

From Lebanon

January 5, 2000

When our family's village was sacked in 1985 in the civil war, they all fled with the exception of a couple of old people, one of whom was my mother-in-law. She was murdered by the invading militias....god knows which one, but most probably the Palestinians, because they took over the village. By the end of the war, they were pushed back into their camps by the Lebanese government, and have been held there ever since in sub-human conditions, with little opportunity for work in Lebanon, and no chance for citizenship, and no hope for return to their original land in Palestine; in short, No Exit.

There are 350,000 - 500,000 Palestinians in Lebanon presently, and around 85,000 are in this camp in Ain Hilweh. The peace talks started, and on Friday there was a huge militia ambush of the Lebanese army in the north by fundamentalists, seemingly Palestinian. Ten Lebanese soldiers were killed. A Palestinian man shot into the Russian embassy yesterday, and killed a security man, and said he was protesting the war against the people of Grozny. He was killed on the spot by the army. Today while getting ready for a class, some students came and excitedly told me that the army had surrounded an area near the University because of reports of bombs. I called off the class and sent the students home (it being mid-afternoon, and they always want to just quit and go home whenever there is sign of trouble...not a bad idea.) Yesterday evening a bomb was exploded at the army checkpoint where my husband passes to go up to our home in Mia-Mia, and a soldier was wounded. He stayed at the house there all day, to stay out of the way of the tenseness building in the area.

Everyone feels that the Palestinian camp in Ain Hilweh is a time-bomb waiting to happen. No one denies that they are well-armed. No one denies that they have been grossly humiliated by their being pushed out of their homes in Palestine, and the world had essentially turned their backs on their plight.

Anyone can see that the Jewish people in violently establishing their nationhood in Palestine, did unto others what had been done unto them. In their humiliation of being massacred, they vowed "Never Again", and turned their vengeance on another people with no pity. The whole world can see what they are doing to the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, even as they are supposed to be engaged in peace negotiations: they keep taking more and more houses away, and more and more land. So if the Palestinians there, who have been recognized throughout the world as a legitimate people to deal with, are having such a hard time, what about these Palestinians in Lebanon who have been cut out of the game???

The Israelis swoop over us daily and break the sound barrier....to remind us of their superiority. In the South of Lebanon (where our home is), they have driven out thousands of Shi'ite Moslems from their homes, occupy 10% of Lebanon and engage daily in battle with the resistance.

I could go on and on about this humiliation which gets passed around from one group to another right in front of my eyes. But I want to selfishly come back to the main one which affects my very life right now..... the Palestinians, with no hope except their violence, right at our road where we pass by, to get to our home. Tonight I am here in Beirut, my husband is in Mia-Mia, and we are talking on the phone about the best time for him to leave tomorrow, when "things might be quiet."

Yes, you have your finger on a vicious virus, this humiliation. It's a virus that is all around me, and I breathe in and out deeply with my head averted, not to catch it, not to fall ill myself. It's difficult to do.