

Armed Struggle in Gaza Strip

THE Gaza Strip is the Palestinian people's land. It was occupied by the Israeli Zionists in the aggressive war started by the United States and Israel in June 1967. For over four years, the 500,000 Palestinian people in the area, refusing to be slaves, have valiantly resisted the occupation troops and become an important force in the struggle against the U.S.-Israeli aggressors. After four years of occupation by Israel, Israeli soldiers dare not venture on the streets alone during the day in the Gaza Strip. At night small units, afraid to go out on patrol duty, stay in camp.

Half of the 500,000 Palestinian people living in the strip were driven there by the Israeli Zionists when they occupied Palestine in 1948. The uprooted Palestinians settled in eight refugee camps around Gaza City and the towns of Deir el Balah, Khan Yunis and Rafah. For more than 20 years they have eked out a miserable existence there. New aggression and brutal oppression by the Israeli Zionists together with their past crimes have aroused a deep hatred among the area's people. They have taken up arms and organized many underground armed commando units to deal with the aggressors. During the last four years, they carried out about 1,600 raids and demolition operations, and inflicted heavy casualties on Israeli occupation troops.

When the Palestinian commandos in Jordan were facing bloody suppression by the U.S.-Jordanian reactionaries this year, the underground commando units in the Gaza Strip intensified their activities. They launched some 800 operations in the first eight months of the year. On June 5, the 4th anniversary of Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip, the commandos carried out 11 operations.

They took the Israeli aggressors unawares everywhere along the strip, an area 45 kilometres long and 8 kilometres wide. They ambushed small Israeli patrols in cities, towns and villages and on highways, showering them with hand-grenades. Military vehicles and highways were blown up by mines and railways and bridges destroyed with time-explosives.

One day last year, a group of Israeli officers and troops gathered in the small square of the Gaza railway station, waiting to go back to Israel for a vacation. Informed of this, the commandos immediately went into action. Some of them moved into the area in twos and threes and hid on the roofs of houses overlooking the square while others lay in wait on the approaches to the station ready to intercept any enemy reinforcements that might appear. Then those on the roofs attacked with

sub-machine guns and hand-grenades. The enemy, thrown into a panic, fled wildly. The Israelis lost 32 men, including a lieutenant-colonel, the deputy-chief of the Israeli intelligence corps in the strip.

An Israeli military governor whose headquarters was in the town of Rafah, 30 kilometres southwest of Gaza City, often personally led many Israeli troop expeditions to barbarously suppress the Palestinian people and commandos. It was decided that the time had come to punish this criminal. Last July one of the commandos, disguised as an Israeli officer, went in an Israeli military car to the military governor's headquarters and reported that a detachment of Palestinian commandos was near the road leading to the Sinai Peninsula. He asked for reinforcements to deal with them. The unsuspecting military governor immediately set off by car at the head of his troops and they were ambushed by the commandos. A land-mine killed the governor and another senior Israeli officer, and the enemy fled in great confusion after suffering many casualties.

The Palestinian commandos in the Gaza Strip have the support of broad sections of the Palestinian Arabs. The Israeli occupation authorities fear and hate the close ties between the commandos and the people. In an attempt to deprive the commandos of this support, the Israeli Zionists have recently driven more than 13,000 Palestinian refugees from the strip and levelled all their houses with tanks and bulldozers. Some of the refugees have been forced south to settle in El Arish in the Sinai Desert where life is very difficult.

However, the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, who have a tradition of revolutionary struggle, in cooperation with the commandos once again began a struggle against the Israeli occupation authorities. In August this year, they staged a strike during which all shops were closed and all public transport was stopped

in Gaza City when they held demonstrations. The Israeli authorities have admitted that the strike turned it into a dead city. The Palestinian commandos supported the strike by incessant attacks on the Israeli patrols and by destroying highways.

Against the constantly rising struggle of the people in the Gaza Strip, the Israeli occupation authorities have sent large numbers of troops on house-to-house searches in cities, towns, villages and refugee camps in an attempt to put down the Palestinian commandos. But, under the cover provided by the masses, the commandos utilize the natural advantages provided by the many orange groves and the scattered sand dunes to outmanoeuvre the enemy. Thus troops on search operations often find themselves ambushed or attacked from behind.

In November last year, the Al 'Chati refugee camp was suddenly encircled by Israeli troops detailed to conduct an intensive search for commandos. To enable the main force get away, a five-member commando unit led by Yusef Abu Ghoben held up the intruders at the main entrance. After inflicting casualties on the enemy, the five commandos died heroically. The next day a big funeral service for the five martyrs was held in the camp. The Israeli troops who rushed in to break up the service were heroically resisted.

Events have proved that acts of ruthless suppression and eviction by the Israeli occupation authorities in the Gaza Strip cannot stamp out the flames of armed struggle by the people. One commando fighter said: "Our struggle in the Gaza Strip goes on like waves, now rising, now subsiding. We have suffered some losses through Israeli suppression, but with the help of the broad masses, the struggle of the Palestinian commandos continues to surge ahead, each wave higher than the one before. We are determined to persevere in armed struggle till the liberation of our homeland is secured."