

The role of youth in the production of Lebanese violence: An Approach to Narratives of the Civil War and Beyond



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The cover: The «Bus» of Ain al-Rummanah at «The Hangan» of «UMAM».
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Introduction: Open War(s)

The Lebanese civil war is unlike any other. Fifty years after it broke out, it remains without a clear end and with unanswered questions. Was it wars within a war, or perhaps phases of deceptive, fragile, intermittent peace; respites between one round of fighting and another? The Lebanese wars predate the country itself in its current form, which faces existential challenges at the beginning of its second century, and horizontal and vertical divisions regarding its identity, role, and position in the surrounding equations and conflicts of the Middle East.

If we do not wish to return to the Druze-Maronite massacre of 1860, should we deny or hide in the corners of oblivion a record of mutual violence, starting with the mini-war in 1958, only 15 years after independence, or ignore all the fires smoldering beneath the ashes that preceded the 1975 Ain al-Rummanah bus clash, with its intense internal turmoil of which the Palestinian factor was only one manifestation?

The mandate in general was theoretically used to prepare the people to govern themselves with a modern state and institutions. However, time in our country seems to have stalled at that moment, as modern Lebanon has passed the century mark and has not yet transitioned to a republic of rule of law and citizenship. Perhaps the train got stuck at the Double Qaimaqamate station in 1842. At that time,





sectarian rule was unabashedly overt,⁽¹⁾ whereas today it is more deeply entrenched, but without the courage to be frank and honest about it, hiding behind vague terms such as «national pact,» «national reconciliation,» «coexistence,» «the Lebanese family,» and «the Lebanese mosaic,» none of which has prevented fighting.

The Lebanese fought for many reasons and in battles in which the combatants moved between camps, sometimes as allies and sometimes as enemies. The war of April 13, 1975, began under the banner of armed Palestinian presence and ended with the consolidation of Syrian hegemony. In between came the Israeli occupation and its repeated attacks, which left their mark on the Lebanese balance of power. From the beginning to the theoretical end of the Great War, as we called it, some factions shrank, others grew, and new ones emerged. War in general seems to be an integral part of the country's history, as it is a land of coexistence between different identities, in the sense of plurality, conflict, and multifaceted violence. After the Great Lebanese War, there were many smaller wars between regions and sects, albeit without any overwhelming external factor, so they were truly «local» or «civil,» some of them taking place in neighboring alleys and streets, such as in Tareek Jdeedeh, Khaldeh, Tayouneh, and others. It is both laughable and sad that means of transportation can be a source of strife, such as Ahmad

(1) In addition to the Maronite and Druze Qaimaqamates, the Orthodox community demanded a third district or Qaimaqamate for their sect, but their quest was unsuccessful. As a result, the Orthodox Koura area was separated from the Christian Qaimaqamate and attached to the Ottoman Wilaya. See: December - The Two Communes or the Division of Lebanon, Al-Shahriya, Al-Dawliya for Information Website, December 9, 2023, accessed on September 7, 2025, time: 16:16.





al-Assir's bicycle or a minister's jeep in Qabrshmoun!

It is no coincidence that there is no official date for the end of the Lebanese civil war. Indeed, it is ironic that the Taif Agreement, which was designed to bring an end to the conflict, was the



Lebanese diaries, Civil War years

cause of further fighting. The wars of other countries are remembered by the moment they ended, while Lebanon does not know when the end will come, if there is one, and always returns to the beginning, under the pretext of «remembering so as not to be repeated,» but it repeats itself. Repetition here has not taught the «clevers,» as the popular saying goes; because the general amnesty law can be considered one of the evils of war itself, as it legalized impunity for all crimes committed before March 28, 1991, and kept the files of the forcibly disappeared, the kidnapped, and the displaced as witnesses to wounds that have been bleeding endlessly... since the beginning.

Therefore, violence in Lebanon is not an incident from a bygone era, but rather a continuous process that changes in form but not in essence, with young people serving as its fuse and the tools for its reproduction. From militias to television and phone screens, and from battlefields to social media, this age group remains at the heart of the war, both active participants and bearers of its scars, against a backdrop of recurring and repetitive patterns such as the lack of social and economic opportunities, missing accountability,





and the obstruction of all paths of transitional justice. For generations of young people, violence was an imposed and glorified environment, at school and university, on the street and in the neighborhood, in the media and at work, as well as in slogans, songs, and chants. It was ingrained—militarily, religiously, and in sectarianism, socially, psychologically, sexually, economically, verbally, culturally, and digitally—in minds and souls. The youth of the war are the grandparents and parents of the next generation, extending to young people who did not experience its horrors but witnessed impunity through the consecration of the warlords and their sons, who are the emperors of politics and economics in times of peace. Some of today's youth have replicated the militias of the past, becoming leaders or influencers in recruiting others, sometimes through paramilitary scouting activities and with a turban or a large cross on the chest at other times.

We will not burden your libraries with an additional publication on the Mother War and its offspring, the minor wars born without labor pains, for there is undoubtedly much of that. However, we have addressed two factors that have not been sufficiently linked in all the papers written since 1975 to the present day: youth and violence. This is because the majority of publications and studies have focused on political and sectarian leaders, the regional and international structure of the conflict, and local socio-economic and sectarian causes. There has been a significant neglect of this age group, which constituted the largest segment of people present in the fields and alleys of the war. They have been treated as numbers or collateral victims, without regard for their role in shaping events and paying the price. This omission has rendered writing history incomplete and fragmented. Therefore, the aim of this





research is to shed light on young people as key actors, as any approach to understand violence in Lebanon cannot be accurate without considering their connection to it, between a memory burdened with the echoes of fighting and a volatile reality that is not free from renewed explosions.

Our research maps this complex relationship between youth and violence, from the roots of war to the geography of its militias and parallel economy, and its legacy extending into our present, then there are the smaller wars and transformations of violence, leading to the soft, unarmed, and digital violence; in a bloody cycle that renews itself, in which sects and parties shape violence according to their interests.

Beyond that, why did violence continue to breed despite the end of the war? Is the answer in the absent justice, the state of citizenship that was never built, and the structure of a deep sectarian system that makes weapons a natural means of settling disputes and reproducing power? Therefore, are the Lebanese in general, and young people in particular, doomed to live in the grip of violence as an inevitable fate from which there is no escape, or can they break this cycle of war(s)?





Chapter One: Who Polarized Whom, How, and Why

Civil wars are a complex world, a giant octopus with political, military, economic, religious, sectarian, racial, and other tentacles.

Before delving into the intricacies of the Lebanese civil war, which has made it a regional and international example whenever any long-term conflict with overlapping causes, planners, and actors, including young people and women, is mentioned, along with an extended list of labels and descriptions; we presented the many dimensions of the definition of civil war in general. We then deconstructed the paths that led young men and women to the furnace of the Lebanese war, from the historical accumulations that led to it, to its early days and its cumulative stages.

Defining civil war... Multiple concepts

Definitions of civil war vary according to the field of study and its objectives, but they converge politically to consider it as an armed conflict between rival groups belonging to the same state or common authority. This conflict has multiple causes and objectives, including political, economic, social, racial, ideological, and





religious factors.⁽¹⁾ It also includes clashes between two countries that were once a single entity, against the backdrop of a group's desire to secede to create its own state, or to change the country's policy and monopolize power.⁽²⁾ In its latest update in 2025, the Britannica Encyclopedia distinguished civil war from riots and the suppression of internal uprisings.⁽³⁾ Military coups and crimes of ethnic cleansing also fall under this heading.

Legally, according to Médecins Sans Frontières, the word «war» is no longer used in international law, having been replaced by the terms «international armed conflict» for conflicts between countries and «non-international armed conflict» to describe civil wars. In addition, a «certain level and intensity» of violence must be recorded for the situation to be classified as an «armed conflict.» Anything less than that is considered «internal unrest» and «tension.»⁽⁴⁾ Moreover, the International Committee of the Red Cross is concerned with applying international humanitarian law to civil wars—defined as those that take place within a country's territory and do not involve external parties—which has led to the development of what

(1) **Civil War: Definition and Types**, Al Jazeera.net website, March 31, 2025, accessed on April 20, 2025, time: 20:22.

(2) Mohammed Akef Jamal, **On the Concept of Civil War**, Al-Bayan website, March 7, 2014, accessed on April 20, 2025, time: 20:54.

(3) **Civil war**, Britannica, accessed on April 15, 2025, time: 13:12.

(4) **The practical guide to humanitarian law**, medecins sans frontieres, accessed on April 24, 2025, time: 14:15.





is known as «international humanitarian law for non-international armed conflicts.»⁽⁵⁾

In line with popular memory, journalistic descriptions, and historians' writings, we did not use the term «non-international armed conflict» in our writing about the Lebanese war.

Sociologically, civil conflict is defined as a reflection of social divisions based on ethnicity, race, or sectarianism; while the economic description approaches it from a class perspective.

Civil war has an impact on various levels. Humanitarianly, it leaves behind dead and wounded, disabled and kidnapped people, victims of rape, and severe psychological trauma, especially among young people, women, and children. Human groups are affected by water and food shortages, the spread of disease and declining health care, the deterioration of infrastructure and transport networks, and waves of displacement and refuge. Economically, this is accompanied by financial collapse, declining living standards, job losses, and restrictions on the movement of goods and commercial services. The education system declines and school dropout rates rise, with young men and women being recruited into fighting, along with the spread of violent extremism.

In addition to the above, civil wars have repercussions

(5) **Non-international armed conflict, how does law protect in war**, icrc, accessed on April 24, 2025, time: 14:00.





beyond their borders, sometimes requiring external intervention that leaves their mark on regional security and international politics.⁽⁶⁾

Examples of countries that have experienced civil wars since the 20th century: Rwanda (1990–1994), Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992–1995), Yemen (2014–present), Sudan—including the secession of the south (1983–2005) and then the fighting between the Sudanese army and the Rapid Support Forces (2023–present), and... Lebanon (1975–1990), at least officially.

«Lebanonization» and «the Events»... Between the local and the external

In an 80-page report published in December 2021 by the Legal Action Worldwide (LAW) and UN Women on rape crimes in Lebanon between 1975 and 1990, the research team chose the term «Lebanese wars» instead of the Lebanese war or civil war in Lebanon. Wars, in the plural, because it was not «a single continuous event.»⁽⁷⁾

Explaining our war is more complex than defining civil war in general or non-international armed conflict. It has gained such notoriety that a derivative term, «Lebanonization,» has been coined, and its use is



(6) Mohammed Amin, **Research on the Concept and History of Civil Wars**, Athar website, February 27, 2025, accessed on April 20, 2025, time: 20:43.

(7) **«They raped us in every possible way, in ways you can't imagine: Gendered Crimes during the Lebanese Civil Wars,»** LAW, December 2021, accessed on April 15, 2025, time: 20:25.



not limited to our region but has reached global proportions. According to the French dictionary Larousse, it is a feminine noun that refers to «the process of fragmentation of a state resulting from conflicts between different religious sects, in reference to the conflicts that Lebanon experienced in the 1980s [...]» It is noteworthy that it limited the fighting to an undeniable sectarian aspect, but this was not the only reality. At the beginning of the war and the height of the split between the «Lebanese National Movement» and the «Lebanese Front,» which its opponents referred to as the «Christian right,» specifically the Maronite right; leftist and nationalist Christians joined the «Movement» against the «Front.» Between the two, the label «Lebanese» divided rather than uniting; it was a weapon in a bloody race on who can be the most brutal.

The War is also «the Events,» as popular tradition and slang call it. The word was used by one of the young men who took part in one of its most horrific episodes, the Sabra and Shatila massacre, in the film *Massaker*⁽⁸⁾ by Lokman Slim and Monika Borgmann, which recounts the context of that terrible event through interviews with six participants. «Events» is a somewhat neutral term that downplays the horror of the fighting that spanned

(8) The documentary **Massaker, Sabra and Shatila through the Eyes of the Perpetrators** by Lokman Slim and Monika Borgmann was released in 2005. It participated in more than 100 international festivals, but the Lebanese General Security only allowed it to be screened once in the country.





«Little Wars,» as director Maroun Baghdadi titled his 1982 film.

So, what was the war? Was it internal or «a war for others,» to use the expression of journalist Ghassan Tueni in a book he published in 1985? And who were the «locals» and the «others»?

In terms of internal components, parties and militias fought each other, as did the army, which experienced periods of division. On the Christian side, there were the Lebanese Phalange (Kataeb), Lebanese Forces, the Marada Movement, the Guardians of the Cedars, and the Free Nationalists or Ahrar... Among the Sunnis, there were the Morabitoun and the Popular Nasserist Organization, as opposed to the Shiite Amal Movement and Hezbollah, and the Progressive Socialist Party among the Druze. There were also roles for nationalist and leftist parties, such as the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, the Arab Baath Party with its Syrian and Iraqi branches, the Lebanese Communist Party, and the Communist Action Organization.

At the same time, the war provided fertile ground for foreign political, military, and financial intervention, primarily from Syria, Israel, the United States, France, Iran (through the Revolutionary Guard), Iraq, Libya, and others, in addition to the Palestine Liberation Organization.

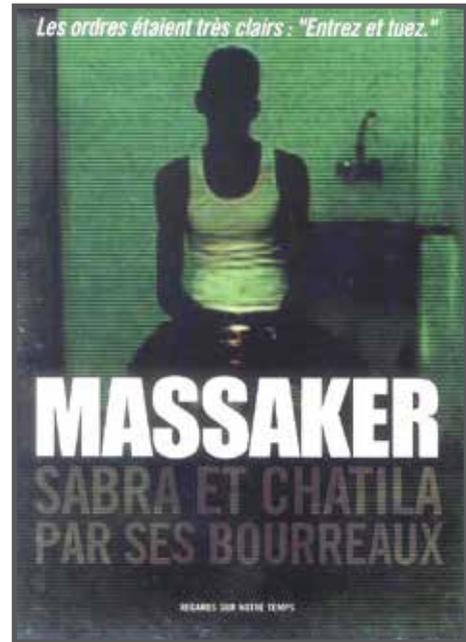
Regional struggles turned into wars on our soil. Examples include the Syrian-Iraqi conflict, which manifested itself in the support of both sides for Palestinian and Lebanese parties, as well as the confrontation





between Damascus and its allies on the one hand and Palestinian factions and the Lebanese left on the other. The Libyan-Egyptian rivalry also left its mark, with Libya supporting certain Nasserist organizations.⁽⁹⁾ The Iranian-Syrian struggle was reflected in a Shiite war between Hezbollah and the Amal Movement.⁽¹⁰⁾

Historian Kamal Salibi addressed the Palestinian factor in 1988, writing that it was «a civil war linked to a conflict between the Lebanese themselves—and this became clearer than ever since 1982, when Palestinian participation in internal conflicts effectively ceased.»⁽¹¹⁾ This Palestinian presence marked what is considered in history to be the beginning of the Lebanese war, manifested in a bus heading to the Tel al-Zaatar



Massaker documentary

(9) Abdel Raouf Sinno, **The Lebanon War 1975-1990: The Disintegration of the State and the Fragmentation of Society**, Lebanese University Publications, Department of Historical Studies, Museum, 2015, vol. 1, pp. 225, 229.

(10) Mahmoud Hamadi and Abbas Hadla, **History of the Shia Community in Lebanon: From the Mysterious Past to the Unknown Future, from 1959 until the Maritime Demarcation**, Umam Documentation and Research, Beirut, 2023, pp. 117, 119.

(11) Kamal Salibi, **Lebanon and the Middle East Question**, translated and presented by Mahmoud Shraih, Dar Nelson, Beirut, 1st edition, 2021, p. 10.





camp that passed through Ain al-Rummanah on April 13, 1975, and what happened after is well known. However, it had been present before, as the first clash between Palestinian militants and the Lebanese army took place in 1968 against the backdrop of factions carrying out commando attacks on Israel from the south. This was followed by several milestones, such as the 1969 Cairo Agreement and the Palestinian Liberation Organization's move to Beirut in 1970, until its departure in 1982.

Before the war... Embryonic seeds of conflict and historical accumulations

It is impossible to understand the depths of the war without delving into the history of the components that make up the Lebanese people. The current homeland took shape over four centuries. The era of Maani Princes, followed by the Shihabis, then the Double Qaimaqamate and the Mutasarrifate led to the formation of Lebanon with its «multiracial and multireligious» population within a feudal structure that soon became sectarian.⁽¹²⁾ It is as if sectarianism is closely linked to the country like a twin!

The demise of the Shihabist emirate, which matured with the sectarian strife between Christians and Druze and the isolation of Emir Bashir III on January 2, 1842,



(12) Edmond Rabat, **The Historical Formation of Political and Constitutional Lebanon**, Lebanese University Publications, Department of Legal, Political, and Administrative Studies, Beirut, 2002, vol. 1, pp. 363-364.



paved the way for the emergence of a new system that divided Mount Lebanon into the Double Qaimaqamate or two districts, northern and southern. The first had a Maronite majority and was ruled by a governor from the same sect, and the second was mixed and administered by a Druze governor.⁽¹³⁾ However, both were the foundations of a sectarian system that carried within it the seeds of strife,⁽¹⁴⁾ leading to unrest followed by administrative changes with the establishment of a mixed advisory council in each.⁽¹⁵⁾ The Druze-Maronite clashes reached their peak in 1860, spreading across Mount Lebanon, then Beirut and Damascus. This was followed by a French landing on the coast that ended the Double Qaimaqamate, restoring the mountain to its unity under a new system, the Mutasarrifate, under the command of a Christian governor, with Ottoman blessing and international cover.⁽¹⁶⁾

At that time, the government was based on a purely sectarian basis between the Maronites, Roman Catholics, and Orthodox Christians; and the Druze, Sunnis, and Shiites as Islamic sects.⁽¹⁷⁾ These balances

(13) Ibrahim al-Aswad, **Enlightening Minds on the History of Lebanon**, American University of Beirut Library, St. George Press, Beirut, 1925, vol. 1, p. 432.

(14) Kamal Salibi, **History of Modern Lebanon**, Dar An-Nahar Publishing House, Beirut, 7th edition, 1997, p. 88.

(15) Edmond Rabat, **The Historical Formation of Political and Constitutional Lebanon**, vol. 1, p. 332.

(16) Mohammad Munzer, **History of the Shia community in Lebanon From the Mysterious Past to the Unknown Future, From Emergence until 1959**, Umam Documentation and Research, Beirut, 2023, p. 129.

(17) Edmond Rabat, **The Historical Formation of Political and Constitutional Lebanon**, Vol. 1, p. 20.





between the six major sects continue to govern the country's wars and peace, even though there are currently 18 officially recognized sects in modern day Lebanon.

After the end of World War I, a French mandate was established under the Sykes-Picot Agreement. On September 1, 1920, General Henri Gouraud proclaimed the state of «Greater Lebanon» after annexing new areas in the south, east, and north to historic Mount Lebanon, in addition to the coastal strip that had constituted the largest part of the province of Beirut in the last Ottoman era. Thus, extremely diverse territories and human communities, with an Muslim majority, were added, despite being previously linked to Syria by the bonds of religion and Arabism. Therefore, two divergent paths, at least since two centuries back, merged without fusing. After its expansion, the nascent state remained as it was, «sectarian in its social essence and doctrinal in its political life.»⁽¹⁸⁾

Although independence in 1943 held the promise of ending sectarian divisions, Lebanese governments have failed to live up to this goal. The National Pact drafted by Bechara el-Khoury and Riad el-Solh didn't unite the country's various components or find a formula for sustainable coexistence. Instead, it brought the different sects together in a melting pot that kept the underlying contradictions simmering, postponing their



(18) Edmond Rabat, **The Historical Formation of Political and Constitutional Lebanon**, vol. 1, p. 20.



explosion until sooner or later.⁽¹⁹⁾ The sectarian nature of the country was reinforced by the custom that the president of the republic would be Maronite, the government would be led by a Sunni, and the speaker of the parliament would be a Shiite.⁽²⁰⁾

The end of the 1950s witnessed violent unrest. Towards the end of Kameel Chamoun presidential term, strikes, demonstrations, and clashes escalated into armed confrontations that began on July 15, 1958, and nearly turned into a full-scale war. The tense situation called for direct American intervention, with the landing of Marines at the Port of Beirut. The crisis was resolved on October 25, with an agreement between Washington, Cairo, and Beirut to elect a figure acceptable to all as president, so Fouad Chehab was chosen.⁽²¹⁾ It is noteworthy that the scene of the landing was repeated 98 years later, from the French in 1860 to the Americans in 1958, followed by many foreign interventions in various forms.

This «conflict,» in the words of researcher Makram Rabah, «provided sufficient proof that coexistence within the existing political system was no longer possible [...]

(19) Ali Fatouni, **The Sectarian History of Lebanon**, Dar al-Farabi for Publishing and Distribution, Beirut, 1st edition, 2013, pp. 111-112.

(20) Majda Ramani, **The French Mandate over Lebanon 1920-1946**, Master's Thesis, Academic Year 2015-2016, Mohamed Khider University of Biskra, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences - Qutb Shatma, History Department, p. 77.

(21) Mohammed Munzer, **History of the Shia community in Lebanon From the Mysterious Past to the Unknown Future, From Emergence until 1959**, pp. 231-232.





Muslims (Druze, Sunnis, and Shiites) found the [National] Pact unfair and unequal, as it gave the Maronite minority unlimited power over the country. On the other hand, the Maronites felt that their Christian homeland was threatened by various factors and was therefore no longer sustainable or viable under the terms of the Pact.» Thus, the conflict of 1958 was «significantly linked to the subsequent war,»⁽²²⁾ and not as transient as was thought at the time.

The seeds of war had been accumulating politically and economically since the mid-1960s. Social unrest escalated in the movements of the General Workers' Union, students, and tobacco workers since 1970 in the face of what researcher Fawaz Traboulsi called «the hidden and semi-sacred power of the commercial - financial oligarchy,»⁽²³⁾ culminating in the fishermen's demonstration in Sidon on Wednesday, February 26, 1975, and the shooting of participants, including Maarouf Saad, who passed away on March 6.

The country was boiling, and the explosion could have occurred after the protests in Sidon against the army's accusation of firing the fatal bullet at Saad.⁽²⁴⁾ This wasn't the case... until April 13, 1975. There are many accounts

(22) Makram Rabah, **The Conflict over Mount Lebanon, Collective Memory and the Mountain War**, Umam Documentation and Research, Beirut, 1st edition, 2022, p. 158.

(23) Fawaz Traboulsi, **Modern History of Lebanon: From the Emirate to the Taif Agreement**, Riad Al-Rayyes Books and Publishing, Beirut, expanded and revised edition, October 2008, p. 297.

(24) Ali Hashisho, Amal Khalil, **Maarouf Saad... Alive in the Memory of the People of Sidon**, Al-Akhbar website, March 6, 2021, accessed on April 25, 2025, time: 11:11.





of what happened on that fateful Sunday. Tarabulsi, a member of the «Lebanese National Movement,» said that «an unidentified car fired on a Kataeb party gathering at the Ain al-Rummanah church, injuring a number of residents. The Kataeb responded hours later with a massacre on a bus heading to the Tel al-Zaatar camp, killing 21 Palestinians. Fighting then broke out along the line of contact between Shiyah and Ain al-Rummanah.»⁽²⁵⁾ In those few lines, he placed full responsibility on the Kataeb. They, however, had a different account of the details and numbers. According to Joseph Saadeh, the mastermind behind the Black Saturday massacre, two members of his party were killed in the shooting at the church. Admitting that the Palestinians' crossing two hours later was «an unforgivable provocation after the morning incident,» he added, without naming the perpetrators, that «the bus was shot at in front of the same church,» and then «the Palestinians and Kataeb exchanged responsibility for this opening massacre. While they disagreed on responsibility for the incident, they agreed on the number of dead: 31. Responsibility was soon attributed to unknown and undisciplined elements.»⁽²⁶⁾

How many times since that day has the killer - the criminal remained unknown, undisciplined, and unpunished?

(25) Fawaz Traboulsi, **Modern History of Lebanon: From the Emirate to the Taif Agreement**, pp. 323-324.

(26) Joseph Saadeh, **I Am the Victim and the Executioner**, Dar al-Jadid, Beirut, 1st edition, Beirut, 2005, pp. 81-82.





Escalating polarization to the temptation of war

From its outset, the war spread like wildfire and grew rapidly, with 29 Lebanese factions fighting each other in its first year, numbering some 200,000 members. The spread of militias grew with the expansion of the fighting and the attraction to it, until on the eve of the Israeli invasion of 1982, there were 260 armed factions that accepted members between the ages of 12 and 50.⁽²⁷⁾ Some of these militias had existed since 1957.⁽²⁸⁾

Overall, involvement in these armed entities fought in various periods of the war—from the entry of the «bus» into Ain al-Rummanah to the other deadly episodes of the fifteen years of fighting—was due to social, economic, religious, nationalist, and ideological factors.

One of Lebanon's peculiarities is that its citizens are known by their sects. In a statistical study of a sample of 352 young fighters in the war from various sides except Hezbollah, entitled «To the Death...», it was found that the recruitment of Christians was linked to the rise of Palestinian militarization in 1975, the Israeli invasion, and the assassination of Bashir Gemayel at the age of 35 in 1982, leading up to the Mountain War and mass displacement in 1983. The Sunnis were recruited during the so-called «two-year war» between 1975 and 1976



(27) Abdel Raouf Sinno, **The Lebanon War 1975-1990: The Disintegration of the State and the Fragmentation of Society**, Lebanese University Press, Department of Historical Studies, Beirut, 2015, vol. 2, pp. 1381-1382.

(28) Makram Rabah, **The Conflict over Mount Lebanon, Collective Memory and the Mountain War**, p. 158.



and the first Israeli invasion in 1978. Recruitment was active among the Shiites after the disappearance of Imam Moussa al-Sadr and the Islamic Revolution in Iran in the late 1970s, reaching its peak in the early 1980s. The Druze mobilization took place at the beginning of the war and throughout its various stages.⁽²⁹⁾

Youth participation in the fighting took many forms, from training to military and logistical support, and included suicide attacks. A report prepared by expert Graça Machel in 1996 on behalf of the United Nations Secretariat, stated that «in Lebanon and Sri Lanka, for example, some adults exploited the immaturity of young people to their advantage, recruiting teenagers to train them in suicide bombing operations.»⁽³⁰⁾



The Mountain War

(29) **To the Death... A survey of the continuing experiences among fighters from Lebanon's Civil wars**, Memory at Work [1], Umam Documentation and Research, Beirut, 2010, p. 34.

(30) **Promoting and Protecting the Rights of Children: The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children**, General Assembly, United Nations, United Nations Documents Website, August 16, 1996, accessed on May 11, 2025, time: 15:23.





Extreme poverty, class frustration and arming for revenge

The social reasons for young Lebanese's involvement in fighting are numerous, complex, and intertwined. Traboulsi described the country's structure on the eve of the 1975 explosion as one of privileges and class differences.⁽³¹⁾ Many who belonged to or considered themselves part of a marginalized group or environment felt excluded and marginalized. This bred resentment among young people toward the state and others in the country, prompting some from the poor and middle classes to take up arms in rejection of a system they considered to be perpetuating social injustice.

Journalist May Daher Yaqoub concluded from her travels between Karantina and Nabaa, the mountains and the southern suburbs, that the reasons for the war were not solely sectarian, as «I saw nothing but misery and poverty [...]».⁽³²⁾

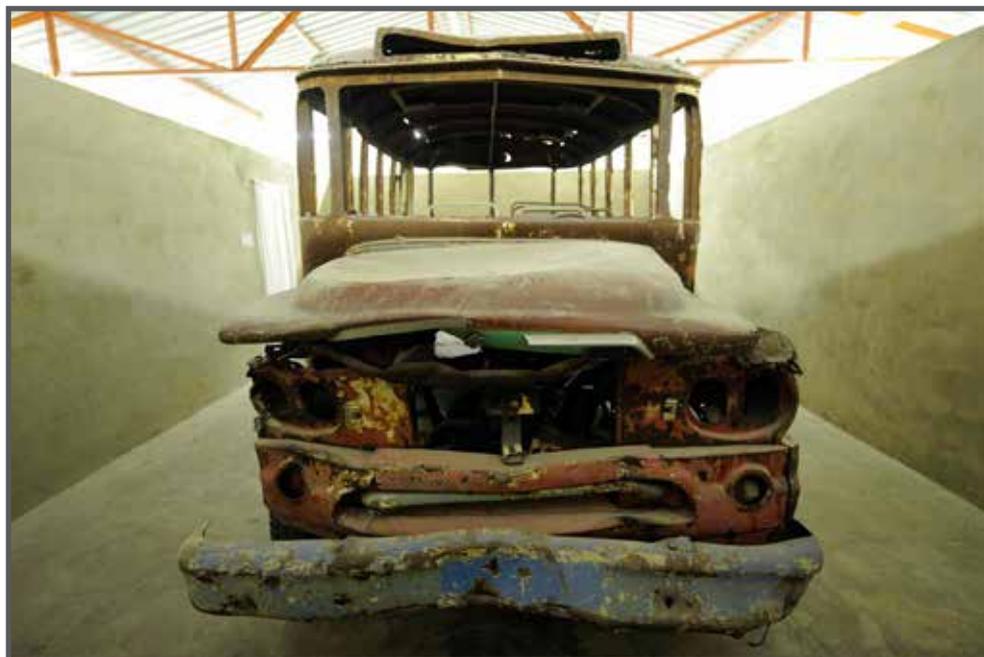
At the same time, the collapse affected the education sector, especially the public one. Many private and public schools were closed, their contents vandalized and looted, or occupied and destroyed.⁽³³⁾ The absence of educational opportunities created

(31) Fawaz Traboulsi, **Modern History of Lebanon: From the Emirate to the Taif Agreement**, p. 287.

(32) May Daher Yaqoub, **Journalist in the Field: Chapters from the Civil War and Lebanese-Israeli Negotiations**, Al-Maktaba Al-Policiya, Jounieh, second expanded and revised edition, March 2010, p. 43.

(33) Abdel Raouf Sinno, **The Lebanon War 1975-1990: The Disintegration of the State and the Fracturing of Society**, vol. 2, p. 1201.





a vacuum that young people sought to fill with partisanship and armed struggle.

Then, at the beginning and throughout its long duration, the war exacerbated internal displacement, and this became strongly linked to the sectarian and political agendas of the warring forces and their long-term goals, serving future strategies aimed at segregation and the establishment of cantons. Displaced young people joined the warring parties, which sometimes led to friction with the «indigenous» population, who differed from them religiously, politically, and socially.⁽³⁴⁾

Many young men took up arms after the killing of

(34) Abdel Raouf Sinno, **The Lebanon War 1975-1990: The Disintegration of the State and the Fracturing of Society**, vol. 2, pp. 1246, 1344.





loved ones, driven by emotion and often by the lack of legal channels to achieve justice without violence. According to «To the Death...», 76.8 percent of respondents had lost a friend, relative, or neighbor in the war, which contributed in one way or another to their involvement in it; 58.5 percent had lost their fathers in battle before they joined, and 48.3 percent had a brother who had been killed before they enlisted. And 4.2 percent took up arms out of revenge.⁽³⁵⁾

Others were influenced by their surroundings to drift toward violence. 88.5 percent said that a member of their family was involved in the war. Those whose fathers had previously fought accounted for 23 percent, while 49.2 percent said they entered the fighting after or at the same time as a brother. Some were influenced by neighbors, friends, and relatives, with 57.2 percent of respondents reporting that these individuals had been recruited before them. The highest percentage was among Amal Movement supporters at 75 percent, followed by the Lebanese Communist Party at 63.3 percent, the Progressive Socialist Party at 59.1 percent, and the Phalange or Kataeb at 56 percent.⁽³⁶⁾

War as a source of livelihood

The 1970s saw a decline in the standard of living for a



(35) **To the Death... A survey of the continuing experiences among fighters from Lebanon's Civil wars**, pp. 22-23, 86.

(36) **To the Death... A survey of the continuing experiences among fighters from Lebanon's Civil wars**, pp. 26-28.



large segment of the Lebanese population as a result of a lack of investment in productive sectors and high inflation rates. A decade before the outbreak of the 1975 war, many young men from the south had joined Palestinian factions since 1965 for financial reasons, seeking stable salaries.⁽³⁷⁾

With the disintegration of the state during the war, accompanied by the collapse of economic structures and rising youth unemployment, a large number of them took up arms to earn a living.⁽³⁸⁾ The militias established parallel political economies in which they employed their young men, as will be detailed in the next chapter.

In the study «To the Death...», 53.8 percent fought in the war for pay. The highest percentage was among followers of the Amal Movement, at 61.5 percent, followed by the Lebanese Communist Party, at 60 percent, and the lowest was among the Progressive Socialist Party, at 22.2 percent.⁽³⁹⁾

On the website of the US Central Intelligence Agency, there is a 38-page document entitled «Directory to Lebanese Militias» prepared by the Office of Near Eastern and South Asia Analysis and authorized for

(37) Tawfiq al-Madini, **Amal and Hezbollah in the Game of Local and Regional Confrontations**, unpublished manuscript, p. 13.

(38) Adnan Fahas, **The Lebanese War (Causes and Consequences)**, Dar al-Hussam for Printing, Publishing, and Distribution, Beirut, 1st edition, 1991, p. 94.

(39) **To the Death... A survey of the continuing experiences among fighters from Lebanon's Civil wars**, pp. 29-30.





release on June 16, 2009. The information in it is current as of April 15, 1984, and mentions the financial returns received by young militants. For example, in October 1983, the allowance for a regular Amal fighter was reduced from 700 or 800 Lebanese Liras per month, or the equivalent of US \$140 or US \$160, to 300 Liras and one meal a day instead of two. The difference between what the movement's members received and their counterparts who joined the Israeli camp was striking. According to the same source, recruits in the Army of South Lebanon were paid 1,700 Lebanese Liras per month, equivalent to \$340,⁽⁴⁰⁾ against the backdrop of Israel's overt and covert financial injections into the Lebanese economy under occupation.

An existential threat... Everyone is right!

As mentioned earlier, the political system nurtured a worsening sectarian imbalance and failed to build a unifying citizenship and a fair sharing of power, accumulating tensions that led to war.

In a field study of 470 students in February 1975 at the American University of Beirut, Saint Joseph University, Beirut Arab University, and the Lebanese University, the majority of Muslims opposed Christian «domination» of the system, while most Christians defended the existing structure.⁽⁴¹⁾ With this context young men here and



(40) **Directory of Lebanese Militias**, Directorate of Intelligence, cia.gov, approved for release 16 June 2009, accessed on 1 May 2025, time: 15:01.

(41) Adnan al-Amin, **Lebanese Youth and the Folds of Politics: Dangerous**



there enlisted
months later.

In a report for the
website Raseef
22,⁽⁴²⁾ Pierre Nassif,
born in 1959,
justified taking
up arms with the



Lebanese Phalange or Kataeb without training, despite being wounded later in the back and left paralyzed, by saying that what happened was not a civil conflict, but an «existential» war with «Palestinian invaders.» He said: «I did not see the other as an enemy, but he made me his enemy, [...] because it was a battle for homeland, destiny, and dignity. The other was the one who attacked my country [...]». Rudolf Karam, who was in the Lebanese Phalange and later the Lebanese Forces - Elie Hobeika Branch, recounted: «When you see all this fear around you as a child, [...] you automatically become immersed in the military atmosphere [...]. The other was my enemy, and I was 100% convinced that I was preserving my existence [...]».

Relations, Political Participation and Youth in the Arab World, Stalled Choices and the Horizon of Change – Collective Work, Lebanese Center for Studies, Beirut, 1st edition, 2008, p. 55.

(42) Firas Hamieh, **Experiences of Four Fighters in the Lebanese Civil War. What Do They Say Today?**, Raseef 22 website, 19 April 2016, accessed on 5 May 2025, time: 8:20.





On the other hand, Abbas Diya⁽⁴³⁾ fought in the wars between Amal Movement and Hezbollah, the Palestinians, the Iraqi Baath Party, the Lebanese Communist Party, the Lebanese Forces, the Lebanese Phalange, the Morabitoun, and Michel Aoun's army, as he called it. He suffered injuries that left him with a limp. He took up arming for political reasons, such as «connecting Beirut to the south via the coastal road through Sidon and overturning the May 17, 1983 agreement, the shameful agreement that provided for peace between Lebanon and Israel. I saw the other side as the enemy, and we were the ones with rights and principles, and we still are [...]».

So, the existential factor represented by the slogan «self-defense» was a unifying force for most of the conflicting parties, as well as the purity and innocence of the self and the blame placed on the «enemy.» Akram Shehayeb, the MP representing the Progressive Socialist Party, who was 28 years old in 1975, said: «I was seeking self-defense. That was my role, and like everyone else, I believed that I was right and the other side wrong.»⁽⁴⁴⁾ According to former MP Najah Wakim, who is close to his age, the «Nasserist Organization - Union of Working People's Forces» was «obliged» to «acquire weapons to the extent of its capabilities in



(43) Firas Hamieh, **Experiences of Four Fighters in the Lebanese Civil War. What Do They Say Today?**, Raseef 22 website, 19 April 2016.

(44) Christine Habib, **«The war is dormant, don't wake it up»... Half a century since Lebanon's «April»**, Al-Sharq Al-Awsat website, April 12, 2025, accessed on May 11, 2025, time: 10:06.



order to defend itself and the citizens who suffered from the absence of authority.» In August 1975, Adnan al-Hakim, head of the Najada Party, acknowledged the existence of 300 trained members for self-defense. The leader of the Maronite League, Shaker Abou Suleiman, linked arming for self-defense to the decline of the state.⁽⁴⁵⁾ Assaad Shaftari was a 20-year-old engineering student when the war broke out, and it seemed to him to be morally right and a matter of self-defense.⁽⁴⁶⁾

In «To the Death...» study the recruitment rate of young men under the pretext of self-defense reached 32.8 percent in general; and was among the parties as follows: 35.2 percent for the Phalange or Kataeb, 25.2 percent for the Lebanese Forces, both in the Christian camp, 30.6 percent for the Progressive Socialist Party, and 24 percent for Amal Movement.⁽⁴⁷⁾

Religion fights religion

Between 1970 and 1971, three field surveys conducted among university students on their political leanings, revealed that these were determined by their sectarian and religious affiliations.⁽⁴⁸⁾

(45) May Daher Yaqoub, **Journalist in the Field: Chapters from the Civil War and Lebanese-Israeli Negotiations**, pp. 50, 52-53.

(46) Sawssan Abou-Zahr, **A religious fanatic turned peace advocate**, peaceinsight, November 2014, 10, accessed on May 2025, 11, time: 16:19.

(47) **To the Death... A survey of the continuing experiences among fighters from Lebanon's Civil wars**, p. 26, 119.

(48) Adnan Al-Amin, **Lebanese Youth and the Folds of Politics: Dangerous Relationships, Political Participation and Youth in the Arab World: Stalled**





Among the Shiite, there was the Amal Movement founded by al-Sadr, followed by Hezbollah with Iranian support and influence. Sunni factions emerged influenced by the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafism. Islamic groups provided a cover for young people to engage in the war to defend religion, the oppressed, and revolution against injustice, among other causes. The parties of the Lebanese Front raised the banner of protecting the Christian presence, which they believed to be threatened.

In the study «To the Death...», 56 percent of young men fought for religious reasons. The percentage was 63 percent for the Lebanese Phalange, followed by the Lebanese Forces with 59.1 percent, the Progressive Socialist Party with 55.6 percent, and the Amal Movement with 52.1 percent.⁽⁴⁹⁾

For instance, Shaftari got engaged in the war influenced by preconceived notions about Muslims and their status as second-class citizens. He was also «taught to hate Palestinians» and believed that by fighting both sides, he was defending «the Pope, Christ, and the cause.» For this reason, he continued to attend Sunday Mass.⁽⁵⁰⁾



Choices and the Horizon of Change – Collective Work, p. 54.

(49) **To the Death... A survey of the continuing experiences among fighters from Lebanon's Civil wars**, pp. 22, 26.

(50) Sawssan Abou-Zahr, **A religious fanatic turned peace advocate**, *peaceinsight*, November 10, 2014.



Arabism versus Lebanese Nationalism

Leftist teachings also inspired many young men and women to fight in a war that was presented as part of a global class struggle and a confrontation with so-called reactionary and imperialist regimes. These motives intersected with the Palestinian cause. Fighting under its banner was seen as a national rather than a sectarian duty, and Lebanese parties enlisted Palestinian experts to train their youth. Against this backdrop, the division over the country's identity intensified between those who linked it to Arabism—with the liberation of Palestine as its primary cause—and those who considered it a distinct and exclusive local nationalism.

A survey conducted in April 1967 among students in six different Christian, Muslim, and public schools found that Muslims had «Arab» leanings, while Christians had «Lebanese» views.⁽⁵¹⁾

Later during the war, according to «To the Death...», 55 percent of communists said they were fighting for ideological reasons.⁽⁵²⁾ Mohsen Ibrahim, who was secretary-general of the Communist Action Organization, believed that the «National Movement» had the right to arm itself in defense of the popular demands for democratic change in the face of what he called right-wing violence, because «the Lebanon we are fighting

(51) Adnan Al-Amin, **Lebanese Youth and the Folds of Politics: Dangerous Relationships, Political Participation and Youth in the Arab World: Stalled Choices and the Horizon of Change – Collective Work**, p. 54.

(52) **To the Death... A survey of the continuing experiences among fighters from Lebanon's Civil wars**, pp. 22, 34.





for is [...] an Arab nationalist Lebanon engaged in a comprehensive national struggle against Israel.» Wakim also mentioned that the «Nasserist Organization - Union of Working People's Forces» defended «Lebanon's Arab identity.»⁽⁵³⁾

With this rhetoric, leftist parties mobilized their supporters in the early stages of the war, before retreating in the face of sectarian reality and the complexity of the conflict, especially after the Israeli invasion in 1982. Many young people later found themselves caught up in sectarian conflicts, sometimes within the same religious community due to regional overlap.⁽⁵⁴⁾

In contrast, the Maronite League took up arms in response to violations committed in the name of the Palestinian cause. Likewise, among the slogans of the Guardians of the Cedars party that «Every Lebanese must kill a Palestinian» and «No stranger shall remain on Lebanese soil,» because «Lebanon's identity is Lebanon alone. Lebanon's true history has not yet been written, and all the history taught in schools is falsified. Two-thirds of the world's civilization comes from Greater Lebanon... Arabism is a backward movement, and Lebanon is not Arab... The Front calls for the removal of Arabic literature from school textbooks and the



(53) May Daher Yaqoub, **Journalist in the Field: Chapters from the Civil War and Lebanese-Israeli Negotiations**, p. 53.

(54) Mahmoud Hamadi - Abbas Hadla, **History of the Shia Community in Lebanon: From the Mysterious Past to the Unknown Future, from 1959 until the Maritime Demarcation**, p. 83.



study of Lebanese and world literature. [...] Anyone who is not Lebanese is considered a stranger.»⁽⁵⁵⁾

Add to this the vague definition of Lebanon in its National Pact as «Arabic-speaking and part of the Arab world with an Arab character,» which some Christians understood as a direct recognition of Lebanese nationalism or Lebanese specificity.⁽⁵⁶⁾

Nonviolence... Dialogue confronts weapons

In parallel with the violence, some young people decided from day one to stay away from the war and renounce weapons. A number of them established civil organizations to build bridges of dialogue and rapprochement based on a belief in common citizenship, despite differences, and a conviction that internal fighting was wrong. They came together in a series of activities and meetings that were intellectual and sometimes sporting in nature. The activists did not content themselves with meeting each other, but reached out, as far as possible, to politicians to pressure them to end the fighting. In September 1988, a delegation representing «the youth and children of Lebanon» delivered a letter to the then Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Albert Mkhayber, stressing «the need to turn the page on war and to cooperate, tolerate, and

(55) May Daher Yaqoub, **Journalist in the Field: Chapters from the Civil War and Lebanese-Israeli Negotiations**, pp. 44, 52, 54.

(56) Abdul Raouf Sinno, **The Lebanon War 1975-1990: The Disintegration of the State and the Fracturing of Society**, vol. 1, p. 541.





love one another in order to achieve what is known as non-war.))⁽⁵⁷⁾

In a testimony about choosing to reject violence, an interview was conducted for the purposes of this research with Fadi Abi Allam, an expert in peacebuilding and human security, who was 17 years old in 1982, when the Israeli invasion led to widespread armament in Mount Lebanon. He admitted: «Yes, I carried a weapon, like my comrades, but I put books in my bag instead of ammunition to reject war.» He attributed his stance, which was contrary to the prevailing one at the time, to family factors such as his father's openness, due to his work in the livestock trade in Remhala with the Druze of the village and the neighborhood, therefore he enrolled him in a Druze school rather than a Christian one. As a result, his young son did not see the Druze as enemies when everyone else was fighting over religious identity. He added: «The weapon did not stay in my hands, as I chose my books and considered it just a piece of iron that would not enslave me.» Once again, his family saved him from war when his brother, who was living in Saudi Arabia, sent him to a private university in «East Beirut,» where he founded a peace group with civil young people that later evolved into the Permanent Peace Movement, which became his identity and cause, and still is today. To pressure for an end to the fighting, he and his comrades participated in student sit-ins and most of the peaceful movements between the two sides of the capital, as well as in providing relief to



(57) **Mkhayber meets with ten MPs and receives a letter from Farah al-Ata**, As-Safir, issue 5066, September 3, 1988, p. 4.



the displaced. The nonviolent activities spread to other universities before divided Beirut reopened on itself.⁽⁵⁸⁾

The newspapers were full of reports of demonstrations such as those mentioned by Abi Allam to confront the violence and the accompanying economic and social collapse, including those organized in one part of the city or bringing together both parts. For example, on July 17, 1986, a popular and trade union march took place in «West Beirut» and «turned into a popular festival against war and hunger.»⁽⁵⁹⁾ And on what was described as a «white day» of opposition to the war on August 20, 1987, hundreds of young Lebanese men and women formed a human chain from Ashrafieh to Sanayeh, passing through the line of contact at the museum-Corniche al-Mazraa.⁽⁶⁰⁾

Similarly, in 1975, Iman Khalifa, who was not yet 20 years old, stood up to violence and was aptly described as «the advocate of the first popular uprising and the loud voice of civil peace» when she called on «those silent in their homes» to march on May 6, 1984, to end the war. However, the intensification of shelling between the two Beiruts thwarted the demonstration, which was expected to draw 100,000 participants. Although the power of arms prevented her from mobilizing her fellow citizens in the streets, she collected 18,033 signatures

(58) From an interview conducted by Sawssan Abou-Zahr via WhatsApp with Fadi Abi Allam on May 13, 2025.

(59) **Against War and Against Hunger: Protesting is Not Prohibited**, As-Safir, issue 4359, July 18, 1986, p. 6.

(60) **Citizens from the East and West meet in a demonstration against civil war**, As-Safir, issue 4741, August 21, 1987, p. 5.





on a «charter for peace among the Lebanese.» Her movement found more resonance abroad than at home, and on December 6 of the same year, she was awarded the «Silent Majority Peace Prize» at the Swedish Parliament.⁽⁶¹⁾

The Nonviolence Movement was also active on both sides of the capital in the mid-1980s, educating people about the concept that had borne fruit in the struggles of Gandhi in India and Martin Luther King in the United States of America. Most importantly, it highlighted simple grassroots initiatives in Lebanon carried out by «ordinary women» such as «day laborers» who decided to wear white clothes on a single day, rejecting the militias' narrative of portraying the fighting as a defense of «the people»⁽⁶²⁾ or «the self» as mentioned earlier. One of the prominent young faces at the time was Afifeh el-Sayed.

The latter, a social and political activist, said in an interview for this research that she refused to take up arms or remain a «spectator watching my country burn,» either by holing up in her home or leaving the country. Her choice was to contribute, however modestly, to countering the war «that was not justified» because «the biggest conflict can be resolved through



(61) Nader Seraj, **Iman Khalifa ... A Biography of Nonviolence in the Life of a Young Lebanese Woman**, Bahithat website, February 8, 2006, accessed on May 7, 2025, time: 23:53

(62) Jana Murad, **Dealing with the Past, Memories for the Future: Reviving the Stories of Unhonored Heroines**, Arab Women's Institute, Lebanese American University, p. 25.



dialogue.» However, it was «like chasing a mirage, that is, the hope of stopping the war through nonviolent means and confronting violence with nonviolence.» The irony is that nonviolence is often met with threats and danger to personal safety. Nevertheless, el-Sayed and her comrades spent days and nights «planning actions and marches that would bring the two divided regions of Beirut together in joint activities [...]. What we did was useful at the time in establishing the concept of nonviolent struggle and replacing weapons with dialogue to resolve conflicts. It is true that it did not stop the war, but it did convey the voice of the majority of the Lebanese people who rejected the war and were silenced by bullets.»⁽⁶³⁾

(63) From an interview conducted by Sawssan Abou-Zahr via WhatsApp with Afifeh el-Sayed on May 12, 2025.





Chapter Two: Who Fought Whom

The war swept most sects into its torrent and divided the army horizontally and vertically along sectarian lines linked to local and regional political conflicts.

Writer Kamal Hamdan believed that it went through two stages linked to the evolution of the balance of power. In the first, violence became legitimate and permanent, with sectarian control within the carved-out territory, but without the declaration of a new state. In the second, fighting turned into a specific situation in the heart of different areas, each of which was the scene of power struggles and fragmentation based on internal factors specific to each sect, unrelated to the broader conflict between all parties.⁽¹⁾

Militias of sects and creeds

The war witnessed three types of militias. The first defended a street or neighborhood, in the form of «unions of strongmen» such as the Morabitoun and the Free Nationalists or Ahrars.⁽²⁾ The second consisted

(1) Kamal Hamdan, **The Lebanese Crisis**, Dar Al-Farabi for Publishing and Distribution, Beirut, 1st edition, 1998, p. 174.

(2) Paul Ashkar, **Half a Century and Fifty Colors of War**, Megaphone website, April 13, 2025, accessed on May 29, 2025, time: 11:45.





of militias in cities, regions and neighborhoods, most notably the Lebanese Forces, Amal Movement, and the Progressive Socialist Party, whose goal was to establish areas under their complete control. They resorted to violence based on two types of military formations: The first were small groups that intervened at checkpoints, and the second were central units focused on security and heavy weapons such as artillery, operating outside neighborhoods, albeit within their sphere of influence. The third model of militia was absolute and transcended regional divisions to build an alternative state, whether religious in nature, such as Hezbollah, or military like Michel Aoun attempted to do.⁽³⁾

Militia recruitment was bigger in size than the Lebanese army. A 1981 report in *The New York Times* presented an overview of those most involved in the war at the time, with estimates of their human and military presence. It stated that «The Maronite Phalangist [Kataeb] militia, along with a few smaller allies, have [had] a standing force of 10,000 and claim to be able to mobilize 40,000 men. The leftist militias, primarily Morabitoun, the National Syrian Socialist Party and the mostly Druze followers of the Jumblat family, start from a base of 7,000. The Palestinians, in all their many factions, have a standing strength of 20,000 and have ordered a mobilization they hope will bring the total to 50,000. [...] The Israeli-backed border enclave militia of Maj. Saad Haddad, a cashiered Maronite officer who sporadically



(3) Kamal Hamdan, **The Lebanese Crisis**, pp. 174-175.



threatens to level Sidon unless his men receive \$5 million in back pay, totals 2,000. Amal, the Shiite Moslem militia generally affiliated with the left, has 1,000 men as does the northern Maronite leader Suleiman Franjeh, who is feuding with Phalangists who killed his son.»⁽⁴⁾ Tony and his family on June 13, 1978, in Ehden.

The same report stated that the war was fought primarily with automatic rifles and rocket launchers. In 1981, the Lebanese Phalange or Kataeb had about 70 tanks, and the Morabitoun acquired long-range artillery. The weapons came from abroad, «Israel on the Christian side and Libya and others on the left.»⁽⁵⁾

Returning to the CIA document mentioned in Chapter One, which was released on June 16, 2009, and whose information was current as of April 15, 1984, the Lebanese Forces were formed in August 1976 out of Bashir Gemayel's desire for a «conventional Christian army.» It had a maximum of 5,000 fighters, with the same number available from the reserves, and possessed 200 tanks and troop carriers from Israel, as well as artillery, mortars, and anti-tank rifles.⁽⁶⁾

The Amal Movement, which employed 5,000 full-time members, was able to double its numbers in 1983, «as most Shia belong[ed] to or support[ed]» it. A year later,

(4) John Kifner, **Battered and divided army mirrors Lebanese civil war**, The New York Times, May 24, 1981, accessed on May 20, 2025, time: 15:37.

(5) John Kifner, **Battered and divided army mirrors Lebanese civil war**, The New York Times, May 24, 1981.

(6) **Directory of Lebanese Militias**, Directorate of Intelligence, cia.gov, approved for release 16 June 2009 accessed on 20 May 2025, time: 21:48.





«most Muslim factions recognized [Nabih] Berri as the civil and military commander of West Beirut and obeyed his instructions.» Islamic Amal, with its 800 recruits, did not last long, and each of its units had an Iranian commander. At the same time, the Progressive Socialist Party took advantage of the division in the army, and Druze officers supervised the training of its 5,000 to 6,000 men.⁽⁷⁾

On the Sunni side, US intelligence estimated the size of the Islamic Unification Movement at 1,000 recruits in Tripoli. The Morabitoun organization emerged during the «two-year war», and its relatively small number of fighters managed to achieve military gains such as the occupation of the famous Burj al-Murr building. On the eve of the Israeli occupation of 1982, it attracted between 1,200 and 1,500 armed fighters, until it was defeated in early 1984 by the Amal Movement and the Progressive Socialist Party. It is believed to have had 200 members outside Beirut, between Tripoli and the Bekaa Valley.⁽⁸⁾

Among the non-sectarian parties, the CIA directory recorded the Syrian Social Nationalist Party as having no more than 200 fighters in 1983, and the Lebanese Communist Party as having between 500 and 600 in 1984. The Communist Action Organization, which participated in the seizure of Burj al-Murr, was armed by Syria and countries in Eastern Europe and had no more



(7) **Directory of Lebanese Militias**, Directorate of Intelligence, cia.gov, approved for release 16 June 2009.

(8) **Directory of Lebanese Militias**, Directorate of Intelligence, cia.gov, approved for release 16 June 2009.



than 200 permanent fighters, although it was able to muster 1,600 when necessary.⁽⁹⁾ Elias Atallah said that the Communist Party was the strongest in the Lebanese National Movement and that its weapons came from the former Soviet Union, as well as Libya, Iraq, and South Yemen. It once received a shipment of 4,000 Kalashnikovs from Russia.⁽¹⁰⁾

The directory did not mention the Free Nationalists or Ahrars which had three divisions: the Tigers, the Eagles, and the Frogs.⁽¹¹⁾ American journalist Jonathan Randall reported that the Syriac youths were «the fuel for Chamoun's Tigers, [who were] the most ruthless and depraved fighters in the Christian camp.» They then supported Bashir Gemayel,⁽¹²⁾ as they were pillars of the Lebanese Front⁽¹³⁾ and participated in several battles, such as those in the commercial markets of Beirut, Tel al-Zaatar, Zahle, and Sarba.⁽¹⁴⁾

(9) **Directory of Lebanese Militias**, Directorate of Intelligence, cia.gov, approved for release 16 June 2009.

(10) Najm al-Hashim, **Elias Atallah recounts milestones in the history of the war and the Communist Party**, Nidaa al-Watan website, January 20, 2024, accessed on May 21, 2025, time: 15:36.

(11) May Daher Yaqoub, **Journalist in the Field: Chapters from the Civil War and Lebanese-Israeli Negotiations**, p. 51.

(12) Jonathan Randall, **The Thousand-Year War, Until the Last Christian, Christian Warlords and the Israeli Adventure in Lebanon**, no publisher, translated by Bashar Rida, translated copy of the book published in English in May 1983 under the title *Going All the Way: Christian Warlords, Israeli Adventures and the War in Lebanon*, p. 113.

(13) Alain Sarkis, **The Syriac Voice of Resistance and Sovereignty... and «To the Last Breath.»** Lebanese Forces website, March 29, 2022, accessed on May 28, 2025, time: 14:12.

(14) Vera Bou Monsef, **Fadak Ya Lobnan... Said by the Syriac Martyrs**, Lebanese Forces website, March 4, 2017, accessed on May 28, 2025, time: 14:16.





Although the Lebanese National Bloc Party was not a militant group, some of its supporters in Byblos took up arms in 1976 on the pretext of preventing «the Phalange and Ahrars from imposing their rule and controlling the people by force of arms».⁽¹⁵⁾ Thus, they took up arms to counter the arming of others!

Randall mentioned Nazar Najarian, or «Nazo,» «from the Armenian community that tried hard to stay out of the conflict» who «at the age of 18, he led half of the Kataeb's groups in central Beirut.»⁽¹⁶⁾ Researcher Ara Sanjian put this military role in an individual context, although he did not deny that Armenian youth were attracted to the Kataeb Party and that dozens of them were killed in the war, without a decision from the Armenian leadership in getting involved in the conflict after the losses that the community endured in 1958. In an interview for this research, he explained that the Armenians' general abstention from any military activity was of great importance to their community after their «mini civil war in 1958, in which political killings were exchanged.» The Lebanese fought for three months between July and October of that year, «losing 3,000 people, including 35 to 40 Armenians in the Armenian internal fighting and alignment with both sides of the conflict, while ten others died in non-Armenian clashes.» It was a



(15) **Eddeh: The Bloc members are arming themselves to prevent the Kataeb and the Free from imposing their rule**, *As-Safir*, March 4, 1976, issue 697, p. 3.

(16) Jonathan Randall, **The Thousand-Year War, Until the Last Christian, Christian Warlords and the Israeli Adventure in Lebanon**, p. 89.



nightmare that had to be prevented from happening again, so the Armenian churches banned fighting in 1975. He added that during the «two-year war,» the Tashnag Party possessed some weapons to defend its headquarters and neighborhoods and protect them from theft, while areas loyal to the Hunchak Party fell into the hands of the Free Nationalists or Ahrars and then the Lebanese Phalange or Kataeb. He also spoke of pressure from Gemayel on the Armenians between 1978 and 1979 to «unify the Christian rifle,» to which the Tashnag responded only sporadically.⁽¹⁷⁾

On that Randall wrote that «in 1978 and 1979, the industrial Armenian community [...] faced a joint attack by the Kataeb and the Tigers militias. Despite their political alliance with the Kataeb, the Armenians had not forgotten the lesson of 1958: at that time, they had paid dearly in money and men for siding with the Christians [.] In the civil war of today [1975 and thereafter], they wanted to remain neutral, but were accused of opportunism [...]».⁽¹⁸⁾

Given the scale of the armament, parties with limited reach and influence remained outside the war, such as the Democratic Party (Bassem al-Jisr), the Arab Liberation Party (Rashid Karami), the National

(17) From an interview conducted by Sawssan Abou-Zahr with Dr. Ara Sanjian, lecturer at the University of Michigan-Dearborn, on the sidelines of a lecture he gave on May 12, 2025, at the American University of Beirut on the positive neutrality of Armenians.

(18) Jonathan Randall, **The Thousand-Year War, Until the Last Christian, Christian Warlords and the Israeli Adventure in Lebanon**, p. 108.





Committee Party (Abdullah al-Yafi), the Constitutional Party (Michel Houry), and the Committed Christians Gathering.⁽¹⁹⁾

Female fighters between cooking and icons

Young women were not away from the above militia map and the violence practiced within it. They were «female fighters in leftist, Christian, Palestinian, and Shiite organizations [...] as women were involved in all the main militias participating in the war». This was not a result of coercion, but rather a reflection of their complete conviction in the «cause» of the faction to which they belonged.⁽²⁰⁾

The study «To the Death...» was not limited to young men, but included 48 female fighters, 47.8 percent of whom carried out military actions, primarily targeting enemy positions, killing armed men and possibly women in the opposing camp, as well as kidnappings, bombings, arson, and theft.⁽²¹⁾

Contrary to popular belief, the proportion of young women in Christian militias was much lower than in most leftist groups—and even in the highly gender-conservative Amal group, women took on combat

(19) Abdel Raouf Sinno, **The Lebanon War 1975-1990: The Disintegration of the State and the Fracturing of Society**, Vol. 2, p. 1382.

(20) Jennifer Eggert, **Revisiting Women's Roles in Conflict and Peace: Female Fighters during the Lebanese Civil War**, *Al-Raida*, Vol. 47, Issue 1, 2023, pp. 105, 108-109.

(21) **To the Death... A survey of the continuing experiences among fighters from Lebanon's Civil wars**, p. 40.





roles—but their motivation for military engagement was to counter Israeli aggression. Some estimates suggest that female fighters made up 15 percent of leftist factions such as the Lebanese Communist Party and the Communist Action Organization, along with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, which fought alongside them; compared to 2 to 7.5 percent in the Kataeb in particular and the Lebanese Front in general. There were no female fighters in the ranks of the Progressive Socialist Party or the Morabitoun. According to interviews conducted by researcher Jennifer Eggert, women formed their own military unit and persuaded socialist militants to train them in their personal capacity. Overall, the female recruits ranged in age from teenagers to their mid-twenties.⁽²²⁾

Maysaloun Farhat recounted that she took up arms in the ranks of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party when she was 14, after undergoing three military trainings, each lasting 40 days. She later became responsible for 12 young male fighters.⁽²³⁾ As for Eileen Bouloss, nicknamed «Um Spero,» she enlisted at the age of twelve after her sister Sophie was killed by a shell and her brother paralyzed by shrapnel.⁽²⁴⁾ Wartime newspapers carried sporadic reports of young women graduating from

(22) Jennifer Philippa Eggert, **Female Fighters and Militants During the Lebanese Civil War: Individual Profiles, Pathways, and Motivations**, Taylor & Francis online, 5 November 2018, accessed on May 1, 2025, time: 18:11.

(23) Viviane Akiki, **Jocelyne Khouwayry, and Maysaloun Farhat: When They Remember the Days on the Battlefield**, Lebanese website, quoted from An-Nahar newspaper website, accessed on 3 May 2025, time: 19:02.

(24) **Weapons in Soft Hands**, Al Jazeera.net website, 16 November 2009, accessed on 4 May 2025, time: 19:17.





training camps for the «Kataebiyat,», referring to female members of the Kataeb for example, as well as the discovery of the bodies of dead female fighters.⁽²⁵⁾

What was the daily life of these female fighters like? Researcher Dalal al-Bizri wrote that «the comrades undertook daily cooking and cleaning the various rooms [... to] shooting practice in the basement of the public school» in Shiyah,⁽²⁶⁾ which the Communist Action Organization took over at the beginning of the war and where she remained for eight months. She was then in her early twenties. One of the tasks she undertook in 1975 was smuggling weapons and ammunition, because «[...] the male comrades need female comrades [...]; simply because they do not arouse suspicion at enemy checkpoints [...] We are stopped at a Kataeb checkpoint in Ashrafieh, who asks us about our identity. We speak to him in Parisian French interspersed with broken Arabic, and he lets us pass, waving his hand as a sign of his reassurance»⁽²⁷⁾ to her presumed religious and political identity based on superficial preconceptions about others. The young men at the checkpoint did not think she was involved in the war like them, because in their minds, women do not fight. In addition, the fact that it was sometimes safer for women to move around

(25) See: **Kataeb prisoners and female fighters' bodies**, *As-Safir*, issue 2497, April 8, 1981, p. 1; **Kataeb female fighters' graduation**, *As-Safir*, issue 868, August 25, 1976, p. 2.

(26) Dalal al-Bizri, **Notebooks of the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990)**, Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, Beirut, 1st edition, 2017, p. 33.

(27) Dalal al-Bizri, **Notebooks of the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990)**, pp. 51-52.





led newspapers to rely more on young female correspondents for field coverage, including dangerous assignments.

Journalist May Daher Yaqoub acknowledged that



Jocelyne Khouwayry

being a young woman helped her and those she interviewed in complex security situations.⁽²⁸⁾

Al-Bizri recounted that in front of a visiting female French left-wing reporter, her party made her and her comrade Zainab the leaders of a women's faction with «[...] flatter[ed] our egos and present[ed] us as legendary beings [...] but we don't tell her, for example, about the long hours we spend in the kitchen every day [...]».⁽²⁹⁾

That legendary reputation shaped the life of Jocelyne Khouwayry, famous for an iconic picture in her short hair, summer blouse, and jeans, confidently aiming her weapon. Unlike the revolutionary, non-religious ideas that motivated al-Bizri, Khouwayry aspired to commit herself to monasticism and had a strong Christian faith. The young woman who stood at one of the Lebanese Forces' barricades in downtown Beirut became an

(28) May Daher Yaqoub, **Journalist in Field Clothes: Chapters from the Civil War and Lebanese-Israeli Negotiations**, p. 109.

(29) Dalal al-Bizri, **Notebooks of the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990)**, pp. 75-76.





icon and the «Raysseh» or female leader of a thousand «disciplined» female fighters. It is believed that her party recruited 1,500 girls and women.⁽³⁰⁾ «On the night of May 6, 1976, we were attacked by 100 Palestinian and Syrian gunmen during a ceasefire. Six girls and I fought them off,» Khouwayry recounted. On how she combined militarization and prayer, she, who led missions in Shikka and Zahle and was wounded in her hands,⁽³¹⁾ said: «The Lord was with us, protecting us and guarding us in an isolated place where no one could reach us.»⁽³²⁾

Putting aside the sanctity of arms, for some young women, carrying a weapon was a desire to «show off» and appear «important»; and engaging in combat was a means of liberation from social pressures, especially in conservative environments,⁽³³⁾ and a quest for gender equality. However, the role of female fighters was horizontal, as al-Bizri quoted her colleague Zainab as saying that «if a female comrade wants to rise through the various party ranks, she must be worth two male

(30) Francois Al-Basha, **Women in Lebanon: An Important Role Throughout History, Unfortunately Reduced**, Lebanon News website, March 8, 2020, accessed on May 6, 2025, time: 15:23.

(31) Viviane Akiki, **Jocelyne Khouwayry and Maysaloun Farhat: When They Remember Their Days on the Front Lines**, Lebanese website, quoted from An-Nahar newspaper website.

(32) **Jocelyne Khouwayry... The woman of battles who rescued girls from the theater of war to devote themselves to God!**, Al-Kataeb website, August 1, 2020, accessed on May 3, 2025, time: 19:51.

(33) Jennifer Philippa Eggert, **Female Fighters and Militants During the Lebanese Civil War: Individual Profiles, Pathways, and Motivations**, Taylor & Francis online, November 5, 2018.





comrades, and sometimes three [...]].⁽³⁴⁾ Salwa Saad, who joined the war as an advocate for the Palestinian cause, admitted that she took up arms «to be equal to men.»⁽³⁵⁾ Although she was an excellent shooter, she was careful not to kill and was sometimes the only young woman on the front line, facing male objections that excluded female fighters from political meetings.⁽³⁶⁾ Meanwhile, Farhat, who could not count the number of men she had killed, said that weapons did not strip her of her femininity.⁽³⁷⁾

In the resistance fight against Israeli occupation, female suicide bombers or «martyrs» were on the frontlines, such as Sanaa Mehadli, who pretended to buy nail polish to leave her parents' house to carry out her mission.⁽³⁸⁾ The irony is that this young woman, who had received military training, was still a teenager in her parents' eyes, needing permission to go out.

While Mehadli, Wafa Nour ad-Din, Mariam Khair ad-Din, Yassar Mroueh, Fadia Bazzi,⁽³⁹⁾ Souha Beshara and

(34) Dalal al-Bizri, **Notebooks of the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990)**, p. 78.

(35) Salwa Saad, **Some of a Journey**, Salam and Kalam website, 1 August 2019, accessed on May 5, 2025, time: 14:53.

(36) Sawssan Abou-Zahr, **The metamorphosis of a female fighter into a peacebuilder**, peaceinsight, 23 April 2019, accessed on May 5, 2025, time: 15:15.

(37) **Weapons in Soft Hands**, Al Jazeera.net website, November 16, 2009.

(38) Raghida Ghamloush, **Shia Women in Lebanon: Unique Identity and the Endless Struggle**, Umam Documentation and Research, Beirut, 2023, p. 65.

(39) For more on their journey, see: Raghida Ghamloush, **Shia Women in Lebanon: Unique Identity and the Endless Struggle**, pp. 64-66.





her cousin Lola Abboud, Zainab al-Mawla, Laila Abou al-Hassan, and others fought the Israeli aggression from a nationalist or ideological, rather than religious, perspective; other young women were involved in the same battle from an Islamic, specifically Shiite, background. Their graduation ceremonies were cause for celebration. For example, after three weeks of training in the summer of 1986 on «theoretical lessons, doctrine, and Islamic culture», 40 female fighters in the «Amal Movement – Women's Organization – Bekaa Region» completed a course in live ammunition shooting in Wadi Makna, the first of its kind in the Bekaa.⁽⁴⁰⁾ According to a report published in the newspaper *As-Safir*, the person in charge was «Mrs. Asfahani,» a name that suggests Iranian origins. In the summer of 1988, the head of Amal's executive committee, Daoud Daoud, and the general organizational official, Mahmoud Fakhri, visited one of the Zahrani camps, where Hasnia Jradi spoke on behalf of the male and female fighters.⁽⁴¹⁾ She was elected in 2002 to the Amal's political bureau.⁽⁴²⁾

Overall, the diverse female fighters, like their male counterparts, were caught up in a bubble of political correctness. According to al-Bizri, partisan pride prevailed, as did their young age. She, the «militant» or



(40) **Graduation of a group of female fighters in Amal in the Bekaa**, *As-Safir*, issue 4407, September 5, 1986, p. 7.

(41) **Amal Graduates Male and Female Fighters**, *As-Safir*, Issue 5032, July 23, 1988, p. 4.

(42) Raghida Ghamloush, **Shia Women in Lebanon: Unique Identity and the Endless Struggle**, p. 85.



«strugglen» as she described herself, lived in the Shiyah center mentioned earlier with a sense of security she had never experienced at home, and more importantly, «intellectual security» in the shadow of «the correctness of our line and our orientation.»⁽⁴³⁾ The word «struggle» was also used by Alice Akiki, who began her activism at the age of 13 with the Lebanese Phalange or Kataeb, influenced by Khouwayry, who «taught us prayer and love for others [...] encouraged us to fight for the survival of Lebanon.»⁽⁴⁴⁾

But the idealism quickly faded. Al-Bizri left the Communist Action Organization in 1981 after realizing that «the leader,» whoever he was, «his days are full of new affluence [...] I think I wouldn't have noticed all that if I were someone's wife, or if I were a man [...] Would I have seen it as corruption in the first place?»⁽⁴⁵⁾ It is as if female fighters were more pure than their male counterparts. Similarly, in some of Eggert's interviews, they mentioned abandoning their military roles when the fighting became sectarian and the militias started fighting over spoils and economic benefits.⁽⁴⁶⁾

The critical thinking was clearly evident with Saad, who

(43) Dalal al-Bizri, **Notebooks of the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990)**, p. 94.

(44) **Hoda Bitar and Alice Akiki for Voice of Lebanon: We are proud of our history of struggle in the ranks of the Kataeb Party**, Voice of Lebanon website, April 12, 2025, accessed on May 3, 2025, time: 20:31.

(45) Dalal al-Bizri, **Notebooks of the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990)**, p. 143.

(46) Jennifer Philippa Eggert, **Female Fighters and Militants During the Lebanese Civil War: Individual Profiles, Pathways, and Motivations**, Taylor & Francis online, November 5, 2018.





moved on to peacebuilding. «It is a path that begins with doubting what we have preserved and learned, and getting rid of our fears by purifying our hearts from the sins of hating those who are different and trying to eliminate them. This leads to working together to prevent the recurrence of war.»⁽⁴⁷⁾

In Eggert's research, most of the female fighters were single, but al-Bizri was married and had a little boy when the war broke out, and the birth of Saad's daughter was a turning point that brought her back to civilian life. Farhat said that she continued to fight until the sixth month of her pregnancy.

The army... Two and More

The army and its young men were not spared the violence of war, as they were among the first victims of the «two-year war.»⁽⁴⁸⁾ At the time, the «Islamic progressive» forces rejected the army's intervention because it would strengthen the Maronites' position in power, while the latter had an opposite opinion.⁽⁴⁹⁾ Amid the militias' control, the army's role was reduced to «deploying in areas agreed upon by the two warring parties and protecting ceasefire agreements [...]».⁽⁵⁰⁾

(47) Salwa Saad, **Some of a Journey**, Salam and Kalam website, August 1, 2019.

(48) John Kifner, **Battered and Divided Army Mirrors Lebanese Civil War**, The New York Times, May 24, 1981.

(49) Kamal Hamdan, **The Lebanese Crisis**, p. 193.

(50) Brigadier General Elie Khalaf, **The Lebanese Army: Reality and Future Role**, Egyptian Institute for Studies website, 2 September 2021, accessed on May 19, 2025, time: 23:26.





On January 21, 1976, First Lieutenant Ahmad al-Khatib withdrew from the military and formed the Lebanese Arab Army from Muslim elements with the support of the Palestinian Fatah Movement, seizing barracks in Tyre, Rashaya, Sidon,



Pro-Lebanese Arab Army banner

Beirut, Baalbek, Khiam, Marjayoun, and Nabatieh. He was then joined by Major Ahmad al-Maamari, who seized a barracks in Arman, two in Tripoli, and the air base in Qlaiyat. Major Ahmad Butari also broke away and took command of the Lebanese Arab Army in Tyre. In the Bekaa, Brigadier General Fahim al-Hajj and Major Ibrahim Shahin founded the «Vanguard of the Lebanese Army,» which included 3,500 members. On the other hand, on March 5, soldiers in Jounieh rebelled and demanded to join units in Akkar to defend Christians in Qubayyat. On the 11th of the same month, Brigadier General Aziz al-Ahdab led a coup that failed two months later. On the 13th, Colonel Antoine Barakat occupied the Fayadiyya barracks, and Saad Haddad retreated with 700 officers and soldiers to Marjayoun. Major Fouad Malek also defected with Christian soldiers, founding the Army of Lebanon. The «Akkar Brigade» emerged from military personnel led





by a civilian, Khalil Nader. The deterioration prompted other soldiers to abandon their units and retreat to their homes.⁽⁵¹⁾

Like the young militiamen, the soldiers justified dividing the army with arguments similar to those used by their counterparts in the warring factions. Al-Khatib, who was 33 at the time, attributed his rebellion to his desire to «turn the Lebanese army's guns against Israel instead of appeasing it.»⁽⁵²⁾ It is believed that by 1981, he had 500 to 700 members under his banner.⁽⁵³⁾ Barakat, on the other hand, said that his goal was to «save the republic from instability and collapse.»⁽⁵⁴⁾ Malek later contributed to the establishment of the Lebanese Forces.

On the morning of February 7, 1978, there was an exchange of fire between Lebanese and Syrian soldiers near the Fayyadiya barracks, which was «another episode in the series of events that led to the collapse of the Lebanese army's unity.»⁽⁵⁵⁾ The 1981 report in The New York Times stated that half of its estimated 19,000

(51) Abdel Raouf Sinno, **The Lebanon War 1975-1990: The Disintegration of the State and the Fracturing of Society**, vol. 2, pp. 953-955.

(52) Samir Nassif, **Ahmad al-Khatib's Army Was the Focus of Conflict Between Hafez al-Assad and Arafat**, Al-Quds Al-Arabi website, August 5, 2017, accessed on May 19, 2025, time: 23:13.

(53) **Directory of Lebanese Militias**, Directorate of Intelligence, cia.gov, approved for release June 16, 2009.

(54) **The military establishment faces severe crises, from Bulletin No. 1 to the fighting in alleys**, Lebanon 24 website, November 9, 2015, accessed on May 16, 2025, at 16:16.

(55) Ahmad Ayash, Joseph Bassil, and Hassane al-Rifai, **Hassan al-Rifai, Guardian of the Republic**, Dar Saer al-Mashriq Publishing and Distribution, Jdeidet al-Metn, second revised edition, 2023, p. 120.





members were divided between the two warring camps.⁽⁵⁶⁾

A further split occurred in the army and its youth in 1983 when it redeployed in the western part of the capital, clashing with militias there and in the southern suburbs. Units from the army intervened in the Mountain War, and the Druze split off took the Hammana barracks as their center. On February 6, 1984, the rift between the «Western Army» and the «Eastern Army» grew bigger when the predominantly Shiite Sixth Brigade abandoned the central command of the army and joined the Amal Movement. At the same time, Druze members of the Fourth Brigade joined the Progressive Socialist Party in controlling western Shahar area.⁽⁵⁷⁾

The fragmentation deepened when Amin Gemayel's presidency ended in September 1988 and extended to the leadership itself between General Michel Aoun and Major General Sami al-Khatib,⁽⁵⁸⁾ a Sunni, causing the army and the country's institutions as a whole to collapse to an unprecedented level. The final chapter of the war that followed was extremely bloody, with internal Christian fighting between Aoun and the Lebanese Forces led by Samir Geagea.

The Israeli factor in the fragmentation of the army cannot

(56) John Kifner, **Battered and divided army mirrors Lebanese civil war**, The New York Times, May 24, 1981.

(57) Abdul Raouf Sinno, **The Lebanon War 1975-1990: The Disintegration of the State and the Fracturing of Society**, vol. 2, pp. 955-956.

(58) Brigadier General Elie Khalaf, **The Lebanese Army: Reality and Future Role**, Egyptian Institute for Studies website, September 2, 2021.





be overlooked. When the «Free and Independent State of Lebanon» was declared on April 18, 1979, Haddad was at the head of the Free Army of Lebanon, as it was then called, which Tel Aviv encouraged Christians to join, along with about 200 Shiites, 100 Druze, and dozens of Sunnis. In 1984, when the leadership was passed to Antoine Lahad, the faction had 2,069 fighters, including 1,286 Christians, 322 Shiites, 276 Druze, and 65 Sunnis. A year later, its name was changed to the Army of South Lebanon.⁽⁵⁹⁾ The aforementioned CIA document states that it had around 20 tanks at the time.⁽⁶⁰⁾

Bloody days... Wars within a War

The personal and the general factors intertwined in the war, and sometimes the most violent events, such as the Black Saturday massacre on December 6, 1975, were overshadowed by personal vendettas. Joseph Saadeh acknowledged that he and some young men «kidnapped Shiites» in retaliation as soon as he was informed of the killing of his son Roland. He then murdered Muslim passersby, most of them workers at the Port of Beirut, admitting that the massacre was an individual decision, as he was told by the leaders of the Kataeb that he and those with him were «crazy and



(59) Hussein Ayoub, **Lahad's Army from its Offensive Beginnings to its Expected End**, *As-Safir*, May 26, 1999, Issue 8304, p. 3.

(60) **Directory of Lebanese Militias**, Directorate of Intelligence, cia.gov, approved for release 16 June 2009.



would set the country on fire again.»⁽⁶¹⁾ And that is what happened.

The war saw many massacres. Randall wrote about the Karantina massacre on January 18, 1976, «the day Christian militias killed hundreds of civilians, including Kurds, Lebanese Shiites, and Palestinians, most of whom were unarmed;» it was committed by



Sabra and Shatila massacre

young men high on hashish or cocaine. He also listed the massacres of «Dbayeh, Black Saturday, Damour, Aishiyeh, Jisr al-Basha, Tal el-Zaatar, al-Qaa, al-Kheyam, Ehden, Safra Marine, Zahle [...]». As for Sabra and Shatila, the massacre lasted 38 hours without interruption between September 16 and 18, 1982. Horses, dogs, and cats were not spared, and the bodies were cut up, mutilated, and even mined to prevent them from being touched and buried.⁽⁶²⁾ Participants in the crime

(61) Joseph Saadeh, *I Am the Victim and the Executioner*, pp. 12–13.

(62) Jonathan Randall, *The Thousand-Year War, Until the Last Christian, Christian Warlords and the Israeli Adventure in Lebanon*, pp. 26, 29.





spoke to the camera of the documentary *Massaker* about their drug use and military training in Israel in 1980, and that «the Jews» recruited them in the process of «exterminating» the Palestinians in revenge for Bashir Gemayel, whom they had no hand in killing.

Randall pointed to a pattern of collective revenge following political assassinations, such as the killing of 342 «Kataeb members and their family members» in 1978 at a rate of «more than ten deaths for each of those who fell in [the assassination of Tony Frangiyeh in] Ehden.» Prior to that, in 1977, more than 170 Christians were killed in the Chouf in response to the murder of Kamal Jumblat.⁽⁶³⁾

The two assassinations were pivotal in the course of the war. The bullets that tore apart the Druze politician's body and the indiscriminate violence that followed were behind, in one way or another, the Mountain War between September 1983 and February 1984, which ended with a Druze victory and «the displacement of the Maronites of Mount Lebanon, mirroring the exodus of Christians to Mount Lebanon at the invitation and encouragement of Emir Fakhr al-Din in the 16th and 17th centuries.»⁽⁶⁴⁾

The targeting of Frangiyeh also unleashed internal Christian fighting, specifically between Maronites. One



(63) Jonathan Randall, **The Thousand-Year War: Until the Last Christian, Christian Warlords and the Israeli Adventure in Lebanon**, pp. 17, 105.

(64) Makram Rabah, **The Mountain War: Forty Years of Lessons in Lebanon**, Al-Majalla website, September 23, 2023, accessed on May 21, 2025, time: 22:39.



of its stages was the armed attack by Bashir Gemayel on «the barracks of the Chamounists, the [five] ports, and the offices and other locations of the Free Nationalists Party» or Ahrars on July 7, 1980, under the pretext of countering hashish smuggling, which led to the killing of 500 people, most of them civilians.⁽⁶⁵⁾ The profit motive and control over the spoils of the economy and its key sectors in the wake of the decline of state institutions were no secret, and the war hereby deviated from its declared course in 1975, as the «enemy» was no longer the leftists, Muslims, or Palestinians, but other Christians. Other examples of Christian political battles include the clashes between the Marada Movement and the Lebanese Forces on the Koura-Batroun axis in 1982, the rebellion of Geagea and Elie Hobeika against the leadership of Fouad Abou Nader of the Lebanese Forces in 1985, and the violent conflicts between Geagea and Hobeika in 1986.

The situation was no better in the opposing camp. For instance, there were wars waged by the Amal Movement against leftist parties in the shared areas of West Beirut, the southern suburbs, the Bekaa Valley, and the South, such as the clashes with the Iraqi-backed Arab Socialist Baath Party, the pro-Libyan Arab Socialist Union, the Lebanese Communist Party, and the Communist Action Organization; then the conflict with the Progressive Socialist Party in 1985 and 1987; in addition to the siege of Palestinian camps between

(65) Jonathan Randall, **The Thousand-Year War, Until the Last Christian, Christian Warlords and the Israeli Adventure in Lebanon**, pp. 109-110.





1985 and 1987; and what was called the Brothers' War of Amal and Hezbollah between 1988 and 1990.

It is noteworthy that the number of those who died in internal clashes within each sect was twice of those killed in clashes between different sects, especially among Maronite and Shiite militias. Furthermore, during the 1980s, political parties increasingly recruited young people under the age of 18, which led to an increase in «arbitrary, blind, and indiscriminate violence.»⁽⁶⁶⁾

The violence was widespread. In the study «To the Death...» 70.3 percent of the sample admitted to bombing military sites, 41.5 percent to treacherously killing fighters from the other side, 36.3 percent to bombing civilians, 29.8 percent to insulting and humiliating people, 25.8 percent to targeting residential buildings, and 25 percent to kidnapping. The highest percentage of hostage-taking was by the Kataeb with 44.5 percent, followed by the Lebanese Forces with 37.5 percent. The Lebanese Communist Party ranked first in bombing civilians with 22.5 percent, followed by the Amal Movement with 21.9 percent. In detonations, the Lebanese Forces came first with 52 percent, followed by the Lebanese Phalange or Kataeb with 46.1 percent. The Lebanese Communist Party had the most snipers with 20 percent, followed by the Amal Movement with 17.8 percent. The Lebanese Forces fighters were the most likely to burn or damage private property at 29.7 percent, followed by their counterparts in the Amal Movement, at 20.8 percent. Insults against individuals





were most prevalent among members of the Kataeb at 38.9 percent, followed by Amal and the Lebanese Forces, at 29.2 percent.⁽⁶⁷⁾

Kidnapping... War on individuals and ongoing tragedy

We can consider the kidnapping and counter-kidnapping of tens of thousands of civilians to be a massacre of another nature, aimed at systematic and indiscriminate political revenge. It was sometimes beyond the control of party leaders and carried out by young men in the context of the excess of power that accompanies armament, as evidenced by some individuals' threat of random kidnappings and setting up of «mobile checkpoints» for this purpose.⁽⁶⁸⁾ Before the war's first anniversary, Kameel Chamoun called on the parties to exercise restraint in the face of kidnapping which he described as «the root of all evil.»⁽⁶⁹⁾ In 1984, writer Elias Khoury considered it «a real institution [...] in which the ruling class, with all its wings, declares its inability to deal with a clear crime [...]».⁽⁷⁰⁾

Al-Bizri was affected by kidnapping through her

(67) **To the Death... A survey of the continuing experiences among fighters from Lebanon's Civil wars**, pp. 37-39.

(68) See: **Yehmor Threatens to Resort to Kidnapping**, As-Safir, December 29, 1975, Issue 632, p. 2; **Al-Issawi Denounces Kidnapping and Counter-Kidnapping**, As-Safir, December 6, 1975, Issue 611, p. 4.

(69) **Chamoun anticipates unrest and blames kidnapping**, As-Safir, December 6, 1975, issue 611, p. 4.

(70) Elias Khoury, **The Kidnapping Institution**, As-Safir, July 10, 1984, issue 3647, p. 12.





husband, a few days after the Sabra and Shatila massacre. He was detained for two months and two days at the Ministry of Defense in Yarzeh on charges of communism and involvement in the assassination of Bashir Gemayel. After she requested the mediation of a «progressive» deputy with Amin Gemayel, he was released on condition that he leave the country. She wrote about that experience: «It remains that my 'luck' in kidnapping and detention was better than that of others. The party that kidnapped and detained him was an official body that could deal with judges, presidents, ministers, or deputies. [... The state] acted like militias, sometimes hiding forever those whose lives and deaths it controlled.»⁽⁷¹⁾

Al-Bizri contributed to the creation of the Committee of Families of the Kidnapped and Disappeared in Lebanon, a body that was and still associated with her comrade, Wadad Halwani, the young woman whose life was turned upside down, as the two kidnappers of her husband Adnan said they were from «the state» and that he would return in «five minutes» to be questioned about a car accident.⁽⁷²⁾ To this day, those minutes have not passed. Like other Lebanese women, she experienced living with violence, learning to «assess the type of missile» in order to flee, and the location of the sniper and the trajectory of his bullets to protect



(71) Dalal al-Bizri, **Notebooks of the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990)**, pp. 161, 167-168.

(72) Sawssan Abou-Zahr, **The disappeared of Lebanon: the unfinished story of a finished war**, peaceinsight, July 5, 2017, accessed on May 6, 2025, time: 18:19.



her children from him.⁽⁷³⁾ Also, women and young girls were forced to search for their missing relatives themselves because «men were usually forcibly disappeared or kidnapped when they went to pay ransom for their kidnapped family members.»⁽⁷⁴⁾

Kidnapping was also a source of income when accompanied by ransom demands. The detention of foreigners, especially journalists, between 1984 and 1989 was a lucrative business, as kidnapers sought «the best deal [...] by selling hostages from one group to another until they ended up in the hands of a larger group»⁽⁷⁵⁾ with



Missing persons, Civil War years

(73) Wadad Halwani, **Shanāi: From a Love Affair to a War Zone, Windmills**, published by the International Center for Transitional Justice and the Committee of the Families of the Kidnapped and Disappeared in Lebanon, distributed by Dar Nelson, 2023, p. 42.

(74) Jana Murad, **Dealing with the Past, Memories for the Future: Reviving the Stories of Unhonored Heroines**, p. 22.

(75) **Podcast Ma'bar, Season 2, Episode 3**, January 19, 2024, podcast website on YouTube, accessed on May 22, 2025, time: 16:25.





political demands. British journalist Robert Fisk wrote that «Libyan agents» in Beirut «bought» hostages from freelance young kidnappers working on their own account and tried to «buy» his American colleague and friend Terry Anderson.⁽⁷⁶⁾

Rape... systematic gender-based violence

The Lebanese war was no exception in the use of sexual violence as a weapon targeting girls and women, with rape threatening any female even before puberty. Halwani recounted her fear of this fate during a long escape with her two children to supposed safety.⁽⁷⁷⁾ According to Saad, some fathers, even in conservative circles, agreed to military training for their daughters to protect them from sexual assault.⁽⁷⁸⁾ However, this was not necessarily achieved, as one female fighter admitted that her counterparts «were subjected to harassment within their militias.»⁽⁷⁹⁾

The female civilians who fell victim to this crime, which no one claimed responsibility for, continued to face denial and sometimes stigmatization. When rape was

(76) Robert Fisk, **Pity the Nation**, Oxford University Press, third edition, 2001, p. 616.

(77) Wadad Halwani, **Shanāi: From a Love Affair to a War Zone**, Windmills, p. 49.

(78) Sawssan Abou-Zahr, **The metamorphosis of a female fighter into a peacebuilder**, peaceinsight, April 23, 2019.

(79) Sawssan Abou-Zahr, **Rape and Lebanon's war: longstanding impunity**, peaceinsight, October 24, 2022, accessed on May 8, 2025, time: 15:24.





acknowledged, it was done so in a boastful manner. In Slim and Borgmann's 2002 documentary *Massaker*, a fighter reenacted the deflowering of a Palestinian girl before killing her. However, his account of his abuse placed it in an individual context, as no one else in the film mentioned sexual abuse, which does not mean that they did not commit it. In any case, it was difficult to document or address cases of rape, except for major massacres such as Sabra and Shatila. Overall, the stories of victims and survivors remained hidden, voluntarily or by force, due to family, community, and political sensitivities.

The blackout lasted for years until 80 pages of shocking testimonies collected from eight locations, including Palestinian camps, broke the wall of silence in a documented report previously mentioned by the Legal Action Worldwide and UN Women. Perhaps the passage of time contributed to highlighting the need for disclosure, and more importantly, hundreds of women who were victims of or witnesses to sexual crimes during the war received psychological and legal support from the authors of the document, a right that was not provided to them by the post-Taif Agreement governments, which showered them with violent neglect.

The report said that state and non-state actors used rape on a large scale and in a systematic manner, including rape with glass bottles and sharp instruments to mutilate genitals, gang rape, and rape by multiple perpetrators or mass rape. Sexual torture, such as electrocution of





the breasts, severe beating during menstruation, and forced prostitution, in addition to the killing pregnant women and young girls after raping them or tying them to two cars driving in opposite directions.⁽⁸⁰⁾

One evidence of the entrenched culture of impunity is that a rapist became a guest on television after turning famous, according to a survivor.⁽⁸¹⁾ This is a form of double and sustained violence that she and her peers face.

The geography of militias... Lebanon's seven regions

After 1982, when Palestinian factions were expelled from southern Lebanon and the western part of Beirut, until the end of the war in 1990, Lebanon was divided into seven regions controlled by various parties and militias, as well as Israel and Syria. These were:

- 1- The border strip, which was under the control of the Army of South Lebanon and directly occupied by Israel.
- 2- The south – the area situated to the north of the border strip, under the complete control of the Amal Movement, especially after 1988, a Shiite-majority area.
- 3- Sidon, which was administered by the Popular Nasserist Organization and inhabited by Lebanese



(80) Sawssan Abou-Zahr, **Rape and Lebanon's war: longstanding impunity**, peaceinsight, October 24, 2022.

(81) Marwa Ballout, **«I see my rapists today on television screens»: LAW documents crimes against women in the Lebanese war**, Legal Agenda website, June 16, 2022, accessed on May 8, 2025, time: 16:33.



and Palestinians, mostly Sunnis, with Shiite and Christian minorities.

4- The «Druze Mountain», which included the districts of Chouf, Aley, and the Kharroub Province, as well as part of Metn. It was a stronghold of the Progressive Socialist Party.

5- The southern suburbs of Beirut remained under the control of the Amal Movement from the late 1970s until 1988, when they became the main stronghold of Hezbollah, a predominantly Shiite area.

6- The «Christian area» included East Beirut, North Metn, Baabda, Kesrouan, Byblos, and part of the Batroun district. Until early 1989, it remained a «homogeneous canton» before being torn apart by Christian infighting into two geographical units: Ashrafieh, Gemmayzeh, Dora, and Nabaa, along with Kesrouan, Byblos, and Batroun, which were under the control of the Lebanese Forces; and the northeastern suburbs of Beirut, including Baabda, northern Metn, and part of Aley controlled by Aoun.

7- The rest of the country fell under the control of the Syrian forces. This included the western part of Beirut, the Bekaa, Zahle, Akkar, Tripoli, Koura, Bsharri, Zgharta, and part of the Upper Metn. It comprised 25 to 30 percent of Christians, half of the Shiites, and four-fifths of the Sunnis.⁽⁸²⁾

This map of Lebanon's fragmentation is essential to

(82) Kamal Hamdan, **The Lebanese Crisis**, pp. 184-188.





understanding the structure of the economic militia empires.

The economy of militias... fighting and compromise

As mentioned earlier, the war deviated from the path of the «cause,» whatever it may be, to fighting over the spoils of the black economy, and with that, the features and headlines of the conflict changed, enemies and allies shifted, but the fall of victims did not stop. When the violence took on an economic character, it was systematized, involving millions and even billions of dollars, managed by militia leaders and practiced individually by small ranking armed young men for personal gain. Economic warfare established illegal mini-states on the ruins of central authority, and they fought each other or formed alliances according to their interests and circumstances, and lived off extorting civilians and institutions.

Armed groups developed their empires in various fields, including illegal ports, smuggling, drug trafficking, money laundering, parallel or extortionate tax systems, the import of cigarettes and oil derivatives that used to belong to the state, and the counterfeiting of industrial products. The parallel economy also included currency speculation, high-interest lending, black markets in flour and bread, medicines, and even substitutes for disrupted public services such as water,





electricity, and telephone services.⁽⁸³⁾

Estimates of the black economy's revenues vary, as the available figures were collected by researchers at different times and under changing conditions, but it is believed that the militias' overall gains exceeded \$30 billion.⁽⁸⁴⁾

Drug trafficking of all kinds was the main source of funding and armament for most organizations. Between 1975 and 1980, it generated between \$1.5 billion and \$2 billion annually. Ironically, the «lords» cooperated with each other and worked together to make this illegal trade a success, even though they were enemies in the war. They monopolized the profits and allocated only the crumbs to pay their young fighters. Drug use spread among them; some became addicted to stay alert at the barricades and when committing massacres, as mentioned earlier,



Wartime taxes and payments imposed by militias

(83) Kamal Hamdan, **The Lebanese Crisis**, pp. 264-265.

(84) Kamal Deeb, **Roger Tamraz, the Intra Empire, and the Money Whales in Lebanon 1968-1989**, Al-Maktaba Al-Sharqia, Sin el Fil, 1st edition, 2018, p. 283.





while others used drugs for pleasure. Banks, protected by banking secrecy laws, were involved in laundering drug money. Researcher Kamal Deeb considered that the relationship between the political class and its sectarian militias with the financial titans was one of the reasons why the banking sector was protected and left untouched by them during the war.⁽⁸⁵⁾

Randall wrote that «as waves of violence and individual and professional looting escalated, Christian militias looted the port. Meanwhile, Palestinians, perhaps with the support of European thieves, carried out the largest series of bank robberies. Thus, Lebanon's two most important sources of income disappeared.» He quoted Najarian or «Nazo» justifying the theft of the assets of the Port of Beirut and its duty-free market, estimated at the time at \$715 million, as compliance with pressure from his young fighters who had seen signs of excessive wealth among other combatants, noting that all the money was subsequently squandered on «gambling, drugs, and women.»⁽⁸⁶⁾

Militias shared official and illegal ports along the Lebanese coast, earning approximately \$2.1 billion during the war.⁽⁸⁷⁾ Here is a list of those facilities and the groups that ran them, from south to north.



(85) Kamal Deeb, **Roger Tamraz, Intra Empire and Money Whales in Lebanon 1968-1989**, pp. 275-278, 337-340.

(86) Jonathan Randall, **The Thousand-Year War, Until the Last Christian, Christian Warlords and the Israeli Adventure in Lebanon**, pp. 89-90.

(87) Kamal Deeb, **Roger Tamraz, The Intra Empire and the Money Whales in Lebanon, 1968-1989**, p. 281.



The port of Naqoura was controlled by the Army of South Lebanon and used for drug smuggling.⁽⁸⁸⁾ That of Tyre was one of the sources of income for the Amal Movement, which charged \$50 for every imported vehicle.⁽⁸⁹⁾ It also managed the port of Zahrani for fuel imports and shared its revenues with what remained of the weak state, with a share going to Lahad. The Popular Nasserist Organization had its share of customs duties in Sidon, and some went to the Army of South Lebanon,⁽⁹⁰⁾ which collected 400 Liras from every commercial ship that docked in Sidon and Tyre, as well as 25 Liras on any transaction involving machinery and vehicles in the South Governorate, based in Sidon.⁽⁹¹⁾

The port of Jiyeh fell under the influence of the Progressive Socialist Party⁽⁹²⁾, as did the Khaldeh facility. The port of Ouzai has been under the control of the Amal Movement since 1984.⁽⁹³⁾

The so-called «Christian canton» included the ports of Jounieh and Beirut.⁽⁹⁴⁾ The former imported foodstuffs and operated a shipping line to Cyprus, and by the

(88) Kamal Hamdan, **The Lebanese Crisis**, p. 184.

(89) **The Amal Movement in the South: An Indecisive Apparatus... Consumed by Chaos**, Al-Hayat, Issue 9892, February 1, 1990, p. 8.

(90) Fawaz Traboulsi, **Modern History of Lebanon: From the Emirate to the Taif Agreement**, p. 405.

(91) **Haddad Militias Impose Taxes on Ships and Official Transactions in the South**, As-Safir, November 1, 1982, Issue 3050, p. 6.

(92) Kamal Hamdan, **The Lebanese Crisis**, p. 185.

(93) Fawaz Traboulsi, **Modern History of Lebanon: From the Emirate to the Taif Agreement**, pp. 404-405.

(94) Kamal Hamdan, **The Lebanese Crisis**, p. 186.





end of the 1980s it was in the hands of the Lebanese Forces. The fifth basin of the latter was also in their hands along with the Phalange or Kataeb.⁽⁹⁵⁾ The «Khuwwa» or extortionate and illegal tax was practiced there even before the war, starting from March 1975. It was used to quickly unload goods, ranging from 10,000 to 25,000 Liras, and then secure their storage in warehouses and depots.⁽⁹⁶⁾

The Marada Movement took control of the port of Shikka, which was intended for cement exports, and imposed fees on cement factories, sharing the port's revenues with the Syrian Social Nationalist Party and other entities loyal to the Syrian regime. The Mahdi Port in Tripoli was run by businessman Tariq Fakhr al-Din on behalf of the Islamic Unification Movement.⁽⁹⁷⁾

Everything was subject to «thuggery,» as the colloquial expression goes, even school desks.⁽⁹⁸⁾ Extortion, a violent economic practice, was justified with pretexts that did not fit, such as «defending the homeland»⁽⁹⁹⁾

(95) Fawaz Traboulsi, **Modern History of Lebanon: From the Emirate to the Taif Agreement**, p. 404.

(96) **Extortionate tax for unloading goods at the port compete with the extortionate tax imposed on storing them**, *As-Safir*, March 28, 1975, Issue 362, p. 2.

(97) Fawaz Traboulsi, **Modern History of Lebanon: From the Emirate to the Taif Agreement**, p. 404.

(98) **The Kataeb's extortionate tax on the state**, *As-Safir*, March 22, 1980, issue 2126, p. 7.

(99) **«Khuwwa» to defend «our homeland Lebanon,»** *As-Safir*, September 16, 1975, issue 532, p. 2.





and «repairing roads.»⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ As if «thuggery» were noble and honorable!

The looting of private and public property and the imposition of extortion accounted for about 12 percent of the militias' income during the war, or \$3.2 billion.⁽¹⁰¹⁾ A share of the revenues of freelance professions and industrial, commercial, and agricultural establishments was also taken, as well as major institutions such as Middle East Airlines, the Lebanese Tobacco Monopoly Administration, the Regie.⁽¹⁰²⁾

For example, the Amal Movement collected fees from building permits at a rate of 15 Liras, or three cents per square meter, and settlements at about 40 percent of their value, as well as half a dollar on every can of gasoline.⁽¹⁰³⁾ It imposed illegal taxes on real estate in the south at a rate of \$2 per dunam and illegal taxes on consumer goods.⁽¹⁰⁴⁾

In turn, Bashir Gemayel collected taxes on gasoline, restaurant and nightclub bills, illegal casinos, real estate transactions, as well as a housing fine based on the size

(100) **The Progressive Socialist Party Explains the «Lira Project,»** As-Safir, May 6, 1976, Issue 758, p. 3.

(101) Kamal Deeb, **Roger Tamraz, The Intra Empire and the Money Whales in Lebanon 1968-1989**, pp. 279, 282.

(102) Fawaz Traboulsi, **Modern History of Lebanon: From the Emirate to the Taif Agreement**, p. 410.

(103) **The Amal Movement in the South: An Indecisive Apparatus... Consumed by Chaos**, Al-Hayat, p. 8.

(104) Fawaz Traboulsi, **Modern History of Lebanon: From the Emirate to the Taif Agreement**, p. 410.





of the property.⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ The Lebanese Forces charged 2 percent of the price of goods at their checkpoints.⁽¹⁰⁶⁾

We can consider within the black economy what accompanied the Israeli invasion, such as the existence of offices for exchanging the Lebanese Lira for the Israeli Shekel in the Chouf and an El Al airline agent in Sidon. And while some young Lebanese voluntarily engaged in what could be considered economic normalization, the Israeli occupation was at the same time an economic invasion. Fisk wrote that on one of his visits to Sidon in 1983, he found no local oranges or lemons, No «Lebanese fruit at all. Every box of oranges, every crate of fruit crate had come from Israel [...] collected at the frontier by truck whose drivers threatened journalists who tried to take photographs. Israel's [forced] exports were helping to put Lebanese farmers out of business.»⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ The Army of South Lebanon in Naqoura earned \$15 million annually by exporting Israeli goods to Arab markets pretending they were Lebanese products.⁽¹⁰⁸⁾

When the war was coming to an end, the economic violence represented by the parallel economy had taken hold of most state administrations and productive sectors, with the Lebanese Forces earning millions of

(105) Jonathan Randall, **The Thousand-Year War, Until the Last Christian, Christian Warlords and the Israeli Adventure in Lebanon**, p. 107.

(106) Fawaz Traboulsi, **Modern History of Lebanon: From the Emirate to the Taif Agreement**, p. 409.

(107) Robert Fisk, **Pity the Nation**, pp. 457, 543-544.

(108) Fawaz Traboulsi, **Modern History of Lebanon: From the Emirate to the Taif Agreement**, p. 411.





dollars, according to their rival Aoun. When he spoke about it in February 1989, without mentioning the other militias out of spite and malice, the figures he presented were enough to give an idea of how everyone had an interest in prolonging the war in order to reap its rewards. Through its armed youth, the Lebanese Forces earned 400 million Liras from real estate transactions. The fifth basin of the Port of Beirut had a monthly income of 100 million Liras, compared to 1 million from passenger traffic through Jounieh, charging 400 Liras for every 20 liters of gasoline and 4 percent of any bill at Casino du Liban and taxes on factory owners, shops, and the self-employed.⁽¹⁰⁹⁾

(109) **Al-Khuwwat and Taxes in Numbers**, As-Safir, February 18, 1989, Issue 5207, p. 3.





Chapter Three: It Is over, But Not Really

Just as «the others» had a hand in igniting the war, it was their decision to extinguish it through the Taif Agreement. Those who survived from the 1972 parliament did not meet in their capital, but in the Saudi resort in September 1989. Ironically, the agreement designed to end the war was the cause of a new conflict, as The War of Abolition broke out between Aoun and Geagea between January and May 1990, a confrontation that had disastrous consequences for civilians and Christians in particular, as well as for both men, leading to the exile of the former in August 1991 and the arrest of the latter in April 1994. This battle is proof that violence only ceased on paper, with no justice or accountability, only a general amnesty law⁽¹⁾ that transformed the warlords into politicians who were sometimes allies and sometimes adversaries on new fronts in parliament, the government, and the streets when sectarian interests demanded it.

Beyond that, is there a date synonymous with April 13 that can be considered the end of the war? Is it the day the National Accord Document was born in

(1) See: **Text of the Amnesty Law in the Official Gazette**, August 27, 1991, Issue 34, pp. 1-3.





Taif on September 30, 1989, or the approval of the agreement on October 22, or its ratification by MPs at Qlaiyat Airport on November 5 of the same year, or the adoption of most of its provisions in a constitutional amendment on August 21, 1990? Or was it October 13 of the same year, when the former Syrian al-Assad regime ended the War of Liberation, by bombing the presidential palace in Baabda, and killing dozens of Lebanese army soldiers loyal to Aoun? Or was it when the amnesty law was issued on August 26, 1991?

Taif... the end of the war or its suspension?

The Taif Agreement was not separate from previous attempts, as «meetings and conferences were held and agreements were signed to end the war, most notably the declaration of the 'Constitutional Document' (1976), the Six-Party Summit in Riyadh (1976), the establishment of the Arab Deterrent Force (1976), the Shtoura Agreement (1977), the Lebanese Dialogue Conference in Geneva and Lausanne (1983-1984), the Tripartite Agreement in Damascus (1985), the meetings of the Arab Six-Party Committee in Tunis (1988), and the Arab Tripartite Committee emanating from the Arab Summit in Casablanca [...] (1989), which called for a meeting of the Lebanese Parliament in the Saudi city of Taif to discuss and approve a draft agreement to end the war in Lebanon.»⁽²⁾



(2) Ramzi al-Hafiz, **The Lebanese Dream**, Infopro, Beirut, 1st edition, 2015, p. 109.



In Fawaz Traboulsi's opinion, this was a «revival» of the «Tripartite Agreement» that was aborted by parliament in February 1986 and militarily in March of the same year. On December 28, 1985, Walid Jumblat, Nabih Berri, and Elie Hobeika pledged to disband the militias within a year. Their agreement confirmed parity between Muslims and Christians and approved the abolition of political sectarianism after a period of time, the achievement of a balance between the powers of the president, the prime minister, and the parliament in favor of the latter two, an increase in the number of parliamentarians, reducing of the voting age to 18, and the establishment of a senate «based on sectarian representation, which would decide on vital issues related to constitutional amendments, naturalization, and declarations of war and peace [...]».⁽³⁾



Three years later, 62 deputies went to Taif, among whom Hassan al-Rifai refused to sign the document,

(3) Fawaz Traboulsi, **Modern History of Lebanon: From the Emirate to the Taif Agreement**, pp. 394-396.





Tawfiq Assaf and Zahir al-Khatib expressed reservations, and Edouard Henein fell ill.⁽⁴⁾ Al-Rifai, who was also absent from the session to approve the constitutional amendments on August 21, 1990, said that the deputies were summoned to a general meeting «where the amended text [distributed to them the day before] was read and everyone was asked to vote on it by acclamation [...],» criticizing the absence of «those with expertise [...] so that [they could have] addressed all the loopholes that had caused political crises to multiply [...] in the struggle between multiple heads [meaning authorities] amid ambiguity in powers and overlap between them.»⁽⁵⁾

Furthermore, «the problem is not only in the texts of the Taif Agreement and its mostly ambiguous wording [...] but rather the major flaw lies in the practice and the men who have implemented the Taif Agreement since 1990, and the flaw has increased since 1992 with the removal of the majority of the deputies who participated in the Taif Agreement and the arrival of those brought in by the Syrian intelligence services [...]».⁽⁶⁾ Worse yet, it enshrined Syrian tutelage or mandate, at what Makram Rabah described as a «heavy price.»⁽⁷⁾

(4) Abbas Hadla, **Peace Initiatives in War and Peace (1975-2025): The Postponed Reconciliation**, Nidaa al-Watan website, April 12, 2025, accessed on June 19, 2025, time: 15:25.

(5) Ahmad Ayash, Joseph Bassil, and Hassane al-Rifai, **Hassan al-Rifai, Guardian of the Republic**, pp. 324–325, 328, 335.

(6) Ahmad Ayash, Joseph Bassil, and Hassane al-Rifai, **Hassan al-Rifai, Guardian of the Republic**, pp. 424–425.

(7) Makram Rabah, **The Conflict over Mount Lebanon, Collective Memory and the Mountain War**, p. 489.





In practice, the National Accord Document did not end the National Pact that accompanied Lebanon's independence, which Nawaf Salam described as «ambiguous» as well.⁽⁸⁾ It is as if ambiguity has accompanied the republic since 1943, if not before. Thus, it can be argued that the agreement froze the internal conflict without addressing its root causes, establishing a ceasefire rather than a final settlement.

The Taif Agreement made the abolition of political sectarianism a vague goal. Ramzi al-Hafiz wondered, «How can something be abolished when it does not exist?» explicitly in the 1926 and 1943 constitutions, considering this the most controversial clause as it led to the «legalization of political sectarianism.»⁽⁹⁾ As the agreement stipulated «the removal of sect and denomination from identity cards,» few young men and women did so voluntarily before being forced to back down by the sectarianism deeply rooted in society.⁽¹⁰⁾ This is in systematic violence practiced by both clerics and public institutions in obstructing marriage, divorce, inheritance, and employment for those who do not fall under the grip of sects.

A quick glance at the text of the document⁽¹¹⁾ reveals

(8) Nawaf Salam, **Lebanon Between Yesterday and Tomorrow**, Sharq al-Kitab, 1st Arabic edition, May 2021, p. 68.

(9) Ramzi al-Hafiz, **The Lebanese Dream**, p. 111.

(10) Hala Najjar, **The Abolition of Sectarianism, a «Mistake» Contrary to Reality: Or When Sects Reclaim Their Stray Children**, Legal Agenda website, June 22, 2017, accessed on June 19, 2025, time: 19:49.

(11) **The Taif Agreement, Document of National Reconciliation – Taif Agreement**, Lebanese Parliament website, accessed on June 19, 2025, time: 18:51.





the violations and infringements that followed and what remains unimplemented. For example, the separation of powers, balanced regional development, and financial, economic, and social reform in the «general principles» of the agreement have not been achieved. The same applies to other areas. The warlords who turned to politics are not solely responsible for these shortcomings. Elected local authorities are also complicit in violating the agreement, which affirmed the right of every Lebanese citizen to reside wherever they wish, while municipalities have banned people of different sects from living within their geographical boundaries,⁽¹²⁾ in a violent and exclusionary practice reminiscent of the war era.

We quote Nawaf Salam, who wrote years before becoming prime minister in 2025, that the agreement «failed, through its partial and distorted implementation, to put Lebanon on the path to state-building. [...] What is needed today is to address the imbalances of the Taif Agreement and develop it further.»⁽¹³⁾

The displaced, the kidnapped, and the missing... The permanence of war in peace

The war ended with a heavy toll: in addition to the 17,452 missing persons, it claimed 150,000 lives and left



(12) See: Johnny Fakhri, **In the «Country of Coexistence»... A Municipality in Lebanon Excludes Muslims!**, Al-Arabiya.net, June 20, 2019, accessed on June 19, 2025, at 19:21.

(13) Nawaf Salam, **Lebanon Between Yesterday and Tomorrow**, p. 120.



300,000 people injured, including those with permanent disabilities. During its various stages, more than one million people were decamped and around 600,000 internally displaced from 189 Christian and Muslim towns and villages, equivalent to 21.8 percent of the total population⁽¹⁴⁾ at the time. According to Tarabulsi, quoting Boutros Labaki and Khalil Abou Rjayli, 670,000 Christians were displaced, especially from areas mixed with Druze, compared to 157,000 Muslims, most of them Shiites, in what he called «sectarian cleansing» and «demographic filtering» followed by the «expulsion» of those with different political views within the same sect.⁽¹⁵⁾

After the end of the war, the Ministry of Displaced was established to oversee reconciliations and deal with the cases of those who had been forcibly displaced from their areas and return them after paying compensation. However, things did not go as planned, as evidenced by the continued existence of the ministry at the time of writing this research in 2025, although Kamal Shehadeh, who currently holds the position along with the portfolio of State Minister for Technology and Artificial Intelligence, expected to be the last Minister of Displaced because the role of the ministry «is over and it will be closed,» not out of its achievements, but because «there has been no funds in the ministry» since

(14) **The Lebanese Civil War: A 15-Year Conflict That Established a New Political System**, Al Jazeera.net, April 13, 2025, accessed on June 8, 2025, time 18:18.

(15) Fawaz Traboulsi, **Modern History of Lebanon: From Emirate to Taif Agreement**, p. 414.





2017.⁽¹⁶⁾ At that time, it was under the authority of Judge Alice Shabtini, who said that thousands had received a first installment of compensation but have not being paid the rest, and «this is the height of injustice to those who were first displaced by war and then deprived of their rights,» as «every party or faction works for its own interests and serves its own community at the expense of the victimized citizen who loses his occupied property, and at the expense of the state, which is powerless.»⁽¹⁷⁾

With this acknowledgment of the fragility of the state, the issue remained a bleeding wound, as the return of displaced people is an act of reconciliation with the land and memory, and one aspect of justice required to address the consequences of the past. Thus, some young people remain excluded from their towns of origin.

In the same context, concealing the truth about the fate of the missing and abducted perpetuates the pain of their families and deepens their sense of injustice. which drags the war deeper in their memories, especially that most of their loved ones were detained by militias that now control the state and they will surely not condemn themselves. For years, the authorities only established

(16) **«I will be the last minister for displaced persons»... Shehadeh: Technology will transport Lebanon to a better world and our children are pioneers of innovation**, Nidaa Al-Watan website, April 18, 2025, accessed on July 2, 2025, time: 15:24.

(17) **Three decades after its creation... Is the Ministry of Displaced Persons heading for closure?**, MTV website, June 10, 2018, accessed on June 22, 2025, time: 15:02.





two committees, one for the security aspects and another ministerial-judicial, and no one bothered to take serious and responsible action despite the availability of public



Urban scars of the Civil War

information about mass graves.⁽¹⁸⁾ Halwani said that even in the disclosure of the graves, «the 6 and 6 policy [referring to a popular saying mocking the fact that everything in Lebanon has to be achieved respecting equality between Muslims and Christians, including uncovering the truth]! was adopted, they did not give us any evidence and published only a page and a half.»⁽¹⁹⁾ The formation of the Independent National Commission for the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared in July 2020 was a shy step forward on the road to justice.

In addition to the displaced and abducted, there are other affected who are not included in the victim statistics, such as those who died out of fear of bombings or faded in sadness while waiting for an abducted loved one who never returned. There are also those who were driven to emigrate by the war

(18) Nader Fawz, **The Missing and Displaced: The Lebanese Civil War Is Not Over**, Al-Araby Al-Jadeed website, April 13, 2014, accessed on June 22, 2025, time: 15:14.

(19) Fatima Khashab Darwish, **The Case of the Missing in Lebanon: We Will Not Forget**, Al-Akhbar website, February 2, 2024, accessed on June 22, 2025, time: 15:43.





and its human and economic burdens. According to Labaki and Abou Rjayli, there are 894,717 such people, including many young men and women. Added to them are more than 100,000 people, mostly Christians, who left for Canada, the United States, and Australia as a result of what Traboulsi called «the wars of General»⁽²⁰⁾ Aoun. Ironically, fighters with multiple allegiances also emigrated at the end of the war or shortly thereafter. They were young when the war broke out and chose to go away when it ended. In the study «To the Death...» 82.3 percent said that their comrades had left the country.⁽²¹⁾

The aftermath of war... Psychological burdens

Just as the Taif Agreement did not bring justice to the victims of the war and the families of the missing and kidnapped, it neglected the rehabilitation of fighters who entered the conflict as young men and emerged from it without any experience of a life free from violence. According to «To the Death...» 2.75 percent sought psychological treatment after the end of the war, and 8.75 percent underwent specialized follow-up.⁽²²⁾



(20) Fawaz Traboulsi, **Modern History of Lebanon: From the Emirate to the Taif Agreement**, pp. 415, 423.

(21) **To the Death... A survey of the continuing experiences among fighters from Lebanon's Civil wars**, p. 63.

(22) **To the Death... A survey of the continuing experiences among fighters from Lebanon's Civil wars**, p. 23.



In an interview for this research, Monika Borgmann reported that the six fighters who appeared in the documentary *Massaker* had experienced harsh childhoods with abusive fathers, but that observation in no way mitigates what they did before and after the Sabra and Shatila massacre. She criticized the amnesty law, calling it a «great sin» for perpetuating impunity, as it protected militia leaders but left their young recruits by themselves to face the consequences of their actions. She added that while working on the project, which aimed to study collective violence in the war, the interviewees still defended their «cause.» One of them even said in a conversation that was not included in the film that he could never accept his daughter being involved in a romantic affair with a Palestinian young man, threatening to kill him if that happened. The violence remained in their hearts, and one of them became a security contractor in Iraq, taking up arms again to earn a living.⁽²³⁾ Back to the study «*To the Death...*», 12.5 percent of those surveyed refused to forgive their enemies of yesterday.⁽²⁴⁾

Assaad Shaftari was met with ridicule and skepticism and received death threats when he apologized⁽²⁵⁾ individually, without any party backing, in 2000 «to all

(23) From an interview conducted by Sawssan Abou-Zahr with Monika Borgmann on June 18, 2025, at the headquarters of the Umam Documentation and Research in Beirut.

(24) **To the Death... A survey of the continuing experiences among fighters from Lebanon's Civil wars**, p. 49.

(25) Sawssan Abou-Zahr, **A religious fanatic turned peace advocate**, *peaceinsight*, November 10, 2014, accessed on June 24, 2025, time: 21:00.





the people I tortured or who were my victims [...] in the name of Lebanon or 'the cause' or 'Christianity' [...] not as a sign of weakness but as a responsible position. This has nothing to do with any measures that may be taken by the Lebanese judiciary in the name of the Lebanese people, whom I defer to and respect.»⁽²⁶⁾

He later made specific, personal apologies during visits to the living of his victims or the families of those who had died; and there was pain and bitterness, «but many forgave me.»⁽²⁷⁾ Among them was Hassan al-Rifai, who survived an assassination attempt that Shaftari had orchestrated on the eve of Bashir Gemayel's election.⁽²⁸⁾ The repentant fighter pointed out that the amnesty law, which did not provide for the rehabilitation of fighters and their integration into a path of community service, truth, and reconciliation,⁽²⁹⁾ should have been a starting point for establishing national institutions to help the families of the missing and the injured.⁽³⁰⁾

Shaftari is a founding member of the Fighters for Peace

(26) **Shaftari in «A letter to his victims»: I apologize for my actions on behalf of Lebanon**, An-Nahar, February 10, 2000, issue 20574, p. 5.

(27) Sawssan Abou-Zahr, **A religious fanatic turned peace advocate**, peaceinsight, November 10, 2014.

(28) Ahmad Ayash, Joseph Bassil, and Hassane al-Rifai, **Hassan al-Rifai, Guardian of the Republic**, p. 241.

(29) Sawssan Abou-Zahr, **A religious fanatic turned peace advocate**, peaceinsight, November 10, 2014.

(30) Joseph Issawi, **Interview with «the repentant» Assaad Shafatri: I only confessed my crimes to a few...** An-Nahar, May 9, 2000, Memory at Work, accessed on June 24, 2025, time: 21:57.





association⁽³¹⁾ along with four others, including Fouad Dirani, currently a university professor, interviewed for the purposes of this research. Dirani too considered that the amnesty law - which transformed militia leaders «from military uniforms to neckties» and brought their followers, without merit or competence, into official institutions as employees - denied justice to the affected civilians, the wounded, and the missing. This enshrined impunity, manipulation of the law, and «the withdrawal of the promised just state after the Taif Agreement from any social, economic, and psychological responsibility towards the victims,» also coincided with the beginning of the sharing of power among the militia leaders who took over the government in including selected followers into the army, without disrupting the Islamic-Christian balance» which Halwani referred to earlier. Even that procedure was limited and «reflected a disregard for the rehabilitation of thousands of fighters;» most of them were «left to boast and brag about their

(31) In an interview with Sawssan Abou-Zahr via WhatsApp on June 26, 2025, Dr. Fouad Dirani explained how Fighters for Peace was founded by people who had participated in the war and met by chance within the framework of the Our Unity is Our Salvation gathering, which was established in 2008 to work towards achieving civil peace. When fighting broke out between Bab al-Tabbaneh and Jabal Mohsen in 2012, five of these individuals, including Dirani, held a press conference entitled «From Yesterday's Fighters to Today's Fighters» to urge them not to repeat the experience of war. After the positive response to their initiative, they decided to launch Fighters for Peace and made sure that the title referred to them as former fighters to emphasize that change is possible, because «if we changed after we were fighting each other on the barricades, then any other change is possible,» and to emphasize that violence is not the solution to any dispute.





past.» There were those who were symbols and mid-level leaders and proud of «breaking others,» and their words influenced new young people in the same circles they used to lead. And those who adopted the rhetoric of «complaining, victimization, deprivation of rights, and persecution» had equal impact on new generations of youth.⁽³²⁾

The absence of justice... Violence under the ashes

In an attempt to deconstruct the intersections of mini wars after the Great War and the cycles of violence in Lebanon, we asked about the impact of the absence of justice on those who were young people and did not fight in the war, as well as on a generation and more of young people who did not experience it but live with its psychological, social, economic, political, and violent repercussions.

In an interview for this purpose, researcher Thia Sagherian said that the amnesty law undermined transitional justice processes. She believed that any form of accountability, even without trials, would have been a minimal form of justice, such as stripping militia leaders of their civil rights and sparing them prison in exchange for opening the door to young faces untainted by bloodshed and bringing about change, even if slight, in governance to curb the cycle of violence. In theory, the



(32) From an interview conducted by Sawssan Abou-Zahr via WhatsApp with Dr. Fouad Dirani on June 26, 2025.



country needed truth and reconciliation commissions in line with the Taif Agreement. However, there was no collective acknowledgment of responsibility for gross human rights violations, nor was there a political apology by the state as an entity and its institutions, or as a joint act by those who committed violence and crimes, as the apology was individual, like what Shaffari did, all of which frustrated the goal of transitional justice. Furthermore, the truth and reconciliation commissions should have included self-criticism and clear apologies from the Lebanese towards the Palestinians and vice versa.⁽³³⁾

Borgmann considered the her making with Slim of the documentary *Massaker* to be similar to the role of truth and reconciliation commissions, noting that the participants showed no remorse except for one person who appeared to be the most troubled in the film, whose distress she attributed to self-pity.⁽³⁴⁾

Furthermore, the general amnesty law tailored to the warlords did not mention Palestinian fighters, and prior to that, the Taif Agreement failed to name them specifically, even though they were the ones targeted by the dissolution of «non-Lebanese» militias. Palestinian civilians can therefore be classified among the forgotten

(33) From an interview conducted by Sawssan Abou-Zahr with Dr. Thia Sagherian, lecturer at the University of Dundee, Scotland, on June 15, 2025, in Beirut.

(34) From an interview conducted by Sawssan Abou-Zahr with Monika Borgmann on June 18, 2025, at the headquarters of the Umam Documentation and Research in Beirut.





victims of war, as they too have kidnapped, displaced, and raped persons among them, and cannot be reduced to the term «militias.» Thus, Taif failed to serve as a starting point for Lebanese-Palestinian reconciliation that would end the psychological and social scars of war.

In an interview for this research, Palestinian-Lebanese journalist and human rights activist Anis Fadel Mohsen presented his vision for a peaceful and healthy relationship between Lebanese and Palestinians. He pointed to the 2005 initiative by the Palestinian Human Rights Organization to bring together young Palestinians from different political backgrounds with their Lebanese counterparts, also from various sects and affiliations. The participants, including the Palestinians, took sides when controversial issues were raised behind the slogans of March 8 and March 14 that were prevalent at the time. This means that «Palestinian refugees are affected, in one way or another, by the divisive nature of Lebanon, and it is imperative, for both Lebanese and Palestinians, to instill the concept of citizenship, before or in parallel with reconciliation meetings. Politically, despite the Palestine Liberation Organization document in which it apologized⁽³⁵⁾ for its role in the Lebanese war, and holding meetings



(35) See: Ghassan Saoud, **Ambiguous apology confuses «other» Palestinians and divides Lebanese**, Al-Akhbar website, January 11, 2008, accessed on June 18, 2025, at 20:20; **Abbas Zaki: Apology to Palestinians who died in Lebanon wars is a good start to mutual understanding**, Donia Al-Watan website, April 12, 2008, accessed on June 18, 2025, time: 20:30.



with those who were its adversaries, the Palestinians continued to be considered responsible for the war. This stems from the concept of denial and blaming others, any others, including Palestinians. Therefore, what the youth of Lebanon need is a return to transitional justice, to reveal and acknowledge the facts of the war, and then reconciliation and forgiveness.»⁽³⁶⁾

The missing book and the torn memory

It is impossible to move from a violent past to a less violent present and future without critically rethinking Lebanon's history, especially what the younger generation needs to know about it.

It is noteworthy that during the war, there was a clear increase in historical writings that were used as a tool to promote certain ideological positions. Most of these works were written to defend the author's doctrine, and sectarianism became a motivating factor in historical writing.⁽³⁷⁾

Asked about the role of reform in teaching history, especially with regard to the war, in steering young people away from violence, education expert Nayla

(36) From an interview conducted by Sawssan Abou-Zahr via WhatsApp with Anis Fadel Mohsen on June 25, 2025.

(37) Axel Hofmann, **History and Historiography in Lebanon during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, Self-Understanding of History: Its Forms and Functions**, published under the supervision of the German Oriental Research Institute in Beirut at the Combioprint Press, Beirut, 1st edition, 2011, pp. 269-270.





Khodr Hamadeh linked the issue to the broader educational and social context. She praised the seriousness of the work of the current committee tasked with preparing the content of history curricula at various school levels in terms of rejecting information overload and encouraging students' analytical and comparative skills, thereby bringing the subject closer to the human dimension at the expense of the political and military aspects. However, she expressed concern about the lack of sufficient courage to approach the war in a way that avoids superficiality, simplification, and generalizations in the choice of terminology and topics, given the continuing divergence of the Lebanese's views on their past.⁽³⁸⁾

Previous attempts to prepare a unified history textbook were accompanied by violence, with injuries occurring in 2012 during protests by the Lebanese Forces and Free Nationalists or Ahrars against «insults to our resistance and sacrifice.»⁽³⁹⁾ Former Minister of Education Hassan Mneimneh said that «the Kataeb, for example, objected to the events between it and the Syrian forces being called confrontations rather than resistance [...]».⁽⁴⁰⁾

Hamadeh criticized what was stated in the Taif Agreement

(38) From an interview conducted by Sawssan Abou-Zahr with the founder of the Lebanese Association for History, Dr. Nayla Khodr Hamadeh, on June 20, 2025, in Beirut.

(39) **History book demonstration turns violent**, Al-Sharq, March 12, 2012, p. 12, Memory at Work, accessed on June 24, 2025, time: 20:25.

(40) **Mneimneh to Al-Hayat: Our history has been controversial since Prince Bashir**, Al-Hayat, March 13, 2012, Memory at Work, accessed on June 24, 2025, time: 20:35.





regarding «reviewing and developing curricula in a way that promotes national belonging and fusion, spiritual and cultural openness, and the unification of textbooks in the



Clashes and injuries at a demonstration over the history book and its content

subjects of history and national education,» rejecting the dissolution of the differences between the Lebanese components in the crucible of «fusion,» which would increase fears and accompanying isolation and potential violence, instead of recognizing diversity as a fundamental characteristic of national identity. She emphasized that adopting multiple narratives in history education encourages young people to pursue critical thinking and understand events in context, as well as to acquire empathy, build a language of dialogue and peaceful communication, and appreciate others, all of which are mechanisms that counter violence. She warned that the publication of the desired history book with a single narrative would lead to the teaching of a parallel history in private educational institutions affiliated with political and religious parties, according to the whims of teachers and their backgrounds.⁽⁴¹⁾

(41) From an interview conducted by Sawssan Abou-Zahr with the founder of the Lebanese Association for History, Dr. Nayla Khodr Hamadeh, on June 20, 2025, in Beirut.





It is no coincidence that Kamal Salibi chose to title the eleventh chapter of his book *A House with Many Mansions, The War over the History Book*, as part of his analysis of Lebanese differences, from describing Emir Fakhr al-Din as «the first founder of modern Lebanon» or being merely «a controversial Druze figure.» In his view, all attempts to formulate history education since 1935 have «overlooked the most sensitive topics [... those] related to Lebanon's historical identity.» He spoke of a parallel history that contradicts the «official narrative,» as in the teaching of the Chouf schools in the 1980s, which presented the «Druze narrative.»⁽⁴²⁾

Dirani evoked the danger of the absence of a coherent and non-selective collective national memory that acknowledges «that one group drove the Israeli occupation out of Lebanon and another pressured for the Syrian withdrawal.» From his university position, he observes the strong presence of individual memories among young people, including leniency towards their own group, justification of its mistakes and violence, and blaming others. To dismantle this, it is necessary to listen to different narratives and promote critical thinking⁽⁴³⁾ among the post-Taif generation, the heirs of the war trauma.



(42) Kamal Salibi, **A House with Many Mansions: The Lebanese Entity Between Perception and Reality**, translated by Afif al-Razzaz, Nofal Foundation, Beirut, 1st edition, 1990, pp. 249-251, 253.

(43) From an interview conducted by Sawssan Abou-Zahr via WhatsApp with Dr. Fouad Dirani on June 26, 2025.



In this context, the We Want to Know project,⁽⁴⁴⁾ in which Umam Documentation and Research took part, involved those who did not live through the war asking those who did about their daily experiences. For example, Karen said that it encouraged her to «go back to the past to understand the present because history repeats itself [...]». The project helped Christine understand what her parents had gone through. Fatima felt that oral history was the best way to explain the «mysterious reasons» for the war to her generation. Rana admitted that she had reconsidered her prejudices and become more open to different opinions. The project enabled Maria to understand the social consequences of war, prompting her to ask the question we still pose today: «Will we ever live in unity that no conflict can shake or threaten?»⁽⁴⁵⁾

If the legacy of war weighs heavily on the young men and women who came after it, through what was instilled in their hearts and said in their homes, how much more so if their parents were combatants and had blood on their hands? According to «(To the Death...», most of the sample did not talk to their children about the war, and only 30 percent were willing to convey

(44) The We Want to Know project was launched by Umam Documentation and Research in 2012 with local and international partners with the aim of raising awareness among students about the war and training them in oral history to promote dialogue about the war and understanding its effects by recording testimonies about the daily life under the war.

(45) **We Want to Know project**, Lebanon Memory website, accessed on June 9, 2025, time: 13:49.





positive messages to their offspring. 29.8 percent of them said they warned their children about the need to avoid war, 29.5 percent mentioned its ugliness, and 22.3 percent were ready to draw their children's attention to the need for reconciliation. 61.5 percent refused the engagement of their sons in combat, while 13.5 percent accepted it.⁽⁴⁶⁾

The absence of dialogue between the majority of war participants and their offspring about it indicates a desire to turn the page by ignoring it, a feeling of guilt, or a belief that it was not worth fighting. This is a double-edged sword, as it distracts upcoming generations from their parents' experiences and contexts, making them prone to repeating mistakes or adopting ready-made, packaged narratives. The low score for reconciliation also means that it has not been achieved or become part of the social culture, despite the passing of more than three decades since the end of the war. Although the percentage of those who refuse to allow their children to engage in new fighting is high, the fact that 13.5 percent did not object to it is a worrying indication that the legacy of violence is still present and alive.

Scouts in the service of sectarianism, politicization, and militarization

In light of the above, and given the fragility of



(46) **To the Death... A survey of the continuing experiences among fighters from Lebanon's Civil wars**, p. 25, 48-49.



national upbringing accepting others and rejecting violence, sectarian affiliation continued to dominate the identity of a large segment of Lebanon's youth after the war. This was reflected in scout associations, which are not merely educational and cultural frameworks for developing individual skills and a spirit of teamwork, but some of which have become tools in the hands of sectarian political parties that manipulate their young members to prepare new supporters for loyalty and obedience, and in some cases for military training.



Mahdi Scouts Association

The Mahdi Scouts Association, affiliated with Hezbollah, was founded in 1985 and licensed in 1992. In 2022, it had approximately 75,000 members.⁽⁴⁷⁾ Its goal is to

(47) Hezbollah's Children crafting supporters from the cradle to the grave, **AlMahdi Scouts: The first community/collective**, Van 4, October 20, 2024, p. 3, accessed on July 2, 2025, time: 14:07.





«create an Islamic generation in accordance with the concept of 'Wilayat al-Faqih', that is commitment to the teachings of Iran's religious leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.»⁽⁴⁸⁾ It is thus one of Hezbollah's most prominent arms in its educational, political, and military project. Unlike traditional associations that focus on life skills, volunteer work, and environmental awareness, this scouting organization takes a clear ideological approach, instilling in boys and youths the religious ideology associated with the culture of «waiting» for Imam Mahdi. This model is used to motivate readiness and preparedness for combat, with many young people undergoing various types of training. Thus, the Mahdi Scouts are a quasi-military school that prepares young men, psychologically and organizationally, to become future recruits for Hezbollah. In fact, many of them were mourned by the party in its various confrontations, especially the recent war with Israel between September and November 2024, «Martyrs on the Road to Jerusalem.»

Similarly, the Islamic Rissala [Message] Scouts Association are considered one of the most important educational and organizational tools of the Amal Movement. They began operating in 1977 and obtained their license in 1983.⁽⁴⁹⁾ Religious allegiance



(48) Wissam Al-Amin, **Hezbollah File (2): Al-Mahdi Scouts... Reservoir of Fighters and Martyrs**, Janoubia website, 26 April 2015, accessed on 23 June 2025, time: 20:31.

(49) Ali Al-Faqih, **Scouts of the Islamic Rissala, Imam Musa Al-Sadr**, Sheikh Ali Al-Faqih website, February 4, 2025, accessed on June 23, 2025, time: 20:58.



here is to the Iraqi cleric Ali al-Sistani, and internally, no one rivals al-Sadr. It also provides military training for young men, as the movement lost many scouts in the 2024 war with Tel Aviv «in defense of Lebanon and the South.»

According to the Al-Anbaa website, the Progressive Scouts Association was founded in 1969. Its approach is «knowledge and discovery of truth» and it carries out various activities to train its members to be active citizens. However, it implicitly prepares them to assume «senior positions in the Progressive Socialist Party» under the leadership of Taymour, son of Walid Jumblat, and following in the footsteps of his grandfather Kamal.⁽⁵⁰⁾

On the Christian side, the Future Scouts, which was dissolved along with the Lebanese Forces, was founded by party officers,⁽⁵¹⁾ in a contradiction between pure scouting and military experience. With Geagea's release from prison, it resumed its activities under the name Freedom Scouts. Its members are also trained on the basis of party loyalty, receiving the principles of the Lebanese Forces that foster in them a «spirit of resistance» and Christian upbringing within the framework of Maronite history.⁽⁵²⁾

(50) Areej Ammar, **The Progressive Scout: Global Standards for a Better Future... Following in the Footsteps of the Founder**, Al-Anbaa website, January 2, 2024, accessed on June 24, 2025, time: 11:10.

(51) **Scouts of the Future**, Freedom Scouts website, accessed on July 2, 2025, at 17:47.

(52) Graziella Fakhri, **Scouts of Freedom... Their Footsteps on the Ground Are Steady!**, Lebanese Forces website, May 13, 2024, accessed on June 23, 2025, at 21:20.





The Lebanese Syriac Scouts Association's license dates back to 1944 before being amended in 1956.⁽⁵³⁾ With its traditional scouting roles, and its constant remembrance of the Sayfo massacre that targeted the Syriacs and Assyrians, along with the Armenians and others, at the hands of the Ottomans, it owes «unconditional loyalty» to the Patriarch of the Syriac Orthodox Church,⁽⁵⁴⁾ which makes it, like others, an extension of the religious or political institution associated with it.

The Syrian Social Nationalist Party is similar to Hezbollah in terms of raising its young boys and girls, then its young men and women, on a special narrative that sanctifies leadership and the concept of martyrdom. They also have a special scouting movement that spreads ideological teachings imbued with the ideas of Antoun Saadeh, which must be practiced and memorized before actual and official membership in the party.⁽⁵⁵⁾

The Patriotic Education Scouts, affiliated with the Lebanese Communist Party, have been active since their founding in 1954 and continue to be active in areas with a historical leftist identity. They are more committed to scouting principles than their sectarian and politically oriented counterparts.

(53) **Settlement of the Status of the Lebanese Syriac Scouts Association**, Official Gazette, Issue 24, May 22, 2003, p. 2767.

(54) Sandra Zainati, **Mount Lebanon Commission of the Lebanese Syriac Scouts Association celebrates its golden jubilee**, Noursat TV website, October 5, 2015, accessed on June 24, 2025, time: 11:46.

(55) Aya Fatima Chamseddine, **The cocoon incubating Lebanon's future**, synaps.network, March 20, 2017, accessed on June 23, 2025, time: 23:21.





Semi-military displays... Showing off power

In times of peace, parties have used various methods to convey messages of superiority to others, both opponents and allies, including semi-military displays at various political and religious events.

Hezbollah is considered the most successful in mastering this technique in its major celebrations, such as the commemoration of the tenth of Muharram and International Jerusalem Day, among others. The logistical organization, which is carried out by a large number of young men dressed in uniform on the ground and on the roofs of buildings, is accompanied by effective rhetorical tools for mobilization and enthusiasm, in addition to audio and visual effects.⁽⁵⁶⁾

The Amal Movement adopts this paramilitary approach in every detail in its most important events, namely the annual gathering in the disappearance of al-Sadr and the central march on the tenth of Muharram.⁽⁵⁷⁾

At the Sunni level, the al-Fajr Forces or Dawn Forces are organizationally affiliated with the Islamic Jamaa, the Lebanese branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. Its young men also wear uniforms and flaunt their weapons, as

(56) See: **Video: Military parades of the resistance on Jerusalem Day (1997-2000)**, Al-Ahed News website, April 4, 2024, accessed on June 28, 2025, time: 16:05; **Hezbollah organizes military parade in Sidon on Jerusalem Day**, RT Arabic website, April 29, 2022, accessed on June 28, 2025, time: 16:09.

(57) See: **Amal Movement turns religious occasion into military parade in Lebanon**, Al Arabiya.Net, August 15, 2023, accessed on June 28, 2025, time: 16:00.





evidenced by what happened in April 2024 during the funeral of two of them in Bbenin in Akkar, who were killed in an Israeli raid on the south shortly before the last war. This show of force did not go unnoticed, as stray bullets hit a woman and a child,⁽⁵⁸⁾ angering the residents. Beirut MP Ibrahim Mneimneh described the show of masked gunmen as «intimidation.»⁽⁵⁹⁾

The Arab Unification Party, led by Wiam Wahhab, has on various occasions organized party festivals in which Druze youths dressed in black paramilitary uniforms rallied under the name Saraya al-Tawhid or Unification Brigades,⁽⁶⁰⁾ wearing headbands with religious slogans.

Despite denying possessing an armed organization after the war, the Lebanese Forces Party sometimes holds paramilitary parades to specific music. One was held by young men in the Gemmayzeh neighborhood of Beirut in September 2020 to mark the assassination of Bashir Gemayel. They marched in formation wearing black uniforms emblazoned with the party's logo and carrying its flag and the Lebanese flag.⁽⁶¹⁾

(58) **Islamic Jamaa parades in Akkar**, As-Siyassa website, April 28, 2024, accessed on June 28, 2025, time: 16:40.

(59) Beatrice Farhat, **Who is the Islamic Jamaa in Lebanon, the last to display weapons against Israel?**, Al-Monitor website, April 29, 2024, accessed on June 28, 2025, time: 16:55.

(60) See: **In pictures: Saraya al-Tawhid prepares for its military parade**, Lebanon Files website, November 15, 2016, accessed on June 28, 2025, time: 15:53.

(61) See: **Video – Military parade for the Lebanese Forces party?**, Al-Tayyar website, September 14, 2020, accessed on June 28, 2025, at 16:23; **Video – Military parade for the Lebanese Forces... We Are Here**, Lebanon On website, September 14, 2020, accessed on June 28, 2025, time: 16:28.





A youth group called Soldiers of the Lord was founded in Karam al-Zaitoun, and spread to Ashrafieh, Jal al-Dib, and Zahle to «protect and defend Christian areas,» opposing everything non-religious, whether secular, leftist, or communist, including Palestinian and Syrian refugees.⁽⁶²⁾ The group defines itself as neither a party nor an organization, affiliated with no particular figure, and not involved in any security or civil activities, which is not accurate. It is true that its muscular members, dressed in black shirts with a double-winged cross, including former prisoners, did not appear armed, but they relied on their fists and sometimes sticks, as well as their numerical superiority in the clashes in which they engaged. They first appeared in public in 2019 during religious and popular protests against a concert by the band Mashrou' Leila accused of promoting homosexuality. Later, news spread about their role in protecting banks during the October 17, 2019 Revolution. Despite the small size of this group, which is believed to have 300 members, some compare it to Hezbollah;⁽⁶³⁾ This is a clear exaggeration in terms of size, even if there is some overlap in their extremist religious backgrounds.

The Syrian Social Nationalist Party has also developed its own means of conveying messages of strength and

(62) Radwan Mortada, **«Soldiers of the Lord»... The beginnings of self-defense**, Al-Akhbar website, December 2, 2022, accessed on June 28, 2025, time: 16:50.

(63) Samer Zreik, **Everything You Need to Know About the «Soldiers of the Lord» in Lebanon**, Al-Majalla website, August 30, 2023, accessed on June 28, 2025, at 17:03.





presence through parades and uniforms, especially on Hamra Street in Beirut,⁽⁶⁴⁾ where paramilitary marches have often been held on various occasions.⁽⁶⁵⁾

As in war... Weapons in everyone's hands

Against this backdrop, small and medium-sized weapons are proliferating outside the scope of political parties, to the extent that Lebanon ranks second in the Arab world and ninth globally in terms of individual weapon ownership,⁽⁶⁶⁾ with an estimated one million weapons in the hands of citizens.⁽⁶⁷⁾ These weapons are usually purchased from armed organizations, Palestinian camps, and black-market dealers. They are displaced throughout the year, whether in the form of stray bullets at social, religious, and political events and celebrations; or crimes of kidnapping, murder, theft, extortion, contraband trade, and other manifestations of community violence that were hallmarks of the war and continued in peacetime.

(64) Aya Fatima Chamseddine, **The cocoon Incubating Lebanon's future**, synaps.network, March 20, 2017.

(65) See: Saad Elias, **Lebanon: Military parade of the National Party in Hamra punctuated by chants against Geagea... and Qoumiyan responds**, Al-Quds Al-Arabi website, May 23, 2021, accessed on June 23, 2025, time: 23:33.

(66) Rama Jarrah, **Lebanon is the second among Arabs and the ninth internationally in individual arms!**, Grand Lebanon website, November, 23, 2023, accessed on June 29, 2025, time: 13:52.

(67) **Discover the «number of armed men» in Lebanon... the number is huge!**, Lebanon 24 website, May 22, 2024, accessed on June 29, 2025, time: 13:55.





According to media reports and internal security forces, between 2010 and 2021, 81 people were killed and 169 wounded by stray bullets.⁽⁶⁸⁾ In one incident, stray bullets fired during a tribal dispute nearly hit a civilian aircraft, which would have caused a humanitarian disaster and damaged the reputation of Rafic Hariri International Airport.⁽⁶⁹⁾ Similar tribal fighting occur on an almost daily basis, with young men using light and medium weapons. It may be between clans of the same sectarian identity⁽⁷⁰⁾ or different sects⁽⁷¹⁾ or within the same clan⁽⁷²⁾ as well as with various Lebanese security forces⁽⁷³⁾ and Syrian militants at the border.⁽⁷⁴⁾

(68) **In numbers... Here are the victims of stray bullets!**, MTV website, September 22, 2021, accessed on June 27, 2025, time: 15:39.

(69) Sawsan Mehna, **How long will stray bullets continue to fly around Beirut International Airport?**, Independent Arabia website, March 14, 2023, accessed on June 29, 2025, time: 14:24.

(70) See: **Army forces enter Sharaouna neighborhood after clashes between Jaafar and Zaiter families cause material damage**, National News Agency website, November 20, 2020, accessed on June 29, 2025, time: 13:27; **Armed clashes between the Hajoula and Zaiter families in Laylaki**, Janoubia website, February 18, 2017, accessed on June 29, 2025, time: 13:38.

(71) See: **Clashes between the Jaafar and Al-Saleh clans in Al-Sharaouna, Baalbek, and the army intervenes**, Al-Joumhouria website, April 22, 2013, accessed on June 29, 2025, time: 13:25.

(72) See: **Video – Armed clash in Al-Laylaki between members of the Al-Zaiter clan**, An-Nahar website, May 23, 2023, accessed on June 29, 2025, time: 13:40.

(73) See: **Clashes in Sharaouna between the army and armed members of the Jaafar clan**, Lebanese Forces website, December 29, 2013, accessed on June 29, 2025, time: 13:19.

(74) See: **Clashes in the north... Here's what happened at the border**, Hona Lebanon website, December 15, 2024, accessed on June 29, 2025, time: 13:42.





As the result of the ease of acquiring and using weapons as a means of quick and illegal income, kidnappings for ransom skyrocketed by 191 percent, from seven cases in 2017 to 50 in 2022.⁽⁷⁵⁾ Similarly, murders rose from 151 victims in 2022 to 155 a year later, an increase of 2.6 percent. There were 3,784 incidents of armed robbery and theft in 2022.⁽⁷⁶⁾ It is true that the rise in violent crime has been accompanied by worsening financial collapse and living crises, but it is also a manifestation of the decline in the authority of the public order in the face of the power of young gunmen and those who manipulate and use them. In the opinion of the head of the Middle East and Gulf Center for Military Analysis - Enigma, Riad Kahwaji, «security forces cannot confiscate weapons from citizens because of the refusal of party leaders who protect many gangs that practice banditry and engage in smuggling and illegal activities [...] Ultimately, consensual security is a big hoax that undermines the authority and seriousness of the rule of law. Illegal weapons are the greatest threat to civil peace in Lebanon [...]».⁽⁷⁷⁾

The post-war era did not protect young women and women in general from violence; rather, their exposure

(75) **Increase in kidnappings for ransom 2017-August 2024**, Al-Shahriya, Al-Dawliya for Information Website, September 27, 2024, accessed on June 29, 2025, time: 15:16.

(76) **Security indicators in 9 months 2022-2023**, Al-Shahriya, Al-Dawliya for Information Website, November 2, 2023, accessed on June 27, 2025, time: 15:25.

(77) Paula Astih, **Murders and car thefts on the rise in Lebanon**, Al-Sharq Al-Awsat website, June 15, 2022, accessed on June 27, 2025, time: 13:35.





to verbal and sexual abuse and murder grew to unprecedented levels, amid «a culture of silence and tolerance of violence against women, rooted in social and cultural norms [...] due to the absence of legal deterrence»⁽⁷⁸⁾ and impunity.

In light of all the above, Dirani concluded that the war continues to cast a shadow over our daily lives; and that the impact of the absence of transitional justice on the spread of multiple forms of violence, ranging from harsh language and threats to the proliferation of cars with tinted windows and unethical driving, cannot be denied. In the same vein, murder is trivialized as a means to solve ordinary disputes that should be addressed through dialogue, such as driving and parking disputes, commercial problems, inheritance disputes, the operation of electric generators, and the results of sports games. Killing others is easy in the certainty that the perpetrators will go unpunished,⁽⁷⁹⁾ just like all criminal and human rights crimes during the war.

(78) Fida Makdashi, **Lebanon: Violence and Silence... Murders of Women Rise 300 Percent**, Independent Arabia website, April 9, 2024, accessed on June 25, 2025, time: 22:42.

(79) From an interview conducted by Sawssan Abou-Zahr via WhatsApp with Dr. Fouad Dirani on June 26, 2025.





Chapter Four: Post-war Wars

Day after day, it becomes clear that the more justice in all its forms recedes, the more violence escalates, especially among young people. Justice is the twin of peace, and both are weak in Lebanon. When a war ends without accountability, violence remains the rule, whether individual or collective, leading to military scenes that turn back the clock to the days of Ain al-Rummanah in 1975, albeit without the infamous «bus.»

It is difficult to count how many times since 1990 Lebanese men and women have felt, rightly or wrongly, that a new war has broken out. It is as if the Taif Agreement legalized the coexistence of crises without addressing their structural causes, which the system had produced and continued to perpetuate. Thus, the country did not escape new confrontations between various political and sectarian parties, and sometimes even within the same sect.

The term «civil» or «local» is currently more accurate than as it was in the war of 1975, since the Palestinians are no longer a party to the conflict. In an interview for this research, Palestinian-Lebanese journalist and human rights activist Anis Fadl Mohsen placed the battle of Nahr al-Bared, which will be mentioned later, in the context of the connection between Fatah al-Islam





and Bashar al-Assad's intelligence services.⁽¹⁾ In fact, the uprising against his regime is pivotal in the history of our recent internal conflicts, as since 2012 it has sent young people to fight abroad. Shiites from Hezbollah and Sunni Salafists faced each other in Syria and Iraq, as if a «local» war were being waged on foreign soil amid the regional axes' conflict. It is also a «war for others,» to borrow Ghassan Tueni's expression, this time between the former Syrian regime and its opponents. It could have been avoided in Lebanon, because its consequences exacerbated Sunni-Shiite tensions. It is noteworthy that one of the features of the post-civil war period is the growth of Salafist phenomena, which were limited during the war, some of which are linked to the rise of jihadist organizations globally, while others arose to fight Hezbollah and target the army.

Hence, what Lokman Slim called in March 2008 the Sunni-Shiite fault line was more evident than anything else, as it has been growing since the assassination of Rafic Hariri on February 14, 2005. In his view, «the fermentation of violence in Lebanon began in 2000 with the liberation [from Israeli occupation], when demands for Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon began.» He considered the intermittent security unrest to be «much worse than an open and declared war [...]».⁽²⁾



(1) From an interview conducted by Sawssan Abou-Zahr via WhatsApp with Anis Fadel Mohsen on June 25, 2025.

(2) Lokman Slim, **Worse than 1975, but without a spectacular war**, Al-Rai Media website, March 25, 2008, accessed on July 13, 2025, time: 23:22.



It is as if these words, written by a thinker and political activist who was assassinated on the night of February 3, 2021, were written today! Or perhaps they were a prophecy about renewed conflicts which, although limited in their geography and duration, have a profound impact. Weapons are still present, and cross-border loyalties justify internal violence, making small wars an extension of the Greater War, in a phenomenon that allows us to describe Lebanon as both a conflict and post-conflict country in terms of the fragility of peace in the face of the proliferation of violence against a backdrop of weak law enforcement in a state divided between parties, militias, and sects.

The following is a table of the most prominent of these in 1990.⁽³⁾ They should not have been in place if the war had truly ended, and some of them remain to be active today, in street violence, as well as in the Parliament and successive governments.

Organization	Sectarian affiliation	Number of fighters
Army of South Lebanon	Christian and Shiite Majority	2,000–2,500
Lebanese Forces	Maronite Majority	8,000 - 10,000
Al-Waad Party [Hobeika's party]	Christian Majority	600 - 700
Marada Party	Maronite	700 - 800

(3) Kamal Hamdan, **The Lebanese Crisis**, p. 179.





Progressive Socialist Party	Druze majority	5,000 - 6,000
Amal Movement	Shiite	3,000 - 4,000
Hezbollah	Shiite	4,000 - 4,500
Popular Nasserist Organization	Sunni Majority	500
Arab Democratic Party	Alawites	500
Syrian Social Nationalist Party	Mixed (secular)	800 - 1000
Baath Party (close to Syria)	Islamic Majority	500
Lebanese Communist Party	Mixed (secular)	600 - 700

It should be noted that there is some overlap in the presentation of events between the subheadings, reflecting their complexity and ramifications in the complex reality on the ground.

Neighbors' wars... The Syrian and sectarian fault line

Between Tripoli and Damascus is an organic link that transcends geography and the association of the word «Sham»)]Damascus in the popular dialect[with its name⁽⁴⁾

(4) Historian Hussein al-Duhaybi argues that the name «Trablus]Tripoli[al-Sham») predates the establishment of Greater Lebanon, noting that «Tripoli continued for some time to use the postal code 'Trablus al-Sham' rather than 'Tripoli Lebanon,' and this continued until 1956.» See: Bashir Mustafa, «**Tripoli-Sham): The Dialectic of History and Rebellion Against Assad's Authority**, Independent Arabia website, December 18, 2024, accessed on July 15, 2025, time: 17:47.





and the existence of a street named after Syria as a line of contact between the Sunni Bab al-Tabbaneh and the Alawite Jabal Mohsen, as if the capital of the north were a mirror of the conditions of the neighboring country, reflecting its bloodshed and alignments.

The Bab al-Tabbaneh-Jabal Mohsen front opened in the 1980s and is considered one of the legacies of the living and renewed war. It is the only local confrontation that continued after the Taif Agreement, and is perhaps further evidence of the permanence of fighting masked by a fragile civil peace. In one of the most violent rounds, the division was based on support for the Palestinian cause or the Syrian regime. At that time, Bab al-Tabbaneh was led by Khalil Akkawi, «Abou Arabi,» a young man who had moved from Marxism to political Islam with Sheikh Saeed Shaban]of the Islamic Unification Movement[. He led the hostility toward the «closest neighbor, loyal to Syria: Jabal Mohsen. The fiercest battles raged [...] throughout the period from 1983 [...] until 1986, when the Syrians tightened their grip on the city, persecuting Abou Arabi's supporters in]Bab al-[Tabaneh and sending thousands of them to prison.»⁽⁵⁾ It was a disastrous period for civilians, with reports of dozens of deaths every day.⁽⁶⁾

(5) Elie Hanna, **Bab al-Tabbaneh and Jabal Mohsen: The Poor Fighting the Poor**, Al-Akhbar website, June 18, 2008, accessed on July 15, 2025, time: 18:31.

(6) See: **Dangerous Turn in the War in the North: Front Lines Shift in Bab al-Tabbaneh and Baal Mohsen**, As-Safir, November 22, 1983, p. 5, Memory at Work, accessed on July 15, 2025, time: 21:14.; **Fire in Tripoli escalated at dawn and in the evening of a war of real incursions in which the «Knights» advanced**, Al-Amal, July 6, 1984, p. 5, Memory at Work, accessed on July





Another manifestation of the impact of events in Syria was the rise in tension between the two regions after the 1982 Hama massacre led by Rifaat, Hafez al-Assad's brother, «especially since the leader of Jabal Mohsen, Ali Eid, owed him complete loyalty [...] and named his eldest son after him in his honor.»⁽⁷⁾ It is noteworthy that after his dispute with his brother, Rifaat al-Assad sought to «establish an organizational and popular base [in Tripoli], which led to the emergence of the Arab Democratic Party led by Eid, and he soon had a military wing in the city called the 'Red Knights.'»⁽⁸⁾

In peacetime, the events of May 7, 2008 reignited the traditional Tripoli front, «marking the beginning of new-old battles between the sons of the warlords of the previous civil war. For health reasons, Eid was absent from the scene and was replaced by his son Rifaat, while [...] on the other side, the leaders of the combat axis in Bab al-Tabbaneh, Harat al-Malloula, Harat al-Mankouben, Harat al-Rifa, and Harat al-Bakkar [...] The battles between the two areas were renewed repeatedly, [...] after 2011], a mere speech by the Syrian president or an achievement by the armed opposition

15, 2025, time: 21:24; **The Northern Committee established three observation posts and announced a ceasefire on all fronts**, Al-Amal, September 20, 1985, p. 5, Memory at Work, accessed on July 15, 2025, time: 21:29.

(7) Nazih al-Ahdab, **Tripoli, Syria: A battleground for civil and Arab conflicts «open to chaos» (analysis)**, Anadolu Agency website, May 29, 2013, accessed on July 15, 2025, time: 19:28.

(8) Elie Hanna, **Bab al-Tabbaneh and Jabal Mohsen: Poor Fighting Poor**, Al-Akhbar, June 18, 2008.





on the ground was sufficient cause to start fighting [...]»,⁽⁹⁾ which recorded 22 rounds until 2015, targeting civilians and the Lebanese army and claiming at least 200 lives. Most of those referred to the Permanent Military Court in connection with these clashes were under the age of 30.⁽¹⁰⁾ The leaders of the factions, some of whom were young men as shown in a leaked photo in 2013,⁽¹¹⁾ were inspired by war militia leaders, imposing taxes and trading in weapons.⁽¹²⁾ They became «stars» who led unemployed young men armed with sniper rifles, heavy machine guns, and mortars.⁽¹³⁾

However, violence is not the only fate for these young people, as the presence of civil society organizations, many of them led by young people, proved that psychological rehabilitation and joint economic empowerment can change their destinies, leading them to lay down their weapons and abandon killing

(9) Nazih al-Ahdab, **Tripoli, Syria: A battleground for civil and Arab conflicts «open to chaos» (analysis)**, Anadolu Agency website, May 29, 2013.

(10) Gladys Saab, **accused of the events in Bab al-Tabbaneh and Jabal Mohsen: I did not fire at the army, but at Jabal Mohsen in defense of my honor and my home**, Ad-Diyar, January 19, 2015, Memory at Work, accessed on July 15, 2025, time: 21:54.

(11) **In pictures: Meet the «leaders of the axes» in Tripoli**, Al-Joumhouria website, October 25, 2013, accessed on July 15, 2025, time: 22:43.

(12) Gladys Saab, **accused of throwing a bomb at the army: Tripoli merchants agreed with Janzari, one of the axis leaders, to collect money to protect shops, which are not «khuwwat»**, Ad-Diyar, February 1, 2015, Memory at Work, accessed on July 15, 2025, time: 22:38.

(13) Abdul Rahman Orabi, **Axis leaders... a new elite in Lebanese sectarian society (1)**, Al-Araby Al-Jadeed website, April 7, 2014, last updated: June 30, 2020, accessed on July 15, 2025, time: 22:59.





as a source of income, and to engage in dialogue and friendship after many of them realized that they shared similarities in terms of poverty and unemployment.⁽¹⁴⁾

In praising the role of these associations, journalist Bassem al-Bakkour pointed out in an interview for this research that they cannot replace the state as an authority and entity, even if it is weak, and cover up its serious and chronic absence, starting with the lack of attempts at reconciliation and compensation for civilians in Bab al-Tabbaneh and Jabal Mohsen, as happened in other areas after the war. All of this «kept the hatred alive in people's hearts,» coinciding with the deepening of extreme poverty on both sides and the associated school dropout and child labor rates, which are among the highest in Lebanon. He described this as «a disaster and a future explosion» because it perpetuates ignorance as a way of life among young men, making it easier to «recycle them politically and invest them in any future round of fighting.» Therefore, the first step to ending the conflict in Bab al-Tabbaneh and Jabal Mohsen is for the state to enter these areas, in a developmental rather than a security capacity, to provide joint urban, social, and educational rehabilitation, foster serious reconciliation, and confiscate weapons «because their continued possession by the poor is a ticking time bomb that could explode at any security breach in the city or outside it.»⁽¹⁵⁾



(14) Sawssan Abou-Zahr, **When theatre turns enemies into brothers**, peaceinsight, August 21, 2015, accessed on July 15, 2025, time: 23:15.

(15) From an interview conducted by Sawssan Abou-Zahr via WhatsApp with Bassem al-Bakkour on July 16, 2025.



The rise of Salafism... Takfiri violence against the army

According to writer Saoud al-Mawla, «1991 saw the beginning of the formation of the new jihadist Salafism from the ranks of Palestinian and Lebanese jihadists in Sidon, Ain al-Hilweh camp, Tripoli, and Nahr al-Bared camp,» due to several considerations, including «the US-led international - Arab invasion of Iraq to remove it from Kuwait,» the Madrid Peace Conference, the breakup of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the Warsaw Pact, along with the return of Arab Afghans to their countries, «including many Lebanese and Palestinians [In addition,...] the actual breeding ground for the Salafi-jihadist movement was in Iraq after the US occupation in 2003 and the departure of large groups of [Lebanese] youth to fight there, with the coordination, funding, and facilitation of Syrian intelligence [...].»⁽¹⁶⁾

There is no doubt that the groundwork for this radical atmosphere had been laid since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the late 1980s. On New Year's Eve 1999-2000, the events of Dennyeh broke out, spreading to other areas in northern Lebanon and continuing until January 4. Young men from Qubba and Abi Samra in Tripoli were training with weapons in the mountains of Dennyeh, led by Bassam Kanj, nicknamed «Abou Aisha,» a veteran of Afghanistan, and Bassam Ismail

(16) Saoud al-Mawla, **From Salafi National Jihadism to Salafi Jihadism**, Al-Jumhuriyya website, March 20, 2013, accessed on July 17, 2025, time: 19:14.





Hamoud.⁽¹⁷⁾ This group clashed with the army in several ambushes and confrontations, leading to the death of Kanj and the arrest of Hammoud. The toll was 11 soldiers, 15 militants, and five civilians killed, in addition to 32 army personnel wounded.⁽¹⁸⁾ Security forces raided neighborhoods in Tripoli, Akkar, and the Bekaa.⁽¹⁹⁾

The battle of Dennyeh was a clear manifestation of the phenomenon of armed Salafism in Lebanon. The subsequent arrests contributed to the creation of a sectarian victimhood among some Sunni youth. This was exploited to recruit them and expand jihadist and Takfiri violent extremism forces after the Syrian revolution.

At the height of the split between the March 8 and March 14 political camps, and while the country was under the weight of the implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 1559 and 1701, widespread clashes broke out between Lebanese soldiers and members of Fatah al-Islam in the Nahr al-Bared Palestinian camp on May 20, 2007, after the army contained a coordinated attack on its positions in Tripoli, Koura, and Qalamoun.⁽²⁰⁾ Shaker al-Absi, a Jordanian of Palestinian

(17) Saoud al-Mawla, **From National Salafi Jihadism to Salafi Jihadism**, Al-Joumhouria website, March 20, 2013.

(18) Fares Khashan, **Madi Issues Indictment in Dennyeh Incident Case 34 Armed Men Were in the Area Led by a Group of Afghan Arabs Linked to the Ansar Brigade Punishments Sought: Life Imprisonment with Hard Labor for the Majority and Death Penalty for the Planners and Leaders**, As-Safir, July 11, 2000, Issue 8648, p. 4.

(19) Saoud al-Mawla, **From National Salafi Jihadism to Salafi Jihadism**, Al-Joumhouria website, March 20, 2013.

(20) Mahmoud Hamadi and Abbas Hadla, **History of the Shia Community**





origin, headed this more organized and numerous faction than the Dennyeh group, which included young Lebanese, Syrians, Saudis, and Moroccans, in addition to Palestinians who made up about 10 percent of its members. The military leadership was assumed by a hardliner from Akkar known as «Abou Houraira.»⁽²¹⁾ It emerged with the spread of al-Qaeda in Iraq, about two years after the withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon, without any decline in Damascus's intelligence influence.

Retired army brigadier general George Nader believes that the organization infiltrated Nahr al-Bared individually and in groups, carrying external funding, and was able to take control of the camp through enticement and intimidation, isolating it from its surroundings.⁽²²⁾ Anis Fadel Mohsen said in an interview for this research that Syrian intelligence, with the help of Fatah al-Intifada, first brought Fatah al-Islam members into Beirut, then transferred them from the Burj al-Barajneh and Mar Elias camps after they were rejected by the people there to al-Beddawi, where they were met with a similar lack of welcome, and then to the outskirts of Nahr al-Bared. Later, Palestinian factions and civilians voluntarily evacuated the camp «to make

in Lebanon: From the Mysterious Past to the Unknown Future, from 1959 until the Maritime Demarcation, p. 214.

(21) Moeen Mannaa, **Fatah al-Islam and the Nahr al-Bared Camp: Case Study or Model?**, Zaytuna Center for Studies and Consultations, Beirut, p. 3.

(22) **The Secrets of the Nahr al-Bared Battle: What Was Not Reported About a Conflict That Began and Ended in Mystery and Ambiguity**, Al-Araby TV website, September 18, 2023, accessed on July 15, 2025, time: 19:21.





way for the Lebanese army to resolve the battle»⁽²³⁾ in a confined area crowded with more than 30,000 people. On September 2, 2007, the army announced complete control of the camp, and reports emerged that al-Absi had fled before his death was confirmed.⁽²⁴⁾ A total of 168 soldiers were killed⁽²⁵⁾ and 220 members of Fatah al-Islam were dead, in addition to 40 civilians.⁽²⁶⁾

A third Salafi confrontation with the military took place in Abra on June 23, 2013, with Hezbollah playing a role in resolving it⁽²⁷⁾ in two days by defeating Ahmad al-Assir's supporters and the army taking control of his security zone.⁽²⁸⁾ The sheikh was arrested on August 15, 2015, while attempting to flee by air with a forged Palestinian passport in the name of Khaled al-Abbasi after changing his appearance.⁽²⁹⁾

(23) From an interview conducted by Sawssan Abou-Zahr via WhatsApp with Anis Fadel Mohsen on June 25, 2025.

(24) May al-Zoubi, **The most notable positions and events in the Nahr al-Bared clashes**, Al Jazeera.net, September 3, 2007, accessed on July 15, 2025, time: 19:29.

(25) Nizar Abdel Qader, **The Army Wins in Nahr al-Bared: Victory in Battle Does Not Mean the End of the War on Terrorism**, Official Website of the Lebanese Army, January 2008, Issue 63, accessed on July 14, 2025, time: 9:56.

(26) **The secrets of the Nahr al-Bared battle... What has not been said about a conflict that began and ended in mystery and ambiguity**, Al-Araby TV website, September 18, 2023.

(27) Sawssan Abou-Zahr, **Sidon regains timid movement and hopes for a state «above which no weapon shall rise», Abra looks to the army to uncover the circumstances of the attack and decide the fate of the «apartments,»** An-Nahar, June 27, 2013, Issue 25116, p. 5.

(28) Mohammed Saleh, **The Army Tightens Its Grip... and Sidon Without al-Assir**, As-Safir, June 25, 2013, Issue 12512, p. 3.

(29) **The full story of al-Assir's arrest**, As-Safir, August 17, 2015, Issue 13147,





Before clashing with the army, al-Assir carried out several demonstrations in downtown Beirut and Sidon, where he staged a sit-in, receiving exaggerated media coverage that contributed to inflating his profile.



Marwan Charbel with Ahmad Al-Assir behind him, Source: Al-Safir Newspaper Archive

At the same time, he expanded his activities in the vicinity of the Bilal bin Rabah Mosque, «seeking to emulate Hezbollah by naming the surrounding area the 'security square' [...] and in order for the square to be upright, it was necessary to remove 'Elie's shop' for alcoholic beverages, [...] noting that Elie did not sell his property, but left it, and they took control of it.»⁽³⁰⁾

Two investigations by the army and general security intelligences with the detained sheikh revealed that his followers had intervened «in military operations in the Syrian regions of Al-Qusayr and Jousia.» In a 34-page document, investigation by the army intelligence reported that his fighters «were divided into about twenty

p. 1.

(30) Monir al-Rabih, **Abra: The story of a city and its transformations and downfalls since the war until al-Assir**, Al-Modon website, October 1, 2023, accessed on July 20, 2025, time: 16:35.





advocacy groups, each comprising seven people, which turned into military groups comprising about 300 young men [...)]. He justified the clash with the army by saying that it was not premeditated but rather self-defense in the face of «the fabrication planned by this group,» referring to Hezbollah.⁽³¹⁾ And self-defense is an old-new pretext inherited from the literature of war. In statements to the Qatari channel Al Jazeera in 2017, the first after his imprisonment, al-Assir said that «former Interior Minister Marwan Charbel contacted him before the battle of Abra and informed him that a decision had been made to end him.» Whatever the case, that confrontation resulted in the deaths of 15 of his supporters, most of them young men, and 19 soldiers.⁽³²⁾

The year 2013 also saw attacks on military installations in the outskirts of Arsal, Ras Baalbek, and al-Qaa, culminating between August 2 and 7, 2014, with attacks by militants from the al-Nusra Front or Jabhat al-Nusra and the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) on military centers in Arsal. The army lost 19 of its men and 20 were kidnapped in a plot that aimed to bring Syrian militants to Laboua and then Akkar to declare a state there. The Fajr al-Juroud operation on August 19, 2017, in Ras Baalbek and al-Qaa was a decisive response.⁽³³⁾

(31) Abdul Rahman Orabi, **Transcript of the al-Assir's confessions: Secrets of the battle of Abra and details of the escape**, Al-Araby Al-Jadeed website, September 18, 2015, accessed on July 20, 2025, at 17:15.

(32) **Abra... Who Fired the First Shot?**, Al Jazeera.net website, March 4, 2017, accessed on July 20, 2025, at 17:27.

(33) Nadine Balaa Khairallah, **From Dennyeh to Fajr al-Juroud: An Epic of Heroism, Redemption, Sacrifice, and Loyalty**, Lebanese Army website, Issue 409, July 2019, accessed on July 16, 2025, time: 15:33.





From the above, it is clear that the attacks by Salafists and violent extremists Takfiris on the army are a mixture of purely local, solely Syrian, and mixed factors, reflecting the sharp political divide and sectarian schism, as Hezbollah was accused of adding a sectarian dimension to the conflict in Syria⁽³⁴⁾ that was reflected in Lebanon through its role in the decisive battle of Al-Qusayr in June 2013.

Salafist youths... Arrested, suicide bombers, and killed outside the country

Since the beginning of the millennium, controversy has surrounded the judiciary's handling of Salafist youth cases. On the one hand, prisons are overflowing with detainees held in preventive custody without trial or with slow ones, some of whom have been behind bars for nearly two decades.⁽³⁵⁾ It should be noted that most of those arrested in Dennyeh were released after Hariri's assassination under a general amnesty that included Geagea.⁽³⁶⁾ Once more, this is amnesty for political interests! At the beginning of 2025, the number of Islamist prisoners was estimated at 400, including young men, 55 percent of whom had not been trialed.⁽³⁷⁾

(34) The Modern History of Syria Initiative, **Hezbollah Crosses Borders: The Case of Al-Qusayr**, Umam Documentation and Research, Beirut, 2023, p. 9.

(35) **Roumieh Prison in Lebanon: Human Rights Chaos and Human Tragedy**, Al Jazeera.net, July 7, 2025, accessed on July 17, 2025, time: 15:17.

(36) Jana Al-Duhaybi, **What is the fate of Islamist detainees in Lebanon?**, Al Jazeera.net website, January 20, 2025, accessed on July 17, 2025, time: 16:38.

(37) Jana Al-Duhaybi, **What is the fate of Islamist detainees in Lebanon?** Al Jazeera.net website, January 20, 2025.





On the other hand, wanted individuals, such as Shadi al-Mawlawi, managed to escape punishment. This young man, who participated in the battles of Bab al-Tabbaneh, was arrested in May 2012 on charges of «belonging to an armed terrorist organization and committing crimes against people and property and undermining the authority and prestige of the state» and was released days later amid protests.⁽³⁸⁾ After hiding in the Ain al-Hilweh camp, he ended up with Syrian Hayat Tahrir al-Sham in 2017.⁽³⁹⁾ In February 2024, there were reports of his arrest and that of «a significant number of Lebanese» due to disagreements with its leader,⁽⁴⁰⁾ Ahmad al-Sharaa, who overthrew the al-Assad regime on December 8. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights described al Mawlawi as «notorious for torture and carrying out death sentences [...]».⁽⁴¹⁾

Like al-Mawlawi, «young men slipped out of their beds at dawn to leave for Syria and Iraq, and their families only learned of their fate when they received news of their death [...]».⁽⁴²⁾ Between 2013 and 2015, frequent reports

(38) **Lebanese judiciary releases Shadi al-Mawlawi on bail, whose arrest caused heightened tensions**, France 24 website, May 22, 2012, accessed on July 17, 2025, time: 17:17.

(39) Hussein Khreis, **How Shadi al-Mawlawi escaped from Ain al-Hilweh**, Al-Modon website, October 26, 2017, accessed on July 17, 2025, time: 17:18.

(40) Ahmed al-Ayoubi, **So that the Shadi al-Mawlawi model is not repeated**, Nidaa al-Watan website, February 2, 2024, accessed on July 17, 2025, time: 17:28.

(41) **After the acquittal of leaders and members on charges of «collaboration,» al-Jolani orders the arrest of investigators in the «Commission,»** Syrian Observatory for Human Rights website, January 30, 2024, accessed on July 17, 2025, time: 17:37.

(42) Ahmad al-Ayoubi, **So that the Shadi al-Mawlawi model is not**





of the deaths of Sunni Lebanese in Syria⁽⁴³⁾ and Iraq⁽⁴⁴⁾ provided disturbing evidence of systematic recruitment there. A review of newspapers and websites shows that most of them were young men, as proven in their photos, including university students.⁽⁴⁵⁾ The majority of them were from northern Lebanon,⁽⁴⁶⁾ some supporters of al-Assir from Sidon,⁽⁴⁷⁾ others were from the city but are not necessarily his followers,⁽⁴⁸⁾ and a number from the Bekaa Valley.⁽⁴⁹⁾

repeated, Nidaa al-Watan website, February 2, 2024.

(43) See: **The Battle of the Fortress**, Al-Khanadq website, March 20, 2014, accessed on July 16, 2025, time: 13:21.

(44) See: **Killing of a Lebanese ISIS member in Iraq... and «congratulations» in Tripoli**, An-Nahar, October 8, 2014, Memory at Work, accessed on July 16, 2025, time: 13:52; **Lebanese killed in the ranks of ISIS in Iraq**, Al-Hadath News website, November 26, 2014, Memory at Work, accessed on July 16, 2025, at 14:17.

(45) See: **Lebanese fighter killed while fighting for ISIS in Iraq**, Lebanon 24 website, May 10, 2015, Memory at Work, accessed on July 16, 2025, time: 14:01.

(46) See: **Lebanese man from Tripoli killed fighting alongside ISIS in Kobani**, LBC website, November 3, 2015, Memory at Work, accessed on July 16, 2025, at 13:49; **Ahmed Deeb**, Lebanon Files website, June 1, 2014, Memory at Work, accessed on July 16, 2025, time: 14:02; **Lebanese Mustafa Khaled Seif killed in Syria while fighting with Jabhat al-Nusra**, Al-Ahed News website, March 13, 2015, Memory at Work, accessed on July 16, 2025, time: 14:14.

(47) See: **Hassan Abdel Nasser Ghandour**, Saida Online website, March 2, 2015, Memory at Work, accessed on July 16, 2025, at 13:42; **Killing of one of al-Assir's supporters in Syria**, Saida Online website, March 25, 2015, Memory at Work, accessed on July 16, 2025, time: 14:12.

(48) **Lebanese fighter killed while fighting for ISIS in Iraq**, Lebanon 24 website, May 10, 2015, Memory at Work, accessed on July 16, 2025, time: 14:01.

(49) See: **«Abou Hafs» killed while fighting alongside Ahrar al-Sham in Zabadani**, Lebanon Files website, August 27, 2015, Memory at Work, accessed on July 16, 2025, time: 13:47.





At the same time, the country witnessed a wave of suicide attacks, most of which were carried out by young Sunnis, as evidenced by official documents found at the sites or after conducting DNA tests with their relatives.⁽⁵⁰⁾ These attacks targeted civilians for their Shiite identities or simply being in Hezbollah's strongholds. Some of them were carried out by anti al-Assad groups such as the «313th Special Operations Brigade,» which claimed responsibility for a car bombing in the Bir al-Abed area on July 9, 2013, injuring 53 people, and the «Aisha, Mother of the Believers, Foreign Operations Brigade,» that carried out a similar attack in Ruwais on August 15 of the same year, killing 27 people and injuring 336, in a «message to Hezbollah for fighting alongside the Syrian regime.»⁽⁵¹⁾

In an escalation against the party's regional patron, the Islamic Republic, two simultaneous explosions targeting the Iranian embassy in the Bir Hassan-Jnah neighborhood on November 19, killed 23 people, including Iranian cultural attaché Ibrahim al-Ansari, and wounded 150 others. The Abdullah Azzam Brigades, affiliated with Al-Qaeda, claimed responsibility for the operation, saying it was intended to «pressure Hezbollah to withdraw its fighters from Syria.»⁽⁵²⁾ The investigation

(50) See: **Investigations into the identity of a 19-year-old Lebanese suicide bomber**, Al-Sharq Al-Awsat website, January 4, 2014, accessed on July 18, 2025, time: 15:59.

(51) **Lebanon bombings against the backdrop of the Syrian revolution**, Al Jazeera.net website, January 21, 2014, accessed on July 20, 2025, time: 20:21.

(52) **Beirut bombing: 23 killed in two explosions targeting Iranian embassy south of capital**, BBC Arabic website, November 19, 2013, accessed on July 20, 2025, time: 20:44.





revealed that the two suicide bombers were young men, one Lebanese and the other Palestinian, an al-Assir supporter.⁽⁵³⁾ The scene was repeated three months later, on February 19, 2014, when the same group sent two car bombs to the cultural center, not far from the Iranian embassy, killing six people and injuring 129.⁽⁵⁴⁾

On January 2, 2014, ISIS carried out a suicide attack in Haret Hreik, killing five people and injuring 35.⁽⁵⁵⁾ On February 3, «Jabhat al-Nusra in Lebanon» carried out an explosion in Choueifat in response to «the continued crimes of Iran's party against our vulnerable people [...] and its insistence on sending more mercenaries to kill the Syrian people [...]»⁽⁵⁶⁾ On March 16, it competed with the «Ahrar al-Sunna Brigade in Baalbek» for responsibility for an attack in Nabi Othman in the Bekaa Valley, in two statements linking the operation to «Hezbollah's rape of the city of Yabroud» and «harassment of the people of Arsal.»⁽⁵⁷⁾ On November

(53) **Identity of suicide bombers in attack on Iranian embassy in Beirut revealed**, France 24 website, November 23, 2013, accessed on July 20, 2025, time: 21:14.

(54) **Blind terrorism strikes again in Bir Hassan, leaving 6 dead and 129 wounded**, Al-Liwa, February 20, 2014, Lebanese Memory Office, accessed on July 20, 2025, time: 21:02.

(55) **Explosions in Lebanon against the backdrop of the Syrian revolution**, Al Jazeera.net, January 21, 2014.

(56) **Al-Nusra Front in Lebanon claims responsibility for Choueifat bombing**, Al Jazeera.net website, February 4, 2014, accessed on July 20, 2025, time: 21:23.

(57) **Suicide bombing in Nabi Othman in response to Yabroud**, Al-Liwa, March 17, 2014, pp. 1 and 9, Memory at Work, accessed on July 16, 2025, time: 14:18.





12, 2015, ISIS killed 43 people and wounded 244 in two simultaneous suicide attacks in a crowded popular market in Burj al-Barajneh.⁽⁵⁸⁾

On August 23, 2013, two explosions struck Sunni civilians minutes apart after Friday prayers at the Taqwa Mosque at the Abou Ali roundabout and then at the Al-Salam Mosque on the Mina Road in Tripoli, killing 47 people and injuring 500. This double crime brought the number of car bomb attacks since 1975 to 241.⁽⁵⁹⁾ On January 10, 2015, Jabhat al-Nusra targeted a café in Jabal Mohsen in response to the authorities' «turning a blind eye» to the perpetrators of the two mosque attacks,⁽⁶⁰⁾ although the judiciary had issued an arrest warrant in absentia for Ali Eid as a defendant.⁽⁶¹⁾

On June 27, 2016, four suicide bombings shook the town of Al-Qaa on the border with Syria within ten minutes of each other. The following day, the army arrested 103 Syrians during raids on refugee camps in Baalbek.⁽⁶²⁾

(58) Mona Alami, **Lebanon: An Analysis of the Double Bombing of Burj al-Barajneh in Hezbollah's Stronghold**, Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, November 15, 2015, accessed on July 16, 2025, time: 14:25.

(59) **Car Bombs in Lebanon: 1975-2013**, Al-Shahriya, al-Dawliya for Information website, October 1, 2013, accessed on July 20, 2025, time: 22:32.

(60) **Al-Nusra: Bombing of Jabal Mohsen in response to bombing of Tripoli mosques**, Al Jazeera.net website, January 12, 2015, accessed on July 20, 2025, time: 22:43.

(61) **Arrest warrant issued for founder of Arab Democratic Party in Lebanon**, Al Jazeera.net website, January 11, 2015, accessed on July 20, 2025, time: 22:51.

(62) **Al-Qaa bombings: Lebanese army arrests 103 Syrians in displacement camps in Baalbek**, BBC Arabic website, June 28, 2016, accessed on July 20, 2025, time: 23:01.





Hezbollah crosses the line and borders... Deepening the rift

Hezbollah's sending some of its leaders and young fighters from Lebanon to openly get military involved in the Syrian conflict, along with its activities in Iraq and Yemen, the dismantling of its cells in Gulf countries, in addition to its previous involvement in bombings in Latin America and Europe, have all led to a radical change in its regional image. It is no longer seen as a resistance movement against Israel, but rather as a sectarian actor in cross-border conflicts of a sharp sectarian divisions, and many feel that it has failed to take into account national balances and the country's foreign relations.

After Saddam Hussein was overthrown following the US invasion in 2003, and with much of the Shiite opposition supporting the move, sectarianism rose sharply, creating «a terrible picture of rapid and perhaps irreparable disintegration at the level of society and the state [in Iraq], fueled and exacerbated by long-standing religious divisions between Sunni and Shia Arabs [...] Regionally allied sectarianism has become an organizational means of collective self-defense.»⁽⁶³⁾

In 2015, the then Secretary-General of Hezbollah, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, acknowledged a «modest presence» in Iraq, «because this is how we defend

(63) Heather Robinson, Ben Conable, David Tyler, and Ali Scotton, **Sectarianism in the Middle East: Implications for the United States**, RAND Corporation, California, p. 48.





Lebanon [...]».⁽⁶⁴⁾ Since 2005, Ali Moussa Daqdouq from the party, in his mid-thirties then, played a key role in establishing pro-Iranian groups there. In 2007, the Americans arrested him on charges of plotting an attack on their forces in Karbalaa. He was released by an Iraqi court in November 2012 and assassinated by Israel in the Damascus countryside in November 2024.⁽⁶⁵⁾

In Syria, the revolution began in 2011 as a peaceful uprising, but the conflict quickly took on a sectarian character «because of the way Bashar al-Assad's government responded and the intervention of external regional actors with conflicting political agendas [...]».⁽⁶⁶⁾

While young members of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party participated in battles to protect the regime,⁽⁶⁷⁾ it was Hezbollah that had the most dominant presence. Its fighting alongside other Shiite militias from Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, and Afghanistan greatly exacerbated sectarian tensions. Initially, it used various pretexts

(64) **From a speech by Hassan Nasrallah on the anniversary of the martyred leaders (Sheikh Ragheb Harb, Sayyid Abbas al-Musawi, and Imad Mughniyeh)**, YouTube, February 16, 2015, accessed on July 21, 2025, time: 17:17.

(65) **The story of Daqdouq: From prison in Iraq to assassination in Damascus! (1/2)**, Asas Media website, November 16, 2024, accessed on July 21, 2025, time: 17:57.

(66) Heather Robinson, Ben Conable, David Tyler, and Ali Scotton, **Sectarianism in the Middle East: Implications for the United States**, p. 82.

(67) **Syrian National Party Expands Participation in Fighting Against Assad Regime**, Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, April 4, 2014, accessed on July 21, 2025, time: 18:22.





to promote its military role, from defending Shiite villages on the border to securing them from «terrorist» organizations that pose a threat to Lebanese, Muslims and Christians alike, and protecting the shrine of Sayyida Zainab in Damascus. Later, Hezbollah got heavily and openly involved in various fronts, and his rhetoric became clear regarding the fight against armed groups opposed to al-Assad wherever they were present. As part of his call to spare Lebanon from the repercussions of the Syrian conflict, open to all interventions—which did not happen— Nasrallah said in May 2013: «Do you disagree about Syria? You are fighting in Syria, and we are fighting in Syria. Let us fight there. Do you want me to be more frank than that? Leave Lebanon away from the fighting.»⁽⁶⁸⁾

Since Hezbollah does not announce the total number of its dead and merely mourns and buries them, the figures in this context are approximate, but still high. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, 1,830 were killed by 2025,⁽⁶⁹⁾ most of them young men. The number of wounded was close to 17,000 in a somewhat old estimate from 2017.⁽⁷⁰⁾

(68) **From a speech by Hassan Nasrallah on the anniversary of Resistance and Liberation Day, An Unbreakable Will**, YouTube, May 25, 2013, accessed on July 21, 2025, time: 18:20.

(69) **Approximately 657,000 people have been killed and martyred since the outbreak of the Syrian revolution in March 2011**, Syrian Observatory for Human Rights website, March 20, 2025, accessed on July 16, 2025, time: 14:57.

(70) Hala Nasrallah, **Hezbollah to announce number of its dead in Syria soon**, Daraj Media, December 28, 2017, accessed on July 16, 2025, time:





In Yemen, the Arab Coalition to Support Legitimacy published videos showing Hezbollah's involvement in planning and training support for the Houthis, as well as the presence of its experts in various military fields.⁽⁷¹⁾ In 2021, Tariq Saleh, nephew of former President Ali Abdallah Saleh, spoke about the role of more than 300 of these experts in Sana'a over the previous decade.⁽⁷²⁾ On the other hand, those close to Hezbollah justified its involvement as symbolic, media-related, and political, rejecting comparisons with what they consider as necessities of intervention in Syria related to geography and the protection of shrines.⁽⁷³⁾

At the same time, several Gulf states accused Hezbollah of establishing networks affiliated with it and others linked to the Islamic Republic, in addition to some illegal funding activities. In March 2013, Saudi Arabia arrested an «Iranian spy cell» consisting of 18 Shiites, including a Lebanese national. In September 2015, the Kuwaiti Public Prosecutor's Office charged 25 people, all of whom were citizens except for one Iranian, with communicating with Tehran and Hezbollah. In 2016, the Federal Supreme Court in the United Arab Emirates

14:36.

(71) **Hezbollah in Yemen... Implications of involvement that undermines Lebanon's neutrality**, Sky News Arabia website, December 27, 2021, accessed on July 21, 2025, time: 18:08.

(72) Ahmad Al-Shimiri, **Tariq Saleh: 300 Hezbollah experts in Sana'a**, Okaz website, September 26, 2021, accessed on July 21, 2025, time: 18:12.

(73) Jihad Abou Al-Ais, **Is Hezbollah participating in the fighting in Yemen?**, Al Jazeera.net website, March 27, 2015, accessed on July 21, 2025, time: 18:17.





sentenced seven people for divulging state secrets to Iran and Hezbollah.⁽⁷⁴⁾ The Gulf Cooperation Council classified Hezbollah as a terrorist organization on March 2, 2016.⁽⁷⁵⁾

Beyond the Arab countries, Argentina held the party responsible for the 1992 attack on the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires, which killed 29 people. One of its young members was part of the network convicted of carrying out a second attack in the city in 1994 on the Jewish community center, killing 85 people.⁽⁷⁶⁾ In 2012, his loyalist, 23-year-old Mohammed al-Husseini, blew up a bus carrying Israelis in Burgas, Bulgaria. His remains were handed over and buried in a cemetery for Hezbollah fighters in the southern suburbs in April 2025.⁽⁷⁷⁾

Hezbollah confronts Israel... Resistance without consensus

The civil war ended, but the conflict with Israel continued. Hezbollah remained a military force independent of state authority, growing and expanding until it became

(74) **Most notable Gulf trials of individuals «linked» to Iran and Hezbollah**, Al Jazeera.net website, December 11, 2016, accessed on July 25, 2025, time: 21:33.

(75) Mahmoud Hamadi and Abbas Hadla, **History of the Shia Community in Lebanon: From the Mysterious Past to the Unknown Future, from 1959 until the Maritime Demarcation**, p. 243.

(76) **US Accuses Hezbollah Member of Involvement in 1994 Buenos Aires Bombing**, Al Arabiya.net website, December 20, 2023, accessed on July 25, 2025, time: 22:01.

(77) **Mohammed Hassan al-Husseini: Hezbollah suicide bomber in Bulgaria buried in Lebanon after 14 years**, Janoubia website, April 12, 2025, accessed on July 25, 2025, time: 21:53.





far more powerful than the state itself. It engaged in numerous confrontations that were not unanimously supported, as others in the country saw them as a monopoly on the decision to wage war and peace and a denial of justice due to the absence of a democratic mechanism to discuss or reject the option, confirming the absence of the state as a sovereign refuge in such critical matters.

On July 25, 1993, Tel Aviv carried out an air invasion of the country, calling it Operation Accountability, which was known in Lebanon as the Seven Day War. On the 31st of the month, a ceasefire was declared, with a toll of 113 dead and 460 wounded, including young men, and about 250,000 displaced persons.⁽⁷⁸⁾ Less than two months later, on September 13, the day the Gaza-Jericho Agreement was signed between the Palestinians and Israelis, Ghobeiry area was the scene of a security incident during a demonstration called by Hezbollah, in which nine protesters, all young people, including two girls, were killed and dozens wounded.⁽⁷⁹⁾

On April 11, 1996, Israel launched Operation Grapes of Wrath, which Lebanese call the April War, targeting the southern suburbs for the first time since 1982. Sixteen days later, the April Understanding was announced simultaneously in Beirut and Jerusalem, stipulating



(78) Mahmoud Hamadi and Abbas Hadla, **History of the Shia Community in Lebanon: From the Mysterious Past to the Unknown Future, from 1959 until the Maritime Demarcation**, p. 154.

(79) **September 13, 1993: Nine Moons Fell for Palestine**, Al-Ahed News Website, September 13, 2021, accessed on July 14, 2025, time: 19:34.



in one of its clauses that it was temporary and not a substitute for a permanent solution after negotiations. 250 civilians, including about a hundred, mostly young people, women, and children, were killed at the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) base in the town of Qana.⁽⁸⁰⁾

About a decade later, on July 12, 2006, Hezbollah captured two Israeli soldiers across the border, and Tel Aviv responded by bombing civilian and military installations for 33 days. The July War, or Second Lebanon War, claimed 1,109 civilian lives and left 4,399 wounded, in addition to displacing one million people.⁽⁸¹⁾ Qana was once again targeted, with 55 people killed, including 27 children, in a raid on one of its buildings.⁽⁸²⁾ Around 500 members of Hezbollah were killed, a high proportion of whom were young people. The war ended with Security Council Resolution 1701 on August 11, which was adopted by Beirut the following day.⁽⁸³⁾

(80) Mahmoud Hamadi and Abbas Hadla, **History of the Shia Community in Lebanon: From the Mysterious Past to the Unknown Future, from 1959 until the Maritime Demarcation**, p. 159.

(81) **Why They Died: Civilian Deaths in Lebanon During the 2006 War Between Israel and Hezbollah**, Human Rights Watch, September 2007, Vol. 19, No. 5, p. 4.

(82) Lina Saleh, **Qana... Witness to the History of Israeli Massacres**, Al-Sharq Al-Awsat website, October 16, 2024, accessed on July 30, 2025, time: 10:18.

(83) Mahmoud Hamadi and Abbas Hadla, **History of the Shia Community in Lebanon: From the Mysterious Past to the Unknown Future, from 1959 until the Maritime Demarcation**, p. 208.





The relative calm lasted less than two decades. On October 8, 2023, following the Al-Aqsa Flood operation carried out by the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) on targets and settlements surrounding the Gaza Strip, Hezbollah attacked an Israeli target in the Shebaa Farms, opening unilaterally a new front under the banner of supporting the Palestinian people and «defending Lebanon and its people.»⁽⁸⁴⁾ It lost 505 fighters, including a large number of young men, who were mourned «on the road to Jerusalem.» This situation lasted for about eleven months. On September 17, 2024, it seemed that things went out of control and were heading toward unprecedented aggression, as Tel Aviv blew up thousands of pagers belonging to employees of various Hezbollah institutions, followed by wireless devices' explosions the next day,⁽⁸⁵⁾ The two operations left 37 people dead and nearly 3,000 wounded,⁽⁸⁶⁾ including women, young people, and children.

On September 23, an open Israeli war began, the most notable event of which occurred on the 27th of that month when a squadron of fighter jets killed Nasrallah in a firebombing attack on the central command

(84) **Hezbollah Speaks About Its Support for Gaza and the Strategic Implications of the Al-Aqsa Flood**, Al Jazeera.net website, October 7, 2024, accessed on July 21, 2025, time: 13:02.

(85) Ayham al-Sahli, **War Biography: Israeli Aggression Against Lebanon 2023-2024**, Palestinian Studies Magazine, Issue 141 – Winter 2025, pp. 208, 211.

(86) **The Pager and Wireless Explosions... What's in the Latest Figures**, Kataeb website, September 19, 2024, accessed on July 21, 2025, time: 18:03.





of Hezbollah in Haret Hreik.⁽⁸⁷⁾ This ended the career of the party's third secretary-general, the longest in its history, as Nasrallah had assumed the position at the



From the airstrikes that targeted Lebanon during the 66-day war

young age of 35 in 1992. The surprise attack caused terror and displacement in the southern suburbs, especially as Tel Aviv issued threats to evacuate neighborhoods there,⁽⁸⁸⁾ and the number of displaced persons reached 1.4 million by mid-October 2024.⁽⁸⁹⁾

The aggression continued until dawn on Wednesday, November 27, in the 66-day war, when the ceasefire agreement came into effect. The Lebanese Ministry of Public Health counted 3,823 dead and 15,859 wounded.⁽⁹⁰⁾ It can be said that the figure is not comprehensive,

(87) **Hezbollah targeted in the southern suburbs... Everything we know so far**, Sky News Arabia website, September 27, 2024, accessed on July 20, 2025, time: 21:50.

(88) **Video: Residents flee southern suburbs of Beirut**, Sky News Arabia website, September 28, 2024, accessed on July 20, 2025, time: 23:32.

(89) **Lebanese minister: Number of displaced persons exceeds 1.4 million**, Al Jazeera.net website, October 16, 2024, accessed on July 21, 2025, time: 13:23.

(90) **War Diaries, November**, Van No. 4, No. 16, December 3, 2024, p. 11.





as it is difficult to determine the actual scale of total human losses in the absence of an announcement by Hezbollah regarding the final number in its ranks, which consists mostly of young people, including those who were mourned as «missing in action.» There are also those who fell into the hands of the Israeli army and for whom there is no official toll or count by Hezbollah, although it was later documented that 16 people, including civilians, were captured by Israel during and after the war.⁽⁹¹⁾

Wars within sects... «Localism»

In 1990, the Lebanese believed that the era of internal fighting was over. However, the country witnessed political and security battles that were conflicts over influence and representation within each sect where internal disputes often turned into armed confrontations due to the dominance of parties' loyalties at the expense of civil peace.

Among the Shiites, the relationship between Hezbollah and Sheikh Sobhi al-Toufayli deteriorated after he was removed from the General Secretariat in 1991 due to differences over service and development demands in the Bekaa Valley. He believed that the party had engaged in deals with the post Taif authorities. On May



(91) Nazir Rida, **Uncertainty surrounds the issue of Lebanese prisoners held by Israel**, Al-Sharq Al-Awsat website, June 21, 2025, accessed on July 21, 2025, time: 13:18.



4, 1997, he launched what he named the «revolution of the hungry» and called for civil disobedience on July 4 in Baalbek. Escalating the situation, he decided to hold the International Jerusalem Day ceremony at the place where Hezbollah usually commemorates the occasion, and a decision was issued to expel him on January 24, 1998. Six days later, armed clashes broke out between his supporters and members of Hezbollah in the al-Mahdi Hawza [Islamic seminary [in the town of Ain Bourday in the Bekaa Valley. An official military campaign was launched against him, in which former MP Sheikh Khodir Tlais was killed, along with supporters of both sides and Lebanese soldiers.⁽⁹²⁾

Hezbollah did not officially announce its participation in ending al-Toufayli's movement in order to preserve its image as a resistance force against Israel and avoid using its arms domestically, which later fell apart in the streets of Beirut following the events of May 7, 2008.

Furthermore, despite the strong alliance between Hezbollah and Amal, the two parties differ on many domestic and foreign issues, in addition to their traditional rivalry for Shiite leadership. In the post-Taif Agreement era, both parties have made efforts to contain the disputes between their supporters in order to keep things

(92) Mahmoud Hamadi and Abbas Hadla, **History of the Shia Community in Lebanon: From the Mysterious Past to the Unknown Future, from 1959 until the Maritime Demarcation**, pp. 164, 168–169.





under control in the service of their common strategic interests. However, the significant social overlap makes the so-called individual confrontations take on a partisan character and sometimes lead to casualties. The bloodshed is reminiscent of what journalist Ali Al-Amin called «the two-year Shiite war», referring to the Brothers' War mentioned earlier. «The fire smolders under the ashes, quickly ignited by a dispute here and a celebration there,»⁽⁹³⁾ he said. Efforts are frequently made to extinguish it with joint statements to calm the two communities and emphasize the personal nature of the fighting.

For example, less than two months after the Israeli withdrawal on May 25, 2000, two young men from Hezbollah who «contributed greatly to the liberation» and underwent «military and cultural» training and participated in «special operations», were killed in the border town of Markaba after a dispute with members of Amal over raising pictures, in which people from both sides were injured.⁽⁹⁴⁾ In August 2020, a young man from Amal died and three others were injured in a fight over Ashura banners in the town of Loubya, which spread to nearby Adloun.⁽⁹⁵⁾

(93) Ali al-Amin, **Hezbollah Devours Its Shiite Ally... and the South Reclaims the War in the Apple Province!**, Janoubia website, August 23, 2020, accessed on July 21, 2025, time: 22:11.

(94) **Both leaders consider the incident to be isolated, and the military judiciary takes over the case. Two Hezbollah members killed in Mrakba after a dispute with Amal members over photos and banners**, As-Safir, July 17, 2000, issue 8653, p. 5.

(95) **Dispute over Ashura banners in Loubya: Amal members killed**





Among the Druze, the two leaderships faced off in local and regional conflicts, with the Lebanese Democratic Party being the traditional rival of the more powerful



Progressive Socialist Party. Despite the meetings held when necessary between Talal Arslan and Walid Jumblat, and their constant emphasis on sectarian unity, clashes between their followers occurred from time to time due to political differences. For instance, an incident in May 2018 in Choueifat led to a fatality,⁽⁹⁶⁾ as well as the killing of two young Arslan supporters who were in the motorcade of former minister Saleh al-Gharib at the hands of members of the Progressive Socialist Party in Qabrshmoun on June 30, 2019.⁽⁹⁷⁾

The conflict in regard of the Syrian war was not limited to Hezbollah and its Salafi opponents, but extended to the Progressive Socialist Party and the Arab Unification Party. This was clearly evident after Jabhat al-Nusra attacked the Druze village of Jabal al-Samak in Idlib

and wounded in Hezbollah ambush, Janoubia website, August 20, 2020, accessed on July 21, 2025, time: 13:57.

(96) **One dead in armed clash in Choueifat, Jumblat: This senseless fighting is shameful**, Al-Markazia website, May 8, 2018, accessed July on 21, 2025, time: 14:33.

(97) Johnny Fakhri, **After the killing of his companions in the Mount Lebanon incident... This is how the minister commented**, Al-Arabiya.net website, July 3, 2019, accessed on July 21, 2025, time: 14:47.





in 2015. At that time, Wahhab declared a general mobilization, and Jumblat attempted to contain the crisis by contacting the Syrian opposition.⁽⁹⁸⁾

Wars between sects... New lines of contact with old tools

During peacetime, Lebanese groups were divided along new sectarian lines of contact, albeit unannounced and less visible than during the Great War, giving rise to minor conflicts that confirmed that the absence of a just and capable state, allows each side to wage its own battles whenever it wishes.

After Hariri's assassination, it seemed that Sunni and Shiite streets were heading toward a violent clash that culminated in the events of May 7, 2008, which had its immediate causes, but also resulted from a series of escalating events, including Hezbollah's open sit-in to overthrow Fouad Siniora's government in late 2006. Then, two days after injuries occurred during a strike carried out by the March 8 forces to intensify pressure on the cabinet,⁽⁹⁹⁾ clashes broke out on 25 January 2007 between Sunni and Shiite youths using stones and sticks on the campus of Beirut Arab University in Tareek Jdeedeh and its surrounding neighborhoods, mixed



(98) Amal Khalil, **Lebanon's Druze: Between Jumblat's «accident» and Wahhab's «call to arms.»** Al-Akhbar website, June 12, 2015, accessed on July 18, 2025, time: 15:30.

(99) Awwab al-Masri, **The most notable events in Lebanon in 2007**, Al Jazeera.net website, December 30, 2007, accessed on July 14, 2025, time: 12:38.



between Sunnis and Shiites. These clashes escalated into gunfire, resulting in the deaths of four people.⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ Some footage indicated prior preparations by both sides for confrontation: snipers were seen on rooftops, along with the spread of youths equipped with helmets. In the aftermath, two young men affiliated with the Progressive Socialist Party were abducted on 23 April and killed, then dumped in the town of Jadra in the Chouf. The brothers of one of the victims of the Beirut Arab University clash, from the Shams family, were accused of carrying out the crime in revenge.⁽¹⁰¹⁾

Against the backdrop of tensions related to the installation of a surveillance camera in the vicinity of Rafic Hariri International Airport, the government decided on May 5, 2008, to return the commander of the facility's security apparatus, Brigadier General Wafic Shqair, to the army, and to consider Hezbollah's communications network illegal.⁽¹⁰²⁾

Two days later, on May 7, demonstrations accompanying a strike by the General Labor Union turned into an armed invasion by fighters from Hezbollah, Amal, and the Syrian Social Nationalist Party. Clashes broke out in Beirut and

(100) **4 dead in renewed Beirut confrontations and Lebanon's leaders call for self-restraint**, Al Jazeera.net website, January 25, 2007, accessed on July 14, 2025, time: 12:27.

(101) Youssef Diab, **Ending the repercussions of the killing of «the two Ziad» and the continuation of its judicial effects**, Al-Sharq Al-Awsat website, April 24, 2018, accessed on July 14, 2025, time: 12:53.

(102) **Lebanese government attacks Hezbollah's communications network**, Al Jazeera.net website, May 6, 2008, accessed on July 14, 2025, time: 10:14.





the mountains, spreading to the north, the Bekaa, and Sidon, with coastal and inland roads blocked and regions isolated. 71 people were killed in the clashes, most of them young men, and dozens were wounded. The fighting ceased when the government reversed its decisions on May 14 and the country's politicians went to Qatar for a week of talks that culminated in what became known as the Doha Agreement,⁽¹⁰³⁾ which was a belated acknowledgment of the shortcomings of the Taif Agreement and its poor implementation, and enshrined the dominance of arms as an influential factor in Lebanese politics. Ironically, it was a second agreement made on Gulf soil.

The events of May 7, 2008, with their temporal and geographical scope and high human and material losses, broke down the fragile balance of power, as it marked a turning point in the political and sectarian conflict, especially with a series of political assassinations targeting opponents of Hezbollah, which emerged victorious from its war with Israel in the summer of 2006, transferring this surplus of power to the domestic arena.

On August 1, 2021, revenge sparked a new Sunni and Shiite clash, with fighting breaking out in Khaldeh between Arab clans and members of Hezbollah following an ambush on the funeral procession of Ali Shibli, which left four people dead. A young man



(103) Mahmoud Hamadi and Abbas Hadla, **History of the Shia Community in Lebanon: From the Mysterious Past to the Unknown Future, from 1959 until the Maritime Demarcation**, pp. 219-220, 222.



from the clans had shot the latter in retaliation at a wedding in Jiyeh. The shootings spread from the inner neighborhoods to the highway between Beirut and Sidon.⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ This was not a passing incident, but rather a proof of the dominance of revenge over the concepts of law and state and the spread of local violence among young people.

The specter of a new civil war loomed from the ashes of the fragile justice system. After summoning ministers and deputies from forces allied with Hezbollah, Tarek Bitar, the investigating judge in the Port of Beirut explosion of August 4, 2020, was accused of bias, politicization, and arbitrariness. After Nasrallah called for his removal from the case,⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ on October 14, 2021, young supporters of Hezbollah and the Amal Movement marched on the Palace of Justice to press for his dismissal. Then, «bullets flew at the Tayouneh roundabout on the border between the Shiyah neighborhood in the southern suburbs of Beirut and Ain al-Rummanah in the eastern suburbs, the line that formed a war front from 1975 to 1990.»⁽¹⁰⁶⁾

Needless to say, the infamous bus passed through Ain al-Rummanah itself and sparked the Great War.

(104) Ikram Saab, **Ambushes, Clashes, and Revenge Killings: What is Happening in Khaldeh, Lebanon?**, Sky News Arabia website, August 1, 2021, accessed on July 19, 2025, time: 13:53.

(105) Shafiq Choukair, **Clashes in Tayouneh, Lebanon: Context and Messages**, Al Jazeera Center for Studies, October 17, 2021, accessed on July 19, 2025, time: 13:04.

(106) Najm al-Hashim, **The Tayouneh fires that nearly burned Lebanon**, Independent Arabia website, October 14, 2022, accessed on July 19, 2025, time: 12:52.





Tayouneh had all the ingredients of actual new warfare, from the specific nature of the location, to bullets and medium-range weapons such as RPGs. and a modern «weapon» that was not available in previous rounds of the civil war, that is live television coverage, which allowed both Hezbollah and the Lebanese Forces to present two contradictory narratives and claims of victimhood. The presence of snipers on rooftops proved the danger of the confrontation, as evidenced by the fact that «the fatalities were shot in the head, heart, and upper body, which means it was with the intent to kill.»⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ The battle claimed the lives of seven people, most of them young men, and left dozens wounded. Those arrested were from both areas.⁽¹⁰⁸⁾

While Nasrallah accused the youth of the Lebanese Forces of firing on his supporters,⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ the Christian party denied its involvement in the fighting, considering that what happened was nothing more than the people of Ain al-Rummanah defending themselves. However, Geagea described the incident as a «mini Christian May 7» that Hezbollah attempted to carry out.⁽¹¹⁰⁾

(107) Doha Shams, **Lebanon. «Tayouneh ambush» awakens specter of civil war**, Orient 21 website, November 10, 2021, accessed on July 19, 2025, time: 13:16.

(108) Nabila Ghossain, **Investigation into the Tayouneh events: Four arrests and 17 requests to recuse judges**, Legal Agenda website, September 13, 2022, accessed on July 19, 2025, time: 13:20.

(109) Mahmoud Hamadi and Abbas Hadla, **History of the Shia Community in Lebanon: From the Mysterious Past to the Unknown Future, from 1959 until the Maritime Demarcation**, p. 259.

(110) Shafiq Choukair, **The Tayouneh Clashes in Lebanon: Context and Messages**, Al Jazeera Center for Studies, October 17, 2021.





Whatever the case may be, the battle of Tayouneh and the partisan and sectarian mobilization that preceded it revealed that the opposing sides are ready to explode at the slightest opportunity, and that the wounds of war are still open along the old-new lines of contact, with the most dangerous factor being the continued heavy armament of all parties involved. The proportion of young people participating in the battle who did not witness the civil war revealed their aggressive narratives about «the others» and their inherited hostilities in their daily lives.

Violence by the authorities, their parties, and security forces

In an interview for this research, educational expert Nayla Khodr Hamadeh described the October 17, 2019 Revolution as an opportunity for millennials to learn about their country's politics, get involved in its affairs, and try to change it. They carried banners reading «Today the war is over» and asked in discussion sessions in the squares about its causes and consequences. This was a catalyst for collective independent critical thinking and liberation from the dominance of traditional sectarian parties. However, this cross-sectarian youth dialogue was thwarted⁽¹¹¹⁾ by multiple factors, including the spread of the Covid

(111) From an interview conducted by Sawssan Abou-Zahr with Dr. Nayla Khodr Hamadeh, founder of the Lebanese Association for History, on June 20, 2025, in Beirut.





19 pandemic, the Port of Beirut explosion, and the economic collapse of 2020, not to mention the impact of partisan and security violence.

The authorities at the time sensed a danger unprecedented even in the 2015 You Stink movement, which was also led by young people, as Berri's supporters waited no more than 24 hours to act refusing the «criticism of their leader [...] firing shots in some places to disperse the crowds [...]»⁽¹¹²⁾ The first two days of the revolution saw the arrest of 130 people, most of them in Beirut, who reported that they had been brutally beaten.⁽¹¹³⁾ Seven people were then injured in Nabatieh in an attack with sticks carried out by «Shabiha» or thugs of «a partisan group.»⁽¹¹⁴⁾ Young men loyal to Hezbollah attacked male and female protesters in Riad al-Solh Square in Beirut,⁽¹¹⁵⁾ and the scene was repeated days later at the hands of those described by An-Nahar newspaper as «human monsters.»⁽¹¹⁶⁾

The violence was not limited to the Shiite duo of Amal and

(112) Amal Khalil, **Berri's Supporters in the South: Crush the Revolution!**, Al-Akhbar, October 20, 2019, Memory at Work, accessed on July 24, 2025, time: 19:12.

(113) Hadeel Farfour, **Evacuation of 130 detainees: We were brutally beaten**, Al-Akhbar, October 20, 2019, Memory at Work, accessed on July 24, 2025, time: 19:16.

(114) Ramal Jouni, **Nabatieh... Revolutionaries break the «stick raid,»** Nidaa al-Watan, October 24, 2019, Memory at Work, accessed on July 24, 2025, time: 19:31.

(115) **Hezbollah supporters attack protesters in Beirut**, Nidaa al-Watan, October 25, 2019, Memory at Work, accessed on July 24, 2025, time: 19:36.

(116) **Women are stronger than human monsters**, An-Nahar, October 30, 2019, Memory at Work, accessed on July 24, 2025, time: 19:44.





Hezbollah, as supporters of the Progressive Socialist Party considered «Walid Jumblat a red line» when they attacked young men and women⁽¹¹⁷⁾ in Bakaata and Aley. «Supporters of the Free Patriotic Movement attacked protesters [...] in Jal el Dib, Jounieh, Baabda, and Hadath [...] Supporters of the Lebanese Forces [also attacked protesters] in Jal el Dib, and the Future Movement [did the same] in downtown Beirut.» As of October 17, 2020, five young revolutionaries were killed and at least 1,500 people from various regions arrested and summoned in systematic



October 17 Revolution

security violence in the protests that injured about 800 people, mostly young people. Some of whom suffered permanent damage from being targeted «by rubber bullets to the head and chest, resulting in loss of sight; or [shrapnel] Khordok targeting the skull, lungs, and

(117) **Partisan and official repression: protests continue in various regions,** Al-Modon website, July 5, 2020, accessed on July 24, 2025, time: 20:02.





heart; along with fractures and concussions to the spine, head, face [and] various parts of the body, and hearing loss [...]».⁽¹¹⁸⁾

The security forces intensified their crackdown on every occasion that the authorities considered a potential return of popular movements. For instance, on August 8, 2020, four days after the explosion of the Port of Beirut, a demonstration was met with excessive violence that left 700 wounded by live ammunition, shrapnel, rubber bullets, and tear gas.⁽¹¹⁹⁾ Among those injured that day was young lawyer Firas Hamdan who fell to the ground with shrapnel from a bomb that pierced his heart a hundred meters from the Parliament,⁽¹²⁰⁾ which he entered two years later, elected in the name of the October 17 Revolution. The authorities have always used excessive violence against the families of the victims of the port explosion, who are young men and women, bereaved mothers, and grieving fathers.

Violence is the only authoritarian response to any cross-party youth movement demanding political and economic reform. August 7, 2001, is an example

(118) Nader Fawz, **October 17 and the Year of Spilled Blood: Five Martyrs and 1,500 Victims**, Al-Modon website, October 17, 2020, accessed on July 24, 2025, time: 20:19.

(119) Batoul Yazbek, **August 8: A reminder of authoritarian and unlawful violence**, Al-Modon website, August 8, 2023, accessed on July 24, 2025, time: 20:31.

(120) Nabila Ghussain, **Firas Hamdan enters parliament with October 17 and a grain of shrapnel in his heart**, Legal Agenda website, May 27, 2022, accessed on July 24, 2025, time: 20:40.





of this, «a turning point in Lebanon's history. On that day, Lebanese security forces arrested hundreds of young people who were demonstrating for freedom of expression and against the Syrian oppression [...], throwing them in prison without any arrest warrants or legal justification.»⁽¹²¹⁾ The headquarters of the Lebanese Forces student wing and the Free Patriotic Movement's center were raided, and dozens of young men and women were taken to the Ministry of Defense and detained for weeks.⁽¹²²⁾

The strike called by the General Labor Union on May 21, 2004, also took a bloody turn, with five dead and 20 wounded, most of them young people. In protest against electricity cuts in some neighborhoods of Beirut and its southern suburbs, clashes broke out between the army and demonstrators on January 25, 2008, in the Shiyah-Mar Mikhael area, leaving eight dead and 29 wounded,⁽¹²³⁾ most of them young people. Two weeks later, the then government commissioner to the Permanent Military Court, Jean Fahd, charged two officers and 11 soldiers with «premeditated murder.»⁽¹²⁴⁾

(121) Ghassan Saoud, **August 7... The Day Lebanon Had Enough of Democracy**, Al-Akhbar website, December 21, 2006, accessed on July 14, 2025, time: 14:12.

(122) George Al-Akouri, **August 7... Yes, «the eye resists the needle,»** Leb Talks website, August 7, 2024, accessed on July 14, 2025, time: 14:08.

(123) Mahmoud Hamadi and Abbas Hadla, **History of the Shia Community in Lebanon: From the Mysterious Past to the Unknown Future, from 1959 until the Maritime Demarcation**, pp. 176, 218.

(124) **The Mar Mikhael Crime: 19 Soldiers Indicted**, Al-Akhbar website, February 12, 2008, accessed on July 25, 2025, time: 21:10.





Women... Declining military presence and rising religious mobilization

In a report by the BBC Arabic website on the al-Qaa bombings, a photo of two young women with an older one carrying weapons was accompanied by a caption stating that they were Christians.⁽¹²⁵⁾ Similar images of female supporters of the Lebanese Forces party after the Tayouneh battle were widely shared on social media, but they appeared to be more of a show off than actual participation in the confrontation.

Lebanese women have not been involved in the wars that followed the Taif Agreement, which can be explained by the fact that most of the rounds of fighting lasted no more than a few days, meaning that they did not pose an existential threat. This coincided with the decline of the left and nationalist movements that had previously recruited women, as well as the limited confrontations involving the Christian right.

In contrast, veiled women have led, and continue to lead, all demonstrations demanding the release of Islamist detainees. In this context, it is noteworthy that Salafi ideology has spread also among young women, with some of them playing a paramilitary role. For example, in October 2014, «security forces received information that Takfiri forces in the Aarsal countryside were training women and preparing



(125) **Al-Qaa bombings: Lebanese army arrests 103 Syrians in displacement camps in Baalbek**, BBC Arabic website, June 28, 2016.



them to carry out suicide operations and drive these cars themselves.»⁽¹²⁶⁾

At the end of 2015, the government completed an exchange deal with Jabhat al-Nusra that included the liberation of 16 kidnapped soldiers in exchange for the release of 13 Islamist detainees, including five women,⁽¹²⁷⁾ one of whom was Lebanese Joumana Hmayid. This young woman, in her thirties at the time, was. «one of three girls arrested on charges of smuggling a car bomb,» which she was driving herself to deliver to one suicide bomber. «Joumana's life changed radically after her brother was killed in the fighting in Syria [...]».⁽¹²⁸⁾ She had previously driven another car bomb from Aarsal to Aley, where she handed it over to a Syrian who took it to the Cola area in Beirut and then completed his mission alone. After her arrest, Jabhat al-Nusra threatened to execute soldier Ali al-Bazzal, «which demonstrates the status of this woman within this terrorist organization [...]».⁽¹²⁹⁾

With the rise of ISIS, two Lebanese women, Mona A. M. and Majida B. S emerged in its basic organizational

(126) **Tripoli regains calm, exceptional measures in the south, and commandos comb the Qubayat hills**, Janoubia website, October 29, 2014, accessed on July 22, 2025, time: 21:22.

(127) **Details of the exchange deal between Al-Nusra and Lebanon**, Al Jazeera.Net website, December 1, 2015, accessed on July 22, 2025, time: 21:15.

(128) **Who is the woman on whom the fate of the kidnapped soldier depends?**, MTV website, November 28, 2014, accessed on July 22, 2025, time: 21:20.

(129) Ali Al-Moussawi, **Court publishes confessions of Al-Nusra Front members in exchange for the release of soldiers**, Mahkama.net website, July 5, 2017, accessed on July 22, 2025, time: 21:25.





structure in Qalamoun in 2015.⁽¹³⁰⁾ Until 2022, Lebanese women, including young ones, wives and widows of ISIS members, were present with their children in the Al-Hol and Roj camps in northeastern Syria without a settlement allowing them to return to the country. Former Director General of General Security Abbas Ibrahim linked the matter to «a political decision that must be taken.»⁽¹³¹⁾

For his part, Nasrallah justified his reservations about women playing an armed role within Hezbollah by saying that there was no need for them to be involved.⁽¹³²⁾ In an interview for this report, researcher Hanaa Jaber argued that women, including young ones, in the Hezbollah context are recruited, even if without weapons. Their «war» is «internal,» based on mobilization, and they are «extremely important in dealing with or managing human losses.» Furthermore, the grief they are required to express and feel is a form of violence, as «public mourning on Ashura is mandatory and obligatory, while the right to private mourning is denied»⁽¹³³⁾ for those killed in Syria and elsewhere.

(130) **Get to know Lebanon's «ISIS women»!**, MTV website, June 30, 2015, accessed on July 22, 2025, time: 21:40.

(131) **Lebanese ISIS women... Empty rooms await their owners**, Akhbar Al-Youm news agency, citing Al-Hurra website, July 14, 2022, accessed on July 22, 2025, time: 21:30.

(132) Raghida Ghamloush, **Shia Women in Lebanon: Unique Identity and the Endless Struggle**, p. 89.

(133) From an interview conducted by Sawssan Abou-Zahr with Dr. Hanaa Jaber, Executive Director of the Lokman Slim Foundation, at the foundation's headquarters in Beirut on July 14, 2025.





Political assassinations... Ongoing war on individuals

One of the hallmarks of impunity inherited from the war is the continuation of political assassinations in times of peace at a rate no less violent than that committed during the Great War, on what writer Suleiman Taqi al-Din described as «opposing sectarian homelands,» making agreement on the definition of «martyrs» impossible and spreads revenge «like any tribal society»⁽¹³⁴⁾ at the expense of justice and citizenship.

In the section Who Killed Whom on the website Memory at Work, under the heading Assassinations, there is a tally of 137 political assassinations, starting with Kamel al-Hussein al-Youssef on May 10, 1949 and ending with Pascal Suleiman on April 9, 2024, noting that the number includes foreigners killed in Lebanon. 43 of these crimes took place after the Taif Agreement,⁽¹³⁵⁾ which is a high number for a period that was supposed to be peaceful. For example, June 2005 saw the killing of Samir Kassir on the 2nd and George Hawi on the 21st. In the tables of Al-Dawliya for Information, the phrase «no conclusion reached» appears in regard to the investigation of most crimes, as well as assassination attempts, of which there were 95 between 1943 and 2021.⁽¹³⁶⁾

(134) Suleiman Taqi al-Din, **Violence, Assassination, and Political Death**, As-Safir, October 23, 2012, pp. 1 and 16, Memory at Work, accessed on July 23, 2025, time: 18:13.

(135) Assassinations, Who Killed Whom, Memory at Work, accessed on July 23, 2025, time: 18:42.

(136) **220 Assassinations and Attempted Assassinations in Lebanon (1943-2021) and the Perpetrator... Still Unknown in Most Crimes**, Al-Shahriya, Al-





Nader Fawz wrote that «investigating political assassinations is a red line [...] and after condemnation, there are two options: another killing or silence out of fear and to avoid strife [...] turning coexistence into a shared death for all opponents [...]».⁽¹³⁷⁾ On the website of the Lokman Slim Foundation, there is a calendar from January to December. Pressing on any given day shows whether a political assassination took place or not,⁽¹³⁸⁾ as if the elimination of political and intellectual dissenters were ordinary in Lebanese life!

In an interview for this research, Jaber commented that the lack of accountability has normalized «assassination as a tool of political repression that ensures the victim is easily silenced. Those who practice it are well aware that no punishment awaits them because impunity has become a given, since the war did not end as it should have with a new social contract, but rather with a relationship of interests between its warlords over the sharing of the state and its institutions, albeit dilapidated, as spoils, along with bargains to ensure their escape from accountability.» She pointed to a «solid economy of political assassination that provides work for some young people and a livelihood from violence

Dawliya for Information Website, February 18, 2021, accessed on July 23, 2025, time: 19:12.

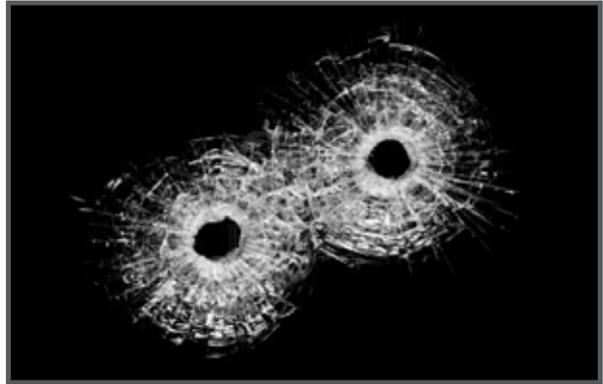
(137) Nader Fawz, **We begin with political assassinations... and return to them**, Al-Modon website, February 10, 2021, accessed July on 23, 2025, time: 19:33.

(138) **Judicial Accountability Observatory**, Lokman Slim Foundation, accessed on July 23, 2025, time: 19:40.





in the absence of social justice and limited individual prospects of growth.» As «small killing tools,» they are, to a certain extent, especially the young ones, «sacrificial victims»



in the event of accountability, because justice does not knock on the doors of those who decide on assassinations. She still believes that it is not too late to rehabilitate the old war fighters and, more importantly, the next generation that fought in subsequent battles, in Lebanon and abroad. This is a challenge for society as a whole that could help break the cycle of violence.⁽¹³⁹⁾

(139) From an interview conducted by Sawssan Abou-Zahr with Dr. Hanaa Jaber, Executive Director of the Lokman Slim Foundation, at the foundation's headquarters in Beirut on July 14, 2025.





Chapter Five: Screen Wars and Soft Violence

The war ended, but it did not really end, not only with the small wars that spawned from it, but with a different kind of violence without bullets. The early years of the millennium, which saw the rapid spread of information and the intertwining of media and digital platforms, opened up new fronts in Lebanon and battlefields that were no longer limited to alleys and neighborhoods, cities and checkpoints. Their locations are screens larger than geography, albeit relatively small, the size of phones, computers, and televisions, fought over by young fingers moving with agility and anger, spreading hatred and incitement, with the arsenals of hate speech⁽¹⁾ and verbal violence. Those who differ in ideas and cultures, religions and politics, duel with the weapon of language, which is no less dangerous and destructive to souls and the social fabric than a

(1) The United Nations defines hate speech as «any form of communication, verbal, written, or behavioral, that attacks or uses derogatory or discriminatory language in reference to a person or group on the basis of identity, in other words, on the basis of religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, color, descent, gender, or other factors specific to identity.» And «unlike traditional media, hate speech can be created and shared online easily, cheaply, and anonymously. It has the potential to reach a global and diverse audience in real time. The relative permanence of hateful content online is also a problem, as it can reappear and regain popularity over time.» See: **What is hate speech?**, Understanding hate speech, United Nations website, accessed on August 17, 2025, time: 13:45.





real war, and which equally perpetuates division and separation.

The «old» fighter was mostly living in poverty, drawn to arms under the banner of protection or existential threat, sometimes for sectarian reasons, or due to a loss of socio-economic hope and a lack of faith in a just state and its institutions. His «new» counterpart, on the other hand, is attracted to violence on political or sectarian grounds and feeds on inherited narratives. It is no exaggeration to compare systematic digital campaigns of violence to rounds of civil war. Account hackers are the modern version of snipers, watching their victims, who may be more than one person, until the moment to strike. The leaders of the fronts and barricades at that time are the equivalent of the masterminds behind cyber attacks. War with the fighters of modern era has shifted to tweets and videos, television and electronic broadcasts, using cultural, social, customary, religious, and political tools, employing insults, betrayal, sectarian and doctrinal incitement, psychological pressure, and defamation, to social ostracism. Legitimacy, which used to be derived from control of the battlefields, now comes from followers and influence on public opinion.

Cyber violence spreads *schadenfreude*, gloating, and contempt, leading to bloodshed, as happened to Lokman Slim, who warned in 2008 against «drawing lines of contact written in invisible ink that do not always reveal themselves through burning tires or demonstrations. For the danger of the lines of conflict drawn in people's minds is no less serious than that of physical lines of conflict. Security forces can be sent to separate the streets of Barbour and Tareek Jdeedeh,





but no security administration or armed forces can find a solution to the discord that exists between the Lebanese themselves.»⁽²⁾ This soft violence, meaning that it is unarmed but dangerous, grows with intimidation and terror to prevent people from wearing swimsuits here, putting up Christmas trees there, holding music concerts elsewhere, and threatening those with different sexual orientations.

Cyber armies... A hidden weapon and visible violence

It is not a coincidence that some online groups with clear objectives are referred to as «armies» in terms of their strict organization, division of roles, and capacity for harm.⁽³⁾ Just like hate speech, which could be «so powerful that containing it becomes a very difficult process [... after] turning individuals into hate-promoting machines and exploiting this collective influence to pave the way for violence.» It is promoted by «accounts with similar characteristics [...] The main instigators identified [as of 2022] are accounts supporting Hezbollah and the Free Patriotic Movement, with accounts belonging to men being the most active, while women's accounts were the most targeted in most cases.»⁽⁴⁾

(2) Lokman Slim, **Worse than 1975 but without a spectacular war**, Al-Rai Media, March 25, 2008, accessed on August 10, 2025, time: 18:52.

(3) For more on cyber armies, see: Wafa Fawzi, **Concepts of Cyber Armies – Cyber Flies and Opinion Making**, Al-Bayan Center for Studies and Planning, 2023, pp. 11-13.

(4) Wadad Jarboub, Jad Safwan, and Jad Hani, **730 Days of Hate: Monitoring Hate Speech in the Lebanese Media and on Social Media 2020-2022**, supervised by Samer Abdullah and Ayman Muhanna, Samir Kassir Foundation, 2023, pp. 4, 19.





It is common to counter the opinions of female political activists with insults, mockery, and ridicule, shaming them, violating their privacy, and bullying them and their family members. At the height of ISIS's rise, reports spread in 2013 about what was called Jihad al-Nikah or sexual jihad. Even though most of its practitioners were Tunisian girls;⁽⁵⁾ it was used in digital campaigns that spread fake sexual images to defame female journalists known for their support of the Syrian revolution and their opposition to Hezbollah. In 2022, Reporters Without Borders noted that 30 percent of Lebanese female journalists—including the co-author of this research—had been subjected to digital violence because of their political views and because they were women,⁽⁶⁾ in the form of threats, hacking of emails and social media accounts, and identity theft. Therefore, «it can be argued that political competition and debate within the country necessitate the formation of a culture of feminist protection.»⁽⁷⁾

Not all digital campaigns are anonymous in terms of origin and funding. In the post-Taif Agreement era,

(5) **Tunisian Minister for Women: 700 Tunisian women have joined jihadist groups in Syria**, France 24 website, January 4, 2015, accessed on July 22, 2025, time: 16:15.

(6) **Lebanon: One year after the assassination of Lokman Slim, Reporters Without Borders sends a letter of complaint to the United Nations**, Reporters Without Borders website, February 4, 2022, accessed on August 13, 2025, time: 18:19.

(7) Wadad Jarboud, Jad Safwan, and Jad Hani, **730 Days of Hate: Monitoring Hate Speech in the Lebanese Media and on Social Media 2020-2022**, p. 35.





which imposed the dissolution of militias, at least officially, partisan youth cyber armies emerged, «the majority of these groups are organized [...] and most of the time follow the media and communication agencies [of political parties]». The Lebanese Forces boast that they were among the first to professionally engage in this field, which allows parties to disavow their cyber recruits when necessary.⁽⁸⁾

A study and analysis of the hate networks that surrounded Slim, which can be used as a model for understanding such online groups, found that they «consist of key influencers who manage the conversation and supporters who retweet or endorse tweets through comments.» Some accounts hide behind the faces of public figures or use complex names that appear to have been created by a computer, while others are similar with minor differences in their details and have no profile pictures or bios. The study demonstrated the ability of intensive dissemination of misinformation and fake news to spread schadenfreude, mockery, and insults, destroy reputations, and spread threats. This is a real, not hypothetical danger, as evidenced by the moral assassination of Slim since he was branded a collaborator and traitor in December 2019, leading to his physical elimination and the celebration of it. Worse yet, the digital hate network supporting

(8) Paula Astih, **Lebanese Political Parties' «Cyber Armies» Spearhead Political Campaigns**, Al-Sharq Al-Awsat website, July 14, 2018, accessed on August 13, 2025, time: 19:09.





Hezbollah that targeted him did the same to male and female journalists.⁽⁹⁾

Hezbollah's cyber army is believed to be one of the most organized. One of its groups manages thousands of fake accounts to «promote specific news and images» and carries out campaigns to report opposing accounts with the aim of temporarily closing them down. In addition, there are two units, «1000» and «900,» which include specialists who analyze data from specific phones or computers, and whose mission is to expose agents.⁽¹⁰⁾ Many in Hezbollah receive fixed monthly salaries in this context. It can be argued that they are young people because the field is relatively new, and those active in it, such as programming, digital security, cyber hacking, and artificial intelligence, are millennials. The belief that young people are the backbone of cyber armies is reinforced by information that Hezbollah recruited between 2012 and 2020 thousands of young men from Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Syria to train them to use social media as a weapon in their countries to spread fake news, and that it has earned «millions of dollars» from this.⁽¹¹⁾

(9) Nasri Msarra, **Field Study of the Networks of Hatred that Surrounded Lokman Slim Before and After His Assassination**, Samir Kassir Foundation, 2021, pp. 14, 17-18, 20, 22-24, 30, 32.

(10) Johnny Fakhri, **The Secrets of Hezbollah's Flies: Details of an Electronic Army and Fake Accounts**, Al-Arabiya.net, August 22, 2020, accessed on August 14, 2025, time: 18:46.

(11) Will Crisp, Suadad Al-Salhy, **Exclusive: Inside Hizbollah's fake news training camps sowing instability across the Middle East**, the telegraph, August 2, 2020, accessed on August 14, 2025, time: 19:20.





All of the above points to the growth of organized incitement groups, often for political reasons,



and their interconnectedness and recruitment of different functional and age groups, most notably young people, as can be seen from the images on accounts that incite hatred and social isolation of their targets, without ruling out the possibility that these photos can be fake and randomly selected from the internet, in order to escape prosecution. This digital hostility creates a fragile social environment rife with sectarian and religious strife in an open space without legal or moral controls, allowing anyone to spread violent rhetoric. Add to this the viral spread of cyber hatred, with its ability to spread like an epidemic across platforms at a speed unknown to traditional war fronts.

As with all problematic turning points in the country, online hate speech spread among young people during the recent Israeli war on Lebanon in 2024. Hezbollah was once again accused of causing the hostile attacks and the ensuing heavy human and material losses, and its supporters responded with accusations of treason. It was as if a parallel civil war was being waged in the digital arena, through





sectarian and derogatory hashtags such as #ما_بِيشبهُونا (They are not like us) and #ما_فينا_نعيش_معكم (We cannot live with you), along with the use of mockery and schadenfreude at the scale of displacement, deaths, and injuries, especially those who lost their eyes or limbs in the pagers attack on September 17, 2024. In response, the party's supporters vowed revenge against their opponents, promising a «new May 7» and threatening to «trample» and «crush» them.

In the absence of clear legislation criminalizing online hate speech, it is easy to manipulate digital content to achieve political goals, inflame tensions, threaten international institutions in Lebanon,⁽¹²⁾ and escape punishment.

It should be noted that, in parallel with the involvement of young people in multifaceted hate speech, some peers have countered it online by emphasizing inclusive citizenship and defending groups targeted by hate campaigns, such as Syrian and Palestinian refugees, domestic workers, and members of the LGBTQ+ community. Young men and women are also getting involved in community initiatives against racism.



(12) For example, the incitement against the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), see: Nour Al-Osta, **Special Report: Digital Hate Speech in Lebanon: Between Challenges and Solutions**, JNews Lebanon, February 6, 2025, accessed on August 13, 2025, time: 18:49.



Violence of prohibition... Repression in culture and daily life

As a result of the weakness of law enforcement authorities in the face of sectarian and partisan loyalties, as well as the rise of practices that openly reject «the other» and differentiate between «us» and «them» on regional, sectarian, or religious grounds, extending beyond politics to everyday life; violence has spread. This time not through the barrels of guns, but via more subtle means that undermine individual freedoms, such as prohibiting alternative cultures and imposing dress codes and behavioral norms. This violence is soft in form, mostly individual and less organized than cyber armies, but it is based on exclusionary thinking that reinforces mental boundaries between Lebanese. It is as if each sect runs its own undeclared canton, closed off from the others, with regions setting their own laws according to their demographic composition, neglecting Lebanese legislation, which is supposed to apply throughout the country, but is unfortunately powerless, undermined and neglected.

In a pluralistic society, artistic approaches take on dimensions that go beyond objective criticism, sometimes reaching the brink of religious conflict. The justification is often the protection of sacred values or the preservation of customs and traditions, revealing a strong presence of cultural violence as a tool of pressure and control, as art is transformed from a space for expression into a field of tension and struggle. Religious authorities are not far from this atmosphere, with their





discourses of prohibition spreading like wildfire among devoted followers, especially young people.

Director Lina Khoury said in late 2015 that «social oppression has surpassed political oppression, and the reason is the reality that has fueled more and more intolerance,» commenting on the Catholic Media Center's demand to ban her play *Why*, adapted from a text by writer Issam Mahfouz that was first performed in 1971 «without any problems». She explained that the center had not seen the work and based its position on «a two-minute excerpt without any discussion or communication between us.»⁽¹³⁾

In the summer of 2019, under pressure from the church, which spiraled out of control when young activists on social media responded with death threats, the administration of the Byblos International Festival canceled a musical performance by the band Mashrou' Leila, some of whose members were summoned for questioning by the state security apparatus.⁽¹⁴⁾ The matter was not without populist political exploitation by the Christian Democratic Party, whose Facebook page states that it is working to establish a «Christian nation-state» in violation of the constitution, the National Pact, and the Taif Agreement, as well as by figures and representatives of the Free Patriotic Movement. Beyond



(13) May Elias, **Artists who were harassed and attacked in 2015**, Elaph website, January 1, 2016, accessed on August 18, 2025, time: 17:43.

(14) Carmen Jokhadar, **Lebanon: Byblos festivals cancel Mashrou' Leila concert after controversy and death threats**, France 24 website, July 30, 2019, accessed on August 18, 2025, time: 18:06.



the accusations levelled at the band for disparaging religious symbols, the factor of homophobia cannot be overlooked, as the young singer Hamed Sinno has become «a symbol for defenders of gay rights, [...] as the first 'Arab Muslim and gay' singer to proudly declare his identity.»⁽¹⁵⁾

People with different sexual orientation are targeted with cultural oppression that aligns with the interests of religious institutions. For instance, the highest Sunni and Shiite religious authorities filed two reports and a legal complaint against comedian and political activist Shaden Fakih, who is openly lesbian, on charges of «contempt of religious rituals» and «insulting Islam» after she mocked social customs associated with Friday prayers.⁽¹⁶⁾ She received death threats and young men demonstrated outside her home,⁽¹⁷⁾ forcing her to emigrate. Her mother, engineer Nahida Khalil, who ran in the 2022 parliamentary elections, faced pressure to withdraw from the race due to her daughter's gender identity.⁽¹⁸⁾

(15) Sanaa Al-Khoury, **In Lebanon: Christian extremists call for the blood of Mashrou' Leila**, BBC Arabic, July 22, 2019, accessed on August 18, 2025, time: 18:52.

(16) **Lebanon... Religious authorities take legal action against Shaden Fakih**, An-Nahar website, May 10, 2024, accessed on August 18, 2025, time: 18:59.

(17) Diana Mokalled, **The Shaden Fakih Case: We Are Not Ready for Ridicule, But We Are Ready for Bloodshed!**, Daraj Media website, May 13, 2024, accessed on August 18, 2025, time: 19:19.

(18) Myriam Suidan, **Lebanon Elections: When Female Candidates Are Reduced to Being «Divorced» and JMothers!**, Daraj Media website, April 5, 2022, accessed on August 18, 2025, time: 19:5.





In the same vein, in August 2023, the aforementioned Christian group Soldiers of the Lord surrounded a nightclub in the Mar Mikhael neighborhood to stop a performance by a number of drag queens, men who wear women's clothing and apply heavy makeup for show. The attackers chanted: «You will burn in hellfire [...] This place is the place of Satan [...] This is only the beginning.»⁽¹⁹⁾ The then Minister of Culture, Mohammad Bassam Mortada, who was close to Hezbollah, thought that the security forces should have closed the place down; and the Assistant Inspector General of Dar al-Fatwa, Sheikh Hassan Mereb, said, «The soldiers of the Lord did well [...] to defend our families and our society against this destructive and corrupt ideology.»⁽²⁰⁾

In another form of violence cloaked in the defense of religious figures, protests against offensive cartoons of Prophet Muhammad published by a Danish newspaper turned violent on February 5, 2006, with the destruction of the facade of a building housing the Copenhagen consulate and an attack on the Mar Maroun Church in Gemmayzeh. A 17-year-old protester was killed in clashes with security forces.⁽²¹⁾

The targeting of places of worship and symbols of

(19) Marie-Josée Al-Qazzi, «**Soldiers of the Lord» attack a nightclub in Beirut: Homophobic rhetoric translates into violence**, BBC Arabic website, August 24, 2023, accessed on August 20, 2025, time: 18:01.

(20) «**Soldiers of the Lord» attack nightclub in Beirut in rejection of «homosexuality»**, Al-Sharq Al-Awsat website, August 24, 2023, accessed on August 2, 2025, time: 02:43.

(21) **Lebanon triumphs over strife in Ashrafieh**, As-Safir, February 6, 2006, issue 10313, p. 1.





spiritual significance reveals a disturbing aspect of some young people's attachment to violence, especially hostile and exclusionary actions toward others, which transcend the event itself to its social and religious dimensions. In this context, we recall the destruction of statues of the Virgin Mary or their throwing to the ground, and others of former Pope John Paul II.⁽²²⁾

Furthermore, the Baha'i faith is not included in the list of 18 Lebanese sects, as it is not officially recognized, but it has hundreds of followers in Beirut and Mashghara in the Bekaa Valley, and a few in Mount Lebanon.⁽²³⁾ Its largest global presence is in Iran, where it emerged in the mid-19th century as an independent monotheistic religion with its own book linked to the idea of the awaited Mahdi.⁽²⁴⁾ In the Islamic Republic, the Bahá'ís are treated with suspicion by the regime and are subjected to systematic discrimination and oppression,⁽²⁵⁾

(22) See: **In Haret Sakhr... Statue of the Virgin Mary destroyed**, Lebanon Debate website, July 9, 2017, accessed on August 11, 2025, time: 15:44; **Lebanon: Acts of vandalism target Our Lady of the Field Church in Byblos**, Asy Mina website, June 15, 2023, accessed on August 11, 2025, time: 15:46; **Unidentified individuals vandalize statue of the Virgin Mary in Edde, Byblos**, National News Agency, December 31, 2023, accessed on August 11, 2025, time: 15:48; **In pictures: Statue of the Virgin Mary removed and thrown to the ground in Jezzine**, Janoubia website, February 19, 2025, accessed on August 11, 2025, time: 15:50.

(23) Abdul Halim Hamoud, **The Baha'is in Mashghara: A religion not recognized by the state**, Manatek.net website, April 25, 2023, accessed on August 11, 2025, time: 13:37.

(24) Ruslan Jadallah Amer, **What is the Bahá'í Faith?**, Maaber website, October 13, 2019, accessed on August 22, 2025, time: 15:52.

(25) Mehdi Khalaji, **Iran's Growing Persecution of the Baha'is**, Washington Institute, January 21, 2022, accessed on August 22, 2025, time: 15:55.





which is reflected, in one way or another, in their situation in Lebanon, especially in areas with a Shiite majority. On August 30, 2023, 150-year-old shrines in their cemeteries in Mashghara were vandalized. The attack was attributed to unknown individuals⁽²⁶⁾ who may have been young men influenced by a wave of incitement on social media.

Some citizens impose coercive censorship on others under various pretexts, mostly religious in nature or disguised under the pretext of tradition, violently suppressing what is constitutionally guaranteed personal freedom. The violence in these cases is mostly individual, but it is systematic in its repetition.

Almost every summer, controversy erupts over what to wear on public beaches and private resorts. We recall here the case of a cleric who, in 2023, attacked a woman who was accompanying her husband at the municipal public beach in Sidon because she was wearing a swimsuit, and then threatened them both to leave the place,⁽²⁷⁾ justifying the harassment as a defense of custom. A few days later, a confrontation escalated from verbal abuse to causing «minor injuries» to feminists at the hands of young men who rejected «the hijacking of the identity of the capital



(26) Carine Abdelnour, **After «They Followed Them to Their Graves»: A Journey in Search of Bahá'ís from Iran to the World**, Nidaa al-Watan website, October 18, 2023, accessed on August 11, 2025, time: 1:45.

(27) Rita Jammal, **Lebanon: Cleric attacks woman and her husband for wearing a swimsuit in Sidon**, Al-Araby Al-Jadeed website, May 16, 2023, accessed on August 11, 2025, time: 23:23.



of the south and the spread of a culture of nudity [...]».⁽²⁸⁾

A similar controversy erupted in 2020 after footage emerged of young women in short dresses drinking beer on the banks of the Arabsalim or Kharkhar River, prompting «the locals» to issue a statement calling for «respect for social and religious norms in the town [... which] was watered with the blood of martyrs.» The photos' publisher responded by saying, «Those who liberated the south should not prevent us from being free with its nature» or enjoying it.⁽²⁹⁾ In a case of reverse discrimination, in June 2025, two veiled women were denied entry to a beach in Damour on the pretext that it was a private resort, even though this is contrary to the law, which has not prevented «public property from being transformed into closed spaces that are effectively managed according to class [...]» discrimination.⁽³⁰⁾

Similarly, the debate over the freedom to trade and consumption of alcohol is one of the features of Lebanese divisions that contradict the country's

(28) Sarah Matar, **Lebanon: Protest against ban on swimwear on Sidon beach and counter-protest**, Al-Araby Al-Jadeed website, May 21, 2023, accessed on August 11, 2025, time: 23:34.

(29) Samir Sabbagh, **Photo of a young woman from the south wearing a swimsuit in Kharkhar reignites controversy... What did the governor of Nabatieh tell An-Nahar?**, An-Nahar website, June 8, 2020, accessed on August 11, 2025, time: 23:41.

(30) Nagham Rabih, **Two veiled women barred from entering a beach in Lebanon spark outrage on social media**, Al-Araby Al-Jadeed website, June 29, 2025, accessed on August 11, 2025, time: 23:45.





constitutionally secular character. Here, violence takes the form of damaging livelihoods by attacking and sometimes blowing up, stores, causing heavy material losses⁽³¹⁾ as well as threatening to shed the blood⁽³²⁾ of those working in this sector.

As for the incidents of burning Christmas trees in religiously mixed areas, even if they are predominantly Muslim, such as Sidon and Tripoli,⁽³³⁾ they are carried out by young men.⁽³⁴⁾ Some of them are in their early twenties, and after their arrest, they become criminals with a record, which makes it more difficult for them to enter the job market and may put them in a cycle of violence that could have been avoided.

Moreover, television stations are not immune to hate speech and incitement to stir up tensions in order to boost ratings and attract advertising, at the expense of facts, by inciting conflicts instead of exchanging ideas. There are also television programs that open the floor

(31) See: **Two liquor stores bombed in southern Lebanon**, Al Jazeera.net website, January 12, 2001, accessed on August 2, 2025, time: 12:25.

(32) See: Walid Hussein, **Sheikh of Bazouriya vows to shed the blood of liquor sellers**, Al-Modon website, November 27, 2018, accessed on August 2, 2025, time: 12:32.

(33) See: **Unknown persons burn Christmas tree in northern Lebanon**, Al-Sharq Al-Awsat website, December 24, 2023, accessed on August 2, 2025, time: 12:20.

(34) See: **Security forces: Arrest of two individuals who burned the Christmas tree at the Nini roundabout in Tripoli**, An-Nashra website, January 2, 2025, accessed on August 7, 2025, time: 23:23; **Information Division reveals identities of those involved in burning Christmas tree in Sidon and arrests one of them in the neighborhood**, Internal Security Forces website, January 11, 2025, accessed on August 7, 2025, time: 23:29.





to young people who exchange insults and sometimes resort to physical violence, such as pushing and punching, to please this or that politician or party. Here, programs are transformed from platforms for dialogue into battlefields that contribute to the normalization of verbal violence and undermine debate in the public sphere. This violence is widespread, even if it occurs at specific times, and tends to be theatrical, giving it a propagandistic dimension. It may be replayed in short clips on the same screens or on social media.

Television stations are also among the new fronts, as seen in Tayouneh, because in 1975 there was only one station in the country, which was divided into two before the emergence of a number of stations that did not hide their partisan and sectarian affiliations. Perhaps what was written about radio stations during the war can be used to describe television stations today, as «the military was fighting the war on the ground, accompanied by radio stations providing media coverage and propaganda [...] It was also noted that the military defeat of a particular militia resulted in the closure of its radio station [...]. In 1976, the government [...] considered radio stations to be harmful [...] practicing 'radio bombardment,')»⁽³⁵⁾ in an expression synonymous with contemporary hate speech. Violence did not spare the media from its fire. During the events of May 7, Hezbollah youth and

(35) **News broadcast introductions and their connection to the civil war**, Salam and Kalam website, April 1, 2017, accessed on August 15, 2025, time: 19:00.





their allies attacked Future TV, Radio Orient, Al-Siraa magazine, and the newspapers Al-Mustaqbal and Al-Liwaa.⁽³⁶⁾

Among the sacred symbols that party supporters forbid touching is criticizing or mocking the religious and political «leader.» In 2006, angry young followers of Hezbollah launched «spontaneous» protests against «defaming the resistance and its weapons by attacking its leader [...]» on the program Bas Mat Watan, prompting «the mobilization of about 400 members and cadres [...] to stop the demonstrations and prevent attacks on public property in both Ain al-Rummanah and Tareek Jdeedeh [...]»⁽³⁷⁾ after they spread to areas with sectarian and political sensitivities toward Hezbollah. The scene was repeated, albeit on a smaller scale, in 2013 after a second imitation of Nasrallah on the same program, which also targeted former Maronite Patriarch Nasrallah Boutros Sfeir, «prompting a number of Christians to protest [...]»⁽³⁸⁾ against the episodes and their director Charbel Khalil, who once canceled the broadcast of a video imitating Al-Assir after receiving

(36) Mahmoud Hamadi and Abbas Hadla, **History of the Shia Community in Lebanon: From the Mysterious Past to the Unknown Future, from 1959 until the Maritime Demarcation**, p. 221.

(37) Ghasib al-Mukhtar, **Al-Aridi Raises «Bas Mat Watan» to the Council of Ministers, Hezbollah: Open Confrontation with «February 14,»** As-Safir, June 5, 2006, Issue 10409, p. 6.

(38) Ali Saad, **Nasrallah's Imitation Brings His Supporters Out onto the Streets**, Al Jazeera.net website, November 12, 2013, accessed on August 18, 2025, time: 22:42.





slaughter threats.⁽³⁹⁾ From the above, it appears that the objections are not limited to young men from Hezbollah, who have been known to use weapons, such as firing shots, after the Saudi MBC channel aired a parody of Nasrallah in 2016.⁽⁴⁰⁾

Against the same backdrop, channels have been punished by angry young people demonstrating in front of their headquarters, rejecting political views in their news bulletins or programs that do not suit their partisan tastes.⁽⁴¹⁾ This usually coincides with unilateral measures by cable TV distributors to block certain stations for the same reasons,⁽⁴²⁾ without consulting their customers, in a repressive act that deprives them of their right to choose what they watch. The political parties disclaim responsibility for this measure,⁽⁴³⁾ knowing that most of those who control this sector, which is based on piracy

(39) **Bas Mat Watan team cancels music video imitating Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir after death threats**, Skeys Media website, February 1, 2013, accessed on August 18, 2025, time: 22:50.

(40) **Lebanon: Riots and gunfire over Hassan Nasrallah lookalike**, Sky News Arabia website, February 28, 2016, accessed on August 18, 2025, time: 23:01.

(41) See: **After insulting and threatening its employees... Al-Jadeed TV broadcast cut off in some Lebanese areas**, Al-Araby Al-Jadeed website, November 21, 2019, accessed on August 6, 2025, time: 01:12.

(42) See: Zakia Dirani, **Al-Jadeed TV blocked in Dahiya**, Al-Akhbar website, May 11, 2025, accessed on August 6, 2025, time: 01:07.; **MTV broadcasts suspended in Dahiya!**, Lebanon 24 website, February 11, 2021, accessed on August 6, 2025, time: 01:19; **Al-Jadeed channel broadcast cut off in Aramoun, Bshamoun, Deir Qouboul, and a number of villages and towns in western Shahar in Aley**, Al-Jadeed website, November 22, 2019, accessed on August 18, 2025, time: 23:24.

(43) See: **Al-Jadeed blocked in the suburbs, Beirut, and the south**, Janoubia website, May 8, 2017, accessed on August 6, 2025, time: 01:16.





and violation of intellectual property rights, are party members, including young men who also run networks of electric generators. This is another manifestation of everyday violence that uses the free market as an excuse to prey on the weakness of state institutions, imposing illegal fees on citizens similar to those seen during wartime. It is a de facto economy inherited from the war's black market empires, which reproduce themselves just like small wars.





Conclusion and Recommendations: Dismantling Violence... «Until it is No More»

Despite everything presented in the five chapters, nonviolence was a bold choice in many instances; and confronting war, killing, incitement, and hatred was a courageous path for young men and women over half a century, believing that violence is not necessarily inevitable, and therein lies the answer to the question we posed in the introduction. But this leads us to another question: how can we escape the cycle of violence that grips our daily lives and mindsets? How can we dismantle the legacy of war that is ingrained in the consciousness of generations, their behaviors, and their tribal view of «the other» in order to move to a stage where Lebanon is a post-conflict society and then a land of peace, while it has been oscillating between conflict and post-conflict since the Taif Agreement?

First, it is not too late for a critical historical reading of the events of April 13 and before, but rather it is time to do so, as it is necessary to take an objective look at the socio-economic, political, and security landscape. The same applies to the Taif Agreement and its aftermath, and the restoration of lost justice. This task falls on the shoulders of an active and diverse civil society, with young people at the forefront. The October 17 uprising demonstrated the ability of young men and women





to think analytically, which is a necessary «weapon» in the battle to dismantle violence and counter its normalization.

The critical review will take us back to the French Mandate and independence, then to the years 1958, 1975 to 1989, and 1990, those are the turning points from Lebanon's establishment to the Great War. Then we will pause at the years 2005, 2006, 2008, 2020, and 2021, leading up to the latest Israeli war in 2024 and the violence of assassinations and street invasions; passing by the Syrian revolution in 2011, which transferred the «civil» wars abroad, with young Lebanese fighting on both sides of Al-Assad and his opponents, thus becoming regional and bringing more violence to the country with unprecedented sectarian hostilities between Sunnis and Shiites, albeit not separate from similar tensions in the region, from Iraq to Yemen.

Small-scale wars proliferated against a backdrop of weak citizenship and the failure to build a just state capable of attracting young people instead of sectarian parties and militias with a feudal, hereditary character, as if we were still in the Ottoman era of local feudal lords and Emirs as well as commitments of the Moukati'jyah.⁽⁴⁴⁾

A state is not built with stones and institutions alone, but with minds and hearts that are not afraid to teach history without inventing myths and sanctifying them. We



(44) The Moukati'jyah were responsible for collecting taxes, maintaining security, and providing local military forces for the Ottoman Empire.



cannot continue to shy away from teaching a critical history of Lebanon. We must be bold and engage in self-reflection and objectivity when discussing the war with young people, moving away from classifications of «us» and «them.» The expected curricula must include the values of citizenship and human rights in a way that reinforces belonging to the state and nation rather than to a sect or party.

Dialogue about the war is not forbidden; rather, it is desirable, especially among the youth of the war, the youth of after the war, and the youth of the millennium and artificial intelligence, whose answers should not be a substitute for real discussion. Young men and women can write the paths of war, from the perspective of the future looking back on the past, «so that it will not be repeated,» relying on themselves and on oral history, approaching it with understanding and tolerance, far from closed sectarian narratives, allowing access to multiple versions of the story that reflect the complexity and richness of the Lebanese experience and protect generations from giving birth to divisions. The memories of parents and grandparents are diaries of the war with its tragedies and undiminished solidarity. They are also documentation of unpunished crimes such as murder, enforced disappearance, rape, displacement, and looting.

It is also necessary to reconsider the role of young people in writing the «official» history of the war. This requires an approach to violence from a youth perspective, based on field research, with the aim of understanding the





mechanisms of its transmission and reproduction within social and political structures, among perpetrators, victims, and those who resist it.

Young people must then be actively involved in public decision-making after the much-needed lowering of the voting age from 21 to 18 years old, along with their participation in student, union, municipal, and independent political activities, thereby limiting their exploitation in sectarian projects. This should be accompanied by the development of non-sectarian, civic, artistic, and athletic youth initiatives as alternatives to partisan and military mobilization, coupled with economic empowerment programs. After all, young men and women can confront the monopoly of warlords and their sons of power through elections, by running for office and voting, and by establishing modern, cross-sectarian parties that do not carry a militia past. This requires a supportive and nurturing social responsibility. Religious authorities, whose interests often intersect with political ones, have a major role to play in dismantling manifestations of sectarian extremism, especially Sunni, Shiite, and Christian to a lesser extent. They should advocate for and practice a moderate religious discourse and to pursue a philosophy of tolerance rather than hatred.

This should be accompanied by the establishment of national programs for the psychological and social rehabilitation of generations of young people affected by violence, including former and current combatants, and victims of both sexes, especially in light of the





accumulation of economic and political crises that may push them toward extremist choices. This intersects with the promotion of transitional justice and the uncovering of the truth about war crimes and the subsequent small wars, so that amnesty and the obstruction of accountability for narrow immediate interests are not repeated. The country needs the establishment of a national reconciliation body and the activation of a judiciary independent of political dictations, as the continued absence of justice perpetuates the cycle of violence.

There is a glimmer of hope in this regard. It is true that justice is limited by the finite nature of human life, as death ends the existence of witnesses, victims, and perpetrators, but it does not lapse with the passage of time, as evidenced by the appointment of Minister of Justice Adel Nassar in October 2025 of judicial investigators into political assassinations, including those that were pivotal in the war, such as the killing of Tony Frangiyeh and his family in 1978.⁽⁴⁵⁾ This is a step on the long road to addressing the prevailing impunity in Lebanon, even if it comes 47 years later. It must be expanded to include ordinary victims and their families, as well as ending displacement and sectarian demographic sorting and segregation, along with giving the families of the missing and disappeared what they deserve in terms of justice and truth, even if

(45) **Minister of Justice appoints judicial investigators in political assassinations**, An-Nashra website, October 8, 2025, accessed on October 8, 2025, time: 23:05.





it means embracing the remains of their loved ones in decent graves instead of mass graves.

All of the above will help build young people's trust in the state. It is also important to take steps, however small, to reduce—though realistically we cannot say eliminate—political sectarianism. The ruling of Lebanon must be liberated from the equations of «no victor, no vanquished,» in which warlords have won at the expense of citizens, and «you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours,» in which the state and its resources are spoils. There can be no political reform without liberation from quotas of benefits and having elections based on fair laws; and restoring the role of official institutions, from legitimate military and security forces, as well as official schools and universities, to be incubators for young people instead of keeping them preys to certain sectarian and partisan institutions.

This reform path is complemented by strengthening media that is independent of political and religious influence, so that it can expose hate speech and violence instead of adopting it, and reveal the mechanisms of political and sectarian manipulation of young people's minds. Legislation should also be enacted to prevent their recruitment as «cyber armies,» with the creation of youth platforms for the peaceful and creative use of digital skills, and adopting dialogue and negotiation instead of division and fighting.

The Taif Agreement did not bring about an exit from the sectarian and partisan trap to embrace citizenship and end the impunity of those who polarize young





people toward violence and finance their wars. Nor did it bring about independence from foreign influences, interventions, guardianships and tutelage, regardless of the label, as they are no different from the French mandate. It is perhaps ironic that Lebanon seems to be in need of a new mandate, this time let it be an internal one, to be taken up by young men and women to achieve the national goals stalled from 1943.

That being said, our recommendations are not limited to the cognitive dimension, but rather outline a practical horizon that places young people at the heart of the project of building a civic state and establishing a culture of peace capable of facing the challenges of the present and shaping a less violent and more just future.

In conclusion, we hope that this book will be of benefit to its readers, especially young men and women, and that it will be a modest contribution to a comprehensive youth and national workshop for critical thinking about what has not been achieved since the creation of Greater Lebanon, and for expanding the spaces for discussion and dialogue in order to establish a just and inclusive state, which has been delayed for more than a century.





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