

# Palestinians hold key to peace

by Roger Metcalfe

"The Middle East problem cannot be solved until there is a just solution to the Palestinian question", said Abdullah Abdullah, Director of the Palestinian Section of the Arab Information Centre in Ottawa. He was speaking at a meeting March 16 in the McInnes Room, organized by the Canada-Palestine Association.

Reviewing the history of the Palestinians, Abdullah pointed out their long historical roots in Palestine. "They have been the only consistent occupants of Palestine, with their roots going back 4000 years to the Caananites". He went on to say that the products of the Palestinian orange and olive groves were known world wide at the beginning of this century. Palestine was not a "land without people" as the founders of Zionism led others to believe.

Abdullah then turned to the claim of Zionism to Palestine. Noting that the vast majority of Jews had for centuries lived outside Palestine, he asked how someone could lay claim to a land that their ancestors had not occupied as a people for 2000 years.

He added that when the Zionist movement began sponsoring immigrants to settle in Palestine at the beginning of this century, they came not to live with the Palestinians, but to live in place of them. "Zionism was not a liberation movement of the Jews, but a European settler-colonial movement, similar to the imperialist settlements of Africa going on at the same time".

"The Balfour Declaration of 1917, promising a homeland to the Zionists, laid the basis for the strategy to come", Abdullah said. "... what right did the British have to promise Zionism a homeland which already belonged to somebody else: the Palestinians?"

Resisting both British colonial rule and mounting Zionist immigration, the Palestinians fought, often unarmed during the 1920's and 1930's. But eventually, Abdullah pointed out, faced with superior weaponry and frequent terrorist attacks by Zionist groups, the Palestinians were forcibly removed from their home and land in 1947-48.

"One particular incident, little spoken of in today's press, was the massacre by the Zionist Irgun group of 246 men, women and children in the Palestinian village of Deir Yassin in April 1948. The leader of the Irgun group which led the raid wrote later in his autobiography that had it not been for this massacre, there would not have been a state of Israel. That leader's name?—Menachem Begin!"

Turning to more recent history, Abdullah briefly touched upon the

us to stay forgotten in the eyes of the world, so that they could create a Jewish state free of any Arabs whatsoever, as Moishe Dayan put it".

He concluded his talk by asking: "What do the Palestinians want?" He replied by stating: "They want the right to return to their homes and land, their inalienable right as a people to self-determination and recognition of their national rights, and the right to create their own state, free from any external

be expected. What should be surprising, he said, was that after having been uprooted from their homeland, forced to go into an exile of refugee tents, and faced with the denials of Israeli leaders like Golda Meir, that the Palestinians ever existed, that such strikes were not more frequent.

Abdullah noted that while western voices were quick to speak on the Palestinian strike into Israel, he could hear only silence when the massive Israeli invasions of Lebanon were launched, killing hundreds of people, including many civilians. An audience member added that the western media in effect condoned the Israeli invasion by calling it a 'retaliation'. "The Middle East crisis did not begin last Saturday", he argued, "the Palestinians have been struggling for 50 years for their homeland. This invasion is only the latest Israeli attempt to liquidate the Palestinian resistance".

On Sadat's visit to Israel, Abdullah said that the Palestinians were deeply disappointed that Sadat took such an individual initiative, thereby weakening Arab unity and support for the Palestinian struggle, with little concrete to show in return. He warned that the Zionist leadership—and the present government in particular—has never shown any inclination to recognize the Palestinian right of self-determination; "the Zionists are only deluding themselves to think that peace can be achieved without a just settlement of the Palestinian question".

Abdullah ended the meeting with an appeal for understanding and support of the Palestinian struggle. He cited various Jews who were critics of Zionism or, even more, supporters of the Palestinian cause. "A democratic, secular Palestine where Jews, Christians, and Moslems can live side by side with equal obligations and rights, is, in the long run, the only viable solution to the Middle East question", he said. "... this is what the Palestinians propose, this is what we are struggling for".



Palestinian refugee camps in the Arab countries surrounding their homeland. He argued that, contrary to the oft-cited Israeli claim, it is not the responsibility of the Arab countries to re-settle the Palestinian refugees, "... for they have a home—Palestine". Even if efforts were made to absorb them in other Arab countries as permanent citizens, the Palestinians would resist: "Their desire to return home is immense".

#### Palestinian Resistance

After almost two decades of living in the refugee camps and waiting in vain for the right to return to their own homeland, the Palestinians began to re-group and arm themselves. The Palestine Liberation Organization was founded in 1964. "We learned through bitter experience that force can only be met with force, that the Zionists had no intention of ever letting us return, let alone recognizing our national rights. Rather, they wanted

interference".

"We are prepared to live with the Jews", Abdullah added, "for we have never opposed them either as a community or as a religion. What we oppose is Zionism, a political ideology which justifies the seizing of someone else's homeland. It is Zionism which is the obstacle to peace in the Middle East, not the Palestinians, or any so-called religious dispute".

During the question period that followed, questions generally focused either on the Palestinian strike into Israel and the subsequent invasion by the Israeli army into Lebanon, or on the visit last November of President Sadat of Egypt to Israel.

#### The Palestinian strike

Asked about the strike into Israel, Abdullah answered by saying that he deplored violence of any sort, but that such a reaction to Israel's continued refusal to recognize Palestinian national rights was to

## CUPE gives banks ultimatum

OTTAWA (CPA-CUP)—The country's largest union has warned Canadian chartered banks doing business with South Africa to reconsider their position or face a boycott.

In a letter to the heads of the Royal Bank, Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, Toronto Dominion Bank and the Bank of Montreal, the national secretary-treasurer of the Canadian Union of Public Employees said the union would ask its 240,000 members to withdraw their accounts and place them in community credit unions unless the banks stop dealing with South Africa.

Kealey Cummings said he had taken the position "in light of South Africa's terrible record in dealing with human rights and civil liberties."

"Every economic support to South Africa should cease as a means of convincing that government of its wrongdoing," the letter said.

## EIGHT YEARS OF THE (MARXIST-LENINIST) COMMUNIST PARTY OF CANADA

### ANNIVERSARY RALLY

DATE: Saturday, April 1st  
 TIME: 7:30 p.m.  
 PLACE: North End Library Auditorium (rear door)  
 2285 Gottingen Street

ALL FRIENDS OF THE PARTY ARE WARMLY INVITED TO ATTEND.



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