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### SUMUD VERSUS SETTLEMENTS COMMUNAL CONFLICT IN THE HOLY LAND

Hillel Frisch

*The history of SUMUD. A change of emphasis – institution building. Political dividends. The joint committee develops SUMUD. Israeli response to SUMUD. Inadequacies in the structure of SUMUD. A Palestinian's challenge to his fellows.*

In a recent article in the East Jerusalem weekly *ash-Shira (The Flagmast)*,\* entitled "Sumud Funds for non-Sumud," Adil Samara scathingly attacks *sumud* policy in the West Bank. Samara of course did not have to explain the meaning of the word or the context in which it is used – *sumud* as a concept and a doctrine is on the lips of every ten-year-old in Judea and Samaria. It means steadfastness – resistance to an enemy bent on "judaicizing" the West Bank and driving out its Arab inhabitants. The word reflects the sharp contrast between the way Palestinians are behaving today in contrast to the way the majority of Palestinians behaved during the *Karithat Filastin* tragedy of Palestine in 1948. Then they fled; today they are making an effort to stand fast.

The doctrine of *sumud* is neither new nor static. Just as Israel's policies in the Administered Territories have changed, so have *sumud* policies and strategies. What induced Samara to write the article was a keen sense of urgency. Emigration from the West Bank is at an all time high. The various factions which comprise the PLO are dividing up the territories and their Palestinian inhabitants among themselves. Foremost, Israeli settlement is proceeding rapidly: Maaleh Adumim, Jerusalem's outer ring garden city on the Jericho road now has over 1,500 families, more than the total number of inhabitants of Jewish Kiryat Arba (near Hebron) founded in 1969; large suburban projects are nearing completion in Western Samaria, and Emanuel (a little further west) is on the verge of receiving its first five hundred families. Unlike the earlier spot settlements that were problem prone, these urban and suburban centers seem to be far more

\*Adil Samara, "Sumud Funds for non-Sumud", *ash-Shira*, 15 July 1983, no.60 pp. 16-18. *ash-Shira* was closed down by the Israeli authorities in mid-August, 1983 for publishing inflammatory articles representing the views of George Habbash's PLFP (Kol Israel News 16.8.83).

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12 Moshe Hess St., 94185 Jerusalem. Tel: (02) 225874, 249441

successful. On these facts, Samara did not have to elaborate. The East Jerusalem Arab dailies and weeklies present detailed information on Israeli settlement, mostly via translations of Israeli press reports and articles, in full-page sections devoted to Israeli affairs.

### THE HISTORY OF *SUMUD*

It is hard to pinpoint who first used the arabic word *sumud* in a distinctly political context. It gained currency soon after the guns fell silent in June 1967. Two groups were instrumental in transforming it into a doctrine — but for radically different purposes. The Jordanians began pouring in *sumud* money-salaries to striking teachers, lawyers and religious judges in order to undermine Israeli normalization policies in the Administered Territories. Jordan in particular objected to Israeli changes in West Bank practice, and retained hopes that the territories would soon revert back to Jordan. Its money was channelled to the conservative bureaucratic elements of West Bank society. The Palestine Liberation Organization, based in the diaspora, had attempted to develop a territorial base in the West Bank in the late 1960s. Vanquished in the West Bank and ousted from Jordan in 1970-71, it began pouring money into the territories to prevent local Palestinians from taking independent political initiatives, being encouraged by Moshe Dayan, Israel's defense minister at the time. Gradually a full-scale doctrine of *sumud* crystallized. Dubbed by one leading Israeli military official "negative *sumud*", the doctrine then called for the freezing of all public institutional life in the territories, minimum contact with Israeli authorities, and censure of any local moves that went contrary to Arab consensus as it was expressed in the Conference of Khartoum in 1969. During the early seventies money continued to flow to lawyers, judges and teachers. The municipalities were similarly rewarded by the Jordanians for keeping a low political profile.

Changing circumstances brought about a radical transformation of the doctrine in the mid-seventies. The local population began to appreciate the benefits that could be accrued from Israel's liberal policies. Israel had succeeded in normalizing the situation despite Jordanian attempts at obstruction. The Rabat Conference decisions proved a major blow to the Jordanian regime, bringing about diminishing interest in the Hashemite court in West Bank affairs. Attempts to form an alternative leadership to the PLO in the West Bank ceased by the mid-seventies. The PLO no longer had to fear institutional development now that the Arab population in Judea and Samaria had proved its loyalty to the diaspora center. They were thus not opposed to the change. Finally, the local population was actively encouraged to develop new forms of public institutional life by the Israelis.

### A CHANGE OF EMPHASIS — INSTITUTION BUILDING

The creation of new mobilizing Palestinian institutions in Judea and Samaria soon followed. *Sumud* money that had formerly been primarily of Jordanian origin and meted out to individuals and traditional segments of West Bank society, were now supplanted by PLO funds meted out to the new institutions — the universities Bir Zeit near Ramallah, and a-Najah in Nablus, and the two new pro-PLO dailies, *Al-Fajr* and *A-Sha'ab*. Bir Zeit University and *Al-Fajr* were in particular favoured by the PLO, the first because its president Hona Nasir, who was expelled in the winter of 1974, now sat on the PLO committee in charge of education in the occupied territories, and the latter because it was owned by an American Palestinian, Paul Ajlouny, who had links to the PLO. Moreover, the *Al-Fajr* editorial board was (and is still) headed by Hilmi Hanun, mayor of Tulkarem, the first PLO mayor elected in the West Bank.

The local elections in 1976 represented a milestone in the growing institutionalization of *sumud* monies whose redirection emphasized organizational endeavors at the expense of individual needs. As the Jordanians cut back aid to cities in the West Bank which no longer supported their claims (almost all the candidates elected in the 1976 elections were pro-PLO), so did the PLO,

motivated by *sumud*, move to fill the vacuum. Under the aegis of the diaspora center, the PLO twin city agreements between gulf state and Algerian towns on the one hand, and West Bank towns on the other, ensured a steady flow of PLO funds.

### POLITICAL DIVIDENDS

The new orientation of *sumud* funds and the change in *sumud* policy within PLO ranks both in Beirut and the West Bank paid handsome political dividends. The newspapers, the universities, the mayors and the municipality bureaucracies played an important role in establishing a consensus against Camp David and quashing both American and Israeli attempts at creating an alternative leadership ready to participate in the autonomy talks.

### THE JOINT COMMITTEE DEVELOPS *SUMUD*

In 1979, *sumud* received yet another boost. The Baghdad Conference pledged a sum of \$150 million, to be distributed by a joint PLO-Jordanian committee. At the same time, the practitioners of *sumud* also faced a new challenge — massive settlement led by no less an enemy than Ariel Sharon, the newly installed Minister of Defense. Not only did the needs of the Palestinian national institutions (to use the term employed in the East Jerusalem press) have to be met, but it was now deemed essential to initiate counter-settlement moves to step up Arab building activities especially in contested strategic areas. Steps were also taken to stem the tide of emigration as a result of the slowdown in economic growth by providing business and employment opportunities especially to young graduates on the West Bank. To meet this challenge the PLO Department of the Occupied Territories and the Jordanian Ministry of the Occupied Territories, set up a permanent bureaucracy to facilitate the decisions of the Joint Committee. The Committee itself was headed by the Minister of the Occupied Territories, Hassan Ibrahim, a Palestinian-Jordanian, and by the head of the equivalent body in the PLO, Muhammad abu-Sitta. A major role was destined to be played by one of Yasser Arafat's main lieutenants, Khalil Wazir, better known as Abu Jihad; his involvement is a reflection of the importance the PLO attaches to the workings of the Committee, and the cultivation of *sumud*.

Two funding programmes were instituted: loans for housing construction, and individual loans to businessmen, to be used either for initiating or expanding housing and business activities. The first is a very liberal mortgage scheme funded by the Joint Committee, allocated by the Jordanian Ministry of the Interior and distributed through an office in East Jerusalem headed by Amin al-Khatib, a Hashemite stalwart. The mortgage consists of seven thousand Jordanian Dinars (over \$21,000), interest-free, to be paid back within twenty years for areas outside Jerusalem, and over \$30,000 for housing in and around the City. Since inflation in Jordan has been running at 10 percent per annum, the terms are highly subsidized, especially if the mortgagee has relatives abroad footing the bill. The loan is paid out in two payments, one at the outset of construction and the second near termination of the building. To receive both payments, the mortgagee has to provide Israeli documentation, one small example of cooperation between Jordan, Israel and the PLO.

A comparison between the mortgage received by the typical young Israeli family reveals how generous the *sumud* mortgage is. At face value, the terms of the Jordanian-PLO mortgage are only slightly more advantageous compared to the Israeli one: \$21,000 versus \$15,000-\$18,000, with a similar term of years for the payback period. Approximately one-fourth of the Israeli loan is unlinked, meaning that it becomes an outright grant sooner since Israeli inflation is higher. But the advantage of the Jordanian-PLO loan does not necessarily lie in the terms offered but the environment in which it is disbursed. Twenty-thousand dollars allotted to the young Israeli couple only covers 30 to 40 percent of the average Israeli apartment in a suburban complex or bedroom

community. Apartment costs include the land on which the apartment is constructed; as of today only 10 percent of Israeli urban society owns land and a profit margin for the building firm. In the West Bank, over half the population owns land, thus the mortgage goes for purely construction purposes, and more often than not the extended family does the building, both the supervision and the construction work. One must keep in mind that the construction industry work force in Israel and the territories is almost wholly Arab, building their own homes after-hours or off-season. Twenty thousand dollars can often be sufficient to defray most of the housing expenses.

The loans to businesses have been, on the whole, far less successful, for unlike housing matters where individual Arab families have a distinct advantage, West Bank industry operates under severe constraints. Not the least of these constraints is that the Jordanian government continues to adopt a policy of restricting the growth of local industry by preventing the importation of most West Bank industrial products into Jordan. West Bank industry locally must compete with an Israeli industry that is both more sophisticated and more highly subsidized, thus Jordan may be the only market where they can do well against the competition. A situation has emerged in which Jordan on the one hand has been fuelling industries through *sumud* money, while on the other hand is extinguishing them. A good example is the financial support received by a new corporate venture specializing in detergent located in Ramallah. It was financed by *sumud* money but is now in dire straits because of the refusal of the Jordanians to allow import of the product into Jordan. The latest moves on behalf of *sumud* at least, so they are called by the Jordanians, have nothing to do with finances. In the past half year the Hashemites have been making it increasingly difficult for students and workers to leave the West Bank. They require students to possess documentation that they have been received by a bona fide institution of higher learning for the coming year. They require letters from workers attesting to employment abroad. In addition, the Jordanian government cut in half the number of West Bankers it accepted into their two prestigious universities in the fall of 1983; they have also severely restricted places in Jordanian community colleges. The Jordanians claim that these measures will help stem the tide of emigration from the West Bank — an emigration which, according to the joint PLO-Jordanian census bureau set up in 1981 in Amman, has exceeded the natural increase in the West Bank.

*Sumud* over the years has made great strides — it began as a shoe-string Jordanian operation and has developed into a joint venture that includes under its umbrella all the major institutions in the West Bank and is involved in most major aspects of West Bank life. Why then is Samara's article so searing in its condemnation of the process? Is his tone merely exhortative or is it substantive? The answer is both, Samara's criticisms are justified but they are designed not to put an end to *sumud*, but to make it effective.

#### ISRAELI RESPONSE TO *SUMUD*

There have been Israeli countermoves against *sumud*. The most effective were those levelled against the municipalities. It seems in retrospect that the Military government cut back their own funding as monies from the PLO and the twinned towns increased. These monies, instead of going towards development as they were originally intended, were now defrayed to cover ongoing expenses. The net incremental benefit to the municipalities per se was zero. The Israelis also used the reliance on *sumud* monies as one justification for their onslaught on the municipalities which began with declaring illegal the National Steering Committee in 1982 and culminating in the dismissal of six municipal councils in 1982.

## INADEQUACIES IN THE STRUCTURE OF *SUMUD*

There are also inadequacies in the *sumud* structure itself. Samara highlights two of them. He compares how *sumud* money is spent and Israeli funds for colonization are disbursed: Israeli funds are disbursed according to a master plan; *Sumud* monies are disbursed haphazardly. The second point he makes is that *sumud* monies are allotted for individual purposes, settlement money is dispensed with the purpose of fulfilling societal goals. He takes Abu-Jihad to task for emphasizing only the monetary side of the comparison, namely that Israel spends 610 million dollars in the West Bank annually compared to \$100 million dispensed by the Joint Committee.

## A PALESTINIAN'S CHALLENGE TO HIS FELLOWS

The rest of Samara's article is devoted to substantiation of his claims. He notes, for example, that Jewish building is collective, strategic, and related to other settlements. Arab building has been characterized by and large by the construction of individual luxurious villas fulfilling no other national purpose but the expensive tastes of the West Bank bourgeoisie. *Sumud* money, he claims, is going to those segments of society who could have constructed their villas without it. He cites a residential communal project financed by *sumud* monies, over 90 percent of whose inhabitants either owned houses of their own or were sufficiently wealthy to build one themselves. In the Israeli settlements the only ones directly subsidized are those without apartments of their own. Very often the same West Bankers are registered in a number of projects, suggesting an element of speculation. According to Samara, middlemen, experts in bribing the officials have cropped up to expedite matters, keeping a hefty share for themselves as a reward for their efforts. Why, he asks, is not money going to the agricultural cooperatives so that they can reclaim marginal land that has been lying fallow and thus exposed to Israeli expropriation; i.e., why is not money being spent to encourage farmers to remain in farming to prevent villages from turning into bedroom communities. What about village youth clubs, why are they not getting a share of *sumud* money, or marketing cooperatives, for that matter. The bus and taxi firms are being subsidized by the Joint Committee, he points out to not service outlying villages. Egged, the Israeli bus cooperative, services even the most remote village, no matter what the financial loss incurred in return for its government subsidy. What about the tour groups, the Association of West Bank Journalists - worthy endeavours that should be supported but are not. Why, Samara continues, is money being allotted to individual industrialists, who instead of raising wages and encouraging workers, increase profits, and instead of expanding operations so that they can employ more Palestinians are pocketing the loans in private bank accounts in Jordan and elsewhere.

Samara's searing condemnation must be taken in perspective. Samara does not mention the *sumud* funds to the institutions of higher learning whose total enrolment increased from a few hundred in 1975 to over 8,000 in 1982. He does not mention the crucial mobilizing role of the rapidly expanding East Jerusalem press, the support for the PLO, and Communist youth committees, over a hundred of them throughout the West Bank. The Palestinians are learning from the Jews, from the Zionist experience and from Israeli practices, and they are learning fast. They have good teachers, Adil Samara is one of them. They have not solved all their problems - the high level of emigration from the West Bank is one indication of that - but they have come a long way since 1948.

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A Note on the Sources: The material presented in this article is derived from interviews and field trips in the West Bank conducted over the past year in addition to gleanings from the local Arab press; *at-Talia* (a communist weekly newspaper), the three East Jerusalem dailies, *Al-Quds*, *Al-Fajr*, and *ash-Sha'ab* and of course Adil Samara's article in *ash-Shira*.

*Hillel Frisch is co-author with Shmuel Sandler of Israel the Palestinians and the West Bank—A Study in Intercommunal Conflict, (Lexington Books) and is author of Stagnation and Frontier: Arab and Jewish Industry in the West Bank, Washington D.C, American Enterprise Institute (forthcoming) and other articles on West Bank affairs.*