

Matar, Hamdi. Interviewed 2011. Translated by *The Palestinian Revolution*, 2016.

Towards the end of October 1956, the movement's first conference took place, for the movement's leadership in Jordan, in which Dr George Habash was elected Secretary-General, and it was then the movement assumed its famous name, "Movement of Arab Nationalists", as before this, it was referred to as the Arab Nationalist Youth or the Arab Nationalists, and communiqués appeared under these names. Now, they decided to name it the Movement of Arab Nationalists...

Work continued, and during this period, al-Hakim (George Habash, 'the doctor') gathered cadres from here in Amman, the West Bank, and Irbid, and we all went to the Jordanian-Syrian border near Ramtha, we took out the border signs, loaded them on the bus and entered Syria without passports. Unfortunately, we were surprised to find some people hurling stones at us - it turned out to be the Moslem Brothers. Of course we went to al-Hakim, Dr George Habash, and he said do not respond to them - but then someone tried to stab him in the shoulder! In any case, we went to Dera'a, and al-Hakim gave a speech, saying that while colonialism was unable to reach this area, it sent its agents to ruin our event...

Subsequently, the tripartite aggression on Egypt occurred, which gave us more opportunity to train in Amman: the Jordanian military gave us some basic training, and we sent people to train in Syria, and Egypt. Even in the midst of battle, people went on military courses... At this point, there was enormous nationalist and patriotic tide in Jordan... around this time, parliamentary elections took place, and we nominated Dr George Habash and Nizar Jirdaneh, the Ba'athists nominated Suleiman al-Hadidi and Ibrahim al-Ayed, and the National Party nominated Suleiman Nabulsi and the group with him. Unfortunately, the regime made an alliance with the Muslim Brotherhood, and the elections took place, and I was observing the ballot count on behalf of the Movement of Arab Nationalists...The total votes that we got- as the Movement, the Ba'ath, and the National Party- were ten thousand. As for the Muslim Brothers and the regime they got four thousand votes, and sadly their list succeeded: it was made up of Dr Mustapha Khalifa (who was a minister), Wasfi Mirza (another minister), Saleem al-Bakhit (a big capitalist that had bankrolled the campaign), the director of the Muslim Brothers in Jordan Mohammad Abdel Rahman Khalifa, and Sheikh Abdel Baqi Jamo from Zarqa. All five members of the list were elected. Still, the

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majority of seats were won by the National party, so King Hussein, who was to the right of Abdel Nasser, invited the National Party to form a government, which was of course a patriotic government...

In 1957 al-Hakim invited us to a popular conference at the Dead Sea, with ten buses from the movement loaded, and we all met at the shores of the Dead Sea. Jordan was about to embark on a new political course, transferring its orientation from Britain to the United States... After the failure of the tripartite aggression and the permanent exit of France and Britain from the region, Eisenhower put forward his project to fill the gap in the Middle East. At our event, al-Hakim made a speech telling Eisenhower that this 'gap' was in his head, and we also carried out a mobilisational event, a demonstration. Shortly thereafter, we were surprised to find that martial law was imposed across the country, the government of Suleiman Nabulsi was dissolved, and they installed a Prime Minister called Hussein Fakhri Khalidi. Of course, demonstrations took place against Khalidi, demanding he resign... We organised a sit-in, and remained in front of the Prime Minister's building in Salt Street, until Khalidi resigned. After, a new government was formed under the leadership of Ibrahim Hashim and his deputy Sameer Rifa'I, martial law was imposed and we were under curfew for 18 days, unable to step out of our doors at home...

Of course, they arrested all those that they knew of, and we in the Movement of Arab Nationalists were not known, since our work was clandestine; we were not hit hard at that point. On April 25 they arrested the old communists they knew and the ba'athists. As for us, we lost no one, on the contrary, al-Hakim managed to go into hiding in Amman. After the curfew was lifted, he gave me a letter and told me to send it. At the time, Dr George and Dr Wadie would treat people at their clinic for free at least most of the time. Besides offering free treatment, they would often buy medicines from the nearby al-Shifa pharmacy for patients who could not afford it. At the Movement, we were dependent on membership dues and our financial situation was accordingly difficult. This forced Dr Habash to work 2 hours a day at Lozmella Hospital in Weibdeh for 40 Jordanian dinars a month. As for Dr Wadie, he worked at the Karameh Camp medical centre for 90 dinars, taking 10 dinars for himself and sending 80 for the Movement! In this way our finances were kept afloat.

In any case, Dr George gave me the letter and told me to give it to Dr Wadie in Karameh and I sent it there with a guy. We used to tie a cloth to the waist and hide letters there, since one was less likely to be searched in that area. In the letter, Dr George told Dr Wadie: "Do you remember our loud chants on

the shore of the Dead Sea? Look, two of the men who were there, Dr Subhi Ghoush and Dr Amin al-Khatib, are members of the Movement. You should organise with them against the imposition of martial law". We delivered the letter to Dr Wadie and he called Dr Subhi and Dr Amin - both of them used to work as doctors, one in Aqabet Jaber Camp and the other one in Ain al-Sultan Camp. You know, doctors have real prestige - people love them, respect them, and trust them. So when they called for demonstrations, some of the biggest in the history of the Jordan valley area erupted. Next, the government decided to arrest Dr Wadie Haddad, of course he was in Karameh, and they did a full search and found that letter in his pocket. After seeing the names of Dr Subhi and Dr Amin in it, they took them into custody too. Afterwards, the gendarmes in Salt found the young man that had delivered the letter and they interrogated him. He gave them my name and they arrested me along with Nizar Jirdaneh...