

Hammoudeh, Abdullah. Interviewed 2012. Translated by *The Palestinian Revolution*, 2016.

Our first real experiment was the Popular Action Library when we brought books through friends outside the camp. We summarised some books about the Palestinian cause and international revolutionary causes, printing the summaries in small notebooks. We printed a lot of copies and sold them cheaply, around two or three pennies each, even printing 20,000 copies of one booklet. We asked Abu Khaled Hdeib, a humble veteran fighter of the 1936 revolution, who always carried a Simonov rifle and lived among the people, to give people an introduction to the library [...]

Then there was the Israeli attempt in March 1968 to destroy *fida'i* activity in Karameh. *Fida'i* activity spread to the other camps, but our experience in Baqa'a was very unique. One of the things I want to tell the generation watching this is we asked children to give their testimony about the 1967 defeat. We gave children colouring pencils and sheets of paper and asked them to draw what they felt during the 1967 defeat, fleeing their camp or house in the West Bank, and how they arrived at Baqa'a. We exhibited these drawings in Baqa'a and collected them in a book, *Children in the Time of War*. We noticed in the book that all the airplanes came from one direction and that there were no Arab airplanes facing the Israeli airplanes. This showed the weakness of the Arab air forces and the strength of the Israeli one. The children were six to nine years old, but they innocently drew the Israeli airstrikes against the refugees and the trees. They drew the death of children and their relatives. These were their testimonies. They expressed very important issues through their drawings. The book was translated into several languages, but unfortunately this book, like many others, was banned. You would think that books that express children's innocence and their pure view of life wouldn't be banned. This experience taught us that we needed to learn from the people, young and old. Our relationship with some of these children grew stronger and some of them became cubs and later on activists and fighters in the PFLP. Some of them went on to participate in operations against Zionist targets in various places. This is why living among the people and sharing their fears and hopes is very important. It enables you to know what they need and how you can help. Living among the people teaches you a lot. This experience needs to be documented in detail, it taught us that we need to see things for ourselves and that the people are the true owners of the cause. It taught us that the people are willing to do anything, even die for

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their cause when they see the leadership is sharing both their suffering and hope.

I think this experience left a very positive model in the camp. Now, after 40 years when we go to the camp we can still feel the people's respect. Honest efforts are never forgotten and people will always respect those who have proven themselves. People don't forget those who lived among them and treated them honestly. We always warned the people against those with bad intentions as well as the conspiracies of Arab regimes that didn't want to confront the Zionist enemy. We warned the people that they needed to be ready to confront it, which is why it was very important to know that our enemies are the Zionists and their Arab and imperialist allies, especially the American administration that has supported the Zionist presence through all possible means. We used simple language to educate the people, and didn't use terms like proletariat or other terms that we thought the people wouldn't understand. We made sure to use the true language of the people. This experience taught us that the people are ready to work and sacrifice when they understand the tasks before them and when their leadership lives among them. This is unlike other factions, whose leadership were more like visitors or tourists.

The Baqa'a experience still lives in our minds and I think any future work not located among the people will not achieve anything. I want to clarify something when I say living among the people: I don't mean superficial living in terms of clothes, food or accent, I mean real living. I mean sending your best cadres to live among the people. One needs to spend huge effort to touch people's hearts through education and shared living. If we depended on superficial living, without imbuing a deep culture among the cadres, the experience wouldn't be as successful as the experience we had living in the camp. I think there are 150,000 people living there, and it is considered one of the biggest camps built after the 1967 defeat. How many are we now?