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The Uprising of the *Fedayeen* Against the Government of Jordan, 1970-1971: Declassified Documents from The British Archive

Kebangkitan Fedayeen Terhadap Kerajaan Jordan, 1970-1971: Kajian Berdasarkan Dokumen Arkib British Yang Telah Diklasifikasi

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Abstract

The defeated of the Arabs in the 1967's war to the Israeli had created instability and political discord in the Palestinian neighbour countries, particularly the Kingdom of Jordan in 1970s. During the war, a huge number of the new Palestinian refugees or displaced people (DPs) were influxes into the country. The Palestinian refugees who scattered in the refugee camps around Jordan soil than formed a radical militia movement of the *fedayeen* to fight against the Israeli occupation. As a consequence, Israel retaliation placed Amman in continuous instability and danger. After the war, King Hussein was also lost his popularity among Palestinians, Jordan citizens and the Jordanian army. With a support from the Palestinian refugees, who formed the majority population in many Jordan towns, as well as the Jordanian sympathizers, the *fedayeen* movement gains their popularity and eventually emerged as a serious political threat to the King rulership. This paper will analyse the conflict from a historical perspective and methodology, based on archival documents sources found at the National Archive of England in London.

Key words: uprising, refugees, radical

Abstrak

Kekalahan Negara-negara Arab dalam Perang 6 Hari 1967 kepada Israel telah mewujudkan ketidakstabilan dan krisis politik dalam kalangan negara-negara jiran Palestin khususnya Jordan pada era 1970an. Ketika perang, ramai pelarian telah melimpah masuk dan bertebaran di kem-kem pelarian di seluruh Jordan. Pelarian ini kemudiannya telah menubuhkan gerakan militia radikal *fedayeen* bagi menentang Israel dari wilayah Jordan. Akibatnya, Amman menjadi bandar yang tidak stabil dan berbahaya. Selain itu, selepas Perang 6 Hari juga menyaksikan Raja Hussein telah kehilangan populariti dalam kalangan masyarakat Palestin. Gerakan *fedayeen* kemudiannya telah mula meraih sokongan para pelarian Palestin yang merupakan majoriti penduduk di kebanyakan bandar-bandar di Jordan dan dalam kalangan

rakyat Jordan sendiri yang bersimpati dengan nasib para pelarian. Gerakan ini akhirnya muncul sebagai ancaman yang serius terhadap kepimpinan Raja Hussein. Kajian ini akan menganalisis peristiwa berdarah ini dari perspektif dan metododologi sejarah dengan menggunakan sepenuhnya sumber dokumen-dokumen arkib yang terdapat di Arkib Kebangsaan England di London.

Kata kunci: kebangkitan, pelarian,radikal .

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Introduction

The Arab-Israeli wars following 1948 caused an influx of Palestinian refugees to the Arab countries, particularly to the kingdom of Jordan. The surge of refugees during the Six Day Arab-Israeli war of 1967 increased the Palestinian population in Jordan to the point where there were more Palestinians than Jordanians. This increase of the population of Palestinian refugees later created a political threat to the Hashemite government in the 1970s. This arose through the establishment of structured and well organised of Palestinian militia organisations known as "The *fedayeen*". Military activities and industrial strikes by these militant groups jeopardised the stability of the Jordanian government under the leadership of King Hussein. In order to safeguard the government and his throne, the King launched a series of violent military operations against the *fedayeen* in Jordan from September 1970 to July 1971. The political conflict between King Hussein and the *fedayeen* during this period resulted in another 'civil war' between two Arab brothers in a modern era. The bloody military operation of 1970-71 by King Hussein successfully prevented his overthrow, but at the same time this tragedy witnessed another political disunity among Arab leaders. Consequently, in the 1970s, this faction of Arab politics diverted their main focus for a decade from resisting Israel to fighting their own brothers. Indeed, this tragedy created an ambivalent future and a historical nightmare of the Palestinian struggle for self-independence. The tragedy was another example of Arab political segregation and selfishness.

Based on British archival documents, this paper will reveal the historical facts and discuss the tragedy of this violent conflict between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Palestinian *fedayeen* in 1970 and 1971.

Who were the *Fedayeen* ?

After the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948, Palestinian refugees, who were scattered around the border of the Jewish state, launched continuous military resistance against Tel Aviv. They organised guerilla movements by establishing several militia groups known as the *fedayeen* (Freedom Fighters). These armed militias, grew from militant elements within the Palestinian refugee population. The number and prestige of the guerilla organisations operating against Israel grew rapidly in the Arab world after the end of the Six Day War in 1967. Unification has long been the aim of the Palestine guerrilla leaders, but such are the ideological, personal and political differences which divide them, that this proved wholly impossible until February 1969, when a number of major organisations united to form the Palestine Armed Struggle Command (PASC) for operational direction of their military wings. The command consisted of *Al-Sifah*, (a military wing of Al-Fatah), The Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) and the Palestine Liberation Forces (PLF) under The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), Al_Saiqa under the Vanguard of the Popular War of Liberation and The Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP). The command was joined later by the Arab Liberation Front (ALF) and Al-Aqsa Fedayeen Front (AFF). A rough estimation of the command was about 10,000 members. To all appearances PASC was controlled by the leadership of the most powerful of its organisations, *Al-Fatah*, and more particularly by Yasir Arafat as Chairman and Military Director of the Executive Committee.

The following extract from a FCO research department memorandum gives the status of each of the *fedayeen* groups in the PASC who were actively involved in militia activities prior to 1970 [1]

i. *The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).*
This organisation has undergone a number of fundamental changes since its inauguration by the First Arab Summit in 1964. The PLO controlling the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) and the Palestine Liberation Forces (PLF). For above 5 years it followed the normal pattern of the Arab guerilla organisations, the military arm of which was the PLA which, however was very badly mauled in the Six Day War of 1967. From then on it has built itself up with the new image and under new leadership. The PLF was set up in 1968 for the special purpose of carrying out sabotage operations against the Israel. Among the leaders are Yasir Arafat and Zuhair Muhsin as the leader of the PLF. The combined operational strength of the PLA and PLF is estimated to be about 3,000. The PLO has the financial and political backing of the Arab League. In mid 1969 it was asking for £16,000,000 to consolidate Arab resistance and provide for families of fedayeen.

The PLO is the main representative body of the Palestine guerillas. The National Council has 105 members of whom 33 are from Al-Fatah, 12 from Al-Sa'iqa and 12 from PFLFP. The PLO represented by 11 members of the Executive Committee, and the PLA has 5 seats. The remaining seats are held by various Palestinian organisations and by other liberation group outside PASC. Yasser Arafat is the Chairman of the Palestine Executive Committee.

ii. *The Palestine Liberation Movement (PLM)*
This group is better known as Al-Fatah, and controlling Al-Asifah. The movement was first founded in 1962 as a sabotage group which did not, however come into prominence until after the Six Day War and the accession to its leadership of Yasir Arafat. Its military wing, Al-Sifah, dates from 1964.The number of its members appeared to vary very greatly, but up to 1969 the operational strength estimated as 6,000 members. Its headquarters are at Al_Salt in Jordan. Al-Fatah claims to have no particular identity, and as the main prop of PASC it enjoys wide Arab support.

iii. *The Vanguard of the Popular War for the Liberation of Palestine (VPWLP).*
This group also known as Al_Sa'iqa. The exact date of its formation, resulting from the amalgamation of about eight smaller groups including the Palestine Popular Liberation Front (not to be confused with The

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Popular Front for The Liberation of Palestine, PFLP), is uncertain. The operational units of Al Sa'iqa appear to have been recruited originally from the Palestine Battalion of the Syrian Army. Among the leaders are Tahir Dablan and Yusef Al-Burji while Mahmud Mu'atir is the commando leader. Its operational strength estimated about 750 members. This group has no particular ideology but appeared to have strong relations with the Syrian Ba'ath. The group retains its Syrian connection, and it backed Al_Sa'iqa which was involved in the earliest clashes with the Lebanese army in May 1969. It main base of operations is in South Lebanon between Mount Hermon and River Hasbani, relying mainly on Syria for operational support.

iv. *The Popular Democratic Front for The Liberation of Palestine , PDFLP. (Al Jabhat al Sha'abiya al Democratiya li Tahrir al-Falastin)*
The front is the result of an ideological split with the PFLP early in 1969. Previously it had operated as a part of the PFLP under the title of Youth Vengeance. Among the top leaders are Nawif Hawatama, Hussein Jamal al Hijazi and Kamal Rifaat. The operational strength of this group prior to 1970 uprising was 200. The group ideology is extreme left wing, with Chinese sympathy and little time for Arab Communist parties with the USSR connections.

v. *The Arab Liberation Front (Jabhat al _Tahrir al Arabiya)*
The front came into being in January 1969 with the support of the Iraqi government largely for the purpose of countering bad publicity following the closing down of al-Fatah and other Palestinian offices in Baghdad, and of Iraqi training camps for guerrillas. Among the top leaders is Shahrir Yusof with an active operational strength which is probably under 100. The ideology of this group is to be pursuing the pan-Arab interest rather than those of regional nationalism. But it is in fact the creature of the right wing, Iraqi Ba'ath. The finances of this group largely depended on the support of the Iraqi government and their militias are trained by the Iraqi army, mainly in Jordan.

vi. *Al-Aqsa Fedayeen Front, AFF (Jabhat Fida'i al Aqsa)*
This group becomes an independent group in August 1969 as the result of break away from the PFLP. It's comprised largely of members of the one time Palestine Liberation Front. It also called itself the General Command of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (GCPF). Among its top leaders are Ahmed Jibrael, Ali Burnak and Fadlalah Sharour. The operational strength estimated less than 150. The base of this group is at Irbid.

vii. *The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, PFLP. (Al-Jabhat al Sha'abiya li Tahrir al Falastin)*
The front was set up in 1967 for the purpose of carrying out guerilla operations against the Israel, and was itself the result of merger of several

smaller groups (the most important being the Palestine Liberation Front, PLF) all of which at one time or another had had connections with the Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM). The PFLP led by George Habbash. The number of the members approximately 900 strength. This group considered as revolutionary ideology group but fairly middle of the road of the Arab Nationalist. Financially, it appeared to derive the bulk of its support from the United Arab Republic (UAR) with some from Iraq and from South Yemen.

viii. The Active Organisation For The Liberation of Palestine, AOLP (Al-Hayah al Amila li Tahrir al Falastin).
This is a splinter group which hived off from Al-Fatah as the result of personal differences in February 1969. Originally, this group known as The Working Organisation for The Liberation of Palestine. Among the leaders is Dr. Issam al_Sartawi who is considered too closely connected with the Muslim Brotherhood and with the Government of Jordan. It has to be believed that the numbers of its member are more then 150.

ix. The Islamic Conquest (Fatah al_Islam)
The group has operated under a number of different names but came into existence in its latest form in the spring of 1969 with the backing of King Faisal of Saudi Arabia. It nominal leader is the ageing ex-Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini. The members of this group are believed to be not more then 100. The group received support from the Saudi government. Up to mid-June 1969, it was reported to have received 2 million riyals from the Saudis."[2]

Refugees and *Fedayeen* activities in Jordan, 1970

The above *fedayeen* groups which united under the PASC were responsible for the Palestinian uprising and resistance against the Jordanian government in 1970 and 1971. The members of this militia group were mainly Palestinian refugees who were scattered throughout the Arab countries but particularly in Jordan. However, they were also joined by Palestinian sympathizers in Jordan as well as from all over the globe. The origin of this movement in Jordan began as a result of the creation of Israel in 1948, although the more organized and well- structured resistance groups only appeared in the mid 1960s. Even though the *fedayeen* emerged as a result of the Palestinian and Arab resistance against the Israelis, it was very difficult to indentify accurately the members of these militia groups in Jordan as they comprised Jordanians as well as refugees. To avoid confusion: most *fedayeen* were refugees but not all refugees were necessarily *fedayeen*. *Fedayeen* was a militia-political group to fight the Israelis for the right of the Palestinians. Many of the *fedayeen* bases were on Jordanian soil because the majority of the Palestinian refugees lived in Jordan. Historically, since 1948 there was a massive influx of Palestinian refugees' into Jordan. Most of them lived in the

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refugee camps around Jordan and some lived in Jordan's major towns such as Amman, Irbid, Ajlun and Zerka. After the Six Day War of 1967, the number of the Palestinian refugees that fled to Jordan increased tremendously. In a matter of years, Jordan changed not only in size but in character. Nearly 1 million Palestinians were expelled from their lands to Jordan after the 1967 war.[2] The Palestinian populations on the two banks of Jordan in 1969 were estimated as follows:

Table I : Estimated Population Breakdown- Jordan, 1969.

A. EAST BANK

East bankers		750,000
West bankers		130,000
Refugees:		
Old refugees	100,000	
Old refugees not in camps	190,000	
Second time refugees in camps	90,000	
Second time refugees not in camps	90,000	
Displaced persons from West Bank and Gaza	250,000	
	720,000	720,000
Total East Bank (Palestine 53%)		1,600,000

B. WEST BANK

West Bankers		330,000
Refugees in camps	70,000	
Refugees not in camps	200,000	
	270,000	270,000
Total West Bank		600,000

Jordan	TOTAL (Palestinian 66%)	2,200,000

Sources: National Archive of England, FCO 17/1087, 'Social Situation In Jordan, Britain and the New Displaced Person', A Report by R.L Morris, 1st Secretary (Labour), British Embassy, Beirut, 1970.

Despite the statistic of the Palestinian population in Jordan as figured above, the population of the refugees could be seen concentrated in several towns in Jordan. These are the areas or towns where the *fedayeen* uprising broke out in 1970.

Table II: Population of Refugee Camps in Jordan at 31 December 1969.

No	Name of Camps	Official residence		Unofficial Residence		Total	
	Temporary camps	Families	Persons	Families	Persons	Families	Persons
1	Baqa'a	6336	35887	1011	6076	7347	41963
2	Jerash	2291	11524	-	-	2291	11524
3	Souf	1489	08088	0237	0848	1726	08936
4	Hussen	3912	11199	0641	3975	2553	14174
5	Marka	2600	15515	0314	1859	2914	17374
6	Talbiya	1648	04483	0108	0805	0756	05288
	Total	15276	86696	2311	12563	17587	99259
	Regular camps						
7	Amman New Camp	3979	25216	2010	14360	5989	39567
8	Jebal Hussein	3369	21035	1020	5428	4389	26463
9	Zerka	1549	10964	1181	5907	2730	16871
10	Irbid	2120	13111	0620	3675	2740	16786
	Total	11017	70326	4831	29370	15848	99696

Notes: a. does not include an estimated 1788 babies born after June 1967
b. does not include an estimated 4900 squatters living around the Jebel Hussein camps.

Sources: National Archive of England, FCO 17/1087: U.N.R.W.A, Amman, 1970.

After the end of the Six Day War of 1967, the number of the *fedayeen* members increased, particularly among refugees in Jordan. Prior to 1970, the total of *fedayeen* members throughout the Arab world was estimated at over five to six thousand with 5,500 PLA (Palestine Liberation Army), together with 15 to 20 thousand militiamen stationed in Jordan.[3] The PLA was spread between Egypt, Syria, Jordan and included members under training in China and Korea. The bases of the *fedayeen* militias were in the Arab countries neighbouring Israel, particularly Jordan. Between 1969 and 1970, there was an average of 400 sabotage activities of one sort or another per month; either firing across the borders or actual operations carried out by saboteurs crossing into Israel. The majority of them were from Jordan. Prior to the crisis in September 1970, it was estimated that the strength of the *fedayeen was* ten to fifteen thousand. The largest of the fighting group was Al Fatah military wing, known as Al-

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Asifa with about eight thousand members.[4] The *fedayeen* movement in Jordan consisted of twelve different organisations; the largest being al-Fatah.[5]

The emergence of stronger resistance by the *Fedayeen* after the 1967 war caused increasing and more frequent infiltration activities against the Israelis from Jordanian soil. Consequently, Israeli resistance against the *fedayeen* activities from Jordan risked the security and stability of the Kingdom of Jordan led by King Hussein. For example an attack by the *fedayeen* on the Israeli port of Eilat in 1970s jeopardized the security of Jordan.

> " *Jordanian authorities have worked hard to prevent Fedayeen operations against Eilat for fear of Israeli reprisals against Aqaba…the attack of Israel (on Aqaba) will put Jordan at the mercy of Syria (Ba'thist and Fedayeen)"*[6]

Following the end of the 1967 war, it was estimated that more than 20,000 *Fedayeen* based in Jordan launched regular guerilla attacks against Israel at the border.[7] For security reasons, King Hussein later decided that the activities of the *fedayeen* in Jordan, which he believed received a support from Syria, had to be stop.

> "*King Hussein and some (but not all) of those immediately around him would like to put a stop to infiltration of Syrian trained terrorists through Jordanian territory into Israel, since they know that the activities of these people are bound to provoke further Israeli reprisals which can only inflame passions, particularly amongst the overcrowded refugees on the East Bank, and can only make the position of the regime more difficult*"[8]

The campaign of King Hussein to stop *fedayeen* militias from using Jordan as a base to attack Israel created an anger and dissatisfaction in these groups. As expelled refugees without nation status since 1948, they believed that they had a right to be stationed in any Arab country in a mission to attack the Israelis. Any attempts to prevent them from such action would be considered as betraying the Arabs, particularly the Palestinian aspiration to regain their homeland from Israelis. Therefore, the *fedayeen* group resisted an attempt by King Hussein to remove them from Jordan between 1970 and 1971, which then ended with a bloody civil war. In an interview in *Al-Ahram* newspaper on 22 October 1969, their prominent leader, Yasir Arafat defended the policy to use Jordan as a military base;

> "*The National Council as well as the Arab Foreign Ministers have decided that the Palestinian Revolution is fully entitled to fight in all places it finds its strategy dictating that it do so…we will fight from the Lebanon land in the same way we fight from the Egyptian, Jordanian and Syrian land. We fight the Zionist enemy*"[9]

The military campaign launched by Jordan against the Palestinian f*edayeen* between September 1970 to July 1971 was approved and under full responsibility of the King. For example he directed the Prime Minister, Wasfi Tal in April 1971 to take a "*decisive stand…against the handful of professional conspirators and criminals taking pleasure in committing criminal acts against farmers, workers, students, merchants and officials*"[10]. Wasfi interpreted this order as a green light for him to launch a bloody military campaign against the *fedayeen.* He replied and promised "*to cleanse all ranks from the professional*

criminal who disguise themselves as fedayeen"[11]. On May 1971, King Hussein again instructed Wasfi that "*all contradictions that had infiltrated into the ranks of the resistance should be stamped out*". Wasfi, as before, agreed that *"we should abide by our directives and preserve national unity, there shall be no place in our ranks for separatism* (fedayeen)."[12]

The activities of the *fedayeen* were not directed against Israel only, but at the same time towards the leadership of King Hussein. For the f*edayeen*, King Hussein was a failure and his family was blamed for the success of the Israeli invasions over Palestinian land since 1948. In the 1970s, anti-Hussein sentiment was very strong among majority Palestinians in Jordan especially after the Six Days War of 1967, as reported by the British Council:

> "*King Hussein's grandfather is blamed for causing the refugee problem by calling on the Arabs of Jaffa, Haifa and elsewhere to forsake their homes, and for giving up Ramla and Lydda (to the Israelis) without a fight. King Hussein himself is blamed for having given preference to the East Bank over the West Bank during the period they were united under his rule; for giving the West Bank into the hands of Israel by his ill-fated attack on the latter in 1967. And now for trying to liquidate the fedayeen, the only people who can be said to represent the West Bank personality…Perhaps because of the Israeli presence, there has been little in public of this anti-Hussein feeling*"[13]

In the aftermath the 1967 war, the political influence of King Hussein as the protector of Palestinian rights also deteriorated. The severe loss of the Arabs, particularly Jordan, in the 1967 war against Israel destroyed Hussein's leadership image. He was seen as a weak leader and standing only as a puppet of the Western powers. Anti-Hussein or anti-Hashemite sentiment also grew among the Jordanians. Indeed, one of the Jordanian Palestinian sympathiser groups known as the Jordan Movement for the National Liberation, called for King Hussein to step down.[14] The situation was worsened by the spread of revolutionary *Nasserism* ideology among Palestinians and Jordanians. The penetration of this extremist ideology strengthened anti-Hussein feeling among Palestinians. In fact, it was believed that Nasser gave moral as well as material support to the anti-Hussein movement in order to topple the King. A British observer described this situation:

> "*There has always been a large body of anti-Hashemite, pro-Nasser sentiment in the country, particularly in the refugee camps and the larger towns*". [15]

There was also dissatisfaction within the Jordanian army with King Hussein's strategy in the war of 1967. The loss of Jordan in the war destroyed army morale and, in desperation, King Hussein had to boost the army strength in order to face the *fedayeen* threat.

> "*…the ability of the Jordanian authorities to control the fedayeen is becoming increasingly limited because of:*

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a. *the growing sympathy and in many cases active help for the fedayeen amongst Jordanians at all levels (including the army) and most of all among the 'new' refugees who despair of a return to the West bank by peaceful means.*
b. *The active help being given to the fedayeen by the Iraqi army unit in Jordan*
c. *The increasing pessimism in Jordan about a negotiated settlement in faced of the Israeli hardline negotiating position particularly over Jerusalem*.[16]

Additionally, very bad economic conditions in Jordan after the loss of the 1967 war added on people's dissatisfaction towards King Hussein's leadership. The Palestinian refugees in particular were disabled from integrating into socio-economic activities and the re-development process in Jordan. The condition created an economic turmoil among them in which poverty appeared as the major issue. The bad economic conditions in Jordan after the war created a hole for the penetration by subversive and extremist groups led by the *fedayeen*.

> "*The core of the refugee problem is in the territories which comprise the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, where over half of the Palestinian refugees are concentrated. A factor which has worked most powerfully against the successful re-integration of the refugees into the Jordanian society has been the limited absorptive capacity of the Jordanian economy…*[17]

Subversive activities, were mainly organized by the pro-Nasser groups and the f*edayeen* also became actively involved in trade union affairs. For example they had launched a series of labour strikes as a strategy to paralyze the Jordanian economy after the war of 1967. Indirectly, these industrial actions were not only to create an economic recession in Jordan but were also expected to mobilize people's anger against the Hashemite government. For example on 21 April 1970, the Jordan Tobacco Company and Tobacco and Cigarette Workers Union of Jordan launched a labour strike and it was believed that the *fedayeen* group was behind this industrial action.

> "*There is evidence that the Syrian backed fedayeen group, al- Sa'iqa is involved in the strike*".[18]

The report by the British Embassy in Amman of 1970 explained the 'invisible hand' behind the series of labour strikes, including strikes by the Jordan Cement Industrial Workers and workers' demonstrations at the British oil refinery in Jordan;

> "*The fedayeen group operating under the carte blanche have understandably sought to influence the industrial labour force. Al Fatah claim to have organised the workers in Jordan. The PDFP, Al-Sa'iqa, the Arab Liberation Front, the Popular Struggle Front and The Communist Party supported the demands of the cement workers*.[19]

In general, it was clear that the King Hussein's leadership and government were in a critical condition in the aftermath of the 1967 war. The military, political and economic threat by the *fedayeen*, which received support from Jordanian sympathisers and other Arab revolutionary regimes especially the UAR and Syria, caused King Hussein a great political

challenge and difficulties in retaining the throne. Furthermore, the infiltration activities by the *fedayeen* against the Israelis from Jordanian soil exposed the kingdom to reprisals from the Jewish regime. Therefore, the only way for Hussein to save and stabilise his government while regaining absolute support from his people and army was to liquidate the *fedayeen* threat from Jordanian soil completely. For him this movement was described as, "(*Fedayeen*)-t*he whole movement is a cancer in the body of Jordan*"[20]. Logically, to prevent the 'cancer' from spreading, it had to be removed instantly to safeguard the whole of Jordan and preserve the King's political career.

A Bloody Uprising in Jordan, September 1970 to July 1971.

Verious clashes between the Jordanian army and the *fedayeen* had occurred during February, April and June 1970. These clashes were the setting for major confrontations in late July. The *fedayeen* formed a united front in opposition to any settlement based on Security Council Resolution No. 242. The most extreme attitude was taken by the PFLP, which had earlier advocated and carried out attacks against Israeli aircraft and Jewish business interests in Europe.[21] Tension had already been mounting in August and September between the Jordanian Army and the *fedayeen*, and was greatly intensified by the hijacking and detention of the hostages. Other major clashes between the *fedayeen* and Jordanian commandos took place in Amman on 26, 28 and 29 August where an unsuccessful attempt was made to assassinate King Hussein.[22] On 16 September, King Hussein formed a military government and on 17 September fighting broken out between Hussein's army and the guerillas in Amman, spreading to several towns in north Jordan.[23] The war lasted for ten days and was ended by the Cairo Agreement on 27 September 1970.[24] However the agreement did not stop continuous resistance of the *fedayeen* guerillas against the Jordanian regime. Resistance on a smaller scale by the *fedayeen* continued till mid 1971 while at the same time the military campaign by the King intensified. By January 1971, the *fedayeen* had been squeezed out of all the main towns in Jordan except Irbid, Ajlun and Amman itself in which the government's writ did not run, there was shooting in the town almost nightly. The *fedayeen* were still able, at will, to paralyze the commercial life of the city and hence effectively that of the country as a whole.[25] The final battle between them occurred on July 1971.

By July 1971, King Hussein of Jordan progressively pushed the *fedayeen* out of the main towns, particularly Amman, Irbid and Zerka. He allowed them to concentrate in specified areas, for example the Jerash/Ajlun area, but at the same time also virtually destroyed the f*edayeen* infrastructures. By the end of September 1970, the number of *fedayeen* actions had dropped to 100 per month, including those in Gaza. This was further gradually reduced to 60 per month, of which only seven per month came from Jordan. By June 1971, in Jordan there were only 2000 to 2500 active members of al-Fatah.[26] However these were in control of some of the main roads, such as that running from Amman to Zerka. In addition, they were in control of some mountain bases opposite Samaria and of course the large camp at Karame. On 13 to 16 of July 1971, the Jerash/Ajlun battle commenced and was virtually won within 3 days by the Jordanian army. The main aim of the campaign was to eliminate the two mountain strongholds of the *fedayeen* in Jebel Aqra and Jebel Atimed, as

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well as to surround the force in Ajlun. On 14th July the two Jebels had been captured and on the next two days, the Jordanian forces were able to concentrate on the main centers and clean up the Karame camp. On July, 16, the Jordanian force took one thousand prisoners to Mafraq for interrogation. The figures were estimated as below:

Table III : Casualties of the July 1971 Battle

4-600	Were killed or wounded;
800	Were returned to their homes after signing a statement to the effect that they had finished their participation in fedayeen activities;
6-700	Were returned to Syria and Iraq
600	Were captured and charged with criminal offences or for being members of the extremist movements such as George Habshah's PFLP and are still held captive;
100	Were "welcomed to Israel" and
200	Centered in Salt, east of Amman, where they established a Fatah base but under the control of the Jordan Army
3-400	Still remain free

Sources: National Archive of England, FCO 17/1375. A Report by the British Embassy, Tel Aviv, 1971.

The demolition of the *fedayeen* strongholds in July 1971 was still not the end of militia activities by this group. The movement still largely remained active in other Arab countries. After the 1971 battle, there still remained approximately 9,500 active members of *fedayeen* scattered all over Jordan's neighbouring countries. In Lebanon, it was estimated that 1,500 members were still active; mainly concentrated in Mount Hermon and along the Israel/Lebanon border, five to six miles inside Lebanon. While in Syria there were approximately 1,500 members including the *Saiqa* movement and 6,000 members of the PLA in South West Syria. Indeed, in Jordan there were still 200 operations launched from the Salt area where an estimated 300 – 400 members remained at large.[27]

During the conflict, both leaders accused and blamed each other as the party responsible for starting the war. Provocative statements made by leaders from both sides intensified the conflict. For example, in 8 January 1971, an open appeal was broadcast to Arab leaders by Yasir Arafat. In his appeals "Voice of The Palestinian Revolution", Arafat criticised the inhumanity and brutality of the Hashimite regime towards Palestinians. Below is a report of his statement translated from Arabic:

Brother Arab Kings and Presidents:

Just after Premier Bahi al-Adgham had left Amman, the Jordanian authorities suddenly moved their forces to attack our military position in the places

> *designated for them under the agreement. They violently shelled these positions with artillery and various other weapons. They also moved in their tanks and vehicles and attacked our positions in several areas- Umm ar-Rumman, Umm al-Amad, Umm Jawzah, Wadi al-Haramiyyah, As-Salt, Rumaymin, Subayhah and certain other areas and the forest of Jerash - without any reason or justification. They also bombarded Rusayfah town…We appeal to you to intervene to halt this abominable crime which is being committed against the Palestine revolution and our heroic steadfast people, so that the rifles and all efforts may be directed against the Zionist enemy and so that innocent blood may be spared and not shed in the wrong place. As a people's revolution, and martyrs, we appeal to you to shoulder your national and historic responsibility to halt these bloody massacres being carried out by the Jordanian authorities. This is a revolution until victory.*[28]

Again on 24 to 26 January 1971, Yasser Arafat in a speech in Algeria accused Jordan, the US and Israel of colluding in an agreement to liquidate the *fedayeen*, and called upon Arab states to send troops to Jordan to protect the resistance movement[29]. However, the government of Jordan denied this accusation. Instead Amman accused Arafat of 'self deception' and 'fancies' and of having deviated from the true path 'to build personal fame and leadership at the expense of *fedayeen* action' and 'of having gone with the stream of political deception and false propaganda'.[30] Indeed, the government of Jordan repeatedly denied an accusation that it had conspired with Israel to eliminate the *fedayeen*. The Jordanian government in a public statement quoted by The Guardian in 1971 explained;

> "*Our masses know, just as well as Arafat that conspiracies against Commando action were the product of differences among those who are using it to seek their personal glory*".[31]

Strong criticism of Arafat's leadership was continuously broadcast in Amman. As a reflection of Arafat's appeal to the Arab leaders to interfere in the conflict by giving military support to the *fedayeen*, Jordan's government stated;

> "*This is a new misorientation campaign launched by the defeatists…we assure the masses that Arafat's statement is another attempt on his part to deepen divisions and sow differences between the Arab countries. Arafat has forgotten all about the Israeli occupation of Arab lands and is resorting to political trickery and false propaganda*.[32]

The Prime Minister of Jordan, Wasfi Tal in his media conference on 19 July re-emphasised the need to launch the military campaign on the *fedayeen*. For example, in the case of the military campaign in Jerash/Ajloun areas, he justified the action by saying that the *fedayeen* had been terrorising villagers in these areas, and that agriculture and the economy generally had suffered as a result. Wasfi Tal also claimed that, among *fedayeen* captured during the battle, 320 people were Israeli agents and that, according to Jordanian Intelligence,

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there were also about 500 people wanted by the court for various criminal offences, but the *fedayeen* leadership had done nothing to root out such elements.[33] This bloody conflict that had started in September 1970 reached its ending with the final battle of July 1971. However, dissatisfaction and revenge of the militia continued to threaten the peace between them. In the end, it resulted in Wasfi Tal's assassination in front of the Sheraton Hotel in Cairo on 28 November 1971.[34]

The post 1970-1971 Uprising in Jordan and the *Fedayeen* movement.

Although the army met stronger resistance than it anticipated, the fighting resulted in a serious setback for all the *fedayeen* organisations. Thousands were killed during the conflict. For example, up to the end of September 1970, the f*edayeen*, unprepared for such an intensive campaign, suffered heavy causalities, perhaps in the region of 800 killed. They also lost large quantities of equipment, vital documents and organisational material. Both sides' stocks of ammunition were seriously depleted. The army, on the other hand, held together well during the crisis and suffered almost no defections. Their reported losses were between 350-400 killed and 2000 wounded.[35] The *fedayeen*, then a militant Palestinian force independent of the Hashemite regime, was eliminated from Jordan, but the Palestinians themselves as citizens of Jordan remained in a majority of about two to one of the indigenous population. Apart from the defeated militants, for the most part lying low in sullen impotence in the refugee camps, the mass of Palestinians in the towns particularly in Amman, where they composed the bulk of business community, had, with a few notable exceptions, little love for the regime. That they had no stomach for the fight either, and least of all a desire for the return of the conditions before 1971, is of negative value in the context of rebuilding a sound and stable society. The morale, on the other hand, of the positive, passionate supporters of the Hashemite regime was higher than it has been for many years. The army, by holding together between September 1970 and July 1971 and by crushing the *fedayeen*, purged much of the humiliation they had felt since the debacle of June 1967. Victory closed their ranks and confirmed their loyalty to the king.

Despite heavy casualties on both parties, as a lesson from this conflict, King Hussein believed that the people of Palestine had to be united under a single flag of Jordan's kingdom. Thus, he proposed the establishment of The United Arab Kingdom of Jordan and Palestine (UAK) in early 1972. In the announcement of his proposal on 15 May 1972, King Hussein drew clearly the fundamental concept of this new kingdom. Among the main features were:

i. Re-organise the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan into United Arab Kingdom (UAK) comprised of two regions – Jordan and Palestine. A new constitution, giving each region its own elected governor, its own house of deputies and its own regional government;

ii. The UAK would have an elected national assembly, an executive branch and supreme court serving both regions, and national armed forces under the command of the King. The central government would also be responsible for foreign affairs, economic policies and other activities relating to the national interest;

iii. The region of Jordan would to consist of the East Bank of the Jordan. The region of Palestine is to embrace the Israeli-occupied West Bank, plus any other Palestinian Arab areas recovered in a final peace settlement and whose people choose to join the union. Each region would have full freedom in dealing with all matters which do not fall under the jurisdiction of the central government.

iv. Amman would be the capital of the UAK, as well as the capital of the Jordanian region. Occupied Arab Jerusalem would be the capital of the region of Palestine. In a state of final peace, Jerusalem should become a bridge between now divided believers in God, and a city of peace for the three great religions to whom it is holy.

v. The king would be the Head of the state and would assume the Central Executive power, assisted by a central Council of Ministers. The central legislative power would be rested in the King and the National Assembly whose members would be elected by direct and secret ballot, having an equal number of members from each of the two regions.[36]

The proposal by King Hussein generated a mixed response from Arab leaders who mostly concluded that this was another effort by the King to empower his control over the Palestinians, and of course to eliminate their military resistance. For the PLO, after three days of meeting on 16 March to discuss this idea, they rejected the whole proposal. Instead, the PLO's Executive Council consistently called for the elimination of the Hashemite dynasty. In its statement, the PLO indicated:

> "*PLO which is a member of the Arab League and is recognised by the states of the world as the only legal representative of Palestinian people. Neither the King nor any other quarter is entitled to speak for this people, tamper with their fate or decide on their behalf. The Hashemite dynasty in Jordan, with all its history of conspiracy against our people and case and its role in serving imperialist objectives in the area is the subject of dispute. Getting rid of that dynasty and overthrowing the monarchy in Jordan now impose themselves as the objective at this phase which would restore matters to normal and put relations between Palestinian and Jordanian peoples in their true respective*" [37]

The majority of Arab countries also rejected this proposal. Egypt through her Presidential Council announced a rejection of this idea and concluded that "*it represented the starting point of an imperialist and Zionist move to liquidate the Palestinian cause*".[38] Following the Egyptian stands was a rejection announced by Libya (20 March), Tunisia (13 April), Algeria (16 March), Iraq and Syria (25 April)[39]. Indeed, these revolutionary Arab countries refresh their unconditional support to the right of Palestinians to exercise her own choice and remain independent. Finally, the proposal was withdrawn after failing to gain support from the Arabs – particularly the PLO.

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Conclusion

The uprising and resistance of the *fedayeen* towards King Hussein's regime from September 1970 to July 1971 was another bloody war between two brothers in modern Arab history. The war in one way successfully ended an attempt by the Palestinian guerillas to overthrow the king's regime. However the influx of Palestinian *fedayeen* into Lebanese soil from Jordan as a result of this conflict, created another dark episode of the Palestinian tragedy. The military campaign by the Jordanian regime did not entirely solve the refugee anger and their struggle for an independent Palestinian nation after 1948. In fact, the uprising was a symbol of deep disappointment and suffering of the Palestinians for the failures of the international community to respond to their outcry since the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948.

The *Fedayeen* were blamed for the tragedy and were portrayed as "terrorist militias" who committed a series of hijackings and terrorist activities. This paper is not trying to justify nor legalise any terrorist actions such as hijacking airplanes, the massacre of civilians or bombing public amenities. Absolutely, these actions must be disallowed and fully condemned. However, this paper shows how important it is to understand the reasons behind the Palestinian uprising and resistance in Jordan in the 1970s from historical perspectives. The establishment of the militia group among Palestinian refugees could be seen as the failures of refugees' programs by the international community. The long suffering of Palestinian refugees since the 1940s has been translated into the establishment of political extremist and militia groups. Additionally, this tragedy also portrays a historical image of King Hussein as political desperado. King Hussein might explain that his action was necessary for security reasons: to avoid reprisals by the Israelis into Jordan by stopping *fedayeen* infiltrations. However, from another perspective, his action was seen as fully politically motivated. As a consequence of his defeat and failure in the Six Day 1967 war, King Hussein was trying to regain his reputation and popularity by diverting a military campaign from Israel to the Palestinian refugees. Sadly in this tragedy, based on archival document research, history will remember him as another disgraceful Arab leader who sacrificed his own brother's blood for his political survival.

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[2] FCO 17/1415, A Diplomatic Report No. 531/71, from HMG's Ambassador Amman to Secretary of State for FCO, 12 November 1971.

[3] Report by British Defence & Air Attache, 1971, enclosed in a report by M.E Pike, Near Eastern Department, 3 August 1971.

[4] The total number of Al-Fatah was about 10,000 but these are not fighting *fedayeen*. The distinction between fighting and non-fighting members applies, on a lesser scale, to all the other organisations. See FCO 93/92, report " The Effect of the September crisis in Jordan on the *Fedayeen* movement", in letter from P.D Wheeler to Mr. Armitage, 25 February 1971.

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[18] FCO 17/1059, 'Labour situation in Jordan-external relation of trade union, 1967-1969', a report by R.L Morris, 1st Secretary of Labour, British Embassy, Jordan, 1 February 1970.

[19] *Ibid*

[20] FCO 17/1062, Letter from J.F.S Phillips to J.P Tripp, 21 August 1970.

[21] For example on the 6 September, Boeing 707s of TWA and Swissair were hijacked by the PFLP to Dawson's field, a PAA jumbo jet was hijacked to Cairo and destroyed there and an unsuccessful attempt was made to hijack an El Al Boeing. Three days later, the BOAC VC10 aircraft was also hijacked at Dawson's Field. The three aircraft at Dawson Field were later blown up and some of the occupants held until agreement was reached to exchange them for *fedayeen* members held in Switzerland, West Germany and the United Kingdom.

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[26] FCO93/92.

[27] *Ibid.*

[28] FCO 17/1409, a text message in Arabic by Abu Ammar (Yasir Arafat) to all Arab leaders and kings, 8 January 1971.Bahi Adgham was a Tunisian Prime Minister.

[29] FCO 17/149, letter from CP Carter to C.W Long, FCO, 29 January 1971.

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