

PFLP-DFLP

Program for Unity and Democratic Reform in the PLO



The following is the full text of the Program for Unity and Democratic Reform in the Palestine Liberation Organization, presented by the Joint Leadership of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine at a press conference in Damascus on October 16th, and addressed to all Palestinian resistance organizations, progressive forces and nationalist personalities.

Since its inception, the Palestinian revolution has been exposed to many dangers, which have taken different and various forms. These dangers grew and intensified with the growth and broadening of the Palestinian revolution and its increasing political, military and mass influence on the regional and international level.

Throughout the present phase of its struggle, the Palestinian revolution has faced different kinds of imperialist-Zionist-reactionary conspiracies - military and political - aimed to liquidate it, stop its development and growth, and hinder its militancy. However, despite these ongoing liquidationist attempts, the revolution was able to stand firm and preserve its ability to continue the struggle in its different forms against the Zionist - imperialist - reactionary enemy.

The peak of the military attacks launched by the imperialist-Zionist-reactionary alliance against the revolution, in order to liquidate it and thus remove the major obstacle to the implementation of the Camp David accords, was the Zionist invasion of June 1982, with the total support and coordination of US imperialism and the Arab reactionary forces.

However, the failure of the Zionist invasion to fully achieve its aims did not keep the enemy forces from continuing their efforts to drag the revolution into the US liquidationist settlement through the Reagan plan, in an attempt to capitalize on the results that followed, forcing the Palestinian revolution to leave Beirut.

The difficult objective and subjective conditions faced by the Palestinian revolution after its departure from Beirut placed it in a highly critical situation. This exposed the revolution to real, concrete dangers, threatening its entity, line and future, in a way never experienced before in the different stages of the conflict with the enemy forces. We can summa-

rize the dangers the Palestinian revolution is facing in the following points:

First: The danger of political liquidation, and the present attempts to draw the PLO into the US line, accepting to deal with the proposed US liquidationist settlement, first and foremost the Reagan plan. This danger grew with the emergence and growth of some right-wing Palestinian circles who, with the support and encouragement of the Arab right, are willing to converge with the US line and respond to its projects.

Second: The danger of a split in the ranks of the PLO, for political, organizational and disciplinary reasons, which has reached a peak since the Palestinian revolution was forced to leave Beirut. The internal crisis in the Fatah movement and the resulting divisions, followed by the fighting which brought more complications and interference, poses this danger powerfully.

Third: The danger of the PLO being contained or subjected to Arab (regime) tutelage, which would annul the independence of Palestinian national decision-making, and obliterate the national rights of the Palestinian people.

In light of the present circumstances and conditions surrounding the PLO, and the serious dangers threatening its political line, entity, and future, we believe that the responsibility for salvation falls on all the forces of the revolution, and on all Palestinian nationalist and progressive forces and elements. The process of salvation must be based on deep conviction, and on clear recognition of the necessity and importance of achieving democratic reforms in the institutions of the PLO, so as to preserve its unity, cohesiveness, independence and sole representation of the Palestinian people; to maintain the masses' adherence to the PLO, and its political gains on the regional and in-

ternational level, achieved through struggle.

In order to execute this program of reforms in constituting and organizing the leading bodies of the PLO, it is necessary to provide organizational guarantees, i.e., to have democratic relations on the basis of a front. Furthermore, agreement on this should be reached among all the organizations of the revolution and among all the progressive and nationalist forces and elements, in the framework of the legal bodies of the PLO.

In this framework, we believe that the correct introduction to presenting proposals for determining the required aspects of democratic reforms, is to pin-point the main defective phenomena in the PLO's conditions; the following are the most important aspects:

The political aspect:

Generally speaking, the positions of the PLO on the political level lack clarity and firmness. Though this phenomenon emerged clearly and sharply after the departure from Beirut, it has been present in form and content for several years. The implications of this are extremely serious, for a clear political line and positions on the part of the PLO, as a revolutionary popular movement, play a decisive role in rallying the masses, and broadening and strengthening their mobilization.

This lack of clarity and firmness in the positions exists in spite of the political programs that have been adopted in the consecutive National Council sessions, which constitute the minimum national platform. Without going into details, we can say that these programs were rarely respected and adhered to in determining the political moves and positions of the PLO.

The lack of clarity in political line and positions is evident in the excessive influence of tactics on strategy to the point that, in most cases, the tactics were transformed into maneuvers with a narrow perspective, causing damage to the struggle of the Palestinian revolution, its strategic interests and aims. This is manifest in the following symptoms:

First: Neglecting the anti-imperialist nature of the Palestinian revolution, which forms one of its major characteristics. This is expressed in willingness to cooperate with US imperialist plans, including making principle compromises on our national rights in exchange for a dialog with the United States.

Second: Relinquishing the strategic truth that coexistence between our Palestinian people and Arab nation on the one hand, and Zionism on the other, is impossible. This was evidenced in willingness to recognize the right of the Zionist entity to exist, and in the series of meetings with forces who declare their belief in

Zionism - meetings which were in violation of the National Council's resolutions.

Third: Belittling the fact of the struggle, that the PLO is part of the Arab national liberation movement and one of its vanguards. Contrary to this truth, the practice and relations of the influential leadership in the PLO give priority to relations with the Arab reactionary regimes at the expense of relations with the forces of the Arab national liberation movement.

Fourth: Non-differentiation of relations with the Arab regimes. It is natural for the PLO to have relations with all Arab regimes, but at the same time it is natural to make a distinction between the reactionary and the nationalist regimes when determining the level of the relations. The influential leadership in the PLO is extremely mindful of its relations with the reactionary regimes, including the Camp David regime of Egypt, while inflating differences with the nationalist regimes. This contributes to weakening the alliance with these nationalist regimes in the confrontation with imperialism and Zionism. The vanguard role of the Palestinian revolution in the framework of the Arab national liberation movement requires that the priority be to consolidate the positions of the nationalist regimes and strengthen their unity on the basis of a more solid policy against imperialism.

The organizational aspect:

The general phenomenon on the organizational level is that of the excessive influence of individualism, as opposed to the role of the collective leadership and institutions in the PLO. It has been noticed that the individualist tendency has been increasing tremendously in the last few years, affecting all political, organizational, cultural, informational, military and financial levels. This ranges from making political decisions singlehandedly to the appointments in the PLO's institutions and departments. Furthermore, it impedes the collective decisions and voids them of their contents.

This individualism is combined with the domination of one group, which provides fertile soil for individualistic decision-making. Indeed, this leads to weakening national unity based on democratic front relations among the various Palestinian organizations, and deprives them of participation in the decision-making process. All this has led to the emergence of a bureaucratic bourgeois group within the PLO's institutions, where opportunists, retrogressive elements, and those who are only concerned about personal benefits found a place for themselves.

It is natural that individualistic policies and the domination of one group leads to weakening the principles of democratic front work in the framework of the PLO and its bodies and institutions. It is also natural that corrupt financial policies go hand in hand with unilateralism and one group domination. Obviously, this also leads to phenomena of financial and administrative abuse within the PLO's institutions and departments; the choice of personnel relies heavily on group affiliation, rather than on the qualifications, experience and history of struggle of those appointed to responsible positions. All this leads to almost total absence of needed evaluations and accountability for mistakes.

This situation can no longer be tolerated or ignored. Though we confine our review of the defects within the PLO to the political and organizational levels, this does not mean that there are no problems on other levels, such as the military, information, conduct, relations with the masses, etc. However, the defects on the political and organizational levels stand as the major ones, from which the other defects stem.

We emphasize that although these defects are quite harmful, yet they are not the dominant characteristic of the Palestinian revolution. Nor have they undermined the great national gains of the PLO in reviving the Palestinian people's national identity, solidifying their independence, reaffirming and protecting their national rights from impediments, and insuring Arab and international recognition of the PLO.

This affirms the error of those who try to undermine the importance of all these gains achieved by the PLO, and who fall into the trap of desperation, losing hope of the possibility of reform.

The defects and mistakes are a result of the class nature of the political forces that make decisions within the leadership of the PLO, and who bear the primary responsibility.

The left and democratic forces do not overlook their share of responsibility because of the lack of coordination and joint efforts among them, which weakened their role and effectivity within the PLO. However, we are confident that the struggle of the left and the democratic, progressive forces and all the radical nationalist elements is quite capable of putting an end to the crisis and overcoming all defects and achieving democratic reform in a way that insures the unity and independence of the PLO.

In light of this, we emphasize that fulfilling the demands for democratic reform must be based on the following principles:

First: Adherence to the Palestinian National Charter and the consecutive Palestinian Nation-

al Councils' resolutions, in particular the political program adopted in its 14th session, which constitutes the basis for defining the PLO's policies and positions.

Second: Totally ruling out any tendency to bet on the capitulationist political settlement; total confrontation of the liquidationist schemes by all means; completely dispelling any illusions about the possibilities of fulfilling the rights of the Palestinian people through these schemes.

Third: Absolute affirmation that imperialism, in particular US imperialism, is our enemy; translating this position in declared public positions and implementing it in our alliance policy, as well as in our way of dealing with imperialist plans and initiatives, i.e., to clearly and decisively reject them.

Fourth: Affirmation of our affiliation to the Arab national liberation movement; implementing this by developing the relations of militant solidarity with the organizations of the movement, giving them priority based on equality and mutual solidarity.

Fifth: Defining the level of relations with the Arab regimes on the basis of their position towards US imperialism and its plans; and their position on the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, and their commitment to supporting the Palestinian national struggle and goals, and the PLO as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

Sixth: Affirmation that the alliance with the Soviet Union and the rest of the socialist community, with the national liberation movements, and with the forces of progress, democracy and peace in the world, is a strategic matter, not subject to compromises or maneuvers. Efforts should be made to further develop this alliance on a principled basis and on the basis of joint struggle against imperialism and its puppets.

On the basis of these principles, there are some essential matters at this time that demand a clear position from the PLO, mainly the following:

On the political level:

1. To decisively reject and oppose the Reagan plan as it is the central point in the imperialist-Zionist-reactionary schemes at this stage, and aims to totally liquidate the Palestinian national cause.

2. To reject the Jordanian regime's project which calls for establishing a Palestinian - Jordanian federal or confederal union, in order to facilitate negotiations with the enemy on the basis of the Reagan plan; to reject all forms of participation, authorization or mandate

(to speak on behalf of the Palestinian people), which the Jordanian regime is trying to achieve. The relations between the PLO and the Jordanian regime should be reviewed on the basis of the PLO's sole representation of our people everywhere, the right of the PLO - with all its organizations - to work in Jordan, including the right to political, organizational and mass work, and the use of the Jordanian front to intensify armed struggle against the Zionist enemy.

3. To resist any relations with the Egyptian regime, and to fight all attempts to break its isolation as long as it continues to adhere to the Camp David accords; to support the struggle of the Egyptian nationalist forces in their opposition to the capitulationist policies of the regime; to condemn and take measures against the circles that establish contacts with this regime.

4. To struggle against the rightist and reactionary attempts that aim to transform the resolutions of the Fez Summit into a bridge towards the US solution; to reject the reactionary conception which attempts to use these resolutions as an avenue to recognition of the Zionist enemy.

5. To adhere to the resolutions of the Palestinian National Council concerning relations with Jewish forces, limiting these to relations with those democratic forces that oppose Zionism as an ideology and practice, and that support the right of the Palestinian people to establish an independent state in their homeland, led by the PLO.

6. To revive and activate the Palestinian National Front in the Occupied Territories, as the arm of the PLO inside; to extend its activities and structure to include all cities, villages and camps in the territories, as a framework for uniting all the national forces in the struggle against settlements, Judaization, expulsion and other plans of the occupation, and in order to confront all suspicious attempts to create alternatives to the PLO as the sole representative of our people.

7. To strengthen and develop the Palestinian-Syrian-Lebanese alliance in confronting the imperialist-Zionist schemes in the area.

8. To strengthen and develop the militant relations with the National Salvation Front and Amal movement; to provide them with all political and material support in their struggle to banish the occupation and sectarian hegemony, and to abort the Zionist-Phalangist-US agreement in order to preserve Lebanon's unity, sovereignty, Arab identity and all the democratic gains achieved by the masses and their national and progressive forces.

9. To protect the security of our masses and camps in Lebanon; to preserve the civil and social rights of our people, and to uphold

their national rights to be organized and engage in political work, to carry arms and join the revolution; to guarantee the rights of the PLO and its institutions in Lebanon according to the agreements and commitments previously reached; to work to deter the terror practiced against our masses, and those responsible for this, whether the heads of the regime, the fascist isolationist forces, or others.

10. To reinforce and progressively transform the relations with Syria on the platform of joint cooperation on the patriotic and national question, in order to counter the Zionist enemy and the plans and proposals of imperialism, Zionism and reaction in the area, first and foremost the Camp David accords, the Reagan plan and the recent Zionist-Phalangist-US agreement.

On the organizational level:

1. To emphasize commitment to the organizational program that was adopted at the 14th session of the Palestinian National Council; to promote positive work on the part of the PLO leadership and all the Palestinian organizations to implement this program.

2. To solidify the functional systems of the PLO's institutions and guarantee the upgrading of their role; to redetermine the basis, necessary regulations and program of the PLO's central organs in particular, first and foremost the Executive Committee.

3. To implement the principle of collective leadership in all bodies and structures of the PLO, starting with the Executive Committee; to adhere to the organizational rules and regulations in order to apply this principle; to fight against any violations or individual practice on the part of any party; and furthermore, to adopt and apply the principle of taking measures against any departure from collectivism.

4. To put an end to the domination of the one group and open the opportunity for all Palestinian nationalist forces to participate in the leading bodies of the PLO and its other departments and institutions.

5. To limit the role of reporting and declaring the PLO's political positions, and its relations with other forces, to the Executive Committee and the appropriate parties involved, on the basis of democratic, collective decision-making. Any departure from this principle should be condemned, and measures taken against this.

6. To review the formation of the higher councils, departments and offices of the PLO, whereby: (A) They should be formed of committed, qualified and capable persons, meanwhile purging bad and unqualified elements. (B) All na-

tionalist groups should participate on the basis of correct front relations.

7. To consolidate democracy in the structures of the PLO; to preserve democratic principles in internal relations and adopt the principle of democratic dialog as the sole method for solving all problems and differences. Any departure from this, particularly resorting to the use of armed force, is absolutely condemned and to be considered as a criminal act on the part of the offending party.

8. To adopt the principle of taking measures in the bodies of the PLO against any political, military or disciplinary violation, or any shortcomings in the execution of duties.

9. To develop the institutions of the occupied territories inside and outside, giving them the required efforts and the necessary means and capabilities; to preserve the unity of the popular and trade unions, especially the workers union.

10. To preserve the independence of the popular unions based on commitment to the PLO and the principles of democratic work in these unions; to adopt the principle of relative representation in the process of electing their bodies, since this is the best principle for preserving and strengthening democracy and for enlarging the mass base of these unions.

On the military level:

1. To emphasize that armed struggle constitutes the main option of the Palestinian revolution; therefore, to intensify and develop the military work against the Zionist enemy in the occupied Palestinian territories and in Lebanon.

2. To execute the resolutions of the Palestinian National Council concerning uniting the forces of the Palestinian revolution in one Palestinian liberation army; to establish principle rules and regulations to guarantee the freedom of all its members to adhere to different ideological tendencies and organizations, and to guarantee democratic life along with military discipline in its ranks.

3. To adopt the criteria of national commitment, military qualifications and experience in appointing the leading bodies and making promotions in the united Palestinian national liberation army; to adopt the principle of taking measures against any mistakes that occur.

4. To form a special body to investigate all forms of dereliction of duty and misconduct that occurred during the confrontation of the Zionist invasion of Lebanon; to bring to trial all those against whom there is evidence of involvement in these wrongdoings.

5. To return all the forces of the Palestinian revolution to concentrate in areas from which they are able to practice their military activities against the Zionist enemy.

On the financial level:

First: To unite all financial collections and donations in the Palestinian National Fund. All the PLO's finances should be the responsibility of the Palestinian National Fund and supervised by the Executive Committee.

Second: To limit expenditures to those decided by the Executive Committee in accordance with the adopted principles, regulations and budgets.

Third: To make sure that the Palestinian National Fund pays the expenditures on all groups within the PLO: fighters, full-time revolutionaries, the injured, the families of the martyrs, etc. as well as the Liberation Army and all bodies and institutions of the Palestinian revolution.

Fourth: To fight against all forms of waste and misuse of funds, and the corruption (of cadres through excess benefits) in the PLO institutions and the organizations of the revolution.

The Joint Leadership of the PFLP and DFLP submits this program to all Palestinian national groups, forces and personalities in order to achieve democratic reform, meanwhile protecting the unity of the PLO, so as to strengthen its vanguard role and preserve its achievements and independence.

Considering that this program meets the requirements of the present state of our struggle we are confident that it can be implemented through the unity and solidarity of all these forces.

The experience of our people proved that through national unity in the framework of the PLO, we were able to overcome all the obstacles and critical stages through which we have passed... Relying on this, we will be able to overcome this difficult stage as well.

The self-criticism from which this program proceeds is not aimed to slander or spread desperation, but rather to illuminate the path towards correcting and reforming the conditions of the PLO and the Palestinian revolution.

The Joint Leadership of the two fronts expresses its total readiness for an immediate dialog, with the participation of all groups of the revolution and Palestinian nationalist forces and personalities, on this program, as it is considered the path to salvation.

The Joint Leadership

The Democratic Front
for the Liberation
of Palestine

The Popular Front
for the Liberation
of Palestine

October 16, 1983