

Haniyeh, Akram. "I See Everything But Exile: The New Palestinian Generation". *Filastin al-Thawra*, 10 January 1987. Translated by *The Palestinian Revolution*, 2016.

Over a period of 20 hours and two long sessions, the Israeli occupiers presented numerous accusations to the Editor in Chief of 'The People': Akram Haniyeh. Having pleaded for three hours and after refuting every accusation, Akram's ordeal ended with the admission that his only crime was love for his nation, Palestine.

Brother Akram, (it is acknowledged that) it is with utmost hardship that Filatin Althawra has to have this meeting with you whilst in exile, although this is as much a hardship as the Palestinians always face due to the invaders. This is a multi-faceted struggle and indeed you have moved for numerous hours from a direct struggle against the occupiers and their soldiers to a struggle that is in some ways more complicated and harsh. Falestine Althawra welcomes you to together pursue the shared struggle from exile, in order to return to one's homeland. Are you able to tell us about your final struggle with the occupiers to refute the decision of your exile and the background and reasons behind this decision?

Akram Haniyeh: It is evident that any Palestinian who believes in the sacred rights of his people to return to his homeland, who believes in self-determination and who believes in the building of a Palestinian Nation under the leadership of the PLO, is qualified as someone who can be subjected to exile from his homeland: my particular case of exile is an example of what our people suffer, so I will speak with precision in this topic.

Story of Exile

I begin this story on a rainy morning in autumn, on November 3rd last year when they raided my home at 5 a.m. and informed me of an order to arrest me and bring me to a military ruling. I went, and it was an extremely difficult moment when the decision of exile was reached. Until this day I cannot forget the expressions strewn across the informant officer's face when he spoke to me. The expressions betrayed an intense sadistic nature and it was as if he read the decision of my exile with immense pleasure as he tried to glimpse the effect of this decision on my face. I acknowledge it was a difficult situation. It was incumbent on me to prove to him that this decision will not affect my spirit. I knew I would not succeed in that because they realized that exile is the harshest thing any Palestinian could suffer.

¹ This work is made available under a Creative Commons 4.0 International Licence, and must be used accordingly. Please see citation guidelines on the About Us page.

Continued Brother Akram: I was moved to Junaid prison immediately – a central prison in the West Bank. After only 15 minutes of my arrest the Israeli broadcast announced the news of my arrest - the news of my exile. I knew that the decision of exile could not be reversed, except through another political decision. I imagined that the possibility of success in an Israeli High Court was a possibility bordering on non-existence, yet it was my decision to head to the Israeli High Court and stand before the High Court, also known as the Military Advisory Committee. My aim behind all of this was to gain some time, as it was good fortune that my position as a journalist meant that I had associations with many Israeli journalists as well as foreigners – so it was possible to attract a lot of global attention around my case. Although I realised that this attention would not change the decision of my exile, I knew that it would prevent many others from amongst my nation's people from being exiled.

After two days the Military Advisory Committee held two closed sessions... over a period of two days! These sessions lasted about 20 hours and those in attendance included three military soldiers who were members of the committee, one of whom was a military officer with a legal qualification, whilst the other two had neither a legal qualification nor any relation to law or human rights. There was also the military prosecutor and members of the Israeli Intelligence Agency and representatives from the Military rule. My lawyer and members from the International Red Cross were also present.

Accusations...Accusations

For 20 hours I listened to the accusations against me and presented the defence of my case for three hours in front of the committee.

All of the accusations were principally focused on numerous main themes falling under numerous charges including: I was accused, according to their definition, of being an active member of *Fatah* in the Occupied Territories and responsible for the organisation of trade unions and organising demonstration, amongst other activities. The second accusation was my membership of the National Steering Committee in the early eighties - in particular my association with Karim Khalaf and the activist Bassam al-Shak'a. The accusation was that I had tried to revive this committee, or at least been a participant in its revival attempts, which has been banned since early 1982.

The third theme was another accusation related to my activity as, they claimed, a representative of *Fatah* in connection to the various forces and factions in the Occupied Territories. The main accusation was that I was charged, with reference to *Fatah*, of bringing together a wide network, from all streams and factions from the Occupied Territories to escalate anti-occupation activities. I was also charged with playing the role of an arbitrator and reformer between the Palestinian factions whenever a dispute occurred, to attempt to avoid any disputes that could obstruct national synergy.

The main charges, which were dozens and none of which had any basis, began with being accused of receiving orders from the PLO and collecting payments from an organisation abroad. They claimed that I took advantage of my office to get to know foreigners and convince them of the Palestinian cause and also used my office in order to host events for *Fatah* and nationalistic events and as such, overall held a fundamental position within this committee.

I told them that if they had anything [evidence against me] then I was ready to face a Military Trial and even if I had to spend 10 years in jail, even my entire life, I was prepared – so long as it was a fair trial. So [I said] if you have anything against me then present it directly. They replied that they held secret files. This is a tactic used by the Israelis when they are involved in such cases – whether house arrest, state arrest or exile. I said to them – if there are secret files then I demand for them to be revealed. They replied: It is not possible for reasons of national security.

A proposal for Rabin

In the end, and during the final stage of my defence, I said to them: I admit to one crime – and that is the crime of love for my nation. I am proud to be Palestinian. I demand freedom and independence for my people. If that is reason enough to charge me with exile then I demand Yitzhak Rabin to issue the orders to exile a million and a half citizens because they are criminals according to my crime. I said to the committee members: I believe that you are simply a rubber seal [i.e. have final ruling on this matter] and you will confirm this ruling of my exile.

Indeed, at 12pm, after two or three days of being under arrest, I remember it was a Thursday... they confirmed the decision of my exile.

And on the second day the central commander returned with the confirmation of the decision. After two days I headed to the High Court. The

judicial forums continued, which was my main focus, whilst the focus of all my friends at home or abroad was to gauge general public opinion. I believe I was very lucky to have received such a great amount of support for my case: A Palestinian versus the Occupied Forces who want to throw him out of his country.

The Israeli Authorities at the time were escalating their campaign against me, to the point that they informed delegations visiting Shamir that I was a Terrorist Leader in the Occupied Territories. In Knesset, Yitzhak Rabin expressed that 'The exile of Haniyeh from Jerusalem is part of the war against terror'.

In the High Court we returned to the case itself. We demanded the presentation of the secret material. The court announced it had been presented 311 secret documents of allegations against me. The defence lawyer suggested I familiarize myself with these secret materials, but the High Court announced that they would not reveal the material apart from 8 materials related to general accusations. Amongst them was material suggesting that I was responsible for *Fatah* in occupied regions – so I said 'What is the evidence? Tell me exactly on what day I did this or received that or set up this...?' They didn't find anything of the sort and replied: There is a letter from Yitzhak Shamir, Prime Minister to the High Court, in which is stated that these files are secret and cannot be disclosed as they would harm national interests.

During the second session it appeared also that they were sticking to the previous decision that the High Court had issued – that the decision of exile did not contradict the 4th Geneva Convention. Here it seemed the matter had come to an end and I felt as though I was playing a role in a silly play. As such I decided to reveal the rules of the Israeli game. They were trying to legitimize false claims of an arbitrary decision. So I had decided, on Friday morning, to withdraw my claims from the court. Firstly it was because they had not given me the opportunity to a fair trial. Secondly because they had refused to recognize international Law – and those who do not recognize International Law do not possess the jurisdiction to hear my case. No one in this world has the right to threaten the freedom of another man of his right to remain in his own country.

I see everything except exile

On Monday I was moved from a prison in Junaid to a prison in Ramallah. Until Sunday morning I was put in a criminal detainee prison, in one cell with

Israelis addicted to drugs and stealing. At 5:30am I was brought to Lod Airport. I waited there for four hours until a representative from the Red Cross arrived and I boarded the plane to Geneva. During my time in prison I always remembered a new poem by Mahmud Darwish talking about himself upon facing death. In it he says:

'I see everything, I see a coffin, I see a wrapped flag, but I don't see a grave'.

So when I was in prison I would say 'I see everything, except I don't see exile'. Even in Switzerland they refused my entry to Geneva. I spent a night in Geneva airport in a small transit room and I really felt the bitterness of exile and the true meaning of being a Palestinian far away from his country. Whenever one is in their country, whatever the occasion, they feel close to the earth and whenever they are far away they seek exile. It is as if wherever they have settled abroad it appears they are searching for it until they die.

There is no doubt that you followed the news of the popular Palestinian Intifada against the Occupiers when you were detained. What do you think were the conditions that have led to this new uprising?

Akram Haniyeh: I believe that this uprising which took place last month and is still continuing represents one of the most important uprisings that has taken place over the last 10 years due to its size, comprehensiveness and geographical spread. It had covered every city and every camp in the Occupied Territory in the West Banks and Gaza strip. It stretched to Galilee, the Triangle and Nazareth. The significance of this uprising is that it came about at the right time to reflect and mean something appropriate. It came like a new public referendum confirming to everyone that it is impossible to overcome the Palestinian figure. It came in Arab conditions which witnessed an island continuing to exist on the Arabian coast – to assure people that we are Palestinians and no one can overcome us. The uprising had once again affirmed the Palestinian slogans and the PLO's grip on an independent Palestinian revolution and rejection of what is being called a 'functional split' between Jordan and Israel. It has also announced the condemnation of aggression upon the Palestinian camps supported by the Syrian government.

All of these events have come at a very appropriate time. I think that the Israeli, American, Western and some Arab parties must re-evaluate their projections. It has once again been confirmed that it is impossible to overcome the Palestinians. The important element of this uprising is that there are demographic, political and communal rights established in the Occupied Territories. After a year or six months, there will have passed 20 years of occupation.

The important thing that is unnoticed abroad is that 70% of the citizens in the West Bank and Gaza are under the age of 30 whilst 42% are under the age of 14. This is a new generation. A young generation, they call the 'street' generation, the 'stone throwing' generation, the 'Molotov' generation. Just like their RPG throwing brothers in Lebanon, this generation was born in the shade of the spears of occupation. A child is now born listening to the sound of gunshots, born seeing his homes destroyed and father arrested, his sister detained, his neighbour's house demolished. And with all of these tragedies a generation is born, they are young and they grow up defending the PLO and Palestinian revolution. They raise the Palestinian flag and they hold up the portrait of Abu 'Umar.² They move and stop at the checkpoints, and are detained, punished and beaten. This generation does not live in a fantasy nor does it have any choices except the Palestinian choice. This, this is the generation that has created the uprising and has caused its impact to explode. This is the generation that strikes extreme fear in the Israelis.

Although I spent time in a small, single room, when moving from the prison to the High Court, I was allowed to meet dozens of prisoners from different prisons. I met many young men whose ages ranged between 14 and 15. They are the image of the new Palestinian revolution. Young, self-confident men, consciously committed to the cause, fearlessly challenging the prison authorities forcing the prison managers to compete in trying to deport them from one prison to another.

'Cubs Section' in Hebron Prison

Now in Hebron Prison, they have a special section called 'Cubs section' where all these young men are assembled. When I looked in their eyes I realized that I was sure that this generation was tougher than the previous one. It will also be the freedom generation if Israel's historic gamble after the year 1948 and then after 1967 fails again. A new generation that surfaces will be dependent on the revolution and be dependent on the suffering and will emerge having participated in the experiment and the suffering to become even more capable of raising the banner of freedom.

It is noticeable that the oppressive Israeli policies upon the Palestinian people has increased drastically especially in the last year. Do you think that this new campaign

² For the significance of Abu 'Umar see: <http://www.palestine-studies.org/jps/abstract/42604>

launched by Israel is the result of cooperation between Israel and Jordan against the PLO in the Occupied Territories?

Akram Haniyeh: I believe that these policies have come after recent political developments. I had said to the Advisory Committee that my exile is part of a plan aimed to support the Jordanian regime in the Occupied Territory. The response of the Military attaché was made very clear when he said: 'positive developments have taken place in the region for example the opening of the Amman-Cairo bank and the appointment of three Municipality Heads. These are developments which have been unacceptable to factions from within Palestinian organisations and furthermore it is necessary to take selective measures against some of these factions in order for these plans to have an effect.'

These orders were very clear and much of the Israeli press had written openly and clearly that this exile was one of the fruits of cooperation between Jordan and Israel.

The difference between Labour and Likud, is like the difference between Pepsi Cola and Coca Cola!

I return to my thoughts on the new generation who having grown up under occupation almost know nothing about Jordan. They grow up and hear about Tel al-Zaatar and the September massacres. They have no debts or bills needed to repay the Jordanian regime and have no interest in them. When you speak to this generation about the Jordanian regime it is as if you are talking about pre-historic extinct animals, unseen, unknown, unheard of except within books every now and again. There is no historical possibility to bet on the Jordanian option. It is an impossible option, to the point that the occupation itself had forced factions who were elected to provide more support to Jordan to retreat. Because of that it is known that their true interest is in independence and building an independent Palestinian state. Even the traditionalist groups who themselves are still gathering up and leaving the region, do not possess any popular credit. I believe that the recent uprisings are the biggest indicator of all of these issues.

What was the reaction of Israeli left wing circles and Palestinian pro-rights nationalist groups over the exile decision?

Akram Haniyeh: The painful truth, which I insist on mentioning, is that the amount of solidarity with me on the streets of Israel was a lot more than the solidarity shown in many Arab cities. There had emerged enormous signs of

protest. There was unforgettable solidarity but at the same time I can't exaggerate. It is still a marginal phenomenon as, within the Israeli community, there exists a right wing, fascist inclination. There is a rise of fascism in the scientific sense and Israeli fascism. There is also absolute chauvinism but there had on the other hand emerged new trends, especially in my case itself. There are famous Israeli writers who have unprecedentedly shown sympathy towards the occupied territory and were prepared to sign statements related to my case.

Once again, I am not exaggerating. I must give it its due weight so that we realise the detailed extent of exile. Over the last few years I saw, to some extent, a siege on what was being termed an 'Islamic Camp' in Israel. Now the differences between Labour and Likud which were based on economic and community spheres has reduced. There is now a tripartite rule governing Israel – Rabin, Shamir and Peres. There is no difference between Rabin and Shamir and when we try to distinguish the difference between Labour and Likud, in my opinion, it is the same as the difference between Pepsi Cola and Coca Cola. Although – the Labour Party is much more dangerous. There have been seven years of the Likud term with only three people having been expelled whereas over two years of the Labour party ruling 50 people have been expelled! During the seven years of Likud rule there has only been one internment, whereas during one year of the Peres 180 people have been detained. Through the experience of the Labour Party, their power of spinning public relations, he has been able to go to Paris and drink Champaign with Yves Montaigne and say that he is a man of peace. Yet, at the same time he is able to give his soldiers orders to beat us and impose curfews on our own camps and villages.

United Fascist Arena

The space for fascism in Israel is now united. The joint dominance of Likud and Labour are complete and everlasting. Even the traditional role of the Knesset has completely lost its effectiveness. Now there is an automatic majority and the role of small parties who take part in debates has become marginal and those who are able to challenge these parties are not represented by Shamir but Peres.

Are you able to tell us about journalism in the Occupied Territory?

Akram Haniyeh: One of the hardest jobs in the world is to be a journalist in the Occupied Territory. To be a journalist there means that you are banned from practising journalism! As in, you cannot practise the profession with freedom

of speech. You aren't able to even enjoy gathering news stories nor can you cover them. Many times there have been incidents that have taken place in Masjid Al-Aqsa, which is not far from my office – almost a kilometre, yet the next day the incident is not reported in any newspaper. The reason for this is Military observation which has meant that journalism has lost much of its truth. The final factor is the closure of newspapers, which I think will start again in the coming months. The closure of newspapers followed by the closure of many magazines soon after – built on the British mandate which Menachem Begin himself described in 1947 as a Nazi Law.

There is another problem – which is the prohibition of distribution. For example, you can issue the newspaper Al-Quds but you are prevented from distributing it in the West Bank where you will find 90% of its readers. There are magazines that have been issued over seven years ago which are banned in the West Bank.

Nothing except repression

One aspect of repression to be considered is the direct repression of journalists. There are many journalists who have been detained over the last few years or have been put under house arrest. Then there are those who have been exiled. There is even another form of repression which is the harassment of journalists. Two years ago a journalist was abducted and assassinated due to his investigation over the issue of land (Hasan Abd al-Haleem).

In terms of Palestinian journalists in the Occupied Territories they continue to practice Palestinian journalism which launched at the start of this century as a warning against a Zionist invasion and an attempt to challenge it. They practised this with tremendous courage despite all the restrictions upon them. Given the margins are extremely narrow they still continue to work within them. I believe that this movement is splendid – Israel has restricted even this margin and now wants to end it once and for all.

The Intifada and your arrest had been accompanied by the revelation of the scandal of Israel's role in the selling of American weapons to Iran. What will be the effects of the revelation of this scandal in the Occupied Territory, especially since the majority during the beginning of the Iranian revolution welcomed this revolution?

Akram Haniyeh: I think that much of the hope related to the Iranian revolution has diminished now for many years for two primary reasons: Firstly, the Iranian revolution is, unfortunately, not able to develop a

democratic programme inside Iran, in fact they have resorted to the oppression of every progressive and liberal trend which took part in making the revolution and played a fundamental role in its success. In addition to this, the prominence of more oppressive and reactionary trends in the Iranian revolution has made the majority of people re-examine their aspirations which they held in light of the Iranian regime and its role. The other factor is the insistence of Iran to continue the war with Iraq and their refusal of continual calls to return peace to Iraq.

Since the very beginning, the Palestinian request has been to stop the Gulf war because it would lead to the total destruction of the Palestinian cause. Furthermore the insistence of Iran to continue this war means that many of the aspirations will come to an end completely. The majority realise the facts (with regards to comments from Israeli officials) that a continued Gulf war would mean the depletion of Iraqi and Iranian power as well as their people. The Israeli officials have more than once confirmed their character through victory over Iraq. Israeli press has clearly warned of the severe dangers that will ensue upon the release of Iraq from Israel's home front. There are many reports from military experts on the great capabilities which the Iraqi army holds in a continued war which has gone on for over 5 years. I believe that the head of Israeli military intelligence has already expressed that victory over Iraq is a nightmare for Israel.

We are with Iraq

Finally, what we must now do is to put renewed pressure on Iran to accept the option of peace. We must not scare anyone through announcing their position in support of Iraq, a country who is defending its land. One cannot accept any encroachment on Arab Iraqi land or its occupation thereof, on any premise. This issue has clearly become a foregone conclusion. I believe that if there are others who are still hesitant [who believe otherwise] then they do not realise the reality of the situation.

Paris – Interviewed by Abd al-Latif Suleiman