

**Al-Araj, Abu al-Raed. Interviewed 2011. Translated by *The Palestinian Revolution*, 2016.<sup>1</sup>**

We tried to establish a network of relations with the brothers east of the river. It's a shame to differentiate and say Jordanians or Palestinians. In our efforts, we began building ties with a group of leaders, not cadres – such as Hassan Khrais, a doctor and the mayor of Irbid for two terms, Mahmoud al-Rousan (Abu Ziad), a former major general in the army, and Mohammad Tawfiq Rousan (Abu al-Hakam), a brigade general who had left the army and gained experience in finance, revolutionary judiciary and law. Then there was Farid Al-Qidab, who passed away a few months ago. [...] I believe he was a commander when he left the army. With these individuals, we formed a cell, and I acted as their liaison officer. The secretary of the cell, Ihsan Salaha (Abu Tawfiq), can give you more details about the cell itself. This is just one angle of our relationship with our brothers.

Our main aim was to work with the clans in any way possible. There was an officer who cooperated with us greatly and was appointed commander of the central sector. The military work in Jordan was divided into three sectors: northern, central and southern. Badi Awwad was appointed commander of the northern sector. He was a good cadre and a good man. I believe he's still alive. [...] After 1970, he was allowed to return to the Jordanian army, and appointed commander of a brigade.

As I mentioned, we hoped to work with the clans. Here's a quick story regarding our relationship with the clans. One day I went to Karameh and found Abu Ammar angry. Abu Ammar used to get angry if he needed a favour. I asked him to calm down, and asked what he wanted. He said he wanted to send out a patrol, but couldn't find a pistol to give the patrol's commander. He wanted the commander to carry a pistol at least. I asked him to give me a few days. I called one of the Jordanian ministers' wife. She was one of the founders of our women's organisation. Fateh had a great women's organisation. One of its most important founders, though she wasn't Jordanian, was Um Nasser, Abu Ammar's officer manager. She called one of the ministers, who was a clansman with solid backing from his clan, and asked him directly. He told her we should come to the ministry, and hopefully it would be sorted out. We went to the ministry and he gave us a bag with 24 pistols in it. I wondered where he got all these pistols from, and how we would deliver it to Karameh. I asked her to drive us in her car. I said

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if we got caught at least she would be my partner in crime. She answered saying anything for Abu Al-Raed, and this way she could meet Abu Ammar, which was an honour. We drove to Karameh carrying 24 brand new pistols. This time Abu Ammar was extremely happy.

In all honesty the clans in the south embraced us. Even when the events of 1970 took place, these clans protected some of our young men. The person who had the strongest relationship with the clans in the south was a young Egyptian Christian man called Mahjoub Omar. Two of our members were Egyptian Christians: Mohammad Hamza and Mahjoub Omar. Both of them had Muslim names. Mahjoub was a tactful and capable man. He should be credited for all the great work he did with the clans.

However, our work with the clans did not develop into joint organisation. For example, in Lebanon, the Arab front became bigger and stronger when the Lebanese people joined our resistance shoulder to shoulder against the Zionist enemy under the leadership of martyr Kamal Jumblatt. This was when the Arab Support Front was formed. In Jordan, the feeling was there but participation in the revolution remained on an individual basis. For example, the porters in the fruit and vegetable market were not all organised in the revolution given some of them were from the East Bank, the West Bank, others were clansmen and so on. All of them helped us sincerely yet individually. It was the same in Irbid. One of the clansmen that joined the revolution was Abu Fawaz (this was his alias). I will remember his real name. In the events of 1970, he left the Jordanian army because of his relationship with us. This is just some of what I recall.

In Jordan, the masses embraced us. One of our young men named Saleh Sha'watah, a member of the Jordanian parliament for two terms, reminded me of something that happened in Jordan. Saleh was a fighter and imprisoned in Jordan after September, receiving a death sentence that was later rescinded. Saleh asked if I remembered the time I went to Irbid for a festival held in the stadium. I said I remembered. Then Saleh stated "they asked me to stop you from coming to Irbid again because you spoke for a long time." I had forgotten this incident.

In the early days of the network, we did not have a central supply depot. We also did not have all these issues. One time, they needed cooking oil in the bases in Karameh. I went to one of the merchants and started haggling with him over the price, pretending to be a retailer. I wanted to get the cheapest price possible. The man generously offered the cheapest price he could. When we agreed on the price, I told him he needed to handle the transportation of the oil. He argued this was not his job. I insisted and he asked where would

he deliver the oil. When I said Karameh he asked who the oil was for. I said it was for his brothers, the Fedayeen (fighters). He was excited and asked why I hadn't told him that from the beginning. He then gave us 10 extra oilcans for free, rented a car and loaded the 60 cans (50 we paid for, 10 he gave us for free) and drove to Karameh. I cannot remember if he met Abu Ammar or not.

Abu Jihad was out of Jordan when the Battle of Karameh battle took place. If he was in Jordan, he would have also been in Karameh. The Battle of Karameh had ended in the evening when Abu Jihad came with Abu Youssef al-Najjar. I went with Abu Jihad to search for Abu Ammar. At that time we did not know if he was alive or not. We continued our search until after sunset when we finally found Abu Ammar. People, including members in the revolution, soldiers and residents of the camp were fleeing Karameh. Abu Ammar asked me to organise them in a mountainous area near Al-Salt. I thought to myself this area was a good place for people to meet. While I was gathering the people, the Israeli air force dropped flares. I panicked and thought I am gathering the people who just survived a battle to again be bomb targets. Thank god no bombs were dropped on us. I started wondering where we would house these people. You would be surprised if I told you the people of Al-Salt hosted every one of them in their houses. They opened their arms for us. This was unique and wonderful. These are some of the events that took place.

Another incident which only Abu Ammar and I know of took place during the siege of Karameh, before the Battle of Karameh. We did not want any confrontation with the Jordanian army. It was not our goal. I called a former minister and went with him to see a former prime minister. I told them we are not here to fight Jordanians and we do not want Jordanians fighting us. I said we are seeking death in the west bank of the river. The Jordanian army was one of our main supporters and often covered our retreat during our operations. The Jordanian army supported us from the first shot until our exit from Jordan. After talking to the former prime minister and drinking coffee with him, he started making phone calls. The Jordanian forces were withdrawn. It could have been a massacre between the two sides, which we did not want to happen. This story proves the clansmen's support for the revolution given the former minister and former prime minister were both clansmen.

As I said earlier, we did not have an organisational structure like the Arab Support Front in Lebanon. It was also the same situation in Syria in which we had good Syrian fighters. By the way, in its last cycle, a Syrian and a Lebanese were appointed to the Revolutionary Rouncil. For example, Ibrahim al-Ali (Abu Nada), a Syrian commander of the Popular Army, used to carry

ammunition on his shoulder and bring it to us. He was a great man. Another man in the interior ministry used to falsify documents for us. The popular support was really great. Sheikh Fahd al-Ahmad fought with us and was injured in a battle in Al-Salt after Karamah. He was later martyred in the invasion of Iraq. The Arab support was at its peak everywhere. From my own experience, everywhere I went I only saw appreciation, respect and love. For example, in Vietnam, I visited the McNamara Line getting to meet the commander of the Vietnamese Front and the minister of foreign affairs. I asked one of my companions about the relationship between the Vietnamese Labour Party and the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam, the man was surprised by my question and stated, "we are a liberation movement, comrade."