

**Awad, Mohammad Ibrahim. Interviewed 2012. Translated by The Palestinian Revolution, 2016.<sup>1</sup>**

*Bureau Period in Lebanon and Joining Fateh Student Work*

My name is Mohammad Ibrahim Awad. I have a bachelor's degree in law, political science, business administration and economics from the Lebanese University, from which I graduated with high marks. I was born in Ein al-Hilweh refugee camp in 1960. In 1972, my father was martyred by an Israeli airstrike in an area currently named Al-Arqoub in south Lebanon. However, the area at the time was named Fateh Land, which consisted of the bases for the revolution and Fateh in south Lebanon.

Before my father joined the *fida'i* activity, I witnessed people's sufferings as a result of the horrible treatment at the hands of the Second Bureau of the Lebanese Intelligence. The Second Bureau harassed the people living in the refugee camps in Lebanon by denying them access to media, preventing any revolutionary activity or any type of work towards rebuilding organisations that may restore the Palestinian people's stolen rights. Those rights which were stolen through the forcible displacement of the Palestinians into Lebanon and the rest of the diaspora. During this period, we also witnessed the oppressive practices of the Second Bureau towards the people within the camps such as surveillance, preventing people from staying up at night, imposing curfews, beating people with sticks and whips as well as detaining people at Abu Meri's office, located near the main entrance to Ein al-Hilweh refugee camp. Anyone who was taken to Abu Meri's office was beaten brutally and tortured in order to force them to confess to as many people as possible they know who might have political or revolutionary connections.

This period really affected me as a Palestinian refugee without any rights living in a refugee camp within a house made of corrugated metal. Everything else that may improve our lives such as clean drinking water or normal sources of income, which could also help socially stabilise the families, was not present for us. The atmosphere at home was set up for my father to join the *fida'i* activity once the revolutionary work began. He trained at Fateh's military camps before he moved to Fateh Land or al-Arqoub in south Lebanon. This is where he was later martyred by the Israeli airstrike in 1972. My father's funeral was one of the first martyr funerals in Ein al-Hilweh. All the patriots not only of Palestinian origin but other Arabs, including Lebanese patriots, attended the funeral. Notable figures attended as

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well such as members of parliament including the martyr Ma'rouf Sa'ad, former deputy, and Nazih al-Bazri, former minister. Great numbers took part in the funeral including refugees from all of the camps, about 50 thousand attendees in total.

My father's funeral affected me deeply and inevitably led me to join the revolution. My belief was since my father chose to join Fateh then I should do the same. So, I joined al-Ashbal scout camp (part of Fateh) at the age of 12, immediately after my father was martyred. After a short period of time, I asked to be transferred to the organisational work leading me to be the youngest person to join the organisational work in the Ein al-Hilweh branch of Fateh's Student Bureau. After a short period of time, I started moving up the ranks until I became a member of the leadership of Fateh's Student Bureau in Ein el-Hilweh.

I continued the revolutionary struggle through my work at Fateh's Student Bureau. This experience was still at during the early stages during which the Palestinian revolution and the Palestinian people were the subject of a conspiracy aimed at diverting the revolution and embroiling it in the internal Lebanese strife, which led to the Lebanese civil war. This led us to move from student civil activity to military activity. We joined military camps where we were trained to use all types of weapons. We participated in battles to defend our people, our camps and our Revolution. This was a period in which we our experiences in the ranks of Fateh refined and solidified our patriotic character. I started taking on greater responsibilities and began to shine within Fateh's Student Bureau. At that time, a number of students who were committed to direct military action formed a student military brigade, which was stationed in al-Aishiah, al-Nabatieh, and Al-Jurmoq Mountain. The brigade lost many martyrs such as Marwan Kaialli and Ali Abu Touq. This brigade had a proud history, including their confrontation of an elite Israeli force called the Golani Brigade against whom they held out in a fort during the Israeli invasion. They held out until all those inside the fort had been martyred; they never withdrew.

During this time, I kept moving between the various student branches and moving up the ranks. We had a very strong student bureau with a large number of members whose impact within the community was significant. We participated in many activities such as leading funerals of martyrs and issuing daily broadcasts to the people. We achieved this by placing speakers through the refugee camp and broadcasting news of revolutionary activities, particularly military operations carried out by the revolutionaries and Fateh groups in south Lebanon.

In 1978, Israel invaded Lebanon. This was one of the most important periods in which we were able to build the Student Bureau. We had students who believed in the inevitability of our return to Palestine and in restoring our rights through the Palestinian Revolution. These students were committed to the fight and to undertaking the military duties required of us during that period. Such military duties included guarding the camps, distributing statements, organising demonstrations and participating in the funerals of martyrs. We formed student military brigades all over Lebanon and recruited students studying all over the world. Students used to come and train in the military camps in Lebanon. Then in 1980, we witnessed a major Israeli military operation nicknamed the War of Bridges. It was given this nickname because all the bridges connecting the cities, villages and towns in the southern part of Lebanon were destroyed. Israel tried to disconnect the revolution's bases from each other but this attack, of course, failed.