

Yarmouk: the generational conflict and the destruction of the defiant community

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Yarmouk: a disaster bigger than a camp

Introduction

In the context of the tragic Syrian crisis and the sharp political segregation it has produced, prevalent daily thought is industriously popularizing absolutist terms like ‘conspiracy’ and ‘revolution’ in order to abbreviate a complex reality. The remaining time is spent gathering the evidence used to affirm these popularized terms in political debate. By interpreting what is happening as a ‘foreign conspiracy’, the dominant ideology is aiming to immobilize the country internally, refusing to meet its demands or honor its rights, and denying it the social influence that these things would bring. Meanwhile, we find that after losing its project inside the country, as well as its international backing, a large section of the left has moved towards making an ideology out of cutting itself off from the world. At the same time, much of the dispersed opposition is seeking to cheapen the word ‘revolution’, strip it of its meaning and obscure the varying phases that the conflict has passed through, and one section of this opposition is actually contributing to the process of crushing the revolution.

The time that has passed since the establishment of the grassroots movement calling for change in the region is comparable to the degree to which its demands have become obscured and the motives behind them absent from the sphere of public concern. This situation is an intellectual and political expression of the material exclusion of the people who made these demands and the derailing of

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their struggle. It is also the result of efforts to transform them in to soldiers in the wars of the dominant forces. In each attempt to understand the course events have taken we once again discover that the sharp contradictions which gave rise to the social movement in Syria remain the motive behind events that for a multitude of reasons have largely veered off course in to the stalemate of civil war.

The above general reading applies to the part as well as the whole; we reach this conclusion once again when we examine the situation of Syria's Palestinian refugees from four years ago until the present, and when we examine the division that has appeared among them, between most of the younger generation—especially young people with organizational experience—and the political organizations in the Damascus-based Alliance of Khan al-Shih camp (APF)ⁱ. Here too, we find that the organizational body is working hard to cloud clear demands, and using besiegement, detention and killing to force its rivals in to more than just defeat; acceptance of its story about what has happened and what is happening is being imposed through the 'regularization'ⁱⁱ of those who have rebelled against it, or rather, through the attempted 'regularization' of the Palestinian presence in Syria as a whole.

In this article we shall deal with the 'generational conflict' that we believe is intensifying the three main factors that have put Palestinian politics in Syria—which is controlled by the Syrian regime—at odds with the country's 'Palestinian community'. They are as follows: the hampering of participation in politics; the restriction of the kind of political development that is in keeping with the new self-awareness of the younger generation; and, the use of the people to serve the interests of the ruling few.

In our discussion of how the Palestinian generational conflict has manifested itself we shall focus specifically on describing it amongst Palestinian refugees and especially in Yarmouk camp, where many young Palestinians proudly call themselves "Syrian Palestinians". They hypothesize that the clash which took place between them and the APF was an explosive revelation of the transformations the two sides and their relationship to one another had quietly undergone over the previous two decades. The reason we have focused on this subject is that carrying out this kind of research for all Palestinians in all the places where they are present

would be impossible. Therefore, we shall discuss the various relevant viewpoints and interpret them within the circumstances in which they were formed, using the resources and at our disposal and the space allowed.

In our attempt to confirm the extent to which this hypothesis is true, we shall avoid the temptation to document all of the many incidents, in particular the painful ones except where necessary for research, and focus on trying to interpret them instead. As we are discussing a situation that spans four years and has revealed changes that took place over nearly a quarter of a century, it is best for us to select the incidents that represent an intensification of other cases.

In order to carry out this task we have relied upon our own direct experienceⁱⁱⁱ and upon the testimonies of young people who took part in the movement. The latter were acquired through interviews^{iv} or through communicating with the young people in question via social media channels. In our investigations, we applied a research method based on observation and monitoring. We also compared the acquired testimonies before outlining the points that were agreed upon and the testimonies we considered most objective so that they could be used as dependable data for making well-founded conclusions. In addition to this, we have reviewed the statements and press releases of the concerned Palestinian actors in the time period covered by the research.

Yarmouk camp

The Palestinians of Yarmouk camp are proud of the neighborhood, not only because it is the capital of the Palestinian diaspora but also, if such an expression can be used, because it has become a 'damascene town' through its transformation in to a large commercial market for the surrounding area. This could not have happened without the damascene absorption of the camp through the southward expansion of Syria's capital. The veracity of this picture can be seen in the number of the camp's inhabitants which has grown to over of one million with Palestinians forming a minority of no more than an approximate 200 thousand^v. It can also be seen in the transformation of its streets in to markets that are well-known across Syria and perhaps beyond the borders. These include Yarmouk Street, Loubia Street and Safad Street. However, this has not taken place without an increase in the

camp's internal class segregation and the shifting of the poorest group towards 'integrating' with impoverished Syrians in parts of the camp and in their areas. Integration, which is a varying matter even among Syrians, has occurred to the degree that the situation in the country allows it to, from neighborhoods like Tadamon, Al-Hajr al-Aswad and Al-Aruba to Al-Husseiniya, one of the poorest neighborhoods in the area around Damascus. "Only in conditions of war did residents realize that the camp's geography makes it a lung for the southern area should it be surrounded", Ammar Rashdan told us in his testimony.

Inside this commercial space, which has adapted to the gradual economic opening by the authorities over the last two decades, a new youthful character has developed as has happened in Syria's other cities. The difference here lies in the fact that a dual Syrian-Palestinian identity has also developed. This may be observed in the testimony of Issam Al-Khatib, who says that "the Palestinian people have participated alongside the Syrian people at all academic, cultural and professional levels. They have shared their worries and joys, and intermarried. Palestinians in Syria are no longer mere guests; they have become a part of Syrian society". As a result of this awareness young Palestinians have shared the worries and aspirations of young Syrians. At the same time a desire has developed to deal with the Palestinian cause in a different way and take it out of so-called 'realistic' contexts that have cut many off from their Palestinian side and excluded them from participating in decisions that concern their future.

A day of revelation

The 'Yarmouk Intifada' of 6 June 2011 has not been afforded the research and investigation it deserves, despite the fact that it was unique among clashes between diaspora Palestinians. For the first time a Palestinian faction opened fire on civilian demonstrators who had taken action based on reasons and deductions related to the divergence of generations rather than moving with the rhythm of differences between the factions, even though these differences were part of their memory.

At first, what happened during the funeral for the rally of the return martyrs came as a shock to all the Khan al-Shih camp and intellectuals, and perhaps to many of the demonstrators themselves. The people began to discover their position in a

joint declaration that rejected what they considered “the use of Palestinian blood to conceal Syrian blood” and “the killing of the Syrian people in the name of Palestine’s cause”^{vi}. During the funeral, the exchange of opinion between demonstrators on the street revealed the extent to which they agreed that what had happened was a planned operation. Young people had been left to die alone in the Golan in a spectacular television scene that was accompanied by remarks from Damascus or from a sufficient number of kilometers away to guarantee personal safety by the supposed leaders of the people. The goal was to “remind Israel and its allies that their security is decided by the Syrian regime,” according to two corroborative testimonies from Mohammed and Abdullah Al-Khatib. The demonstrators shouted out their view collectively, causing a wave of anger to spread. This anger was then vented in the face of Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) official Maher Taher, who they met in the Al-Shuhada Cemetery. The instant Taher’s bodyguard fired in the air, the protesters pelted him and his bodyguard with stones and pursued him to a building where he took shelter before he was smuggled out over the rooftops. After this the protest grew larger and the demonstrators moved to the Khalisa building. Ahmad Al-Jibril himself opened fire on them along with the guards as they arrived, causing several deaths and injuries before the people inside were smuggled away and the demonstrators burnt part of the building.^{vii}

The accused generation

In the days that followed Ahmad Jibril’s escalation^{viii} the alarmed factions swung in to action after the former incited the parties to the APF who considered their condemnation in the street an attack their representation of that street and the foundations of their legitimacy. The members of the alliance quickly put together lists naming those who they accused of being responsible and it became clear, to them and those who follow them, that the accused were the most prominent young people working in public arena in Yarmouk camp. They were also former and current members of the youth wings of the Khan al-Shih camp. When we take in to account that the total number, after the factions had compared their lists, came to around 250 names, we can imagine the dismay that afflicted the decrepit Palestinian political scene. The factions had discovered that they were in

a confrontation with the very people who they had considered their partisans until the night before.

Through knowledge of the names leaked from the lists that the APF provided to the security apparatuses, accusing the named persons of being responsible for what had happened, and through following the characteristics of those who were called in on the basis of the lists and/or those who demonstrated on the day of the funeral, we have deduced that what faces us is a group of people rarely exceeding 25 years old, most of them under 20, who are former members of the youth wings of the Khan al-Shih camp. In fact, some of them belonged to the youth wing of the PFLP-GC itself; that is, they were demonstrating against the compound that housed the youth wing they themselves belonged to, where they had met up, held celebrations and attended forums. In doing so they were rejecting the type of relations, discourse and conduct that they were used to. We may also notice that the Fatah movement's youth wing had the lion's share of the accusations. This was reflected in the PFLP's conspiratorial interpretation, which held actors that it described as "agents for the Zionist entity in Ramallah's [Palestinian] Authority^{ix}" responsible for the events on the day of the funeral.

This conclusion partially explains why, amid the APF's rush towards declaring war, weak voices emerged on the factional scene, calling for deliberation, encouraging the "aversion of isolation from the people", and stressing "the necessity of finding ways to absorb the youth". However, the most important factor that held back the factions was the way intellectuals in Palestine reacted to the incident in Yarmouk camp. The pressure they exerted on the political level made the leadership of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) issue a statement that firmly rejected "any justifications or excuses for this criminal cowardly act, which is an affront to the simplest Palestinian national traditions and reaches the level of a crime, the crime of mass murder without distinction by PFLP-GC groups."^x This caused a shift in the Syrian regime's outlook towards not clashing with the Palestinian public during the crisis, thus restraining the APF's impulsiveness and as a result calming the escalating confrontation between it and the youth wings. As for the PFLP-GC's escalation, it had reached the point where the faction was accusing "Saudi actors" of funding the group behind the incidents that took place on Naksa Day during the funeral of the rally of the return martyrs and saying that

very soon the factions would invite the media to a press conference during which “the duped persons who have been arrested” would be “presented to journalists so that they can make their confessions and [explain] how money was sent to them from Saudi Arabia and elsewhere to contrive those incidents”^{xi}. This shows that preparations were being made for one of the many ‘media fabrications’ broadcast by the Syrian regime and its allies. However, the page was turned on the matter after the aforementioned developments.

Conflict management

At first the clashing generations headed for soft conflict following the Syrian regime’s confused decision making, its failure to act resolutely and its obvious fear when the leadership of the PLO adopted an assertive tone, rejecting the violence directed at Palestinians by the PFLP-GC. The names that Palestine Branch considered most prominent among those included on the lists were summoned. After their release (including Raed Khartabeel who gave his testimony to the author) they said they had been asked to identify demonstrators from files of pictures and that each file bore the name of the faction that had provided it. At the same time, after a meeting to exchange views, the young people who had a good amount of experience in organized action sent a delegation to the PLO to ask it about what they saw as “the orphanhood they have lived through.” They called on the organization to “prevent the factions from harming them, stop the preparation of lists for the security apparatuses, take note that Ahmad Jibril has repeated past acts in which he served the regime by carrying out a military role against the Palestinian people, and be aware that he is pushing the camps in to the military conflict through armament and the formation of militias.” Among the most prominent figures in the delegation was Hassan Hassan, a young man who was later killed under torture in one of the security apparatuses’ detention centers. The PLO members who met the delegation responded by saying that “although the PLO is aware of the danger to Palestinian refugees, it cannot intervene if any of them are detained.”^{xii}

Meanwhile, a struggle was taking place within the Syrian regime between a trend suggesting dialogue as a way out of the dilemma it faced, expressed by vice-president Farouq al-Sharaa, and a rigid security structure that was pushing to have

the grassroots movement crushed and matters returned to how they were before. This provided an opportunity for a minority within the Palestinian organizations who tried to find means for dialogue with the younger generation. However, with the decisive move within the regime in favor of resolving the situation through the military and security services, and the placing of Sharaa under house arrest, that minority found itself following in the footsteps of the young people who had left the APF's youth wing organizations. As the factions were preparing to join the effort to resolve the situation through decisive action, a delegation from the PFLP and the DFLP^{xiii} accompanied by Fatah commander Dr. Samir Rifai met with PLO leader Mahmoud Abbas. As well as re-telling the PFLP-GC's story, the delegation asked Abbas to prevent the leadership of the organization from condemning the Syrian regime^{xiv} and to prevent Fatah from condemning Ahmad Jibril^{xv}, on the pretext that they knew best what served the interests of Palestinian refugees in Syria^{xvi}.

After this the circumstances changed rapidly. As Syria's central authority disassembled its political system, distancing everyone who did not share its viewpoint and pushing everyone in Syria to choose between fighting with it or against it, the latter, that is the central authority, decided to push Yarmouk camp in to arming and clashing with its surroundings. Moving in time with the PFLP-GC's formation of armed committees and its chaotic armament, which witnesses interpreted as unofficial distribution of weapons in order to create an armed adversary to fight, young people began to come together in non-violent civil groups, utilizing their familiarity with one another and their joint-work in the preceding years. Notably, the first two political papers to come out of the dialogue between several individuals from these groups were an appeal for the protection of the Palestinian camps^{xvii} on 12 November 2012 and an appeal from Palestinian refugees in Syria to United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki Moon^{xviii} on 14 November 2012. Through these two papers it could be seen that they knew their struggle was with the Syrian regime's movement towards militarizing the conflict and that they had chosen to confront the militarization of Palestinians. Besides this political clarity the youth groups took practical steps that reflected a shared thought process that had been made possible by the social movement in the camp's environment, and past experience in networking and dispute management. One of these practical steps was the group dialogue they held in a tent that was

erected in front of Yarmouk camp's Al-Waseem Mosque to honor the martyrs who fell in the first rally of return, which took place on 15 May 2011 on Nakba Day. According to two corroborative testimonies from Raed Khartabeel and Thaer Al-Sahli, they turned the dialogue in to "something resembling a people's parliament to discuss a proposal that had been submitted to send a second rally to the Occupied Golan on Naksa Day (June 6). This continued for several days before it was agreed to reject the proposal"^{xix}. Other steps, all of which were confirmed by all testimonies taken, included the following:

1. Youth groups in Yarmouk declared the camps a safe haven and the group *Hikayat al-Kanaani al-Maghdour* put their declaration in to practice in Khan al-Shih. This was followed by demands for similar action in other camps.
2. The youth groups made appeals to PLO leadership, despite their familiarity with its situation, calling for an end to the armament the PFLP-GC and other actors connected to the security apparatuses were carrying out, to prevent Yarmouk camp and the camps in general from being drawn in to the war. They also made similar appeals to the public and the international community.
3. They communicated with the Syrian grassroots movement to explain the Syrian regime's policy of using Palestinian refugees and their national cause, and to clarify that Palestinians rejected this at the grassroots level.^{xx}
4. They confronted the attempts by the security apparatuses to create strife between Palestinian refugees in the camps and their neighbors. Through cooperation with the PFLP-GC, the security apparatuses would later succeed in doing this in Aleppo's Nayrab Camp, where they formed a Palestinian militia called Liwaa al-Quds that participated in the regime's battles, stirring up anti-Palestinian sentiment in Aleppo Governorate.
5. They quickly set up a wide-ranging grassroots campaign to provide aid for displaced people from stricken areas. And through their campaign the first item listed above was applied practically with Yarmouk camp and Khan al-Shih Camp becoming safe havens for displaced people from the surrounding areas.

6. They agreed that there would be no demonstrations in the camp except if absolutely necessary^{xxi} when a response had to be made to flagrant violations against Palestinian refugees. Those who wanted to demonstrate where asked to do so in the surrounding areas.
7. They encouraged cutting ties with the APF and the few remaining young people its youth wings were called upon to leave.

The destruction of the defiant community

In this way, thanks to the political experience of the Palestinian community's vital youth element, it was possible to deal with urgent developments, including the armed committees formed by the PFLP-GC. Because of grassroots pressure, the fact that the people armed were residents of the camp and the flexible manner in which the youth interacted with them new understandings were reached. The presence of the committees inside Yarmouk camp was accepted on the condition that they did not attack the surrounding areas or the displaced, or interfere with the grassroots relief effort. While this interaction was underway it became clear that the youth had developed new talents. They clearly possessed a political vitality that allowed them to find solutions matching the unfolding developments. In the end, after all their efforts came to nothing, the security apparatuses began to feel sure that they would not be able to push the camp in to conflict with its surroundings, as they did in Nayrab Camp. They also became convinced that they could not prevent its residents from helping surrounded areas and providing relief to those who sought refuge. This conviction on the part of the security apparatuses' found expression in their decision to annex the camp to the stricken areas, putting an end to its functioning as "the lung of the surrounded southern areas." Armed groups in neighboring Al-Hajr al-Aswad were sent to storm the camp and subsequently it was bombed by MiG jet-fighters^{xxii}. In his testimony, Farouq Rifai noted: "one of the most prominent commanders from these groups played a pivotal role in a systematic sabotage operation, which included the assassination of opposition commanders in the southern region. Later on he returned to his work with the security apparatuses"^{xxiii}.

With a single blow the Syrian regime put an end to a community of one million people that included a lively Palestinian community of 200 thousand

people. 30 thousand of its members would remain, besieged, starved, and at the mercy of bombing and the assaults of Liwaa Al-Hajr al-Aswad^{xxiv}. This played a decisive role in the formation of Palestinian armed opposition groups that there is no room to discuss now. What concerns us here is the cutthroat solution the Syrian regime has employed all across Syria, through besieging, demolishing and emptying opposition areas to crush their social structures and kill the 'flower of the nation' in them, making them a theatre for attrition and an example for other Syrians. This was applied in Yarmouk camp, bringing a community and its mechanisms to an end with a single blow. As a result changes took place that made it impossible for the civil initiative to organize political activity. In the following days, this would limit its work to trying to lighten the impact of the unfolding events on civilians. During this period a number of 'security-service NGOs' sprung up to form a network that carried out security apparatus-linked relief work. The leftovers from the resulting thievery were given to the public on the condition that they apologized for what they had done and accepted the security apparatuses' proxies as their representatives. In this period, with the transformation of its factions into militias that fought for the Syrian regime, action would remain limited to the so-called Alliance of Khan al-Shih camp.

Observations and deductions

Firstly, the Syrian opposition has been almost completely absent from the non-violent, civil action that has taken place. Rather than being contradicted, this is confirmed by correspondence between young people from Yarmouk camp, Khan al-Shih camp or elsewhere and certain bodies in the Syrian grassroots movement. Maybe this absence can be justified by the opposition's reluctance to enter the complications of Palestinian politics, and perhaps there is truth to the rumors circulated by some about unofficial communications between PLO leadership and the opposition to reach an agreement on keeping the camps neutral. However, what happened on the ground confirms that the non-centralized structure of the opposition, its chaotic nature and its lack of vision where the situation of Palestinian refugees is concerned have caused it to flounder on this subject, reacting rather than being proactive. The fact that the opposition held a conference or 'workshop' on Palestinian refugees, which closely resembled a conference held

by the regime in Damascus several days before and was condemned by a number of figures in the Palestinian refugee community, may well show that its understanding of the conflict is no more than an echo of the regime's lamentable outlook.

Secondly, the leadership of the PLO has been unable to match its distant history of cohesion with Palestinians in the diaspora because a long time ago it became a defunct body waiting to perform the task of signing an ultimate solution with Israel while its other actions have come to an end. This weakened any potentially positive intentions towards that end and subsequently pushed the PLO in to a confusion that it has yet to come out of. Furthermore, its factions, now governed by their relationships with the states where they are based, have become aging structures that no longer bear any resemblance to their former revolutionary character.

Most importantly, the Syrian grassroots movement, through allowing communities in Syria to express themselves in an unaccustomed manner, has revealed, under the pressure of the violence of the security services and the army, a conflict of generations that is bound up with the identity conflict. This applies to the country's Palestinian refugees, among whom a large section of the youth have expressed a desire to reconcile their Palestinian and Syrian identities. At the same time APF leadership, which long ago lost any independence that would have allowed it to protect those it claims to represent, has become incorporated in to the regime through performing the 'Palestinian card' function.

As a result, the youth came forward to protect their community, under slogans that included: "no to exploitation of Palestinian blood", "no to the arming of the camps" and "the camps are a safe haven". Then the Palestinian presence in Yarmouk camp was wiped out by the application of the Syrian regime's systematic process of pushing the areas that rebelled against it into self-armament, siege, bombing and chaos. This has caused the non-violent, civil revolution to disintegrate and brought to the fore the question of the Palestinian refugees' fate and the effect of what is happening on their stance towards everything.

Conclusion

While the APF, and its leaders in particular, were being horizontally integrated into the Syrian political system so they could perform a functionary role that included participating in the system's protection and acting as a bargaining chip, Palestinian refugees in Yarmouk camp were integrating into Syrian society to varying degrees, according to the characteristics of that society in the different areas that they were distributed across. Therefore, it is only logical that the two sides became divided when a Syrian grassroots movement calling for change took shape. One of them saw it as serving its interests, while the other, which had become a tool of the regime, saw it as a threat. If we add this to the tragic fate of the Palestinian cause and the effect choices made by the older generations—most of whom are now in God's protection—have had on generations that have never had the chance to participate in national decision making, we can imagine the popularity of the calls for change in Yarmouk camp.

It is also logical that the vital younger generation is the one most disposed to integration and the one with the strongest desire for the occurrence of a change that opens up new horizons in the lives of its members and allows them to determine their own future. This is what motivated many of them to side with the pro-democracy youth movement, and confront leaders who had grown old and relations that had become decrepit. In this generational conflict the prevalent economic, social and political conditions strengthened the belief of the youth that long term monopolization of decision making had led to a certain correlation between failure and the results of their leaders' choices.

While the unity of the PLO and its lower organizational units used to regulate these conditions, the near total absence of the organization today and the flimsiness of its lower units have made the latter become a burden on generations that do not afford much importance to the sacrifices that they see as their 'revolutionary legitimacy.'

References

ⁱ The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine PFLP; the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine - General Command PFLP-GC; the Palestinian Popular Struggle Front (Khalid 'Abd al-Majid wing); As-Sa'iqa organization (the Vanguard for the Popular Liberation War); the Revolutionary Palestinian Communist Party; the Democratic Front

for the Liberation of Palestine DFLP; Fatah al-Intifada; the Palestinian Liberation Front (Abu Nidal Ashqar wing); Hamas; and Islamic Jihad. Despite the fact that the PFLP and DFLP left the APF in 1998 they have both worked with it during the current conflict in Syria. As for Hamas, it left the APF when the conflict in Syria moved in to its military phase.

ⁱⁱ An intelligence service term used to describe the process by which opposition members surrender to the security apparatuses. This is often arranged through ‘security tools’.

ⁱⁱⁱ See *The Palestinian Refugees in the Syrian Ordeal*, by the author and Youssef Zeidan, an electronic book containing their testimonies. The book was published by the Democratic Republic Studies Center and can be viewed in Arabic via the following link: <http://goo.gl/H5bgZD>

^{iv} In addition to the interviews used for this article, the author has recorded the opinions of a number of other Palestinian refugees over the past few years with a focus on those residing in Syria’s camps or those who left them to seek refuge in Lebanon. Some of the recorded testimonies can be viewed via the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/user/ajrasalawdeh>

^v The United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestinian refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) estimates that the number of Palestinian refugees in Yarmouk Camp comes to “over 144,000”. For more information see the following link: <http://www.unrwa.org/ar/where-we-work/%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A7/camp-profiles?field=3277>

^{vi} The same conclusion would motivate 100 Palestinian intellectuals to say plainly: “Neither in our name nor the name of Palestine are crimes committed in dear Syria”. The statement by these intellectuals can be viewed, in Arabic, via the following link: <http://syrianoor.net/revmarsad/1560>

^{vii} We have relied upon direct experience to give a picture of the events that took place as well as corroborative statements from the former secretary of the Union of Palestinian Visual Artists - Syria Branch, Imad Rashdan, and university student Ammar Rashdan.

^{viii} “Palestinian factions condemn Yarmouk incidents”, Al-Jazeera Net, see the following link: <http://goo.gl/FIMnZ0>

^{ix} Ibid.

^x “Leadership condemns the crime of Yarmouk Camp and commits to legal action against the criminals”, Palestinian News and Info Agency - WAFA, see the following link: <http://www.wafa.ps/arabic/index.php?action=detail&id=106819>

^{xi} “Palestinian factions condemn Yarmouk incidents”, Al-Jazeera Net, *ibid* viii.

^{xii} These meetings were attended by the author. The delegation included visual artist Imad Rashdan and journalist Thaer al-Sahli. Excerpts have been taken from their testimonies.

^{xiii} Knowledge of what took place at the meeting was gained through one of the PFLP’s second line commanders showing the meeting notes to his visitors and through leaks by Fatah sources.

^{xiv} Condemnations of the killing, bombing and detention by the Syrian regime, and of Ahmad Jibril’s conduct continued. These include statements by Yasser Abed Rabbo. One example of these condemnations can be found in the remarks of Saleem al-Zanoon, Chairman of the Palestinian National Council via the following link: <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/09/16/238411.html>

^{xv} A statement by Fatah in the West Bank condemning Ahmad Jibril for the events that took place on the day of the funeral can be seen via the following link: <http://fatehnow.com/palestine/596-2012-03-31-12-40-52.html>

^{xvi} One example of how the interests of Palestinian refugees in Syria are ‘served’ by these forces is the time they attacked the UNWRA agency after it exposed the bombing of Al-Raml camp in Latakia and the regime’s practices there. UNRWA’s statements can be viewed via the following link: <http://www.middle-east-online.com/?id=115899>. The response of the APF’s factions can be seen here: <http://m.almanar.com.lb/adetails.php?eid=92326>

^{xvii} The appeal can be viewed on the website Ajas al-Auda via the following link: <http://ajras.org/?p=12043>

^{xviii} Same source as above; the appeal can be viewed via the following link: <http://ajras.org/?p=12040>

^{xix} This decision was overridden by people linked to the security apparatuses who brought buses to the camp. They began urging people to go to the Golan despite the collective decision reached by the participants in the dialogue two days before, which had favored not going. (corroborative testimonies, including the testimony of Raed Jalbout).

^{xx} Clear stances from Palestinian intellectuals contributed to emphasizing the national Palestinian stance. For example, their statements constantly repeated that: “the signatories to this statement reject the involving of the name of Palestine and the Palestinian cause by the Syrian regime in order to justify its oppression of its people. The use of the name of Palestine and the Palestinian cause to repress liberties in Syria brings damage upon Palestine and its cause. We also note that on the record of the Syrian regime there are many stances that the Palestinians have paid the price for in blood and tears”. For the full text of the statement see the following link: <http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/10984>

^{xxi} The youth groups showed exemplary discipline in keeping to their decision until the Tremseh Massacre on 13 July 2012 in which more than 250 Syrians were killed, including women and children. Three days earlier, on 11 July 2012, 14 Palestine Liberation Army recruits from Nayrab camp in Aleppo were found dead in Idlib countryside. Residents of Yarmouk camp held a large demonstration condemning the two massacres and the Syrian security forces did not hesitate to confront them with live bullets, killing five and injuring dozens.

^{xxii} The film MiG, by Thaer al-Sahli, shows regime warplanes bombing the camp, and the fright and displacement that resulted. The film can be viewed via the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=omgJovb65HU>

^{xxiii} It later transpired that the top commanders of Liwa Al-Hajr al-Aswad who stormed the camp were carrying out missions to infiltrate the armed opposition. Most prominent among them and most harmful to the camp was Bayyan al-Muzaal who after his mission was exposed led the regime-controlled forces that took control of neighborhoods in the southern part of Damascus and many other places.

^{xxiv} Later an alliance of opposition groups, with prominent roles being played by Aknaf Bait al-Makdis and Liwa Ahrar Mokhayyam al-Yarmouk, would expel Liwa Al-Hajr al-Aswad from the camp.