



RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

[New Search](#) | [About RIR's](#) | [Help](#)

02 September 2004

SYR42939.E

Syria: Pro-Palestinian group known as the General Command Militia or the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC); its connection to Syrian authorities; relations between Syrian authorities and other pro-Palestinian militant organizations in Syria (2002-2004)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

Information on a group called the General Command Militia was not found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC)

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC) has been described as a "pan-Arab, secular, Marxist-Leninist group" that rejects any political settlement with Israel (CDI 13 Nov. 2002; ICT 1990) and as a "far-left Palestinian nationalist group" (CFR n.d.). Although nominally secular, the PFLP-GC started to use more religious rhetoric when it allied itself with Iran in the 1990s (CFR 2004; CDI 13 Nov. 2002).

Several politically-motivated acts, including airplane hijackings, airplane bombings, shootings, the first suicide bombing and assassinations have been attributed to the PFLP-GC since it was formed in 1968 (CFR n.d.; CDI 13 Nov. 2002; MEIB Sept. 2002; ICT 1990).

The PFLP-GC is listed as a "foreign terrorist organization" by the Office of Counterterrorism of the United States Department of State (12 Aug. 2004; CFR n.d.).

Relations with Syria

The PFLP-GC has received support from countries such as Syria, Libya and Iran (CFR n.d.; FAS 21 May 2004; ICT 1990). Specifically, it is reported that Syria has provided the PFLP-GC with "financial, military and logistical" backing (CDI 13 Nov. 2002; MEIB Sept. 2002). Until recently, the PFLP-GC maintained its headquarters in Damascus (FAS 21 May 2004; CFR n.d.; MEIB Sept. 2002). In September 2002, the Middle East Intelligence Bulletin (MEIB), a monthly online publication focused on internal political developments in the Middle East (MEIB n.d.), published an article about the close ties between Syria and the PFLP-GC (Sept. 2002). According to the article, the PFLP-GC has received "considerable" support from the Syrian government, e.g., in the form of tanks (MEIB Sept. 2002). MEIB described the PFLP-GC as acting as "a Palestinian auxiliary of Syrian military intelligence" (Sept. 2002).

MEIB reported that Syria has asked the PFLP-GC to adopt more peaceful methods on at least one occasion; however, MEIB expressed the opinion that this directive was little more than a "public relations ploy" on the part of Syria (MEIB Sept. 2002).

In May 2004, The Inter Press Service (IPS) News Agency reported that the PFLP-GC was one of three pro-Palestinian organizations that Syria ordered shut down after a visit to Damascus by United States (US)

Secretary of State Colin Powell (5 May 2004). Information on the current status of the PFLP-GC in Syria was not found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

Syria and other Pro-Palestinian Organizations

The US Office of Counterterrorism of the Department of State has identified Syria as a "state sponsor of terrorism" (30 Oct. 2003). The Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) lists Syria as a country that supports "terrorist" organizations (CSIS 5 June 2003).

In 2003, Ambassador Cofer Black, the Coordinator for Counterterrorism for the US Department of State listed the following as "Palestinian rejectionist groups" based in Syria:

HAMAS, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine General Command (PFLP-GC) and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), the Abu Musa Organization (AMO), and the Popular Struggle Front (PSF) (Office of Counterterrorism 30 Oct. 2003).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS). 5 June 2003. "2002 Public Report." <http://www.csis-scrs.gc.ca/eng/publicrp/pub2002_e.html> [Accessed 25 Aug. 2004]

Center for Defense Information (CDI). 13 November 2002. Sofia Aldape. "In the Spotlight: The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC)." <<http://www.cdi.org/terrorism/pflp-gc-pr.cfm>> [Accessed 24 Aug. 2004]

Council on Foreign Relations (CFR). n.d.. "PFLP, DFLP, PFLP-GC: Palestinian Leftists." <<http://cfrterrorism.org/groups/pflp.html#Q1>> [Accessed 24 Aug. 2004]

Federation of American Scientists (FAS). 21 May 2004. "Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC)." <<http://www.fas.org/irp/world/para/pflp-gc.htm>> [Accessed 24 Aug. 2004]

Inter Press Service News Agency (IPS). 5 May 2004. George Baghdadi. "Palestinian Groups Forced to Shut Shop." <<http://www.ipsnews.net/interna.asp?idnews=17983>> [Accessed 24 Aug. 2004]

International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT). 1990. David Tal. "The International Dimension of PFLP-GC Activity." <<http://www.ict.org.il/Articles/pflp-gc1.htm>>. [Accessed 25 Aug. 2004]

Middle East Intelligence Bulletin (MEIB). September 2002. Vol. 4, No. 9. Gary C. Gambill. "Sponsoring Terrorism: Syria and the PFLP-GC." <http://www.meib.org/articles/0209_s1.htm> [Accessed 26 Aug. 2004]

_____. n.d. "Main Page." <<http://www.meib.org>> [Accessed 2 Sept. 2004]

Office of Counterterrorism. 12 August 2004. "Foreign Terrorist Organizations." United States Department of State. Washington, DC. <<http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/fs/2004/35167pf.htm>> [Accessed 24 Aug. 2004]

_____. 30 October 2003. Cofer Black. "Syria and Terrorism." United States Department of State. Washington, DC. <<http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/rm/2003/25778pf.htm>> [Accessed 24 Aug. 2004]

Additional Sources Consulted

Internet sites, including: Arab.com, International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Palestine Monitor, *Syria Times*, Syrian Arab News Agency, Syrian Human Rights Committee (SHRC).

The attached reproduction is a copy of an official work that is published by the Government of Canada. The reproduction has not been produced in affiliation with, or with the endorsement of the Government of Canada.