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Student Brigades from Romania

Romania contributed with martyrs, in 1982 – in al-Baqaa there were operations behind enemy lines there. We came back from Romania, of course, in the year immediately after the year of preparation. When I arrived in Lebanon from Romania we already had experience in mobilisation work. We met a number of those involved in the student union leadership from several cities, Bucharest and others. Many were engineers and doctors in Kuwait, Amman, and the West Bank. Amongst them was a doctor called Khaled al-Fassel and Maher Anabtawi. As they received us, they realised that four or five of these young people were from Lebanon. We had a background in labour organising, so we immediately began carrying out the tasks. I was a member of the committee, since I had worked in labour organising, but of course the invasion then took place, in 1982, on 6 June. On 12 June we got on the plane, and headed from Romania to Syria bringing volunteers with us: 450 Palestinian, Lebanese, and Iranian students. There was an Iranian youth called Salah Irani. He got rid of his passport in order to stay with the fighters in al-Beqaa. So we went to Syria.

[On receiving orders for mobilisation] Fateh took a decision for their own organisation, opening the door for volunteers. As a federation we took the initiative, and as an organisation also, to contact whomever wished to give us his passport for travel. So we collected all the passports from those who wished to go. We created lists, and we secured the plans. Khaled al-Sheikh was the PLO ambassador to Romania – he then traveled to India and afterwards retired. I remember an important incident when the Romanians refused to let the planes take off because it wasn't insured – they had orders from the Romanian government. Then Qadhafi paid the insurance fees so that the planes could take off. Our brother Khaled al-Sheikh got into trouble with the Romanian authorities at the airport, which led to several complications. We went to Syria, as I said, and 98% of them weren't trained. Some came with us to the occupied territories. We had informed them that they couldn't go with having an Israeli *laissez passer*. They had gotten the passports from the PLO representation in Bukharest: imagine, they got rid of their passports and said they didn't want to return there. Seeing such enthusiasm gave us the feeling that the people and the revolution were doing well, despite our current circumstances. When I arrived, all I had was my military attire and

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scarf, I came from Romania wearing this along with 450 students. We all went to al-Beqaa, Mohammed al-Wa'ad, the martyr Guevara, was also present. We trained them in al-Beqaa to use weapons.

Two of those who came from Romania lost their lives, and in the end about forty remained. Because we were entering exam season, a large group of young people returned to Romania with the help of the Fateh offices in Syria, which gave them travel tickets, to return to resume their studies. A group of them stayed behind, until we left Beirut, after which they also went back to Romania. As I've mentioned, during that period there was an emphasis on departing surrounding countries like Lebanon. There was an emphasis on the occupied territories and on working with our youth in the occupied territories.