



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS  
JOURNALS + DIGITAL PUBLISHING



---

Struggle for the Land

Source: *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 3/4 (Spring - Summer, 1976), pp. 229-236

Published by: [University of California Press](#) on behalf of the [Institute for Palestine Studies](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2536037>

Accessed: 28/03/2014 16:35

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at  
<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



University of California Press and Institute for Palestine Studies are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Journal of Palestine Studies*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

by nationalists, democrats and progressives within the framework of the nationalist lists supported by the Palestinian National Front — the arm of the PLO inside the occupied territories — our revolutionary appraisal of these results is that the Palestinian revolution has rid itself of the last vestiges of Jordanian tutelage and of the tools of the occupation; it has taken up a new weapon and a new position from which to direct mass struggle against Zionist occupation and the Jordanian regime.”

### STRUGGLE FOR THE LAND

*Shu'un Filastiniya*, the monthly journal published by the PLO Research Centre in Beirut, devoted two articles of its May 1976 issue to the explosion of popular discontent among Palestinians under Israeli rule from December 1975 onwards. It was not the first such uprising — there had been two major outbursts in 1968 and 1974 — but it was by far the most serious one. The Israelis sent wave upon wave of security forces to restore order, using extremely harsh measures which resulted in the deaths of bystanders as well as demonstrators, without being able to put a halt to the protests.

For those who studied the events it was clear that this was a different sort of uprising. Ghazi al-Khalili, in an article entitled “Lessons of the Uprising,” put it in perspective by comparing it with the 1968 and 1974 upheavals. Of the former he wrote: “The general public, and particularly craftsmen and villagers, played little effective part in the mass struggle. Therefore the uprising was predominantly a student movement. It was, on the whole, spontaneous, and there were no organizations to exploit this spontaneity intelligently against the occupation authorities. Some committees were formed during the uprising... but they were local and temporary and showed how great was the need for bodies or committees to guide and organize the mass movement. The uprising did not meet with the outside response it deserved, as the main efforts of the resistance

were directed towards military operations. No sections of the resistance paid much attention to mass movements or to organized political struggle among the masses and therefore the military operations carried out during the uprising stole the limelight kindled by the uprising in the occupied territory. The Arabs of the areas occupied in 1948 played no role in the uprising. Apart from certain activists from Hebron and the Triangle who joined the ranks of the Palestinian resistance and carried out a number of military operations there, the uprising had no effect at the mass level there.”

As for the uprising of 1974, he found that it was a better organized affair and had more articulate aims, but it remained basically a student rebellion, with little help from outside the student body and no apparent help from territories occupied before 1967.

The present uprising he saw as resulting from the reality of the Palestinian national movement whereas previous ones were still trying to assert the existence of the Palestinian people and their revolution. The Palestinians under occupation had always resisted Jewish colonization but could not advance from general slogans to more definite political aims because they first had to affirm their existence. He went on: “But now the national movement has reached a stage where it has sufficient mass support to be able to activate the masses; it can prevent the enemy from establishing settlements, for example, or adopting other policies, because it has become a fact the enemy cannot disregard or sidetrack. Palestinian struggle is no longer a dream but a reality.”

The immediate cause of the uprising was local, namely the attempts by the illegal settlers of the Gush Emunim movement to establish a kibbutz near Nablus. Ahmed Hamza, who took part in a symposium which *Shu'un Filastiniya* entitled “The Great Uprising,” stressed that a major difference between this and the 1974 uprising was that whereas the former was primarily a repercussion of outside events — the October War, the Rabat Summit and Palestinian re-

presentation at the UN — “the present uprising has come about in different circumstances.” Although it cannot be separated completely from the situation outside the occupied territories, he said, “the direct incentives were mainly local ones: the uprising was sparked off by the attempt of Zionist settlers to settle in Sebastia.” When the Israeli government failed to take decisive measures against the illegal settlers, the disturbances spread quickly to include all Arabs under Israeli rule.

Abdul-Aziz al-Hajj Ahmad, another participant in the symposium, gave the broad outlines of the present uprising. He stated: “I want to concentrate on two points. The first is the forms of political struggle which the masses in the occupied territory engaged in, its escalation, and the tendency to violence, which was very clear in the West Bank, Galilee and Gaza. In the previous uprisings mass struggle tended to take the form of sit-ins by students in schools, sit-ins by women and mass sit-ins in mosques. But in the present uprising the tendency has been towards confrontation and direct resistance to the soldiers of the Zionist occupation.” He continued: “The second phenomenon I want to mention is the solidarity displayed by the fact that all the mass organizations in the occupied territory participated in the struggle — the student movement, the womens’ sector, the trade unions and all the organizations and parties in the occupied territory. This phenomenon also proves that the leadership of the National Front in the occupied territory are capable of directing the mass movement. This was clear in the slogans used and the way they were exploited.”

Another speaker in the symposium, Elias Shoufani, looked at the root of the problem, the conflict over the *land* of Palestine, and explained the difference in the Zionist and Palestinian perceptions which came out in the current struggle over Jewish settlement in the West Bank, as well as in the violent protests in Galilee over expropriation of Arab lands for the expansion of Jewish settlement there.

“On both sides the conflict has some kind of religious background. There is the background of a very long Jewish heritage as regards the land. The same applies to the Palestinians. The land means attachment to the country, to the means of production and so on. In the old Jewish heritage, in which religion is characterized by messianism and perhaps mysticism, living history is linked to static geography. Thus in the Jewish religion it can be said that living history is suppressed when it is not in the context of static geography; the existence of the land and its history are ignored as long as its inhabitants are not living in it. Thus the history of the Jews outside Palestine is linked to later Zionist considerations: it is as if there has been no history, as if the land did not exist during the 2,000 years in which the Jews did not live in it....

“This heritage has been translated by the Zionists into efforts to Judaize the land, that is, to renew the link with the land, to link history with geography in the place which their religion teaches them is the homeland. Thus what the Jews have done is another aspect of messianism — Judaizing the land. With this end in view they established a permanent fund for the acquisition of the land, intending for the land to remain the property of the Jewish people as a whole; ownership is not specified, just as the people is not specified. It is assumed that all Jews will immigrate to Palestine; hence the attempt to acquire the whole of the land for the Jewish people, without specific individual ownership. This explains the terrible avarice to acquire land, which is not based on the immediate, local requirements of settlements. There are vast tracts of lands in the occupied areas which have not been exploited and no settlements have been established on them, or those that have been established are empty... Judaization of the land, that is, making the land the property of the Jewish people, is a basic principle in the embodiment of the Zionist project.

“So the Zionist entity had to create the political power capable of determining the relationship between the inhabitants and the

land. There were three variables: the land, which is constant; the inhabitants, which are in their view inconstant; and political power, which is what determines the relationship between the constant and the inconstant variables. Thus the démarche that was made was a political instrument capable of determining the relationship between the settlers and the land. Hence the character of Zionist settlement, a basically colonialist settlement involving the evacuation of the original inhabitants — severing the relationship between the original inhabitants and land — to establish in it a new relationship between the new settlers and the same land.

“As against Jewish settlement there is the struggle of the Palestinian people for their relationship with the land. I think that this struggle can be divided into two parts. There is the struggle of those who have been evicted and exiled to recover their link with the land and to be attached to it; this is the struggle of the Palestinian revolution and its most important struggle is Return. The other kind is the struggle of those who stayed on under the occupation to maintain their relationship with the land, not only as a means of production but also as a homeland. The Zionist entity has used all available means to destroy this relationship of theirs, both by financial inducements, including the purchase of land; by changing labour relations, that is, by increasing hired labour; by legislation, confiscation and other arbitrary measures. The process of changing the relationship between those inhabitants who have stayed on and the land is a process of uprooting, and it is on this basis that we must see the uprising. They are trying to avoid being uprooted from the land. As for the untenable excuses which the Zionist information media put forward about advancement, development and the financial benefits to the Arabs,<sup>1</sup> they are all untrue. What is really happening to the Arabs

of the interior is colonization, in every sense of the word....

“Frequently the Arabs who have stayed on under the occupation since 1948 have been turned into *métayers* (sharecroppers) on the land they used to own and this is one of the most important contradictions in so-called Zionist socialism. They take the land from the original inhabitants and then make them work on it as *métayers* so as to exploit both them and their land. Thus the difference between those who were expelled and those who stayed on is that the relationship with the land of those who were expelled has been completely severed, while the relationship of those who stayed on has been changed as they have become *métayers* on the land in the service of the Zionist settlers. This explains the decrease in the ratio of independent farmers between 1948 and 1976 from seventy-five percent to about fifteen percent, the increase in the ratio of hired labourers who were formerly farmers and also the increase in the ratio of seasonal agricultural workers.

“This change did not take place without a struggle, but this struggle has taken various forms and passed through different degrees of intensity. At first people who stayed on in 1948 continued to hold the previous view of the settlers — they did not take them seriously enough. Therefore at the beginning of 1949 there was some defiance, but it was met with repression and these people were arrested. Then at the beginning of the fifties people saw Israel as a transient phenomenon which would certainly pass away. People therefore resorted to attempts within the framework of ‘legitimacy’; these attempts too were met with military measures, the closing of areas and so on. At the end of the fifties people began to realize that the occupation was not so transient and that they could deal with it through its laws. At the end of the fifties and the beginning of the sixties there was a

---

<sup>1</sup> *Shoufani's referring to claims made by the Israeli authorities that the Judaization of Galilee plan, involving the expropriation of Arab land, would benefit the Arabs of the region* — Ed.

wide-scale campaign of legal proceedings over land: people went to the Israeli courts to litigate with the Israeli regime over land. This was countered by special laws authorizing acquisition of land, such as the Development Laws and so on. In the sixties the image of Israel was greatly inflated as compared with her real size and her size in the balance of forces in the area; this was particularly the case after 1967. But in spite of all this people had grown accustomed to Israeli rule; they had learned its strong and weak points and resorted to processes which may be defined as semi-legal, such as demonstrations... recently reaching the point, on Land Day, of violent resistance.

“In fact the Arabs of Galilee and the Palestinian resistance have come together in violent resistance to the settlers. What is the historical context of this violent resistance? In reality the different forms of resistance to the attempts to acquire lands can be related to the position Israel appeared to occupy in the balance of forces in the area: the stronger Israel appeared the greater was the readiness to have dealings with her on the basis of her rule being ‘legitimate’ ... Violent resistance did not take place until after October 6 [1973] and in fact it is impossible to imagine the demonstrations taking place in the West Bank or Galilee had it not been for the October War.”

Speaking of the struggle against settlement in the West Bank, Ahmad Hamza pointed to the growing consciousness that appeared among the Palestinians in the course of the uprising. This was evident in the broadening of the range of the slogans the demonstrators used. First, he said, “these were against settlement in Sebastia, then against all settlement, and then a new slogan appeared: the abolition of the old settlements. In Hebron, for example, after the unsavoury role which the settlers, with the help of the occupation authorities, played in suppressing the demonstrations, it became clear for the first time that the set-

tlers did not only want somewhere to live but that they had come to take aggressive action. A new slogan then appeared in Hebron for the first time: ‘We want to get rid of the settlers in Hebron.’ ... This shows that from having been a campaign against settlement in Sebastia it was now a struggle against all settlement. In the course of the struggle other slogans also made their appearance: slogans on behalf of people who were arrested. Following arrests made during demonstrations, many voices were raised to protest against them and against the very heavy fines imposed on those arrested. Protests were also made against the savage acts of repression which the authorities committed... Another slogan which was raised was for the release of hitherto forgotten administrative prisoners.<sup>1</sup> These were local and temporary slogans but they did indicate the people’s indignation at the occupation and their desire to be rid of it.

“Another phenomenon which made its appearance during the uprising was shown by the shouts of support for the Palestine Liberation Organization, the raising of the Palestinian flag and the cries of ‘Long Live Abu Ammar’ as the symbol of the Palestinian movement, the PLO.”

These were the local or immediate issues, which Hamza called the subjective causes of the uprising. There were other regional factors, as was the case in the previous uprisings, but there was a difference here too. “The previous uprisings took place when the Arab liberation movement was on the upgrade, after the October War and after the victories won by the Palestinian revolution. But in this case the Palestinian people in the interior have been giving expression to their indignation at and their condemnation of the negative aspects of everything that is happening outside. What is going on in Egypt had some effect on the uprising, for the dangerous course that Sadat is following<sup>2</sup> has aroused indignation and condemnation.... The same applies

<sup>1</sup> *These are prisoners detained without any formal charge made against them* — Ed.

<sup>2</sup> *I.e., the Sinai Agreement signed with Israel* — Ed.

to the Syrian-Jordanian rapprochement which is so questionable because of the lack of confidence which the Hashemite regime inspires there. Then there is the situation in Lebanon, which people there know all about: that the conspiracy of Amman in September 1970 has been extended to Lebanon and concocted to destroy the Palestinian movement in Lebanon....

"All these things are seen as negative trends which distract the Palestinians from the principal objective, which is action inside the occupied territories and action to liberate Palestine. They regard every side battle as a war of attrition against the Palestinian revolution. All these factors, which did not exist before, have influenced and caused the latest uprising. There is also something else which has helped to make the uprising so violent and ensured that all sectors took part in it: this is the extremely bad economic situation in Israel. For nine years Israel has succeeded in linking the economy of the West Bank to the Israeli economy and since the latter has been bad, it has reflected on the situation in the interior. This has shown how deluded people were when they were carried away by economic intoxication as a result of the occupation: everything they gained had gone for good.... This factor played an important role in activating the merchants who had previously profited from the occupation. Suddenly they found that they were suffering very heavy losses and that everything the occupation had given them in eight years it had taken back in a matter of months because of the economic policy which Israel had pursued...."

Arabi Awwad, another participant in the symposium "The Great Uprising," linked the "national insurgency" of the occupied territory with the greater prestige and influence enjoyed by the PLO "after it put forward its programme, approved by the Twelfth National Council, which stated that the main issue was the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in the territory from which the occupation is expelled," as

well as the increasing support which the PLO had from Arab states and the international community.

Elias Shoufani looked more closely at the link between militancy among the Palestinians under occupation and the rise of the PLO after the October War. "I have already said that before the October War there was an inverted picture of the balance of forces in the area: the image of Israel was greatly inflated, while the importance of the Palestinian people, the antithesis of Israel, was greatly underestimated. Hence the view of the Palestinian revolution as something romantic that can do nothing to Israel.... This picture was inverted after the October War. To the extent that Israel lost prestige after the October War, the prestige of the Palestinian people and the Palestinian revolution, represented by the PLO, was increased. Hence the gains achieved by the Palestinian revolution and the PLO in 1974 and 1975, despite their not having participated to the same extent in the 1973 war. It was the Rabat resolutions that encouraged the West Bank uprisings and, as Dr. Hamza said, it was the new importance of the PLO that encouraged the occupied areas to defy and violently resist the occupation authorities; otherwise how can we explain why these Arabs missed the opportunities offered them in the 1956 war, the 1967 war and particularly the 1973 war?"

With the advent of the PLO as a militant political force, opposition in the West Bank expressed itself not as spontaneous sympathy with this force, but through organized activity. Legal organizations in the West Bank — labour unions, professional associations, women's and religious groups — but also illegal organizations such as the Federation of Palestinian Women, the Students' Federation and the Palestinian National Front were the framework for the resistance to the occupation forces, Arabi Awwad pointed out. He stressed the importance of its organized as opposed to spontaneous character. "That the uprising was not spontaneous is shown by the awareness and direction that characterized it: the

uprising was not a mere outburst of anger against the occupation or of protest against the violation of the holy places. It is true that these issues were raised but, over and above all this, the main slogan of the uprising was support for the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, affirmation of its programme for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state and criticism of American imperialism and the American veto. What is really remarkable is that immediately after the American veto in the Security Council<sup>1</sup> the very next day violent demonstrations broke out throughout the West Bank. It is also remarkable that this was the one part of the Arab homeland from the Ocean to the Gulf in which this mass protest against American imperialism exploded. This is very important and shows the extent to which the uprising in the occupied territory was consciously guided and controlled.”

Mahmoud Suweid was, however, more critical than some other participants in the symposium about the leadership's role in guiding mass struggle and seemed to feel the masses were leading the lagging political organizations in some important respects. He asserted:

“Anyone who has followed this seminar might think that the recent uprising in the occupied territory constituted a qualitative change in the struggle of the Palestinian people since 1967. But in my view the recent uprising was a link in the chain of Palestinian struggle in the occupied territory since 1967, a link characterized by more advanced and highly developed methods of struggle and by better analysis of the methods and forms of struggle employed in the previous stages: it was not a qualitative change, in my opinion. In my view qualitative change is fundamentally linked to a political leadership and a political attitude. We cannot talk of a qualitative change in Palestinian struggle in the occupied terri-

ories because there is not really either a political attitude or a political leadership to translate the struggles into day-to-day programmes and carry them from a state of spontaneity to a state of organization with gradually accumulating objectives.

“It must be pointed out that the capabilities of the Palestinian people and their capacity for struggle and sacrifice have always been and still are in advance of the organizational forms of the political leadership of the Palestinian people's movement, as embodied in the PLO and the political movement of the Palestinian people — the resistance organizations. Certainly the rich experience of the Palestinian people through at least thirty or forty years and particularly since 1967 has so far not been embodied by the development of organizational forms really capable of absorbing the Palestinian people's huge capacity for sacrifice and of enabling these immense resources to have the capacity to proceed with their struggle in more advanced forms.

“Even now Palestinian struggle has not succeeded in crystallizing a political attitude and a united front, much less in producing a leading party. It has not even succeeded — and this is the least that could be expected after all this rich experience of struggle — in developing a united front that is capable of developing the power to take decisions and political actions and that can lead the struggle of the masses in such a way that does not ultimately lead to their falling into all kinds of accumulating disappointments which will ultimately affect the course of the struggle. In spite of the establishment of the united front in the interior<sup>2</sup> and in spite of many different kinds of links between the resistance organizations and the struggle of the masses in the occupied territory, that struggle has still not been able to develop the current requirements of the Palestinian

<sup>1</sup> *Against a proposal favouring an independent Palestinian state* — Ed.

<sup>2</sup> *The National Front, which grouped the resistance organizations, the Palestinian Communist Party and other forces* — Ed.

struggle which, I repeat and stress, can only be developed through a unified power which can take political decisions, through a political attitude and a united front that are the expression of an independent Palestinian will. This is the observation I wanted to make about the struggle of the West Bank and Gaza and the uprising that took place recently there: it must provide the political leadership of the Palestinian people with the incentive to reappraise its attitudes in the recent stage so that it may adopt a better and more advanced form of struggle than it has done in the past."

The speakers in the symposium also addressed themselves to the question of the Arabs of Galilee, in the context of present Palestinian options. They are not mentioned in the plans being discussed to erect a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza, although they have been drawing even closer to the rest of the Palestinian people. Some of the speakers saw this as an important element working against an overall Palestinian acceptance of the slogan of a national authority on any liberated Palestinian land, which the PLO had accepted, even if it was considered as only a first stage in total liberation. The question was also tied in with recognition of Israel and the effects which that would have on the Palestinian resistance.

Ahmad Khalifa pointed to some of the problems. "Obviously the independent Palestinian state will not include the Arabs of Galilee in the short run. Given that the general Palestinian upsurge and the use of the slogan of gradual action has made the Arabs of Galilee become attached to the land not as a means of production but as a homeland, and given that the struggle of the masses in the West Bank has also provided them with an incentive to take action, if they are attached to the land as a homeland they will want to know what their place will be in this homeland in order to be able to carry on for a long time, if necessary, and to be prepared to develop their struggle and bear

the very harsh repression to which they will be subjected. The use of the slogan of an independent Palestinian state has prompted the masses of the West Bank to struggle. I do not say it was a wrong slogan; at the time it was right and it may still be a right slogan now. But what imperialism is trying to get in return for an independent Palestinian state is recognition of Israel. Recognition of Israel would exclude the Arabs of Galilee and have many negative effects on the Palestinian revolution. If this recognition does not come about, the Palestinian resistance will be subjected to the attack aimed at destroying it. It will be disarmed and crippled so that it will be unable to resolve the conflict through armed struggle; its activities will to a great extent be restricted to political means which, in my view, can lead to nothing."

Mahmoud Suweid posed the question in more subtle terms and also connected it to the events in Lebanon, which he saw as crucial to the future of the Galilee Arabs.

"As regards Galilee," he said, "certainly the first point to be made in this connection is that at the level of the national authority, as it has been understood from the October 1973 War until now, what has happened in Galilee has made it necessary to review the concept of gradual struggle from which the concept of a national authority derives. Clearly the notion of a national authority bears upon the possibility of obtaining a Palestinian entity and authority in the West Bank, and perhaps including Gaza, as a result of the equilibria that arose after the October War.

"The Galilee uprising, which could be of extreme importance if seen from the point of view of its proximity with South Lebanon and the presence of the Palestinian revolution there, favours reviewing the question of gradualism in Palestinian struggle. Are the Arabs of Galilee to be told that as we are now aiming at establishing an authority in the West Bank you must postpone or shelve your struggle until it is clear what is



going to happen to the West Bank and Gaza? Or is the question to be posed in a form that really leads to correction of the concept of gradual struggle and to reconsideration of the methods that have been used in the past and which could provide an incentive for the development of a single Palestinian attitude, a single Palestinian and a united front that is the expression of an independent Palestinian will and of the real development in Palestinian struggle? Perhaps the Galilee uprising was really destined to ensure reconsideration and the adoption of a more advanced attitude...

"Here I want to point out that attempts to find a difference or contradiction between the roles of Rakah<sup>1</sup> and the PLO are not only harmful to Palestinian struggle but also wrong and unrealistic. If the PLO's role [in Galilee] is nonexistent it is because of the PLO itself and if Rakah is prominent, it is because it exists. There is no contradiction between the two roles and the PLO could play a fundamental role in activities in Galilee without the role which Rakah is playing being impaired. Therefore co-ordination and integration are not only beneficial but also essential and potentially effective. There is no justification for maintaining that the roles are incompatible.

"I want to end by stressing that the development of a Palestinian attitude through a Palestinian leadership in which the organizations of the interior must participate means that the PLO must be linked to the situation in the interior. Certainly the political leadership and the development of a political attitude will have their influence on the struggle in the interior and must come before the establishment of cells and the delivery of arms because it is they that lay down the framework and determine the day-to-day objectives of struggle in the interior; they must precede the establishment of cells, the delivery of arms, the development of methods of strug-

gle and so on. It is the intensification of the struggle in the interior that will eventually lead to the deterioration of the economic and security situation in Israel, to reduced immigration and to failure of the attempts to Judaize Galilee and establish settlements elsewhere."

#### WHITHER EGYPT? NEXT STEP AFTER THE SINAI ACCORD

Egyptian foreign policy after the signing of the second disengagement agreement over Sinai with Israel, which firmly committed Egypt to seeking peaceful ways to end the Middle East conflict, continued to be subject to criticism in the Arab press. Sadat's renunciation of a military option, despite continued Israeli occupation of the bulk of his own Sinai territories, was seen by some Arab commentators as capitulation, pure and simple, to the Israelis and the Americans, while others saw it as a tactical blunder.

Muhammad Sammak, writing in the Beirut weekly *al-Ushu' al-'Arabi* (March 9, 1976) criticized Sadat's policy over the Sinai Agreement, which he thought had put Egypt on the sidelines in the Arab arena and deprived her of the ability to take any initiative. He also saw Sadat's Gulf tour in the light of this paralysis, for even the more conservative Arab states seemed to feel he had been too confident, too quickly, in American support. Sammak wrote:

"One of the unwritten clauses of the Sinai Agreement is an undertaking by the USA to achieve a comprehensive settlement of the Middle East crisis following the last stage in implementing the Sinai Agreement.

"On the basis of this undertaking, President Sadat gave his approval in the agreement not only to [permitting the entry into

<sup>1</sup> *The Israeli Communist Party which is politically prominent in Galilee* — Ed.