# Yesterday's Bullets... Today's Silence

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**Beirut** the city that never sleeps. She breathed life into every corner, whispered songs from her windows, and laughed through her narrow streets. Beirut, the capital of hope, "the lady of the world," as her lovers called her, never imagined that this spring would carry within it an early autumn.

People stepped out to their work as always, coffee in one hand, dreams in the other. The morning was ordinary: too ordinary. But time was hiding its surprise. Fate had run out of patience and chose to announce its coup.

Gunfire echoed through streets that once woke to Fairouz's voice. War erupted from the heart of a city that had loved everyone unconditionally. In a moment, faces changed. Neighbors became enemies, neighborhoods became battlefields, and silence became a terror only broken by explosions. Pictures hanging in homes were torn apart. Childhoods were crushed beneath rubble. That was the beginning of a story no one chose to tell, yet it was written upon us all.

A true story, written by time in black ink, decorated with unbelievable details—drowning the reader in waves of conflicting emotions: wonder, anger, pain, and then one great unanswered question: Why?

The Lebanese Civil War was not just an armed conflict, it was the tearing apart of a social fabric, the breaking of a people's soul. A nation that once dreamed of justice awoke to a homeland booby-trapped with sects, weapons, and division. The city walls still carry the scars of bullets, as if screaming at anyone who forgets—or pretends to forget: "Here the war passed. Here, there was pain."

From 1975 until 1990, the nation fell into the trap of war and did not emerge as it had entered. War devoured everything: friendships, neighborhoods, trust, even laughter. Each sect built its wall, each street had its checkpoint, each name became an identity that could mean life or death.

A child slept under the bed to hide from the shelling. A woman covered her ears so she wouldn't hear the gunfire. A young man lost his future at a checkpoint because he spoke a name the militiaman did not like. Minarets burned, church bells fell silent, and hearts grew cold. How does a nation heal when its memory still bleeds? How can a society reconcile when each person carries their own version of the same war?

Churches and mosques—meant to be houses of worship—became frontlines. Sectarian belonging turned into a weapon. Identity became a passage, or a death sentence. How can a nation where martyrs' graves are forgotten, and the fate of thousands of missing remains unknown, ever know true peace?

I did not live through the war, but I was born from its ashes. I did not run between bullets or hide in shelters. I did not hear the shells, but I heard my mother fall silent whenever history was mentioned. I inherited fear in whispered conversations, in glances slow to trust. The war never visited me, but it lived around me, in broken streets, in faces hiding more than they revealed. I love cautiously. I rejoice shyly, as though a memory I do not own warns me against safety. I am the daughter of a peace not yet born, trying to live in a homeland still learning how to forgive.

Violence in Lebanon was not just screams in the streets or gunfire across neighborhoods. It has worn many masks—sometimes sectarian, sometimes political, sometimes disguised in the numbers of the dollar suffocating life without a single shot fired.

The Civil War ended, they said. But what kind of peace is it when a child is born carrying a fear he cannot name? When a young man grows up in a street closed off to his sect alone? When a girl learns from childhood not to trust those who are "not like us," just because someone decided this land cannot belong to everyone?

Our generation did not hear the cannons, but we heard them in our grandmothers' stories, in the trembling hands of our fathers as they told what they wished they could forget. We did not live the war, but we were raised in its shadow, between its decaying walls. We saw how killers became politicians, then leaders, then "saviors," without trial, without apology. We saw a nation robbed before everyone's eyes, a generation buried alive between migration, unemployment, and collapse. We saw mothers weep in silence, fathers endure

with hard patience, and dreams dissolve in the morning coffee as if they never existed.

In school, silence spoke louder than lessons. No unified history curriculum, no national narrative to protect the truth from fragmentation. Children were asked to forget a war they were never taught while it boiled beneath society's surface, an unprocessed memory. And so, confused questions were born: Who started the war? Who betrayed? Who was the enemy? The answers remain saturated with fear of the other.

We are a generation that did not live the war, but we know the sound of bullets. We did not run to shelters, but we shiver at breaking news. We did not say farewell to loved ones at checkpoints, but we grew up on stories of mothers who did. We are the post-war generation, but the war did not let us grow up in peace.

In Lebanon, the war ended, but no one mourned. We did not bury our memory; we hid it. Our parents carried it in their trembling voices when "those days" were mentioned, in mothers' eyes when a street or neighborhood was named, the place where someone was lost.

At home, stories always began

with: "They were killing us" and ended in long silences hanging in the air like alarms that never stop ringing. How can we grow without fear when we are raised on caution? How do we build one nation when we are taught to beware of "the other"? It was not always hatred, but a wound. A fear so deep it dressed itself as wisdom: "Trust no one." Hatred was not always screaming—it was sometimes a quiet wall, built slowly, between you and another. And here we are, a generation inheriting wars we never fought, living under memories we never chose, trying to write a new page in an old book that still has no ending.

But maybe—just maybe—if we dare to speak, to question, to listen to the stories of others, we might finally write that page. Not to forget, but to remember differently. To remember in a way that heals instead of tears apart.

After the war, violence did not disappear—it changed form. It became silent, deliberate bullets. Assassinations of thinkers, journalists, politicians: small steps on a hellish road. Each assassination was a message—not just to the victim, but to everyone like them. To anyone daring to speak, to rebel, to demand accountability. We, the younger generation, grew up on these messages. Every time we started believing in change, an assassination came to remind us: "This is the price of a word." How then can we believe in justice in a country where voices are silenced instead of protected? How can we trust a state where citizens fear speaking more than they fear war itself?

In October 2019, the silenced voice finally erupted. Thousands of young women and men poured into the streets, chanting simple yet deeply rooted words. It was a rare moment of collective awakening, where Lebanese united not around sectarian identity, but shared pain. The system did not drop its weapons, it only changed their shape. It confronted the uprising with repression, accusations of treason, and new attempts to sow sectarian division. Peaceful protests became battlefields, facing every weapon of intimidation, from tear gas, to rubber bullets, to arbitrary arrests.

And yet, that cry, despite its simplicity, was an earthquake in a country accustomed to silence. A popular uprising that crossed sects, crossed fear, demanding something Lebanon had not known in decades.

August 2020: more than just a date, it is an open wound in the heart of the city. The port explosion was no "accident," but the consequence of years of negligence, corruption, and indifference. Hundreds killed, thousands injured, entire neighborhoods erased. And yet, not a single person has been held accountable. Even pain in this country is left without justice.

And so, the question returns, quietly piercing the heart: Will these scars continue to haunt those not yet born? Will our children inherit fear as we did? Will they grow in a country that remembers war more than it dreams of peace?

We, the youth, stand on a bridge between tragedy and hope. We

are the children of war without weapons, and the children of peace without its comfort. But we are also the children of hope, for we ask the questions others were too afraid to ask. We dream of what many never dared to imagine. Can we—this so-called "post-war generation"—dare to say enough?

Do we choose silence or anger? Do we all emigrate or do we try to build, even upon ruins? What is our role, in a time when everything is broken?

Perhaps our role is to refuse what is "normal." To hold accountable. To question. To write. To love, despite everything. Perhaps our role is simply to believe that this land—no matter how much it bleeds—is worth those who will try to heal it, not abandon it.

Our generation does not have all the answers, but we have the courage to ask with hope, to dream of a peace we deserve, and to love this homeland, even if it remains an open, bleeding wound.