

Abdel Aziz Saqer, *Salamah al-Basila*. Amman: Rabitat Ahali Salamah and Aram Li Al-Dirasat wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawzei', 1997 (pp.172-175).

Restructuring the Leadership and the National Committee in Salamah

The people of the town felt that the battles were going to continue for a long time, and that this requires precision in organisation and undertaking preparations in a more advanced and methodical manner. An effective body that was capable of undertaking this task was needed. It was understood that the current national committee did not have the required abilities, due to the fact that most of its members were advanced in age and did not accordingly have the energy or the ability to undertake the necessary efforts. The inhabitants therefore called for a general meeting to discuss this issue. The majority of the town notables and elders came to this meeting. They decided to dissolve the current national committee which was comprised of family elders and clan notables, and to replace them with a national committee constituted by the town youth who had the willingness and the ability to work regardless of their family belonging. It was also decided to form a military committee that would assist the commander of the town and help him manage and oversee military operations. This military committee had the following members:

1. Commander Musa Abu Hashieh- Chairman
2. Mukhtar Mifleh 'Ibeid Ali Saleh- Member
3. Mukhtar Al-Haj Najeeb Abu Nijem- Member
4. Mukhtar Musa Sweidan- Member
5. Mukhtar Abdel Rahim Hammad- Member
6. Mr. Khalil Ibrahim al-Salim Saqer- Secretary

Furthermore, the following were elected as members of the new national committee:

1. Ahmad Khalil Abu Usba'-Secretary
2. Uthman Musa Abu Hashieh- Member
3. Abdel Aziz Saqer- Member
4. Mahmoud Mohammad Khaled- Member
5. Hassan Ahmad Ramaha- Member
6. Musa Said al-Shafi'i- Member
7. Mohammad Ibrahim Hassan Hammad- Member
8. Said Shehadah Abul 'Ainayn- Member
9. Sabri Abu Nijm- Member
10. Rashid Said Mohammad Salih- Member
11. Sha'baan al-Naji- Member
12. Hassan Abu 'Eid- Member

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Organising the Defence of the Town

As soon as the new national committee was elected and the military command was restructured and reorganised, everyone began to work with a great deal of drive and energy. This was especially the case for the young members of the national committee. They instituted a tariff on imports to town, charged nominal fees on exports, appointed collectors and provided them with official receipt books. This allowed for raising much needed funds for paying the town guard salaries. The latter belonged to the working class and needed income to be able to sustain their families. Furthermore, during the general meeting that was held in town to elect the new national committee, each of the town's families was asked to donate the price of two rifles. Members of the Arab Higher Committee in Egypt were going to help the people of Salamah to purchase these rifles for the discounted price of 30 Palestine Pounds, even though the price of these rifles in Palestine exceeded 100 Palestine Pounds. Most of the families that had been approached provided the requested amounts, and some men from the town were entrusted with carrying these monies to Egypt to purchase the weapons. Accordingly, some Italian rifles were purchased from the remains of the World War, collected from the Western Desert in Egypt by the Bedouin inhabitants. Despite being old, and in some cases defunct, these rifles added to the weapons that were in the hands of the people of Salamah. The weapons in Salamah now numbered 110 rifles, three machine guns, and one mortar that was locally manufactured by Sha'baan Blacksmiths in Jaffa. This mortar was supplied by locally manufactured shells. Whenever it fired a shell, it roared like thunder. The mortar was placed in a location facing the colony of Petah Tikva.

It was agreed in the aforementioned town meeting that each family was going to volunteer four of its young men so that they could guard the town without pay. As such, it was now possible to allocate two men for each weapon, and Salamah now had 228 fighters armed with 114 pieces. Half of these men were volunteers, and the other half were paid from the tariffs that were collected on the goods and foodstuffs that were imported to the village. Each one of the men that needed a salary to support their family was given 7 Palestine Pounds a month. The military committee appointed officials from amongst its ranks and from the ranks of the national committee so that they could oversee the different guard locations in the town. Each one of these officials was responsible for one or more of these guard locations, so as to ensure that all guards were present, and to make sure that they were provided with the necessary ammunition and other needs.

In addition to tariff collection, the national committee oversaw, since its founding, the process of receiving monetary or other donations that were provided by some merchants and other patriots from Jaffa and other cities. These donations were distributed to the guards and used to pay for other supplies. The national committee also began to dig fortifications in vulnerable

and open areas, filling them with sandbags to protect the guards from enemy forces. Trenches that were two meters deep and two meters wide were also dug, cutting the roads that connected the town of Salamah to the surrounding colonies. This was to prevent against the penetration of the fortifications that were established on these roads with the armored vehicles that the enemy had possessed a number of. The national committee also oversaw the cutting of two rows of orange trees from the groves that were connected to enemy groves, so as to ensure that the guards would be able to see the enemy if they tried to sneak into the town through these contiguous orange groves.

The national committee was therefore successful in arranging these defenses and preparing them well, so that its forces would be able to protect the town without being hit by enemy bullets. The defenders thus became more confident and secure about protecting their lives, and more capable of repelling the enemy's vengeful attacks against the town, which had now become so frequent that they took place almost every night. Local organisational capacity was now so high that some technicians from the youth of Salamah had installed locally made phone lines connecting some of the frontline defensive posts and the leadership centre. This raised the morale of the defenders, their confidence in themselves and their leadership, and lifted their spirits...