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# Individual and Group Influences on the Decisionmaking of Key Palestinian Organizations

A Research Paper

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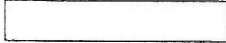
# Individual and Group Influences on the Decisionmaking of Key Palestinian Organizations

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A Research Paper

The author of this paper is [redacted] Office of Scientific Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome and should be directed to [redacted]

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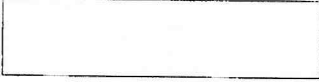
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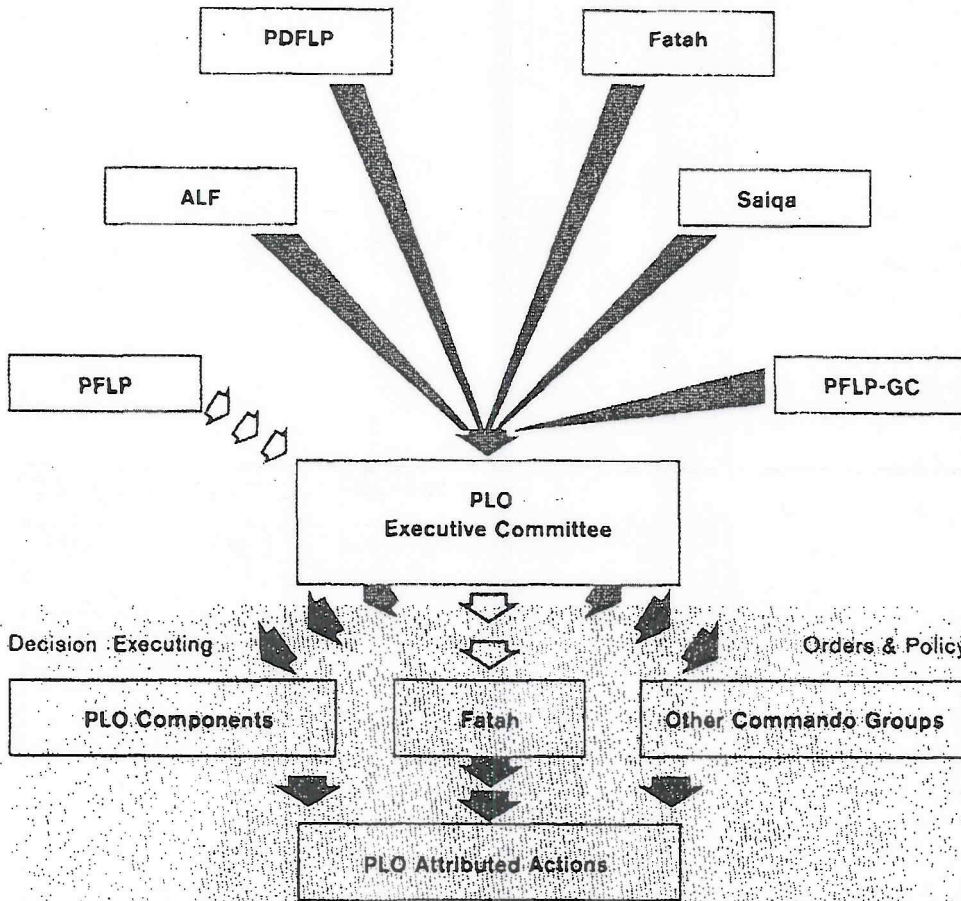
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The Flow of Decisions Resulting in PLO Actions



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**Individual and Group Influences  
On the Decisionmaking  
Of Key Palestinian Organizations (U)**

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**History and Context**

At a meeting in Jerusalem in May 1964, representatives from Palestinian communities throughout the Arab world voted to establish the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to represent Palestinian interests. This Palestine National Council (PNC) also adopted the Palestine National Charter, a constitution which affirmed the goal of reclaiming Palestine by means of armed struggle. During the late 1960s and 1970s, the PLO has increasingly become dominated by the commando groups. In 1969, Yasir Arafat, the head of Fatah, the largest commando group, was elected chairman of the PLO Executive Committee (PLO/EC). (See table 1 for a chronology of events having significance for the development of the PLO.) (U)

Since 1969, the PLO has evolved into an organization whose actions and pronouncements represent the position of the Palestinian people. Its legitimacy as the spokesman of all Palestinians derives both from Palestinian support and international recognition. According to [Redacted] press reports, the PLO is supported by most Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied territories as well as in other Arab countries. [1] In the April 1976 elections on the West Bank, some 140 of the 188 councilmen and mayors then elected were Palestinian nationalists who have challenged the traditional leadership; most support the PLO. [2,3] (S NF)

<sup>1</sup> This paper is an update of SI 76-10016X, July 1976, Secret

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**Table 1**

**Chronology of Events With Significant  
Impact on the Palestine Liberation Organization**

May 1964	Palestine National Council (PNC) establishes PLO and adopts charter affirming the reclamation of Palestine by armed struggle.
1967	Arab-Israeli war, which establishes effectiveness of fedayeen.
1969	Yasir Arafat selected chairman of PLO (indicating fedayeen control of PLO).
1970-71	Jordanian-Palestinian confrontation, resulting in expulsion of Palestinian commandos from Jordan.
1973	Arab-Israeli war.
Jun 1974	PNC meeting during which rejectionists withdraw from PLO.
Oct 1974	Arab summit meeting at Rabat recognizes PLO as "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people."
Nov 1974	Yasir Arafat delivers address to UN; PLO accorded "Permanent Observer" status in UN.
1975-76	Lebanese civil war: PLO fights with Muslim/leftists against Christian/rightists.
Jun 1976	Syrian armed forces intervene in Lebanese civil war and engage leftists and Palestinian forces; Palestinian commandos expelled from Syria.
Oct 1976	Arab summit meeting at Riyadh negotiates end of Lebanese civil war and establishes (mostly Syrian) Arab deterrent force to maintain cease-fire.
Mar 1977	PNC meeting debates Palestinian negotiating position.
Nov 1977	Sadat's visit to Israel initiates negotiations (without PLO representation).
Mar 1978	PLO raid on Israel followed by Israeli invasion, which eliminated PLO presence in Lebanon, south of the Litani River.

This table is Unclassified.

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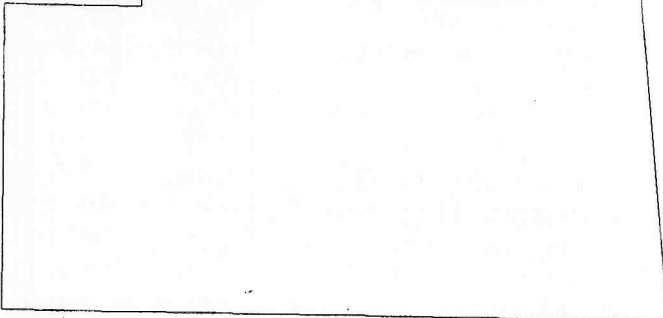
Although the PLO has gained increasing legitimacy as the representative of the Palestinian people, the organization does not govern any territory or people. Most Palestinians are residents of Israeli-occupied territory or of Arab states where they live among the native population or in refugee camps. The camps are administered by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA), the local governments, and the commando groups. While the fedayeen have controlled substantial territories in Jordan and Lebanon in the past, the area under their domination continues to diminish. In September 1970, open warfare broke out between the Jordanian Army and the commando groups. By early 1971, the Jordanian Army had crushed the fedayeen and expelled them from Jordan. (U)

When the Lebanese civil war erupted in 1975, the Palestinian commandos became involved first in supporting the leftist/Muslim groups and then in actual combat against the rightist/Christian forces. In June 1976, Syrian troops intervened in Lebanon to enforce a cease-fire and engaged Palestinian as well as Lebanese Muslim forces. The cease-fire negotiated at an Arab summit meeting in Riyadh in October 1976 authorized an Arab Deterrent Force, consisting primarily of Syrian troops, to maintain order in Lebanon. Attempts to resolve the major issues involved in the Lebanese crisis have failed. The continuing conflict has resulted in periodic outbreaks of violence between Christians and Muslims, between Christian militia and Syrian troops, and between different Christian factions. Most Palestinian groups have attempted to avoid involvement in this fighting, but have taken advantage of the weakness of central Lebanese authority. Between 1976 and 1978, the Palestinian commandos operated freely throughout most of the area south of the Zahrani River. However, the March 1978 Israeli invasion of Lebanon has severely restricted the area under Palestinian control, by eliminating the Palestinian presence south of the Litani River. (See figure 1 for a map of Palestinian-controlled territory in southern Lebanon.) Since Israeli forces withdrew in June 1978, the 6,000-man UN force controls most of the area south of the Litani and has restricted the entry of Palestinians into the area. Since the Lebanese civil war, the Syrian Government has limited the activities of Palestinian commandos in that country. (U)

In recent years, the PLO has gained widespread international recognition as the representative of Palestinian interests. At the October 1974 Rabat Arab summit conference, the PLO won the endorsement of the assembled heads of state as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. In November 1974, Arafat presented the Palestinian position before the United Nations, and the PLO has been granted "Permanent Observer" status in the United Nations. As of May 1978, 44 countries had accorded the PLO partial or full diplomatic status, and the organization had retained unofficial representation in 17 additional states. [4] (C)

However, the PLO's international negotiating position has deteriorated since late 1977. Although both the June 1974 and March 1977 PNC meetings issued resolutions approving greater flexibility in negotiations, the PLO has not gained representation in any Middle East negotiating forum which included other than Arab participants. A Geneva conference might have admitted some participants who would have represented the PLO position. Sadat's visit to Israel in November 1977 initiated Israeli-Egyptian negotiations in a forum which excludes PLO participation. While the eventual PLO position will depend on the terms negotiated, the PLO leadership cannot support Sadat's initiative unless they can be assured that their interests will be represented. The Camp David accords and the subsequent negotiations do not offer such assurances. (U)

The PLO is currently operating under severe international as well as internal constraints. At the present time, the most important of these constraints is the presence of Syrian troops in Lebanon. The implicit threat of military reprisals requires the PLO to consider major Syrian positions. This was one factor in the PLO's rejection of Sadat's initiation of negotiations with Israel.



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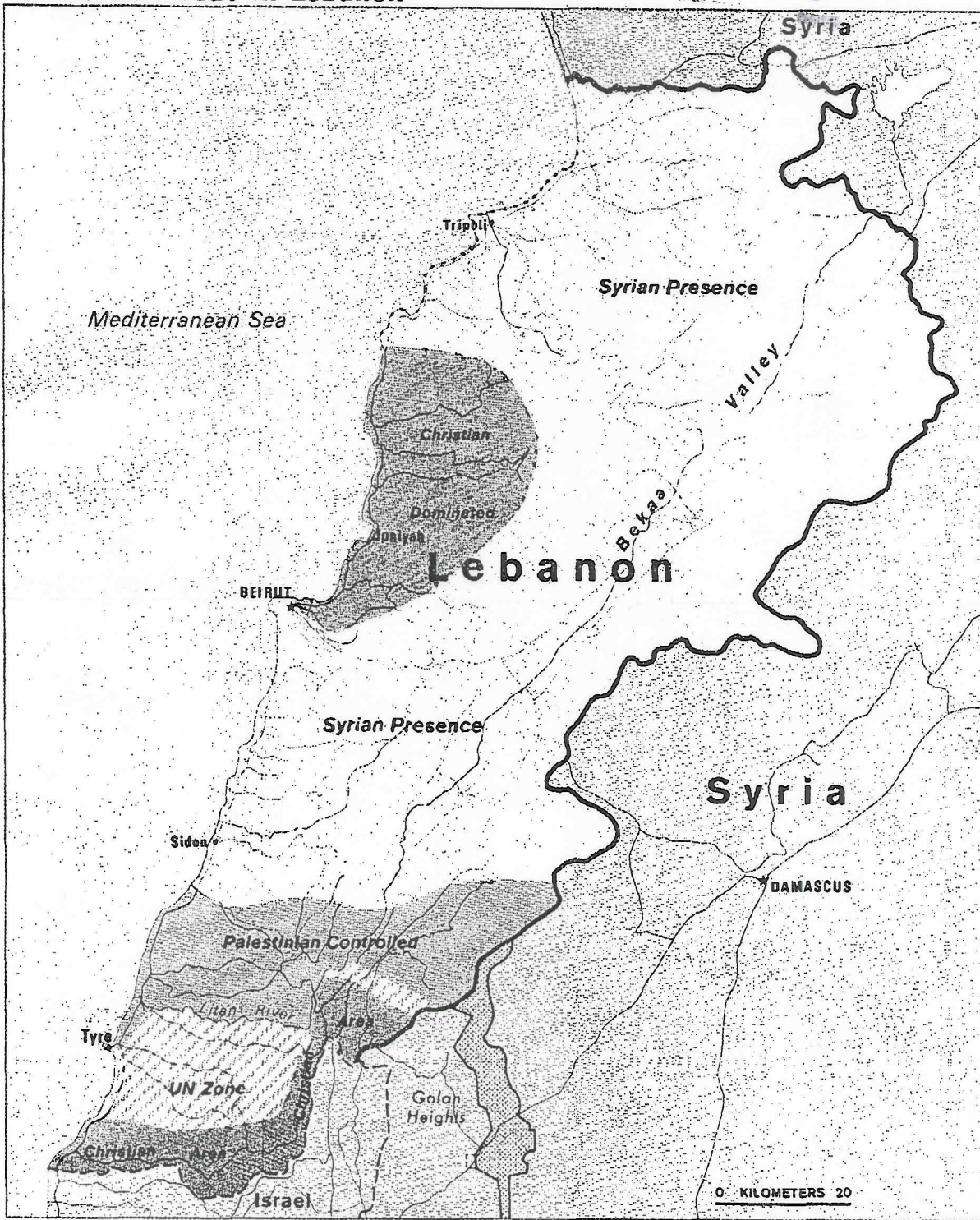


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### Controlled Areas in Lebanon



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In spite of these international constraints, the instability of the Lebanese situation, the internal factionalization of the Palestine resistance movement, the structure of the PLO, and the relative positions of the principal Palestinian decisionmakers have changed remarkably little. (U)

#### Structure of the Palestine Resistance Movement

The Palestinian resistance movement refers to all groups who actively pursue their goal of an independent homeland for Palestinian Arabs. The moderate elements of the movement include the commando groups of Fatah and Saiqa, the independents who do not belong to any commando group, and most West Bank mayors. In general, they support the establishment of a Palestinian homeland on any territory liberated from Israel, accept the idea of negotiating with Israel providing the Israelis recognize the Palestinians as a distinct entity, and, under present conditions, oppose international terrorism; their only ideology is nationalism. Fatah is the largest, most influential, and most moderate of the commando groups. Saiqa, the second largest commando group, is controlled by the Syrian Baath Party, and its policies reflect those of the Syrian Government. (U)

The Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP), an offshoot of the rejectionist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, was established in 1969; its leaders have espoused a Marxist ideology but have supported the policies of the more moderate groups, including the idea of negotiations for a Palestinian homeland. (U)

The rejectionist commando groups are the most radical elements of the Palestine resistance movement. The "rejectionist" label derives from their 1974 rejection of a Geneva conference and of any recognition of or negotiations with Israel. Some of these groups support revolutionary movements throughout the Arab world. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) is the largest rejectionist group. The front has also included several smaller commando groups: the Iraqi-sponsored Arab Liberation Front (ALF), until May 1977, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine—General Command (PFLP-GC), a Syrian-sponsored offshoot of the PFLP, and the Front for the

Liberation of Palestine (FLP), an Iraqi-sponsored splinter group from the PFLP-GC. (U)

The PLO is the most significant organizational representation of the Palestinian resistance movement. It is the coalition of Palestinian groups that publicly represents the movement. Because the most influential members of the PLO are representatives of individual commando groups, PLO actions reflect a negotiated position that may at times contradict the positions of the individual groups. Since the independent groups retain control of their own resources, they act according to PLO directives only when doing so is in their own interest. Nevertheless, precisely because PLO statements are negotiated, they do reflect positions that are acceptable to most organized Palestinian groups. (See the frontispiece for a graphic representation of the policymaking process in the PLO.) (U)

All of the commando groups have indicated their support of the PLO through participation in the organization's meetings. Although the PFLP formally withdrew from the PLO Executive Committee in June 1974 in protest over PLO support for a Geneva conference, their representatives have continued to participate in some meetings. The PFLP sent representatives to the PNC meeting in March 1977 and another rejection front commando group, the ALF, accepted formal representation in PLO bodies. (See table 2 for a description of the commando groups associated with the PLO.) (U)

#### Palestine Liberation Organization: Structure and Decisionmaking Process

The PLO has evolved a relatively complex bureaucratic structure which includes policymaking legislative and executive councils, administrative departments, and the Palestine Liberation Army. While this structure has remained fairly stable since 1976, membership in all of its major councils has been expanded. (U)

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Table 2

Groups Associated With the PLO

		Representatives At March 1977 PNC Meeting	Size (Number of Commandos)	Leader	Major Supporters
PLO-Affiliated Groups	Fatah	34	10,000	Arafat	Links to most Arab states
	Saiqa	16	2,000-2,500	Muhsin	Syria
	Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine	12	500	Hawatmah	USSR Libya Iraq
	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine— General Command <sup>1</sup>	3	200-300	Jabril	Syria
Rejection Front	Arab Liberation Front	12	100-400	Ahmed	Iraq
	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine	16	500-1,000	Habbash	Iraq Libya
	Front for the Liberation of Palestine.	1	200-300	Abbas	Iraq
	Popular Struggle Front	4	200-300	Ghawshaw	Iraq
	Independents, Palestinian diaspora, refugee camps	No clear breakdown; most support Fatah			

<sup>1</sup> As of 1978, no longer associated with the Rejection Front.

This table is ~~Secret~~.

According to the Palestine National Charter, the supreme authority of the PLO is the Palestine National Council, a legislative type body of some 290 members. [7] This council is convened at irregular intervals to ratify major policy positions of the PLO. In a recent meeting, in March 1977, membership was expanded to include more representatives of the West Bank and Gaza. Most of these "representatives" are not current residents of the Israeli-occupied territories. Representation to the March 1977 PNC meeting is summarized in table 2. The March meeting endorsed the establishment of a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza and authorized PLO participation in international conferences dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict. [8] (S NF)

In addition to the PNC, the PLO has a Central Council for ensuring that PNC directives are implemented. Its 55 members include the members of the PLO Executive Committee (PLO/EC), which is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the PLO, and other influential Palestinians. [9,10] While formally subordinate to the PLO/CC, the smaller

PLO/EC dominates the larger body through such means as setting the agenda for PLO/CC meetings and determining the composition of the PLO/CC. [10,11]

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*The PLO Executive Committee*

The PLO Executive Committee is the central decisionmaking body of the PLO. Like a cabinet, it is in constant session and contains men with the power to make and implement decisions. Its composition and deliberations reflect the political positions and the relative power of the various elements of the Palestinian resistance movement. Because of Fatah's control of most Palestinian resources, its leaders dominate the decisionmaking process, although some decisions are compromises with individuals who represent different constituencies and have some power to effect implementation of those decisions. Members of the PLO/EC head the departments that are responsible for the execution PLO policy. Table 3 identifies the members of the PLO/EC with their group affiliation and departmental responsibilities. (U)

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Table 3

The PLO Executive Committee  
(Appointed in March 1977)

Name	Executive Committee Office	Affiliation
Yasir Arafat	Chairman	Fatah
Abd al-Muhsin Abu Mayzar	Pan-Arab and International Relations	Independent
Ahmad Majdi Abu Ramadan	Social Affairs	Independent
Hamid Abu Sittah	Occupied Homelands	Independent
Abd al-Rahim Ahmad	Popular Organizations	Arab Liberation Front
Ahmad Sidqi al-Danjani	Higher Council of Education and Culture	Independent
Zuhayr Muhsin	Military	Saiqa
Talal Naji	Higher Education	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine— General Command
Muhammad Zuhdi Nashashibi	Administrative Affairs	Independent
Faruq Qaddumi	Political Affairs	Fatah
Habib Qahwaji	No portfolio	Independent
Walid Qamhawi	Palestine National Fund	Independent
Yasir Abd Rabbu	Information and Culture	Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine
Abd al-Jawad Salih	No portfolio	Independent
Alfred Tubasi	No portfolio	Independent

This table is Unclassified.

Six members of the PLO/EC represent commando groups and can commit the resources of those groups. Fatah has two representatives: Yasir Arafat, the chairman, and Faruq Qaddumi, the head of the Political Department. Four other groups—Saiqa, the PDFLP, the PFLP-GC, and the ALF—each have one representative. Although the PFLP does not formally belong to the PLO, representatives of this group frequently attend meetings of the PLO/EC. [12,13]

The nine independent members of the PLO/EC do not control substantial resources and therefore have considerably less influence on policy. Most of the independents have some connection with the West Bank or Gaza and may have been included on the PLO/EC to give the organization greater legitimacy and authority among the Palestinians of the occupied territories. Six of them—Abd al-Muhsin Abu Mayzar, Abd al-Jawad Salih, Walid Qamhawi, Muhammad Zuhdi Nashashibi, Alfred Tubasi, and Habib Qahwaji—were notables on the Jordanian West Bank who left or were expelled by the Israeli occupation authorities after 1967. [9,14] Hamid Abu Sittah and

Ahmad Majdi Abu Ramadan both have ties to Gaza. Sittah's Bedouin family moved to Gaza after their expulsion from Israel, while Abu Ramadan was described in 1965 as the director of the PLO's Gaza Affairs Office. [14] Ahmad Sidqi al-Dajani, who was originally from Jerusalem, has been employed by the Palestine Research Center and represents its interests. [14] Most of the independents have links with a fedayeen group and/or one of the Arab states. Seven of these independents are reputed to be pro-Fatah; Nashashibi generally supports Saiqa positions; and Salih is not associated with any fedayeen organization. Nashashibi, Qahwaji, and Abu Mayzar reportedly have links with Syria; al-Dajani and Abu Ramadan have ties with Egypt. [7] (S NF)

The decisionmaking process of the PLO/EC varies somewhat with the type of issue. The relative influence of individual members changes from one issue area to another. In general, the PLO/EC considers questions related to (1) the "external relations" of the PLO with foreign governments and international organizations,

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