

SADAT OPPOSITION IN DISARRAY

PLO-Iraq Dispute Further Splits Arabs

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BEIRUT, Lebanon—A long-festering dispute between the Palestinian establishment and the government of Iraq has come out into the open.

It has increased the disarray of Arab opposition to Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's peace initiative toward Israel, and made even less likely any coordinated action against the Egyptian leader.

The Palestine Liberation Organization, the umbrella organization that nominally represents all the various Palestinian revolutionary movements, has formally asked the government of Iraq to hand over a renegade Palestinian leader, Sabri al Banna, whose guerrilla name is Abu Nidal, or "father of the struggle."

The PLO accused Nidal of responsibility for the recent assassinations of two PLO leaders in London and Kuwait and blamed him for the killing of Egyptian editor Youssef Sebai during an Afro-Asian solidarity conference in Cyprus last February.

The PLO statement did not attack the Iraqi government directly but left no doubt that it held Iraq responsible for Nidal's activities.

"We demand the Iraqi government hand over Abu Nidal so he would get what he deserves," said the statement, released at the PLO's headquarters here in the Lebanese capitol.

Nidal, whose followers are believed to operate under the group name

Black June, has been sentenced to death by a revolutionary court of Fatah, the main Palestinian guerrilla organization.

So far, there has been no Iraqi response to the note, delivered July 4 at the Iraqi Embassy in Damascus, Syria.

The PLO maneuver marked a new low in relations within the so-called Arab steadfastness front, composed of nations that opposed Sadat's dramatic peace effort last year. But Palestinian sources here said it was the result of five years of mounting frustration over the "obstructionist" tactics of the Iraqis.

One senior PLO official here said the troubles date back to 1969, when the Iraqis cleared out Fatah training camps and set up their own Arab Liberation Front to replace the Palestinian establishment. Then, the following year, Iraqi troops based in Jordan did nothing to help the PLO when King Hussein sent his Bedouin mercenaries against the guerrilla bases there, eventually driving out the PLO.

Later, Iraq gave support to Nidal and another Palestinian renegade, Dr. Wadi Haddad, a former member of the Marxist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, who had split with Dr. George Habbash, the Popular-Front leader.

In addition, Iraqi embassies distributed propaganda from the renegade Palestinian groups. Baghdad gave Nidal his own radio broadcasting facili-

ties, which he called "the voice of the Palestinian revolution."

Among other things, the radio station launched virulent attacks on two Palestinian leaders shortly before they were assassinated—Said Hamami, the PLO's London representative, who was killed in January, and Kuwaiti representative Ali Yassin, who was killed last month.

Nidal has been credited with at least one airline-related operation, an attack on a Pan American World Airways plane at Rome airport in 1973. His group also has been linked with attacks on hotels in Damascus and in Amman, Jordan, after the Syrian intervention in Lebanon in 1976.

Senior PLO officials here claim that the organization has shown remarkable restraint in the face of this provocation but the time has come to have it out with the Iraqis. "The Iraqis supported Abu Nidal because the PLO made up with the Syrians," one said.

Iraq and Syria are ruled by rival wings of the Baath Arab Socialist Party.

Another reason for the unheard-of PLO attack on a brotherly Arab country could be a gradual slippage in its control over the Palestinian movement. Habbash's group walked out in 1974, and on May 18, five Palestinian organizations demanded the creation of a collective leadership for the revolution.

Fatah was making all the decisions, they complained.