

الحريري تشاور مع اجميل و...
 عين الرمانة: حادث أم رسائل متعمدة
 لبنان يدحض الشائعات عن جسيات عربية

بعد جريمة عين الرمانة: عودة إلى «زينة الرجا»
 من «الحادث الفردي» إلى «تهديد السلم الأهلي»
 تأملات في مقتل جورج أبو ماضي وفي مروياته

memory at work [2]



تحت
 بوسطة عين الرمانة
 لم تكن بداية الحرب

عين الرمانة
 وذراجات وذكريات طائفية

Random Acts of Violence vs. Civil Peace
 Considerations and Narratives
 on the Killing of G. Abou Madi

A review by

Hassan Abbas

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 أورد الموقع الإلكتروني لـ «القوات» اللبنانية أن عضو كتلة «القوات» وقع في عين الرمانة، وخصوصاً أن «القوات» لا تنظر إلى هذا الاشكال

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 أصبحت عكس السير. لكن هناك فريق في لبنان يجب أن يسير عكس السير. يعتبر نفسه فوق القانون. ويتمنى أن تعود وراء ليعيش في المتاريس. لأنه يستمتع بمنظر خط

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Documentation & Research

memory at work

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Hassan Abbas
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UMAM DOCUMENTATION & RESEARCH, 2010
Tel.: 01/553604 | P.O.Box: 11-5222 Beirut Lebanon
www.umam-dr.org | info@umam-dr.org

memory at work is a UMAM D&R publication project that deals generally with Lebanon's history but focuses particularly on its war-loaded memory.

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English text edited by John McLean, BA (Psych.), MMAS, MFA.



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beziehungen e.V.

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Ain ar-Rummaneh: déjà vu all over again

Introduction

On the night of October 6, 2009, a confrontation took place in Ain ar-Rummaneh that killed one person, Georges abou Madi, and injured several others. Although it was not the first such incident to occur in this extremely symbolic quarter of Beirut's suburbs, it begs closer examination.⁽¹⁾ This additional scrutiny is warranted since, aside from the toll exacted by the fight that October evening, it also generated significant political tension which was fanned by media coverage and the public debates that ensued, all of which exaggerated the original scope of the event. Ultimately, this gave the incident a public "shelf life" that far outstripped anyone's wildest predictions. As eventually became obvious, the murder that night had the potential to destabilize the tenuous peace not only in the immediate area, but also quite possibly throughout Lebanon. Taking that focus and as part of its organizational predilection for staying abreast of Lebanon's current tensions by examining the country's war-loaded memory, UMAM Documentation and Research (D&R) launched a research

project under the general heading *Random Acts of Violence vs. Civil Peace*. This publication, which addresses the initial aftermath and responses to the Ain ar-Rummaneh incident, is based largely on an examination of assessments and narratives of the event by media and political representatives. The Ain ar-Rummaneh incident was eventually and consensually described as being *hadeth fardi*; in English, a condition that describes and codifies incidents or "random events" vis-à-vis the unique Lebanese experience.

Revised here into a single thesis, the basis for the assessment that follows is an examination into the way five of Lebanon's daily newspapers reported the random event which occurred that fateful night. The approach we took to selecting the newspapers to be surveyed was anything but random. For example, *An-Nahar* and *As-Safir* are older, more "classical" newspapers that typically represent Lebanon's pro- and anti-Western philosophies (nowadays embodied respectively by the March 14 and March 8 camps). Among the next two periodicals, *Al-Mustaqbal* serves as the mouthpiece for the Hariri establishment

(1) PLO guerrillas riding in a car fired at a church in the Beirut suburb of Ain ar-Rummaneh on 13 April 1975. The incident killed four people, including two Phalangists, and escalated when a bus filled with Palestinians was ambushed by Phalange gunmen. The Ain ar-Rummaneh bus attack marked the official beginning of the Lebanese Civil War.

while *Ad-Diyar* is the “Lebanese Sun.” The last media outlet we considered, *Al-Akhbar*, is indeed unique among its peers. Although it advances a patently pro-Hezbollah perspective, the newspaper consistently incorporates approaches to reportage that are at once effective and remarkably daring. In our assessment of the Ain ar-Rummaneh coverage published by these newspapers, we evaluated fundamental elements of the stories they carried. These included how the incident was reported, how the perpetrators were described, how the victim was described and the types of analyses the reporters employed. The tone these publications advanced ranged from “an incident caused by a few bastards” to conspiracy theories conceived in order to gain leverage over one political issue or another. In addition, we sampled political reactions to the Ain ar-Rummaneh incident by noting the “reminiscences” that punctuated statements released about the event as well as public response to the situation relative to its management by the security bodies, particularly the Lebanese Armed Forces. The six annexes that follow the text amplify the findings contained in this report and add further insight into the mind-sets at work within Lebanon that seek to “spin” the story in favor of the source involved. In brief, the annexes convey:

- 1) Audiovisual coverage of the incident including excerpts of news bulletins published on YouTube.
- 2) An analysis of the frequency and volume of comments published about the incident by the press outlets during its 10-day shelf life.
- 3) Maps that portray Ain ar-Rummaneh relative to its rival neighborhood, Shiyyah.
- 4) A list of the highest profile incidents that have taken place along the Shiyyah-Ain ar-Rummaneh fault line since 2000.
- 5) Reproductions of the indictments released by judicial authorities.
- 6) Excerpts from the minutes of the workshop hosted by UMAM D&R on January 29, 2011 during which the draft report was discussed with civil society activists, judicial representatives and members of the press.

Diary of a Random Event

Hardly a day passes that a *hadeth fardi* (random event) fails to occur somewhere in Lebanon, regardless of geographic location or political influence. In the Lebanese vernacular, these disruptive skirmishes, referred to often as anomalies or random events, are violent episodes, the responsibility for, or consequences and repercussions of which are restricted to the individuals involved. These *hawadeth fardiyya* (random events) typically do not involve the confession, party or regional group with which the participants are affiliated, regardless of whether the connection exists fortuitously by birth or through free will. Further, while examples of such random events may vary according to connotation and impact, they remain intrinsically arbitrary and unpredictable. Hence, the emblematic and nearly immediate categorization of these episodes as random events is intended to counter any assertion that they are connected to a wider framework, such as a showdown between the myriad, blood-stained Lebanese groups. Regardless of the antecedents or background of these events, and despite the number of resultant casualties or apparent degree of martial organization involved (e.g., the types of weapons used, unit structure, individuals’ willingness to comply with orders, etc.), these events are characterized uniformly as random. Yet the converse is sometimes true as well, at least in theory: such episodes need not be warlike in order to exceed the criteria ascribed to random

events. In the present context, when someone experienced with the Lebanese situation and its literature becomes aware that another random event has occurred and learns the identity of the injured and/or dead, he or she needs little prompting to doubt that all-too-common characterization and fear the worst. Curiously however, such apprehension can be simultaneously justified and refuted. On one hand, it may be right to downplay the element of coincidence in a given random event, which is tantamount to describing it as not having been spontaneous. On the other hand, it may be wrong to overestimate the political meaning and immediate implications of such an event. But regardless of the fear elicited by these occurrences, not every random event has sufficient gravity to make it the harbinger of a major confrontation. Consequently, it is impossible to connect an event to any major altercation without first considering the chain of minor and entirely random events that preceded it. Here, we do not consider random events to be a discrete category of incidents. Instead, they represent a particular classification that was fashioned, modified and applied through longstanding Lebanese experience. We might add that those who use the phrase *random event* often tend to indicate that a given episode may indeed relate to some larger incident. A similar observation can be made regarding those who avoid using the phrase, do so reluctantly or employ different jargon in the immediate aftermath of an event, whether referring to it casually or proclaiming its significance. Perhaps such hasty remarks might encourage us to ponder the very notion of such random events, especially since they have come to represent a “station” at which the Lebanese train of daily life stops regularly. This symbolic station is situated at the intersection of three dimensions: *security*, *politics* and *history*. Here, the italics indicate simply that the appearance and meaning of each term in the concept that describes a random event is not *prima facie*. Security, for

instance, may relate to the assorted tensions that prevail in certain areas or extend throughout the country. Politics may indicate the willingness of a given faction to seize upon a random event and squeeze as much life from it as possible. Finally, history may refer to the conceptualization, real or imagined, of some relationship between an event and its antecedent. It may even convey symbolism of a specific or general nature. Similarly, it may be asserted that no such event would compel any competent authority—political, religious or otherwise—to jump to conclusions about characterizing an event as random if it were indeed so. In other words, if such authority fails even to admit having made an extemporaneous assessment of the event, that inactivity simply pushes the incident farther away from the acknowledged state of randomness. Thus, were it not for other evaluations, the incident would likely not have been characterized as random by those who deigned an urgent need to do so. Clearly, not every random event is capable of igniting a war, but regardless of how self-evident that observation may seem, it certainly prompts one to ask meaningful questions. For example, is it accurate to state that for the Lebanese, random events universally echo the violence generated during their wars? Might the converse be even closer to truth? In that case, a random event would find itself counted among the many hypothetical institutions that populate the “cold” civil peace. Here, its job would be to sieve out the violent facts and confrontational fault lines recorded in the memories of the Lebanese wars. It would minimize the annotations and footnotes appended to those recollections and the general responsibility and implications that attend them so they can be viewed as individual criminal acts to be dealt with by the law and its stipulations.

The Challenge

On the eve of the 33rd anniversary of the April 13, 1975 commencement of the Lebanese “civil”

war, UMAM D&R organized the first of eight workshops. It was convened on April 10, 2008 in a Beirut hotel under the general theme, *What is to Be Done? Lebanon's War-Loaded Memory*. Civil society activists, politicians, government officials and experts from Lebanon and beyond participated in the closed sessions, the first of which focused on the deceptively simple question, "How did the war end?"⁽²⁾ The seven subsequent sessions dealt with questions that were more specific, such as the issue of war-related missing persons, the prospects for legal prosecution of war crimes, methods of recollection—memory mining—and others. At this point, it is inappropriate to elaborate on the proceedings or ruminate about what might have added to the discussions about the war. Rather, it is sufficient to observe that the sessions produced opportunities for new and improved interaction between individuals and organizations. Indeed, unity ensued among those involved due to their eagerness to consider collectively how to cope with the legacy of Lebanon's past without ignoring the need to confront its contemporary challenges. Notably, that personal and programmatic harmony occurred despite individual characteristics that may have militated otherwise.

Understandably, the necessity to categorize history in this manner was driven solely by the need to communicate effectively. Owing to the attendees' active participation during the eight workshops, the members closed the distance between each other and followed up on their initial progress by meeting periodically for several more months. These subsequent engagements resulted in a number of suggestions regarding activities and practice-bound research projects intended to address

jointly the necessity to comprehend the past and take appropriate actions in the present. In light of the events that have taken place in Lebanon since 2008, the suggestion was made to prepare a series of reports that focus on "current" or "recent" random events that might somehow be construed as potentially detrimental to the civil peace. Engaging in such an analysis might shed some light on the attendant political, media and judicial actions taken to manage those events. Once finalized, the files could be used to broaden the discussion that centers on the hazards that occur daily and which, demonstratively, threaten the peace enjoyed timorously by the Lebanese people. Lebanon's postwar civil society has been particularly reluctant to shoulder any responsibility for public matters. It seems content to spread cost-free words of comfort on issues as grave as life and death, and it is of the mind-set that the violence being exchanged among Lebanese deserves adequate and deliberate consideration as opposed to being ignored because of disgust or shame. From this perspective, however, an idea evolved that was discussed at length under the provisional title *Random Acts of Violence vs. Civil Peace*, which is expressed in this publication.⁽³⁾ The following narrative of what has become known as the *Ain ar-Rummaneh incident* may be somewhat inaccurate, but that is due primarily to its brevity. At the same time, this random event simply may not have deserved any more than the routine coverage it was given by politicians and the media. Yet the merit found in chronicling this incident lies precisely in an entirely naïve but essential question. Apart from the range of actions assigned constitutionally to the judiciary or accreted to it otherwise, what last resort can the ordinary citizen realistically expect that

(2) "How the War Ended" was the title of a UMAM D&R-sponsored workshop held in April 2008 during which many war-related issues, including its aftermath, were discussed.

(3) The literal translation of the Arabic title is: "From a Random Event to Jeopardizing the Civil Peace."

august body to take when Lebanese politics looks for refuge after reaching another dead end? Of course, this account does not purport to address the entire universe of concerns caused by Ain ar-Rummaneh's random event nor does it strive to answer comprehensively the many questions prompted by that anomaly. Rather, as noted in the preface to a previous UMAM publication titled *To The Death*, it simply offers one response to what has already been observed and the intent behind publication of those observations. Of note, we have avoided extrapolating facts about claims, especially those that have never been made.

Case Study: The Randomness of Ain ar-Rummaneh

The police records in Ain ar-Rummaneh for Sunday, April 13, 1975 note that the first sparks of war had finally become apparent. Joseph Saadeh, who wrote one of the first "public confessions" regarding the civil war, noted that (quoting Alfred Celine) this scourge, the origin of which "came from the depths," marred an otherwise sunny and idyllic Sunday.⁽⁴⁾ It happened primarily because of the inability of the Lebanese polity to accommodate the changes that were affecting the core of the Lebanese structure, adjustments that expressed themselves ultimately as antagonistic. The conflict stemmed from the durable self-image Lebanese communities held of themselves, their perception of other communities and Lebanon's mission and role as a state and nation-state. It originated as well from the burden placed on the country by the Palestinian cause in terms of its refugees and militancy, especially after the "gates of armed struggle" were shut tight by Syria and Jordan. Yet with reference to the war and in the minds of Lebanese citizens,

the political, social and historical dimensions that made Ain ar-Rummaneh a quarter unlike any other—and made the bus a vehicle unlike any other—did not plead in favor of that peculiar neighborhood. They did not anoint it as having hosted the war's beginning or even to have borne witness to it. In general, Ain ar-Rummaneh suffered from the war the same as other quarters, towns and villages. But sometimes that buffeting became even more pronounced. The sparks that ignited the country's larger fire also kindled a smaller local blaze, the flames of which indeed licked at Ain ar-Rummaneh and its closest neighborhood, referred to in the local patois as Shiyyah. Indeed, Ain ar-Rummaneh's designation as a neighborhood should be accepted as having been evident in the extant legal records. Further, assuming Ain ar-Rummaneh warrants such scrutiny, the reason would likely stem from the somewhat incestuous relationship it has with Shiyyah. Nevertheless, Ain ar-Rummaneh is but one of Shiyyah's quarters. For many Lebanese, however, the unofficial and notoriously exaggerated history of the Shiyyah area has given it a degree of autonomy. Yet a map reconnaissance discloses that Ain ar-Rummaneh is simply a quarter situated within both Furn ash-Shubback and Shiyyah. Similarly, others consider Shiyyah to be part of Dahyeh, one of Beirut's most turbulent quarters. But from a purely municipal perspective, Shiyyah is an entirely Christian municipality. It encompasses some areas of Ain ar-Rummaneh as well as those of its antagonist, Shiyyah, which is inhabited largely by Lebanese Shia. Clearly, the situation is one in which two geographical registers are involved, one administrative and the other "inventively impressionist." And while each of these has some legitimacy, the impressionist register that ultimately gained credibility accurately or otherwise through the civil

(4) *Victime et bourreau* ("Victim and Victimizer"), Calmann-Levy, Paris, 1989.

war, is responsible for influencing relations between the neighborhoods and the lives of their residents. To aggravate conditions further, some areas of Ain ar-Rummaneh were stripped away and annexed to Furn ash-Shubback (according to the website of the Shiyyah municipality).⁽⁵⁾ Of course, it may be that this intricate administrative affiliation means little relative to Ain ar-Rummaneh's status as a quarter of Furn ash-Shubback or the municipal definition assigned to it by Shiyyah. Still, the similar appellation conferred by Shiyyah's definition, not to mention its dogged antagonism, remains a source of curiosity. Before April 13, 1975, nothing appears in Ain ar-Rummaneh's records that ascribe to it any particular feats or extraordinarily glorious deeds that mark it as the war's ignominious flash point, which certainly would have distinguished it from other areas. Hence, in the eyes of friend and foe alike, this mark of distinction advanced through symbolism and image exists only because of its relative seniority in terms of wartime history. In a different vernacular, the notion of age before beauty is appropriate in this case. Likewise, the same applies to Shiyyah, known variously as the "town of a million chrysanthemums," "hometown

to heroism" and the "veritable factory of manhood," a town with such an artistic soul that even the simple act of strolling down its sidewalks seems poetic.^(6,7,8) Rather than for any intrinsic reasons, Shiyyah's image was likely conceived to contradict that of Ain ar-Rummaneh, which is known as the "fortress of steadfastness."⁽⁹⁾ By extension, the incremental image improvement bestowed on both of these areas may indeed have promoted them in the eyes of their respective publics. Ultimately, both achieved a certain level of distinction which reached its zenith when the Shiyyah-Ain ar-Rummaneh Front was given a halo of sanctity. After the "Two Years" war, Ain ar-Rummaneh's reputation swelled to almost iconic proportions. That escalation prompted similar promotions for all other fronts as well as a reconciliation between those who lived in Shiyyah-Ain ar-Rummaneh and members of the other warring factions. Neither the combined Shiyyah-Ain ar-Rummaneh front nor either locale individually ever ceased capitalizing on the distinction they acquired for having played host to the war's tinderbox. In fact, both continue to emphasize either their symbolic rank or their ignominy as antagonistic fortresses. Moreover, regardless of the Civil

(5) <http://www.chiyah.gov.lb/Templates/InsideTemplate.aspx?PostingId=721>

(6) From a war song by Khaled al-Habr and its troupe: "We will plant one million chrysanthemums in Shiyyah / We will sing for the spring that is sure to come / We will hold to our machine guns and sing in their honor / We will write the names of our martyrs with our bullets."

(7) From a war song by Khaled al-Habr and its troupe: "In Shiyyah, the hometown of heroism, in Shiyyah the factory of manhood / They killed our kids, destroyed our houses, so we took our arms, (we) sunburned men to defend the streets; we confronted the rockets with our chests / They swear: we will never give up . . . we fight to the death in order to defend Shiyyah."

(8) From a poem by Palestinian writer Ezz ed-Din al-Manassira: "For the streets of Sabra, I shall sing / For poetry written on the streets of Shiyyah, I sing / For Beirut; the bullet, I shall sing / For dismissed workers, I sing / For Jafra, I shall sing."

(9) From the earliest stages of the war, Ain ar-Rummaneh achieved significant notoriety as being the "steadfast" front. An initial reference to this status was made in a propaganda book titled *Ain ar-Rummaneh – Heroism and Steadfastness*. The work was published in 1976 by the Mar Maroon (which identifies a particular sector within Ain ar-Rummaneh) arm of the Phalange party. The description applied to Ain ar-Rummaneh as a "fortress of steadfastness" came through an opinion piece written by Fouad abou Zeid and published in the aftermath of the incident in ad-Diyar (October 9, 2009).

War glories Shiyyah or Ain ar-Rummaneh failed to accrue compared to other regions or fronts, they more than made up for during the “fratricidal wars.” Ain ar-Rummaneh profited by Bashir Gemayel’s “Unification of the Rifle” campaign, the various upheavals of the mid-1980s and the “War of Annihilation.”⁽¹⁰⁾ In a similar vein and contrary to what occurred in Beirut’s southern suburb of Dahyeh, the reputation Shiyyah profited from having played host to brutal Shi’ite-on-Shi’ite violence enabled some of its streets to successfully resist Hezbollah’s expansion. The common denominator, however, indeed the primary reason behind the notoriety awarded to Shiyyah and Ain ar-Rummaneh, is the episodic violence which took place in that area and was focused on “enemies” and/or “brothers.”

During the evening of October 6, 2009, on one of the Ain ar-Rummaneh streets closest to the Old Road to Saida—the historical front line that separates Shiyyah from Ain ar-Rummaneh—a skirmish took place in which cold steel was used to kill one person and wound several others.⁽¹¹⁾ While this incident might have gone unnoticed and been classified as a random event the likes of which occur daily throughout the world, this particular scuffle assumed Apocalyptic dimensions by Lebanese standards. At the very least, it bore some resemblance to the gory incident of April 13, 1975, which spiraled violently out of control. Fortunately, the titanic dimensions that were being ascribed to the Ain ar-Rummaneh event began to recede just a few

days afterward, at least with respect to the properties generally ascribed to such incidents by politicians and the media. Soon enough, the incident was stripped of its asterisks and novel “historic” ranking, filed eventually in the random events category and its management was consigned to the judiciary and a blissful consensus of political factions. Yet if this periodic “fratricidal” conflict generated new internal “balances of power” in Shiyyah and Ain ar-Rummaneh (given their respective Shi’ite and Christian contexts), then it appears that Lebanese reluctance to process the war’s “files” to determine its social and symbolic implications caused absolutely no change to the way Shiyyah views neighboring Ain ar-Rummaneh or vice versa. Change among these emerging balances of power was the memorandum of understanding (MOU) agreed to at Saint Michael’s Church by Hezbollah and the Free National Current. Interestingly, the MOU was signed despite the fact that Shiyyah, home to a passageway favored by Dahyeh youth traveling to and from the nearby entertainment center (at best an optimistic description of that destination), serves as the least representative example of Hezbollahite Dahyeh. Moreover, Ain ar-Rummaneh continues its efforts to manage the demographic and physical changes that make it an increasingly “mixed” area, ostensibly to the chagrin of its “indigenous” inhabitants. One approach to this has come in the form of legislation submitted by MP Boutros Harb. The initiative seeks to prevent real estate transactions between Lebanese of different sects in a concerted effort that aims

(10) The “Unification of the Rifle” campaign was a military operation led in 1981 by Bashir Gemayel, then the commander of the Lebanese Forces, the intent of which was to unify Christian forces. The campaign produced hundreds of casualties, and some of the fiercest fighting took place in Ain ar-Rummaneh. The “War of Annihilation” is the name used most frequently to describe the series of battles that took place in 1989 and 1990. The fighting pitted the Lebanese army, then commanded by General Michel Aoun, against the Lebanese Forces commanded at the time by Samir Geagea.

(11) This area runs along part of the “Green Line” which separated Muslim West Beirut from the Christian East during the civil war.

to stem the expansion of Hezbollah's real estate holdings.⁽¹²⁾

Ultimately, it may be appropriate to note that the random event of October 6, 2009 was yet another scandal that aggravated the precarious civil peace. Yet in that same sense, it also may be construed as an anomaly that could have visited significant danger upon that serenity. Hence, Ain ar-Rummaneh and Shiyyah might simply be two noms de guerre for realities we strive so hard to avoid calling by their real names: "Christian recession" and "Shi'ite expansion." In this sense, the breakdown that occurred in a neighborhood positioned between two symbolic quarters was completely unaffected by the act perpetrated that night as the murderers were not residents of Shiyyah.⁽¹³⁾ Yet today, thanks to the ponderous security measures implemented since the event, Ain ar-Rummaneh has taken on a sinister, prison-like appearance, a no-man's land devoid of any real life—and any lasting peace. Unquestionably, checkpoints and soldiers do little to foster a community atmosphere, and tanks do even less to assure a lasting peace.



Since its founding in 2004, UMAM D&R has been guided consistently by the belief that acknowledging Lebanon's tumultuous past demands the careful and deliberate

collection, protection and public promotion of related evidence and artifacts. Notably, the foregoing account of the random incident that took place in Ain ar-Rummaneh is a perfect example of the organization's involvement in those pursuits.

The focus maintained by UMAM D&R is essential for the country since to date, no official of the Lebanese government has resolved to deal specifically with the memory of Lebanon's violent past. Moreover, no national archive exists to provide such information to a public that longs for objective enlightenment. In short, given the absence of any item on Lebanon's national agenda that encourages acknowledgement of its history, no official accounting of the country's past has ever been conducted. Because of that distressing fact, UMAM D&R remains at the forefront of all efforts to recover and document historical artifacts by engaging in a diverse set of activities that ranges from archival projects to cultural exhibits to technical workshops.

Our specific interest in the potentially tumultuous Ain ar-Rummaneh event stems from our efforts to:

- Recall the violence in Lebanon.
- Enable the disempowered but growing chorus of voices that call for the adoption of a transitional justice approach tailored to Lebanon's specific needs relative to its postwar deadlock.

(12) This demographic melting pot sustains itself primarily through real estate transactions and subsequent construction projects that attract newcomers, particularly Lebanese Shia, to formerly Christian areas. As a result of the deep existential crisis (and deadlock) that continues to impact the country, MP Boutros Harb recently submitted legislation which suggests a freeze on such transactions between Lebanese citizens of different sects. As claimed by the author of the draft, the legislation will become an "effective" measure through which Lebanon's "diversity" can be preserved. At the same time, however, it reflects an atmosphere of panic and distrust.

(13) Statement by speaker Nabih Berri, *an-Nahar*, October 9, 2009.

- Acknowledge publicly the ongoing cycles of blame and counter blame within the nation's political discourse despite the ever-present threat of renewed political violence. As evidenced in this report, the tone adopted by the Lebanese media relative to Ain ar-Rummaneh demonstrate that Lebanon's predilection for "closing the files" on its past is an abysmal failure. By seizing upon this potentially cataclysmic random event, UMAM D&R seeks again to clarify and underscore the urgent need in Lebanon to commit unequivocally to undertaking the painful yet essential

tasks of truth seeking and truth telling. Clearly, the nation's ability to deal with its past will impact its ability to manage its present—and future.

Notably, this comprehensive report bears a triple signature which deserves a brief explanation. First, Marie-Claude Souaid traced the project from its beginnings and assisted in shaping its concept. Next, Hassan Abbas applied consummate research and documentation efforts to the work and was integral in producing the initial draft. Lokman Slim, the last individual to join the process, helped shape the text and was instrumental in composing its final draft.