

A black and white photograph of George Habash. He is shown from the chest up, looking slightly to his right with a serious expression. He has dark hair and a mustache. In the background, there is a large, faded portrait of a man with a mustache, possibly a historical figure, and some indistinct shapes that could be flags or posters.

***GEORGE HABASH on
MARTYRDOM, REVOLUTION
and RESISTANCE:***

***'WE
WILL
OVERCOME'***

On Saturday, March 17, 1973 in Beirut, Lebanon, George Habash of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, delivered a speech to commemorate the martyrdom of his revolutionary comrades Mohamed El-Aswad (who was known as ‘the Guevara of Gaza’), Abdel Aziz Amassy, and Abdulhady Hayek. All three men had been killed a few days before while battling the zionist entity in Gaza.

Habash begins by asking what we owe these martyrs, and indeed, all our martyrs. He immediately dismisses the impulse to despair over those martyred in Gaza. Far from despair, the figure of the martyr provides Habash with a renewed and deepened commitment to never lay down arms against imperialism, such that each martyr directly resurrects a revolutionary spirit. Habash never mourns the death of his comrades without immediately expressing that grief as a passion for militant resistance along with all the technical, strategic, and scientific organisation it requires for victory.

It is perhaps true that amerika and ‘israel’ have a certain technical superiority displayed in their ability to create guns, bombs, and other technologies of death. What they will never understand however is that the resistance forces they are incapable of defeating were never built on weaponry alone. The resistance movement depends not just on guns, but rather on a deep companionship with death. As Habash’s dear comrade Ghassan Kanafani put it just weeks before his own martyrdom: “Of course, death means a lot. The important thing is to know why. Self-sacrifice, within the context of revolutionary action, is an expression of the very highest understanding of life, and of the struggle to make life worthy of a human being.” We witness this sentiment in

Habash's speech below, but also in the words of the martyr and former Secretary General of Hizbullah, Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah, when in 1997 he commemorated the martyrdom of his own son, Hadi Nasrallah as follows: "Before being a battle with guns and weapons, it is a battle of ideology, faith, loyalty, truth, reliance on God, aspiration to martyrdom, renunciation of worldly pleasures, the love of others, and the desire to serve them."

Those that have divorced their thought from that of the resistance only see the martyr as a failure, since to them death and victory cannot be reconciled. This common-sense thinking is mistaken. It fails to grasp the meanings and relationships between death, the armed resistance vitalised and fortified by those that have died, and the life of dignity realised through that armed resistance. When the 'failure' of each and every death is immediately reinscribed as a source of renewed commitment to political organisation and armed resistance, then the ultimate success of the revolution is all but guaranteed. Habash can then declare with certainty, 'We will overcome.' The path of the martyr is thereby the path to life.

At a critical moment, Habash's speech reminds us that a resistance movement grounded in an oath to the martyr can never die.

—Mary Saad

“We Will Overcome”

This is the complete transcript [translated from French] of a speech given by Dr. George Habash on March 17, 1973 at the Beirut Arab University. Alongside representatives from the Lebanese national movement, Fatah, and thousands of Lebanese and Palestinians, Habash pays homage to PFLP martyrs who fell in Gaza: Mohamed El-Aswad (the Guevara of Gaza), Abdel Aziz Amassy, and Abdulhady Hayik.

Brothers,

What is our duty toward our courageous martyr, Guevara of Gaza, and his two comrades, Kamel and Abdel Adi? What is our duty and what is our responsibility toward all our martyrs, including Abu Ali Aya, Ghassan Kanafani, Mahmoud Hamshari, and all those who died for the Palestinian revolution? What are our responsibilities toward their parents, their families, and their wives and children who are now deprived of their affection? What are our duties to The Cause that was their cause, the revolution, the masses, and the cause of the oppressed against their oppressors? What are our duties toward the oppressed populations that have been chased from their country and abandoned? What are our duties toward our masses that have not stopped sacrificing for the last 50 years, combatting their imperialist enemies, the enemies of humanity and liberty?

Comrades, our duty toward these martyrs is to clearly discern things, see our cause clearly, proclaim it, and decide to act in the light of clear evidence that our revolution will continue to endure and exist in this way, and that no force in the world

is capable of dominating the masses of our Palestinian and Arab people.

The central and essential point in the enemy's plans during this particular phase (leaving to the side its political movements and conspiracies) is to sow seeds of doubt in our ranks and spread despair among us and among the people. That the masses, seized by doubt, might question their revolution, its efficacy, and the strategy of the people's war for liberation is the central point of the enemy's plans. And our duty consists in foiling this plan through scientific awareness.

We will tell the imperialist enemy that, just as the Vietnamese people's liberatory military strategy demonstrated its effectiveness and success in their victory, in the same way it will prove its success in its application on Palestinian and Arab land.

The Vietnamese revolution that made imperialism bow to the land has elucidated the first fact of revolution that should guide our revolutionary action against our imperialist enemies. What is the basic essential reality of the Vietnamese revolution? It is that a people who lead a just revolutionary war, through one revolutionary organisation, one national united front, based on the mobilisation of as many people as possible, and an adroit knowledge of the art of war, pushing its alliances to an international level—such a people is capable of achieving victory and crushing imperialism.

This is the essential fact of the Vietnamese revolution. It is an example for honest people, for revolutionaries, for

organisations, and for those who lead revolutions.

How did the Vietnamese people behave in the face of all the crises of their revolution that unfolded just before their victory? In December and January, Nixon wanted to prove to the world that the Vietnamese revolution had not obtained all its goals. He wanted to claim that the retreat of american troops from Vietnamese territory had been honorable. He rejected the accord previously signed in Paris and at that very moment hundreds of bombs fell on Vietnam; Haiphong and, above all, Hanoi. If I am not mistaken, during this period (around two weeks) the same quantity of bombs and other destructive machinery were launched against Vietnam as were launched against England during the entire Second World War. What was the Vietnamese command's attitude in this situation...? Did he stop fighting on the borders? Did he make humiliating demands to New York through the intermediary of messengers? What did he do? How did he comport himself? Did he say that the Vietcong were saboteurs that must be destroyed...? No, General Giap said to the imperialists, "You can completely destroy Haiphong, you can destroy all of Hanoi, you can raze everything, every last stone, but you can never destroy our will to fight."

Today, our obligation to 'the Guevara of Gaza' is to take an oath, first of all among ourselves and then with the people, to never lay down arms against the zionist-imperialist-reactionary enemy in spite of its massive force, its weaponry, its Phantoms, and its superior technology that it can direct against us with all its might, killing Guevara, Abdel Adi, Abu Ali, Ghassan Kanafani, Mahmoud Hamshari, and many others. The enemy will be able to carry out new unexpected

attacks against us, but it will never destroy our will to fight.

How will we achieve victory in this way?

How will millions of Palestinian children find success?

We will be successful when, after 50 years of experience, a hundred million children of our Arab nation are determined to continue the armed struggle and are guided by the revolutionary doctrine and combat strategy of the people's war for liberation.

Our first obligation toward our martyrs is to establish this fact. The second is to be fully conscious of the revolution's recent progress (after a general evaluation), in spite of all its mistakes and the punches we have taken.

The last step in these final years is to lead the Palestinian and Arab people to take a giant step toward the final goals of the Palestinian and Arab revolution. This fact is recognised by the enemy himself insofar as one of the Zionist leaders stated, "The Palestinian resistance is the most difficult obstacle to establishing a settlement"...

In spite of its faults, the Palestinian revolution has been capable of proving to the world that there exists a cause, the cause of a people who do not want to surrender at any price, in spite of all the conspiracies fomented against it over the last 50 years. Even the enemy recognises this.

Our third most fundamental and important duty to our martyrs is to consider our future with total lucidity and to go

forth and act in the light of a clear agenda.

So that our speech is not just hollow words, so that our speech might bring about a real force that is capable of leading us to victory, we must have a complete understanding of our political program. Following this path, if the principal Palestinian organisations and our leaders truly want to continue their revolution, then it is essential that they reexamine the totality of their structures at the level of theory, politics, and organisational infrastructure. This is necessary in order to reinforce these structures and raise them to the level where they can confront all the enemy's conspiracies.

It would be unacceptable if our past experiences did not at least teach us a lesson. We need an immediate investigation into the nature of our organisational structure, considering each organisation separately, as well as the bulk of the resistance activists in general. Additionally, the executives and leaders of guerilla organisations must lead an educational operation at the level of theory, politics, and organisation that will become a true example for the masses.

One cannot achieve victory with only emotions and words. Organisations facing a historic task must construct themselves on this foundation. They must cast off any form of weakness that enfeebles the mission—be it theoretical, political, organisational, or practical. In a resistance movement, the combatant must be an example for the people, devoting his or her time to enlightening them, and affirming his or her faith in their cause. During important events, crises, and difficult moments, he or she must be

found at the head of the masses putting him or herself in the service of the people. This image has not existed in the past and does not exist now. Our first obligation then is to wage a battle against ourselves at the heart of our own organisations with the aim of casting off any forms of weakness within the resistance.

It is therefore necessary that every organisation find new forces which must be awakened by the members and leaders. These forces must be affirmed while rebelling against all the habits acquired when we operated openly and publicly. Let us get rid of all our bureaucratic characteristics and return to the source of the revolution, to the people, living with them, serving them, giving them a political conscience, and creating a historic force capable of undertaking historic tasks.

Such is our first objective, but it is not sufficient in itself. It is totally unacceptable, a crime from now on, for an organisation to limit its vision of the future to itself alone.

The Palestinian national front, composed of Palestinian organisations, must become the central and fundamental objective. It must become the principal point in the direction of all movements. After some experimentation, once the resistance has clearly and decisively defined its revolutionary positions, the relations between Palestinian organisations will not remain how they were before.

The Popular Front declares honestly and candidly here before you that, in conjunction with all our sincere comrades from different organisations, it will devote all its authority

and efforts to pushing forward bit by bit the question of national unity. This is the obligation that presents itself to us.

It is now part of the reactionary enemy's plans to destroy the PLO and substitute it with Palestinian traitors so that they can say these latter individuals represent the Palestinian people.

In such a situation, it is our obligation to support the PLO by striving to enhance its political standards, and particularly its administrative and military apparatus. Moreover, we must fight within this organisation to endow it with the quality needed to face such a task. The politics of national unity must also be accompanied by fundamental alliances between the organisations so that their alliance and especially their cooperation can have a positive effect on the progress of the Revolution in occupied Palestine, in Jordan, or in Arab countries.

After we have rid ourselves of the weakness that we currently live with, after having reinforced our structures at the level of theory, politics, and that of the organisation, after every organisation is prepared for a new more punishing and difficult phase, after having acted in the interest of the permanent cause of national unity and not from the sectarian standpoint of individual organisations, our third objective after all that is to constantly keep in mind that only the people (not just the organisations or the national front composed of these organisations) and the people themselves have the strength that alone can deliver victory and make history. By 'the people,' I do not mean figures like Jaabari or Anwar Nusaibeh, since they do not belong to the masses of our

Palestinian people. They are part of the 4% that comprises the dominant class in every underdeveloped country. The masses of our Palestinian people are the 96%. The masses are the poor among our people, those working-class people in the camps, the peasants, the students, revolutionary intellectuals, doctors and medics, and all the honorable and patriotic people. Without exception, all these people—women and children, old and young, everyone regardless of their actual situation—must provide the continuous efforts and work that, thanks to these individuals, will allow us to create the force that will overcome. We do not forget that this politics, the politics of the masses, is the fundamental politics that will be able to confront all the difficulties the revolutionary movement will now have to deal with.

The particular circumstances in which the Palestinian people live obliges us to make a distinction between each concentration of this population scattered around the world. In this regard, our people have some advantages. One part lives always on our sacred land, our beloved occupied Palestine. In many ways, this portion of our population is most important. It must receive the largest share of the resistance's efforts. More than 1.25 million Palestinians still live in occupied Palestine, and 400,000 are in the heroic region of Gaza. 400,000 others are in the regions occupied since 1948. They continue oppose every 'israeli' effort to destroy their Palestinian character and refuse to submit to the overwhelming racial and social persecutions 'israel' has imposed on them for the past 25 years. Another 700,000 of our people live in the West Bank, which means that we have between 1.25 and 1.5 million—between 40% and 50% of our Palestinian people—in occupied Palestine.

Our obligation as a resistance movement is to turn toward this portion on the inside, which is the most important and essential. The second characteristic of these people is that they find themselves in direct confrontation, face-to-face with the zionist enemy occupying the Palestinian land. Accordingly, we must undertake a study of all our previous activities in occupied Palestine. The purpose of this review is to discover the various lacunae that we must repair as quickly as possible. We must not limit our vision of the masses' actions against the 'israeli' occupation to military operations. The masses also endure a quotidian persecution. The 'israeli' occupation, despite all its efforts, remains committed to exploitation. In spite of all the 'israeli' allegations, every study clearly indicates that occupied Palestine has become the second-largest market for 'israeli' products and the Arab workforce is actually exploited by 'israeli' industry. Our people truly resent this exploitation. Consequently, our military attacks against the 'israeli' enemy in occupied Palestine must be accompanied by the people's quotidian battle against the enemy. Such a battle cannot be waged in a comprehensive and rational manner without there being an authentic unity between the principal organisations working there. When the cause becomes a question of life or death, when the revolution finds itself at a crossroads, there is no longer room for a narrow-minded individualism.

We must bring together all our strengths and apply them in such a way that the Palestinian national front that we are seeking to establish over there can be effective on occupied Palestinian territory. Its establishment must be followed by political action from the masses, punctuated by occasional severe blows against the 'israeli' enemy. This activity must

conform to a fundamental principle: we must be cool-headed and not engage in misadventures that would cost lives. We must care for the life of every revolutionary. That is how we will achieve final victory.

Our action in occupied Palestine demands that we completely and radically reexamine our thought, account for the enemy's new plans, consider our past actions, and research all the circumstances of the Palestinian revolution in its current phase.

Let's get to the second division of Palestinian masses. The second significant concentration of our people currently lives on the East Bank of the Jordan River. More than 700,000–800,000 Palestinians are currently on the East Bank. They comprise between 67% and 70% of the inhabitants. After they were prohibited from fighting the 'israeli' enemy and its occupation, these people now have the right and the duty to fight side-by-side with our people in Jordan to bring about the destruction of this traitorous and fraudulent regime that still prevents them from attacking the 'israeli' enemy.

As it appears in Churchill's memoirs, this regime was established in 1920 when the Trans-Jordanian principality was created with the specific goal of ending the Palestinian people's struggle against the colonialist and zionist plot in Palestine. Since its formation, this artificial puppet has never ceased acting against the Palestinian people, their struggle, and their revolution. That is the role the Jordanian regime played in 1936 and 1948. And during Black September in 1970 you know all about the role this fraudulent regime

played against our people's revolution and our just and legitimate struggle against the zionist occupation. Our duty toward our cause demands that our people on the East Bank become an integral part of the Jordanian national liberation movement that works day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, to destroy this fraudulent regime and crush it under the foot of the masses.

I declare this with complete knowledge of the difficult situation the resistance movements currently find themselves in. I am absolutely aware of the blows we have taken and will receive again today. I am fully aware of the current manoeuvres that consist in reducing the dimensions and impact of the resistance movement. I am fully aware of the quasi-dichotomy between the resistance movement's organisations and the masses. I am fully aware of the resistance movement's mistakes, but I equally know that, in spite of all its errors and all the obstacles, our people's revolution will secure victory in the end.

These lines of action I have spoken of cannot be applied immediately. They will not be applied tomorrow, nor in a week or in a month. They will be applied when we all believe in them, and as a consequence we will act and struggle. This is our duty to everyone. The obligation of the rank and file is to apply real pressure on all the resistance movement's leaders so that we can benefit from our past experiences, draw lessons from those experiences, and make progress.

In the study of our Palestinian people we must also take into consideration the special characteristics of the third current concentration of Palestinian people. This concentration of

Palestinian people is here on the beloved Lebanese soil. If I am not mistaken, there are between 300,000 and 400,000 Palestinians living in Lebanon. At the current hour, this concentration carries a special historical responsibility for the Palestinian revolution and its future. When the children, women, youth, adults, and elderly of this population of around 400,000 are recruited and organised, they can temporarily serve as a solid platform upon which the resistance movement will be able to depend upon in its difficult and decisive moments as it completes the work it has begun restructuring the land occupied in Palestinian and Jordan. This obligation demands a complete understanding of the present variables. We can only successfully satisfy this demand when we have become a party in solidarity and fraternity with the Arab masses in Lebanon and the Lebanese patriotic movement. It is our duty, the duty of the Palestinian people, to give thanks and recognition to the people of Lebanon and to the Lebanese patriotic movement that has undertaken its own resistance movement. Thanks to the masses and their patriotic movement, they showed themselves capable of staving off a massacre, at least until now, even though amerika works day and night paying its agents to exterminate the resistance.

There are also concentrations of our Palestinian people throughout the Arab countries and around the world. Our fourth concentration of Palestinian people is in Syria as well as the Arab Gulf and other locations in the Arab homeland. There are also those in Latin amerika and other parts of the world. It is therefore necessary to recruit them all in the service of the Palestinian revolution. At this stage in particular, they must mobilise themselves and be aware of

their responsibilities vis-a-vis the difficulties the resistance movement has to face in Palestine and Jordan due to the circumstances of Arab politics. All of this, my brothers, must constitute a complete plan so that the Palestinian revolution might truly achieve victory.

Even if the Palestinian revolution is reconstructed theoretically, politically, and practically, even if a unified Palestinian national front is realised, even if this front manages to truly mobilise the Palestinian people, this alone will not be enough to assure victory.

There is something particular about the Palestinian revolution. And there is also something particular about the occupying Zionist enemy and its involvement in imperialism. There is a peculiarity specific to imperialism's oil interests in this part of our Arab world. Equally, there is a particular relation between the Palestinian cause and the Arab cause. And therefore, the great lesson we must draw from what has happened between 1967 and today, the first and fundamental lesson, is that the Palestinian revolution cannot be victorious if it is not integrated with the revolution of the Arab masses in every part of our Arab world. The strength of the Arab nation, the masses of the Arab nation mobilised in support of the Palestinian revolution, holds the strength capable of victory. And if we want to show our loyalty toward our comrade 'Guevara' and all those who have sacrificed their lives, we cannot in any way ignore the importance of our alliances with all the revolutionary forces in the new international order. Nor can we ignore the necessity of maintaining relations with all the socialist states. The revolution must establish very solid relationships with the

great Soviet Union, the great Chinese revolution, and all the socialist states and national liberation movements around the world. This alliance must become a reality in the effective plans that will truly help our revolution through the crisis it currently endures. With these guidelines we will truly achieve victory.

If our enemy is strong, it also has weaknesses we will be able to exploit once we have solidified our strength. The state of 'israel' and its foundations are artificial. It is a state that consumes four times what it produces. If it enjoys this military and economic strength, it is because it is at this point \$4 billion in debt. A state this poor with such an artificial power can only exercise its power on cowards and defeatists, but under no circumstances can it do so with our comrades 'Guevara' and 'Abu Ali Ayad' and the Palestinian revolution and its people.

Our revolution will continue to blaze its path toward victory in spite of the obstacles. This, comrades, is our duty to the comrade and martyr 'Guevara' and to everyone. Peace be with you.



Comrades, our duty toward these martyrs is to clearly discern things, see our cause clearly, proclaim it, and decide to act in the light of clear evidence that our revolution will continue to endure and exist in this way, and that no force in the world is capable of dominating the masses of our Palestinian and Arab people.