

Habash, George. *al-Thawriyun La Yamutun Abadan*. Beirut: Dar Al-Saqi, 2009. Translated by The Palestinian Revolution, 2016 (pp. 54-62).¹

What made you choose Lebanon after your forced departure from Jordan?

We had no choice. The Syrian regime was very strict, and did not allow anti-Israeli military operations to be carried out from the Golan Heights. As for Egypt, it was too far removed from the actual elements of the resistance. Furthermore, many Palestinians lived in Lebanon, having taken refuge there after the catastrophe of 1948. Finally, beginning in 1969, the Cairo Agreement² gave Fedayeen the right to attack Israel from South Lebanon. All these factors influenced our decision.

What was the PFLP's situation upon your arrival?

I could not give an exact figure, but I can tell you that PFLP members were quite numerous. Comrade Abu Ahmed was responsible for the Front's military branch. Our headquarters were located in Shatila refugee camp in Beirut, and we had several bases in the South, near the border with Israel, as well as a few more in the rest of Lebanon.

Initially, all our operations in Lebanon targeted Israel. They consisted of infiltrations by fighters who crossed the border and entered the settlements, in the first instance to conduct reconnaissance of targets. It was not easy to infiltrate Israel, but our *fida'iyeen* were well organised.

They benefited from the support of Lebanese people, who helped smuggle them across the border, and from coordination between the PFLP in Lebanon and its branch in Palestine. Communication between the two countries happened mostly through messages, which the inhabitants of border villages – who, by the way, were not necessarily members of the resistance – relayed to the other side, or directly thanks to Westerners, most notably South American fighters enlisted in the revolution, who would enter Palestine via Israel in secret. There were quite a number of them in the early seventies.

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² This agreement gave the Palestinian resistance the right to attack Israeli territory from Lebanon.

Our departure from Jordan forged my code of conduct for the decades to come. Thereafter, Palestinian factions would have to stand united when attempts were made to eliminate us. Still, we could diverge, dare I say, in the search for solutions to our ideological and political positions.

The loss of our Jordanian base was one of the trickiest periods of my long political life, since defeat always breeds turmoil and anxieties. Even so, as leader of the Front, I had to have the courage and willpower to overcome these concerns. It had become necessary to convene a new congress to analyse the defeat and the ensuing situation, as well as to vote on our proposed internal regulations and to install a new leadership.

It wasn't difficult to analyse the causes of our defeat in Jordan and map out our future missions; however it proved far more complicated to explain the internal contradictions that continued to plague the Front, and to clarify the leadership's position on this matter. These latter two points, which were my main concerns after we left Jordan, would lay the Front open to yet another schism. I elaborated on the first in a text that I presented to the political bureau. It was later adopted by the third congress of the PFLP in March 1972, whose primary objective was to persuade different tendencies within the Front to accept the Marxist line.

Shortly before the congress convened in Badawi camp, in North Lebanon, we were forced to confront another schism within the Front, led this time by Abu Shehab, an Iraqi who exhibited a Marxist and opportunist orientation, propelled by the desire of certain elements to one-up and weaken the Front.