

## Palestinians around the world remember Dr. George Habash (PFLP)

By Edward Campbell

MISSOULA, Jan. 29 (Al-Masakin)—Dr. George Habash (Al-Hakim) former Secretary General of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) was mourned by Palestinian's the world over after he was lain to rest after an open casket funeral at a

Greek Orthodox Church in Amman,

Jordan Jan. 28. Mr. Habash died of natural causes in the capitol, where he had been living since 1992, Jan. 27.



He retired from the leadership of the PFLP in July 2000 after having led the leftist faction which is a key component of the Palestine Liberation Organization for more than 30 years. He was 80 years of age.

His successor Abu Ali Mustafa was assassinated by Israel in Ramallah one year later. Ahmed Saadat, the current PFLP secretary general, is held in Israeli prison on charges of planning the assassination of former tourism minister Rahba'am Ze'evi in retaliation to the murder of Abu Ali Mustafa.

Mr. Habash was a fierce opponent of the policy of compromise of PLO chief Arafat,

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ruling out a normalization of ties with the Jewish state and accusing him of making too many concessions. He opposed Arafat's 1993 Oslo autonomy deal and refused to return to the Palestinian territories after the launch of autonomy in 1994, while insisting on the right of return of Palestinian refugees to their former homes in Israel.

His funeral was attended by prominent Palestinian leaders, friends, family, and comrades such as his daughters and

his widow Hilda Habash, longtime friend and comrade Leila Khaled, DFLP leader Nayef Hawatmeh, PFLP politburo leader Maher Taher, Israeli Knesset member Ahmad Tibi, head of the Palestinian National Council Saleem al-Za'anoun and Fatah leader Faruq Qaddumi, inter alios.

Abu Mazen, lame duck Palestinian President, declared three days of mourning and the Palestinian flag lowered to half-mast in recognition of this great leader. Islamic Jihad organization expressed deep sorrow at the loss. The movement said losing Habash meant losing a major symbol of the Palestinian and Arab people.

Islamic Jihad praised Habash for a lifetime of resistance and struggle against the Israeli occupation, for rejecting American views towards the Palestinian question, and for his role in founding the Arab National Movement.

The Secretary General of the Palestinian National Initiative, Mustafa Barghouthi,

also the former Palestinian minister of information, traveled to Amman to attend the funeral. Barghouthi said Habash was a symbol of the Palestinian struggle and a tireless advocate of Palestinians' rights.

There were several symbolic funerals in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in which mourners took to the streets carrying Habash posters. Speaking at a rally in Jenin in the northern West Bank, Jenin Governor Qaddora Mousa said that with the death of Habash, Palestinian national unity has lost one of its pillars. Also in Jenin, Amir As-Sa'di spoke on behalf of the Palestinian National and Islamic Forces by Amir As-Sa'di who promised that the Palestinian forces will follow in Habash's steps until they achieve Palestinian national goals.

The political bureau of a PFLP offshoot, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC) issued a statement expressing their sadness for the departure of Al-Hakim as well as pride for being under his command before they established the General Command as a separate faction. The Union of UNRWA employees in Lebanon also expressed sorrow for the loss of "a historic Palestinian



leader" the *Ma'an* news agency reported on Monday.

With PFLP SG Ahmad Sadaat imprisoned, the prominence of Maher Taher at the funeral suggests that he will very likely be taking a greater role in the leadership of the party, not a leadership crisis as some may have anticipated. That the funeral of a recognized Marxist leader took place, however, in a Greek Orthodox Church flies in the face of ham-fisted pundits of atheism within the ICM underscores how that movement has persistently misunderstood the Palestinian cause and the critical nature of understanding the phrase "Holy Land" in relation to it. Who has not eulogized this great man with in the left have said as much as those who have.

Indeed on the level of metaphysical ontology, the persistent use of the word "Arab" by the PFLP, and others within the Arab Nationalist movement, particularly the PLO, signifies how that movement, and those on the left united with them, have sought to conceal much deeper and fundamental ties to Christianity and, moreover, with its principal architects of Communism having themselves been Christians, how Christianity has played a role in the ideological development of Socialism and indeed made the development of communist ideology even possible. Understanding the fundamentally religious nature of this land and this conflict is imperative for those who seek to unite with it.

God bless you Mr. Habash. Best wishes to the PFLP and the Palestinian people.

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