

Nasser and Black September 1970

Noha Osman Azmy

The Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser considered the Arab affairs as the most crucial and contingent circle to Egypt. He spent years trying to achieve his aim of Arab Unity. Sometimes he was able to get his goal and many times he realized that the inter-Arab fractions were far beyond to be recovered. In spite of this fact, his attempts were never stopped. Black September in 1970 was one of the main events that threatened not only Nasser's objective of Arab Unity, but also the whole Arab entity in a very critical time of its history. While Nasser was stepping towards the reconstruction of his army and calling for Arab resistance after their defeat in 1967 to be ready for the next military confrontation with Israel, the Jordanian-Palestinian relations were deteriorated and the external intervention, including that of Israel, became very much possible, to achieve their targets in the region.

Several historians had approached this topic from different number of perspectives. Most of the historians talked about the Black September and the relations between the Jordanians and the Palestinians, focusing on the reason of the event. Malcolm Kerr and Laurie A. Brand claimed that the Palestinian Resistance was the responsible for the deterioration that led to this conflict⁽¹⁾. Alan Dowty and Abraham Ben-Zvi referred that Jordan's unannounced relation with the United States and Israel was the main reason for the escalation of the events⁽²⁾. As for the Egyptian role, few numbers of historians focused on it. Anthony Nutting tried to follow Nasser's role and his effort to end this conflicts⁽³⁾. In spite of these writings, many roles that affected on the event still unclear. The paper will use the US Department of State, to focus on the reasons, for Jordanians and the

Palestinians that led to Black September. the role of the external powers to stir up the fight between the two Arab countries. Egyptian role in Black September 1970. and its relations with both Jordan and the Palestinians. even before the conflict. that strongly affected on its role during the crisis. It will argue that Egypt was the only Arab power that was able to intervene to end this conflict and prevent imperialists and Zionists to intervene in the Arab affairs.

The topic still addresses critical questions. Who did win this civil war? Did Nasser's absence affect the conciliation between the two parties. after the conflict? Did the external powers achieve their goals?

The Jordanian – Palestinian relations were complicated and interlaced. scarcely to be separated throughout its different phases. depending on the strong historical. geographical, social and economic ties that always had been there to gather them.

The political relation between Jordan and Palestine was also different in its component and structure from any other inter-Arab relations. After the Palestine War 1948. more than 700.000 Palestinians were fled from their homes. Some 70.000 went directly to the East Bank of Jordan River. which at the time had an estimated largely indigenous Transjordan population of about 440.000.

In 1950, the Jordanian King Abdullah annexed the West Bank that had not been occupied by Israel. to be formally incorporated into his kingdom that was titled 'The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan'. While this addition to the kingdom less than 7% of territory. it tripled his population⁽⁴⁾. Since the annexion of the West Bank. the population of the Hashemite Kingdom had been composed of two major communal groups: Transjordan and Palestinians.

The period from 1948 – 1964. was a period of integration between Palestine and Jordan. This period was ended when the first Arab Summit Conference was hold in Cairo. in January 1964. When the heads of the Arab States authorized Ahmed Al Shuqairi. the Representative of Palestine to the

Arab League. to contact the Palestinian people with the aim of establishing an organization of the Palestinian people to liberate their country and determine their own destiny. And in the Second Arab Summit conference. that was held in Alexandria in September 1964. they welcomed the establishment of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) as a boost to the Palestinian entity and vanguard for the collective Arab struggle to liberate Palestines⁵.

These resolutions created the Jordanian worry towards this new born organization as it might compete with the Jordanian monarchy and try to have separate Palestinian entity. In spite of this worry, the Jordanian Government welcomed the convention of the First National Council of the PLO in 1964. to be sure that this entity would be connected to be sure that this entity would be connected to the Jordanian one.

Many times, the Jordanian king, Hussein, declared that "Jordan is Palestine and Palestine is Jordan". It was his way to assert Jordan's decisive role in the determination of the political fate of the Palestinians to ensure the survival of his Hashemite monarchy⁶.

Jordan took some steps to control the new Palestinian entity. like to make the head quarter of the PLO be in Jordan. and its members had to have special Jordanian passports. The duplication in the Palestinian people's representation led to clear dispute between the two parties concerning the PLO's targets and entity.

The Israeli attacks on the Jordanians Sammu' village. on November 13. 1966 was considered a turning point in the Jordan - Palestinian relations. The PLO criticized the Jordanian failure to protect the villagers and asked for military training for the villagers and to distribute arms among them. The tension between Jordan and Palestinians increased rapidly. till it was ended with the Jordanian resolution to close the PLO's offices in Jerusalem⁷.

The Jordanian Government considered the PLO's desires of establishing training camps for the Palestinians in Jordan. went beyond the Summit Conference resolutions limits. As a result of this tension in February 1967.

the Jordanian government officially withdrew its approval with the PLO, describing the Palestinian leadership as conspirator and destructive.

The Jordan-Palestinian dispute was apparently frozen by the beginning of June 1967, when the Israeli threats began as a step towards the military confrontation with the Arabs on June 6 that ended with the Israeli occupation to Sinai, Golan Heights, West Bank and Gaza Strip.

After the 1967 war, Israel thought that it realized all its objectives, and its military victory would guarantee the acceptance of the Arab governments on its terms in the post war negotiations. In contrary, the Arab countries that participated in the war began to reconstruct their forces to start a new phase of resistance to remove the traces of the defeat. Within twenty days after the war, on July 1, 1967, in Rass Al Ash, the attrition war began to impede the military Israeli existence on the Suez Canal, in form of frequent attacks causing military and economic troubles to the enemy but would not lead to an exclusive war ⁽⁸⁾.

President Nasser supported the attrition war. He mentioned on February 18, 1963, that he could assure that Israel would not withdraw from the Arab Lands as a result of the US applying pressure on it, nor would withdraw as a result of the efforts of the United Nations, but it would withdraw when we became capable of carrying out military actions to drive it out of the occupied Lands ⁽⁹⁾.

On April 7, 1968, Nasser ensured that he would carry out operations with the Fedayeen in the occupied lands as he had received information indicated that the Israelis were very disturbed by the Fedayeen, since around fifteen people were being killed every week ⁽¹⁰⁾.

The Palestinian guerrillas organized in the early 1950's to harass newly created Israel, seek to become a rallying point for Palestinian irredentism. Their fortunes and following were low until the 1967 Six Days War.

The CIA's reports mentioned that there were eleven Fedayeen organizations, most of them were members of the PLO, and the larger and more heavily financed group was Fatah. It was founded in 1956, headed by a Jerusalem -

born Palestinian called, Yasser Arafat. It claimed to be without political bias and seek friendship of all Arab governments, but in fact supported extreme guerrilla tactics through its Front. There were also ideologically oriented groups that included the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), which main concern was to overthrow the conservative Arab regimes as prerequisites for the liberation of Palestine; their hostility to the US and the most Western countries was intense ⁽¹¹⁾.

In 1955 the Palestinian Resistance Movement began to take on a more organized character; in fact, the Israelis believed that the Egyptians were sponsoring and training them, as in early 1955 when Israel attacked Egyptian military installations outside Gaza in reprisal for a series of raids from the Gaza Strip.

By 1965, the Israeli program to divert the waters of the Jordan River had raised tensions in the Arab world and created a climate favorable for the resurgence of the Fedayeen. From June 1967, the Fedayeen activities and Israeli reprisals became more intense ⁽¹²⁾.

Since the first moment, President Gamal Abdel Nasser supported the Palestinian Fedayeen's military operations as a decisive reaction on the Israeli and Western attempts to impede the unified Arab action. Practically, Nasser translated this support by providing the Fedayeen with arms and opening some of the Egyptian military training camps to train the Fedayeen. He ordered all the Egyptian media to work for supporting the Palestinian Fedayeen's operations. In October 1966, during his visit to Cairo, Yasser Arafat was informed that Egypt would support them on the same way that it supported the military resistance operations in Algeria ⁽¹³⁾.

President Nasser believed that the proliferation of the Fedayeen organizations fed on the rivalries of the Arab States like Iraq and Syria, which backed one or more organizations in a competition to reap the political profits of association with the political cause.

Nasser tried to unify the Palestinian Resistance Groups in one organization.

He believed that their different oriented ideologies would affect badly, regionally and internationally, on their cause and would weaken its strength to achieve its targets.

These attempts were described by the Americans as continuing efforts to promote the unifications of the Palestinians Resistance movement under a leader who would be amenable to Egyptian disciples. In 1960's Egypt's chosen Ahmed Shuqiari and after 1967, it was closely associated with Yasser Arafat ⁽¹⁴⁾.

The new system of Resistance founded a new commando groups that started their operations in the refugees' camps in Jordan and Lebanon. They declared that they would lead wars to liberate their lands. They suggested the establishment of a non-sectarian state where the Jewish population of Israel, the Palestinian Arabs and the refugees would have the equal rights and obligations as citizens of the Unified Palestine. They opposed the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) 242 Resolution that called for division of Palestine.

These Commando operations caused the conflict between the Resistance and the Lebanese and Jordanian regimes that wanted to settle the conflict with Israel on the base of the 242 Resolution. Both regimes were worried that these operations might make Israel withdraw from the peaceful negotiations and to hold onto the occupied territories of 1967.

On September 4, 1967 soon after Fatah had resumed its operations, King Hussein expressed his opposition to the Fedayeen as their activities would increase Israel repression, which would drive the inhabitants of the occupied areas to flee their home to seek refuge in neighboring Arab States. On February 19, 1968 Fatah stated in reply to another attack by King Hussein pledging that the Resistance would not permit anymore or any regime, to prevent its operations.

Yasser Arafat tried hard to have a full authority over these organizations and to confer regularly with King Hussein, but he failed to have control over all of these groups. Each time he reaches an agreement with King Hussein concerning the PLO's activities in Jordan, his arrangements somehow

sabotaged as the extremist groups' activities, like PFLP of George Habbash, spoiled it. These groups believed that the Jordanian regime no less an enemy to the Palestinian cause than the Israeli regime.

The Fedayeen were always suspect in King Hussein. His relations with Israel might lead him to dissolve the resistance to reach settlement with Israel. King Hussein, in turn saw that the Fedayeen's operations might cause disorders and troubles in Amman and other Jordanian towns. And the operations in the West Bank might push Israel to lead revengeful raids that would cause damage to the Jordanian towns. King Hussein was accused by Israel and the United States with sheltering terrorists who were trying to cause damages to Israel ⁽¹⁷⁾.

The Syrians had displayed a highly ambivalent attitude in dealing with the Palestinian Resistance. They supported the Palestinian movement in rejecting any compromise settlement with Israel. But with the fear of the enemy's reprisals they declared that they would not allow to use the Syrian lands in these operations. The Syrians support was limited with providing them with weapons and training the Fedayeen in the Jordan and Lebanese lands.

President Nasser was worried that the Syrian and the Iraqi statements might incite the Palestinians to escalate their conflict with their Jordanian and Lebanese hosts. Therefore Nasser used to urge King Hussein to keep patient in handling with the movement. On the other hand, he advised Arafat to have full control over the PLO and its groups. He believed that the PLO should be careful not to try conclusions operations with Israel unless they could get the financial and military support from the Arab States ⁽¹⁸⁾.

Nasser preferred to deal with Yasser Arafat for his courage and his determination in dealing with the Palestinian groups and leadership of the movement. But Nasser did not agree with their rejection of any compromise settlement with Israel. Nasser believed that the Resistance could play a useful role in harassing the Israelis and bringing a pressure on them that would force them to take more flexible situation during the negotiations.

He advised Arafat to accept the UNSC 242 resolution to allow the PLO to have operations from Ramallah and Hebron rather than Amman. Nasser used to tell Arafat that as they depended on the foreign supplies, any attempt to liberate Palestine could be stopped by those who controlled the Arabs' arms supplies. He warned Arafat against getting involved with the Syrians and Iraqis Baathists who would only mislead him with false promises⁽¹⁹⁾.

The Battle of al Karamah, on March 21, 1968, was a decisive point in the Fedayeen' strategy. The Israeli forces entered the village as it was said to be guerrilla capital. Yasser Arafat with his 200 – 300 Fedayeen and his light guns and rockets launchers did not stand along against the organized Israelis. Arafat decided to keep his fighters till the Israeli tanks arrived. He managed to leave Al Karamah at night before the Israeli troops crossed the river. Against the Jordanian, King Hussein's orders, the Jordanian forces engaged the battle that managed to contain the Israeli thrust and to inflict considerable losses on the intruders.

Al Karamah was the supreme battle of honor. It boosted the Palestinian morale and gave the PLO additional prestige within the Arab community. The official backing from Egypt and many other Arab governments was increased, that forced Jordan to grant more freedom to the organizations to establish their training camps and carryout their operations into the occupied lands. Initially the Jordanian government became supportive of Fedayeen actions against Israel⁽²⁰⁾.

David Raab claimed that Jordan was not all the time against the Fedayeen. They were a source of pride to Jordan as the forces that still daring to fight Israel and might regain the West Bank⁽²¹⁾. And in case of not achieving this goal, the liquidation of these forces would be the tool to realize settlement with Israel. In reality, King Hussein could not appear as opponent to the Fedayeen' operation that managed to inflict some loses to Israel; otherwise, he would be considered a traitor to the whole Arab Cause. That was the reason for King Hussein's visit to President Nasser in Cairo, on April 6, 1968 to discuss the Israeli threats as result of these Fedayeen'

operations and the Egyptian support to Jordan. During this meeting. The Jordanian Chief of Staff. Gen Khammash. mentioned that these operations gave Israel a good excuse to launch military operations against Jordan. Nasser recommended coordinating with them; especially Fatah had a good people and choosing some dependable officials to contact them. trustful to the Palestinians. Nasser had information that the liaison officers between King Hussein and the Palestinians were suspected of being contact with the American Central Intelligence Agency (22).

On the Palestinian side. after al Karamah. Arafat became a national hero who managed to confront Israel. Masses of young Arab joined his organization. Fatah. Ahmed Al Shuqairi resigned in July 1969. Fatah joined and soon Yasser Arafat was elected as the new Chairman of the PLO.

In Jordan, the Fedayeen constituted a serious problem due to constant Israeli raids on their outposts; the Fedayeen moved eastwards to the Jordanian high lands and pitched their camps in and around major towns. These camps became hotbeds of their activities and stores for their military holds. which exposed the Jordanians' centers to heavy Fedayeen presence. In addition to arming the population the Fedayeen moved in the town and villages bearing arms and wearing own camouflage uniforms. They refused to register vehicles or carry Jordanian license plates (23).

The Jordanian police and army began to lose their authority. As a way out to realize settlement in Jordan, in November 1968, negotiation between King Hussein and the Organizations. a Seven – Point agreement was reached. The agreement forbade the members of these organizations from walking around cities armed. stopping civilian vehicles. competing the Jordanian army for recruits. and to carry Jordanian identity papers, license plates and would be investigated by the Jordanian authorities (24).

The Marxist-Leninist orientation groups like PFLP that was headed by George Habbash and the Popular Democratic Front (PDFLP) that was headed by Nayef Hawatmeh. advocated the overthrow of all moderate and conservative Arab regimes. including Jordanian. which they considered to

be allied with the western imperialism and Israel. They claimed to be the only representative of the Palestinian people to pose a direct challenge to the King Hussein's claim to guardianship over the Palestinians (25).

Between mid of 1968 and the end of 1969, around five hundred violent clashes occurred between the Palestinian guerrillas and Jordanian forces. Acts of violence against civilians frequently took place. The PLO also continued attacking Israel from the Jordanian territories without regard to Jordanian authority. The PFLP believed in the hijacking of American and Israeli liners to imitate the Cuban Revolutionaries' ideology. In spite of Arafat's rejection on this way of resistance, it joined the PLO officially in July 1969. And less than a month after it hijacked a TWA plane and diverted it to land in Damascus. They increased their attacks on El Al company offices in Brussels and Athens and severely damaged. Under pressure from Amman and other Arab Capitals, Arafat announced in June 1970, that the armed attacks on civilian aircrafts were detrimental to the Palestinian cause (26).

The PLO armed struggle caused heavy Israeli reprisals against vital Jordanian economic projects in the Ghore area and Civilian centers. By 1970, in Jordan, Fatah had established itself State within State, with an army, hospitals, social security system and tax collectors. It was unable to have a complete hegemony over the activities of the commando groups, PLFP and PDFLP. Although they were financially weak, they were influential because of the wide spread appeal of their radical ideology (27).

Early 1970, a severe anger spread in the Jordanian army towards the Palestinian Resistance, especially that the number of these military operations increased from 6 operations monthly in spring of 1967 to reach 480 operations in August 1969. In turn, the number of the Israeli murders and injured were also increased from 69 in 1967 to be 473 in 1969 (28). The Jordanian officers were convinced that the Fedayeen activities threatened stability in Jordan, and they were independent of the Jordanian government's control and potentially hostile to the regime of King Hussein, because of his moderation and Pro- Western sympathies.

According to the US Department of Defense reports, the Fedayeen' activities did not pose a serious military threat to Israel, and would not succeed in driving the Israelis from the occupied areas or endanger the existence of Israel itself. Israel claimed to have stopped 90 – 95 percent of the incursions and has exacted from raiding parties a casualty rate in death and captured estimated from 50 percent to 90 percent (29).

In February 1970, King Hussein published a Ten-Point edict, restricting activities of the Palestinian organizations. On February 11, the fighting broke out between Jordanian Security Forces and the Palestinian groups in the streets of Amman. By summer 1970, the violence increased that was described by King Hussein: Amman became a virtual battle field. (30)

On June 9, the Fedayeen opened fire on Jordanian intelligence headquarters in Amman. A cease fire was agreed to the next day and was collapsed the day after. On the same day the US Assistance Military Attaché was assassinated in front of his family.

In an attempt to placate the Palestinians, on June 1970, King Hussein was forced to replace his uncle as a Commander in Chief with the Major General Mashhur Hadith, who was closer to the PLO. He appointed also a new moderate Prime Minister, Abdul Moneim Rifai (31). King Hussein resolutions portrayed his situation in this civil struggle. King was losing his authority in front of commandos that supposed to act against their real enemy, Israel. Hussein gave the impression as he was on his way out; he appeared as powerless on his regime. Hussein was cunning in drawing this portrait. He appeared to the whole world that he did all he can do, scarifying his prestige, to reach settlement with the Palestinians, to found uncontestable excuse to get ride of them on the right time.

In July 1970, Egypt and Jordan accepted the American proposal that called for ceasing the fire in the war of Attrition between Israel and Egypt, known as Rogers Plan that was suggested by William Rogers, the American Secretary of State. The plan also discussed the Israeli withdrawal from territories occupied in 1967, according to the UN Security Council 242 Resolution (32).

The PLO, George Habbash's PFLP and Nayef Hawatmeh's PDFLP opposed the plan, as they believed that the UNSC 242 Resolution contained no specific assurance about homeland for the Palestinians. Violent demonstrations spread all over the streets of Amman and Beirut. It attacked both the American and Egyptian embassies accusing the Egyptian regime with being traitor to the Palestinian cause, cursing Nasser personally accusing him as agent to the Imperialism.

In response to the Egyptian-Jordanian approval to Rogers Plan, the Palestinian groups were divided into Pro or anti Amman and Cairo policy. Total hostility from PFLP and PDFLP, that reached armed struggle with any group that showed sympathy over Cairo. Other groups like Arab Palestine Organization were supportive to the groups with their hostility to Cairo, without mentioning a word to accuse Nasser personally. Al Anssar group was very supportive to Cairo and Jordan. Fatah was in as awkward situation. While it did not want to attack Nasser, it knew that if it did not condemn Nasser's decision, the other groups would outbid and seize the chance to shake the superiority. That was the reason for going along with the other groups, just to save its position among the other groups (33).

In response to these demonstrations, on July 29, President Nasser decided to close two Radio Stations that were operating from Cairo's transmitters until further notice. Yasser Arafat left to meet Nasser in Cairo, to discuss the deteriorating relation between Egypt and the Palestinian. Before reaching Cairo, Arafat stopped by Iraq to convene with the Iraqi President, Hassan Al Bakr, to inquiry his opinion if the PLO asked the Iraqi troops, that were already exist in Jordan since 1967 in the Jordan north frontiers, in case the Fedayeen were attacked by the Jordanian army.

The Iraqi president's Baathist policy was against Nasser, so Nasser considered this visit as incorrect beginning for negotiation. Arafat just had shackled hands with Nasser who found it a good chance to comment that Arafat was saving the hugs for Al Bakr only (34).

Nasser refused to open the Radio Stations, confirming that King Hussein did not attack the commando groups because of Cairo's mediation, and his

fear to dismantle the Jordanian army as most of its officers were Palestinians. Nasser sent a message to King Hussein assuring his support to Jordanian in all cases except of liquidating the Palestinian Resistance. He believed that the Fedayeen reckless actions could not be an excuse to liquidate the whole movement. He promised to reach a permanent conciliation agreement with the PLO and all its groups would be committed to it (35). Nasser sent this message on the same time of his talks with Arafat. He wanted let Hussein know that his anger with the Palestinians did not mean that he would allow to get ride of them.

President Nasser's acceptance on the American plan was seen by the Fedayeen as justifying their worst fears and suspicious regarding their intentions of the Arab States to conclude a definite peace settlement with Israel that would signal the final surrender of Palestinian national rights and the Arab States were ready to sell them out again. They were also anti pathetic towards Hussein's United Kingdom project (36).

In August 1970, the left organizations figured out that seizing power in Jordan would be the best way to achieve their goal, as the way to Jerusalem would pass by Amman. Both PFLP and PDFLP openly called for the overthrow of the monarchy (37).

The Palestinian worry towards Nasser's situation was not correct. From the beginning Nasser ensured that the Palestinian cause was apart of any possible peaceful solution between Egypt and Israel. On July 22, 1970, on his reply to William Rogers, Nasser insisted on the necessity to approve the Palestinian people rights through the United Nations Resolutions (38).

In his meeting with King Hussein in Ras Al Teen, in Alexandria, on August 21, 1970, Nasser confirmed the right of the Palestinian Resistance to reject the Rogers Plan and to reject the Peaceful solution even if these were approved by all the Arab countries. He again asked Hussein to be patient with the Palestinians, even if they went astray, for both the Jordanians and the Palestinians. He recommended that Hussein to approach the Fedayeen issue through political action and not through police action.

Nasser explained that it did not mean that Hussein to take negative stance towards the opportunistic Palestinian elemis. but he had to embark on a vast political movement (39).

Muhammad Hassanin Haikal, Nasser's Confident and Minister of Information, mentioned that Nasser said that he accepted Rogers Plan because it carried an American flag. It was the first time for the US to step seriously to solve the Middle East problem. He added that they needed enough time of ceasing fire to reorganize and construct their troops. And as fatal factor, he ensured that he needed time to finish constructing the rockets arsenal that would protect the Egyptian troops on the Eastern Bank of the Canal.

Nasser ensured that the expected rate of the success of this plan was half percent. And the rejection would be translated by the whole world as a desire for the war, then Israel would appear as a victim, was threatened from its neighboring states. (40) Thus, the PLO lost its good relations with Nasser and his protection. Reportedly, the plan was a trap conceived to destroy the PLO's relation with Nasser, and the plan itself had never been implanted.

The Jordanian army became increasingly angry and frustrated. Many officers requested the King's permission to crush the Fedayeen and he backed them off. He was accused of being women who was afraid to take action against the country's enemy.

On September 1, King Hussein was close to being shot to death by the commando groups. Twenty minutes later, the Jordanian army began shelling the Fedayeen in Amman. The following morning Amman was tense and down town was completely under Fedayeen control.

On September 3, clashes resumed through a broadcast. King Hussein addressed the PLO asking them to have control over its groups. On September 5, the PLO's Central Committee and the Jordanian Government reached an agreement under which the guerrilla would leave Amman and the Jordanian troops to withdraw from the outskirts of Amman. In spite

of this agreement. on the next day. one round hit the US embassy. In the evening Hussein made radio address to the people as he could no longer remain silent in the face of a painful flow of doubts and accusations. ruin and destruction directed to his people and army (41).

On September 6, the PFLP carried out three airline hijackings taking a Swiss Air and TWA plane to desert airfield and a pan Am airliner to Cairo. At the beginning at least 85 passengers had been released. they kept most male and Israeli passengers as hostages. On September 10. a British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC) flight was hijacked to the same desert runway east of Mufraq city. Then the total number of the hostages became 300 (42).

The PFLP announced that its objective was to force Israel to release the prisoner Fedayeen who were held in Israel. They threatened that if there was any foreign military action in Jordan. the three planes and all their occupants would be blown up and an attack on the hotel in Amman where some of the passengers were staying was also possible (43).

The PLO condemned the hijacking but it. as well as the Jordanian regime. could not do anything towards the hijacking. After three days. the hostages were released. except of forty of them and the planes were blown up. This attitude that was described in the American report as Fatah was not only opposed to the PFLP hijackings. it was victimized by them. by being precipitated into civil war with the Jordanian.

At the beginning of the crisis. King Hussein entrusted to his army chief – of – staff. all authority of the armed forces to restore the peace. But later the guerrillas and the security forces were trading shots and fighting was going on in several areas of the city. The American embassy confirmed. in its reports on September 10, that the King. till that moment. was unwilling to take the final military confrontation with Fedayeen. (44)

In reality. the choices for Hussein were limited. if he did nothing. the Jordanian army might move to crush the Fedayeen. thus destroying his authority. If he acted. Syria and Iraq that forces still in Jordanian borders

since 1967 war might intervene to support the Fedayeen. So the only possible choice for him was to look for outside intervention to support him to move, which meant for him the United States and Israel.

The American response to the hijackings was cautious. The US plans were designed to extricate the hostages' personnel and to evacuate the American citizens from Jordan. The United States' contribution was steadily escalation series of military moves, meant to demonstrate president Richard Nixon's determination to act forcefully if necessary, and to provide a military intervention if requested by King Hussein.

Henry Kissinger, the American National Security Adviser, suggested supporting the Israeli intervention with equipment package, and to take in the US posture to hold the ring against the Russians if the Israeli moved to support Hussein under his request. (45)

Officially, Egypt announced its condemnation to these hijackings. Muhammad H. Heikal, Nasser's confident, told the US Minister in Cairo, Bergus, that he had personally conveyed to Fatah, the main middle-of-the-road Palestinian organization, an ultimatum that unless it publicly denounced the hijacking operations of the radical Palestinians, as the United Arab Republic (UAR) had done, the UAR would consider Fatah in the same category as the radical and act accordingly. (46) On September 15, the hijacking crisis was still unsolved. The hijacked aircraft had been blown up, and the fifty-four hostages were still being held at unknown locations.

Late on the same day, King Hussein informed Washington that he would move to compel Fedayeen to implement the cease fire agreement and remove their forces from Amman in order to establish law and order, p. 20. He confirmed that he would establish a military government that would take over communications and declare a curfew. He stressed that depending on Fedayeen reactions; he might need to call for the US and Israeli assistance (48).

On September 16, King Hussein appointed a new military government headed by Brigadier General Muhammad Duad, and declared the martial

laws. Next day the Jordanian tanks attacked the headquarters of the Palestinian organizations in Amman; the army attacked also camps in Irbid, Salt, Sweileh and Zarqa.

The armored troops were inefficient in narrow city streets and thus the Jordanian army conducted house to house sweeps for Palestinian fighters and got immersed in heavy urban warfare with the Palestinian fighters. The Jordanian infantry moved towards the Palestinians' shelters to push all the Palestinians out of Amman after weeks of bitter fighting. (49)

The Jordanian revenge did not distinguish between the Palestinian civilians and commandos. As if King Hussein decided to crack down on the military Palestinian presence on the Jordanian soil, and it was his determined and successful onslaught against the defiant Palestinian factions in and around Amman.

Seeking to prevent the imminent collapse of his Hashemite Kingdom and the disruption of the regional balance of power, Hussein panned with the US and worked with Israel to get ride of the Palestinians; ignoring that if he moved earlier to have more authority over them. He might not in need to use force and blood to submit them, but these steps were planned to leave the rope for the Palestinians to hang themselves.

King Hussein's move was with full American support as Henry Kissinger mentioned in his memorandum to the American President Richard Nixon, on September 16, that «King Hussein appointed a new military government early this morning as planned». (50)

King Hussein was in need to this American support. There was the risk of Syrian and Iraqi intervention. There were in Jordan since the 1967 war. King Hussein also considered Egypt as a great potential danger, because of the Soviet presence there in such great numbers. (51) The survival of King Hussein's regime was vital to any hope for a settlement of Arab- Israeli conflict. The defeat of King Hussein, as a close friend to the United States, by the Fedayeen would be considered a victory of the radical regimes with the Soviet weapons as apart of plan began with the Soviet rejection of

Rogers Plan and dispatch a large numbers of Soviet troops to Egypt.

President Nixon wanted to crush the Fedayeen, but the conflict contained with Jordan. Thus, the Americans policy was to restrain the Israelis to intervene militarily. At the same time, an American and Israeli show of force might help to deter the Syrians and Iraqis and Soviets.

On September 17, from Kansas State University, Nixon gave a tough speech in which he denounced the Fedayeen. (52) From the American view, the crisis was seen as a US-Soviet confrontation. In case of outbreak of hostilities between Israel and the Arab States, The Soviet intervention, in order to protect the defeat of the Arab States, could require American intervention on behalf of Israel. Nixon was not sure that the Soviet would not intervene, unless the Syrians would do. They would not intervene on behalf of the Fedayeen as the American received news that Arafat was recently told in private by USSR officials that USSR disapproved the Fedayeen terrorist tactics. (53)

The American were certain that the Soviets would accept limited local setbacks in order to avoid a conflict with the United States over the Middle East, as less important in comparison with China, Eastern Europe, and its global relationship with United States in the west. (54)

On September 18, the Soviet Union warned the outside Powers that intervention could only widen the conflict. It cautioned western powers as well as Iraq and Syria against interfering in the fighting. (55)

Kissinger commented that this Soviet note showed that, Moscow had heard the American's, as it urged prudence on all parties and promised to use the Soviet influence to bring the civil war to an end. (56)

On September 19- 20, the Syrians forces intervened into the northern Jordan to reinforce the PLO. President Nixon was certain that the Soviet was pushing the Syrians and the Syrians were pushing the Palestinians. (57)

On September 21, King Hussein had appealed from Israel and the United States for help to deter the Syrians. Nixon agreed on the principle to an Israeli air and ground strike. The American approval was a warning

that was directed to the Soviets if their Syrian partner did not stop. Throughout the crisis, King Hussein and members of the Israel political leadership engaged in direct, top level operation discussion which included the Israeli intervention to confront the Syrian attack (58). On September 27, 1970, Kuwait Political Newspaper, Alsiyassa, printed a document that was received from the PLO that claimed that the Jordanian government asked the US government to press Israel to drop the idea of Palestine State. (59)

The Israeli-Syrian confrontation was a risk for the Super powers to confront in the Middle East. The Russians declared that they had opposed the Syrian intervention into Jordan, and made it clear that they were pressing the Syrians to withdraw. On September 22, Field Marshal Habis-Al Majali, the military governor of Jordan announced that the aggressor's forces in the North had retreated.

President Nasser was annoyed with this Arab bloodshed especially that estimates of the number killed in Jordan mount daily. A figure of 10,000 was mentioned by Muhammad H. Haikal, the Egyptian Minister of Information. And on September 22, Cairo announced that the most recent information put the death toll in the Jordanian war at 15,000. (60)

Nasser was worried that Israel might use this conflict to be a pretext to renege on its promise of ceasing fire. And if the Syrians intervened to help the Palestinians, Israel would intervene with plea of helping King Hussein. But in reality, Israel wanted to accomplish an agreement with Jordan to isolate Egypt and to force it to accept the Israeli terms to reach conciliation.

Whatever the fact, concerning the Syrian intervention, as they claimed that who intervened were Palestinians not Syrians, the Jordanian claim of the threat of the Syrian intervention from the north was the most acceptable reason for the American and Israeli intervention in the Arab region. (61)

Nasser was shocked that reckless actions of some of the Palestinians could not to be the reason for as overwhelming attack against all the Palestinians.

On September 25. Nasser sent a message to King Hussein with some undeniable facts. not respecting cease fire, non respect for all the promises made to the UAR. put plan to liquidate the Palestinian Resistance... (62)

At the beginning. Nasser thought to travel to Amman to mediate for an immediate cease fire. But he sent an envoy to invite Hussein to Cairo to discuss the deteriorating situation away from the battle field. At the same time he sent Hafez Ismail. the Chief of the General Intelligence, to update him with the news of the American forces movements in the region. especially the Six Fleet. (63)

Under Arafat's request. in his message that he sent to all Arab Heads of States. appealing to intervene to end the bloodshed in Jordan (64). The Arab League declared would to hold a summit conference in Tripoli. Libya to discuss the Jordan Crisis. Then it was mentioned that the summit would be convened in Cairo (65). Many Arab Heads of State had flown in. some key leaders chose not to. Neither King Hussein nor Yasser Arafat accepted to share. and the PLO reasserted that it would 'fight on to the end. to overthrow the throne and military regime (66). The Syrian president. who was in Cairo at the same time. refused to attend the summit. Instead of a summit. a High-Level Four Men 'Peace Mission' headed by the Sudanese president Jaffar Al Nimeiry. was formed and dispatched to Amman. In the mission also. were Bahi Ladgham. the Tunisian Prime Minister. General Muhammad Sadiq. the Egyptian Chief of Staff. who was sent to Amman since the beginning of the crisis and Saad Salim Al Sabah. the Defense Minister of Kuwait. The main aims of that mission were to convince the Jordanian party to cease fire and the two parties to attend and negotiate in the Arab Summit Conference. especially after Arafat's statement that he would never negotiate with the treacherous. the Jordanian Government. (67)

When the summit was postponed. the British Prime Minister Heath sent a letter to President Nasser asking him to intervene on behalf of the hostages and committed to release the seven European prisoners. He assured that nothing would enhance the Anglo-Egyptian relationship rather than being able to arrange this exchange. In response. Muhammad H. Haikal. called

the British ambassador in Cairo, Richard Beaumont, mentioning that Egypt could secure the release of remaining hostages provided that would assure him that they would free their Fedayeen.

Britain commented on Egypt's offer that Nasser made the offer in response to personal message from the Prime Minister. On September 26, Mahmoud Riad, the Egyptian Foreign Minister, called Washington to confirm that the remaining hostages had been turned over the Egyptian embassy in Amman. (68)

Nasser had devoted all his effort—in the last political act of his life—to pressure on Jordan to obtain a cease fire that safeguard the integrity of the Fedayeen as a political and military factor. At the same time he sought to maintain open channels to King Hussein and sufficiently conciliatory attitude to preserve the post 1967 political alliance between the two countries, and to avoid any grave repercussions of active external intervention from United States and Israel. (69) That attitude of President Nasser was described as that he died in the act of shielding his old enemy Hussein at the expense of his old clients the Palestinians. (70) This description was not right, on contrary, when the Jordanian regime did not respect the cease fire resolution, Nasser accused the Jordanian Military regime with continuing violation of cease fire arranged by the Arab mediation committee and implementing a plan to destroy the Arab resistance movement once and for all. He described the event in Jordan as a horrible massacre, contrary to all Arab and human values. (71) Nasser believed that if he followed the anger of the other Arab States and closed his doors in front of Hussein, Hussein would find it a good excuse to continue his plans under complete American and Israeli protection.

Earlier and perhaps more significantly, President Nasser had invoked the possibility of military intervention to stop the war in a private message to Hussein on September 20, which was not made public at the time. I want you to know honestly that we will not liquidation of the Palestinian Resistance, no one can liquidate it, and instead of fighting the enemy, we

will find ourselves involved in an Arab civil war». It was clear that this letter was just a threat to King Hussein to respect cease fire agreement that was reached between the Jordanian regime and High-Level Four Men mission. It was not difficult for Al Jaffar Al Nimeiry to reach a cease fire agreement between Hussein and Arafat. In spite of King Hussein's orders for his troops to stop fighting the truce began after two days during which the Jordanian army crushed the Palestinian refugees' shelters, or till the Jordanian regime achieved its target of crushing removing all the Palestinian from the Jordanian lands, with the approval of King Hussein himself. At Cairo News Conference on September 26, President Jaffar Al Nimeiry had accused Hussein of genocide and blamed him for the continuation of fighting and breaches of several cease fire arrangements concluded by his team. (73)

On September 26, the Cairo Arab Summit Conference, or Nine-Nations Summit meeting, had been hold its emergency session to settle the crisis in Jordan. (74)

In response to Qaddafi's rejection to invite or even to contact King Hussein because of his attitude towards the Palestinians, Nasser insisted on a positive action was needed to stop the fighting instead of prolonging the discussion and debates. When the Arab Leaders suggested that Nasser should send Egyptian forces along with other Arab forces to occupy Jordan, he replied sent our forces to Yemen, where we lost more than 10,000 men, and Israel is till occupying our lands. I am not prepared for a single Egyptian soldier to die on Jordanian soil. (75)

At the same time, in a press conference, the Arab Kings and Presidents' decision was announced, that they hold King Hussein responsible for the bleeding events that were taking place in Jordan. After this declaration, King Hussein contacted Nasser to inform him that he wished to come to Cairo to explain his position to the Arab Leaders. Qaddafi led the party that refused to invite the King, while President Nasser headed the other group, confirmed that the participants failed to reach a positive decision while the numbers of innocent victims continued to increase and the only

solution was to call King Hussein to Cairo to compel him to bring the conflict to an end. (76)

Both Arafat and Hussein flew to Cairo on September 27; meanwhile the last hijacked hostages held by the PFLP had been released unconditionally in Amman. The Palestinian prisoners who were held by western Germany and Switzerland were freed soon after.

According to Haikal, on September 27, the final stages of the conference opened with a stormy meeting. Hussein and some of his officers were in one corner of the room and Arafat in the other and both were carrying pistols. King Faysel of Saudi Arabia suggested to Nasser to carry out a disarmament operation before that talk began. (77)

Nasser mixed of persuasion and pressure. of sympathy and realism to bring the two men together and produce a new agreement. He was exhausted by long hours of negotiations and emotional strain. When his friends urged him to rest during the talks. he said, there are men. women and children dying. We are in a race with death..

While Nasser was discussing the draft of the final agreement that he received by Nimeiry and Bahi Ladgham, Arafat sent a message that Jordan army was intensifying its attacks on Amman. Nasser called Arafat to discuss the message and to try to persuade him to accept the draft of the agreement. Arafat confirmed that he could not trust those people who were trying to liquidate the Palestinians. but Nasser urged him to control himself and keep in mind the main objective which was to get a cease fire as soon as possible. Nasser warned Arafat that he could end the conference at that moment as it had already achieved much politically. Nasser concluded. a cease fire must remain the objective because it would give Arafat the chance to reappraise his situation and redeploy his forces. (78)

In spite of his sympathy on the Palestinian movement. Nasser well treated King Hussein during the sessions. but in their private meetings. Nasser was tougher with Hussein. Nasser confirmed to Hussein that he could not be neutral while the Jordanian army was continuing their massacre with the

Palestinians. When the Yemeni delegation urged on voting to censure formally on King Hussein. Nasser refused as it would be useless. When they insisted on their request. Nasser reminded them that there was no Yemeni participation in the Arab-Israeli war, and the Kuwait that supported Egypt and Jordan financially and militarily in the war agreed on that there should be no recriminations. (79)

On September 27, the 14-Points of Cairo Peace Agreement was agreed. First, the fighting on all fronts was to be stopped immediately. And secondly that the Jordanian army and the Resistance fighters were to be withdrawn from all the cities by the sunset of the same day. Thirdly, a committee headed by Bahi Lahgham, would go to Jordan, on September 28, to oversee the implementation of the agreement. (80)

Nasser with this agreement had succeeded in stopping the Arab bloodshed in Jordan. Although his influence was diminished to be just in Sudan and Libya with their new revolutionary regimes, but Nasser was the only Arab leader who was able to gather both the Jordanians and Palestinians in a negotiating table. He was also able to gather the Arab States who were neutral or anti Hussein, and directed the sessions in a way that guaranteed to achieve his goal. Nasser had prevented the Americans and the Israelis from seizing the chance to intervene directly in an Arab issue, as he believed that the escalation of this conflict was with the Jordanian hands but with the CIA and Israeli Intelligence Plans. As he spent his life fighting for the Arab dignity, and against imperialism and Zionist plans. Nasser's last war was to heal the cracks in the Arab Unity. He believed that any Arab fractions would impede the supposed strategy of reconstructing and resisting of the Arab' forces to be ready for the coming Arab-Israeli confrontation.

Through the mediations of the Arab League envoy Bahi Ladgham, Jordan and the PLO signed Amman agreement, on October 13, which confirmed the PLO's respect for Jordan's sovereignty. The following months, the mission faced uncooperative attitude from Jordanian civil authorities as

well as the Jordanian army. The Jordanian regime exploited every incident to extract further concessions from the dwindling PLO forces. By January 1971, Ladgham was threatening to resign if the acts of provocations and military operations by the Jordanians against the Fedayeen were not stopped. (81)

Nasser's absence in the Arab working field left no chance, neither to realize the summit resolutions nor to stop the American and Zionist plans in the region. By December 1970, the guerrillas lost the town of Zarqa and Jeresh. In March, the army took over Irbid and finally in April the Fedayeen had to evacuate Amman itself.

The outcome of the Black September was widely considered a successful result of the American Policy. As, in December 1970, the American President Nixon congratulated King Hussein on the successful outcome to Jordan's grave problems of September. In turn, King Hussein thanked Nixon as Jordan could not have gotten through its difficult days without the support and interest of the United States. (82)

King Hussein improved his position somewhat at expense of Fedayeen. The Moderate Fedayeen have been strengthened at expense of extremist elements. The success of the American plans forced the Fedayeen to re-evaluate their position and adjust their expectations to the new reality. The PLO no longer openly opposed the efforts of Egypt or any other Arab regimes to recover through peaceful means the territories occupied in 1967, that's why Washington welcomed the Tunisian offer to play a role of bridging gap with the Fedayeen and seeking encourage Fedayeen moderates to play responsible role in reaching Middle East settle and we certain wish to keep this mind as we periodically review matter of our contacts with the Fdayeen. (83)

But if the American plans managed to remove the Fedayeen from Jordan, it could not eliminate them. The Palestinian militants were driven to Southern Lebanon, which helped precipitate the Lebanon civil war. Jihaz al Rasd, the unseen other half of the Fatah, and Black September Group

continued their commando operations. They organized the hijacking of the Sabena airliner on May 8, 1972. The murder of the Jordanian Prime Minister Wasfi Al Tal in Cairo, on November 28, 1971. Munich Olympic massacre and the blowing up of the Rotterdam oil refinery on March 15, 1971, and many other highest profile attacks were organized by them.

On the whole Arab Level, King Hussein appeared to be thinking in terms of negotiated peace with Israel. The US-Israeli main objective became to demonstrate to the new Egyptian president Anwar Al Sadat that the Soviet military presence in his country was an obstacle to recover Sinai, thus Sadat ejected his Soviet advisers, technicians and airmen which in turn, diminished his effective military striking power. (84)

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