

PFLP MARKS WOMENS DAY

Comrade George Habash, General Secretary of the PFLP, held a meeting with women cadre on the occasion of International Womens Day, and delivered the following presentation.

On the occasion of International Womens Day, I would first like to express to you all the most heartfelt congratulations on behalf of the Politbureau, the Central Committee and on my own behalf. I would also like to extend my deepest solidarity and struggle for the sake of the victory of women, their liberation and the victory of their just cause. It is natural to remember our women martyrs, such as Comrade Taghrid al Batmeh and sister Dalal al Moughrabi, as well as all the other women martyrs of the Palestinian revolution. It is also natural on this occasion to remember and salute the wives and mothers of our martyrs; to salute the women comrades and sisters imprisoned in Zionist and reactionary jails and to bow our heads in humility before their patience, steadfastness and continuation of service to the Palestinian revolution, despite the hard conditions they are under.

My comrades, allow me to salute through you all the women of the world, the women

of the Arab nation and Palestinian women. With this salutation, I declare on behalf of our leadership our determination to achieve the task of womens liberation as a part of our continuous and endless revolutionary work – a task that will not come to an end until the complete liberation of humanity has been achieved.

On this occasion, I felt it would be best to briefly note the PFLP's most important stands with regard to womens liberation. We are committed to these stands in our struggle – a commitment that we solemnly promise you and all the masses to fulfill.

Our position on the subject of womens liberation is based on a number of understandings:

First: There should be nothing less than complete equality for women as human beings. In the PFLP, we begin with the scientific belief that the question of equality between men and women has nothing to do with biological differences or with women's abilities in general. In the broad historical context this inequality is a passing sickness. We should not surrender to this matter of inequality. It is like capitalism or imperialism, which respectively represent class and

national oppression. These have been present in our societies for a long time, but have we surrendered to them? The answer is no, we have not. We struggle for our liberation knowing that imperialism will and must pass because it is based on the exploitation of man by his fellow man. In the same way, with the same enthusiasm, we must struggle against inequality between men and women, until the complete liberation of women – despite the long time span that stretches between us and the achievement of this task.

This is the first stand of the PFLP with regard to the question of womens liberation. We stress the central issue of inequality and analyze it scientifically. This provides an economic basis, and this condition of inequality will only change once the economic base is changed.

Second: Womens liberation is of necessity connected with political liberation, followed by economic liberation and then the social liberation of society as a whole. It is unrealistic to believe that it is possible to liberate the masses of Palestinian and Arab women separately from political liberation and from the struggle for economic liberation, i.e., apart from the national democratic revolution that places society on the threshold of socialism.

The path leading to genuine liberation of Palestinian and Arab women is the path of participation in the national democratic revolution. Some women may achieve individual liberation to a certain degree; however, complete liberation cannot be separated from the ongoing battle between the forces of progress, liberation and socialism on one hand, and the forces of imperialism, Zionism and reaction on the other.

Third: At present, the Palestinian revolution provides the most suitable objective conditions for the process of womens liberation. This point reflects the view of the PFLP with regard to the dialectical relation between the Palestinian revolution and the liberation of Palestinian women. You, as comrades of the PFLP, participate fervently in the struggle against the Zionist enemy; you dress the wounds of those struck during air raids and you demonstrate against oppression and attacks. This is the path to the liberation of Palestinian women. The Palestinian revolution provides the suitable conditions for the beginning of the process of womens liberation and the crystallization

PFLP Womens Day poster.



of the dialectical relationship between the liberation of women and the liberation of Palestine.

I don't believe that your activities and those of your sisters in the occupied land — including demonstrations, protests, nursing, etc. — would have been possible or would have reached such heights if your mothers and fathers did not feel that you were struggling for the cause of all the people. It is in this way that the process of changing attitudes towards women occurs. Thus when a woman really participates in the Palestinian revolution, she is demonstrating the right to our liberation and to her liberation.

Fourth: The process of womens liberation is to a great extent the responsibility of women themselves. We have mentioned this before on other occasions, and now repeat this point so you will realize your special responsibility. I do not deny the vanguard role of the party in this process. On the contrary, I consider the party to be the base of this process; however, this must be complemented by a stand which specifies the special role of women. This is what drove Ho Chi Minh to say: "Do not wait for the liberation of women to come from the government or from the party — this is a task you must fulfill yourselves." I do not, naturally, go so far as to cancel or lessen the role the party must play as the leader of the

whole process of change in society — as a leader of the process of political liberation, then economic and social. However, the complete liberation of women can never be achieved without the special struggle of women themselves.

Our joint struggle — men and women's — is a revolutionary process which is now taking place and will continue until the complete liberation of humankind and the eradication of all types of oppression and repression in society. Both men and women will participate in the process of political liberation; however, in light of the present situation of inequality, we say regretfully that men will play the outstanding role in this stage. After this the stage of economic liberation begins, and here the role of women will increase in the process of building socialism — the only way to remove economic exploitation from society. But after the process of political liberation (the liberation of Palestine), and after the process of economic liberation (socialist construction), there remains the great task of social and cultural liberation. This is the most critical stage.

On the level of oppression of women by men, you as women must rely on yourselves to a great extent and on the formal programs of the party. We are speaking of a long historical process. We are not speaking now

of women's activities in Lebanon or in the occupied homeland, nor are we discussing the current realities of the Palestinian revolution and the dangers facing us. Why? Mainly, because this is a women's occasion. Thus, despite the critical dangers facing us in the political situation which might cause some to despair, we are 100% sure that the process of the liberation of all of humanity will continue, as has been proven by the movement of history. No one should be under the illusion that if we face great difficulties in the Lebanese arena in the coming period, then the process of liberation will come to a stop, making all this talk meaningless. The process of the liberation of humanity will continue, and the conflict between the exploited and the exploiters will continue. History has confirmed that it will only end with the victory of the exploited.

Fifth: Our stand with regard to womens liberation is connected to the role played by the party in the process of liberation. It is true that you as women must bear special responsibility, but it is the party which is responsible for completion of the process of liberation on all levels. The party is responsible for reaping whatever benefits can be achieved from the dialectical relationship that exists between the Palestinian revolution and the process of womens liberation. It is also responsible for spreading revolutionary ideas with respect to womens liberation in order to pave the way for the third stage of struggle — the stage of social liberation. We always are struggling on a political, economic and social level; however, each stage has special characteristics. We are now going through the stage of political struggle, aiming at the liberation of Palestine and establishing political authority. After that begins the stage of building socialism, accompanied by a cultural revolution, i.e., the process of ideological liberation. Clearly events in Poland provide an example of how a Marxist-Leninist party should always remain aware that the process of political liberation should be accompanied by economic and social liberation as well.

Sixth: The last of these points is that we in the PFLP consider the stand taken on women as not only a matter of principle but a moral issue. The position on women and their right to equality and liberation comes as the result of moral values. There is a Marxist-Leninist saying that a people who exploits another is not a free people. In the same vein, we say that any human being who exploits or enslaves another is not free. This is the essence of the moral issue in regard to women.

