and aiding the injured. In Gaza, leadership fell to the recently formed Central Union Committee, which represented all of the major secular factions. To provide a central voice to *al-Intifada*, the Unified National Leadership (UNL) was formed. Marwan Kafarna, one of the initiators of the PFLP's union strategy, was one of the original four UNL members.

The Popular Front, like all of the PLO organizations, was quick to celebrate *al-Intifada* in its press and official statements. But the initial response reflected the externally dominated hierarchy which defined inside-outside relations within the PFLP. George Habash warned in 1988, there are “two fundamental poles to the Palestinian revolution (inside and outside), and it is impossible for one to cancel the other or to operate independently of it.”<sup>248</sup> In 1988, when *al-Intifada* was still in a position of ascendance, the inside and the outside differed little in their analysis of the needs of the movement. But as discussions of a potential political solution shifted public opinion toward the establishment of a state in the West Bank and Gaza, the Popular Front struggled to maintain its control over cadre under occupation.

The Palestine National Council (PNC), the legislative body of the PLO, met for its nineteenth session in November 1988 in Algiers. The roughly 380 delegates represented the secular, armed Palestinian factions and major institutions within the Palestinian diaspora—workers, women, students, etc. They recognized the need to not only acknowledge, but formally endorse *al-Intifada*, because ignoring it would cede the leadership, the potential, and the victories it might achieve to the UNC. Yasser 'Arafat, chairman of the PLO and the head of Fatah, drafted a declaration of Palestinian sovereignty over the West Bank and Gaza, in preparation for the establishment of a Palestinian state in those territories. George Habash led

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<sup>248</sup> Nassar & Heacock in Nassar & Heacock (1990), pg. 193.

the opposition to the declaration, arguing that the references to two specific UN resolutions<sup>249</sup> amounted to a veiled acceptance of Israel's sovereign claim to the other 78% of historic Palestine. In spite of Habash's protests, the declaration passed with 253 for, 46 against, and 10 abstentions. The literary theoretician Edward Saïd wrote of the proceedings, "[t]here was a sad nostalgia to what [Habash] represented, since by voting against him we were in effect taking leave of the past as embodied in his defiant gestures."<sup>250</sup>

In 1993, it was announced that secret negotiations between the PLO and Israel in Oslo had reached an agreement and an interim self-government, *as-Sulta al-Watania al-Filastinia* (the Palestinian National Authority; PA), would be established in the West Bank and Gaza. In return, the PLO would forsake violence and recognize the state of Israel and its right to exist. Since 1970, when the two-state solution first found advocates among PLO leaders, the Popular Front had positioned itself as the staunchest opponent of any Palestinian state which did not encompass all of historic Palestine. The PFLP, along with the DFLP—which had become increasingly integrated with the Popular Front since the mid-1980s—rejected the Oslo Agreement as a betrayal of the founding principles of the PLO and incapable of establishing even its stated goal: the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. In rejection, the two fronts were joined by the Syrian-aligned factions, some within Fatah, and a number of independent figures, including Haidar'Abd ash-Shafi in Gaza.

After the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in 1994, thousands of administrative jobs became available for which membership in Fatah was an unstated requirement. For the first time since the 1960s, many activists chose dual membership with the PFLP and Fatah. Others left the front because they wanted or needed employment that members were barred

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<sup>249</sup> 242 and 338.

<sup>250</sup> Saïd in Lockman and Beinin (1989), pg. 17.

from pursuing, like with the PA police force, Preventative Security. Dr. Ali Jarbawi<sup>251</sup> explained the effects of Oslo on the non-Fatah factions:

The Fateh faction was successful in its attempts to become the Authority. The other factions have no potential for renewal or modernization to become new political forces. Those who leave these finished factions today and seek a new role in society, such as the post of a director or general director in an institution, have to realize that the only positions available are to be obtained through the Fateh faction, which has become the authority. I am sorry to say that the national program has been transferred to the program of the authority; and this authority, in all respects, is disappointing.<sup>252</sup>

Educated cadre uninterested in teaching were absorbed into the foreign-funded non-governmental sector where their organizing experience was wasted on euphemistic “development” projects. And many PFLP members saw the establishment of a Palestinian state, however superficial, as palliative. Though the leadership abroad condemned the idea of a two-state solution, many activists felt differently. Ibrahim of Hebron stated, “I believe in two states. A Palestinian state must be established in the entire West Bank and Gaza Strip that is free from occupation and all settlements.”<sup>253</sup>

When municipal elections were held in 1996, the Damascus-based leadership called for a boycott, but some local PFLP leaders ignored them. Fayez Jabar, a PFLP leader in Ramallah, ran on the Fatah list while Riad al-Malki, Kamal Sharafi, and Ra’fat an-Najar ran as independents.<sup>254</sup> Compared to the other leftist groups, the Popular Front was lucky to only lose individual members. The DFLP, PPSF, ALF, and PLF each split in two, with an outside leadership rejecting Oslo and an inside leadership supporting the accords.<sup>255</sup> Still, the PFLP

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<sup>251</sup> Jarbawi is the current PA Minister of Planning and Administrative Development, as well as a writer and a professor of political science at Birzeit University.

<sup>252</sup> PASSIA (1997), unpaginated.

<sup>253</sup> Wiles (2010), pg. 70.

<sup>254</sup> According to Andoni (1996), al-Malki registered as a candidate but pulled out before the election. Pg. 7. An-Najar won his seat in Gaza. Pg. 14.

<sup>255</sup> Suleiman (1999) discusses the wave of splits on page 70. The PPSF was unique in that the inside leadership was the original leadership and the larger part of the group. The DFLP split led to the formation of the Palestinian Democratic Union (FIDA) which, under the leadership of Yasir ‘Abd Rabo,

shrank so rapidly that by the time they did participate in an election in 2006, they only received 4.25% of the vote.

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Conclusion

The big mistake of the 'outside' was that it forgot the 'inside'. It involved itself in many unnecessary problems that reflected on the situation of the 'inside' as well. The philosophy of steadfastness that was devised by the 'outside' for the 'inside' was limited to only a few tools and resources for the 'inside', to enable it to carry out instructions from the 'outside'. On the other hand, the mistake of the 'inside' was to accept and authorize the 'outside' to lead it on the basis that the 'outside' was far less restricted by the daily pressures of the Israeli occupation.... [T]he relationship between the two was not one of partnership or equality. It was based on an authoritarian stand from the 'outside' vis-à-vis a receptive and weak 'inside'.

—Dr. Ali Jarbawi, PA Minister of Planning and Administrative Development, 1997²⁵⁶

The PFLP developed two incompatible leaderships in the two decades after the occupation began; after the Popular Front was founded: an outside leadership trained through guerrilla warfare and the internal politics of the PLO, and an inside leadership forged in prisons, unions, and popular committees. The outside leadership dictated the ideology and the strategy of the front in a manner informed by the experience of the Jordanian and Lebanese civil wars. Eqbal Ahmad, a theorist of national liberation and armed struggle, argued that the PLO organizations failed to relate to the occupied territories because “[t]hey had everyday contact with the Palestinians of the diaspora, not with those of the West Bank and Gaza. Hence, what should have been their primary concern remained a secondary one.”²⁵⁷ But it would be a

came to be seen as a pawn of ‘Arafat and Fatah. Prominent leaders like the historian Jamil Hilal left, but did not rejoin the DFLP.

²⁵⁶ PASSIA (1997), unpaginated.

²⁵⁷ Ahmad (1983), pg. 21.

mistake to say that they forgot or ignored the occupied territories. George Habash, in a 1973 interview, stressed the importance of those organizing under occupation:

We fear that the political existence of the Palestinian resistance movement outside occupied Palestine may have negative repercussions among the masses of the occupied territory. We must not forget that at least 50 per cent of our people are still in the occupied territory. I cannot imagine a Palestinian revolution in isolation from the masses in the occupied territory. The value of this does not lie in numbers and proportions; *the real value lies in the fact that it is this section of the masses that is daily suffering national and class persecution.*²⁵⁸

Eqbal Ahmad attributes the incompatibility of the inside and outside to the leadership's "fixation with the idea of armed struggle as the only revolutionary form."²⁵⁹ Armed struggle can be carried out—with, perhaps, a smaller degree of effectiveness—from the outside and without a popular base of support. The fetishization of armed struggle as the only *real* path to liberation led the Popular Front to strand itself in the politically barren environment of Ba'athist Syria. But Habash had anticipated this in 1973: "Our previous struggles were vanguard military struggles. These struggles must be turned into day-to-day political and mass struggles against the occupation."²⁶⁰

In spite of Habash's warnings in 1973, however, the Popular Front gradually became a diaspora organization. Those leaders, mostly deportees, who were meant to represent the inside lost touch with their comrades under occupation. A Democratic Front leader in Lebanon, Mamdouh Nofal, explained: "My daily concerns were related to the battles in the Lebanese Beka'a Valley, to the defense of our refugee camps and to the standing of Kamal Jumblatt. I was not involved in any way whatsoever with plans for the 'inside', with which I did not even have any direct contact." Without an equal and democratic relationship with the inside, the Popular Front, and its PLO allies, excised the West Bank and Gaza from its short and long-term

²⁵⁸ Institute for Palestine Studies (1973), pg. 196. My emphasis.

²⁵⁹ Ahmad (1983), pg. 21.

²⁶⁰ Institute for Palestine Studies (1973), pg. 196.

strategy. Nofal continues: “We had worries, suspicions and fears concerning the idea of involving the ‘inside’ in our institutions ‘outside’. Our fear was based on the possibility that a group of leaders might develop in the ‘inside’, and that this group would be capable of taking independent, political decisions.”²⁶¹ The inability to articulate or enact a unique, meaningful approach to organizing under military occupation and the stifling of an organically arising leadership was behind the disappearance of the PFLP post-Oslo. The failure to build a reliable, committed base in the occupied territories led to the rapid atrophy of cadre after 1994.

²⁶¹ PASSIA (1997), unpaginated.

Conclusion

This essay is premised on two theses: the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine failed both as a contender for leadership within the Palestinian political sphere and as a national liberation movement. In both cases, the failure of the PFLP can be contrasted with another's victory. In the first instance, Fatah succeeded in imposing its strategy onto the PLO and the PA—at least until 2006—though its strategy was to some extent dictated by outside forces rather than by Fatah itself. The Popular Front never succeeded in moving beyond the territory of perpetual opposition. In the latter instance, that of the national liberation movement, the victor, as of 2013, is Israel. The establishment of the Palestinian Authority met the base needs of the most unimaginative and compromising PLO officials, but it does not represent liberation in any substantive sense. The establishment of a secular, democratic state in Palestine—all of it—has yet to come about, let alone its transformation into a socialist society.

The decline of the PFLP after the Oslo accords cannot be attributed to either the collapse of the Soviet Union or the rise of Islamism, though these might be the most common diagnoses.²⁶² The Popular Front had closer ties to China than the USSR, and those cadre who left the PFLP rarely shifted their allegiances to Hamas or Islamic Jihad. Rather, the Popular Front's failure was the result of a reliance on the battlefields chosen by its rival, Fatah. To preempt Fatah's dominance in Jordan, the Popular Front focused its resources on the desert kingdom, rather than on Lebanon or Gaza where Fatah had only a small following. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Lebanon had become a hopeless quagmire, yet the PFLP continued to involve itself in the Civil War, ignoring the increasingly militant but alienated population under direct occupation in the West Bank and Gaza. Through the entirety of this period, Fatah's reliance on armed struggle meant the Popular Front had to equal or outdo its militancy, even when popular non-violent organizing might have been able to open the PFLP to a mass

²⁶² Salim Tamari's 1992 article "Left in Limbo: Leninist Heritage and Islamist Challenge" is a well-written, succinct combination of both these theses.

following. By allowing Fatah to dictate the sites of confrontation, the Popular Front yielded the momentum of the Palestinian resistance movement to its least revolutionary wing.

Among the refugees in Jordan, the Popular Front gained mass support through its tactic of plane hijackings, but failed to transform its following into a revolutionary movement which might have challenged the Hashemi régime. The failure was reflective of the limitations of the individual-based tactic which had no long-term strategy for mass mobilization. Saïd Aburish, a Palestinian writer and biographer, wrote of the hijackings:

After Karameh the PFLP stole the limelight. Whatever view the world had of the hijackings, they represented singular triumphs to the Palestinian people—certainly something more tangible than the raids across the Jordanian and Lebanese borders produced. In a way the PFLP was supreme, and its advocacy of activity aimed at disrupting Israeli life, regardless of that activity’s nature and where it took place, guaranteed it a high level of popular support.²⁶³

But in spite of this popular support—which was almost exclusively Palestinian, rather than Jordanian—the PFLP, along with the rest of the *fiḍa’i* factions, was excised from Jordan in a strikingly one-sided civil war which saw very few native Jordanians openly question the monarchy’s legitimacy. As the movement relocated to Lebanon, it reevaluated its tactics, leading to a depth and clarity of analysis evident in George Habash’s interviews from the period, in which the Secretary-General predicted many of the future failures of the movement. In one instance, Habash cautioned that a “revolutionary organization realizes its goal through mass mobilization, its basic strength” and that, in Jordan, the movement had “established only superficial relations with the masses and considered military action as a substitute for mass struggle, rather than the peak of that struggle.”²⁶⁴ But this introspection was lost after the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War. By 1985, when asked about the PFLP’s strategy going forward, Habash would reply:

²⁶³ Aburish (1998), pg. 105.

²⁶⁴ Maksoud (1973), pg. 73.

The strategy of Palestinian action in the coming stage revolves around a central axis: the adoption of a policy of armed struggle and the escalation of that struggle against the Zionist enemy.... Armed struggle, as we understand it and in accordance with our conception of a people's war, is the most developed form of struggle waged by revolutionary forces.... Every citizen has the opportunity to resist occupation by all available means.... The struggle with the Zionist enemy in Lebanon is open and clear. We still have a military presence to fight the enemy and to protect the security of our camps in the face of Zionist attacks.²⁶⁵

The occupied territories went unmentioned in Habash's answer, despite references to the Lebanese arena, the Jordanian arena, the pan-Arab arena, and the international arena. When asked specifically about the occupied territories, Habash emphasized the importance of that half of the Palestinian population, but explained that they were not in a position to wage a people's war. His prescription was to "escalate our military operations in these territories."²⁶⁶ At a time when the first signs of the impending *Intifada* were becoming visible in the form of strikes, demonstrations, volunteer work, and community organizing, the invocation of armed struggle as the ideal tactic should have appeared absurd, but it reflected a policy which had dominated the PFLP's operations for at least a decade. Habash would reflect in 1998, "I know now that there were those who turned armed struggle into a sacred rite. We've gone beyond this notion now and see armed struggle as part of the wider political battle."²⁶⁷ But the moment was lost and the Popular Front was no longer in a position to change the movement's overall strategy.

In writing a history of the PFLP, and of the Palestinian resistance movement as a whole, there is an instinct toward fatalism. Was the Popular Front doomed from the start? Had every mistake described in this essay been avoided, could the PFLP have succeeded? Even if King Hussain was overthrown, Israel would have invaded and crushed the guerrillas' Sierra Maestra-North Vietnam-Kronstadt socialist sanctuary within a matter of weeks. Had the combined forces

²⁶⁵ Habash (1985), pgs. 9–10.

²⁶⁶ Habash (1985), pg. 14.

²⁶⁷ Habash (1998), pg. 93.

of the PLO and the Lebanese National Movement taken hold of state power in Lebanon, could they have held onto it against the wishes of both Israel and Syria? Even if *al-Intifada* was not diverted into serving the narrow interests of those who fetishized the state to the point where they could celebrate its existence with neither a territorial nor popular basis, an uprising needs attainable goals and Israel would never have acquiesced to a democratic, secular state encompassing all of Palestine and guaranteeing the right of return, as the PFLP insisted upon. Yet, every national liberation movement has faced odds rightfully qualified as insurmountable. In a speech in Yarmouk camp in Syria in 1979, George Habash proclaimed: "And to those who say 'How can we win a battle against the US [and Israel] with all its technological and military capacities? , the answer is not theoretical. The answer is Vietnam."²⁶⁸ In homages to Vietnam, Cuba, and Algeria, Habash not only recognized, but celebrated the impossibility of the PFLP's struggle as a testament to its righteousness. A history of the PFLP must then be a history of a movement which attempted to achieve something impossible in a historic moment in which impossibility was irrelevant.

²⁶⁸ PFLP Bulletin, No. 27, May 1979.

Appendix 1: Glossary of Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Organizations

ANM	— <i>Haraka al-Qawmia al-'Arabia</i> (Arab Nationalist Movement). The precursor group to the PFLP. The ANM was founded in 1954 (officially) at the American University of Beirut by George Habash, Wadi' Haddad, Hani al-Hindi, and Muhsin Ibrahim. It would gain large followings in Lebanon, Syria, South Yemen (where its successor would eventually take power), and in the Palestinian diaspora.
DFLP	— <i>Jabha ad-Demoqratia l-Tahrir Filasin</i> (Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine). Originally the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP), the Democratic Front emerged from the Left faction within the PFLP/ANM in 1968/69. Prominent members include(d) Naif Hawatma and Yasser 'Abd Rabo.
Fatah	— The reverse acronym of <i>Harakat at-Tahrir al-Watani al-Filastini</i> . The leading organization within the PLO after 1968 and by far the greatest example of Palestinian <i>watani</i> nationalism (as opposed to Arab <i>qawmi</i> nationalism). Prominent members include(d) Yasser Arafat, Abu Iyad (Salah Khalaf), and Abu Jihad (Khalil al-Wazir).
<i>al-Kata'ib</i>	— A fascist-inspired Christian militia. Also known in English as the Phalanges.
LCP	— Lebanese Communist Party.
LNM	— Lebanese National Movement. The coalition of Arab nationalist, leftist, and Muslim forces during the early years of the civil war.
<i>al-Mourabitoun</i>	— A Lebanese Nasserist organization.
NLP	— National Liberal Party. Associated with the Chamun family.
NSP	— National Socialist Party. Arab nationalist party in Jordan. Associated with Sulayman an-Nabulsi.
PFLP	— <i>Jabha ash-Sha'bia l-Tahrir Filastin</i> (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine). Formed in the winter of 1967 as a merger of the Palestinian section of the Arab Nationalist Movement and the Palestine Liberation Front. Adopted a Marxist-Leninist

program soon after its founding. Prominent members include(d) George Habash, Ghassan Kanafani, Wadi' Haddad, Laila Khaled, 'Abu 'Ali Mustafa, and Ahmad Sa'adat.

- PFLP-GC — Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command. An early 1968 split from the PFLP. Relatively non-ideological and warfare-oriented. Led by Ahmad Jibril.
- PLF — Palestine Liberation Front. The militia organized by Ahmad Jibril in the 1960s and merged within the ANM to form the PFLP. Not to be confused with a group by the same name that split from the PFLP-GC in the 1970s.
- PLO — The Palestine Liberation Organization. Effectively the Palestinian government-in-exile, representing most of the secular Palestinian *fi da'ii*n groups.
- PSP — Progressive Socialist Party. Originally acted as the leading social democratic party in Lebanon, the PSP gradually became a mostly Druze party.
- SSNP — The Syrian Social Nationalist Party. A pan-Syrian party (advocating the unification of Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria).

Appendix 2: Glossary of Arabic Terms

<i>ad-dakhl</i>	—	The inside.
<i>fiḍa'iin</i>	—	The plural of <i>fiḍa'i</i> . Literally “sacrificer”. Often transliterated (butchered) as “fedayeen”. This term was used to refer to Palestinian and Arab guerrilla fighters. The words <i>fiḍa'i</i> , guerrilla, and commando are used mostly interchangeably throughout.
<i>iqlimi(a)</i>	—	Regionalism. See ‘ <i>watani(a)</i> ’
<i>al-kharj</i>	—	The outside.
<i>qawmi(a)</i>	—	Nationalism. Usually used to refer to Pan-Arabism/Arab nationalism, or the unification of all Arab lands. In opposition to the <i>watani</i> nationalism of individual nations. See ANM, Ba’ath, or Nasser.
<i>qutri(a)</i>	—	Regionalism. See ‘ <i>watani(a)</i> ’
<i>watani(a)</i>	—	Regional nationalism. This term is the most direct translation of the English word “nationalism”, and is sometimes also translated as “patriotism”, but came to refer to Palestinian nationalism within the Palestinian political context. See Fatah.

Appendix 3: Glossary of Names

- Yasser 'Abd Rabbo — A Palestinian leader of the ANM Left faction who went on to be a founding member of the PDFLP/DFLP. Largely seen as 'Arafat's lackey in the DFLP. Broke away after Oslo to form the Palestinian Democratic Union (FIDA).
- Bassam Abu Sharif — A member of the ANM since his days at AUB. Spokesperson of the PFLP after Ghassan Kanafani's assassination. Largely seen as 'Arafat's lackey in the PFLP. Since leaving, generally viewed as a pariah by his former comrades.
- Naji al-'Ali — A Palestinian cartoonist and a member of the PFLP. Remembered for his character Handhala, a Palestinian child wearing rags, holding his hands behind his back while facing away from the camera, representing the condition and steadfastness of refugees. Al-'Ali was assassinated in London in 1987. His killer may have acted on behalf of PLO, or Israeli Mossad, or on his own. It remains unclear.
- Salah ad-Din al-'Anabtawi — A founding member and leader of the ANM's West Bank branch and a Nablus notable. Deported in 1968. Political activity afterwards unknown to this author.
- Yasser 'Arafat — *Nom de guerre*: Abu 'Ammar. A founding member of Fatah, later Secretary-General. Chairman of the PLO from 1969 until his death in 2004. Seen as a skillful politician by his rivals, a national hero by most Palestinians, and a terrorist by Israel and the West.
- Samir Ghosha — An early member of the ANM's West Bank branch. Founded the PPSF along with Bahjat Abu Gharbia in 1967. Cooperated with the ANM until the founding of the PFLP. Largely seen as a lackey of 'Arafat.
- George Habash — *Nom de guerre*: Al-Hakim. Founder and leader of the ANM in the 1950s and 1960s. Founder and Secretary-General of the PFLP from 1967 until his resignation in 2000. Remembered by many as the 'conscience of the Palestinian revolution'.
- Wadi' Haddad — *Nom de guerre*: Abu Hani. Founder of the ANM. Head of military operations. Founder of the PFLP and head of its Special Operations unit. Forced to resign in 1972. Assassinated by Israeli Mossad (though there is some disagreement about this).

- Nayif Hawatma — *Nom de guerre*: Abu an-Nuf. A Jordanian leader of the ANM Left faction. Founder and Secretary-General of the PDFLP/DFLP since 1969.
- George Hawi — *Nom de guerre*: Abu Anis. The Secretary-General of the Lebanese Communist Party from 1979 until 1993. Seen as instrumental in its unique independence from the Soviet Union and its membership in the Arab New Left. Assassinated in 2005.
- Hani al-Hindi — A Syrian founder of the ANM. A member of the Right faction. Appears to have left the leadership bodies of the PFLP soon after its founding.
- Muhsin Ibrahim — A Lebanese founder of the ANM. The leading theorist of the Left faction and editor of *al-Hurria*. A founder of the Organization of Lebanese Socialists. Head of the Communist Action Organization. General Secretary of the Lebanese National Movement.
- Kamal Jumblatt — A Lebanese Druze communal leader. Founder and leader of the Progressive Socialist Party. Leader of the Lebanese National Movement. Assassinated in 1977.
- Ghassan Kanafani — A member of the ANM in the 1950s and 1960s. Novelist, short story writer, poet, and cartoonist. Founding member of the PFLP. Editor of *al-Hadaf* and spokesman for the Popular Front. Assassinated in 1972.
- Salah Khalaf — *Nom de guerre*: Abu Iyad. Founder of Fatah. Generally regarded as the leader of the Loyal Left within Fatah. Maintained relations with the leftist organizations. Assassinated in 1991.
- Laila Khalid — A member of the ANM through the 1960s. An early member of the PFLP and the public face of the Special Operations unit after her successful hijacking of a plane in 1969 and her unsuccessful hijacking of another in 1970. Currently a member of the Politburo and the Central Committee.
- Gamal 'Abd an-Nasser — President of Egypt, later the United Arab Republic, from 1956 until his death in 1970. Came to power because of the Free Officers' Coup. Seen as the public face of Arab nationalism.
- Kamal an-Nimmari — A member of the ANM in the Jerusalem area. May have been a member of the PPSF and/or Fatah after 1967, the year of

his arrest. Released in 1979. Mentioned as a member of the PFLP in a PFLP Bulletin of that year.

- Walid Qamhawi — A leader of the ANM in the West Bank in the 1950s and 1960s. Deported in 1970, returning soon afterwards. Left (or was never a member of) the PFLP. Played a major role in the PLO.
- Ahmad Sa'adat — A leader of the ANM in the West Bank in the 1970s and 1980s. Head of the PFLP in the West Bank after 1994. Elected Secretary-General in 2001 after the assassination of Mustafa Zibri. Imprisoned since 2002.
- Nimr Salah — *Nom de guerre*: Abu Salah. The most significant leader of the left wing of Fatah and a military leader. Associated with but not a leader of the 1983 Fatah revolt, Salah may already have left Fatah soon before.
- Haidar 'Abd ash-Shafi — An independent leftist in Gaza. Deported for membership in the PFLP in 1970 [?]. Played a role in dissent of the Oslo Accords.
- Fawwaz Traboulsi — Originally a member of the Lebanese section of the Ba'ath Party. Founder of Socialist Lebanon, which merged with the OLS to form
- Ahmad al-Yamani — An early member of the ANM and one of its leaders in Lebanon. A founding member of the PFLP and the most prominent member of the Right faction based in Lebanon. A longtime member of the PFLP Politburo and Central Committee. Al-Yamani is believed to have been Habash's chosen successor, though the PFLP vetoed Habash, choosing Mustafa Zibri instead.
- Mustafa Zibri — *Nom de guerre*: Abu 'Ali Mustafa. An early member of the ANM in the occupied territories and one of the ANM's military leaders. Head of PFLP military operations for most of the 1970s and 1980s. Deputy Secretary-General of the PFLP for most of that period. Proxy leader after Habash's 1980 stroke. Elected Secretary-General after Habash's 2000 resignation. Assassinated by an Israeli Apache helicopter the following year.

*Appendix 4: The Palestinian Student Left: A Diagnosis of the Decline*²⁶⁹

Last month [April 2012], students at universities in the Israeli-occupied West Bank cast their votes for student governments. Unlike their popularity-contest equivalents at universities throughout the world, Palestinian student elections have long been the subject of national attention. In particular, Birzeit University, located in the town of Birzeit outside Ramallah, is seen as a harbinger of developments within the broader Palestinian political scene. Despite another year of electoral marginality, the student Left at Birzeit is confident that it will overcome the trials that confront it. An analysis of this year's student elections and the challenges faced by the Left follows.

The students of Birzeit University are no strangers to activism or politics – 2012 alone has seen a campaign of student strikes and occupations²⁷⁰ over the rising cost of tuition, solidarity hunger strikes with Khader Adnan and Hana Ash-Shalabi, and frequent demonstrations at the nearby Atara checkpoint, often met with violent force by the Israeli military. Since the 1970s, in the wake of the 1967 occupation of the West Bank and the failure of armed revolution, student activism defined the West Bank university colloquially known as either the “Harvard of Palestine”, or “Martyr’s University”. It was in this foment that national leaders like Marwan Barghouti emerged.

However, many see the political role of Birzeit as largely diminished. Like many Palestinians – and especially the middle class which has emerged since the establishment of the Palestinian Authority – Birzeit students have largely been subdued by the multi-tiered system of privileges under occupation that has developed following the Oslo Accords. Blogger and former Birzeit student Linah Alsaafin describes the state of student activism:

“One of my main problems with my time at Birzeit University was the lack of any concrete student activism, overtaken instead by the simulated scenes and atmosphere of a US

²⁶⁹ Originally published in *Al-Akhbar*, 26 May 2012 as “Palestine: The Underappreciated Student Left” under the pseudonym Terry James.

²⁷⁰ Coverage by Charlotte Silver, “Occupy Birzeit: Protesting High Tuition” *Al-Akhbar*, 25 January 2012.

high school as shown in Hollywood movies... The glory days of BZU were during the first intifada... Students were one of the important driving forces behind the mass protests and civil disobedience in Palestinian society.”²⁷¹

Class division on campus has become far more visible than expectable divisions of political affiliation, area of study, or religion. The increasing cost of education – reflecting a trend replicated across Europe and, especially, in the United States – and the use of English as the primary language in many classrooms threaten to force out students of poor or working class origin.

In the face of these circumstances, stands a small, divided, but steadfast student Left. Two incidents, each involving the student party Qutub (which includes student members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine as well as some independent leftists) and each ending after action was taken by the Birzeit administration, illustrate the efforts of the Left to challenge the rising cost of university. In the first instance, Qutub challenged the high prices of textbooks, sold to students by the university, by making photocopies and selling them to students at the cost of production. After recognizing that students were choosing not to eat in the cafeteria because of the cost, Qutub set up a stand on campus offering sandwiches for one shekel (\$.26) each.

When it came time for students at Birzeit to choose their student council, some expected the actions of Qutub to pay off in increased student support. When that proved not to be the case, it was easy to rely on the old mantra of politically pacified students. A more in depth analysis is due.

April 2012 Student Elections

Nine lists participated in the April 2012 student elections at Birzeit. The lists corresponded either to national-level parties or ideologies, with one Islamist list, one Fatah list,

²⁷¹ Linah Alsaafin “#OccupyBZU to #BZUProtest” on her blog *Life on Bir Zeit Campus*, 22 January 2012.

one centrist list, and six leftist lists (associated with the PFLP, DFLP, PPP, PPSF, FIDA, and the Ba'ath). The division and redundancy of the Left was apparent to students.

Months before the elections, there was talk of the possibility of a broad coalition of the Left, possibly including the PFLP as well as the student blocs associated with the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Palestine People's Party (formerly the Communist Party). The period beginning in 1979 and ending after 1986, in which the Left was able to dominate the student council, was marked by an alliance of these three parties. After divisions had developed in the wake of Oslo, these parties came together again to form Qutub in 1995, though the DFLP and PPP left the coalition four years later.

When it came time to register lists of candidates, however, no coalition was announced. Instead, media attention was given to the decision by Hamas to participate as the Islamic Relief Bloc (IRB). There had been no Islamist participation in the previous two elections after Hamas candidates were arrested by the Fatah-controlled Palestinian Authority.

Without a clear third choice, the elections developed into a two-way race between the incumbent Martyr Yasser Arafat Bloc (MYAB), representing the pro-business politics of Fatah, and the IRB, representing the religious right. Qutub hoped to win enough seats to deny either of the stronger blocs a clear majority, making itself the kingmaker. The half dozen other left blocs had similar aspirations, though with far less reason to expect success.

The results were announced on 4 April: 26 seats for the Martyr Yasser Arafat Bloc; 19 seats for the Islamic Relief Bloc, 5 seats for Qutub; and 1 seat for the Popular Struggle Front (a small "Left" faction funded heavily by Fatah). The MYAB, gained a complete majority in the 51 seat student council, allowing it to dictate without contestation from either leftists or Islamists.

Fatah also claimed victories at Bethlehem University (the historical stronghold of the Left), Al-Quds University in Abu Dis (where the DFLP is strongest), and at Al-Khalil University. An-Najah University, which holds elections in the fall semester, has also been led by Fatah since Hamas began boycotting elections several years ago.

The marginalization of the Left on Palestinian campuses is not a new phenomenon. Though there was a time when the Left, despite its internal divisions, could easily expect a majority in student councils, it now represents a small minority among students. Several observations might elucidate the reasons behind this weakness.

Lack of Political Unity

There is no golden age of unity for the Palestinian Left to reflect upon. Despite relying on similar political programs (and in the case of the Popular and Democratic Fronts in the late 1960s, a word-for-word identical program), leftist groups have witnessed far more splits than mergers. Campuses have, at times, been the exception to the rule.

As mentioned earlier, Qutub emerged in 1995 as a coalition of the leading Left student groups to challenge the growth of Islamist groups on campus and to take advantage of the division in Fatah after the initiation of the Oslo Accords. The united Left reached its peak in 1998, capturing ten seats. Since then, the coalition has given way to its separate, constituent parts, with the PFLP maintaining the Qutub name. In the place of unification between diverse tendencies, the PFLP has consolidated itself as the only viable Left group in Birzeit. The effect has been to limit the terrain for debate among leftists to the politics of the dominant party.

The call for unity between leftist students can not ignore the actions of the various groups on the national level. For those most active in Qutub, the question of unity is not a simple matter of mutual apologies among the factions; the PPP and DFLP both give (qualified) support to the Palestinian Authority while the PFLP firmly opposes it. While the former two parties are assured a small amount of representation, the latter has suffered repression and arrests, like the supporters of Hamas and Islamic Jihad in the West Bank. It is hard to imagine a full reconciliation of the Left under the current configuration of the Palestinian Authority, but with student branches of the DFLP and especially the PPP critical of their national leaderships, students may be able to avoid division.

Still the most unifying environment for leftist activists (and even for those supportive of Fatah or Hamas) is in the battlefield-like streets and fields of Nabi Saleh, Bil'in, and the fifteen other villages which hold weekly demonstrations against the Wall and settlement expansion. The often lethal "crowd control" measures of the Israeli military fail to differentiate between supporters of a one-state solution or two-staters. Students from Birzeit and other universities have played a major role in the demonstrations outside Ofer prison which have recently escalated to include hundreds since the initiation of a mass hunger strike in April. While some of the older village demonstrations have been marred by factional competition – Bil'in, for example, could often be mistaken for two colliding parades of DFLP and Fatah partisans – the rapid development of new spaces of protest forces collaboration between different tendencies.

Hamas-Fatah Duopoly

Hamas and Fatah, though hardly willing to cooperate with each other, have created what is effectively a right-wing duopoly of power both on campuses and in the national political scene. While opposed to both the corruption of Fatah and to the religious conservatism of Hamas, voters choose the lesser evil, rather than supporting a bloc that they genuinely identify with.

One nursing student I spoke with identified himself as a supporter of the PFLP and Qutub but chose to vote for Hamas because they could compete with Fatah and because, despite their religiosity, they have been more effective as a student council in the past. The same student supports banning Islamist parties on the national level. Another student said she had vacillated between supporting Hamas or Qutub, but after hearing rumors of Hamas plans to gender segregate the cafeteria, ended up voting for Fatah. Still a third student, after I asked her why she supported Hamas, thought for a moment before scribbling across my notebook "I HATE FATAH!!". Few students seemed inclined to speak positively about the party they were ostensibly supporting.

The Palestinian Left has often sought to overcome the duopoly by presenting itself as a willing partner in a ruling coalition. When the Left represented a large minority of students, this was a viable strategy, though at the expense of ideological clarity. Now, those leftist groups willing to collaborate with Fatah or Hamas have shrunk – partly because of their collaboration – ending the need for the larger groups to seek partners. Marginality itself is forcing the Left to seek new strategies.

Looking Forward

The class-focused guerrilla-activism of Qutub earlier this year – distributing cheap food and books – may be a sign of what's to come. Efforts to widen boycott initiatives of Israeli products in the West Bank, as well as the Friday demonstrations across the West Bank – where the red keffiyahs of the Left often outnumber the black and white of Fatah – are also bolstering the appeal of the Left. By focusing on grassroots organizing within those communities most affected by the occupation, the Left can work to reposition itself within the political scene. This does not necessarily mean seeking greater success in student elections.

Islamists at Birzeit, An-Najah University, and elsewhere have boycotted elections for practical reasons – avoiding the arrest of their candidates by the PA. However, the elections themselves, because of outside funding stretching into the tens of thousands of dollars, have reached a point where no bloc can compete with the two leading parties. When either of the two dominant blocs wins the student elections, they rarely live up to any of their campaign promises. The international Left has often had a complicated relationship with the institution of elections, especially when money plays an unregulated role in campaigns. It may be time for the Palestinian Left to reconsider its participation in student elections and to return to its roots in the revolutionary struggle against capitalism, Western imperialism, and Israeli settler colonialism.

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