

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL HISTORY

Inventory of the collection of the  
AL-QIYADA AL-WATANIYYA AL-MUWAHHIDA  
LI-L-INTIFADA

(Unified National Command of the Intifada)

1987-1990

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## *INTRODUCTION*

### History

The first numbered leaflet of the intifada was issued in January 1988 and bore the signature of the 'Unified National Command to Escalate the Uprising in the Occupied Territories', a body which was a fiction at that point of time as it was still a private initiative of one member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). Besides demanding the establishment of a Palestinian state, the flier called for a general strike of three days, the erection of road-blocks, the withdrawal of the Israeli army from the cities, towns and refugee camps, the repeal of the emergency laws and the holding of democratic elections. When the flier was being printed, it was discovered that two days earlier a similar flier had been printed at the same publisher's in name of the 'Palestine National Forces', an organization of Fatah.

In this atmosphere of rivalry the Unified National Command was born as a compromise between the Democratic and Popular Fronts, the Palestinian Communist Party and Fatah. The flier the PFLP issued was quickly given number two in the series of leaflets issued by the Unified National Command which ended with No. 46 almost two years later.

The Unified National Command was a grass roots organization which had been established at the initiative of local groups on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. For the first time since the establishment of the PLO, a political organization was established that was at least partly independent from the PLO. Its leaders were anonymous young Palestinians who replaced the old guard of the PLO 'notables' after they had proved themselves unable to take command of the Intifada during the first months after its outbreak in October 1987.

The fliers were the greatest achievement of the Unified National Command. They set realistic goals and established practical means of attaining them. They gave coherence to the intifada and determined strike days, sneered at the enemy and gave pride to its participants. Although the Unified National Command sometimes consulted with the PLO headquarters in Tunis, it mostly decided its strategy according to specific circumstances and local exigencies. The distribution system of the fliers, which numbered between 35,000 and 100,000 copies, was ingenious. The very fact that they were distributed all over the West Bank without the Shin Bet discovering the whereabouts of the Unified National Command, meant that the Intifada was well-organized. Due to the large recruitment potential, the anonymous membership of the Unified Command was easily replaced. When one of the distributors was arrested with 35,000 copies of flier No. 6 in his van on 3 February 1988, and the whole Unified Command was arrested, it was quickly succeeded by another, put together by its participating organizations. The next two Commands were arrested as well; the first while drawing up flier No. 11 on 19 March, the second only one month later. Continuous repression and the difficulty in printing such enormous numbers of fliers meant, however, that initiative and guidance over the intifada gradually shifted from the Unified National Command to the PLO headquarters in Tunis.

From autumn 1988 fliers were read at dictation speed over the radio by the PLO. As control from outside increased, the fliers lost their original verve and started to repeat

themselves. When at the beginning of 1989 the last lineup of the Unified Command was arrested, power had devolved to the local committees which continued the intifada. Eventually, the Unified Command was unable to resist the pressure of the Israeli's and the PLO together.

## The collection

The collection of fliers of the Unified National Command of the Intifada was received by the IISH in 1989. The leaflets of the Unified Command, which form the main part of the collection, was distributed between January 1988 and September 1989. The collection also contains leaflets issued jointly by Fatah and the Unified Command, the local Command council of Ramallah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), HAMAS and several other Palestinian organizations. The leaflets of the Unified National Command, part of which are original and part of which are photocopies, are numbered from one to forty six (Nos. 43 - 45 are missing). The size of the collection is 0.02 m.

All the leaflets of the Unified National Command and the other Palestinian organizations, issued from the beginning of 1987 until the end of 1988 (until leaflet No. 30 of the Unified National Command), have been described and reproduced by Jean-François Legrain in his book *Les Voix du soulèvement palestinien* (Cairo, 1991).

## Consultation

Only the microfilm of the collection can be consulted.

## INVENTORY

### Unified National Command of the Intifada

1. Photocopies and originals of the directives issued by al-Qiyada al-Wataniyya al-Muwahhida li-l-Intifada, (the Unified National Command of the Intifada), No. 1, January 1988 to No. 42, 4 July 1989 and No. 46, 25 September 1989. 1 cover.
2. Two Leaflets without numbers containing directives issued by Fatah/ Unified National Command of the Intifada. 14 April 1989 and 29 June 1989. 1 cover.
3. Three directives issued by the Local Command Council of Ramallah. 22 May, 13 July and n.d. 1989. 1 cover.

### Other Palestinian Organizations

4. Nine directives by Jabha al-Sha'biyya li-Tahrir Falastin (the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, PFLP) issued between 8 May and 8 July 1989 and n.d. 1 cover.
5. Leaflet by al-Jabha al-Dimuqritiyya li-Tahrir Filastin (the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, DFLP) issued on 30 March 1989. 1 piece.
6. Two directives issued by the Kata'ib al-Shahid Ghasan Kanafani (Battalions of the Martyr Ghasan Kanafani). June/July 1989. 1 cover.
7. Pamphlet issued by the Committee for the Commemoration of the Martyr Muhammad al-Fawaja. 1 June 1987. 1 piece.
8. Joint directive issued by the Executive Committee of Fatah, the Central Committee of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Higher Palestinian Military Committee. 4 June 1989. 1 piece.
9. Directive issued by the Popular Oppositional Committees and Strike Forces. N.d. 1 cover.
10. Issue of the periodical *al-Muwajaha*, publication of the Communist Party of Palestine, Vol. 1, No. 2. June 1989. 1 cover.
11. Leaflet issued by the Communist Party of Palestine. N.d. 1 piece.

12. Leaflet issued by al-Sa'irun fi Darb Abu Jihad. 9 May 1989. 1 piece.
13. Leaflet issued by Shin Bet [?] in Arabic: *Amr bi-sha'n ta'limat li-aman (Yahuda wa-l-Samara)*. 19 June 1988. 1 piece.
14. Leaflet issued by al-Jabha al-Muttahida fi Filastin al-Muhtilla (United Front in Occupied Palestine). N.d. 1 piece.  
N.B. According to a written comment on the leaflet, it was issued by the Shin Bet.
15. Directive issued by HAMAS, No. 38: *Yawm al-ard da'wa li-tawhid al-juhud wa-l-sir'ala darb ma'raka al-karama*. 20 March 1989. 1 piece.
16. *News from Within*, Vol VI, No. 1. 10 January 1990. 1 piece.