Arabs in Palestine denied jobs, heritage

Khaled Mouammar is a spokesman for the Arab-Palestine Association. He was born in Nazareth and left Palestine in 1948.

Excalibur interviewed Mouammar last week, in an effort to bring to light the Palestinian side of the complex Middle East situation.

By MICHAEL HOLLETT and PAUL STUART

The interview began with a discussion of charges of anti-Arab racism in Israel. Mouammar painted a bleak picture of life for Israeli Arabs.

'The Israelis are not as blunt about discrimination as the South Africans are about apartheid. They don't say that Arabs are second-class citizens officially, but that is how it is in practice.

"Members of my wife's family were among the people who stayed behind in occupied Palestine and tried to build a life for themselves. But they found it was impossible; her relatives couldn't operate a business in Haifa with Arab names."

Mouammar claimed that the Arabs remaining in Israeli territory are victims of total social, economic and cultural repression.

"Within Israel, Arabs costitute 12 per cent of the population, but make up only two per cent of university students. One reason for this is that most of them drop out of high school very early, because the Israeli high schools teach only what they call 'Israeli history'.

SKIP CENTURIES

"They skip 3,000 years of history, they bypass the Arabs completely. They say 'There was Israel, then the Romans came, then they resume with a history of Zionism.

"If an Arab stays in school, his cultural identity will be destroyed. They attempt to make him ashamed of his heritage.

the Toronto office of the Arab Im-

migrant Information and Communi-

ty Services, located on the second

floor of the First Unitarian Church

"It is only because the neighbours

reported the fire promptly that the

entire church did not burn up," he

"What's more, even if he graduates, 50 per cent of the jobs are blocked to Arabs because the Israelis claim they are defence related, and that Arabs would be a security

"The sciences and medical professions are taboo to Arabs for the same reason.'

He described the Toronto-based organization of which he is a member.

"The Arab Palestine Association was formed in 1966. After the '67 war, when the Palestinian struggle became well known, we devoted ourselves to supporting the resistance and its goals.

"There are 2,000 Palestinians in Toronto, 1,000 of them for occupied Palestine. Because many of them hold Israeli citizenship, they are afraid of reprisals that might be made against them by the Israeli government and in some cases, of a possible threat to the safety of their relatives in Palestine if they become involved in politics here.

INTERROGATED

"One refugee who lives here gave \$20 to the Palestinian Red Crescent (Red Cross), through us, in early 1973. In the summer he returned to Palestine to visit relatives in Nazareth. He was detained for a week and questioned by the Israeli authorities.

Mouammar presented a version of recent Mid-East history that contradicts the prevailing popular con-

When asked to comment on the charge that the Palestinians left their homes in 1948 to make way for an onslaught of Arab armies bent on genocide, Mouammar said, "Yes, we've heard that hundreds of times. It's just not true, and if you look at it reasonably, the whole idea makes no

"To begin with, a reporter, Michael Adams, monitored BBC tapes of Arab radio broadcasts from

after Toronto office fire-bombed

portant office was destroyed, and

damage was done to other offices in

"The damage has been estimated



Khaled Mouammar of the Arab-Palestinian Association

1947 to 1948, and didn't find a single broadcast urging Arabs to leave

"Think about it. If you were an Arab general, would you want a million hungry and homeless refugees clogging the roads and slowing down your army? Also, it would have made sense from a military point of view to have had a sympathetic population that could have helped the armies.

"In my own case, my family took me out on the back of a mule. I can still remember how sore I was afterwards. But we had to sneak into Lebanon; if the Arabs wanted us, why did we have to come in

"When Palestine was partitioned (in 1948), the Israelis were to receive 54 per cent of the territory, and we were to get the remainder, though we outnumbered the Jews.

'But the Zionists began infiltrating the Arab territory, and tried to claim the territory as their own. This action took place before May 15, when the partition was to take effect. The Arab armies did not move until after this date.

FRIGHTENING

"The presence of the Zionist A.I.I. members receive prank calls

"Then there was the massacre at

forces was frightening to our people. The Zionists were well-armed and had military experience fighting with the British in World War Two, whereas our people had been forbidden to carry arms.

Deir Yassin, in which 254 people

Ulster death toll below U.S. rates

CHICAGO (CUP/ENS) -Everyone knows Northern Ireland is

World attention has focused continually on the reports of bombings and murders originating in that military-occupied country. But according to latest FBI statistics, each of America's 10 largest cities is a worse place to be.

Homicide rates in these cities are much higher than in North Ireland. In fact, although Detroit and Ulster have about the same population, homicides in Detroit during 1973 alone totalled more than all of Ulster's in the past five and a half years of martial law.

were murdered. It was committed by the Irgun, which was led by Menachem Begir, who now leads an opposition faction in the Knesset (Israeli parliament).

"The Zionists exploited Deir Yassin skilfully in their propaganda. They spread the word of it, and paraded survivors of the massacre through the streets of Jerusalem as a warning to our people.

"One Israeli general later wrote that 'after Deir Yassin, our forces cut through the enemy like a knife through butter', and that 'without Deir Yassin, the creation of Israel would have been impossible'."

Mouammar also said, "Israel was admitted to the UN on the condition that the Palestinians be let back in. which we of course are still waiting for."

ABSENTEE LAWS

Mouammar described the expropriation of Palestinian land by the Israelis.

'After a million people left in 1948, there was much land left unoccupied. The Israelis passed a law allowing them to take possession of any absentee-controlled land. This allowed them to take over lands vacated by the refugees.

"As well, the United Jewish Appeal bought up land owned by big Arab land-owners. They required that Arabs never be allowed to work this land, and as a result many Palestinians who had farmed the land were without jobs and homes."

He discussed the Arab nations' early treatment of Palestinians. 'The surrounding countries were not in a position to assimilate one million refugees. Some of them were newly independent and had unstable

Egypt, for instance, is growing at the rate of one million people a year, and can not, and could not then, take in a lot of refugees. Added to that, they were recovering from the reign of the corrupt King Farouk.

"Lebanon is primarily a tourist country there are more Lebanese outside their country than in so they cannot provide any solution to our plight.'

Mouammar traced the growth of the Palestinian resistance from its earliest stages.

"After the 1956 war, the people of Palestine began to realize that the Arab regimes were not interested in aiding them, but only in pursuing their own interests.

EL FATAH

"So the political organization El r atan was formed in 1956, and secret cells were organized.

"But the Arab states were never sympathetic, and in 1964, they formed the Palestine Liberation Organization; it was to be used to keep the people quiet.

They did this very shrewdly. They put Zukhairy, the Saudi Arabian foreign minister, in charge; he had a big mouth, and did as they told

"It was he who said, 'We will push the Jews into the sea'

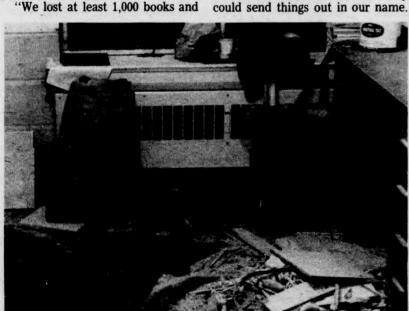
"But at the same time, guerillas were being organized, and on Janury 1, 1965, Fatah made the first strike into occupied Palestine.

(continued on p. 16)

on St. Clair Avenue, was firebombat approximately \$10,000, and our intherefore is surprised by the attack. surance doesn't cover that amout." A representative of the organiza-He said the bombers appeared to He added, however, that the organization has in the past been the tion, who wished to remain have known what to look for, since victim of pranks and threats; in fact, they broke into the files and stole the anonymous, said that immediately in the course of a discussion with Exorganization's membership lists. after the bombing, neighbours saw a dangerous place to be. two people fleeing the building.

Since the attack some people on our lists have been getting prank phone calls," said the spokesman. "They (the bombers) have our letterhead and our seal, so they

could send things out in our name.



On the night of December 13, 1974, many files in the fire. Our most im-

the area

A section of the fire-bombed offices of the Arab Immigrant Information and Community Services.

We have warned members of the community of this possibility.'

The spokesman emphasized that the AII is a non-political organization supported by the federal, provincial and municipal governments, and calibur, he received another of what he termed the "endless" phone calls the office gets.

He speculated that the reason the office is subject to abuse is because the organization is the only one in the city whose identity is purely

'We are the only listing in the phone book under 'Arab'," he said. He said the church that houses the

office "has been quite courageous. 'They have condemned the fire bombing, and some people have started a collection to help pay for repairs."

He criticized the Toronto police department, however, for "trying to cover the whole thing up", and described the Toronto Star's attitude toward the incident as "hands off".

"Their reporter came and spoke with us and was very enthusiastic. He said he was going to write a feature, but when he got back to his editor, the idea was dropped."

The office is on the way to being repaired, and the organization is attempting to carry on its daily business as normally as possible.

Muzak visits the plant kingdom

INDIANAPOLIS (CUP/ENS) — Wondering if your house plants have been getting lonely all those weekdays when you leave them alone?

Your worries are over: a new album from the Funny Forum of Indianapolis is designed "for people who don't have time to entertain their

Entitled Vegetation Conversation: Music and Thoughts for Things in Pots, the album features songs such as Lament to a Plant and No Matter How Fertile, There's No Place Like Loam.

The liner notes claim that the musical numbers and poetry "provide the plant with the audio attention and musical manure to accelerate its wellbeing in the owner's absence".