

“Brigadier-General Saad Sayel to al-Hurriyah: We Are Preparing For the Coming Battle”. *Al-Hurriya* (Beirut), 15 February 1982. Translated by *The Palestinian Revolution*, 2016.

Soon there will be a quantum leap in the military action inside the occupied territories.

Brother Brigadier-General Saad Sayel (Abu al-Walid), the Palestinian revolution’s forces commander of operations, was recently part of a Palestinian military delegation that visited a number of socialist countries.

Abu al-Walid spoke to al-Hurriya about this visit, about a number of main military issues and possibilities, and the situation in Lebanon and the region.

How do you view the current situation of the revolution in the light of the recent Israeli threats of a wide operation starting in the south?

We can’t talk about this topic briefly. The Israeli threats are continuous using the Palestinian armed presence as a pretext. The Palestinian presence is not the core reason, as some believe. The Israeli attempts, which started before 1973, to hit the Palestinian bases and limit their presence were in reality intended to hit Lebanon and attempt to occupy parts of it. We need to understand that the Israeli strategy, from the start, was based on three circles:

- 1) Reaching the Nile, i.e. Egypt and Sudan.
- 2) Crossing to the Fertile Crescent, which is comprised of Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq.
- 3) The other Arab circle / Saudi Arabia and the Gulf.

After the signing of the Camp David Accords Israel found itself in a comfortable situation in the first circle (Egypt and Sudan). It is known that the Arab strategy was built on the flawed unified Arab leadership. Egypt constituted the real strategic balance against Israel. After Egypt left the equation it created in imbalance even though its no a permanent one. I say this not because we hope the Palestinian people would correct the situation but because the Arab East (Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and the PLO) can achieve this strategic balance if they come over internal regional tensions and external tensions such as the Iraq-Iran war. This was meant that Iraq’s attention was diverted from the main conflict to a secondary one. Iraq in the international strategic standards is an emerging state with human, economic

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and military resources. How can Iraq, which fought in all the Arab-Israeli wars except the 1956 war, distract itself in a side war?

Israel Fears the Formation of the Eastern Front

Syria has strained relations with Iraq and Jordan in addition to the Lebanese problem. These factors collectively eliminate the strategic decision for war or for a just peace. If these factors were removed then a strategic balance in the region would be achieved. By strategic balance I don't mean in balance in terms of arms. If we calculated the amount of weapons the eastern Arab states possess we would find that it exceeds the arms that Israel possess. However, this is not considered a real measure in strategic balances. Solving the Lebanese problem is a big part of achieving this balance. Israel, regardless of all the long-term proposals, considers Lebanon a confrontation state. Israel tries to maintain the tension in the Lebanese arena in order to prevent the strategic balance in the region from being achieved

The most that Israel fears is the formation or the revival an eastern front that includes Jordan and Lebanon. Jordan is the focus of the Israeli strategy. The distance from the Jordan River to Bisan's Jordan valley, al-Afulah, and Marj Ibn Amer is very short. This road is historically known as the road of military campaigns.

If we go back in history we will understand the military importance of these corridors. That's why Israel fears Jordanian participation in such a front. It is for the same reason that Israel tries to prevent Lebanon from joining as well. Even though Jordanian front is more critical and more dangerous Lebanon is still one of Israel's critical targets. Military action from the east is the most dangerous military action and the closest to Israeli vital targets. Syria is close to these targets as well but there is an obstacle. The Golan Heights that Israel annexed recently constitutes a security or a warning area. These are the real reasons why the Israel threats continue. They are not limited to the Palestinian presence. The Palestinian presence is used as pretext for Israeli maneuvers. Their strategy is different. As for the Lebanese south and the implementation of the United Nations resolution 425 and all its appendices we can say we in the PLO, since the launch of the revolution we were keen that our work flows into the pan-Arab effort rather an exclusive Palestinian effort, are ready to provide all means for Lebanese-Lebanese reconciliation and to preserves the sovereignty of the Lebanese state. We reiterated this position on many occasions. The PLO is ready to reach a formula for a solution. Lebanon, as I have mentioned, in the long term is part of the Arab

strategic balance. We are more concerned with the long-term strategic scope rather than the short-term tactics. Our revolution is an energetic motivator for the Arab nation towards its central cause. We won't claim that we can liberate Palestine alone. That's why we say that the PLO and its strategy are built on principles of pan-Arab effort.

The Israel threats will not stop. We understand we are living in a very complicated situation that Israel created in Lebanon. This situation fits Israel's strategic goal of hindering any decisive decision for confrontation. The strategic elements in the region are enough to take a decision in favor of a war. The rise in Israeli attacks after the signing of Camp David is the result of the comfortable situation that Israel created in the Nile circle.

We Are Preparing Ourselves for the Coming Battle

Israel is very interested in forcing Lebanon into an agreement similar to Camp David. We are expecting an aggression against the south. People who monitored Israeli statements about the heroic operation near Yasir – Tubas noticed that the statements focused on the operation as a violation of the ceasefire. This is an indication of the Israeli aggressive intentions. The aim of these statements is well known. The Zionist settlers in the north of Palestine, who paid a heavy price for the two weeks war in July, noticed these intentions. That's why we see their representatives objecting in the Knesset. We on the Palestinian side understand these Israeli preparations and are preparing ourselves for the coming battle. The revolution's and the join forces have the will to fight but we also understand our enemy's strength and their modern weapons supplied by the American arsenal. Our forces have gained good combat experience from our long battles with the enemy. We have also learnt its weaknesses. We know we are facing a modern army with advanced, modern, accurate and highly destructive weapons. That's why the Palestinian Supreme Military Council worked to acquire arms suitable for the confrontation. We are fighting a modern battle in full sense of the word. This requires us to modernize our arsenal even though we know it won't match the modernity or the sophistication of the enemy's arsenal. From this realization a delegation from the Military council made multiple visits to friendly states. The delegation focused on two important points:

- 1) Purchasing arms, especially advanced arms.
- 2) Training.

Our delegation was received warmly by the friendly states especially socialist states. I can't claim that our forces are capable of inflicting a total defeat on

the enemy but I can say any new battle will be different from the previous battles. The Palestinian and the joint forces are ready to inflict heavier losses on the enemy; a lot more than in the past.

We worked on improving our forces' combat levels through continuous training in the Palestinian revolution and its training institutions and in the training institutions of friendly states.

Another issue we addressed was the solidarity between our Palestinian and Lebanese masses. This solidarity was cemented during the July 1981 war. A strong evidence of this solidarity was the determination to keep the roads open. The July war was a battle for the masses determination. The enemy was determined on destroying the roads and the Palestinian and Lebanese masses were determined to fix them. The masses used their machinery voluntarily and without being asked to.

We Are Still Reaping the Fruits of Victory in the July War

In the light of the July War experience what could be said about the improvement in the arms and the formations of the Palestinian revolution forces for the coming war?

The Israeli enemy's statements about destroying the leadership and the infrastructure of the Palestinian revolution are extremely exaggerated. The July War has helped expose this exaggeration. Their tactics are based on directing sudden concentrated attacks, to incite more fear, through their air force and long-range missiles. Israel is keen on protecting its human resources. That's why they resort to concentrated and sudden attacks that are aimed at confusing their opponent. This fits its fascist military doctrine. I question this policy of killing the leaders. Would the killing a leader, two or three end the Palestinian Revolution? This revolution has roots and its not easy to destroy it. Al-Karameh was a clear answer to this. Such statements are merely intended to raise morale in the Israeli circles.

Our revolution came out of every crisis it faced stronger militarily and politically. We are still reaping the fruits of our steadfastness in the July war. Yesterday brother Abu Ammar travelled to Hungary to open the Palestinian embassy there. The steadfastness of the Palestinian rifle is essential for more political gains.

We Are Always Under Attack!

It became clear to all the military observers of the July War, despite the enemy's surprise, that Joint Forces and Palestinian Forces were capable of battle dynamics. We were able to direct heavy fire at right place and time. Later on studies were conducted to develop this dynamicity. This will be a surprise for the enemy in the coming battles. We learnt valuable lessons from our previous battles and acquired advanced and highly effective weapons. The continuation of fighting for a long period of time imposes an organizational structure on the Palestinian revolution forces. It is true we are organized into units like other conventional armies but our combat style isn't. This is the main factor and the core of the long-term popular war. We don't occupy defensive position because we are always under attack. This is the alphabet of military rules for small size forces. We don't locate our forces in positions that could be easy targets for the enemy because we know the enemy's capabilities. We have our ways of making them miss the opportunity.

Coordination is Good.... We Aspire for Better!

What could be said about the level of coordination and the development of the joint leadership's work on all axes? What level did the revolution forces and the joint forces reach in reinforcing their units and developing their joint military leadership?

On the Palestinian level we can say we have reached a good level of coordination and joint work. But we always aspire for better. We aspire for a complete national unity with military unity as its main foundation. At the moment we have formed joint command framework and we have the Palestinian Supreme Military Council for the Palestinian Revolution. All the Palestinian factions are represented at the Military Council. The council has already started its work in all the various combat fronts. We have leaders representing all the areas where there is presence for the revolution forces and the Lebanese National Movement. There is a good level of coordination at the movement but we hope to improve further. This is especially the case because we have the support of the Palestinian National Council. I hope we can achieve complete unity. I'm calling on all Palestinian leaders to push in this direction especially our brothers in the DFLP whom we have a continuous and long running dialogue in this direction. We are sure about the results of this dialogue.

Special Attention for the Occupied Territories

- What do you think the necessity of developing military action inside the occupied territories as an essential link in military work? In your opinion, what are the forms that could absorb this development?

The Palestinian Supreme Military Council has a subcommittee for military action inside the occupied territories. This subcommittee was formed by all the Palestinian factions represented at the council. The subcommittee has started its meeting already. We can say it produced good results. The council works towards giving it the priority. We discovered weakness points in the issues we discussed such as military organizational and coordination development. In terms of weapons and training there will be a quantum leap in the occupied territories.