

A coalition leftists and secular Lebanese and Palestinian groups (of which ATTAC LUBNAN is a member) have now been transformed into a relief service with several non-political social groups and NGOs joined in recently.

The pro-American Lebanese government has done nothing and only yesterday sent out officials to ask what is needed. It is also clear that half the government is in fact tacitly supporting the siege in hopes of breaking their most formidable opponent Hizbullah.

This is NOT a battle of equals. "8 killed in Haifa" was the lead BBC's and other US media's headline while at the same time 15 children, women, and men were TARGETED and KILLED by the Israeli army.

This is NOT a battle of equals where 13 Israelis dead equal more than a 100 dead Lebanese, the COMPLETE destruction of Lebanese infrastructure, and 3 million Lebanese and several tens of thousands of foreigners being held ransom. It's sickening.

Beirut and all of Lebanon is under a complete state of siege and the Southern Suburbs, which is baring the brunt of the attack at least in Beirut, is deserted. Unfortunately, many of those inhabitants, the poorest in Lebanon, have no place safe to go as most of them are from the South which is both inaccessible and equally dangerous. As I have said, in Marwaheen yesterday 15 innocent men, women and children were massacred in their cars; they were refugees fleeing their village at the command of the Israeli army. Now most people can't or won't go from town to town let alone to or from Beirut is as dangerous as staying put.

Furthermore, even if movement was not dangerous (which is clearly is!), it is extremely difficult. Cities in the South such as Sidon and Tyre are completely isolated and cut off. Travel between villages, these cities, and Beirut is virtually impossible as Israel has destroyed all the bridges, major and minor. Refugees who chose to take their chances have to travel on dirt or small Back roads in hope that they and their children are not "confused" for combatants. moreover, most are afraid to travel anywhere near what bridges and tunnels are still in tact. In fact, the Lebanese Army shut down on Sat (yesterday) the "Open Sit-In" (camp out) in Martyr's Square that the coalition of secular progressive groups launched on Weds in solidarity with the Palestinians under siege in Gaza. Ironically, the Israelis chose to make us comrades of those who are suffering even more in Gaza that day. The Lebanese Army shut us down b/c we (between 30-100 people at any given time) were camped near the main artery and bridge between East and West Beirut and they feared that it too would be destroyed.

Related, pounding of the Southern Suburbs is clearly audible throughout the city along with an almost constant drone of warplanes over head, dropping flyers whose adolescent, silly, and juvenile quality ALMOST makes one wish for bombs! While before yesterday, most of us not living in the South or the Southern Suburbs were tense but felt that most Lebanese NOT in those areas were generally safe. However, yesterday's immense attack proved us wrong. The invasion was expanded to hit every part of the country, including blowing up the civilian lighthouse on the Corniche (only about 200 meters from the American University where I am fortunate to live and hence able to write you while most have little electricity let alone access to Internet). Previously, two or three land routes could be taken to Syria. Now only ONE remains through the northern Lebanese-Syrian border (probably b/c there aren't too many bridges on the way!) and Israel came dangerously close to provoking Syria in bombing another Lebanese border crossing. It is said that the attack, however, was 20-30 meters inside Lebanese territory and the Syrian government was more than happy to oblige Israeli propaganda and stress that ITS territory was not hit. In the 1970s, 1980s and even 1990s the Syrians did little to defend or fend off Israeli aggression when they were occupying Lebanon under the pretext of "protecting" it. We used to say "Asad Asad fi Lubnan, Arnab arabab fi Golan! (Asad is a lion in Lebanon and a rabbit in Golan". Indeed, no one wants an expansion of this war but Israel are doing its best to encourage it, clearly using violence ONCE AGAIN

to achieve political means.

Currently, the relief movement is based out of Sanaya Garden in R'as Beirut. While we have a hundred volunteers already, this is still not enough as apparently refugees, who are reduced to sleeping in the street, are mounting. There is a food shortage among them and donations internally are being requested. However, the Lebanese population at large is under a complete blockade by the Israelis (one actively enforced as we see in the bombing of three ports yesterday: Beirut, predominantly Christian Jounieh, and Tripoli. Therefore, the Lebanese are hardly in a position to be generous in donating food.

There is also a call for medical personnel to attend to the refugees.

PLEASE afford the issue its due and HONEST coverage.
Thank you.

Prof. Stephen Sheehi