

## Meanwhile, in Lebanon ...

By George E. Irani

On Christmas Eve 1995, a Lebanese editorialist wrote:

"Isn't it a symbolic scene from the peace process that Israel is withdrawing from Bethlehem and yet still maintains its troops in South Lebanon? Arafat is celebrating Christmas in Bethlehem, and Lebanon, which has paid the price of war, is now threatened with paying the bill of peace."

The people of Lebanon are fearful that the Land of Cedars will once again become a bargaining chip in the ongoing peace negotiations between Syria and Israel.

Throughout 1995, South Lebanon was a constant site of warfare and suffering for the Lebanese living in that oppressed part of the country, the forgotten, perhaps final battleground in the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Not a day goes by without its toll of innocent civilians and properties.

Since the beginning of this century, Zionist and later Israeli leaders have coveted South Lebanon, an area rich in water resources vital for the survival of Israeli settlements.<sup>1</sup> The now famous diary entry of former Israeli Prime Minister Moshe Sharett spelled out the strategy. Writing on May 16, 1955, he quotes Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan:

"The only thing that is necessary [in Lebanon] is to find an officer, even just a Major. We should either win his heart or buy him with money, to make him agree to declare himself the savior of the Maronite population. Then the Israeli army will enter Lebanon, will occupy the necessary territory, and will create a Christian regime which will ally itself with Israel. The territory from the Litani [River] southward will be totally annexed to Israel and everything will be all right."<sup>2</sup>

—Continued on Page 4

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*Lebanon is yet to recover its full sovereignty. Part of southern Lebanon still bleeds under Israel's military occupation. The rest of the country, its democracy in abeyance, cowers under a Syrian protectorate. And 450,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, most of them clustered in 12 camps, find their situation the most merciless of all.*

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## About This Issue

The target was a school bus. Twenty-five children, returning from school, with flowers. It was Mother's Day 1994. Had the explosion occurred in Israel, it would have made news. As it was, it happened in South Lebanon.

The shelling, and bombing, and occupation of Lebanon continue daily. At times the Israeli actions are reported in a brief item on an inside page of our newspapers. With the focus now on Gaza and the West Bank, the half million or so Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have become the butt end of the "peace process." The world forgets, if indeed it ever grasped, that Israel has invaded a sovereign country. Its "security zone" is a euphemism for territorial rape. U.N. resolutions have mandated immediate withdrawal. But U.N. resolutions don't fare much better than targeted school buses.

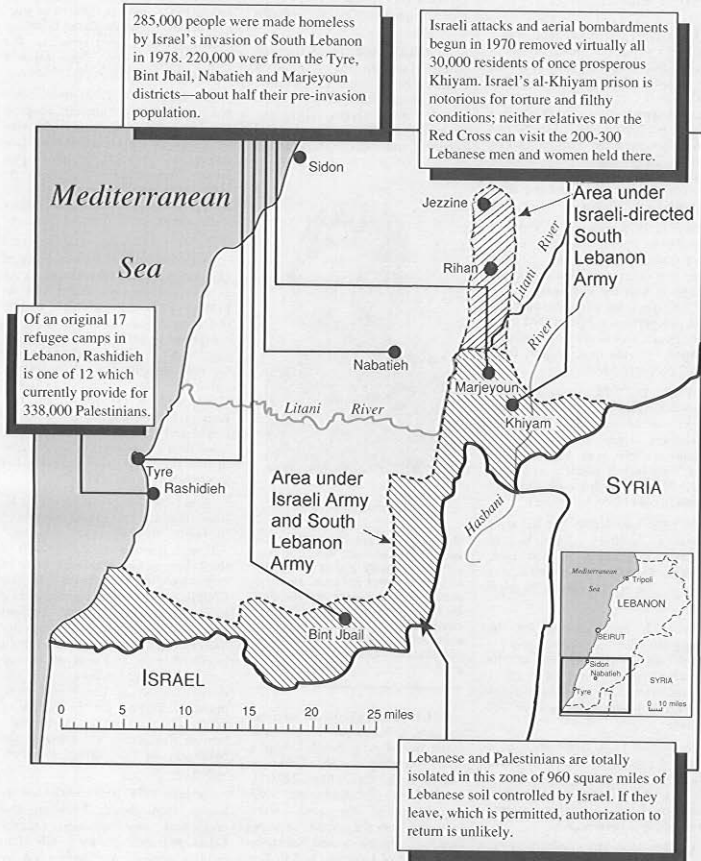
Our feature writer, George Irani, a political science teacher at the Lebanese American University in Beirut, writes first-hand of Lebanon's unrelenting tragedy. With his wife Laurie, he is completing a book on the lessons to be learned from Lebanon. Here he writes of its lacerations.

For ongoing reports on the situation of the Palestinians in Lebanon, readers may contact Maha Ayoub. Maha has spent nearly three years in the refugee camps and has returned to help organize a committee of individuals interested in the Palestinian refugee issue. In May 1996, the Multilateral Committee on Refugees formed after the Madrid Conference will meet to decide the fate of Palestinian refugees. The committee's goal is to educate, pressure and lobby relevant individuals and organizations for the protection of the social and civil rights of the refugees. Maha can be reached in Washington, D.C., at 202-319-0757.

Page 14 of this issue offers books and videos on Lebanon. (The school bus attack, by the way, was recorded by a British film crew and is included in the documentary video, "Hostage of Time.") Other special offerings are found on page 15, including "Hanan Ashrawi: A Woman of Her Time," a new video by the British documentary film maker, Mai Masri. Typical of Dr. Ashrawi, she uses this opportunity to speak not so much about herself as about her people. The video shows Dr. Ashrawi as she tries unsuccessfully to get an elderly West Bank couple past the blockade of Jerusalem to the only hospital that can care for them; provides gripping footage of a Palestinian mother, father and children being dragged from their residence and forced to watch a bulldozer demolish their ancestral home to make room for yet more illegal settlements around Jerusalem; and records the daily violations of human and civic rights committed not only by the Israelis but now, alas, by the Palestine Authority.

John F. Mahoney, Executive Director

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(Continued from Page 1)

Until 1967, South Lebanon was a quiet area populated mostly by Shiite farmers and rural Druze and Christian communities. Following the June 1967 Arab-Israeli war, the situation changed dramatically. The Palestinian resistance adopted South Lebanon as a base for guerrilla actions against Israel. Israel reacted by making punitive raids, mainly against South Lebanon, repeatedly bombing over 150 towns and villages.

In May 1970, following a series of Palestinian operations, the Israeli army invaded Lebanon for the first time. For many southern towns and villages it was the beginning of the end. Khiyam, for example, once the most prosperous and populated town in the South, would see its population ravaged over the next decade, from 30,000 people to 32.<sup>3</sup>

When, in 1978, Israel finally handed Khiyam over to its Lebanese quisling, Major Haddad, its inhabitants were herded into a mosque. "We sank to Haddad's level," an Israeli military specialist said. "I watched his men shoot 70 people in cold blood in Khiyam."<sup>4</sup>

In 1978, Israel also handed over Khiyam's military barracks to Haddad's militiamen, who, in turn, redesigned it into a grotesque horror factory. [See separate article on pages 10-11 - Ed.]

In 1972, in retaliation for the Palestinian Black September group's assault on Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympic games, in which 11 athletes were killed, Israel again bombed Lebanon, killing over 400 civilians.

In August 1974, Israel declared a policy of preemptive raids that was officially endorsed by the Israeli cabinet in 1979. Attacks on Palestinian bases in border villages became almost daily occurrences.

In 1975, with the outbreak of the

Lebanese civil war, Israel kept up its military operations mostly in South Lebanon.

In March 1978, Israel invaded South Lebanon to "liquidate terrorist bases along the border." The human consequences of this invasion were tragic. Lebanese authorities estimated that total Lebanese and Palestinian casualties



GEORGE E. IRANI

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were 1,168 dead, almost half of them civilians. Some 285,000 people were made homeless in South Lebanon and, according to the Lebanese Higher Relief Committee, 220,000, or half of the estimated 1977 population of the area, were Lebanese from the districts of Tyre, Bint Jbail, Marjeyoun and Nabatieh. Thousands of Lebanese had to flee

their homes in the South and seek refuge in the poorest suburbs of war-torn Beirut. These displaced Lebanese became willing volunteers in the Palestine Liberation Organization's war against Israel in South Lebanon.

On March 19, 1978, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 425, a draft of which was submitted by the United States. [See text on page 12 - Ed.] It called upon Israel "immediately to cease its military action against Lebanese territorial integrity and withdraw forthwith its forces from all Lebanese territory."

A United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) was created to act as a buffer between Israel and its proxies and the guerrilla groups operating in South Lebanon. UNIFIL, comprised of 5,000 soldiers, was also supposed to help the Lebanese Government extend and strengthen its authority in South Lebanon. (Composed of troops from Fiji, Finland, France, Ghana, Ireland, Italy, Nepal and Poland, UNIFIL has lost more than 200 soldiers in its 17 years of operation, the Irish suffering the most with 36 soldiers killed.)

Israel has long considered U.N. Resolution 425 inadequate because of its failure to condemn "terrorism." Although it has been of little help to the Lebanese Government's hope to reassert control over South Lebanon, UNIFIL has played an important role in providing social and medical services to the people there who suffer daily under Israeli aerial and field bombardments and acts of harassment. UNIFIL continues as a symbolic demonstration of the world community's support for the people of South Lebanon, and the implementation of Resolution 425 remains the battle cry of the current Lebanese Government.

In June 1978, Israel withdrew its troops from South Lebanon and created a new situation on the Lebanese-Israeli border. Christian militias, trained and supported by

Israel, were established to act as "guardians" of the so-called "security zone," a strip of Lebanon's border 8 to 16 miles wide and 900 to 960 square miles in area running from the Lebanese coast in the west to the town of Marjeyoun in the east. Israel's proxy Lebanese army, known as the South Lebanon Army (SLA), is led today by a renegade Lebanese army officer, Major Antoine Lahd.

In 1982, the Israeli Government of Menachem Begin launched a large military offensive against Lebanon. Its goals were to destroy the P.L.O.'s military infrastructure, weaken Syria's presence, and install a friendly Christian Maronite leadership that would conclude a peace treaty with the Jewish state.

Operation "Peace for Galilee" turned out to be a military disaster. Israel lost over 600 soldiers and experienced its first bout of negative public relations. More than 17,000 Lebanese civilians were killed and over 30,000 wounded.<sup>3</sup>

The invasion, which reached the capital of Beirut, awakened the Shiite "genie" in South Lebanon. Angered by the presumptuous behavior of Palestinian guerrillas, Shiites saw the invasion as a golden opportunity to rid the south of the P.L.O. and were potential friends of Israel. But the Israeli army misread the Shiites' feelings and adopted a policy of abuse against them. The Israeli army and its Lebanese proxies have paid a heavy price for this mistake.

In 1985, Israel withdrew its troops from most of the South, maintaining control of the "security zone" through its SLA surrogate.

For the past ten years Israel has continually bombarded communities of South Lebanon both from the air and from artillery bases. Systematically, it has raided villages in search of "suspects," abducted Lebanese religious and political leaders opposed to Israel's occupation

(Continued on page 6)



UNRWA PHOTO BY G. NEHMEH

## Time and Time Again

Israel's 1982 invasion wreaked death and destruction on southern Lebanon and into Beirut. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) distributed the photograph above with a caption reading: "Bulldozers have moved into Ein el Hilweh camp near Sidon on 4 October 1982, and the acres of rubble, where the refugees' homes stood until the summer of 1982, are nearly cleared for the slow process of re-establishing shattered lives. In the meantime there are still a few things worth salvaging—a few sticks of firewood, an oil bottle, a skein of wire, a bit of rag. At times like these when home has become a crude tin lean-to shed or a shattered shop with no front, every little thing helps." Below: Damage inflicted by Israel bombardments at Ein el-Hilweh camp eight years earlier, 16 May 1974.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ARAB INFORMATION CENTER

(Continued from page 5)

of Lebanese soil, and directed arrest campaigns against wide sectors of the local population.

Inside the occupied zone Israel imposes strict curfews, closes roads connecting the occupied zone to the rest of the country, destroys orchards and crops, jails suspects without trial, and forces Lebanese civilians to serve as "human shields" for crossing dangerous areas.

## The Human Cost of Israel's Occupation:

### The Lebanese

Israel's official policy in Occupied Lebanon (the "security zone") and the villages bordering that area has been a repressive mixture of forced migration, economic pressure and psychological warfare.

Israel expresses its policy there with tactics intended to diminish the population's means of subsistence, create hostility among the various Lebanese communities in the area and dissent among individuals, and alienate citizens from their government.

In the occupied zone, Israel and the SLA impose total isolation upon the local population — opening the gates to Lebanese who want to leave, but barring entry to those who wish to enter, with the exception of the rare few who can obtain a permit from Israeli intelligence and the SLA.

According to Hassan

Abdallah of the Lebanese daily *As-Safir*, Israel has also applied a policy of "ethnic cleansing." This is in keeping with Israel's original aim of driving a wedge between Lebanon's Muslim and Christian communities.

In consolidating its occupation in southern Lebanon, Israel made sure that no single confessional group comprised a majority of the population. It did this through population transfers and forced sectarian segregation.

One example is the corridor of towns and villages from Jezzine, which is largely Christian, south toward Marjeyoun, a mixed Muslim and Christian city. Midway in the

corridor is Rihan, once a Shiite Muslim town, which Israel emptied of its residents, replacing them with Christians from ez Zahrani and the Iqlim al-Tuffah area. [See map on page 3. — Ed.]

Since 1985 many Christian Lebanese have moved into the security zone itself, having bought into Israel's propaganda that they would be safer under Israeli military control than in a predominantly Muslim region. Israel welcomes these Christians as a more compliant population and readily uses them to divide and conquer the Maronites, Shiites, Sunnis and Druze within the zone.

The cruel result of this policy has been the massive exodus of Lebanese — Christians and Muslims — from their ancestral homes.

Every young Lebanese living in the occupied zone is forced to serve in the SLA. This Israeli-sponsored army of some 5,000 troops is paid 15 to 20 million U.S. dollars annually by Israel.<sup>7</sup>

With these massive cash infusions, the SLA can behave like a government. Given the total absence of Lebanese authorities, the SLA is providing basic services and has taken control of government offices such as educational and health institutions, even imposing its own taxes and fees.

SLA-issued car plates and driving licenses now contain information on the civil status of the driver of the vehicle, thereby enabling the militias to curtail the movements of the inhabitants from one area to another.

Since 1949 until now, the Israeli army has followed a policy of seizing land inside Lebanon for such purposes



UNRWA PHOTO

Dry food rations are provided by UNRWA to all registered refugees. Because this diet is not sufficient for growing children, UNRWA serves nutritionally balanced hot meals to youngsters such as these in Lebanon's Debayeh camp.

as roads, observation posts and canals for water transport. Official Lebanese reports mention that more than 2,500 acres have been confiscated.<sup>4</sup>

Israel also covets the water from South Lebanon's main rivers, the Litani and the Hasbani.

In 1992, Fida Nasrallah, a Lebanese water expert, wrote that, "Israel will not relinquish its self-proclaimed security zone in South Lebanon without assurances that it will receive its share of the Litani River."<sup>5</sup> The Lebanese Government's position is that Lebanon's water resources are barely enough to satisfy the country's own needs. The Litani River runs entirely within Lebanon and, as such, Israel has no riparian rights to its usage. [See map on page 3. - Ed.]

Israel's reach into the villages bordering the zone it occupies has wrought destruction, death and population displacement. In 1994, *As-Safir* surveyed conditions in this area. The *mukhtar* (mayor) of Majdil Silm village described the bombings that burned 20 olive groves and destroyed tobacco and other crops. He deplored the inaction from the Lebanese Government, which no longer enjoys the trust and respect of its citizens.

"The support we get isn't worth the fingernail of a wounded citizen," he asserted. "It has been [since 1993 that] we saw an official. God forgive them! No parliamentarian, no religious leader came to visit. We hear them pontificating on their tribunes. And here we are eating our sour grapes."<sup>11</sup>

The mayor of Braasheet village told the *As-Safir* reporter:

"Peace will come. We are longing for peace, but let everyone know that we will not buy from the Israelis even a cup of tea! What they did to us is unforgettable. The sea will not cancel the damage they left in our streets."<sup>11</sup>

Thirty residents of Braasheet have died as the result of Israeli actions and more than 8,000 left for safer cities

such as Sidon and Tyre.

In the village of Yaater (160 dead), a student told *As-Safir* that he had come to hate Israel: "Not a week goes by without having Israel share with us our books and writing pads. Our classrooms shake each time a bombing takes place. If we hear [Israeli] planes roaring above us, this means that we have to escape or hide."<sup>12</sup>

Anger at the Lebanese Government is deep and pervasive in the area. In Jbaa, few houses remain. A 50-year old resident said Jbaa would be an ideal location to produce a dramatic movie, which should be premiered at the presidential palace in Baabda, home of Lebanon's prime minister and speaker of the parliament.

"Aren't they ashamed," he charged, "to build castles and fancy homes there [in Beirut] while their compatriots in this region lose their lives and properties?"<sup>13</sup>

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### The Human Cost of Israel's Occupation:

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## The Palestinians

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As for the nearly half a million Palestinians in Lebanon, their situation has never been more wretched. The Oslo Agreement has placed them in a no-man's land. Lebanese across the political and sectarian spectrum oppose any aid that might foster their permanent "implantation" in Lebanon. Israel adamantly opposes repatriation of the refugees to their areas of origin in the Galilee and coastal cities.

Countries abroad are shutting their doors as well. Germany, Denmark and Sweden have stopped providing asylum, leaving only Canada, which restricts entry to



### No Home a Haven

**Mother and son seek safety during Israeli bombardment of South Lebanon.**

Palestinians with professional qualifications or large bank accounts. As Dr. Rosemary Sayigh, a sociologist affiliated with the American University of Beirut, concludes:

"This underlies the point that it is precisely those refugees whom Lebanon would most like to get rid of — the poor, the underqualified — who are least able to emigrate. Without an exit, state policies appear aimed less at increasing emigration than at creating despair and social breakdown in the camps, perhaps to justify their demolition as "breeding grounds of criminality."<sup>14</sup>

Indeed, evictions in the 12 remaining camps continue discreetly, building by building. Evictees are given \$5,000 in indemnity, a sum barely enough for a place in the grim shanty towns that are cropping up outside the camps. According to Sayigh, the continued refusal of the Lebanese Government to extend civic rights to Palestinians, particularly

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

work rights, simply maximizes their poverty. In 1995, for example, 20 Palestinian doctors went on trial for practicing their profession, which the government has limited to Lebanese syndicate members.

Meanwhile, the situation in the camps continues to deteriorate. Lebanese authorities have vetoed the reconstruction of camps destroyed by war, as well as the establishment of new camps and any UNRWA-funded reconstruction inside existing camps. Decline in U.N. funding and international non-governmental aid has paralleled the phasing out of the P.L.O. as provider of jobs, pensions, scholarships and, most critically, medical services. The absence of reliable socio-economic data has prevented most other donors from stepping in. There is still no health profile of the refugee population despite the health care crisis which UNRWA officials themselves acknowledge.<sup>15</sup>

The victims of the '48 and '67 wars of expulsion once again find themselves victims — this time of a peace process. And again hardly anyone notices.

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## The Lebanese Resistance

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Immediately following the 1982 Israeli invasion, the Lebanese resistance movement sprang into action. This resistance is spearheaded by the "Islamic Resistance," the armed wing of Hizballah (the Party of God), a movement which receives military and economic support from Iran. Hizballah's guerrilla attacks forced Israel to withdraw its troops from Lebanon in 1985. The Islamic Resistance has been a source of

constant harassment against the Israeli occupation ever since.

In July 1993, Israel launched operation "Settling of Accounts" (or the "Seven Day War") in South Lebanon to flush out Hizballah guerrillas who had carried out Katyusha rocket attacks on northern Israel. Israel had four objectives in mind:

(1) to force the Lebanese Government to enter into direct confrontation with the Lebanese resistance in order to guarantee "security" on Israel's northern border; (2) to pressure Lebanon to sign a separate peace deal with Israel, similar to the May 17, 1983 agreement between Israel and Lebanon (which was canceled a year later by the Lebanese Government as a result of Syrian pressure); (3) to demonstrate to the Lebanese Government that its insistence on respecting the 1949 Armistice Agreement [between Lebanon and Israel] and the strict implementation of U.N. Resolution 425 were superfluous; and (4) to destabilize the civil peace in Lebanon by systematically destroying homes and property, thereby forcing mass movements of the population.

Following a seven-day onslaught, U.S. and Syrian intermediaries worked out an unwritten accord between Israel and Hizballah. The Israelis agreed not to bomb Lebanese villages if Hizballah agreed to halt rocket attacks against Israel. This accord has since been violated by both sides several times.

The Israeli government has acknowledged in many of its statements that Hizballah's resistance has become a constant and painful feature of the military realities of South Lebanon. During 1995 the resistance conducted more than 876 operations against the Israel Defense Forces and the South Lebanon Army, killing 24 Israeli soldiers and 29 SLA men.<sup>16</sup>

In addition to Hizballah guerrillas, other Lebanese and Palestinian groups opposed to the peace process have waged warfare in South Lebanon. These include the Lebanese communists, the Shiite Amal group, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine—General Command. Such resistance has become an important lever for the Lebanese and Syrian governments to use in negotiations with Israel.

Moreover, since 1982, Iran has become a very important player in South Lebanon's politics. The United States acknowledged this reality last October following a series of confrontations in South Lebanon. The State Department issued a statement pressing Syria to "use its influence" on Hizballah fighters. "Syria does not control the Hizballah," a State Department spokesperson stated, "but clearly has the capability to influence." Iranian-Syrian relations are bound to be one of the key elements in negotiations between Israel, the United States and Syria.

In an interview conducted on December 19, 1995, a reliable Hizballah source told this writer that resistance was one of the main priorities of his group: "We consider resistance to be our principal instrument because experience has taught us that with an enemy like Israel, resistance is the best choice."

Hizballah's second priority is "to fight the state of economic deprivation of our people regardless of their confessional identity. We believe that there are regions in Lebanon that are deprived not only because of their geographical location but because of successive Lebanese Government policies." Hizballah has succeeded in making the issue of South Lebanon a national and governmental concern.

On March 15, 1995, the Lebanese government proclaimed a "Day of Solidarity with the South and the Western Bekaa" (both under Israeli occupation). Lebanon's President Elias Hrawi addressed the Lebanese



Parliament and stressed four policy principles for the South: (1) refusal to relinquish one inch of Lebanese soil; (2) refusal to accept the constant Israeli oppression and harassment against people and property; (3) consolidation of the government's authority; and (4) close coordination with Syria in future peace talks.

Commenting on the current talks between Syria and Israel and the prospects of peace, the Hizballah source declared that "what is taking place through the negotiations between Israel and the Arab confrontation states (Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon) is based on principles that give recognition and legitimacy to the occupier [Israel]. This is what we cannot accept. The United States has applied pressures and succeeded in achieving Israeli desires, which are to split the Arabs and conclude separate peace deals."

Regarding the role of the Lebanese resistance following a peace treaty, the Hizballah spokesman told me, "The resistance will keep for itself the right to answer this issue at the appropriate time. We consider that one of the leverages that the resistance has is not to reveal its real intentions. ... Let the enemy withdraw [from South Lebanon], and then we will discuss."

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## The United States and Lebanon

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Since the beginning of the Lebanese civil war in 1975, U.S. Government attitudes were and still are guided by a policy of "benign neglect" towards



PHOTO COURTESY OF SAVE LEBANON

### Jibchit, near Nabatieh, after Israeli air attack in March, 1985

Lebanon. In the minds of many Americans, Lebanon evokes bad memories of hostage-taking, wanton terrorism, and the death of more than 240 Marines in 1983.

The Lebanese, of whom the majority are innocents and who have a high degree of admiration for anything American (there are more than one million U.S. citizens of Lebanese ancestry), feel that their country has been unjustifiably forced to pay for actions over which they had no control. Although taking of innocent U.S. citizens as hostages was certainly a crime, the entire country of Lebanon has been a hostage to local, regional, and global politics for the last 20 years.

A sour issue in U.S.-Lebanese relations today is the ban on travel to Lebanon for holders of U.S. passports. This ban has been in effect since 1985 when a TWA plane was hijacked at Beirut airport and a U.S. Marine was savagely killed. Despite the ban, more than 40,000

holders of U.S. passports have visited Lebanon in the last two years. More recently, State Department officials have been discussing the possibility of easing the ban for humanitarian reasons.

In a meeting on November 9, 1995 at the White House, the American Task Force for Lebanon (ATFL), a Lebanese-American lobbying group in Washington D.C., raised the travel ban issue with President Clinton and Vice President Gore.

ATFL chairman Tom Nassif explained that "the travel advisories to Algeria and Bosnia indicated that not only should Americans not go there, but that in Algeria, they should only go with armed guards and not use public transportation. In Bosnia, Americans were subject to being taken hostage, according to the State Department advisory, yet it was legal for Americans to go there and illegal to travel to Lebanon."

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

Nassif thus asked the question, "What facts exist in Lebanon that rival those in Bosnia and Algeria?" The President laughed and then looked at the Vice President and said, "Why are we still banning travel to Lebanon?" Vice President Gore replied that he thought it was because of the hostage-taking. Nassif pointed out that there had been no hostages taken in this decade, and that, if the travel ban had not been in effect when the President and Vice President took office, it would not be in effect today.<sup>17</sup>

A very important factor to keep in mind regarding official U.S. policy towards Lebanon is the role and activity of Hizballah in Lebanon. State Department officials fear that if the travel ban were to be lifted and U.S. citizens were to be taken as hostages, the U.S. Government would be accused of recklessness towards its citizens.

When I conducted a wide-ranging interview with Faris Boueiz, the Foreign Minister of Lebanon, on December 12, he addressed Lebanon's official perspective regarding the travel ban, the peace process, and the situation in the South.

Regarding the travel ban, Boueiz stated that the security situation in Lebanon in the last five years has proven to be one of the best in the world. "If there is any danger facing the safety of a U.S. Secretary of State, this danger exists in more than 50 percent of the countries of the world. We cannot believe that the justification is rational and real." The U.S. also has asserted that Christopher does not visit Lebanon lest he leave the impression that the United States was trying to create a wedge between Lebanon and Syria. Boueiz discounted this notion: "We have a joint stand with Syria and no one can separate or force us to deviate from this joint stand."

Boueiz also challenged the prevailing U.S. perception of Lebanon's role as marginal. "We modestly believe that although Lebanon is sometimes weak in waging war in the Middle East, in the field of cultural, economic, and human relations, Lebanon has a power that exceeds its small geographical size. We believe that if there is peace [in the Middle East] the military challenge will shift to an economic, social, and cultural

challenge. It is in this framework that Lebanon will prove to be one of the strongest countries in the region."

Boueiz said that this mistaken U.S. assessment of Lebanon's role could hurt American economic interests. "Lebanon is in the process of rebuilding and the absence of U.S. firms reflects badly on their interests. We have now concluded strategic contracts with many foreign companies because Lebanon will need to buy the material, spare parts, and technical supervision for years to come. This is why I believe that the U.S. Administration, for reasons unknown to me, has committed a mistake and this mistake will harm U.S. interests."

The Foreign Minister then introduced a political interpretation to explain the travel ban. "If the ban is an attempt to apply pressure on Lebanon so that it speeds its negotiations with Israel, I believe that the U.S. realizes that Lebanon has priorities. Lebanon needs to hear comforting words regarding Israel's readiness to fully withdraw its troops from Lebanese territory in order to enable the government to extend its sovereignty throughout the entire country."

## The Torture Factory of Al-Khiyam

The al-Khiyam concentration camp is located within the Israeli-occupied area of Lebanon, less than two miles from the Israeli border. A May 1992 report by Amnesty International counted more than 200 Lebanese detainees. More recent reports from informed Lebanese sources speak of 300, including 20 women.

The camp reports organizationally to Israel's civil administration in the occupied area, but a high officer in Israeli Army intelligence supervises operations. Day-to-day duties are carried out by South Lebanon Army militiamen under Major Antoine Lahd.

Lebanese Government reports indicate that the Israel Defense Forces have arrested citizens living in the occupied areas, mostly from targeted professional and

social groups, and have transferred the prisoners to Israel itself or to al-Khiyam for detention and interrogation.

Guards are from the SLA. Two forms of torture are applied—physical and psychological. Prisoners are given electric shocks, beaten with electric wires, hung from an electric pole, and immersed in water. Psychological torture takes various forms. Detainees' relatives are punished. Prisoners are shackled and their heads hooded to produce disorientation. They are deprived of food, sleep and the use of restrooms.

According to a report published by the Lebanese Ministry of Information, conditions inside al-Khiyam recall those of Nazi concentration camps. Former

"By this we mean that Lebanon is not ready to engage in negotiations leading to only partial withdrawal. Lebanon is not ready to negotiate its internationally-recognized boundaries with Israel. Lebanon is not ready to accept that the South be under the supervision of an authority other than the [Lebanese] Government. By this I mean that Israel may intend to place South Lebanon under the control of the SLA militias. [Lebanon refuses] attempts to include the SLA as a regiment in the Lebanese Army in order to impose it as a major element of control in the South. [We also refuse] Israeli requests to have early warning stations or any other limits to Lebanese sovereignty."

In response to a question related to U.S. Government perceptions that Hizballah resistance in South Lebanon is viewed as terrorism, Boueiz made the following comments:

"First of all, as long as our land is occupied and as long as our army is not capable of forcing Israel out of our land, and as long as the United Nations is not capable of getting its resolutions implemented, any people who have not got the necessary official means have the right to resist the

occupier." Boueiz went on to explain that not all resistance movements in the world are directly linked to governments. For instance, the French resistance movement in World War II was created in Britain, its weapons were British, and its financing and logistical support came from various allied powers.

"To force the Lebanese Government to confront the resistance now, absent any Israeli promise of withdrawal, makes the Lebanese Government look like traitors and collaborators with the occupier," Boueiz said. The day that the Lebanese Government obtains Israeli guarantees for withdrawal and the resistance refuses to give up its weapons, "then it [the resistance] will be considered as a major obstacle to liberation."

He then spoke to the issue of Lebanon's participation in the peace process. He asserted that, until the peace conference in Madrid, the U.S. Administration had stressed Lebanon's right to invoke U.N. Resolution 425 and to call for its implementation. In its letter inviting Lebanon to attend the Madrid conference, the Bush Administration did not mention 425. Boueiz said

that this indicated that the U.S. had backtracked on its support for implementing 425. On this basis, Lebanon initially turned down the invitation, insisting that Lebanon was directly concerned with Resolution 425.

Also, in solidarity with the Arab cause, Lebanon voiced concern over U.N. Resolutions 242 and 338. Following negotiations with the Bush Administration and more specifically with Secretary of State James Baker, Lebanon received a letter guaranteeing that, in addition to 242 and 338, Lebanon was also invited to discuss the implementation of 425 with Israel.

"Our participation in Madrid was thus based on that understanding and without it we would not have gone to Madrid. As far as we are concerned, this is very important. When U.N. Resolution 242 was adopted [1967] there was no Israeli occupation in South Lebanon. This is why it was impossible for Lebanon to join the peace process. Had Lebanon gone to Madrid to discuss exclusively U.N. 425, no doubt Lebanon would have regained its land but would have lost its overall influence in the Arab world.

*(Continued on page 12)*

detainees report that the smallest infraction invites brutal treatment, including being beaten in the camp's yard in front of other prisoners.

There are no toilets for prisoners in their cells. They are given small cloth-covered containers and ordered never to replace the covers. Those who violate the orders have the contents dropped on their heads. Prisoners are allowed to bathe only once a week with three minutes of water. Those who exceed the allotted time are forced to crawl naked in the central yard.

Food and living conditions are unhealthy. Many prisoners, especially those wounded during confrontations with Israeli soldiers, have suffered permanent disabilities from lack of treatment. Visits by relatives to al-Khiyam were allowed only once a month for just five minutes, but were discontinued altogether in 1988 for reasons unknown to Amnesty International. Detainees believe that this decision is an additional

means of pressure used by Israel to achieve a prisoner exchange. International pressure gained access for the Red Cross for brief visits, but this practice, too, was halted in 1995.

Amnesty International has requested the Israeli Government and the SLA to respect the basic human rights of the men and women detained in al-Khiyam. The organization has requested an end to torture, renewed visits by the International Committee of the Red Cross and relatives, and provision of medical care. Israel also has been asked by Amnesty International to define the legal status of the detainees. Since 1978, the number of Lebanese known to be detained as hostages by the Israelis is 165. Israel also holds the bodies of 150 deceased Lebanese which it refuses to release to their families or humanitarian agencies. [Source: *Lebanese Ministry of Information. See also: "Follow-Up Committee in Support of Detainees in Israeli Prisons," As-Safir, 29 December 1995.*]

## U. N. Security Council Resolution 425

(19 March 1978)

### The Security Council:

Taking note of the letter of the Permanent Representative of Lebanon (S/12600 and S/12606) and the Permanent Representative of Israel; Having heard the statements of the permanent representatives of Lebanon and Israel;

Gravely concerned at the deterioration of the situation in the Middle East and its consequences on the maintenance of international peace; Convinced that the present situation impedes the achievement of a just peace in the Middle East;

1. Calls for strict respect for the territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon within its internationally recognized boundaries;
2. Calls upon Israel immediately to cease its military action against Lebanese territorial integrity and withdraw forthwith its forces from all Lebanese territory;
3. Decides, in light of the request of the government of Lebanon, to establish immediately under its authority a United Nations interim force for southern Lebanon for the purpose of confirming the withdrawal of the Israeli forces, restoring international peace and security and assisting the government of Lebanon in ensuring the return of its effective authority in the area, the force to be composed of personnel drawn from member states of the United Nations;
4. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the Council within twenty-four hours of the implementation of this resolution.

*(Continued from page 11)*

Lebanon is directly interested in crucial issues such as the fate of the Palestinian refugees, the status of Jerusalem, and the future economic, political, security, and development arrangements in the region."

According to Boueiz, the Bush administration had bowed to Israeli pressures and minimized the importance of 425 to Lebanon. "Following Israeli pressures, the Bush Administration believed that an unclear U.S. stand regarding 425 would be considered as a plus for Israel and send a message to Lebanon that it would not be able to regain its occupied territories unless it signs a

peace treaty with Israel. The U.S. tried to minimize and neutralize one of the cards that the Lebanese negotiator held."

Hizbullah provokes negative reactions in Western circles, but it can hardly be ignored. I sought out and interviewed a knowledgeable member of Hizbullah, beginning my questioning with: "How will you go about changing the negative image that American citizens have of Arabs in general and of Hizbullah particularly, which is considered by the U.S. Government as a group of terrorists? Americans would say that you have abducted U.S. citizens and kept them as hostages. How

can you say that you have nothing against U.S. citizens when you are accused of abducting some of them?"

He responded, "We, as Hizbullah, have nothing to do with the abduction of U.S. citizens and others in Lebanon. We have more than once stated this. We believe that there is strong Zionist propaganda which has tried to present the resistance movement spearheaded by Hizbullah as terrorism. I sometimes wonder: why wasn't [Prime Minister Yitzhak] Rabin's killer dubbed as a terrorist? Is it because he is Jewish? We are Lebanese who live on our land who carry out our struggle by killing occupying Israeli soldiers in Lebanese towns and villages. We tell the American people that the U.S. Sixth Fleet came to Lebanon in 1982-84, bombarded the southern suburbs of Beirut and destroyed countless homes in the Shuf mountains. We do not know the reason.

"Were we invading the U.S.A. to deserve this kind of treatment? Or is this a tactic used by the U.S. Administration to hijack the will of the people? The American Government has never condemned the constant Israeli aerial attacks against innocent Lebanese civilians. If a Katyusha rocket is launched against Israeli settlements in northern Israel, then we hear voices condemning our actions. Sometimes condemnations by U.S. officials are harsher than those coming out of Israel!"

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## Conclusions

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This last statement by a Hizbullah leader provides a clearer picture of the deep chasm of misperceptions and misunderstandings that obstruct a possible peace agreement between Lebanon and Israel. (And it should be pointed out that Hizbullah's denial of responsibility in abducting American and other Western citizens goes counter to Lebanese, American and

other independent readings of who was behind the wave of kidnappings.)

The U.S. Government is caught between its close friendship with Israel and its objective to achieve a comprehensive peace between Arabs and Israelis. Prior to the Israel-P.L.O. accords, the P.L.O. was isolated and attacked by the United States and Israel. P.L.O. "terrorism" was supposedly the root of all evils in the Middle East and had to be extirpated. Then, overnight, everything changed: a psychological and political breakthrough was achieved. In the case of Lebanon such a breakthrough will be harder to achieve — but not impossible.

Peace, it seems to this writer, is possible between Lebanon and Israel if:

- Israel acknowledges that it blundered badly in its policies toward Lebanon, especially its 1982 invasion, and offers an official apology.

- The Israeli Government straightforwardly declares that it will unconditionally withdraw from South Lebanon.

- The Lebanese Government pledges, possibly with Syrian support, that units of the Lebanese Army will be dispatched to the southern borders to maintain peace and quiet.

- The United States Government, in the framework of a search for common

ground, alters its approach towards Syria, Iran, and Hizballah.

Knowing how difficult and idealistic this approach initially appears, there cannot be, in this writer's opinion, any other solution.

In an era when acknowledgment, forgiveness and reconciliation have become high on the world's agenda (note South Africa, Northern Ireland, Central Europe and Latin America), it is time to begin healing the wounds of all the parties involved in the Lebanese, Syrian and Israeli triangle. That healing must be helped along by Lebanon's religious leaders.

In November 1995, a Synod for Lebanon was convened at the Vatican by Pope John Paul II, the first time in the history of the Catholic Church that such a synod has been called to discuss a single country. Its aims were to better integrate Catholics into Lebanon's postwar socio-political structure and to use Lebanon as a successful model for Christian-Muslim dialogue in the region. But the different reactions to the final call of the synod seemed only to underscore how difficult the road to healing and social integration really is.

Should these difficulties prove intractable, surely more tragedy will yet befall the children of Abraham in the Land of Cedars. ■

## Endnotes

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9. Fida Nasrallah, "The Questions of South Lebanon," Oxford: Centre for Lebanese Studies, May 1992, p. 9.

10. Hassan Abdallah in *As-Safir*, 20-22 November, 1994.

11. *ibid.*

12. *ibid.*

13. *ibid.*

14. Rosemary Sayigh, "Palestinians in Lebanon: Waiting," *Najda Newsletter*, Summer 1995.

15. *ibid.*

16. "Monday Morning," 6 November 1995.

17. This exchange was quoted literally because of its significance. Excerpts from "Notes of Meetings Held by Thomas Nassif, Nijad Fares, and George Cody on Thursday, November 9, 1995."

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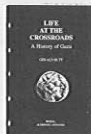
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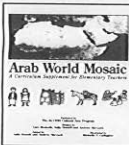
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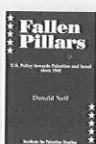
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