

Abu Mayzar, Mohammed. Interviewed 2011. Translated by *The Palestinian Revolution*, 2016.

I would like to connect this interview to the previous one, where we spoke at length about political activity in Algeria. This is also related to our work in Algeria, and its effect on our activity in Europe, especially in France. How did the idea of working in Europe develop? After the Karameh battle in March 1968, Fatah, which was the backbone of Palestinian *fida'i* activity, and representing the Palestinian revolution, gained Palestinian and Arab popular support. After the battle, brother Abu Ammar visited some of the Arab countries that supported Fatah. This was before Fatah assumed the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Algeria was one of the key stops in brother Abu Ammar's tour.

After his return from Algeria, at a leadership meeting in Amman, brother Abu Ammar briefed us on the outcome of his visit to these various Arab countries. He devoted some time discussing Algeria, telling us President Houari Boumediene had suggested it is now time for the revolution, Fatah, to start its international activity from Europe. He mentioned that the President also expressed Algeria's complete readiness to support Palestinian work in Europe. Brother Abu Ammar and the Algerian president discussed potential representatives of the revolution in Europe, and between them agreed that Mohammed Abu Mayzar, Abu Hatem, had great experience with political work in Algeria and Algerian surroundings, and was the best to represent Fatah and the Palestinian revolution in Europe at that time. They also agreed it would best if I was based in Paris, and the president promised that Algeria would fully support this move.

After long discussions I travelled to Paris, the starting point of our work in Europe. That same week, president Houari Boumediene sent Mohammad Yazid to Paris. Yazid was a keen journalist - in other words he was a semi vice-minister of information in the interim government. For a long time Yazid represented Algeria in the United Nations, especially at the sessions of General Assembly. He made connections with many journalists and politicians, French and non-French, through the UN. This was especially so because Yazid was one of the cornerstones of the Evian meetings, between the Algerian Revolution and the French government that produced the Evian Accords.

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Yazid spent an entire month with me, and through him I met a wide group of French people and Arab residents in France, especially from the Arab Maghreb. These were people interested in the Algerian Revolution as well as the French committees that supported the French revolution. Some of the people I met the French lawyers who defended the leadership of the Algerian revolution, after the leadership were kidnapped and detained in France. I remember one of the most important meetings in that period was a meeting held between Yazid, one of the Moroccan or Mauritanian-Moroccan brothers and myself. That brother was the journalist al-Bahi Mohammad, and I should mention the role al-Bahi played in building these relationships. In short, meetings were held with an extraordinary group of thinkers and journalists.

I remember the first meeting between Mohammed Yazid, Jean Daniel and I. Jean Daniel at the time was in the first stages of establishing his weekly magazine *Le Deauville*. At that time he had published only one or two editions. When we met in Jean's office, and after Yazid introduced me to him I discovered Yazid and Jean Daniel came from the same city in Algeria: both of them were from Blida. Jean Daniel is Jewish, born in Algeria and lived in Blida, Yazid's city. This connection gave the meeting a very special atmosphere.

I remember many of the people I met through Mohammad Yazid, Mohammed Belaid or al-Mahdi al-A'alawi. Al-A'alawi was a member of the Moroccan royal family. He was in charge of foreign affairs in the group that Mehdi Ben Barka led before he was kidnapped and killed in 1965 – he also played a very important role during that period. His contribution was, of course, under the guidance of the Moroccan Socialist Union.

We also met with Jacques Perique, who doesn't need any introduction. Perique lived for a long time in Morocco and knew the mentality that prevailed in the Arab Maghreb extremely well. I also met Maxime Rodinson, who also doesn't need any introduction; Rodinson had lived for sometime in Lebanon and Syria before the war, and had relations and interests in Arab and Islamic thought, and culture. I think all Arab intellectuals had read his books about Islam and Arabs.

One of the people I also met was Pierre Demeron. Pierre was still a young man after the 1967 war, and the defeat of the Arab regimes, when the western media hailed the crushing Israeli victory over the Arab states. However, a lone voice came out in France against Israel: that voice was Pierre Demeron, who wrote a book entitled, *Against Israel [Contre Israël]*. The daughter of the late Lebanese leader Riad al-Solh translated this book into Arabic, and

through it, and some articles he wrote, he became well known in Arab society. He also built strong relations with Colonel Ghazi Abu A'qel, head of the Media and Culture department of the Syrian army, and through this kept in constant contact with the Arab Mashreq. I also met Gerard Chariand, who was a Trotskyist left intellectual, and a member of the first political office Nayef Hawatmeh established under the name Democratic Front, after he defected from the Popular Front. Chariand wasn't close to the atmosphere of the Palestinian revolution. I remember when he opened the door for al-Bahi Mohammad and myself, he was carrying his daughter who at that time was less than one year old. The meeting with Pierre Demeron was very intimate, in a very small house and had a fully Levantine Arab atmosphere, we discussed this a lot.

There were many other meetings but the most important ones are the meetings Giselle Halimeh, Michelle de Beauvoir, she was a relative of Simone de Beauvoir, and a lawyer who was defending the five Algerian leaders detained at that time.

I don't want to mention all the meetings that were held with others, as I met with many Arab residents of France. Some of the most important people I met and who contributed to Palestinian work were the brothers from Morocco such as Sheikh Mohammad al-Basri, al-Bahi Mohammad, and the prominent lawyer Abdurrahman al-Youssoufi. I can't forget the role that Al-Youssoufi played – later he became Prime Minister of Morocco. I can't forget the meetings held with Abdurrahman Ben Barka, Mehdi Ben Barka's brother: at all of these meetings we discussed how to present the Palestinian Revolution.