

“Testimony of Brother ‘Abd al-Hamid al-Qudsi, a Leading Fateh Cadre” in Yakhluf, Yahyá. *Shahadāt ‘n Tarikh al-Thawra al-Filastiniya*. Ramallah: Sakher Habash Centre for Documentation and Intellectual Studies, 2010 (pp. 126-147). Translated by *The Palestinian Revolution*, 2016.¹

After I was released from prison I needed to go to the occupied land. A big group of Fateh cadres were also released from Zarqa military prison. Prisoners were also released from al-Jafr and al-Mahatta prisons. We were around 400 prisoners. We were all accused of being Fateh cadres. Outside we found a defeated country. It was clear that it was a one-sided war. The war resulted in the loss of the West Bank.

On 9 June 1967, I snuck into the occupied territories. I met with many brothers to organise groups of young men and to prepare for the second phase of Fateh movement. We started preparing in many areas such as Jerusalem, Nablus and Jenin. We prepared areas to host these groups. We asked the brothers to recruit as many young man as they can for training. After the young men were recruited we used to get them out of the occupied land to al-Hama training camp in Damascus. Hundreds of cadres from the occupied land graduated from al-Hama camp. After finishing their training they snuck back across the river into Palestine.

Border crossings during that period were soft and undisciplined making it easy for the young men to move across the borders. Some of these young men were martyred. However, we managed to train many of them and we sent them back to Palestine where they waited for Fateh’s Second Intilqa.

During the first trip I stayed in Palestine for 4 days. I moved between many places. I even went to Tal Aviv and Yafa. I prepared a comprehensive report of the situation in those areas. Supplies were sent from Jordan. On one hand the arrival of weapons from Algeria improved our situation to some degree. On the other some of the Syrian officers supported us individually. After the fall of the Golan Heights our friends in the Syrian Army wanted to return to their command and gave us the locations of the Army’s weapons caches in the Golan. Groups of Fateh cadres, especially the *fida’iyeen* brigade in Damascus most of whom had joined Fateh, started going everyday to the Golan Heights and return with weapons from the Syrian Army caches in areas under occupation.

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Our armaments relatively improved. Before that we went on patrols carrying explosives only. We didn't carry any weapons. A lucky group among us would carry a rifle with them. The situation was now different. We had Ak-47s and Simonov machine guns. Those were all new weapons. Our brothers in Algeria sent us pistols, Port Said submachine guns and English machineguns. This improved our combat levels.

During this time brother Omar Abu Layla (Mujahed) became the leader of al-Hama camp after Manhal was martyred in an explosion during training.

After the explosion and the fall of martyrs the brothers collected the remains of the martyrs in a Palestinian flag. The blood stained the flag. We kept this flag and took it to Palestine on the patrol that Abu Ammar led we took. The flag was raised over Palestinian territory.

Starting Preparations for the Patrol

We prepared bases in the occupied land and recruited as many *fida'iyeen* groups as possible. We had a considerable number of trained Palestinian youth and at the same time a relatively good amount of weapons, military equipment and explosives. We didn't want to remain hostage to some Arab regimes decision not to start to the armed struggle. That was especially the case of Syria which was pressuring us to wait, postpone and prepare with the other factions for the intilqa. We had another reason to launch the Second Intilqa. The occupation hadn't officially had set the mechanism through which it would control the land or the people they occupied. Most importantly our people needed any glimmer of hope to rid themselves of depression and the negative effects of the defeat. We decided among ourselves that one of the brothers from the leadership needed to go to work in Palestine. There were two opinions on the person that needed to go. One opinion said that brother Abu Jihad should go while the other opinion said it should be Abu Ammar. Because Abu Jihad was suffering from the loss of his son Nedal in accident the Central Committee decided that he should stay in Damascus. The Central Committee decided that Abu Ammar should go. They argued that a single man doesn't have anyone to mourn him or any commitments. Abu Jihad's situation was difficult. Because of our love for this man and out of consideration for the difficult situation sister Um Jihad was going through we convinced him to stay. At the same time this meant that Fateh was sending Abu Ammar, its highest-ranking official. Everyone was equal.

The first patrol was on 26 July 1967. We left Damascus in brother Haj Sayed's car. Haj Sayed was a dear and generous brother who was the head of transportation and armaments. He was also the driver of the only the only car, a land rover, that the movement owned. He was known as Haj Karnak. While he was on a mission in Saudi Arabia he used the time to do Haj as well. He was a simple, dynamic and a very brave man. None of us knew how Haj Karnak could drive on such a road. He knew it very well.

Haj Karnak drove us from Damascus to al-Hamra inside the Jordanian borders. The Iraqi forces' headquarters was located in al-Hamra.

We were 14 people in the patrol including brother Abu Ammar and brother Omar Abu Layla (Mujahed) who graduated as an officer from a military college in Iraq. This was Haj Amin al-Husseini's work. He asked Abdel Karim Qasem to include a number of Palestinian young men in every Iraqi military training course. These young men were meant to form the nucleus of the Palestinian Army that would liberate Palestine. Haj Amin was a pioneer with this vision. Brother Mujahed was one of the young men who studied at the Iraqi College for Military Science. He graduated as an officer and served in the Iraqi forces. He was known as an officer who was skilled in the art of fighting. He managed to build strong relationships with many officers in the Iraqi Army.

Brother Abu Ali al-Madani was also with us on the patrol. He came from the *fida'iyeen* Brigade founded by the Syrian Army. Brother al-Dabe' was also with us. He was from Brigade 81; Brigade 81 is a different name for the *fida'iyeen* Brigade. Brother Abdel Aziz Shahin was also with us. Another brother called Abdel Ilah was also with us. He was from A'teel or A'llar. He was martyred later on. Anyway there were 14 people.

I had met some of the Iraqi brothers in the past. I went with Mujahed who also knew some of the Iraqi officers at the post. We introduced brother Abu Ammar to the area commander. Abu Ammar wasn't well known yet.

We briefed the head of the military intelligence on the importance of this patrol. He sensed Abu Ammar's importance for us. He wrote an order for a mission to the Jordan Valley. We were to go to valley under the protection of the Iraqi military intelligence escorted by their vehicles. They accompanied us to the north of al-Krraima. It was right before sunset so we crossed the river.

We had groups in the Jordan valley. In one of the farms there we had a permanent observation post. When we called them they said we could cross. Usually we crossed into the occupied land half an hour before sunset. This was in order to avoid the mines planted by our young men to target Israeli patrols. We crossed the Jordan River at an area called Marj Nafha. We were inside the occupied land.

Our destination was Qabatiya where we had already established a semi military camp. Our real strength was in the countryside. In Qabatiya's mountains we had a main base. If you looked at the mountains and the caves there you would have found 200 fully armed men. Fateh's most important force in Palestine was located in Qabatiya's mountains.

All the members of the patrol were armed and I was the only civilian among them. At the time I was still a liaison officer and also did some work as a political commissioner.

I was the commander of the Patrol. I remember that brother Abu Ammar was the most disciplined member of the Patrol, the easiest to lead and the most compliant with orders. I commanded many groups. Abu Ammar was a great help for me with his discipline and obedience. He respected instructions religiously. At that time we didn't have orders but instructions which we all needed to carry out each according to his mission. Each cadre had great respect for the mission.

On the way brother Mujahed had rapped the Palestinian flag, which we used to collect the remains of the martyrs at al-Hama, around him. The road was very rugged. He came to me and said that he lost the flag on the way. As I have mentioned earlier he had rapped it around him. I became pessimistic but I didn't want pessimism to spread. I told Mujahed not to tell anyone else and we agreed to try and find another flag. This was despite the great symbolism of the lost flag and its connection to the brothers who were martyred. Mujahed couldn't keep his mouth shut.

He told brother Abu Ammar. Abu Ammar told him he had to go back with 'Abd al-Hamid and look for the flag. We followed his orders and thank god our mission was easy. After only an hour of searching we found the flag and returned with it.

We reached Tubas area and stayed there for a while. It happened that one of our Palestinian sisters was harvesting wheat in the field. She was also fighting with her husband. It was clear that the fight between them was serious.

Brother Abu Ammar decided to intervene between them and helped them reconcile. Two of her sons joined Fateh. The woman and her husband were old. Abu Ammar managed with his courteous and calm manner to help them reconcile.

Because he insisted on intervening between the woman and her husband we were delayed for 24 hours. It became daytime and we were staying in an unsafe area. The 14 of us were exposed. I was the only civilian wearing civilian clothes among them. The rest of us were armed and wore military fatigues. We stayed in that dangerous area until the evening. Then we moved north towards al-Zababda on our way to Qabatiya. After we crossed Zababda the sun rose. We were almost at the eastern mountains of Qabatiya. In front of us lay a plain. There was nothing we could hide under. I noticed that the leaves on the vine trees didn't provide any shelter. I still remember this accurately. Mujahed asked me "what should we do now?"

I looked at the plain and saw some of the people going to work in their farms. We needed to cross the plain towards the mountains. If we crossed the plain we would have reached Qabatiya's western mountains where our bases were. I told him we needed to cross the plain. He said "what about these people?"

I said, "We need to walk as if we were in a military parade so that the people see us."

He said, "Brother, this is not allowed militarily."

I said, " My curse and yours is that you deal with every situation from your own point of view, your own understanding and your military knowledge. I don't deal with the situation from a military point of view. I have another vision in this situation."

Mujahed was worried that I would give the order to the group to march as I told him I would earlier. Before I gave the order he went to Abu Ammar and told him brother 'Abd al-Hamid wants us to march in front of the people like we were in a military parade.

Abu Ammar with his sharp mind understood what I was thinking about. When I reached him he immediately asked "Where do you want me to stand?"

We marched through the plain in an organised military fashion. The people were shocked. It was around sunrise; 5 or 5:30 in the morning but we were seen and were amazed. They wondered who we were.

Our morale improved.

At the same time people thought we weren't the only ones and there must have been others who passed or will pass through. As I know the nature and traditions of our people as well as their experience in 1936 revolution I asked the brothers to make sure not to exploit our people. Some exploited our people during the 1936 revolution in the name of the revolution. We suffered greatly as a result of the actions of few.

It was a lesson for us to be strict in not going to any of our brothers' houses asking them for food or anything we needed despite how badly we needed it. We needed to make do with the limited resources we had without thinking of profiting from our people. At the same time if they offered us water we shouldn't refuse because that would hurt their feelings. We should accept the water even if we didn't need a drink. This kind of small issues was often used in family disputes. Some were accused of lack of generosity for example. We accepted water from all those who offered it. We told them that we were their brothers and the occupation will end. We told them that many things will change and asked them to return to their work. We asked them not to look in which direction we were going. We told them this was out of our concern for their safety and because we didn't want them to be held accountable. It was also to maintain the clandestine nature of our activity. Those people were an example to our Palestinian people in their awareness, concern and belief. They returned to their work. We disappeared in the mountain and finally we reached our bases in Qabatiya.

That same day around 2 o'clock in the afternoon brother Khattab (Ezzat Abu al-Rub), one of our cadres in Qabatiya, came to see us. Abu Ammar and I went with him to his house for lunch. From there we could go to Nablus and Jerusalem. At brother Khattab's house we were surprised to find the elders of the all families in Qabatiya waiting for us. They welcomed brother Abu Ammar who was using Abu Mohammad as an alias. Before lunch they pledged allegiance to Abu Ammar, Fateh and everything related to us. They promised to protect us more than they would protect their own children. I can say that Qabatiya was the first town to join Fateh en masse. You could see entire families, women, children and youth flocking to our bases in the mountains. They all came carrying whatever food they could carry. The camp was full of groups training. It was like a beehive. These groups were divided

into smaller groups. I can say that almost all the young men in Qabatiya joined the training groups in the mountains.

After lunch we needed to go to Nablus. We told the brothers that we would go alone and in a normal way. We went to Jenin in a servees (a shared taxi). At first the driver passed us but then reversed back. He was a driver on the Jenin-Qabatiya route. I signaled to him asking if he was going to Jenin. He said yes and came back without any passengers in the car. I thought maybe he understood from my signal that we wanted a taxi not a servees. At that time we had little money and we weren't allowed any extravagance. Anyway we got into the car. Abu Ammar sat next to the driver and I sat in the back seat. I took out half a dinar in case the driver wanted a full taxi fare. The driver looked at me and said, "why my friend? Aren't you from that group?"

I asked him "what group?"

He said, "the one in the mountain."

He didn't take the money. The entire town knew who Fateh were. He drove us to Jenin. There we went Hajja Tawadod Abdel Hadi's house. When we were about to leave Damascus I just had returned from a mission in Lebanon for which I wore a tie and a suit. I was still in wearing the same clothes. When we decided to move I asked brother Abu Ammar if I could change my clothes first. The suit and the tie were meant to serve the nature of the previous mission but now I was going on a patrol. Brother Abu Ammar joked "Why? Are you worried the suit would be ruined?"

I said, "No. I'm worried about what people might say."

He said, "Abd al-Hamid, the country was lost and you are worried about what people might say? Go on the Patrol."

I went on a *fida'i* patrol wearing a suit and a tie.

I fixed my appearance a little at Hajja Tawadod's house. Abu Ammar was talking to Hajja Tawadod. She told him, "We speak when the brother leaves."

He told her, "This brother is one of us."

She said, "He is one of you and is wearing a suit and a tie?"

He looked towards me. I was sitting opposite the house for protection and to keep any eye out for any surprises.

He said, "Brother now I understand what you meant. Even the educated and intellectual Hajja doesn't want to talk in front of you because of what you are wearing. You need to change into khaki clothes and wear a sign that says *fida'i*."

Hajja said, "Brother Abu Ammar I want my liaison with you to be through brother 'Abd al-Hamid. I will be leaving this area after a short while." The Hajja played a very important role in supporting the movement in that period. She was well respected and enjoyed high status among the people especially in Jenin and among the patriots in the area. She was a school principal in Jenin.

We went to Nablus before we went to Jerusalem. In Jenin we met brother Mahmoud al-Hamshari who later on became the PLO's ambassador to France.

In Nablus, brother Tayseer Abu Hawaash was appointed head of the region and head of Fateh's committee. Along with six or seven committee members Abu Hawaash formed the leadership in Nablus region. Brother Mahmoud al-Hamshari became the leader in Toulkarm. In Qalqiliya we met with some of the brothers so they could select a leader for Qalqiliya. In Jenin brother Nasri Sa'adallah was the leader and then brother Ahmad Rashid succeeded him. We met them and sat down to work out a leadership mechanism for the various areas and the heads of Fateh's committees in Palestine. After that we went to Said al-A'to'out's house in the Old City in Nablus. Brother Mohammed or Mousatfa Samarah went there with us. He was the only member of his cell who wasn't arrested by the Israeli authorities. His cell included Nazih Hussein, Abdullah al-Ifranji, Zuheir Manasra and Abu Ayyash. This group of our cadres came from Germany after some of them finished training in Algeria. They crossed into Palestine on a patrol and were arrested. They didn't arrest brother Moustafa Samarah because they wanted to know who visits him. The occupation's authorities knew of his Fateh membership. He was wanted but he was left as bait. They wanted to know who was also a member of Fateh. Brothers Said al-A'to'out and Tayseer Hawaash were familiar of the area's affairs. Another brother called Ahmad was also with us. We called sister Esam Abdel Hadi who was the head of the Women Union in Nablus. She was very respected by the people. I remember the first time brother Mujahed and I went to her house. All our moves were taken with Abu Ammar's knowledge and his approval and within the

parameters of mass action. At the time Jerusalem was under a cruel siege. We asked sister Esam if the Women Union in Nablus could help our people in Jerusalem. I remember sister Esam said “You spoke to me about this. How can I be sure of your true Identity?”

I told her that we had a badge and that the occupation can make one like it. I told her we didn’t have anything else.

It was clear she wanted to think about it and make sure we are who we said we are. She asked us to come back the next day. We returned the next day. She gave us an amount of money to deliver to Jerusalem. We refused to take the money and told her we can give the people an amount of money in our own way. We told her that we wanted the people in Jerusalem to feel the people in Nablus are supporting them. We asked her to contact the people she worked with and those who could make it happen. We told her for us they represented Nablus.

We felt that she started trusting us. This was the start of our work with her. In Nablus at that time there was a collaborator with the Israeli occupation called Abu Ali Habroon. He was open about his treason. He really hurt us and hurt the national movement in Nablus. We decided to liquidate him. He was outspoken about his treason and his relationship to the occupation. The entire city agreed he was a traitor. He always carried a pistol openly around the city. The brothers in the Nablus committee were late in making the decision to end his life.

Brother Abu Ammar was angry at their position. He told them he would visit Nablus only after this man was liquidated. He gave this task to brother Abu Ali al-Madani. Abu Ali al-Madani was one of the purest Fateh youth. He smiled all the time. He was brave and a real fighter. He wanted to know who the man was. They told him the name of the café the man frequented. Abu Ali al-Madani sat near al-Wajaq. Al-Wajaq is the place where coffee and tea are made at a café. The person working behind al-Wajaq was one of our youth. He sat there and waited for Abu Ali Habroon. When he showed up the café worker pointed him out. Abu Ali al-Madani walked towards him and stood in front of him bravely. He was a brave and a highly trained soldier. He was part of the Palestinian brigade formed by the Syrian Army; Brigade 81. He knew how to use guns very well. He asked him, “Are you Abu Ali Habroon?” He answered, “Yes.”

He said, “My name is Abu Ali al-Madani. In the name of the Palestinian National Liberation Movement – Fateh we accuse you of high treason. I will

kill you now. If you are innocent may god have mercy on your soul. However, everyone in your city agrees that you're a traitor."

He took a pistol out and shot him in the head. You want, and I want, but Allah does he wants. Despite the potentially lethal injury Abu Ali didn't die. The occupation saved his life. He was killed later on by another group of *fida'iyeen*.

We returned to Jerusalem. Brother Adnan al-Joulani was driving a car. At an army checkpoint two Israeli soldiers signaled us to stop. After we passed them we asked brother al-Joulani to go back for them. They got in the car and sat in the back next to me. I started thinking what if they knew who was sitting next to them or in front of them. We dropped them off in Jerusalem. There are many details that I will not talk about because I don't think the time is right yet. The conflict continues and I'm still involved in a national liberation movement. Our battle with them is not finished yet and I can't say everything. The Israelis are known to collect and keep every bit of information. I will say what brother Abu Iyad used to say, "We are not a fax revolution." We didn't drop our weapons yet.

In Nablus we set up a preparatory committee headed by brother Tayseer Hawaash – Abu Sharif along with a group of brothers to organise and buy and store weapons. A rifle at that time was sold for 2 or 3 dinars. At the time we had little money. In the few times I went to Palestine, before brother Ammar visited Palestine, we asked the brothers to buy as much weapons as they could. We thought we had a good weapons cache in Nablus. This was in addition to preparing the young that were trained previously. Brother Mujahed was asked to head Ramallah area. The next day he came on an urgent mission to Nablus. Many of the cadres in Nablus knew Mujahed. He trained most of them when he was the head of al-Hama military camp. We thought its better if he was in Nablus.

Sometimes I had to leave brother Abu Ammar and go on an errand. I used to ask the brothers to prevent any cadre or messenger from seeing brother Abu Ammar. If a messenger brought a message they should take the message and deliver it to brother Abu Ammar. Abu Ammar then would decide if he wants to see that person or not.

Those instructions to protect Abu Ammar were carried out in all the areas. No direct contact with Abu Ammar was allowed.

After arranging things well in Nablus we left for Ramallah then Jerusalem where we were staying. We worked in Jerusalem and many other areas. We opened up towards other national forces despite their ideologies and whether they were parties or factions. We all had one cause: resisting the occupation. This common cause is what brought us together. We were very open towards everyone. During the Jerusalem uprising I was in contact with Kamal al-Nemri head of the Movement of Arab Nationalists (MAN). At that time Dr. Sobhi Ghosha was involved in a disagreement with MAN after the arrests that followed their conference in Chtaura in November 1966. This disagreement didn't change Jerusalemites view of this man. He was still considered a patriot and an honest and a devoted man. I think some people exploited his good nature. The person who was in a decision making position was brother Kamal al-Nemri. We struck an agreement with him. Jerusalem was preparing for armed disobedience in the Old City. We worked on bringing large number of our brothers from al-Qadisiya Birgade in Iraq to the city. Most of the Brigade's officers were Fateh. How would we conduct the armed disobedience in the Old City?

Brother Abu Ammar was the one who planed and supervised the preparations. At that time he was staying in Jerusalem in an apartment that belonged to one of my uncles: Ibrahim and Sadeq al-Shantti. They were comfortable financially. They gave us an apartment near al-Tazziz pharmacy close to the Palestinian Red Crescent. It was close to their houses. They had more than one house. They emptied the apartment to enable us to work freely. They used to bring us breakfast. Sometimes I went to get the breakfast especially if Abu Ammar was meeting one of the brothers in the apartment. I remember the house belonged to Abu Ali Qleibo. The house is still there.

Abu Ammar met many of our cadres in the apartment. We used to go sometimes to visit some of the dignitaries. Eventually we got a center. Ismail Istanbuli, one of our brothers, worked for the Arab Contractors Company. Fahmi al-Hamouri – Abu Ziad was his manager. Al-Hamouri was a member of the communist party and like us believed in guerilla warfare. We used his officer as storage and for meetings. The meeting between brothers Abu Ammar, Kamal al-Nemri and Faisal al-Husseini, who was then a member of MAN, was held. Israel was starting a census and Abu Ammar was counted as a Jerusalemite in order for him to get a Jerusalem ID. By the way he had more than one ID from more than on source with many professions. The profession he was known for more than any other was teaching. He wore a white kufiyya. At the time he didn't start wearing the Palestinian patched kufiyya. He also spoke with an Egyptian accent.

Our brothers the fellaheen had their own way in wearing this kufyia especially the elderly. Abu Ammar imitated their way and looked like a fellah.

We told him once that he looked like a fellah but spoke with an Egyptian accent. We wanted him to speak with an accent closer to ours.

He said, "What do you think about Gaza accent?"

When he started speaking in Gazan accent we told him its better if he spoke with an Egyptian accent. He used to travel and made many visits as a teacher called Abu Mohammad. All those who have met him knew they were in front of a different man. They knew he was a decision maker and a charismatic man. He proposed what he wanted clearly using facts and documents that convinced others. One time I went with Abu Ammar to visit brother Dr. Abdel Aziz el-Haj Ahmad whom I met in Zarqa military prison. He had returned to his clinic in Ramallah and headed his own faction. The most important thing was that we needed to achieve national unity in anyway possible. At that time we had an agreement with MAN and offered them training and weapons. I told them that we only need coordination to ensure the success of the planned disobedience in Jerusalem. Without real unity and unified decision the disobedience would fail.

At the time brother Fayez Hamdan (Major Khaled) was with us. He was a captain in the Jordanian army before he was arrested on suspicion of being a member in MAN. They considered him member of the Free Officers Movement.

At the time we were at the height of our preparations for the armed Intilqa in more than one area. We needed to decide the time and the date of the Intilqa. Brother Abu Ammar was the head of the leadership committee, which was comprised of Abu Ammar, Abu Jihad, and Abu Ali Iyad. Those three were the leaders of al-Asifah forces. Abu Ammar was based inside the occupied land; Abu Jihad and Abu Ali Iyad were based in Damascus. Sometimes I had to leave brother Abu Ammar and go to Damascus through Allenby Bridge. There were no problems leaving Palestine but on the way back we had to sneak across the river.

I went to Damascus and I was carrying a small notebook the size of my hand. I gave the brothers a comprehensive report about the situation. I told them that we inside Palestine propose that a decision be made to launch the Intilqa. I told them that we were ready and had a good level of preparation

in all the areas and we only needed their agreement or to give the order to al-Asifah forces to move. I told them I wanted their signatures on a white sheet of paper. I opened two new pages in the notebook. Brother Abu Jihad signed in the middle of the page and then brother Abu Ali Iyad signed leaving space for Abu Ammar's signature. The notebook was still open when brother Abu Ali Iyad wrote on top of the page to brother Abu Ammar "be crazy".

This was in a reference to the saying that revolutions are planned by wise men, carried out by crazy me and cowards reap their results. Unfortunately this statement is almost applicable to all revolutions. Anyway I returned to Palestine with the notebook. I delivered the document to brother Abu Ammar. The decision was in his hands. He signed the document next to Abu Jihad and Abu Ali Iyad's signatures. Now we only need to decide on the date of the Intilaqa.

At that time the Arab League Summit was planned in Khartoum. Ahmad al-Shuqairi wasn't invited to attend the summit. Al-Shuqairi was the official representative of Palestine. The inauguration was planned on Wednesday 29th of August at 6 in the evening. It was funny that Abu Ammar sometimes didn't have anyone to talk to but me especially when no one was visiting him. I asked him what he thought about choosing the day of the inauguration of the summit as the date for the Intilaqa. Especially that Palestine wasn't invited to attend.

We were present on the ground. Previously many brothers conducted, without instructions, individual resistance missions. We always told them to try and not jump over instructions. We told them to avoid confrontation to avoid the tightening of security while we are preparing for the Intilaqa. We didn't issue statements claiming responsibility for those operations. If we did the enemy would know that a faction or an organization organised those operations. This would not have been in our interest. We left these operations without claiming responsibility for them.

I remember a group of brothers went to scout a target for zero hour. This group often moved to scout the target. One day they found a soft target and got excited. On their initiative they attacked the target. Abu Ammar became very angry and ordered them to be put on trial. I took responsibility for their actions and told him I gave them instructions. I told him that if he insisted on trying them I would go in the court and say I gave them instructions. This group of brothers was great and some of the best cadres we had in the movement. Two of them were martyred later on. When they went to scout a target they found an easy target and attacked it. We must be strict with them

but we needed to treat them like our sons. We need to make sure such mistakes don't happen again.

We were keen on launching the struggle with momentum. Our plan was that when the groups start the attacks from the various areas that all the groups support one another. The Israeli enemy shouldn't be allowed to attack one area individually. The launch would be in all the areas. We asked everyone to identify new targets in addition to the targets identified by the leadership. We told them they have the freedom to attack other targets. However, the most important targets are the two targets chosen by al-Asifah leadership. After targeting those two targets they had the freedom to act.

I went with brother Abu Ammar to Gaza where he met with all the leaders on the ground there. We had lunch there and came back on the same day. Travelling was really difficult. We were driven to Gaza by a car that travels there everyday for trade. The brother who drove the car paid a lot of bribes to the Israelis soldiers to facilitate his passage. The bribes he paid allowed our passage. I took my uncle's wife and five years old daughter with me as a cover. We went to Gaza and met the brothers. There was a problem during my previous visit. In the previous visit I didn't meet the highest-ranking leadership on the ground. I had the names of everyone including the shadow leadership. I met with the shadow leadership. They thought that I should be in the meeting. I asked them to consider the way I came to Gaza and that the car that brought me will stay in Gaza for two hours only. I told them I needed to finish my work within those two hours to be able to catch the car back. This is why brother Abu Ammar needed to go to Gaza. He was the only one who could solve this problem. He had all the information and the authority to hold meetings and make decisions. He explained to them that I came to Gaza before and enquired about them and when I wasn't able to find them I followed Fateh's instructions.

On 25 August brother Abu Ammar was in Nablus while I was getting settled in my work in Jerusalem and Ramallah. I couldn't leave these areas without instructions. If I could I passed the information to the brothers in the other areas without leaving the area; I wouldn't leave without instructions. I asked brother Mujahed, with all love and brotherhood, not to come to Ramallah for security reasons. People in Ramallah knew him very well.

On 25 August I was surprised to see brother Mujahed in to Ramallah. He went to one of the houses to see. I was notified of his visit. I know how disciplined brother Mujaed is and immediately knew something was wrong. When I asked him he said, "Brother Abu Mohammed tells you to stop all the

operations and that he left Nablus for Damascus after receiving a messenger from there." I got really worried and stopped all operations in the West Bank. I sent word to Gaza with sister Obaida al-Kathimi informing them to stop the operations. They told he that the groups had already moved to attack their targets according to the agreement and the instructions. This was on 25 August. On 26 August I was informed that the groups had moved to their targets in Gaza. After Abu Ammar left I became the leader and had the authority to issue instructions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. If Gaza has already moved then the occupation forces would isolate it and therefore I needed to aid them. This would only be possible if the groups in the West Bank move as well. This meant disobeying the leadership's instructions. Either I leave Gaza Strip to fight the battle alone or I disobey the clear leadership's instructions to stop the operations. I immediately left the West Bank and went to Damascus. I remember I arrived there on 28 August at 5pm. When Abu Ammar saw me he said, "What the hell are you doing here? You left Palestine in the hands of two crazy men: Mujahed and Abu Ali al-Madani."

They had the highest level of military knowledge but nothing else. They only thought through the barrel of the gun and now they were the decision makers. I briefed him about the situation in Gaza and the critical situation we are in. I told him "You need to take responsibility. The brothers in Gaza moved against their targets and you will hear about it in the news. The leadership doesn't know their targets to stop them. You need to return immediately to the occupied land." On 29 August we returned. In the same night we claimed responsibility. Around 6pm; half an hour before sunset we were near al-Makhada. Through our surveillance we saw that the occupation forces were withdrawing from the Jordan valley. We could see them with our naked eyes. After sunset our groups used to cross to set up ambushes and plant mines. This was always done half an hour after sunset. We had an hour to wait until its half an hour after sunset. We needed to cross the borders and the dangerous area full of mines. We reached Sail al-Zarqa on the Jordanian side and sat down. This time the patrol consisted of 34 people. Abu Ammar led the patrol. Our guide, Abu Ali Hassan Freitkh, was an excellent guide and like tourists he carried a water bottle over his shoulder. As usual I was the most active member of the group. I was wearing civilian clothes, a pair of trousers and a shirt. I left our hideout and went to brother Abu Ali Freitkh. He told me that brother Mujahed has been martyred. I was shocked. He said that brother Mujahed went to Moustafa Samara's house who as I said before was not arrested by the occupation forces and was left as bait to who ever visited him. Clearly they monitored him closely. When brother Mujahed visited him he was seen. He went to get brother Moustafa Samara to Jenin for

a meeting held a barber's shop in the town's center. They were followed. Mujahed had a Colt pistol and 37 shots with him. I remember our conversations when he used to say that if he had an AK-47 with ammunition he could stop an Israeli platoon. I used to tell him that as a result of his extreme impulse he would die cheaply. He was a real fighter. He wasn't an easy person. He had total belief in his own abilities. He was surrounded. He force surrounding him had five 50-caliber machine guns. He resisted them with his pistol. He was arrested and taken to an area in 1948 as my interrogator told me later on. The interrogator described him as a real man. They handcuffed him and put in a jeep with the driver and one guard. Mujahed looked around and studied the situation. He thought he could strike the guard with his hands and quickly grab the machine gun to next to the driver and control the situation. As the interrogator told me the driver was alert and was faster than Mujahed. When Mujahed struck the guard and before he could reach the machine gun the driver got hold of it and emptied it in Mujahed's body.

When Abu Ali Freitkh informed of Mujahed's death I asked him to toll anyone else. I wanted to avoid any confusion on the Patrol especially that two of the men on the patrol were trained by Mujahed. We were about to cross into the occupied land and we were still in the beginning of the patrol. News like this would definitely have negative effects on the brothers.

I told only Abu Ammar the news. He also asked that we don't tell anyone else the news. We crossed the borders and started towards Nablus. Before our patrol arrived at al-Shaka'a orchid in the morning the attacks against two targets in Gaza were announced. One of the targets was a bridge that cut off an entire area inside the occupied land.

It is important to point out here that our capabilities, including *fida'i* capabilities, were not bad. They were enough. I remember that Abu Ammar, with his humane feelings, knew that meals were not enough and used to save his food. He used to pretend he is not feeling well so that his meal would go to the brothers. I testify to this. This man often went to sleep hungry, so he could give his meals to the others. A meal was usually shared between two men. He used to say that 'Abd al-Hamid would be his partner.

I used to say to him, "Look for another brother Abu Ammar. Partnership with you is a loss. Please spare me your injustice."

He used to say, "I don't want to be unfair to anyone else. I can depend on you and you understand me. As I can be unfair to you I don't want to be unfair to anyone else."

I remember it used to be very cold in Qabatiya at night. Each one of us had a good blanket. One blanket remained for him and me to share. As I said the mountains in Qabatiya are extremely cold at night. Abu Ammar said that he would share the blanket with 'Abd al-Hamid. I said, "Abu Ammar it's really cold and Qabatiya's mountains are high." He said, "There are sandy areas where we could dig a grave to sleep in." We dug about 60cm deep in the ground. The earth was really warm. I think that that night the two of us with only one blanket were warmer than the other brothers.

Once again we were on the patrol. I think it was the first patrol when we discovered a cave that could shelter us. The cave was full of insects called donm. Donm is a dirty and nasty insect. When it stings a human it causes a swelling where it stings. We couldn't find anywhere else except the cave. We had to coexist with the donm insects because we needed warmth. We slept back-to-back trying to warm each other using our bodies.

Operations in Gaza and the areas occupied in 1948 were announced. On the day that Abu Ammar crossed the borders brother Ahmad Said announced through his political programme on Sawt al-Arab to the Palestinian people that the *fida'i* movement headed by Fateh's leader managed to cross in groups into the occupied land and that oppression against the Palestinian people will end.

Brother Abu Ammar wasn't happy with this announcement. We were not happy with it as well even if it was said in good faith. It shouldn't have been announced at such time. Many people as well as the Israeli army will think that we are an organised army even before we launched our activity yet.

On 10 August we decided to publish an official statement. The movement had conducted 124 operations, but never claimed responsibility for any of them. We needed to announce it to the people. Brother Abu Ali Iyad insisted on being with us during this time and on crossing into the occupied land. At that time he hadn't recovered fully from al-Hama incident where he was shot by mistake. I told him "Brother Abu Ali your body has a right over you. Your health doesn't permit you to be on a patrol. Being a patrol is not like riding a car." He said, "I know how difficult it is. If I can't cross I won't be a burden." This is what we were worried about. We knew very well that once he feels that can't continue he won't be a burden on anyone. We managed to convince

to postpone the issue. We told him we are still in the beginning and in the coming stages he would be with us on the patrols. He said, "Take this pen and use it to write Fateh's first statement after its second Intilqa." I took the pen. On 10 August, it was a Friday, Abu Ammar and I had lunch at the same house in Jerusalem. I remember that my uncle's family prepared fish. After lunch he said, "We will write the statement now." He had started writing when I told him "don't use your pen. If you may use this is Abu Ali Iyad's pen." He tore the paper on which he started writing. He took Abu Ali Iyad's pen and wrote the statement with it.

I took the food tray to return it to my uncle's house. Qleibo's house where we were staying had a good location and many exits in various directions. When I exited the house I noticed a man I didn't see before. He was wearing a suit and standing near one of the house's exits. I continued my way normally to my uncle's house. I returned to the house from another direction to avoid being seen by the man. In the direction I returned from there was a house and a bakery belonging to al-Ja'abari family. I had very close and intimate relationship with them. I asked the brother in the bakery "I see a new customer in the neighborhood?"

He said, "He is one of them. A white care dropped him off." The occupation forces at that time used white Peugeot 404 cars. Once people saw this car they new they were intelligence. The young man continued saying that the man had a device on him.

I carried the information to Abu Ammar who was still writing the statement. He had taken his jacket off; or should I say my jacket. He was wearing civilian clothes. We had a pair of sport trousers, a jacket and the suit. In the morning that day I asked him "what do you want to wear from what we have?"

At that time we were the same size. He said, "If you want to wear the suit I will wear the jacket and the trousers." On that day he was wearing the jacket. I dragged him out. He took the jacket off the chair and wore it. We left quickly without anyone seeing us. Even the young al-Ja'bari in the bakery didn't see us. As I mentioned earlier the house had many exits. We left through an area where there was a bicycle shop. I had the keys to Adnan al-Joulani's red dodge car. In the car park the cars were parked facing the wall not behind each other. When we left.... I want to point out that I pledged in front of the Central Committee in Damascus that I would protect Abu Ammar as long as I was alive and capable of moving. It would have been a disaster if anything happened to him. I opened the car's back door quickly and he got in. When I started reversing the man who was watching us saw the car. I drove the car

quickly for approximately 500 meters. I stopped the car near a gas station in Sheikh Jarrah on the way out of al-Jismania towards Damascus Gate. This was in order to avoid any surprises and to get in touch with the information network I was in touch with. I dropped Abu Ammar and called Adnan al-Joulani. I said, "How are you smart guy? How is your health?" He said, "The red loses."

I told him to send someone to pick up the car. From what he said I understood that were in danger. He knew I used the red car. I owned a white Volkswagen but no one knew. It was a good and strong car. One of our brothers had prepared it for me. No other car of that same big size could be as good or as fast. I had parked it in the same area. I went and got my car. We left Jerusalem in the white car and drove to Ramallah. I said to Abu Ammar, "All the occupation forces are looking for a red car".

I took brother Abu Ammar to a flat in the street adjacent to Rokab Street near al-Umara' Sweets. The flat was on the third floor. It belonged to brother Na'im Qa'adan (Mukhtar Na'Im). He became the head of Usar al-Shuhda' Institution in Amman later on. The flat was empty. Brother Na'im was living on the second floor of the same building. I took brother Abu Ammar to the flat and brought a rope and a hook used to hang meat. The flat had a kitchen that looked on another street opposite the old Ministry of Finance. There was a courtyard under the window. The rope was for Abu Ammar to use in case someone came to arrest him through the main street. I told him not to hesitate in using the rope. The rope led to any area away from the street. There was food and supplies in the flat enough for fourteen days.

The occupation forces were conducting an extensive combing operation. They started in the north and were moving south. They started in Jenin. 'Abd al-Hamid name was mentioned in more than an area as the brothers informed me. I said, "Brother Abu Ammar the situation is becoming very dangerous and they are reaching Ramallah. It is necessary that you go underground because I need to go underground as well. As long as you remain here I can't go underground." While we were talking Abu Ammar cried and said, "When the situation was good and I was relatively safe I was the leader. Now when you are in danger you want to me to disappear?"

I said, "Brother Abu Ammar the situation is too dangerous and we can't afford risking the cadres or outbidding. I need to disappear and I can't do that as long as you are here."

He said, "As it got too dangerous for all of you I can't accept your request."

I said, "There is a solution." We had a secret base near the Jordan River which only one person knew its location. We used it as a storage location. This base was established on Abu Ammar's request who asked us to have a weapons cache in Jordan. His vision was correct. I told him then, "Why don't we have a warehouse in Jordan while we are being pursued?"

He said "I don't know. But I'm afraid that they will compromise on Palestine. We need to be independent." This was in 1967. We established this base which can only be accessed by a certain car from the Jordanian side. I told him only one person knows this. This way the people outside and inside won't know you left. He categorically rejected this. I said, "Since this is your decision I will stay and I will go to prison. But I repeat the most important thing for me is to keep you safe."

I went back to Jerusalem where I was arrested the same night. Abu Ammar stayed in the flat in Ramallah for 11 days in contradiction to the instructions we agreed on.