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**Declaring An
Independent State
Is Becoming
More Necessary
By The Day**

AL - FAJR, August 14, 1988

Discussion over a unilateral declaration of the birth of a new Palestinian state intensified in the occupied areas following the recent administrative detention of Faisal Husseini and the Israeli claim that they found in his office a draft proposal for such a declaration. Discussion reached maturity after Jordan took the step more than two weeks ago of severing administrative and legal ties to the West Bank. Several opinions have been presented on this subject. Here Al-Fajr's Maher Abukhater solicits the views of Bir Zeit University professor of philosophy, Dr. Sari Nuseibeh, on this subject.

Q: The recent media exposure and interest in a document found at Faisal Husseini's office made its subject — the declaration of an independent Palestinian state — the topic of serious discussion among Palestinians. How realistic do you think is the idea of declaring an independent state in the occupied territories at this moment?

A: In my view, and speaking purely as an analyst, the idea of declaring independence is becoming more necessary by the day. Our state will not arrive by registered mail to the main post office on Salah al-Din Street. It has to be created in stages.

If you look at the last 21 years, but in particular at the last eight months of the uprising, you will observe a clear evolution of the various components of the state — universities, popular committees, unions, etc. The uprising's philosophy, in particular, has been to disengage from the Israeli system, economically and administratively, and to effect a simultaneous takeover of the control of our daily activities.

Jordan's declaration of disengagement from the other end has come to complement this strategy. Now we are at a crossroads. Either we take on our responsibility, or we allow ourselves to be stunned into inaction. Our worst choice is to steer ourselves into inaction through hair-splitting scholasticism and Byzantine disagreements.

Our best choice is to declare, at the peak of our civil disobedience campaign, that we are masters of ourselves. Once we do, we get into second gear, and we continue with more power along the road to freedom.

Q: Some critics of the document say its text and organization show political immaturity since a subject of this importance needs deep and thorough study before it is presented for discussion. What do you say to that?

A: I'm not sure how mature a criticism this is. Discussion is the art of bringing ideas to maturity. I presume the text in question contained elements that could have been (and which still could be) changed or substituted. The process to

bring an important text to full fruition is arduous, especially in politics. Since it was prematurely seized and published by the security services, the text was obviously in an unfinished state when it was presented to the public.

Our job, and especially that of the critics — if they are sincere in their intentions — is to repair the damage done by the leak and to proceed with the debate in a constructive manner. In my view, any other manner of discussing the text would be totally irresponsible and politically damaging, besides being a reflection of political immaturity, or political ossification.

Q: Do you think the idea of declaring independence was born out of recent developments, or has this idea been circulating for some time?

A: As far as I know, the idea of a declaration of independence in these areas was first floated in recent times in 1980. The idea was again presented for discussion at the beginning of the uprising. Some intellectuals even wanted to incorporate the January 14th statement of 14 points in such a declaration.

When the various scenarios of the uprising's strategy were discussed among the inhabitants, one scenario that was particularly predominant in the discussions was that of a gradual escalation in civilian rebellion leading finally to the point of a declaration of independence.

This discussion was later enhanced by visiting scholar Jerome Segal who published his ideas in the local press. The publication made it possible to hand around and discuss a legitimate text. Various short commentaries were also handed around and discussed. When it finally seemed that we were coming closer to the point of total rebellion (disobedience), an indigenous text became necessary. I assume that this is how the text in question evolved.

Q: Apparently the enthusiasm for declaring the state is coming mainly from inside the occupied territories rather than outside them, and, by looking at the language of the document, Palestinians inside the occupied territories are for the first time taking the initiative to push for what they think should be done. Would you say the occupied territories are telling the leadership outside that they are taking more control over their future than before and that the leadership should this time take what they call for very seriously and give it full attention?

A: Personally, I have always distrusted the thesis that people in the occupied territories have in general played the role of obedient soldiers to the PLO's leadership. In my view, decisions concerning issues in the occupied territories

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have in general been taken by people here, with the leadership endorsing the recommendations. Otherwise, there was a good deal of democratic interchange, in spite of the difficulties involved in the lines of communication.

But having said this, I must add that concerning this particular issue at hand, I personally believe that it is not enough to come out after the next PNC meeting with a government-in-exile which is fashioned in the traditional form, to serve no more than a negotiating team. We do not want a government floating in a spaceship with no specific functions in the occupied territories, and which is unconnected with the uprising's evolving infrastructure. We want a cabinet whose members are each connected institutionally to a sector of activity in the occupied territories. We want a cabinet that will structurally and institutionally top the pyramidal organization which already is rooted in Palestinian soil. In other words, we want to connect ourselves institutionally with our leadership: hence the need to combine the two ideas of independence and a government-in-exile together. Only like this can we concretize an otherwise symbolic relationship between the people and its leadership.