

The 50th Anniversary of the War



Fifty Years Since the Outbreak of the War in Lebanon

Half a century has passed since the outbreak of the war in Lebanon.

Half a century of memories burdened by absence and unanswered questions, and of a legacy that continues to live on in the cities and in people's hearts.

On this occasion, **the Committee of the Families of Kidnapped and Missing Persons in Lebanon**, with the support of **the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung**, launches the “50 Years of War”

campaign as an initiative to preserve collective memory and revisit the past—not to relive the pain, but to understand it and move beyond it.

As part of this campaign, the Committee invited a group of figures from diverse fields—politicians, artists, writers, and journalists—to contribute texts reflecting on their understanding

of the war fifty years after its outbreak, and on the lessons that can be drawn from it. This book is the outcome of these contributions.

It is not a documentation of the war, but rather a space for reflection on its meaning and on its continuing impact on the present and the future.

For us, remembering is not an act of nostalgia, but a collective responsibility: towards those who were kidnapped and those who went missing and whose fate remains unknown,

and towards a country that cannot be built on forgetting, but on the right to know.

On the fiftieth anniversary, we write to keep memory alive and to affirm that hope is possible—as long as we choose to remember so that war does not happen again,

and to look to the past in order to create a different future.

As the Committee continues its journey towards **genuine reconciliation**, grounded in recognition and the right to know, this book comes as a step towards a deeper understanding of the pain of the past, and towards building a more just and peaceful future.



"I was born in 1974. I am 51 years old now

and I finally understand what it means to be a child of war.

Fifty years of violence, blood, hatred, righteousness, and division.

Fifty years of survival.

I often wonder:

Who would I have become if I hadn't needed to survive?

But today, five decades later,

I choose peace.

And I aim to live the rest of my life in that state.

That is my revolution.

This is what war taught me.



**Muriel
Abou el-Rouss
Lebanese
Filmmaker**



Growing up amid Lebanon's civil war (1975-1990) left searing memories.

My first encounter with the word "kidnapped" (makhtouf) came in 1977, when a friend of my uncle—a Middle East Airlines employee—vanished on his way home. Later, someone else recounted a brother who had been missing for three years while their mother begged militias for news. I do not remember any of their names.

Such disappearances loomed over anyone who had to cross the Green Line; being in the wrong place at the wrong time could erase you forever.

Half a century on, the Committee of the Kidnapped and the Disappeared in Lebanon still fights to keep this wound visible, anchoring reconciliation and lasting peace.

When an official inquiry ended in 2000, the Prime Minister coldly told grieving families to "consider them dead."

The committee's integrity—its refusal to "move on" without truth and justice—honors the memory of those lost to war and to trigger-happy men intoxicated by violent masculinities.



**Lina
Abou-Habib
Director of the
Asfari Institute
for Civil Society
and Citizenship**



The civil war is terrifying. It haunts my generation of the 1980s every time it opens its mouth.

It is a ghost that still inhabits the streets of the 1970s generation, a dream of masculinity for the partisan youth of the 2000s,

and a myth that today's children ask about.

It has cut through us and continues to cut through us with many wars, yet the civil war holds a special place—its own ownership, its own legitimacy, as if it were the original war, our war and ours alone. Yet it is not one war; it is war within war within war, and war after war, all gathered into one large war.

A beginning and an end were drawn for it, packaged and marketed through them: the Ain el-Rummaneh bus incident and the general amnesty.

A clear and explicit war: civil, local, identity-based, with the dominant slogan:

“May it be remembered and never be repeated!” A slogan we repeat in every war, like prayer, like a magical brigade we summon in every crisis.

We repeat it and repeat it, like a national incantation, repeated to soothe ourselves on the most restless nights of this country—where every inhabitant is armed, where leaders steal and sell their people, where the kidnapped are still waiting to be accounted for, and where a future was martyred before us.

And we keep repeating it until it becomes a national ritual, a spell that lulls us in the sleepless nights of this country.



**Lamia
Abi Azzar
Theater artist
and artistic
director of
Zoukak
Theatre**



War has not ended.

Fifty years... half a century... as if an entire era has passed since the beginning of the Lebanese war, and 35 years since its supposed end—yet we have not healed from it, and nothing has truly changed. Tens of thousands of families are still waiting for the return of their missing and forcibly disappeared loved ones, but to no avail.

The state has ignored them, and civil society has not supported them enough.

Still, the families did not give up. They continued to struggle and organize sit-ins in streets and public squares, undeterred by burning sun or heavy rain, demanding their right to know the fate of their loved ones—alive or dead. They went to international forums and set up their tent in front of ESCWA headquarters so that the world could hear their cry and their pain. Their efforts eventually bore fruit, achieving two key milestones:

1-The issuance of the Law of the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared, and the establishment of the National Commission

for the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared to investigate the truth.

2-The International Committee of the Red Cross establishing a DNA database to collect samples from the families of the missing and compare them to identify those who may return.

Then came the major shock with the opening of Syrian prisons and the release of all prisoners and detainees, raising the painful question: “Where are they? Where are our children and husbands?”

Here lies the awaited role of the new Lebanese authorities and the National Commission for the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared—to work on two parallel tracks in order to close this humanitarian file: truth-seeking in Syria on one hand, and investigations on the other hand with members of political parties who carried out abductions—many of whom are known—to disclose the locations of mass graves, open them, and reveal the identities of those buried inside.

War has not ended, nor have we truly exited it, as long as the truth remains hidden, the missing have not returned, the identities of those buried underground remain unknown, and those responsible have not been held accountable. It will remain present in our daily lives and memory, resurfacing with every passing year and era.

There is an urgent need not to waste any more time, and to push seriously toward resolving this profoundly humanitarian issue, and to provide genuine support to the relevant bodies so they can carry out their work with transparency and independence. This is the only path to closing a painful chapter from the black book of war, and opening a white page of peace built on truth, justice, and a clean collective memory.



**May Abboud
Abi Akl
Journalist**



War is over... war is not over!

Fifty years have passed since the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War.

How can we possibly compress these years into a few lines? I believe we are still trying to understand what happened.

The war may have ended, but it remains deeply engraved in our memory, as witnessed by every street, wall, and pothole in our cities and villages.

The war is over! It is not over! It still lingers, hidden within people's souls.

We do not forget it, perhaps because we do not yet have the courage to confront it.

We say to our children and to future generations: do not let your hearts turn away from the voices of the oppressed—those killed, wounded, and the kidnapped. Let difference become a bridge for connection, not a barrier.

Avoid hatred of the other. Learn forgiveness and reconciliation so that your future may be filled with love and humanity, and perhaps you may wipe away the dust of war and its sorrows from the memory of both land and people.



**Dr. Hind
Adeeb
University
professor**



In the fiftieth anniversary of the war,

I write not as a retired judge who presided over the Beirut Criminal Court for ten years, nor as a representative of the Lebanese state before Lebanese and foreign courts as the head of the State Litigation Authority at the Ministry of Justice, but as a witness to the failure of justice in the face of a wound that has not been closed and continues to bleed to this day.

The file of the kidnapped is not a remnant of the war, but one of the tragedies of the present. It is an ongoing issue, because the crime is ongoing: the crime of enforced disappearance, the crime of silence, and the crime of complicity.

In the archive of justice, crimes do not lapse with time, and no file is closed as long as there is a mother and a human being still waiting, and a voice crying out: "Where is my son, my husband, my brother, my lover, my relative?"

I have issued many rulings in my judicial career, yet I have often wished with all my being that just one kidnapper would fall into my hands... so I could try him.

In the name of every mother who does not know the fate or grave of her son, to recite prayers beside him to calm her anguish, and to bring him flowers that will never wither, watered by the flood of her tears that soothe her wounds. And in the name of a justice that has been battered for fifty years on the roadside of oblivion.

Let this year not be only a year of remembrance, but a year of decision: opening the files, holding perpetrators accountable, and restoring dignity. For justice does not retire, and even if it sleeps... it does not die.



Helana Iskandar
Former Head
of the State
Litigation
Authority
at the
Ministry of
Justice



For a reason like oxygen,

they went on the journey of going to where it is possible to go, certainly without cutting the rope. They struggled for more than forty years, day after day. They got tired on some days and sometimes they got fed up, then they went back to their struggle. They organized a campaign and after it a campaign, then a petition and after it a petition. They did not leave any event without trying to use it for the cause. They drafted a law to solve the issue and succeeded in making Parliament pass it. It is a civilized law by international standards and fits the cause; at the same time it does not destroy the balances that put an end to the Lebanese wars...

This talk has become from the past. But now, it is time to take the path of return. Nothing is required from you, only open the space. One step, the important thing is that the state does it. It is time for it to embrace you after you embraced it all those years. It is time for the return to start. A firm step or by coincidence? It does not matter, the important thing is that it starts. After all this time (they say half a century has passed. How did this time pass?!). The important thing is that it starts, with a mass grave or just a body? It does not matter, the important thing is that it starts. The important thing is that we recognize one of them, in the name of the Lebanese people. This is your right and its duty. And it is the job of the National Commission for the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared.

The Commission is the state and at the same time it is independent from it. It is the state because it must provide it with the conditions for its existence, and it is the state because it must use all its capacities for it. And it is independent because it moves by itself.

But it is also the state for another reason even if it assigned it to the Commission: the search for its children. We may differ among ourselves about war and about peace and what lessons should be taken from them. But we agree on a basic fact: a state that does not search for its children does not deserve to be called "our state". Yes, it will search for them, it will search for us. For a reason it alone knows. A reason like oxygen, that we are also searching for it.



Paul Ashqar
Retired
journalist
specializing
in Latin
American
affairs



The noise of conflicting questions goes beyond answers and leaves them suspended endlessly.

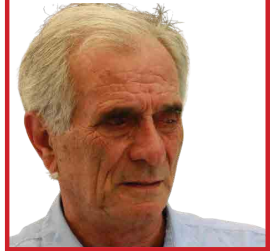
More than three decades have passed, and the questions still wander in their space without healing.

Hope is defeated, and what follows it is hope itself, like scattered dust in the air.

I was asked to write ten lines, as if each one of my disappeared family members had the right to only one line!

Numbers do not concern me, nor do they answer my questions—writing remains without end.

My consolation and inner peace lie in the fact that hatred and resentment have not lived in me and will not live in me as long as I live.



**Dr. Joseph
Elian
Retired
professor at
the Lebanese
University**



If the Lebanese war can be humanized at all,

then the issue of the kidnapped and forcibly disappeared is its

most prominent feature. And if such a humanization of the victims of fifteen years of murderous chaos is possible to any meaningful degree, it is thanks to the Committee of the Families of the Kidnapped and the Missing, whose members—men and women alike—have themselves fallen, like their loved ones, burdened by the anguish of unanswered questions since the outbreak of the war fifty years ago.

Kidnapping, enforced disappearance, and abduction... these are the methods of wars that are still present before us in all their brutality and cruelty. Syria knows them well, since the outbreak of the uprising against the Assad regime, and after its fall. Lebanese and Syrians exchange silent looks of pain and solidarity across borders and conflicts. The Lebanese kidnapped remain in Syrian prisons, and Syrian prisoners remain in Lebanon, where the Sisyphean judiciary keeps pushing the stone of justice uphill, again and again, only for it to roll back down.

These prisoners in both countries are also a shared link, a thread embedded in the flesh of both peoples.

In Lebanon, the parties and forces responsible for obscuring the fate of thousands are today running elections and tearing apart the fragmented cake of power with the appetite of authority, under what they call programs, development, and democracy.

In Syria, militias remain unchecked, launching sectarian raids against their own citizens, kidnapping, looting, and tearing individuals from the embrace of their families—without serious accountability.

Palestine is in a similar situation, whether under occupation or under local forces.

This Lebanese–Syrian–Palestinian triangle, which also shares a history of involvement in the Lebanese civil war, still sees its people suffering, while its authorities and active powers continue to resist healing this wound—whether by revealing the fate of the disappeared so their families can finally practice their healing mourning, or by assigning moral and ethical responsibility to the perpetrators when legal prosecution proves impossible... an impossibility that strikes at the very core of morality, ethics, and even politics.

It remains that the Lebanese Committee of the Families of the Kidnapped and Missing represents today one of the very few positive inheritances left by the war. Rationality, action, a sense of justice and accountability, emotion... and most importantly, a right that does not die, because the Committee remains alive, even if only barely. Unfortunately, the Committee's model has not penetrated Lebanese political life. Yet, within its civil and grassroots sphere—within its vessel of love and persistence—it remains a guiding northern star pointing toward the desired direction.



**Rasha
Al-Atrash
Editor-in-chief
of “Al-Modon”**



War | Love

Lebanon, my little homeland, my enchanting country of kind and generous people, was born to wars—wars that multiplied and took root until it seemed to any rational mind that there was no escape from their grip.

War is here. I have seen it since I was born, at the doorstep of our home. I heard my aunts describe the famine of the First World War, and my mother recount the massacres of 1860, as told by her grandmothers and great-grandmothers. We were displaced, we suffered, and the people of Haret Hreik were driven from their welcoming homes and forced to sell their land for the lowest prices. War lives in memory. War is a nightmare that nests within us and whispers to us, and a mythical creature that leaves children orphaned and inflicts pain.

War remains in our midst; we keep it at bay by saying: No.

It moves away, then returns and settles once again in our homes.

War lives in the bullets fired at Lokman's head, and at the entrance of our home, which was destroyed by the latest Israeli war, a war that continues until this very moment.

The fratricidal ideological war took its revenge yesterday on the home of my opposition friend in Brital.

"Stray bullets" are daily heartbreaking news. The images of those who were kidnapped and never returned, and who may never return, never leave our thoughts.

Where are our loved ones? Where are they? Where is our little, enchanting homeland?

And how can we convince those responsible for it that the time for justice has come?

I have seen war travel in the suitcases of victims and perpetrators. I saw Naela leave with her two daughters, after their father was assassinated before their innocent eyes. Since I was born, I have witnessed the death of innocence, the death of this beautiful land, devastated by its own people and surrounded by predatory neighbors. Lebanon, drenched in wars and departure, mourns the Lebanon that aspires to the impossible.

The wars that we have stubbornly preserved remain before us always, while the impossible lies within our reach.

Take hold of the impossible with strength. Tell war to shed the letter that separates it from love, so that it becomes love—a love that builds, remembers, and moves toward peace.



Rasha Al Amir
Writer and
Publisher / Dar
Al Jadeed
Publishing
House



On that spring day, we were picking wild thyme and flowers in Dhahr Al-Baydaq,

and when we returned home to Dekwaneh, the smell of gunpowder lingered in the air.

That day, my mother said, “May God keep us safe,” and prepared a bag in which she “stuffed” our clothes, my father’s medicines, her jewellery, and whatever money was available. From that day on, we were no longer allowed to go to school, out of fear of any security incident.

My father’s fear drove him to take us far away. There were many of us. We later returned to our home, and the displacements happened again and again, but our numbers kept decreasing. My brother Hashem was targeted by a shell, and we left once more, crammed together.

Yet my father stayed there — “livelihood is equal to the soul” — and he paid the price of staying through kidnapping and extortion. He eventually got out miraculously, after losing “the harvest of a lifetime.”

He returned to us broken, looking at us with the longing of someone who had lost hope of ever seeing us again. The episodes of displacement and losses continued.

We lost my brother Moussa, who was buried far away, and after forty years he returned to Aaitaroun, to rest beside my father and mother, along with my sister whom Israel killed...

Fifty years of war... How many loved ones, memories, and dreams it has taken from me



**Nazihah
Al-Amin
University
professor
and writer**



On the anniversary of the outbreak of the Lebanese War,

we pause before a pivotal moment in the history of our homeland, not to live in the past, but to learn from it and open a new page titled truth-telling and reconciliation.

Fifty years have passed since April 13, and the Lebanese are still held captive by conflicting narratives and a history they do not share. The first step toward building a new Lebanon lies in mutual recognition of all stories and the tragedies of all Lebanese people, without exception or justification.

Reconciliation does not mean erasing memory; it means accepting each other's pain and building together a shared national narrative that reflects our diversity and strengthens our unity.

However, true reconciliation cannot be complete without confronting the causes that led to the war.

The war erupted because of two main issues: illegal weapons and the lack of trust among the Lebanese.

If we truly want to prevent this tragedy from happening again, we must address these two wounds from their roots.

Therefore, the project of building the state begins with placing all weapons under the authority of the Lebanese Army and restoring sovereign decision-making to state institutions, because no trust can be built in the presence of weapons outside legitimate authority, and no state can exist under a balance of power imposed by force of arms.

We need an inclusive national conference, where we put all concerns on the table and listen to one another with courage, in order to create a roadmap for a shared future.

A future built on equality, a fair and pluralistic civil state, an independent judiciary, and a constitution that enshrines diversity as a value rather than a cause of division.

On the anniversary of the war, we renew our commitment to be a bridge for truth-telling, not a wall of denial. We believe that recognition and justice are the gateway to building peace, and that true reconciliation does not eliminate accountability but rather strengthens it, just as happened in the experiences of peoples who overcame their wars and built nations reconciled with themselves. As we write a new chapter in Lebanon's history, we take pride in our resistance and bow before the sacrifices of our martyrs who gave their lives in defense of the homeland's sovereignty and the dignity of its people.

Lebanon deserves that we rise above our wounds and open a new page that protects the dignity of every citizen and restores hope to future generations for a homeland where war does not erupt every five years, but where opportunities for life, stability, and justice flourish.



Sami Gemayel
Member of
Parliament
and President
of
the Lebanese
Kataeb Party



On the fiftieth anniversary of the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War, we stand before you and bow in respect for your continued struggle for the cause of the kidnapped and the forcibly disappeared during the war, which brought sorrow and grief to many Lebanese families.

As the Federation of Bank Employees' Unions in Lebanon, on this occasion, we can only declare that the continuation of this national issue without serious follow-up by the official authorities has been a disgrace to all those responsible for managing the affairs of the country and its people after the end of this abhorrent war. We are certain that history will not forgive them for their failure and negligence in addressing this tragedy that befell thousands of families who were deprived of their loved ones through kidnapping and forcible disappearance. In contrast, your relentless struggle to pursue this issue and seek justice for the families of the kidnapped and the missing led to the adoption of the Law of the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared in 2018.

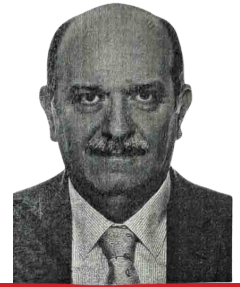
This law transcends regions and sects and offers justice to these grieving families who lost their loved ones. However, it still requires follow-up by those in power, whose response has remained far too timid despite the magnitude of this catastrophe and its consequences for the families of the missing and the kidnapped. How many mothers passed away while waiting for the return of their children? How many children of the missing or the kidnapped have grown up waiting to meet their fathers who were kidnapped during the war? And how many wives are still waiting for the return of their husbands, who left their homes to provide for their families and never came back?

Fifty years have passed, and the wound continues to bleed tears and sorrow in the hearts of their families. This issue remains a national tragedy that is still absent from the conscience of those who have successively governed the country and its people.

Today, we say to every official in this state that it is their national duty to provide answers to the families of everyone whose loved one—a relative or a friend—was taken from them by the Lebanese Civil War.

A state governed by the rule of law will not see the light in Lebanon as long as this issue remains unresolved. Finally, following the election of the President of the Republic, we place our hope in the humanity of the President and in the conscience of the Prime Minister, who is known for his commitment to humanitarian causes, hoping that they will succeed in bringing this catastrophe to an end.

The time has come for the families of the missing and the forcibly disappeared to finally find peace.



**Georges
Antoine
El Hajj
President of
the Federation
of Bank
Employees'
Unions
in Lebanon**



Fifty Years Since the Outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War:

The End of the Dream of a Homeland at the Gates of a Quasi-State

It was no coincidence that the waning of the fifth decade since the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War coincided with a period of profound global transformations affecting the very foundations, structures, and role of the state, as well as the nature of governing systems.

Nor was it a coincidence that this period coincided with a fierce Israeli-American war against the people of Beirut's southern suburbs, southern Lebanon, and the northern Bekaa, especially since no official body acknowledged that it was a war against Lebanon.

More often than not, the very realism of immediate demands remains anchored in a bygone era, leaving Lebanon's struggles out of step with the demands of global and international transformations and their impact on our society.

Amid all these changes, local actors continue to call for adherence to international legitimacy, built on prescriptions that increasingly resemble a checklist of requirements aligned with the global culture of corporate rankings and the digitization of social structures.

Within this context, what once constituted the social fabric of the state is transformed into a marketplace of citizens and residents, expected to comply with the etiquette required for entry into the state—or else...



**Izza El Hajj
Suleiman
PhD in Law,
Professor and
Researcher at
the Lebanese
University**

Based on the above, and in keeping with our creative role in constant renewal, and as a contribution to building (God willing) a free, responsible, and conscientious Lebanese citizen—one who is mindful of their homeland, flag, army, people, political parties, and beliefs—I hereby proclaim, from this podium and for the very first time, part of my Post-Constitutional Manifesto:

1. An agent is anyone who does not stand when the Lebanese national anthem is played at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of every theatrical performance!
1. An agent is anyone who forgets that Issam Mahfouz's celebrated play The Dictator was originally titled The General, but the censorship authorities insisted that the title be changed because the President of the Republic happened to be a general as well (what a wonderfully convenient coincidence)!
2. An agent is anyone who does not regard the endless variety of marine, terrestrial, aerial, and terrestrial waste as an inexhaustible source of both inspiration and devouring!
3. An agent is anyone who does not believe that scenes of rape, assault, or drug use are less dangerous than scenes of sex shown on screen. Ask the Lebanese censor!
4. An agent is anyone who happens to run into the kidnapper or murderer of their family and says, "I know you. Do you remember me?"
5. An agent is anyone who regards the stories of war victims as credible testimony!
6. An agent is anyone who marks thousands of mass graves on a map of Lebanon and calls it The Geography of Fear.
7. An agent is anyone who proudly offers two sons upon the altar of martyrdom while praying that God will spare the life of the third.
8. An agent is every Muslim who buys a plot of land in a Christian area, and every Christian who buys one in a Muslim area!
9. An agent is anyone who refuses to believe that the policy of spreading shit across every inch of Lebanese territory is an integral part of the national democratic transition and the promotion of cultural and social decentralization!
10. An agent is anyone who dares to utter the word "shit" on stage!
11. An agent is anyone who claims that respectable Lebanese women are above swearing and hurling insults!
12. An agent is anyone who accuses Lebanese mothers of encouraging their daughters, as they approach menopause, to board the first flight to the nearest civilized capital to freeze their eggs!
13. An agent is anyone who refuses to believe that we can cast down the staff of an honourable citizen only for it to become a slithering agent!
14. And forever, an agent is anyone who ...



Hanan El Hajj
Ali Theatre
artist,
cultural
activist,
and university
professor.



In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful

The fiftieth anniversary of Sunday, 13 April 1975, which fell on a Sunday in 2025, marked a national occasion that brought together presidents, religious and national authorities, political and party leaders, and all political components. Despite the differing objectives behind commemorating this painful occasion, all Lebanese agree on the necessity of avoiding a return to its suffering, tragedies, divisions, and destruction.

In the memory of all Lebanese remain black pages from that profoundly bitter and harsh experience: killings, displacement, devastation, and loss, which led to the disintegration of the state and its institutions.

Lebanon witnessed waves of forced migration to neighbouring countries and abroad. Over the past years, Lebanon has also witnessed significant milestones that sought to lift the burden of the war from the Lebanese people, rebuild what was destroyed, and reopen shared national spaces. Many initiatives and attempts have been made to erase the impact of 13 April from the memory of future generations.

However, all these efforts have remained unable to reassure the families of the missing, who continue to await a clear and just answer that does justice to their long and difficult wait.

All tribute and appreciation go to the esteemed Mrs. Wadad Halwani and her honoured colleagues for their noble struggle and for their unwavering voice over the course of decades in pursuit of truth and justice in Lebanon.



Bahia Hariri
Former
Member
of Parliament,
President of
the Hariri
Foundation for
Sustainable
Human
Development



To the Committee of the Families of the Kidnapped and Disappeared in Lebanon,

Fifty years have passed since the Lebanese war, the war that took our loved ones away from us and left us with an open wound that never heals.

For fifty years, we have carried the pain of waiting and the bitterness of absence, searching for the truth and refusing to allow our right to know the fate of our loved ones to be lost.

This anniversary is not merely an occasion for mourning; it is an opportunity to raise our voices louder and stronger, so that our cause remains alive in the conscience of this nation.

On behalf of all of you, we renew our commitment that we will not grow weary and will not remain silent

until the day comes when
the fate of every one of the missing is revealed, and every absent loved one is honoured in a manner befitting them and us.

With my solidarity and affection.



**Joe Issa
El Khoury
Minister
of
Industry**



What if wisdom had accompanied the youth?
Would we have crossed through life without fighting?
Perhaps!

What worries me today is that our young people may come to believe that, through “national” fighting, they are immune to defeat.

What frightens me today is this disregard for what happened and for those who were there.

What pains me today is forgetting what happened and who was there, under the pretext that we should not reopen the door to a deep wound.

Then, this deep wound: how did it happen, and how will it heal so that we can finally close it and move on? With a weapon of war that achieved nothing and produced nothing but equality in annihilation?

A weapon that defeats us all, while we have not yet thought of replacing it with another that does not fire bullets — one through which one of us may find a way to win, without taking the rest of us with him into an age of peace and gentleness.

Wars go on, and they have never truly ended.

I survived them, but nothing of me survived within them.



**Oumeima
Khalil
Lebanese
singer**



The City of Shoes

(During the Fifty Years of the Civil War)

A homeland where shoes multiplied along its roads.

Shoes take the shape of cities; the crowds inhabit them and strike their offspring within them.

New streets, ancient shoes.

And every morning, the inhabitants of the shoes awaken, loosen the laces of light, and peer through the lace holes.

And no one comes.

A people who pray that someone would come to them, to put shoes on the city.

*(From the book "Untitled", Nlsn Publishing House)



**Adham
Al-Dimashqi**
Writer
and
Director



“And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

I could find no words more truthful or more precise than this verse from the Gospel of John to express my thoughts on the issue of the missing and the forcibly disappeared. For when people know the truth, they are freed from illusions, falsehoods, and fake news.

The truth before us today concerns the fate of the missing and the forcibly disappeared. A credible international or national body, in the form of a judicial commission, must declare the truth—not on the basis of what families seek or hope for, but on the basis of what the truth itself requires.

The grieving mothers and the patient fathers must be approached with compassion and told: We understand the anguish you have endured over the disappearance of your sons and daughters. But where could someone who disappeared half a century ago—or even later—still be alive? These disappearances took place in Lebanon and Syria. There is no one who disappeared in Lebanon who remains alive today, nor is there anyone who disappeared in Syria who remains alive today, especially after the fall of the former regime and the opening of all its prisons, from which not a single Lebanese detainee emerged alive.

This is a painful truth. Yet its painfulness does not make it any less true, even though no power on earth can persuade a mother or a father that their child is no longer missing or forcibly disappeared, but has instead passed away.

The issue of the missing is one of the greatest tragedies of the Lebanese Civil War.

Those who disappeared did not bear the cost alone; their families bore it alongside them. What could be more painful for a mother or a father than to spend a lifetime hoping to hear the confirmed news that their child is still alive—only never to hear it, and never to hear it at all?

“And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”



Pierre El Daher
Chairman
of the Board
of Directors
of the
Lebanese
Broadcasting
Corporation
International
(LBCI)

Prophets and Liars

The Missing

Our homes are our decaying bodies,
and our souls—
we live in the open emptiness,
in the all-encompassing haze.
No roofs shelter us,
nor the sky.
We have no balcony
from which to look out upon existence.
We have no bread and olives,
nor does the moon belong to us,
nor the evening.
Your sun is not ours,
nor the dawn of morning.
And when we grow cold in winter,
when our worn-out bones tremble,
we warm ourselves with the gasps of our coughing.
We steal a glance,
from behind the separating glass,
at your careless laughter.
And when, in summer,
the pain of summer intensifies,
we seek refuge beneath the trees of shadows,

among the ghosts of our memories.

Whenever we dream of returning,
with the basil of return,
our years have lost the way
to the exiles of our homes.
Whenever we try to escape the past,
whenever we wave our ancient hands,
the present closes its doors
in our faces.

What consoles us
is that we do not despair of our own death,
while we pile up your lies
on the shelves of our painful absences.
Oh, how happy you are, how happy you are,
when, in your reassuring tin-like languages,
you call for the return of the forgotten
and prepare for the joy of your cruel resurrection.
For it is no wonder, no wonder,
that you bargain with us
for less than thirty pieces of silver,
and that you cast lots for our garments.
It is no wonder
that you,
like false prophets,
certify our forced death
with your treacherous signatures



Akl Awit
Poet



Fifty Years of Fear

The renowned political philosopher Thomas Hobbes writes that fear compels human beings to leave the state of nature and establish the state. In the state of nature, people live in constant fear of violent death, as the absence of a central authority places them in an unending struggle with one another.

War is not death itself; it is the fear of death.

It is a persistent sense of fragility in the face of the arbitrariness of the powerful.

It is the ability to suspend the rule of law and replace it with the rule of force. War is anxiety over existence—not only one's own physical existence, but also the existence of loved ones, family and friends, and of the places where memory has taken shape.

Lebanon has now entered the fifth decade of a regime of fear: fear of a past that refuses to pass; fear of the powerful, who wield violence and rule through violence; fear of their deadly wrath, their destructive fury, and their seemingly irresistible power.

Peace is not merely the absence of war and armed confrontation; at its core, it is the absence of fear.

In Lebanon, war does not end when the powerful agree to a truce among themselves.

It ends only when their hold over society is broken and they are prevented from controlling us through fear.

Violent death may strike in an instant, but the fear of death endures for a lifetime.

Fifty years of fear and anxiety, Lebanon—this is the war under whose burden we live every single day.



**Dr. Wissam
Lahham
Assistant
Professor
at the Institute
of Political
Science at
Saint Joseph
University and
Senior Researcher
at Legal Agenda.**



The issue of the missing and forcibly disappeared persons

will remain one of the greatest humanitarian tragedies,

deeply etched into the conscience and collective memory of every person in Lebanon and around the world.

This cause can neither come to an end, fade away, nor die, because it embodies the most fundamental and inalienable of rights.

For that reason, it must be the cause of every Lebanese and every human being.

It is a dark chapter in the history of those who committed this vast and well-documented body of crimes. Yet the passage of time does not diminish their rightful claim to justice.

Their cry will continue to echo in the human conscience until justice is done.



**Ibrahim
Al-Moussawi**
Member of
Parliament,
Chair of the
Parliamentary
Committee on
Information and
Communications,
and Member of
the Loyalty to the
Resistance Bloc



Such Is War

There is something strange about the way we remember war. We recall harsh, dark events in which terror and death became inseparable, yet we also remember moments that suggest we may have been better off then than we are today—full of joy, vitality, and presence.

Such is war. We were its protagonists, and we adapted to it to the point of becoming addicted to it. We would return from our shifts at the medical station ("Al-Tibbiyyeh," West Beirut–Damascus Road) and gather for our most memorable evenings. We danced and sang. We drank and celebrated. We escorted our fellow resistance martyrs to the checkpoints, and on our way back, we wiped away our tears with fits of wild laughter.

Such is war. Stories of life and death. Stories of loved ones who left us, whose absence we could never truly believe.

Such is war. We believed it was a cause as great as nations themselves, only to discover that it led to nothing more than narrow alleyways.

Such is war. It nearly destroyed our spirit, our reason, and our hearts, while we resisted self-criticism behind the ideology of the "national sects."

Such is war. It never truly resembled who we were, yet we accepted it under slogans such as "democratic development," "Lebanon's Arab identity," and the like.

Such is war. It ultimately left us with a country more deeply consumed by sectarianism than ever before. Sectarianism, clientelism, and corruption have become entrenched maladies from which recovery is impossible without uprooting this sectarian system—the very system that continues to give birth to wars and crises.



**Hussein
Ayoub
Writer
and
Journalist**



The Fiftieth Anniversary of the Beginning of the Lebanese War

A Pivotal Remembrance in an Endless Series

We could fill dozens of pages if we were to pause at every memory connected to the history of this homeland, what it has endured, and what it continues to endure.

This very feeling has become a feature of Lebanese life, as if we are living the past in the present.

We live as though we are remembering, and we remember as though we are living.

Today, we meet not only to remember, but to move from the terror and tragedies of memory toward the vastness of truth and its reality, for the present must not be a continuation of the past.

Today, we gather around a painful cause whose age is the same as that of the war, and whose suffering has continued for decades: the issue of the missing and forcibly disappeared persons in Lebanon.

This is not only a profoundly humanitarian issue; it is also a matter of dignity, rights, and national memory.

Every family has the right to know the fate of its loved ones. It is also the duty of the state, through all its institutions, to address this file in accordance with the law and away from political calculations.

The Lebanese Forces Party, from its political and historical position, views this issue with great seriousness, but also with great caution, given its sensitivity, the complexity of its dimensions, and the multiplicity of parties concerned with it. In this regard, we support every effort that contributes to implementing Law No. 105 of 2018, particularly with regard to supporting the National Commission for the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared and enabling it to perform its role within a clear legal and institutional framework.

At the same time, we emphasize the necessity that the approach to this issue remain within a sovereign and comprehensive national context, one that takes into account realities and balances, respects everyone's feelings, and places truth at the service of stability, rather than in confrontation with it.

In conclusion, we stress the importance of completing this national process calmly, objectively, and with a genuine will to move toward justice without revenge, and memory without division.



Ghada Ghada
Member
of
Parliament



Fifty Years, and the Knife Is Still Here!

They said it had passed.

Nothing passes except our years.

They said it had ended.

Nothing ends except dreams that we once believed were colorful.

The dreams of wars are stained with the voices of loved ones, with souls devouring the earth, with a waiting that resembles purgatory.

You tried to turn the page

And how could you not? There is no possibility of building your temples if we, the forcibly surviving women, insist on counting our dead—by their names, their qualities, and the color of their eyes.

Death is a number that has recreated itself for fifty years gone by, and fifty more to come.

What you do not know, and what we, the ones who are always waiting, know, is that the doctor you brought to cauterize our wound forgot his knife between a vein and a scream.

How, then, can the war end when the knife is still alive?!



**Rita
Barotta
Gender
Instructor
and
PHD
Candidate
at USJ**



The 13 April 1975 marked the beginning of the wars that devastated Lebanon.

They were wars fought by others on our soil, but they were also our own wars against one another, brought about by the failure of our state.

Everyone paid the price: people were killed, others were injured, and many lost their homes, property, and livelihoods. Yet the greatest tragedy was the fate of those who disappeared and whose whereabouts remain unknown to this day. We introduced a law to uncover their fate because their families have the right to know the truth. Only then can the wounds of war truly begin to heal.

Future generations also have the right to know that internal conflict, sectarian incitement, hate speech, and the manipulation of people's emotions lead to nothing but destruction and death. Our movement has never been a militia, and it never will be. We have always stood by the state, the Lebanese Army, and constitutional legitimacy. Today, we reaffirm our support for the Presidency of the Republic and for all constitutional and legitimate state institutions over any militia. Whenever the state fails and militias prevail, the inevitable result is a return to war.

Either we agree to reform the state, safeguard Lebanon's neutrality, and protect it through the strength of its institutions, or we will inevitably face another 13 April, with all its victims and devastation. Resisting occupation is a legitimate right, but our duty is to build a state capable of preventing occupation and resisting it should it occur.

Everyone fought, fought one another, killed, and was killed. The killing must never be repeated. If Lebanon is to remain a country with a message, we must build a state founded on justice, the rule of law, and the strength needed to protect its land, its people, and its resources. God willing, war will never return. But we must remember it so that we may learn from it.



Gebran Bassil
Member of
Parliament,
Former
Minister,
and President
of the Free
Patriotic
Movement



I belong to the generation that grew up and came of age amid war.

A generation deprived of its youth, accustomed to curfews, empty streets, and a silence heavy with threats. Our cities would empty at sunset, and we learned to return home early, to remain silent, to be afraid.

Our areas were separated by checkpoints that we had to cross amid questions and suspicious eyes: "Where are you going? What are you carrying? Why are you crossing?" Beirut was divided into two areas, East and West, as if a line of fire separated two worlds that could never meet.

We spent our lives waiting for the war to end, but it has not truly ended yet. It left us its dead, its missing, and its silent wounds.

Many families still live without graves for their loved ones, without the truth.

We are still waiting for better days, for a real homeland. A homeland that acknowledges its wounds, honors the memory of its victims, and teaches its children history so that the tragedy is not repeated.

We are waiting for a Lebanon that builds its shared future through peace and justice, and that makes its diversity a wealth we share, not a reason for division.



Najwa Bassil
Local
Development
Consultant and
Social and
Political
Activist



My Mother, Whose Features Were Spared by Waiting

I do not, of course, know when I first heard the story, nor how many times I heard it afterward, until I began to see it unfolding before me, scene after scene. My two older brothers were teenagers, 15 and 16 years old. They got out of the car at the checkpoint. They were taken, along with others, to a narrow room. There, the room was emptied of the kidnapped one after another, until only the two of them remained.

They embraced in a final farewell. But one of the masked gunmen took pity on the two boys. He told them: “Run...” To this day, I still chase after them in my imagination, afraid of the fear they felt from the bullets they believed would lodge in their backs. No one shot them that day. And so my mother’s face was spared forever from the features that endless waiting carves into people’s eyes.

In the year 2000, when I went for the first time to the weekly sit-in on the steps of the Museum, I began searching in the eyes of the mothers of the kidnapped and missing for what my mother’s eyes might have looked like.

I realized that I had chosen “the families of the kidnapped and missing” as the subject of my journalism investigation at the Faculty of Information for precisely this reason: perhaps to put an end to my personal story, the one that had accompanied me since childhood. In it, I imagined the two brothers crying and running, and I imagined a young mother with hands trembling under the weight of waiting.

I imagined them returning to her—the thing that never happened for the women sitting on the Museum steps, laughing, crying, chatting, and waiting.

To this day, I think that the worst thing about the civil war and what came after it is that Lebanon was, and remains, too cowardly to give these women a final answer—to place an ending, even a painful one, to their stories. To put a full stop at the end of all this waiting.



Jihad Bazi
Writer



Sometimes we like to forget. They tell us that memory matters,
but through forgetting we can escape.

We try to hide from the tragedies around us in order to find happiness. Some warn us that this happiness is false, because the experiences of wars and tragedies never leave us, no matter how hard we try to escape.

But there are things one cannot forget.

How can you forget the person you love who left home forty years ago
and never came back? How can you forget your son who was taken at a checkpoint and whose fate you
still do not know to this day?

There are people who are still waiting to know, and for that person, forgetting is not an option.

We can forget, and ignore those who cannot forget.

We can pretend to be living in comfort in a country that we want to see stand on its feet again.

Or we can place our finger on the wound and begin the real process of ending the civil war,
giving the country a chance for true peace by revisiting a history we do not want to see repeated.

As long as there is still someone waiting to know the fate of their loved ones,
the open wound is a wound that belongs to all of us.



**Baneh
Bashour
University
Professor**



When I learned, from the depths of my hole—how many levels beneath the earth does hell lie?

that a Committee of the Families of the Kidnapped and the Missing had been formed to stand against death, it was as though I had emerged into the open air, as though I could breathe again.

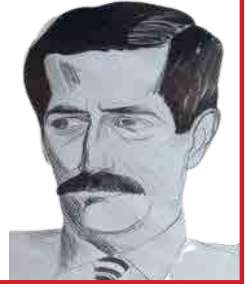
True, I learned at the same time that we were thousands. Yet, as if by magic, I forgot the urine soaking my clothes, the rats rummaging through my food bowl, the screams that haunted my sleep, and the dizziness that struck me upon waking.

One single thought flooded all the others with light.

Women—mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters—united by tragedy, bound together by fate, and sustained by hope, coming from every corner of this broken country, all of them stubborn beyond measure, were about to make the future sing.

Today, bloodthirsty regimes are falling, and prisoners emerge from their filthy cells. As for me, without you, I would have rotted away in the filth of history.

And my brothers? What of their remains? What of their memory?



**Antoine
Boulad
Poet and
activist in
the fields of
culture and
civil society.**



The Lebanese Civil War was fought by people who said they wanted a better Lebanon...

They promised change, justice, and a brighter future. But instead, they destroyed everything. They burned down homes, tore apart families, and filled the streets with fear and grief.

The war didn't bring peace and prosperity, it broke the country into pieces. No side was innocent. No dream was fulfilled.

What was once a land of hope became a land of sorrow. Even now, the wounds are still open, the memories still heavy.

This is the heartbreak of all wars: they begin with words of love for the homeland, but end by crushing it. They promise to build, but only destroy.

Lebanon didn't need bullets to prosper, it needed understanding. Instead, it was drowned in blood and silence. And all that's left are shattered dreams, stories of what could have been, and the weight of everything lost.



**Denise
Jabbour
Filmmaker**

Fear of the Other

I was thirteen years old when the civil war began to defile our souls and darken our lives. Fear of the Other took hold of me, insidiously making its way into my consciousness. My survival, my fate, and my freedom all depended on that Other, whom I barely knew.

I lived in fear, nourished every day by the belligerent rhetoric of the militias, which, while claiming to protect us, tightened their grip on us and instilled in us hatred and rejection of the Other. We lived a stark paradox: those who were supposed to protect us were, in reality, enslaving us.

Perhaps this is what led me to journalism: the search for the threads of truth within a complex reality. Like my fellow citizens, I was a victim of that complexity.

I wanted to understand the mechanisms that give rise to the rejection of difference, so that I could exorcise the darkness of the past, the madness of killing, and the destruction of a nation that was still in the making.

My work enabled me to travel across the country to meet the Other, to speak with them, and to listen to their fears. I met Palestinians in exile, in poverty, and in refugee camps marked by hardship, seeking to understand their bitterness and anger. The person who had once been my sworn enemy suddenly took on a human face, telling a story steeped in suffering and fear for their life and future.

I spoke with Druze, Sunnis, and later with Hezbollah Shiites, who had been branded as “terrorists,” and even with the radical jihadist said to be “bloodthirsty.” I spoke with all those whom the war—and its absurd recurrence over the past decades—had driven me to hate and condemn. I wanted to hear their reasoning and to understand, always to understand, why my “enemies” could appear threatening. I wanted to exorcise the past, transcend it, and reclaim brighter spaces for encounter.

It was then that I realized that it is only ignorance of the Other and the rejection of their humanity that create hatred and fuel murderous impulses. This is a lesson that only the duty of remembrance—collectively suppressed by the old and new warlords—can teach. It is a duty inseparable from acknowledging our collective responsibility for creating our own tragedies.



Janine Jalkh
Journalist



Fifty years since the war? ... I don't think so

The war did not begin on April 13, nor has it ended yet.

At its core, war is not merely military action, just as peace, at its core, is not merely the cessation of such action.

It is a culture whose foundation is the value of the individual human being.
A homeland in which that value is absent is a homeland forever vulnerable to violence—and violence takes many forms.

Where that value is present, there can be lasting peace,
grounded in a sense of citizenship and respect for difference.

It is a culture in which collective memory is one of its cornerstones.
In such a culture, the image of warlords in power gives way to the principle of accountability.

Attempts to erase national moral causes, such as the wound of the forcibly disappeared, also fall away,
and no one would dare again to allow a crime like the Beirut Port explosion.

A memory that kills forgetfulness within us... so that April may no longer continue to kill us.



Fadi Jelwan
Political
Activist



I wanted to turn the kindergarten into a real garden, where flowers and playground equipment would create a safe space for the children, allowing them to grow in a balanced way while enjoying the beauty of their surroundings. I requested soil suitable for planting roses and a variety of flowers.

The administration of the Makassed Association granted my request by replacing the fence surrounding the playground with large planters and arranging for a nursery to provide us with the appropriate soil. The children, two caregivers, and I visited the designated nursery. Each child chose their own seedling, planted it, and took care of it personally.

At that time, fighting was ongoing between East and West Beirut. I therefore stressed to the caregivers the importance of distinguishing between gunfire fired to clear the way for a vehicle transporting a wounded person to Barbir Hospital and gunfire

resulting from fighting between the Museum and Barbir crossing points, as well as what they should do in each situation.

I did not want to deprive the children of playing, even in times of war, so I equipped the kindergarten with every kind of play equipment.

One day, while a member of the Board of Trustees was visiting the kindergarten, heavy gunfire suddenly erupted. The children stopped playing, listened for a few moments, and then quietly resumed their play. Our distinguished visitor was astonished by the children's calm reaction and by their ability to distinguish between gunfire resulting from fighting and gunfire fired to clear the way for a vehicle transporting a wounded person.



**Hassana
Jamaledidine
Educational
Specialist
and
Social Activist**



To have been born in the wake of the Naksa—the Arab defeat of June 5, 1967—is one thing; to discover the light of my homeland through the cracks of shattered walls is quite another.

We belong to a generation raised on news of bloodshed, kidnappings based on sectarian identity, snipers, shelling, massacres, sectarian statelets, and invasions. We absorbed all that violence as though we had drawn it from our mothers' milk. We grew up with strange and bewildering terms. By God, had a British, Portuguese, or Canadian child heard such words at the time, they would have been admitted to a psychiatric hospital.

We belong to a generation that has yet to come to terms with the absurdity and brutality of war, and with its insidious ability to tear apart the social fabric and distort the psychological development of a child who saw blood flowing and smelled its nauseating odor. Nor did it truly learn the lesson—whether through good advice or through direct experience.

War is war: it is filthy.

It kills everyone and lays waste to the homeland—not only with bullets and artillery, but also with sectarian incitement and opportunistic positions.

Beware, a thousand times, of foolishly falling back into its traps.

We may have survived once or twice, but our weak and ailing homeland will not endure another hemorrhage. It has endured enough suffering.



Mona Jahmi
Secondary
School
Teacher and
Political and
Social Activist



My relationship with what is called the “homeland” is deeply ambivalent.

I was not born here, and perhaps one of fate’s cruelest ironies is that I may die here.

I know—without actually remembering—that I moved, or rather, was brought to Lebanon in September 1973, when I was five years and seven months old. And I left Lebanon, deliberately and with full intention, in August 1990. I have not returned since.

I spent seventeen years there, most of them during the war—or rather, the successive, overlapping wars.

All I remember about April 13, 1975, is that we were in the village of Joun, and that a car hit my sister. As for the rest, I know it without remembering it.

That fragmentation of memory has stayed with me to this day.

My memories of the war before my secondary school and university years are more like a series of flashbacks than a film: brief scenes with blurred outlines.

My feelings toward the war, those who caused it, those who fought it, and what it left behind are quite the opposite. They are crystal clear: rancor, hatred, and revulsion.

And this “homeland” stands precariously on a narrow ledge, suspended between what it has done to me and what it could still become; between my hatred for its past and present, and my desperate love for its possible, though improbable, future.



**Dr. Basem
Hasan
Scientific
Research
Director, Paris
Brain
Research
Foundation**



On the fiftieth anniversary of the war in Lebanon, the role of education emerges as a means of acknowledging this complex period of our history. The civil war left a profound impact on the lives of Lebanese people, and a legacy of pain and sorrowful memories that continue to pass from one generation to another.

Among the wounds that remain unhealed, the fate of thousands of missing and forcibly disappeared persons, men and women alike, remains a bleeding wound in the hearts of their families and in the conscience of the nation.

To promote healing and understanding, special attention must be given to an inclusive educational approach that honors the victims and their stories, including those whose traces have vanished. Adopting a multi-narrative approach is an urgent necessity, through which diverse experiences and perspectives are integrated, fostering empathy and opening avenues for dialogue among students. Education should serve as a platform for exploring the multiple dimensions of the civil war, shedding light on its tragedies while allowing the strength of resilience and stories of courage to guide us.

Addressing unresolved traumas across generations is also essential to breaking the cycle of pain and misunderstanding.

By incorporating discussions about the impact of the civil war into educational curricula, we provide students with the tools they need to confront their emotions and develop a strong sense of collective responsibility.

In doing so, we honor the memory of all those who suffered and strive not to let their voices be forgotten. Through education, we build bridges toward reconciliation and healing, and provide future generations with the knowledge and empathy needed to build a more peaceful and united Lebanon.



**Nayla Khodr
Hamadeh
Education
Specialist,
Lebanese
History
Association**



The anguish and pain run deep in our hearts whenever we recall those who went missing during the Lebanese Civil War, whose fate remains unknown, and especially when we remember what their families endured over decades—caught in a relentless ebb and flow between the torment of living a daily death and the fragile, ambiguous promises that they might one day be reunited with their loved ones.

In principle, we must always remember the civil war and its causes so that we may draw the lessons needed to avoid repeating it.

Yet the tragedy of this country lies in the fact that, since its inception, its political, economic, and social order has been dominated by a reckless and regressive sectarian liberal system.

By its very nature, this system continually reproduces the very conditions that gave rise to the war whenever internal political balances and equations shift. These, in turn, overlap and interact with external balances and dynamics that are themselves constantly subject to change.

This interplay often makes it easy to reduce our civil wars to so-called "wars of others" fought on our soil. In reality, however, this characterization conceals the genuine calculations and temptations that have led domestic political forces to enter into relationships of political subservience with an "other" they believe serves their interests and is willing to join them in exploiting narrow, sub-state identities and sectarian loyalties, all in pursuit of the highly particular interests of both the domestic and external parties.

In this sense, the problem is not confined to the case of kidnapped, missing, and forcibly disappeared citizens. Rather, it is part of a far greater and far more complex tragedy: that of a homeland that has itself been kidnapped.



**Dr. Kamal
Hamdan
Economic
Researcher**



From my position as Lebanon's Minister of Labor, I affirm that the issue of the kidnapped and the missing during the Lebanese Civil War is not merely a memory of the past, but a national and moral responsibility that requires serious efforts to deliver justice to their families and uncover the truth.

Fifty years have passed, yet the pain remains, and justice continues to be a right that does not expire with the passage of time.

Lebanon's stability cannot be complete without an honest reckoning that restores rights to their rightful holders and lays the foundation for a society in which no one is left to an unknown fate.

From this standpoint, we renew our commitment to supporting every effort that advances this just cause, in the belief that the pursuit of justice begins with truth and national responsibility.



**Dr. Mohammad
Bahjat Haidar
Minister
of Labor**



Nothing but Repetition

They turned us into monsters... or perhaps they awakened the monster sleeping within us—that Cain who never truly died, who never learned; the one who hates the other out of overwhelming fear, as though his own survival depended on the other's annihilation, as though killing could somehow breathe life into us.

Fifty years have passed, and we still crave hatred and killing.

Fifty years, and the same Cain still dwells in our shallow thinking and our fragile hearts.

Despite the losses, despite the absence, despite the tears of bereaved mothers and the anguish of those who continue to wait, we still seek anger, hatred, isolation, and the false comfort of discrimination.

How does a human being strip themselves of their humanity in the name of survival? How can one go on living amidst tears, scattered remains, and hours that feel like an eternity to families longing for their loved ones?

How can one carry on while the blood of one's brother in this homeland still lies beneath its soil, nourishing the very fruits that you and your children eat?

Fifty years have passed, and we still do not know the fate of our missing. The tears of the mothers of the victims have not yet dried. Fifty years have passed, and the martyrs are regarded as victims by some, while the victims are regarded as martyrs by others.

Fifty years have passed, and each of us is still searching for our own version of freedom.

How many different kinds of freedom exist in this homeland, and how contradictory they are.

We continue to judge one another on the basis of identity or geographic affiliation.

If you gain one thing, you lose many others. We will never become a homeland without humanity.

We will never become a homeland without humanity.

For what does it profit a person to gain the whole world and forfeit their own soul?



**Georges
Khabbaz
Actor
and
Writer**



Recently, while working on Bertolt Brecht's play **Mother Courage*, I was struck by the phrase, "Peace broke out."** Brecht uses it to describe the calamity that befell Mother Courage when the fighting stopped, for the very essence of her life was inseparably bound to the continuation of war.

For the first time, I feel that these words capture what happened to us in Lebanon when the General Amnesty deal was struck and the outbreak of peace was officially declared. It brought obscene and immense profits to the warlords, who, from that moment on, became the custodians not only of the present and the fate of the war's victims—the wounded, the kidnapped, and the dead—but also of the narrative that carries the truth of their stories and the stories of their families.

The peace that broke out thus became a succession of erasure, corruption, and illicit enrichment—a chain that has suffocated the people of this country: Lebanese, Palestinians, Syrians, and migrant workers from other lands ravaged by violence.

Over the past thirty-five years, the war criminals have continued their abuse and paved the way for their heirs. They seized the coastline through illegal waterfront developments, allowed their quarries to colonize our mountains, rigged elections, assassinated everyone who tried to expose their corruption, stole citizens' bank deposits, smuggled collaborators out of the country, and stockpiled explosive materials in the Port of Beirut.

All of this happened in a time of peace. And even more than this took place.

Is this why, every April, we commemorate the beginning of the war rather than its end? Is this why we remain attached to our rubble, wanting it to remain the one entrusted with us, because it bears witness to their crimes? In it, our private and collective tragedy is laid bare. No voice rises above its silence—a resounding silence that proclaims a justice yet to come, heralding the coming of an age of peace.



**Crystal
Khodr
Theatre
Director**



The wars that Lebanon experienced between 1975 and 1990 have been written about extensively, and even more will certainly be written about them in the future. What is certain is that this was a complex war that took place among political parties, within parties themselves, between parts of different sectarian communities, and even within those same segments.

Syria, the Palestinian Authority, and Israel intervened extensively in Lebanon's internal affairs, alongside numerous Arab states and major international powers. If we examine the causes that led to the outbreak of conflicts and wars in the Lebanese regions during the nineteenth century and the final quarter of the twentieth century, we arrive at a fundamental conclusion: such conflicts erupt only when internal struggles within sectarian communities and political parties, as well as between sectarian communities and political parties, intersect with regional and international interventions.

The objective of the complex wars that Lebanon endured was to destroy the economy, displace populations internally and abroad, particularly by disrupting scientific and professional expertise, undermine educational institutions, and fuel conflicts and sectarian, familial, and religious divisions.

What strikes the researcher is that the Lebanese have not drawn lessons from what happened throughout their history, despite the fact that Lebanon had also suffered from complex wars in previous periods. In the aftermath of those wars, instead of the Ministry of Education taking the initiative to give exceptional importance to civic education and history courses—with the aim of weakening the influence of sectarian loyalties, strengthening national belonging, promoting tolerance among sects and religions, and highlighting Lebanon's long history of coexistence and cooperation among Lebanese people from different communities over hundreds of years—the teaching of history was marginalized.

Indeed, many private schools do not teach Lebanese history at all, and may instead teach the history of foreign countries. Under the claim of educational reform, history was removed from the primary stage curriculum and merged at the intermediate stage with geography, sociology, economics, and administration, receiving barely half a class period. This is the approach currently being pursued by the Educational Center for Research and Development, and it must be prevented from moving in this highly dangerous direction.

The Arab Mashreq is currently facing dangerous trends and bloody policies aimed at the collapse and fragmentation of Arab states and at creating sectarian and ethnic entities on the ruins of the settlements that followed the First World War (the Bernard Lewis Plan). What is taking place in Syria is a clear example of this.

This situation will inevitably have repercussions on Lebanon.

Let us hold firmly to the bonds of national unity and strive to build secular democratic societies that respect freedoms and human rights, preserve the independence of states—foremost among them the independence of the Lebanese state—and safeguard its full borders. Let us confront together all projects seeking the collapse of the Lebanese experience, an experience for whose establishment our fathers and forefathers struggled.



**Dr. Issam
Khalifeh
Historian
and
Trade
Unionist**



On Saturday, 12 April 1975, I left the UNESCO Theatre in Beirut filled with joy and amazement after watching the Caracalla Dance Theatre's performance *The Wonders of Wonders*. I had composed the music for this first dance production.

We celebrated seasons of joy and continuous festivities. The performance was filled with more than one melody and rhythm, with youthful bodies and pure faces. There was something beautiful and new in the work. Yet joy, as in weddings, was not meant to be complete. Fate was waiting.

The following day, Sunday, 13 April, after the second performance, we left the show together while Beirut had fallen into darkness. The bride of the performance, Amira Majid, was struck by a bullet that pierced her back and left her disabled for life.

This was what the bride received in the darkness of that night, after she had illuminated worlds of joy and spring the night before. That night, I returned to my village. Everything in the country had come to a standstill, and new rounds of military and armed conflict had begun for us. Between one round and another, markets would reopen and people would rush out. Then the snipers would return, the checkpoints would return, and the kidnappings would return. A catastrophe threatened the country. The city centre was destroyed.

The city became devastated—a ruined city from which smoke rose, that was the image it came to have.

In my isolation, I found solace in a collection of Mahmoud Darwish's poetry. It accompanied me, and there were the first songs of *Promises of the Storm*, *My Mother*, *Rita*, and *The Passport*.

The war spread across most parts of the country, and I was forcibly displaced from my village.

That day, as my father bid me farewell for an unknown journey, he said to me: "What are you doing here, my son? Find yourself a place, a horizon." I choke with emotion at this memory...

Take the song from me, my father! Who will fill the emptiness left by those who departed?

Who will fill this emptiness? A stone here, glass there, scattered along an abandoned road.

How did we learn the naïveté of the anthem "All of Us, for Our Homeland" in the cold and the heat, before entering the classroom? How did we learn to resist with whatever we possessed: stubbornness, irony, and love?

After the horrific port explosion and the devastating Israeli war, we are all anxious, all of us anxious.

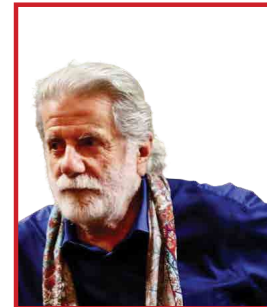
This total destruction wounds us. We need something extraordinary, a miracle. People, streets, walls, and homes are collapsing. Imaginations multiply and disappear like stars in the sky.

I am armed with sorrow for the stolen land. I seek shelter in the song.

We have no miracles; we have imagination and dreams. With them, we wipe away burning tears beneath a burning sky.

In a vast Arab homeland whose beauty has been taken away, it has become difficult to speak, and hearts have become inflamed by the decay of this era and the exhaustion of barren questions. We live in a permanent forced exile, a migration erected on the edge of a tent of a fierce war that has consumed everything in its path.

Hell here, and hell there. Yet music remains the salt of the poem, extending it through time like the elixir of life.



**Marcel
Khalifeh
Artist**



Fifty years have passed since the sparks of the ill-fated war that swept across Lebanon as a state and its institutions were ignited, tearing apart the social fabric that has yet to recover from its wounds to this day.

That war, which lasted for a decade and a half, resulted in the killing and wounding of hundreds of thousands of people, in addition to the immense destruction of the country's infrastructure and urban landscape. The greatest tragedy, however, was the loss of thousands of Lebanese citizens who were kidnapped at checkpoints driven by hatred and abhorrent sectarianism. They left in the hearts of their families and loved ones an ember that has never been extinguished despite the passing of years and days.

These grieving families spared no effort in seeking answers; they turned to every authority and knocked on every door, yet they never heard what could ease the anguish in their souls.

After a long and painful struggle, the Lebanese Parliament adopted, at the end of 2018, a law aimed at revealing the fate of the missing and holding accountable those responsible for their disappearance. Despite the passage of more than six years since the adoption of Law No. 105 and the establishment of the National Commission for the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared, successive governments have failed to address this major issue with the seriousness it deserves.

The time has come to reveal the fate of the missing, hold the perpetrators accountable, and recognize this as a national cause that concerns all Lebanese people. Without unraveling its mysteries and complexities, the file of the war cannot be definitively closed once and for all.



**Mohammad
Khawaja
Member of
Parliament
(MP)**



Will We Ever Wake Up?

When the war broke out, I was 21 years old. Today, I am 71.

Fifty years, divided as follows: 15 years of shelling and destruction, 15 years of occupation, 15 years of various crises, and 5 years of poverty and misery...

Around 200,000 dead, hundreds of thousands wounded, disabled, kidnapped, forcibly disappeared, displaced, and emigrated... for a people whose population did not exceed 4,000,000!

Between 13 April and 20 September 1975, we tasted the horrors of war in Ras El-Nabeh, the "mixed" neighbourhood where we were threatened and forced to flee to Broummana, where we spent two years after our entire household furniture had been stolen by the "neighbours." Our journey of displacement finally ended in Hazmieh at the end of 1977.

Our Israeli Zionist enemy was the primary actor responsible for tearing apart Lebanese society. The Palestinian factions, as well as the Syrian occupying neighbour, were the second actors. And there were many others involved: from the United States to Britain, France, Saudi Arabia, and Iran, all of whom were instigators and actors interfering in the conflict.

Fifty years of oppression and suffering, of hopes and disappointments, of attempts at solutions and counter-attempts, from sectarian incitement to religious fragmentation...

They set the rules of the game, and we played it—sometimes intelligently, sometimes foolishly—without working to build our immunity.

Will we ever wake up?



Naji Khoury
Secretary
General
of the
Islamic
Christian
Gathering
around
Our Lady Mary

Half a Century of a War Without Purpose

After fifty years of a civil war that led us into a long, dark, and exhausting tunnel, we have reaped nothing but successive losses.
We lost, because of it and through it, friends, companions, and relatives.
We lost values that all collapsed, and we lost our dreams and projects that faded away.

Nothing remains in our memory but the clamour of words, bursts of gunfire, bomb explosions, and assassinations of unknown origin.
The only language that has remained is that of hatred and hostility, the language of slogans and speeches that fill every aspect of a life we once dreamed would be peaceful and beautiful.

Hope no longer illuminates our path.
We have begun to fear that despair may become our permanent state, that death and destruction may become our destiny, and that our final destination may be a descent to the bottom.

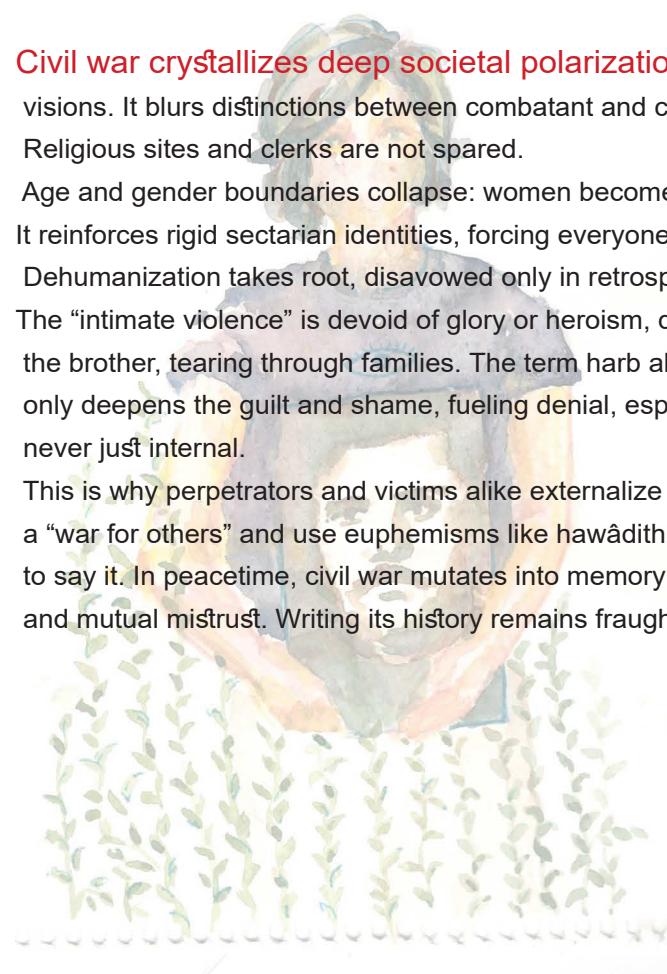
It seems that true revolution is forbidden to us, as we now live in a country where words are abundant while actions are absent.

Yet, despite all these tragedies, we are forever bound to keep trying to break free from these constraints imposed upon us, and to escape from the mud and swamps that surround us.



**Dr. Georges
Dorlian
University
Professor**





Civil war crystallizes deep societal polarization, with violence serving irreconcilable visions. It blurs distinctions between combatant and civilian, sacred and profane. Religious sites and clerks are not spared. Age and gender boundaries collapse: women become fighters; boys, militiamen. It reinforces rigid sectarian identities, forcing everyone to take sides. Dehumanization takes root, disavowed only in retrospect. The “intimate violence” is devoid of glory or heroism, directed against the neighbor, the brother, tearing through families. The term *harb ahliyya*, which evokes kinship ties, only deepens the guilt and shame, fueling denial, especially since Lebanese know it was never just internal. This is why perpetrators and victims alike externalize its evil by framing it as a “war for others” and use euphemisms like *hawâdith* (incidents) or *ahdâth* (events) to say it. In peacetime, civil war mutates into memory war, institutional paralysis, and mutual mistrust. Writing its history remains fraught. Do civil wars ever end?



**Dima de
Clerck
Historian
and author
of the book
Lebanon
at War**

This text was originally written twenty years ago to mark the anniversary of the Israeli invasion of Beirut.

It is republished here, with some additions and revisions, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the "end" of the Lebanese Civil War. Breathless, I called out to my father: "Dad, I've lost the bag."

The darkness was pitch-black. Bullets were singing above our heads. I was exhausted, and the thorns and stones had cut my feet. From the tone of his voice, I could tell he was angry.

"Where?" he asked. I pointed to nowhere. The others continued walking, while he and I turned back.

Note: The above recounts part of our escape from the siege of Tel al-Zaatar. I was nine years old then. Lebanon was fifty-five.

I stood in the middle of the street in front of my aunt Umm Sami's house in *Zaroub al-Haramiyeh in Beirut and shouted at the sky, at the warplanes, and..."Enough! Enough! Enough!..." I could no longer bear this... Enough.

The sky rained down dust, stones, the smell of gunpowder, and screams. I think I heard laughter as well.

Second Note: The above recounts part of my experience during the Israeli army's siege of Beirut.

I was fifteen years old then. Lebanon was sixty-two. When we reached the soap factory in the eastern suburb of Beirut, we were met by a crowd of armed, masked men, who escorted us to a large hall somewhere else.

The best fried eggplant sandwich I have ever eaten—before, since, or after that day—was there.

For many long months, we knew nothing but the taste of lentils, dates, and dirt mixed with water... and other things

I don't think you would want to know about. The Jeep looked beautiful. It had the image of a tiger—or perhaps a leopard—I no longer remember exactly. What I do remember is that the men in the Jeep argued with those accompanying us.

The argument escalated until weapons were drawn, and then they "withdrew." Later, I learned that our neighbour Ayyoub, along with an unknown number of his family members, had also "withdrawn"... to the heavens.

As for us, we "withdrew" with that same bag—which contained nothing but the house deeds, our identity cards, and other "important" documents—to the village. Third Note:

This passage is a continuation of the first one. And, by the way, I did not like the village at the time—especially having only one pair of trousers for the entire year!

Today, on what they call the fiftieth anniversary of the "end" of the Lebanese Civil War, we are still unable to agree on how to describe it, what to call it, or even who its parties were. No one has ever been brought to trial for its crimes.

The victims—whose number approached two hundred thousand killed or wounded—might as well have been struck down by ghosts from another world. The issue of the **missing and forcibly disappeared remains unresolved, suspended in midair.

No one responsible has been held accountable. On the contrary, some continue to profit from lamenting its ruins just as they profited during the war itself. We still celebrate and congratulate those who obtain the nationality of another country.

Israel remains, the so-called Arab states remain, and our society now stands on the brink of disappearance.

Final Note: Today, as I approach sixty, the heroes of my story have disappeared in death. Yet my family, my friends, my comrades—women and men alike—and I continue our struggle for a homeland worthy of our children and our loved ones.

With all my love, always and forever— but not for everyone.



**Nizar
Rammal
Community
Development
Practitioner**



Fifty years have passed since the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War,

yet the issue of the missing and forcibly disappeared—victims of that war—continues

to weigh heavily on the families who long to know the fate of their loved ones.

Among those families are many who passed away over the years, still waiting for answers.

The case of Nayfeh Najjar Hamadeh, who took her own life after losing hope that her son would ever return, remains deeply etched in our memories.

For decades, the families of the missing struggled until they succeeded in securing the adoption of the Law on the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared (Law No. 105/2018).

Despite this achievement, the Lebanese state has yet to fully implement the law, preventing families from exercising their right to know the truth.

It is our hope that the new government will complete the remaining steps required to implement this law. There can be no lasting peace, no genuine reconciliation, and no justice capable of easing even part of the families' suffering without uncovering the truths that remain hidden to this day.



**Zoya
Rouhana
Executive
Director of
(KAFA (Enough
Violence
&
Exploitation**



Widad and the Wolf

Fifty years have passed since civil war erupted in Lebanon, turning its inhabitants against one another with weapons, hatred, mutual hostility, killing, displacement, kidnapping, and the forced disappearance of innocent civilians. These were people with names, identities, families, mothers, children, friends, neighbours, and dates of birth—but no date marking their fate.

Half a century has passed. The scenes of death, destruction, shattered lives, and evasions of the truth have receded. Yet one truth remains, as clear as daylight and as unmistakable as the eyes of the families of the kidnapped and the missing and forcibly disappeared. They have documented some seventeen thousand kidnapped and missing persons, and they continue to pursue this national, humanitarian, and moral cause.

It is a struggle between two sides.

On one side stands the Committee of the Families of the Kidnapped and the Missing in Lebanon steadfastly seeking to uncover the fate of their loved ones, enduring the rain and the blows of the rifle butts wielded by those determined to silence their cries and demands for the truth. On the other side stand those in power, who continue to bury their heads in the sands of truths that are already well known.

Fifty years of spring, summer, autumn, and winter have felt like a single endless season in the lives of the families of the kidnapped. They have lived upon the embers of waiting, bracing themselves for unexpected news, chasing rumours, and struggling to preserve any sense of normalcy in lives governed by uncertainty.

Perhaps it is no exaggeration to say that the **Committee of the Families of the Kidnapped and the Missing in Lebanon** has come closest to embodying the true meaning of civil society in Lebanon. Through its unwavering commitment to the **right to know** and the **right to access information**, the integrity of its journey, its remarkable perseverance, its daily determination, and its meticulous documentation of an archive so extensive that it requires entire repositories to preserve it, the Committee has become a global model for movements of this kind. Fifty years later, Widad has grown old, Odette has passed away, and the wolf remains both witness and killer—twice over: once through the act of kidnapping, and once through the concealment of the truth. My deepest respect to the **Committee of the Families of the Kidnapped and the Missing in Lebanon**, and all shame before your eyes.



**Mona
Sokarieh
Writer
and
Journalist**



Fifty years ago, a bloody civil war erupted in Lebanon, tearing through every region, sect, and social group for fifteen long years.

Tens of thousands lost their lives, hundreds of thousands were displaced, and countless loved ones vanished—among them the kidnapped, the missing, and the forcibly disappeared, whose fate remains unknown to this day. Today, we remember the violence of the war, the red and green lines—indeed, the black lines—that fragmented the geography of our homeland and divided our cities, towns, and villages.

We remember the fear that every Lebanese endured—at home, in the workplace, or while attempting to cross from one area to another. We remember our capital, Beirut, and how it was transformed from a centre of encounter, dialogue, and exchange into a battlefield marked by destruction, chaos, and unsettling lawlessness.

We also remember the heavy silence that followed the war—above all, the reckoning that never truly took place and the justice that was never achieved. There is hardly a household in Lebanon that does not carry an unfinished story from that war: someone killed but never buried, someone kidnapped who never returned, or a fear deeply rooted in the soul that those dark days may come again. These stories remain before us today, calling on us to reflect and learn from them.

Looking back at the consequences of our wars over the past fifty years, one truth has become unmistakably clear: no one truly wins a war. In the end, every side emerged a loser, and every victory proved to be an illusion.

Since 1975, successive wars have threatened Lebanon's security, undermined its stability, violated its sovereignty, and led to the occupation of parts of its territory, in addition to the killing, displacement, forced migration, and impoverishment of hundreds of thousands of its people.

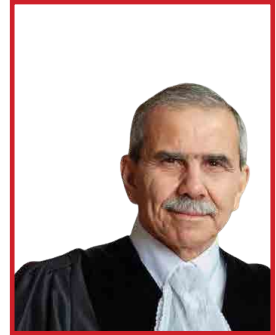
The time has come to confront every narrative that seeks to divide us into sects, denominations, factions, and rival political parties, and instead to build a discourse that unites, heals, and lays the foundation for a state founded on equal citizenship. Perhaps the most important lesson to be drawn from this reflection is that, however much opinions may differ regarding the causes of the war that erupted in 1975, they all converge on one central reality: the absence—or the failure—of the state.

The truth is that just as the absence or failure of the state was the problem, rebuilding it is the only solution.

Let us therefore work towards a state that is strong and just, one that restores young people's confidence in their future; a modern state that rebuilds its institutions on the basis of merit rather than patronage; a civil state that places the individual—equal in rights and responsibilities with every fellow citizen—at the heart of its policies, rather than sect or denomination. A state that preserves memory so that we may learn from our past, not repeat our mistakes—or rather, our sins—against one another.

A state that upholds the principle of accountability and rejects the logic of "forgive and forget"; a state governed by the rule of law, not by the fragile logic of superficial reconciliations.

And because wounds cannot truly heal while the truth remains obscured, it is the responsibility of the state to address the issue of the kidnapped, the missing, and the forcibly disappeared with seriousness and transparency, in pursuit of the truth—for only the truth can deliver the justice that is so deeply sought.



**Dr. Nawaf
Salam
Prime
Minister**



Half a century has passed since the outbreak of a war in which we fought one another, as well as others.

We killed and were killed.
We wounded and were wounded.

We disabled others and were left with disabilities ourselves.
To this day, we continue to bear the pain of those blood-soaked years.

Yet there are those who carry a different kind of pain: the anguish of not knowing the fate of their loved ones who were kidnapped, went missing, or were forcibly disappeared during those years of suffering and devastation.

They live with a question lodged deep within them that has never found an answer, with a search that has never reached its destination, and with sleepless nights that no reassurance can ease.

We owe it to them to share the burden of their relentless search for a truth whose absence continues to haunt them and prolongs their suffering without end.



**Dr. Ghassan
Salamé
Minister of
Culture**



The Fiftieth Anniversary of the Lebanese Civil War

"Lebanon is a fortress built by God with His own hands;
From its two balconies, eternity and immortality unfold.
Enemies fall in failure at its gates,
While nations gather in the embrace of its freedoms.
A refuge for every orphan, the oppressed, and the persecuted,
A paradise overflowing with grace and honey."

This is the Lebanon my grandfather, the journalist and poet ****Youssef Salameh****, described in 1943, long before we allowed treacherous hands to weave their malice through its corridors and sow division across its land. We ceased to see the beauty of our country and the greatness of its diverse society and culture. Instead, we turned against one another, poisoning our relationships and searching for all that divided us—even when it became our own fate. We sank into the mire of our fragmentation and looked beyond our borders for those who would support us, violating the blessing that Lebanon had been and turning its paradise into a living hell.

Now, fifty years after the crimes we committed against ourselves, what have our own hands achieved? Have we uncovered the fate of our ****missing and forcibly disappeared****, whose unresolved plight remains a debt upon our conscience and a stain upon our collective honour, so that the memory of the war may finally cease to bleed within us? Have we restored human dignity? Have we worked to strengthen genuine citizenship? Or do greed and division still prevail, when only the banner of a strong state can unite us, and only its institutions can truly guarantee our future?

May each of us become an example, a lesson, and an inspiration to others, so that together we may restore Lebanon's greatness.



**Amani Salamé
Acting First
Investigative
Judge of
the Bekaa**

Resisting the Enforced Disappearance of Enforced Disappearance

You try to recall the sound of his laughter, the shape of his index finger, the way he walked. Yet those cherished details defy your memory. You blame yourself for forgetting, forgetting in turn that the years separating the day he was torn away from you and today have become so many, and that your struggle throughout them has been a bitter one. The details retreat behind time, while the ache in your heart remains unchanged.

He has not grown older. He will never grow old. He is still smiling, just as he is in the faded photograph, though the bitterness of his absence has never faded.

He still had so much time ahead of him—to live, to become the person he wished to be, to plant a garden at his family's home, and to bring comfort to his mother's heart.

But in this country, there are those who hate gardens, trees, and birdsong. In this country are killers who fought, killed, abducted, destroyed, spread devastation and pain, and splashed the face of the country with acid. Then they granted themselves amnesty and returned to rule those who remained of the children of this land.

But in this country, too, there are those who have not forgotten. They continue to demand the truth and to resist the enforced disappearance of the enforced disappearance of their children. In this country are those who teach us perseverance, patience, and... hope. To them belong the whole homeland and every heartbeat.



**Hanadi Talal
Salman
Journalist**

We Have the Right to Know

(11 April 2000)

From the archive of Talal Salman, shared by his son Ahmad Talal Salman

My memory was taken from me along the way; I forgot the question and the answer. Therefore, I will speak beyond the text...

Here we meet—we, the slain among the slain; those whose human dignity, freedom, and even citizenship have been taken away—as the kidnapping of the kidnapped continues through the captivity of their families' future, our families' future.

All of Lebanon remains captive as long as the fate of a single citizen remains unknown or deliberately obscured, and as long as one family continues to endure the anguish of losing someone who never returns. They bear all the complications generated by this unresolved condition: they do not know whom to hold accountable for the crime committed against them, even if only through forgiveness, and they are unable—through the law—to overcome their tragedy, as long as justice remains beyond reach, so that they may resume their lives after the catastrophe to which they were forced to surrender.

They granted a general amnesty to the killers.

So when will a general amnesty be granted to the kidnapped, the missing, and the forcibly disappeared—without having to call them “the killed,” lest we be accused of excess or incitement?

Death itself falters before the unbearable pain born from ignorance of the fate of a loved one: a father, a brother, a husband, a grandfather, a mother, or a sister. They do not know whether that person is dead, so that he may be mourned and his tragedy may be given its place among them, or whether he is alive, to be awaited with hope—while knowing that such a possibility is almost impossible.

We cannot remain suspended upon the cross of our open-ended tragedy. After losing a loved one, we find no one to bring us down from it, nor anyone to close its doors and grant us one of the two forms of relief.

Death itself falters before this unbearable pain. Our demand has become that death declare itself.

We have forgotten the perpetrator, and we do not wish to hear from him or about him. But we insist, and we hope, to hear an amnesty declared for the deceased, their descendants, and their closest family members.

Our freedom, we who survived killing, kidnapping, and disappearance, cannot be complete as long as the forcibly disappeared remain prisoners of the darkness of not knowing their fate.

We do not seek to know the killers or the kidnappers. Indeed, we have forgotten what we once knew, suspected, assumed, or imagined about them and around them.



**Talal Salman
Journalist
,and writer
founder of
Al-Safir
newspaper**



But we insist on ending the climate of kidnapping, disappearance, and killing—whether based on intention, identity, political belief, intellectual difference, sectarian affiliation, or religious distinction.

Civil wars arise, among other reasons, from fear: fear for oneself, fear of the other.

And civil wars are ignited by hatred: the hatred of the oppressed, the deprived, those erased from existence, and those whose role or rights in their homeland have been denied.

We have the right to know, so that fear does not kill us, or drive our children into war once again.

We have the right to know, so that the resentments accumulated from a war that has passed do not lead us into a new war.

The continuation of this tragedy goes beyond moral, humanitarian, and even legal dimensions; it reaches into the realm of politics. It shakes the foundations of our shared coexistence and our agreement on a state for this small homeland, built upon compromise.

The continued tragedy of the forcibly disappeared threatens to undermine some of the foundations of the settlement established by the Taif Agreement, which was intended to bring an end—more than ten years ago—to the wars between sects and the wars within each sect.

We have the right to protect our children from the danger of losing themselves once again, through the confusion between human rights and the rights of sects that erase both the human being and the homeland.

It is our duty to confront together this sectarian monster that has managed to consume some of our most sacred causes and destroy some of our noblest aspirations.

Through this clash between partners in the same destiny—those who were clear about their objectives and those who lost sight of their true enemy—Lebanese people lost their unity, their state project, and their dream of a homeland.

Error prevailed, and we became submerged in it until we lost sight of our rightful goals. Perhaps many of us remain lost still—there, in Palestine, and here, in Lebanon... But that is another matter, and we only recalled it because of the discussion about the forcibly disappeared and the missing.

Thank God that a new resistance has emerged from the shattered hopes, wasted lives, and murdered cities. It turned towards the right objective, restored dignity to the blood of the martyrs, and revived the honour of belonging to this land—whose enemy has tried, and continues to try, to burn through its people: men, women, children, trees, schools, and seasons. Those who remain in it and belong to it despite all our wounds.

May we have finally found the right path towards the right goal.

We have the right to know.

It is the duty of the state to recognize us as citizens, to grant us a certificate of life, and to allow our dead to die. It must allow us to bury our dead, so that we can look forward rather than remain with our necks twisted backwards, towards the past and all the poisons of war contained within it.

Once again: grant us, please, an amnesty for our missing loved ones. We have accepted their death; allow us to bury them so that we may have a tomorrow after them—a tomorrow in which we will never forget them, but in which they will no longer remain, because of the state's adopted policy of denial, obstacles in our path towards it, or mines blocking our way to shared coexistence, its state, and the homeland.

Writing the Past to Shape the Future

I spent nearly ten years trying to shed light on the events of 13 April 1975, both the attack on a Palestinian bus in Ain El Remmaneh and the series of incidents that preceded it. I do not claim to have found “the” truth, but by examining archives and cross-referencing testimonies, I was able to establish certain facts and, above all, to deconstruct many deeply rooted myths.

Throughout this investigation, however, one question never ceased to haunt me: what is the point? Why spend so much energy and reopen poorly healed wounds in a country where there is no hope for justice, whether through the conviction of those responsible or reparations for the victims and their families?

On closer reflection, the value of such an endeavor lies less in a supposed historical truth — which, by its very nature, remains unattainable — than in the very act of seeking to revive the past.

The first reactions prompted by the book point in this direction, and I have received many enthusiastic messages from people who had given up on understanding this nebulous and painful history and had, as a result, cut themselves off from a part of themselves.

It is also on this fallacious idea — that the past is too complicated and too dangerous, because it could become combustible again — that the amnesia imposed after the war was built. Examining the facts, questioning them, and recounting them, while acknowledging their knots and contradictions, is, I believe, a way of proving by example that we can confront this past.

And at a time when Lebanon is desperately searching for a future, this seems more than ever a necessity.



**Marwan
Shaheen
Writer**



****13 April 1975****

An eight-year-old girl is swinging in a public garden in one of the mountain villages, together with her siblings and her cousins. On the other side of the garden, the adults are busy preparing food, while the smell of the barbecue rises with its smoke filling the air.

The sun is shining, the weather is pleasant, and the day promises joyful moments and a delicious lunch. The beautiful flow of the day is interrupted by news delivered to my aunt's husband:

“Pack your things and go down to Beirut immediately. The situation is really not good at all.”

At the time, I did not realize that these were the last moments I would live as a child, before knowing what war meant, and that rising smoke would come to signify terrible things beyond barbecues and swings.

Today, fifty years after that moment, I reflect and realize that the war has shaped every decision I have made in life... Where to study. Where to have my children. Where to educate them. Where to work. Where to live. Where to move.

Fifty years have passed, and wars have continued to follow one another. And I still find myself obsessing over one question: how do I protect my son, my daughter, and myself in this country—so exposed and vulnerable to every possible outcome?



**Fatima
Sharafeddine
Children's
and
young
adult writer**



"Remember It So It Never Happens Again"?

As wise as this saying is—a true lesson distilled from the tears and bloodshed of nations that either learned from their history or failed to—it feels to me today, as a Lebanese citizen whose childhood and adolescence were consumed by the civil war, and whose remaining years were devoured by the cold peace that followed, more like a prayer than a slogan. Something akin to saying, "God willing," or "May God grant you a long life." For we, dear readers, are citizens of a country of forgetting. Whenever we are called upon to remember, we seem somewhat lost. We strain our minds to recall the events of our past, as though someone had slipped a memory-erasing drug into the water we drank, leaving us to forget yesterday as if it had never happened—despite the countless scars we bear, despite the bodies of our loved ones that we continue to drag behind us because we have never been able to bury them, despite the questions that remain unanswered, and despite our generation's collective trauma.

"Remember it so it never happens again?" If only! But how? Where is the account of what happened?

Every side has its own version, one that contradicts everyone else's. Fifty years have passed, yet the official history textbook stops at a single sentence stating that, in 1975, a civil war broke out.

What led to it? Who were the parties involved? How did events unfold? What role did external actors play?

Who financed the war? What became of the missing, the kidnapped, and the forcibly disappeared? Total silence.

At best, we are offered evasive words devoid of meaning—murmurs that say nothing, delays intended to buy more time in the hope that the passing years will bring oblivion.

And before that? We are told that "Upper Phoenicia" and "Lower Phoenicia" lived together in harmony and peaceful coexistence. Today, Lebanese history is transmitted to the younger generations largely by word of mouth. Each community passes down its own narrative to its children. They grow up convinced of their own victimhood and driven by a desire to take revenge on those who are different from them—even with the devil's help, if necessary.

And so a new generation comes of age, each raised in the alleyway of their own sect—an alleyway that longs to declare itself a state "because they are not like us," determined to prove to the despised other that it can survive, indeed thrive, without them. "Remember it so it never happens again?" No, my dear. This war will be forgotten entirely within a generation or two. And once it is erased from the nation's memory, it will, naturally and inevitably, happen again. In truth, it never ended. It merely gave way to a cold civil war, brought about by a shortage of funding and ammunition. But the will to wage it remains. You can feel its latent heat in streets tense with sectarian division, where sectarian purity is preferred over living alongside other Lebanese.

So, on its fiftieth anniversary, nothing assures us that future generations will not repeat it.

They will, without realizing that what their own hands are doing is nothing more than a worse version of their fathers' wars—fathers who, in turn, committed against them the crime of falsifying history.



**Duha Shams
,Writer
,journalist
and blogger**



We All Kidnapped Our Own

We deceive ourselves when we say that only a handful of militias and armed gangs kidnapped so many of our citizens, as though the kidnappers had sprung from nowhere or descended from the sky.

The truth is that, when they did what they did, they were acting on behalf of broad segments of society—those we have come to call sects. These sects financed the militias, sheltered them, and indeed gave rise to them. In turn, the kidnappers "defended" their sects and provided them with protection from other sects.

Since the militias belonged to all sects, and their victims came from all sects, it is fair to say that the direct kidnappers were the instruments of a kidnapping society. This, of course, does not absolve the militias of responsibility; rather, it places that responsibility within the realm of mere execution—of "following orders." Consequently, instead of adopting the narrow legal perspective that treats the crime of kidnapping as an evil act committed by evil criminals, we should adopt a more layered interpretation—one that indicts a society consumed by hatred and overtaken by violence. We kidnapped ourselves, for we were, at once, both the kidnappers and the kidnapped.

Thus, condemning kidnapping begins—and ends—with condemning violence as a means of resolving difference and otherness, and condemning the tendency to sanctify causes to the point where human suffering, by comparison, is regarded as insignificant and unworthy of attention.



Hazem Saghieh
Writer and
commentator;
author
of several
books on
Arab politics
and political
culture



2025–2075

Fifty years after the beginning of the Lebanese Civil War, one question remains: Who lost, and who won this war?

After more than 44,240 people were killed, 184,051 were wounded, 13,455 were left with permanent physical disabilities, and 17,415 were kidnapped; after we destroyed, sniped at, killed, displaced, and kidnapped one another because of our identities—who lost, and who won this war?

In every room, every home, every street, every neighborhood, every village, every town, every city—we all did. We all lost.

And by "we," I mean the Lebanese. But we can also add the Palestinians to the list of those who lost, having been engulfed in a war that served no one but the Zionist project.

And if we all lost this war, who won it?

Israel won. The Assad regime in Syria won. The clerical regime in Iran won. And today, in 2025, of that infernal trio, only Israel remains a winner.

I hope that, in 2075—fifty years from today, and one hundred years after the beginning of the Lebanese Civil War—our children, our grandchildren, and our great-grandchildren will write the opposite of what I am writing today. I hope they will write that the project of building sustainable peace prevailed; that a Lebanon founded on equality in rights and responsibilities, on freedom, diversity, culture, creativity, art, and a healthy environment became a reality; and that they are living safe and happy lives in their homeland, surrounded by their families and friends.



**Nada
Sehnaoui**
Visual artist
whose work
has explored
the memory
of the
Lebanese
Civil War.



We Dig Through the Soil in Search of the Truth... Not of Hatred

On the fiftieth anniversary of the beginning of the Lebanese Civil War, the wound of the missing and forcibly disappeared remains open in the nation's memory and in the hearts of their families. Fifty years of waiting, pain, and searching for a truth that has yet to be revealed.

Despite the positive statements recently issued by the current administration and the current government, what truly matters is implementation. The National Commission for the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared cannot fulfill its mandate without the resources and genuine support provided for under the law that established it.

As a member of the Commission, representing the Orders of Physicians in Beirut and the North, and as a forensic physician specializing in forensic anthropology and the analysis of human remains, I affirm that establishing the identities of the victims is not merely a technical matter—it is a humanitarian, ethical, and national act. It is a right owed to the victims' families and a collective responsibility shared by the state and society.

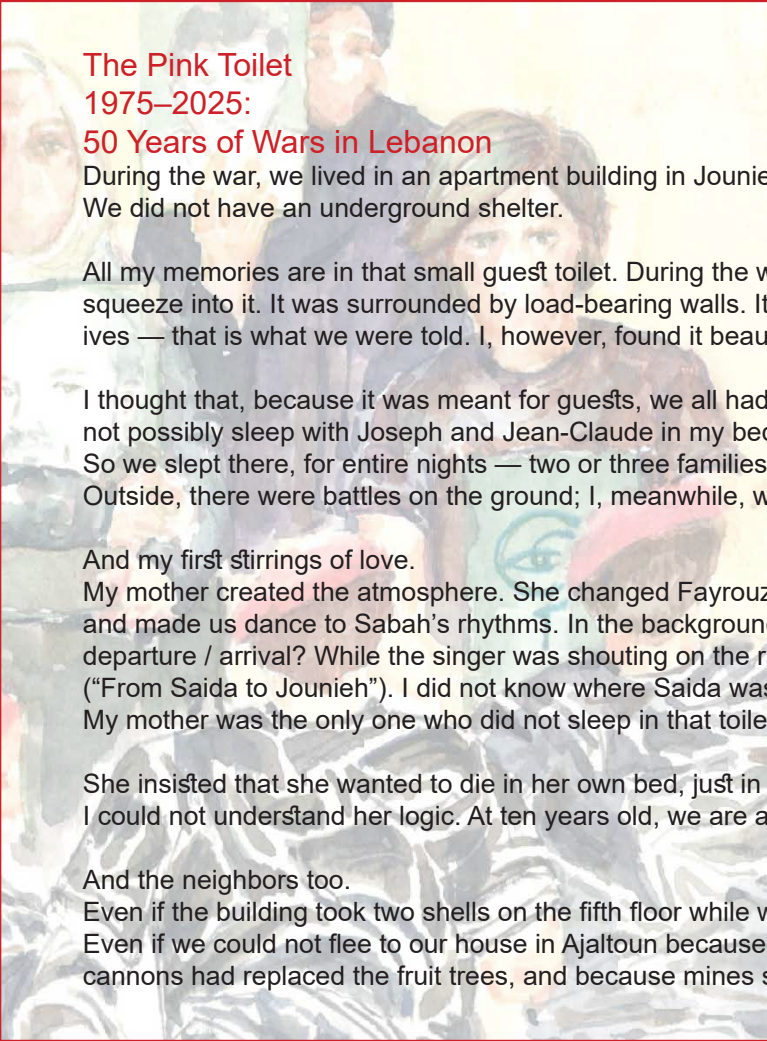
Lebanon does not lack expertise; it lacks the will. We have specialists in forensic medicine, archiving, and analysis who are capable of uncovering the truth, provided the necessary conditions are in place. Every set of human remains that is discovered, and every name that is restored to its rightful place, is a step toward justice, reconciliation, and human dignity.

The right to know does not expire with time. It is a sacred right and the foundation of any genuine reconciliation. Let this anniversary be an occasion for action rather than mourning, for searching rather than forgetting, and for hope rather than surrender.



Dr. Naji Saeibi
Forensic physician
specializing in
anthropology
and human
remains analysis;
member of the
National
Commission
for the Missing
and Forcibly
Disappeared.





The Pink Toilet

1975–2025:

50 Years of Wars in Lebanon

During the war, we lived in an apartment building in Jounieh. On the first floor. We did not have an underground shelter.

All my memories are in that small guest toilet. During the war, we invited the families from our building to squeeze into it. It was surrounded by load-bearing walls. Its walls, its heroes, were supposed to save our lives — that is what we were told. I, however, found it beautiful. It was pink.

I thought that, because it was meant for guests, we all had to stay there. After all, my sisters and I could not possibly sleep with Joseph and Jean-Claude in my bedroom. That was simply not done. So we slept there, for entire nights — two or three families, directly on the floor. In that pink toilet. Outside, there were battles on the ground; I, meanwhile, was discovering naval battles.

And my first stirrings of love.

My mother created the atmosphere. She changed Fayrouz songs every time she was allowed to, and made us dance to Sabah's rhythms. In the background, my father and the neighbor speculated: departure / arrival? While the singer was shouting on the radio: "Min Saida la Jounieh" ("From Saida to Jounieh"). I did not know where Saida was. My mother was the only one who did not sleep in that toilet.

She insisted that she wanted to die in her own bed, just in case.

I could not understand her logic. At ten years old, we are all immortal. Our mothers, our fathers, our sisters.

And the neighbors too.

Even if the building took two shells on the fifth floor while we were crammed together on the first.

Even if we could not flee to our house in Ajaltoun because the militia had occupied it, because their cannons had replaced the fruit trees, and because mines surrounded the neighborhood.



Rina Safir
Professor
of Law and
Lecturer in
Human Rights
and
International
Criminal Law



At ten years old, we are not afraid. We do not die.

Then we grow up. And we realize that, in fact, many people died. That many of them were even younger than ten years old.

We grow up and we do not know why we hate fireworks and the sound they make.

Then we understand.

Above all, we also understand that no, sleeping with Joseph and Jean-Claude in a toilet is not normal.

Even if it was designed for guests.

Today, I still do not understand how we continued to vote, again and again, for those who housed us in toilets.

And not only in Jounieh. Not only in Kesrouan. But across the entire country.

One evening, in the Netherlands, a friend told me: — I cannot imagine what it is like to live through a war.

I consider myself lucky to have been born in this part of the world.

He is right, he is lucky. But I also told him that, for nothing in the world, would I change my childhood, and that I consider myself lucky to have survived.

Yes, I spent most of my childhood in a toilet. But it was pink.

Today, we commemorate the 50th anniversary of this war. A war that never finishes ending.

That never finishes finishing us.

Today, we still live in a toilet. A slightly larger one.

Only today, I feel like I myself am a guest.

Sometimes, an unwanted one.

And this toilet, today, is not even pink anymore.

Today, I have understood that we are not immortal. We are, in fact, very easy to eliminate.

And by granting amnesty to those responsible for the war, it is they whom we have made immortal.

Today, I have understood that without justice and a true reconciliation, we will all continue to live in one big toilet.

A repulsive one.



The tragedies of war are beyond counting; they leave behind losses of life, disabilities, mass displacement, physical injuries, mental health struggles, and profound grief. Behind every headline of war, there is a human being—a family torn apart, a child deprived of the right to education, a woman whose dignity has been violated, a grandmother who has lost a limb, and a migrant domestic worker left without shelter. This is the immense human cost of war.

War affects women, youth, the elderly, and marginalized groups disproportionately. The wars we have witnessed are not distant tragedies; they are rooted in our shared human experience. We continue to carry the scars of the civil war through every chapter of our country's bloody history: from the 2006 war, to the Beirut port explosion in 2020, and finally the 2024 war. We are traumatized, to the point that loud noises, thunder, lightning, or any sound that remotely reminds us of the hell we endured still makes us tremble.

Despite this darkness, the Committee of the Families of the Kidnapped and Missing in Lebanon remains, for me, one of the most important and pioneering true success stories. It is a movement that transcends sectarian, national, and gender differences, embodying the true meaning of commitment and leadership.

Through the continuous efforts of its members, the Committee succeeded in securing the adoption of a law that officially recognizes the issue of the families of the missing and forcibly disappeared and guarantees their right to know the fate of their loved ones.

Thanks to its president, Wadad Halwani, a true leader whose contributions to Lebanon have been, and continue to be, immense and inspiring, the Committee has demonstrated that impunity is not an inevitable fate, but something that can indeed be challenged. For me, Wadad embodies the essence of transformational leadership. Had the resolution of the issue of the missing and forcibly disappeared not taken all these years, I believe that the struggle against impunity—particularly in the case of the 4 August Beirut port explosion—would not have encountered the obstacles it has faced.



Miriam Safir
Executive
Director of the
Arab Institute
for Women
at
the Lebanese
American
University.



I remember clearly the day the war began.

I was a young boy at the time and did not fully understand what was happening, but I felt the disturbances that had seeped into the details of everyday life. Two things in particular remain etched in my memory: the anxiety I felt when my family would come to pick me up from school before the end of the school day at the beginning of each new round of fighting; and the questions about the absence of some of my classmates from the “other side” of Beirut.

Years passed, and when the war ended, I had become a young man on the threshold of my career as a lawyer, beginning to engage in civil society work.

I quickly realized that the consequences of the war were still alive.

Many issues had never been addressed, and many wounds had never healed: the missing and forcibly disappeared, accountability, genuine reconciliation, and the major national choices that remained divided.

The war never truly left us; it only changed form and continued its course through politics, division, and sectarianism. Fifty years later, we are living through a period of major transformations, from which we hope for an end to the temporary settlements that accompanied the end of the war, and for the courage to ask the difficult questions in order to build a country that is not threatened by the memory of war, but rather protected by the memory of justice and reconciliation.



Marwan Saqr
Lawyer,
university
professor,
and former
member of the
National
Commission for
the Missing
and Forcibly
Disappeared.



Heavy are the days, as heavy as a stone tied around the necks of the families of the kidnapped, cast into the sea... left to drown in an unknown fate for years, wandering in anguish and questioning...

Where are their loved ones and their children? Are they still alive, or have they departed this life, as some of the families themselves have, after years of heartbreak and waiting? Some even ended their own lives out of despair and an inability to bear the pain of separation and loss.

It is a torment caused by the unknown, despite the strength of their struggle and their perseverance in pursuing their rightful cause.

Hope remains the main driving force that enables them to continue this tireless journey—one that does not weaken or grow weary, but continues its pursuit of this just cause and its search without surrender.



Yola Sawwan
Retired teacher
and
Mathematics
and Science
Coordinator.



Despite the ongoing efforts to shed light on the issue of the missing
and forcibly disappeared and to uncover
the truth about the fate of these individuals, answers remain elusive 50 years after the war.

“We will not forget”... a cry that has continued for decades from wives, mothers, children,
and grandchildren who continue to hold on to hope after all these years.
The essential turning point in addressing this tragic legacy remains strengthening and activating the
role of the ****National Commission for the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared**** so that it can provide the
families with answers that bring closure, in fulfillment of their right to know.

The key lies in implementing Law No. 105/2018 so that it does not remain merely ink on paper.
Its implementation would contribute to uncovering the truth and helping build the state,
while serving as a deterrent against similar violations and ensuring that the fate of the missing is revealed.



Mark Daou
Member
of
Parliament
(MP).



To all Lebanese men and women, from all ages and generations...

In this country, there are people who disappeared and never returned—not because they died, but because we never learned where they went. There are homes that have been waiting for fifty years, waiting for a name, a photograph, or an answer.

No mother forgets, and no nation grows by forgetting. Those who disappeared have faces, they have rights, and we have a duty to know.

The pain does not belong only to those who lived through the war; it has become a legacy we carry in the eyes of our families and in the voices of those who refused to remain silent. Their cry is not meant to inflict pain, but to awaken us.

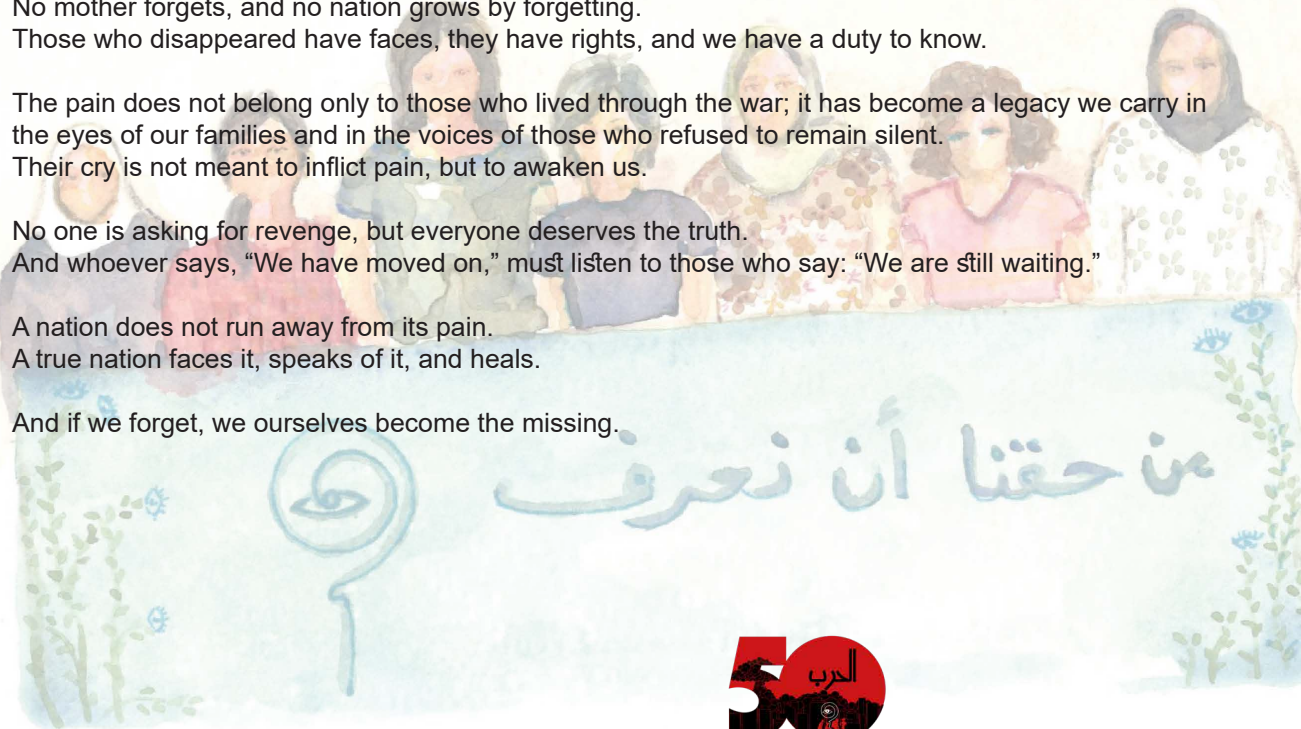
No one is asking for revenge, but everyone deserves the truth. And whoever says, “We have moved on,” must listen to those who say: “We are still waiting.”

A nation does not run away from its pain. A true nation faces it, speaks of it, and heals.

And if we forget, we ourselves become the missing.



**Mark Tarabay
Farah Al Atta
Association**



Whenever we speak of a civil war, we are speaking of fighting among one's own people:

brothers and sisters, relatives, friends, and comrades. In Lebanon, we may add to them guests, near and distant neighbors, and those with an open appetite for anyone who could benefit from conflict by investing in destruction.

In civil wars, everyone loses, and the one who claims victory is the greatest loser.

The outcome, as history has shown us and as we have witnessed in Lebanon and across the region, has been hundreds of thousands of dead, widows, orphans, bereaved mothers, wounded, persons with disabilities, displaced people, the missing and forcibly disappeared, alongside the armed seizure of livelihoods, dignity, dreams, and memories through intimidation and invasion, in addition to a vast number of people who have profited from the suffering of others: war profiteers and those sustained by hatred and resentment.

Fifty years have passed, yet the civil war in Lebanon has not ended. The threat of its return still looms at every decisive crossroads. Our hair has turned white, we have grown old, while Lebanon's war has not aged.

The cries of "With our souls, with our blood, we sacrifice ourselves for you"—for the leader, the za'im, the sayyid—can still be heard today, as though this country carries an ancient hunger for blood and tears.

Despite all the speeches of goodwill and reconciliation, the wound remains open; it has not healed, and there are those who do not want it to heal. How can it heal while there are 17,000 missing and forcibly disappeared persons, and 17,000 families waiting for those who were forcibly and unjustly disappeared? Disappearance is more painful than death; waiting is a form of torture, humiliation, crucifixion, and suffering.

It has been said that the war ended. But how can that be when, in the time called civil peace, survivors of armed conflicts were once again handed over to their former tormentors, who overwhelmed them with grand speeches, televised statements, and empty political clichés devoid of meaning, after having stolen the fruits of their lives?

Wars that began fifty years ago remain alive in people's minds, and their past—with all its distortions—is passed on to new generations, causing them to relive experiences and emotions that are not truly their own. Thus, the hateful past continues to dominate the future as long as this destructive alliance between militias and mafias remains in place. Peace is not built through impunity, the erasure of truths, or calls for forgetting. It is built through cleansing and purifying memory in order to rebuild a shared national memory, one freed from violence.

Violence makes life meaningless; it does not only mean death, but something worse than death itself: humiliation, which inflicts deeper harm by turning human beings into things, into lifeless bodies stripped of dignity.

Civil peace does not merely mean the absence of war; it means the absence of poverty, hunger, disease, ignorance, and injustice. It means not turning one's back on grievances and on the memories of those waiting for truth and justice. So, after fifty years since the outbreak of the civil war, can we truly claim that we are living in peace while those who were disappeared remain forgotten and their families continue to endure the bitterness of waiting to uncover the fate of their loved ones?



Antoine Touq
Writer



On the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Lebanese Civil War, to Those Who Preserve the Memory of Those Who Have Yet to Return

Today, fifty years after the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War, we stand before wounds that have yet to heal and a memory that continues to seek the truth.

We address you, those who have carried the pain of loss without losing hope; those who have transformed absence into a voice, silence into a cause, and wounds into a path toward truth.

On this anniversary, which we live through without celebrating, we honor your humanity and affirm that your right to know, to justice, and to accountability is a cornerstone of genuine reconciliation and civil peace.

The National Commission for the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared, born from the heart of your struggle, stands as living testimony that the battle over memory has not yet been settled and that the dignity of those who are absent cannot be buried in silence. Its existence today is an acknowledgment of all the efforts you have made and of your ongoing struggle, where pain, efforts, and sincere intentions came together, leading to the adoption of Law No. 105 and the establishment of the National Commission.

Do not allow anyone to take away your achievements, just as you did not allow anyone to exploit your setbacks. Today, you are victorious through Law No. 105, through the National Commission, through its humanitarian mission, and through its mandate to uncover the fate of your loved ones. Stand as the guardians of this Commission, just as you were its foundation and core, with awareness and understanding of its role, its humanitarian mandate, and the limits defined for it by law. Do not allow anyone to build for you decorated palaces on the sands of the homeland's shore.

With the hope that together we will reach the moment when the truth is revealed, every family regains its right, and every missing person is restored their name and dignity, we thank you for your support and trust, and for the hope and determination you have planted in us throughout every stage of this founding mandate of this independent official national institution, which constitutes a safeguard for Lebanese society against the repetition of the pain and tragedies of wars and internal conflicts. Be proud that you are victims, heroes, and peacebuilders.



**Dr. Ziad Ashour
Lawyer, Doctor
of Public Law,
and former Vice
President of
the National
Commission for
the Missing
and Forcibly
Disappeared.**



To raise the issue of the missing from the civil war fifty years later means that we have failed to heal ourselves, our society, and our country from the painful and bitter experience shaped by that war.

Unfortunately, nearly thirty-five years after its end, we have not undertaken the minimum necessary steps to learn from the lessons of that experience and prevent its tragic repetition.

The perpetrators have not acknowledged their crimes, nor have they asked forgiveness from their victims, while those who suffered have not forgiven. We have neither forgotten nor forgiven.

This creates the “perfect formula” for the return of war, God forbid, or at the very least allows its specter to remain present at every turning point and every stage.

Therefore, we can do nothing but raise our voices in support of the cause of the missing, one of the most painful and unjust causes of the war. This crime does not become subject to a statute of limitations with the passage of time, nor can its legal, humanitarian, and moral consequences be erased.

Our silence regarding this crime, and our acceptance of dealing with it as though nothing had happened, would encourage the repetition of such violations without any deterrent. It would also perpetuate further tragedies endured by many families, unhealed wounds, and endless longing—especially among mothers and wives, who bear the greatest burden as a result of this criminal act.

Only truth heals, and justice brings relief. Through both, we build the true nation: the nation that is a message of human and moral values, and a nation built for the human being.



Inaya Ezzeddine
Member of
Parliament (MP)
and Chairperson
of the
Parliamentary
Committee for
Women and
Children.



As a tour guide and content creator, sharing information has become an urgent necessity for me.

Personally, I did not lose a family member, nor did I live through the Lebanese Civil War, but I heard many stories of those who were kidnapped and missing during that period. This continued until my grandmother, who lived through those years, shared with me the story of her cousin, Saeed Ballout, who was kidnapped and has never been heard from since...

From a visual perspective, the presence of the Committee of the Families of the Kidnapped and Missing in Lebanon's tent in downtown Beirut, opposite the ESCWA building, along with the transparency in accessing information and hearing the stories of the families of the missing through various digital platforms, helped me create a narrative approach to present this issue in a simplified way to everyone who joins the Green Line tour that I have been conducting weekly since 2021.

Fifty years after the outbreak of the war that my grandparents, my mother, and my father lived through—and whose consequences I inherited and continue to experience today—there is a pressing need for awareness, dissemination, and engaging young people in following this cause.

My grandfather and my aunts and uncles are from Beirut, from the Gemmayzeh area, but my grandfather no longer lived in Gemmayzeh after he left it to secure a safe home for his young family. As a result, my mother, my aunts, and my uncles know nothing about Gemmayzeh. I jokingly tell them: "Honestly, I should take you on a tour of Gemmayzeh. How can you know nothing about it when you are from Gemmayzeh by identity?"

Their spatial identity was taken from them because of an absurd war...



Samira Azzou
Founder of
the Layers of
Lebanon
initiative,
tour guide,
and content
creator.



BLACK HOLE IN TIME

The smile of the dead is not merely a memory
The rage of the living is not merely a fit of fever

Between yesterday and tomorrow, there is nothing.
The sun has set at dawn.
Dawn has joined the twilight.
Today is nothing but a forgotten future.

Between here and the sky, there is nothing.
Dreams have left no traces.
The crumbs of desires have not even made dust.
Life is empty, and death is nothing but absence.

And yet,
I remember the cries of love and anger.
I remember the dead who crossed through space,
carried at arm's length on waves of tears.

I remember the clinging hands, the hoarse voices,
the bodies stretched tight, fused to portraits.

And it was like a swarm of birds,
flying just above the waves,
caressing the foam with their black wings.

And it was like a giant sailing ship
at the heart of a storm.

I remember the waves, the thunderbolts, the lightning,
the smile of the dead, the fever of the living.

Today,
Surrounded by full bellies and soulless speeches,
I look at the crumbling walls and the impassive sky.

All that remains for me is the pain of a chimerical country,
buried beneath the smiles of indelible dead.

The smile of the dead is not merely a memory.
The rage of the living is not merely a fit of fever.



Roujeh Assaf
Director,
Actor,
and
Researcher



Fifty Years and They Have Not Returned: The Missing from the Lebanese War and the State's Continuing Silence

By Dr. Bashir Ismat Fifty years ago, the first shots echoed in one of the streets of Ain El-Rummaneh. It was not merely an isolated shooting incident, but the beginning of the collapse of an entire country into a dark abyss of killing, destruction, sectarianism, and division. On 13 April 1975, the civil war opened its doors, and they have not truly closed yet, despite all that is said about "civil peace." This war continues to live among us—in memory, in the air, in politics, and in the open wounds that have never healed, the most devastating of which is the wound of the missing.

Tens of thousands of Lebanese disappeared. They were kidnapped from their homes, at checkpoints, from the streets, near battlefronts, or even from their workplaces. They never returned. No bodies, no graves, no information, no acknowledgments. Among them are those believed to have been transferred to Syrian prisons, those buried in mass graves that have yet to be opened, those used as bargaining tools between Lebanese and Palestinian militias, and those who disappeared under Israeli occupation. Only the families of the missing did not forget. After the war, they formed the Committee of the Families of the Kidnapped and Missing in Lebanon and decided to carry the faces of their loved ones into every public square, every exhibition, and every tent, to tell this country: these are not numbers, but souls taken by the brutality of war and stolen by post-war settlements. The Committee remained a thorn in the side of indifference, reminding us that justice does not expire with time, and that truth cannot be granted—it must be claimed. In a state that implemented a general amnesty law without justice, equating the perpetrator with the victim, this file was never seriously addressed. Successive governments, in one way or another, colluded in keeping this issue in the shadows. Weak official reports, promises without implementation, and mass graves remained buried beneath asphalt. To what extent is human dignity to be disregarded in Lebanon?

There is no Lebanese household that has not shed a tear for a missing loved one. Yet the most painful reality is that families have been forced into forgetting, and asked to "reconcile" without knowing whether their children are alive in some prison cell or whether they are unidentified remains beneath the soil of their homeland.

On the fiftieth anniversary of the outbreak of the war, what is needed is not speeches or symbolic ceremonies. We simply want the truth to be revealed. We want acknowledgment that what happened was an organized crime in which Lebanese and external actors participated, and that the Lebanese state bears responsibility—not because it committed the crime, but because its silence contributed to concealing it. The missing do not belong only to the past. They are the hidden danger within a paralyzed present and an uncertain future. As long as this file is not fully opened, no national reconciliation can be complete. Transitional justice is not a slogan raised at conferences; it is a moral and political duty. Therefore, on the fiftieth anniversary of the outbreak of the war, we say:

Open the graves. Open the archives. Break the wall of silence. Tell the truth.

For mothers who have not slept for decades, for children who grew up without knowing the fate of their fathers, and for a people whose war continues to steal its memory and its justice. Fifty years, and they have not returned. Can this country return to itself before it returns its missing loved ones to their families—even if only as a name engraved on a gravestone?



**Dr. Bashir
Ismat
University
Professor,
Writer,
and
Journalist**



Crossing and Survival: Testimony on the Lebanese Civil War

What is probably, and perhaps wrongly, called the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990) marked my life and led me to make the fundamental decisions that shaped my writing, my teaching, my research, and my personal, political, and social commitments.

I was a young professor at the University of Illinois when it began, and I obtained research grants to work in Lebanon and in other countries of the Mashreq and the Maghreb. I was therefore able to experience the anxieties (the fears, the terrors, the frights — there is no shortage of words... “anxieties” seems too weak to me, but it reflects my own feeling) linked to the war, its battles, its violence, and the pain of disappearances, both on the ground and in exile in neighboring countries.

This led me to further explore the question of violence related to war, as well as gender differences, a subject addressed in one of my books

An image that clearly illustrated the contrast between the attitudes of women and men in a torn-apart Beirut emerged as I observed my friends.

Several times a week, they crossed the demarcation line, a place as dangerous, devastated, and depressing as one could imagine.

Most of the time, they crossed it on foot (only vehicles with special permits were allowed to pass through); they were convinced that their walk, both real and symbolic, would reunify the country.

They crossed this line, against all odds and despite everyone, under the ironic or admiring gaze of their fathers, husbands, and brothers.

They defied martial law, the voice of weapons, and that of militias, politicians, churches, mosques, and synagogues.

They told me about the happiness they felt when they met each other, smiling, at this daily rendezvous.

They were delighted to see one woman or another join them with determined steps to cross the apocalyptic passage of the Museum, aware that this walk, this crossing, was a bold, important, and vital act for the survival of Lebanon.



**Dr. Evelynne
Accad Professor
Emerita at the
University of
Illinois and LAU;
author and
composer;
recipient
of numerous
literary awards.**



The fiftieth anniversary of the Lebanese war is unlike the fiftieth anniversaries of other wars.

In other cases, societies usually emerge from the aftermath of their wars, learn from them, shed the skin of conflict, and put on the garments of peace and coexistence. In this sense, and in reality, war becomes a memory for reflection.

The fiftieth anniversary of the war in Lebanon feels as though it were only yesterday. Its causes are still here, its patterns of behavior are still here, even without fire and gunpowder. It is closer to a nightmare than to a memory.

Something must change for this fiftieth anniversary to become like others: a combination of changes must take place, affecting both texts and souls at the same time.

The governing texts and the governing souls.

Texts and souls that are modern, free from the genes of corruption and war.

We have made it easy to use money for corruption and weapons for exclusion.

After fifty years of all this ease, it is time to move toward making things harder—and toward greater criminalization.



**Judge George
Okais Member
of
Parliament
(MP)**



The war in Lebanon has not ended, as long as

a significant part of the truth remains silenced and hidden from people's eyes and hearts. After fifty years, the consequences of the war still inhabit the details of our daily lives and weigh heavily on the memory of a country that has never known reconciliation, and in which the full story has never been told.

The file of the kidnapped and missing remains an open wound, reminding us every day that forced disappearance does not become less painful with the passage of time; rather, it becomes deeply rooted in the hearts of families waiting for truth and justice.

Alongside them, there are thousands of women who were separated from their children through child trafficking for the purposes of illegal adoption, depriving their children of their origins and roots. Mothers who continue to suffer in silence and loneliness.

There are also those who were classified as orphans and placed in care institutions because of poverty. How can a child live as an orphan while their parents are still alive? What kind of endless war is this, one that kills in the name of protection?

There can be no true peace built upon the denial of the pain of those affected, or the denial of the right to know and to receive reparations for the harm suffered. Let us all take responsibility for standing with the families of all those who disappeared—those who went missing at barricades, at checkpoints, in care institutions, or through paths of forced separation.

Grief may retreat for a moment, but it never leaves. It remains present like a shadow, calling upon us to seek truth and justice.



**Dr. Zeina
Alloush
International
Child Protection
Advisor and
Expert
in Alternative
Family Care for
Children
Separated
from Parental Care.**

When Jad and Ram, my two sons whom authority and its corruption have driven away, insist that I follow them, I answer: "I would leave Lebanon only if a war were to break out among its people." And I say no more. I know that I am not capable of living outside this country, just as I know, deep inside, that I would die if I left it—even after only a few months.

In that same depth within me, I feel that I am living the war I fear, the war I sense revolving around me. Though it has no visible barricades, it exists, like sectarianism, in people's souls rather than in texts.

Do not be afraid... I am not defeated.
I am only trying to manage my buried grief and my anger, and I am resisting despair.
With full awareness and with all my strength as a citizen, I know that there are many of us—women and men—who believe that one day we will reclaim this wounded country, which is wounded like us.

We know that we will pass on to those who come after us this long and difficult path, but there is no other choice but to walk it.

It is painful that the fiftieth anniversary of the Lebanese Civil War arrives while our country remains exposed, our villages occupied, and our people within the range of Israeli fire. Yet the path is one and the goal is one: one day, we will reach the purification of both wounded souls and the land itself.



**Alawi Saada
Head of the
Journalism
Department
at Legal
Agenda.**



In our country, the war has not had its pages turned; rather, it has hidden chapters deep within the hearts of mothers.

There are those who left and never returned—those whom our country took away during the war, between an exhale and an inhale, leaving behind half-open doors and hearts that never close.

Their names are still whispered in prayers, and their photographs bear witness to the time that stopped in the eyes of their mothers.

Their seats remain reserved at the table, their clothes folded as they left them, and their voices sometimes rise in memory, as though they have not disappeared, but have only been delayed for a little while.

The country moves on, but the pain remains seated. There are no graves to visit, no news to be told—only a long silence that groans within the chests of those who wait.

How many mothers died while calling out, with no one answering them? How many fathers hid their tears because they did not know whether they should say goodbye or continue waiting?

The issue of the kidnapped is not a past to be forgotten; it is a living wound demanding the truth.

Have fifty years not been enough to close this deep wound carried in the hearts of the families?



Aghnar Awada
Poet



Today, fifty years after the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War,

I renew my commitment to a humanitarian cause that must never be neglected or forgotten: the cause of the missing and forcibly disappeared.

I signed this appeal out of my belief that the right to know is among the most basic rights of families, and that the implementation of Law 105/2018 is a moral and national duty that cannot be postponed.

Lebanon's reconciliation with its past begins here: with the dignity of truth and the justice of memory.



**Najaat
Aoun
Saliba
Member
of
Parliament
(MP)**



From the Time of Wounds to the Time of Clarity

Fifty years ago

On the second day of the war, my father was almost killed by a sniper.

At the age of eight, the Syrian army took over the building where we lived.

At nine, I was separated from my closest friends, and I never saw them again.

At nine, I left my neighborhood and my school, and I never returned to either.

At fifteen, our home had been destroyed several times.

At nineteen, I spent twenty-three days under bombardment with twelve other people, and we survived.

That same year, my university was destroyed; the library burned, and the electronic equipment melted.

At twenty, I left my homeland, and I did not settle back in it until sixteen years later.

Throughout those years, I kept asking myself: Why did all of this happen? And why were my parents unable to stop the war?

Even today, I have not found an answer that convinces me or brings peace to my heart.

Fifty years after the outbreak of the war,

those who took part in it are still among us, and many of them still believe that their actions were right and that their crimes were justified in order to protect their community or their religion.

But after fifty years, I have come to see things differently.

I have realized that what unites me with my fellow Lebanese citizens is far deeper and more important than everything that divides us.

I have learned to see the other as a human being before seeing a cross or a crescent.

Today, I understand that the future is in our hands, and that we can build it on respect, love, and understanding.

It has become absolutely clear that human rights are indivisible, that protecting everyone is, in fact, the only way to protect the individual, and that justice and fairness must be the foundation of how we treat one another.

Today, more than ever, I believe that we will:

Overcome our wounds,

Heal,

Teach our children to avoid our mistakes and the mistakes of those who came before us,
And live in peace.



**Makram
Oweiss
University
Professor
and
Researcher**



Indifference

Since the end of the civil war and the Syrian military withdrawal, justice has remained silent regarding the fate of the Lebanese who were reported missing. Their families continue to demand answers about the fate of their loved ones, but in vain!

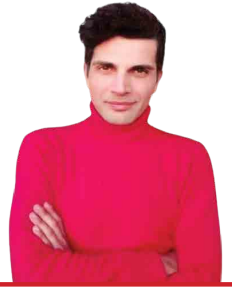
Indeed, politicians have limited themselves to creating committees that do nothing more than repeat the Syrian narrative denying the presence of Lebanese in its prisons, or to turning a blind eye under the pretext of preserving peace. Certainly, they are the country's guardian angels!

Furthermore, the country welcomes refugees from neighboring countries in the name of human rights. But which human being are we talking about? Certainly foreigners, and not Lebanese people. What denial and what a farce!

By turning a deaf ear, these leaders become accomplices who facilitate the commission of a crime against humanity. "They have eyes, but they do not see. They have ears, but they do not hear," according to Jeremiah. "They are like cattle; rather, they are even more astray," according to the Qur'an.

This reality remains one of the damning proofs of the injustice and impunity that continue to plague the country.

In short, it is political indifference that continues to commit filicide!



Mario Eid
Writer



The Beginning: Adnan

During the Lebanese Civil War, in the alleys and neighborhoods, after every battle in which people fell as martyrs, we would gather around Adnan, our faces grim and our heads bowed, wondering how to tell the mother of a martyr that her son had been killed.

We waited for reassurance from him, and every time the responsibility fell on Adnan—the person responsible and the brother of the martyr.

As for me, I was the doctor, there to anticipate the collapse of any family member upon receiving the news.

The alleys multiplied, and so did the early morning visits to a mother here and a sister there.

The sorrow grew heavier, and words became broken. We had never grown accustomed to delivering news of death.

Then the disappearances began... What kind of pain is this?

Wafaa, one of the most beautiful women of my village, disappeared at a distant checkpoint. Then Hussein, then Ali. And then it was Adnan's turn... He was forcibly disappeared; he did not simply disappear.

Disappearance is like a natural disaster—a sudden earthquake or tremor.
But enforced disappearance is an intentional act committed by human beings.

And today, according to the laws being discussed by the scum of those in power, it is treated as nothing more than a natural disaster...

There is a profound difference between the sorrow of death and the agony of enforced disappearance.

Throughout the past fifty years, I have wished that one early morning I could reach Wadad, Ghassan, and Ziad, to tell them the news of Adnan's death...

They have the right to know.



**Dr. Ghassan
Issa
Doctor**



Fifty Years of War:

A caricature of our situation:

Two main roles in the play:

The leader** — or any random official or manager affiliated with the leader
(and the leader himself may be Lebanese wearing foreign clothes, or any foreigner).

The leader, of course, steals from his own people, and his people chase after him because he is creating jobs for them with the money he stole from them!!!

The citizen's role (individually, not collectively).

The one who wrote the script of this play has been artificially clever for a very long time, programming citizens to accept all the humiliation and incompetence of the leader, even altering the structure of Google Maps and creating a sectarian version of Google.

No one reaches their destination on Google Maps unless they switch to sectarian Google and enter the sect of the area

And the important thing is that they keep fighting over who gets the starring role in this play...
Let us see who will emerge as the hero after 50 years:

The citizen (collectively), or the leader — and, of course, the project of some political parties that are still hanging on, stuck to the bottom of the pot of war?



**Ghada
Ghanem
Soprano**

The Lebanese Civil War represented the culmination of the major explosion

of the various dimensions of the conflict that had been unfolding before the shooting of the Ain El-Rummaneh bus on 13 April 1975.

The political division in the country was not limited to positions regarding the Israeli aggression against Lebanon; it extended to broader questions concerning Lebanon's identity, its Arab character, and its democratic development.

These included labor and trade union demands; the march of 50,000 people in the "Bread Demonstration"; the Israeli attack on Beirut Airport; the assassination of Palestinian leaders; the martyrdom of comrade Safwan Dandashi during the 23 April demonstration; the martyrdom of farmers Hassan Hayek and comrade Naama Darwish during the tobacco farmers' demonstration in Nabatieh; the suppression of student demonstrations demanding education, bread, and freedom; and the assassination of the great national leader Maarouf Saad in 1975 during the demonstration in defense of fishermen in Sidon.

This is how our generation and our people pursued their national democratic struggle in the period leading up to 13 April, when the political conflict was transformed into an armed conflict that took on a sectarian character at the hands of those who felt they were losing their privileges.

No, it was not a war of others on our land. Rather, there was—and there remains—a crisis of a political, economic, and social system that generates wars and crises.

The true tribute to the martyrs, the wounded, and the missing on the fiftieth anniversary of this war lies in change and in building a democratic national state: a state based on social justice.



**Hanna Gharib
Secretary
General of
the Lebanese
Communist
Party.**



There is nothing to be grateful for about growing up in a war.

But it made me who I am. War was there when I was born,
it was there when I became a journalist, it was still there when
I became an author. War is why I started writing.
To make sense of the chaos for myself and others.

To have purpose. To have agency,
not be a victim. To effect change, not submit to the events. Events, al-hawadeth.
Fifty years later, events still shape our lives, our nights, our minds, our collective memory.
The Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard said: Life can only be understood backwards
but it must be lived forward.

Fifty years later have we understood enough of what ripped us
apart that we can now live and build forward? Maybe. But to do so we must continue to write,
to make sense of events, to demand better, to hold those in power accountable— and to truly live,
not just survive.



Kim Ghattas
Journalist
analyst
and
author of
Black Wave.



The war broke out as I was nearing the end of my studies as a social worker.

I was rich in values and in what I had received through my training at the Lebanese School of Social Training at Saint Joseph University.

I began serving the poorest communities in the area where I was based, respecting the values and suffering of the people I served, without denying the suffering of “the others.”

Human beings, in all their dimensions, were and remain my first priority.

Fifty years later, despite a long journey in social work, particularly with young people, I live with a deep sense of disappointment. We have learned nothing.

We do not respect one another.

We continue to fight over trivial matters and to satisfy the desires of leaders.

We belong to causes that are not noble.

Our youth, disillusioned, are leaving the country, while those who remain are lost.

We turned the page without forgiveness or reconciliation. Forgetting is not the solution.

Learning and drawing lessons from the past are what can change the destiny of a nation.



**Carmel
Ghafri Wakim
Social
Worker**



Our dreams have grown old in the fiftieth anniversary of the war;

no, they have faded away in this anniversary that, to this day, we have not celebrated with its true ending.

The spaces of imagination and dreams have narrowed around us in the “mirage” of a homeland that we are still searching for in the alleys of streets “cloaked” in narratives of events passed from one home to another, with no authority given to words.

The accumulation of disappointments in our minds drives us toward the abyss, accompanied by a “malicious” desire to escape the emptiness that has followed us since our youth until today, imprisoning us in the illness and torment of insomnia.

Some may criticize this dark tone in our words, arguing that Lebanon is not a hotel one leaves when its services decline. Yet the war and the violence that has accompanied it at every turn have exceeded imagination, becoming heavier than merely thinking about a project for a homeland.

How do we resist? With ink, with words, with nonviolence, with culture, with musical notes, with colors and their waves, with the breath of poetry, with the elixir of love for beauty and freedom, and with the rejection of falsehood in a homeland where hidden truths about everything that is

happening are being revealed—so that we may settle in a new world where no mediator stands between people except truth, justice, and fairness among the children of one homeland.



**Rozette
Fadel
Journalist
and
Researcher**



On an Annoyance Called the Missing

Justice does not always come in the form of a court ruling, an election result, or the cry of a courageous individual confronting an oppressive authority.

Sometimes, justice takes different and multiple forms. Among them is the form of a feeling of annoyance—simple and quiet, yet persistent. A feeling that can be ignored for a while, but that always returns, always returns, to question any conclusion, agreement, truth, reconciliation, or forgetting.

This is how we have experienced the issue of the missing and the kidnapped after the war: as a constant source of annoyance—soft, quiet, and simple, yet enduring. An annoyance that stood in the way of attempts by political parties to recycle their military image into a civilian one; that obstructed amnesty and oblivion laws, as well as reconstruction projects; and that disturbed everyone who attempted to ally with the warlords of the past in the name of political necessities.

This issue was not merely a source of annoyance for the authorities, but also for a deep-seated desire among people that “things should move on”—that temptation to believe the authorities’ reassurances and promises that reconstruction would erase the traces of war, reconciliation would turn the page on violence, and crises would come to an end. We want to believe, but there remains this unsettling feeling reminding us that things are not so simple.

Annoyance is not an accusation, except for those who long for a world free of all contradiction and ambiguity. Annoyance is a starting point for political criticism, reminding us that there is always something left over that the present cannot contain, nor can desires for salvation tame.

It is this annoyance that, with its quiet, gentle, and persistent voice, confirms that beneath some buildings there are graves; at the bottom of the sea, there are bodies; behind party headquarters, there are remains; behind the image, there is sorrow; and alongside words, there is silence.

In a country that has become a graveyard for political projects, the most we can hope for is to shake the present’s confidence in itself through this annoyance.



**Samer
Frangieh
University
Professor
and
Writer**



After a long journey through labyrinths and a relentless excavation

into the depths of pain and the unknown...

The Lebanese Parliament passed the Law on Missing and Forcibly Disappeared Persons during its session held on 12 November 2018.

The most significant aspect of this law is that it enshrines in legislation the right that the State Shura Council had already established through judicial rulings: the “right to know.”

Such are wars—their cruelty and their absurdity:

that one must claw back, even with one’s teeth, an obvious and self-evident right: the “right to know”—a right that gives meaning to absence and seals it through the denial of presence.

Certainty instead of doubt.

Eloquence instead of stammering.

And an affirmation of loss...

As for you, the absent ones—whether your absence was forced, fated, deliberate, or imposed...

Your absence seeps into our times as a deficiency in our own presence.

Our presence diminishes our integrity.

Your absence is an eloquence that silences us.

Your absence is a forced exile.

Our presence is a voluntary exile.

There is no evidence of your absence.

There is no evidence of our absence.

There is no evidence of your presence.

There is no evidence of our presence.



Kamal Feghali
Director
of the
Statistics
and
Documentation
Office



Letters That Never Arrived

Today, I am fifty years old, my father. On this very day, fifty years ago, they took you into the unknown. We do not know where they took you, and to this day, we still do not know.

Back then, I was still in my mother's womb. You were both waiting for my arrival, but when I came into the world, my mother welcomed me alone. Later, she hid the truth from me. She told me that you were traveling and would return soon with gifts. She said this while tears never stopped falling from her eyes.

I asked my teacher to write me a letter so that I could send it to you. I pleaded with the waves and the moon to tell you of the immense longing and the even greater pain, yet we never received any answer.

I grew older, my father, and learned the bitter truth. I searched through your papers, hoping I might find a reason for your abduction. I found nothing but your love for God and for the homeland:

"Religion is for God, and the homeland is for everyone."

Do those who deprived us of you hate God and the homeland?

Today, I have become a father myself, my father. I fear that my children may suffer what I suffered.

I ask myself: does the one who betrayed God and the homeland still deserve to be considered human?

Father, whenever I look at my children, the pieces of my heart, I feel pain and wonder: will their lives be safe while the one who kidnapped you continues to live freely, without punishment?

I know that if earthly justice is not carried out, divine justice will prevail.

May God protect our homeland and our children from the evil within and beyond.

May God protect Lebanon.



**Maram
Qubaisi
Editor**

I Do Not Know How to Write “About” the War

The first feeling I had when Widad asked me to write something “about the war” was similar to asking an Inuit to write something “about” snow.

What does “about” mean?

I turned to an unreliable source (Wikipedia), which answered:

“An is a preposition that is used before nouns. It has several meanings, the most common of which is separation and distance, as its meaning is shaped by the context in which it appears. Like other prepositions, it can move beyond its original meaning and acquire other meanings and implications.”

The definition did not help me, but it reassured me that “about”—like us, and like our wars—can move beyond its original meaning and significance.

Like all other prepositions:

from, to, about, on, in...

Everything and everyone that moved beyond their original meaning... and never returned.

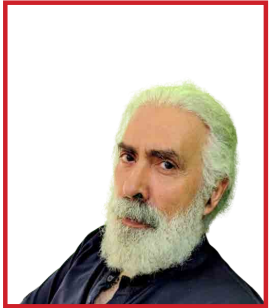
Like us.

Without snow, there is no Inuit.

What if the war had not happened when I was ten years old, and its prepositions had never entered my life? Would I have remained true to my original meaning? Would I have known it, or even wanted it?

I am not old enough to claim that I lost a previous life because of the war, nor am I young enough to deny the burden of my share in it, from it, and about it...

No Inuit without snow.



**Mahmoud
Qaraq
Film Producer**



On the Civil War, and the Absence of Justice and Accountability

On 13 April, and on the fiftieth anniversary of the Civil War, we must draw lessons from this experience. The most important lesson of the Civil War is that the absence of justice leads to the spread of crimes and killings, and opens the door for others to return to war.

The failure to hold war criminals accountable encourages them to return to war.

So, will we learn from what happened? Instead of inciting a return to war, or speaking in the name of the state while calling for the punishment of others, should we not hold ourselves accountable and learn from the experience of the Civil War, so that we do not return to it again?

We must all call for the establishment of genuine justice on the ground, so that crimes—whether individual or collective—do not remain without accountability.



**Qassem
Kassir
Political
Writer**



They killed Lebanon twice: declaring sustainable peace in Lebanon forcibly disappeared

by the ruling class.

Despite the adoption of Law 105 in 2018, which recognizes the right to know and provides for the establishment of an independent national commission to clarify the fate and whereabouts of missing persons, and despite the establishment of the National Commission in 2020, a clear political decision was made not to enable the Commission to carry out its core duties.

This political decision, aimed at concealing the truth, depriving families of their right to know, and preventing the disclosure of the fate of victims who were kidnapped and disappeared during the war (1975–1990), is not new.

In 2009, the government refused to implement the decision of the State Shura Council, which ordered the delivery to the Committee of the Families of the Kidnapped and Missing in Lebanon—formed in 1982—of the final report prepared by the official committee established in 2000 to uncover the fate of the missing.

The government justified its refusal by claiming “fear of provoking sectarian tensions and threatening civil peace.”

Even after the report was handed over to the families, 14 years later, confirming the existence of two mass graves in what was known as the Eastern Zone and two mass graves in what was known as the Western Zone (6 and 6 bis), no action was taken to uncover the truth or help families locate their loved ones so they could be buried with dignity, begin mourning them, and eventually turn the page on the war.

Thus, we reaffirm the determination of war criminals to kill families twice: once when their loved ones were killed, and again when they were denied the knowledge of their fate and the possibility of burying them.

This killing is not only individual, nor is it limited to the collective killing of 100,000 victims and 17,000 forcibly disappeared persons. It is the killing of every attempt to turn the page on the war, and the killing of genuine national reconciliation, which cannot be achieved without knowing the full truth and revealing the fate of the forcibly disappeared.

Attempts to kill the Lebanese people and prevent the establishment of a strong state and a united society continue systematically through the use of sectarian mobilization and the exploitation of the “specter of war” and “fear of the other” as tools to gain greater support and votes at the expense of the nation and its people. This happens without establishing transitional justice, including accountability for perpetrators and revealing the fate of the forcibly disappeared, particularly after the adoption of the general amnesty law in 1991 and the adoption of the Taif Agreement, which aimed to end the war.

The result is that the war continues through different forms and means, while sustainable peace itself has also been forcibly disappeared through a clear decision by the ruling class, which, under the pretext of “avoiding sectarian tensions,” continues to kill the path of justice—a path that is a prerequisite for achieving peace and preventing the recurrence of war and violence.



**Halima
Kaakour
Member of
Parliament
(MP)**



In the post-civil war context, the issue of the missing remains a key indicator of Lebanon's incomplete transition from conflict to peace.

This issue is not only tangible through the physical absence of those whose families continue to await their return, but is also deeply symbolic, as it embodies one of the most painful and longest-lasting wounds of the war.

It is a complex and multidimensional issue, where legal, sectarian, psychological, social, economic, and gender dimensions intersect, and above all, human rights concerns. It also extends across multiple levels: individual, societal, national, transnational, and international.

For the families of the missing, healing is tied to the hope of reunion and to the demand for truth regarding the fate of their loved ones. This longing goes beyond personal grief, becoming a reflection of the condition of the country itself—a country still burdened by its past and struggling to confront the legacy of unresolved violence. The missing are not merely absent; they remain present as a constant shadow, a testimony to unresolved issues, and a matter that cannot be marginalized or set aside.

Within this broader context, families—and a wide segment of Lebanese society alongside them—remain in a state of waiting. They await truth, justice, and a state capable of ensuring both. They await the fulfillment of the promise of peace.

In short, they await Lebanon's emergence from the transitional phase it entered with the end of the war.

As 2025 approaches, an unavoidable and urgent question arises: Have we finally reached the threshold of national maturity? Are we ready to close this chapter responsibly—to resolve the issue of the missing, turn the page with dignity, and begin writing a new chapter in post-war Lebanon?



Lina Qamati
Researcher
and Social
Activist
Member of
the National
Commission
for
Lebanese
Women



Fifty years have passed since the outbreak of the war in Lebanon,

but the truth is that this war has not truly ended, and we are still living with its consequences today.

The national memory has not been cleansed, and no genuine reconciliation has taken place among the Lebanese.

The faces of the war still hold the reins of power today, with the same mindset.

No one has been held accountable, and the files of the past have not been opened, leaving the wounds to bleed silently.

The political consequences of the war and its barriers have come to govern our lives. Women are still denied the right to pass on their nationality, the population census remains prohibited, and electoral laws continue to be based on sectarian registration areas.

The displaced, the forcibly displaced, the kidnapped, and the missing all remain buried beneath the rubble of a period that has not yet ended, as if the country remains hostage to equations that refuse to move.

But now, after fifty years, it is time for the war to truly come to an end—not only in history books, but also in public consciousness—through addressing fears, guaranteeing pluralism, developing political practices and approaches, and restoring rights.

After fifty years of war, this is no longer a commemoration; it is a project for peace.



**Albert
Kostanian
Journalist
and
Economist**



The Lebanese and Lebanonized wars have broken many Lebanese people.

Yet, for some, they have also led to a deeper engagement with memory and with the way it is understood. Memory does not simply conceal some things and reveal others; it disappears and returns, sometimes at unexpected moments. This is because the present often shapes memory, awakens it, and even reinvents it. The manipulation of memory by some politicians may fade for a while, only to resurface when it becomes useful for partisan and sectarian mobilization.

We should not forget that the dominant and constantly renewed narratives of our wars remain incomplete. They often look at our reality—past and present—from a single perspective. As a result, many avoid confronting their own wrongdoing and instead place responsibility on their opponents for what they did or did not do.

We have never achieved genuine reconciliation because we chose forgetting—or because our leaders chose, on our behalf, to embrace collective amnesia in order to turn the page on the past and move on. But we did not truly move on, as we had imagined or as we were made to believe.

Reconciliation has taken place only in a few cases, and the same is true of self-criticism. There has been no sufficient solidarity among the victims of the wars, as sectarian divisions have kept them apart.

Perhaps the issue of the missing and forcibly disappeared is one of the issues most capable of bridging sectarian divides and reaching a generation of young women and men who did not inherit the memory of the wars, but who have come to see themselves as citizens whose lives still bear the many scars left by those wars.



**Dr. Tarek
Mitri
Deputy Prime
Minister**



On a Hope That Breaks the Waiting

Year after year, we commemorate the anniversary of the outbreak of our civil war (our civil wars?) by exchanging promises and pledges of “never again,” armed with a massive accumulation of lessons and warnings, after choosing to ignore the fact that its internal and external causes continue to smolder and flare up within people’s minds, within our borders, in the surrounding geography, and in the region as a whole.

Fifty years ago, the bus massacre gave us the opportunity and the energy to endure the struggle of living safely within the “paradises of sects.” And because the Lebanese are... Lebanese, they have come to realize that the members of this social community (?) are condemned to live in misery together.

The leaders who led the war quickly moved on to lead the “post-war state,” along with the angry members of their sects—angry simply because they could not find happiness in living with the other. They offered a smart and innovative form of leadership, opening the doors to profit, enabling plunder, and creating unimaginable fortunes across every sector and every place:

banks... electricity... oil... coasts... rivers... dams... ships... healthcare... the judiciary... security... deposits...

The list is longer and more complicated than it can ever be counted...

On the 50th anniversary, after tens—indeed hundreds—of thousands of dead, wounded, and missing...

How wonderful we are... We are no longer afraid of death. Instead, terror has settled in our eyes at the possibility of having to commemorate this anniversary again and again, living through these days while trapped in the hope that this absurdity will finally come to an end.



**Ahmad
Murad
Freelance
Journalist**



Not Mine, Yet Part of Me

The war is made of memories that are not mine, yet they are part of me.
I was born under bombardment. My first journey home from the hospital was also made under bombardment, and my first days and weeks on this earth were lived beneath the sound of shelling. The sound of war, then, was the sound of my arrival into this world.

My mother tells me that, while she was pregnant with me, she used to listen to the music of pianist Richard Clayderman, perhaps in an attempt to drown out the sounds of shells and gunfire.
Where does this auditory memory live? Do we truly forget it? Does the body forget?
In my imagination, I carry scenes of moments I never witnessed, yet today I bear witness to them.

Like the scene of fighters storming a residential building in Sakiat El Janzir, searching for their enemies in the bathtub of our apartment. Their clothes were stained with blood.
“While I was running around trying to find a robe to cover myself,” my mother says.

The children of the building were gathered in a small bedroom, while their families begged the fighters not to enter. They stormed in, carrying machine guns, pointing them at terrified children screaming in fear. Among them was my brother, who was six or seven years old.

Another scene, from another home, from a massacre in our northern village: flames engulfing the body of an elderly man. He was my mother’s uncle, who refused to leave his home and land and died burned in his bed. Did he die in silence? Did anyone hear his screams?
In my imagination, I carry memories of sounds I never heard.
They are part of me, and I am part of them.
I come from there, from that time. I create images and stories of homes and rooms I never knew.

**Dr. Sara
Murad Writer
and
University
Professor**



On the 50th anniversary of the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war, the war remains present—not as a memory, but as an ongoing possibility. Violence, even if its weapons have fallen silent, has not been eradicated from politics. It continues to be invoked whenever conflicts intensify, as a tool of pressure and intimidation.

Between the appearance of stability and the reality of deep divisions, it seems that we have failed to produce a political model that transcends the war or acknowledges its consequences. There has been neither accountability nor a complete process of confronting the past. The tools and logic of war remain present in the collective unconscious and in the practices of the political elites.

The issue of the missing is the clearest expression of this continuity. Seventeen thousand missing persons remain without a known fate, and their families have never been granted the truth. Closing the file under the cover of “amnesty” did not end the pain; rather, it legitimized forgetting and prevented justice. There can be no reconciliation without disclosure, and no justice without acknowledgment.

Remembering the war is not an emotional act; it is a call to dismantle the logic that sustained it and to strip war of its legitimacy as a means of resolving political disputes. The starting point is recognizing the families’ right to truth and justice, and affirming that armed violence can no longer be considered a legitimate or acceptable option in political life.



**Dr. Ali Ahmad
Murad
Writer and
University
Professor**



A Golden Jubilee Claiming to Have Rendered Our Civil War Blind

This “civil war in its local form” brought together the voices of the “people of the house” and the outbursts of their protests with the “master of this house,” the one who still beats the drum.

Fifty years have passed without truly passing, moving over a wound whose blood continues to flow through the veins of waiting.

I see these fifty years as a photographic image of the smallest details of a memory that departed from the ordinary, struggling to erase the single letter that separates war from love. A memory that realized it resides in the future, and that remembering belongs to those who forget.

Personally, I was destined to live through and read this “civil war in its local form.”

Therefore, I now declare the sincerity of my joy in this jubilee, without placing myself in contradiction with the beginning of this text.

This joy is no longer surprising when one considers the enduring resilience I have witnessed among those who lost the warmth of their loved ones, those who still refuse to let tears settle in their eyes, and who cross sectarian boundaries with a confidence worthy of admiration, despite the distortions inflicted upon human dignity.



Fetam Murad
Visual Artist



Remember Me

Even if seas lay between you and me,
and roads kept blaming the bridges,
even if countries stood between us,
and trees longed for their roots,
remember me.

Whenever you grow cold,
let hope remain warm.

May our thoughts find their way back
and no longer remain broken.

Even if forgetfulness came between us,
if the dust of sorrow covered our joy,
and no picture remained in our drawer,
remember me.

The injustice, the war, and the loneliness of days,
the wounds carved deep within our hearts...

Let the promise never fall asleep,
never fade away.

Let it erase the darkness,
let it make dreams grow bigger,
and let your eyes return
to shining with their own light.

Remember me.



**Sawsan
Mortada
Poet**



My age is the age of the war, but which war?

Each of us has our own battle, our own story, and our own wounds that never heal...

One evening, my father did not return home. I was told: "Israel took him."

Where to? Why? And when would he return?

No answer.

As a little girl, I entered a state of both loss and waiting.

Every morning, I would wake up, water the rose pots, and pick the jujube fruits, hiding them until the evening, hoping he would return to eat them and see how much I cared for his plants and his land.

But every day, with every sunset, my father did not return, and I would taste bitterness in my mouth, despite the sweetness of the jujubes.

Fear wrapped around me like a shadow that never disappeared, and tears often flowed silently. Yet I would always whisper to myself with hope: "It must be a frightening dream, and I will wake up from it soon."

My nightmare ended after many long months, and my father returned. Yet the taste of bitterness still fills my mouth whenever I remember those children who grew up and became adults, and who are still waiting for their forcibly disappeared loved ones.

The taste of bitterness rises more and more whenever I see the barricades around us, everywhere, and our inability to create a collective memory that could lead us toward a homeland with less sorrow.



Tamam Marwa
Executive
Director of
the Social
Movement



On the 50th Anniversary of the War

At night, I would lie in my bed, listening to the sound of gunfire coming from afar, and wonder: Would it reach me? Or would I survive another night?

The war was not only outside, in the streets and the destroyed buildings. It lived inside the house as well, occupying the corners, hiding beneath the beds, present in my mother's anxious looks and my father's restrained fear as they exchanged a silence heavier than words.

My mother's face looked exhausted even when she smiled, and my father's hand trembled slightly as he locked the door tightly every evening, as if he were trying to shut the war outside, or deceive it into passing by without knocking on our door.

I remember the kitchen window and the balcony well—how they became a refuge from which we looked out over a city that was divided, pale, and broken...

I was a teenager then, and my tender heart believed that tomorrow would be different, that those who were absent would return, and that the sound of cannons would grow tired like us and fall silent, and that the war would end just as long nights eventually come to an end.

But I grew older. Much older. The shape of the war changed, its sounds changed, its faces changed, and even its names changed, yet it remained with us.

Wars became small wars within people's souls before they appeared in the streets.

I see them in the news, in the eyes of passersby, in political disputes, and in the constant absence of reassurance. Those who left never returned. Some disappeared into the gaps of memory, while others remained standing in dreams.

I no longer fear as I did before, but my heart still trembles whenever I hear that someone has left and never returned.



**Diana
Moukalled
Journalist**



Fifty years have passed since the beginning of the Lebanese civil war,
yet the families of the missing and forcibly disappeared persons have received no answers
about the fate of their loved ones.

Fifty years have passed, and the consequences of the war are still embodied in the ongoing suffering of
the families of the missing and forcibly disappeared persons.
Fifty years have gone by, and the families of these victims remain determined to know the fate of their
loved ones.

These families are united by a common cause.
Their diverse affiliations and backgrounds—which reflect the diversity of Lebanese people and residents
of Lebanon—do not divide them. They have chosen to embrace their diversity and are working to uncover
the fate of their missing loved ones, in order to move from a Lebanon of war toward a Lebanon that is the
final homeland for all its children, as stated in the preamble of the Lebanese Constitution.

The families of the missing and forcibly disappeared persons have the right to know the fate of their loved ones.
Those responsible for managing the affairs of the state—including the government, the presidency of the
Republic, and the Parliament—also have a duty to assume their responsibilities regarding this issue.

Political parties, many of which, ironically, include among their members a number of the missing persons,
and which may have been responsible for their disappearance, and which hold many of the
answers regarding their fate, must also assume their responsibility and contribute to ending this suffering.



**Adnan
Malki
Environmental
and
Democracy
Expert and
Activist**



On the 50th anniversary of the Lebanese civil war, we remember a tragedy that tore apart the fabric of the nation and claimed innocent lives. Among the wounds that have yet to heal is the issue of the missing and forcibly disappeared persons, a humanitarian and justice issue that requires the state to assume its full responsibilities in revealing the fate of the missing and detained persons.

Coming to terms with the past and closing this painful chapter can only happen through achieving justice for the victims and their families. On this occasion, we must pay tribute to the struggles of the families of the missing and forcibly disappeared persons.

These struggles led, even after decades, to the adoption of Law No.

105 in 2018 and the establishment of the National Commission for the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared. However, these steps have unfortunately remained ineffective due to successive governments' failure to provide the Commission, established in 2020, with the financial, logistical, and organizational resources stipulated by law to carry out its mandate.

We call on the current government and its Prime Minister, Nawaf Salam, who represents an internationally recognized legal authority, to give this issue the attention it deserves, especially as the passage of time risks closing this chapter without serious measures being taken.

This anniversary is an opportunity to draw lessons that warn us against repeating such a tragedy. National unity is the strongest shield, and a strong and just state governed by the rule of law is the only guarantee of a secure future. We must work together to build institutions, combat corruption, strengthen social justice, and uphold the values of true citizenship that place belonging to Lebanon above all other affiliations, making Lebanon a home for all.

A Lebanon that is strong in its diversity and its future begins with a culture of peace and coexistence. We must also learn from the painful experience of war to build a future based on dialogue and tolerance, not violence and hatred, as division and fragmentation can only lead to wars, death, and destruction.



**Ibrahim
Mneimneh
Member
of
Parliament**



The War That Passed but Never Truly Passed

Half a century has passed since that war, which was one of the most complex and bloodiest civil wars Lebanon has witnessed in its history. Despite the long time that has elapsed since its end, its causes and motives remain embedded in the memory of Lebanese communities, in politics as well as in the economy, and in the structure of the state and its institutions.

That war ended with the Taif Agreement, which was approved and endorsed by the majority of Lebanese people and their political forces. The agreement redistributed powers among the presidencies, introduced a set of constitutional reforms, and laid out a roadmap for abolishing political sectarianism. However, the Taif Agreement was soon undermined, and none of its fundamental provisions were implemented. Even the issue of powers was subjected to attempts to bypass and challenge them.

What we Lebanese are experiencing today, in terms of divisions, conflicts, and collapses at various levels and across different fields, is as if we are still living in the time of war—or even worse. The political system is becoming increasingly sectarian and entrenched in power-sharing arrangements; the Constitution is absent, justice and the rule of law are forgotten, weapons remain outside the control of the state, and ruling political leaders and parties continue to dominate, with their existence and continuity based on sectarianism, confessional identities, and political quotas. As for the state and its institutions, they have become a thing of the past.

In light of our current reality, it can be said that most of us as Lebanese have not learned enough from the lessons and consequences of that war. We continue to avoid confronting the facts, defining responsibilities, and addressing how to deal with them. Instead, we escape this responsibility by attributing our shortcomings and failures to others. At times, by claiming that it was “the war of others on our land,” and at other times by holding the armed Palestinian presence responsible for the war.



**Dr. Hassan
Mneimneh
University
Professor
and Former
Minister**



Both statements contain some elements of truth and reality, yet neither reveals the full truth. The truth is that the war began under political slogans and social demands, as a result of the sectarian political system that existed and continues to exist, the absence of social justice, the prioritization of sectarian and regional identities over citizenship, and the presence of weapons outside the authority of the state in several areas.

However, the sounds of weapons, foreign interventions, and their local intersections soon overshadowed all other considerations. The war stopped, but it seems that its lessons were not learned as they should have been. All the causes and factors that led to its outbreak remain present today, and have in fact become more deeply rooted after the war. It is true that the fighting ended, but a genuine peace was never built. There was no true, sincere, and comprehensive national reconciliation.

The files of the missing were never opened, and no one among the warlords was held accountable.

On the contrary, many of them reached positions of power and reproduced the same mentality that existed before the war. Since the end of the war until today, Lebanon has been living through a series of existential, political, economic, and social crises, accompanied by widespread corruption. All of this culminated in the nationwide economic collapse of 2019 and the Beirut port explosion the following year. Nothing remains of the state and its institutions except their names and titles. All these events and developments confirm that the war was never truly closed; rather, its forms have changed. From killing and destruction through weapons to killing the state and society through corruption and sectarian and political power-sharing, and from military frontlines to structural collapse. Despite everything, a glimmer of hope appears with the new generation of Lebanese who have begun to raise their voices, demanding a just civil state free from sectarianism and quotas, as expressed in the October 17, 2019 protests. The 50th anniversary of the civil war is not an occasion for exchanging accusations between sects. Rather, it is an opportunity to examine the roots of the crisis that has not ended, and to reconsider the choice of rebuilding the state on the foundations of citizenship, justice, and accountability.

Lebanon will not escape the memory of war until all its people decide that it should be a state, not an arena; until they free themselves from narrow loyalties and choose the nation as their first and last priority; and until they uphold the Constitution and the Taif Agreement, which cost the Lebanese 150,000 martyrs and 17,000 missing persons.



In every home in Lebanon, there is an absence that remains present.

The absence of truth in a murder case.

The absence of a missing person.

The absence of a breadwinner who is away overseas.

A symbolic absence of a homeland that fails to do justice to its daughters and sons.

Fifty years have passed since the outbreak of the Lebanese war, yet justice remains missing, and the waiting has not ended.

Impunity is not confined to the era of war alone. It is the tragedy that keeps repeating itself, without a memory that holds people accountable and without a state that delivers justice. Those searching for the perpetrators of crimes, those seeking to uncover the fate of the kidnapped, and those demanding the recovery of their stolen money... are all victims of a political system built on impunity.

Memory is not meant to comfort the past, but to protect the future.
Every silencing of the truth is an extension of the war, in another form.

In the faces of mothers and fathers, in the silence of siblings, and in the dispersion of families... the deepest meanings of waiting are revealed.

Perhaps the 50th anniversary will be a moment to speak the truth, not to repeat the silence.



**Ayman
Mhanna**
**Executive
Director
of the Samir
Kassir
Foundation**



The 13 April 1975 anniversary has always been an occasion for personal and national reflection, with all the pain, victims, destruction, and lessons it carries. It was and remains a painful milestone in the memory of Lebanon and the Lebanese people.

On that dark day, Lebanon entered turbulent years during which hundreds of thousands of Lebanese fell victim as they were killed, wounded, displaced, and orphaned. Tens of thousands of its people were kidnapped and became considered missing, the state was destroyed, institutions collapsed, and the country's doors were opened to a devastating wave of emigration.

Today, this anniversary comes after the completion of the constitutional institutions through the election of a President of the Republic and the formation of a promising government, following the cessation of the Israeli aggression against Lebanon. This gives Lebanese people renewed hope in rising again to rebuild their state and their homeland.

However, despite the passage of half a century since the outbreak of the war, and 35 years since its end, the agreement on the Taif Accord, and the removal of its effects from the land and from people's minds, the issue of forcibly disappeared persons remains a bleeding wound that continues to exhaust many Lebanese families.

Healing this wound requires the promising leadership and government to enable the National Commission for the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared to fulfil its national role and to provide it with the necessary material and moral support.



**Dr. Michel
Moussa
Member of
Parliament and
Chair of the
Parliamentary
Human
Rights
Committee**

At the end of the civil war, we were given a choice between justice and civil peace

We believed that civil peace could be achieved by bypassing the values of justice. Accordingly, we issued a general amnesty law. We lost justice, yet we did not achieve civil peace. On the contrary, the fate of the country came to be controlled by those who had participated in the civil war.

Fifty years since the outbreak of the war... Has the war become a memory? Unfortunately, no. The war remains a bitter reality that continues to live with us.

The missing and forcibly disappeared persons are the lost link in this dirty war, and the suffering of their families is the most painful on the human and moral levels. As for the political and legal dimensions, there are many other missing links that increase suffering, deepen division, and forcibly hide from us the possibility of building a just state that respects human dignity.

Suppressing the truth about the civil war and the fate of the forcibly disappeared, followed by the truth about political assassinations, the Beirut port explosion, and financial crimes (God forbid), continues to accumulate within us a sense of frustration and an inability to progress. Wars are the result of humanity's failure to resolve problems through peaceful means.

Wars will continue to exist as long as we allow instinct to prevail over reason in our societies, as long as we accept a culture of impunity, and as long as we avoid civilized and peaceful confrontation and retreat before an authoritarian power that rules in the name of sects and feeds on futile conflicts...

A war ends when the causes that produced it—causes that exist within us and come from us—come to an end.

This happens when we believe that justice is the path toward progress, that accountability is the gateway to modernity, that it establishes the rule of law, and that it builds a capable and just state.

Today, we stand at a decisive moment in the history of our nation, facing genuine opportunities to build the state. Will we rise to the level of this challenge?



**Dr. Marie-Claude
Najm
Dean of the
Faculty of Law
and
Political Science
at Saint Joseph
University and
Former Minister**



It Has Entered History...

That war stormed into our lives with breathtaking speed. We had barely begun to move beyond it... or have we not done so yet?

Is what we are living today merely its aftermath, or an extension of it?

I sometimes wonder: are we truly ready to place it in the category of a "historical event"?

Like other wars that are reduced to a starting date and an ending date, then recorded in history books, to be memorized by school students in preparation for official exams.

Fifty years... a number that has begun to make its way into history.

But, a hundred years from now, will our grandchildren's grandchildren commemorate the 150th anniversary of that war?

Or will it have faded into oblivion, erased by other wars that erupted afterward, followed by more and more, like all the wars that have passed through our land?

Will it become merely a trace celebrated by historians, and displayed in museums and preserved in collective memory?

...Yet we still remember.

Because the war, quite simply, has not yet left our present...

As long as we are still searching for the missing.



Joyce Nassar
Archaeologist
and Physical
Anthropologist,
and Member of
the National
Commission for
the Missing
and Forcibly
Disappeared

For fifty years, the families of the kidnapped and missing have carried the torch of justice and truth.

Had it not been for their struggle, it would have been extinguished, and the warlords would have succeeded in burying the truth and denying their rights.

The state has taken no steps to hold those responsible for war crimes accountable. Instead, it enacted a general amnesty law that ignored the victims, and the post-war period became a time of glorifying criminals and silencing the voices of those who suffered.

The families of the missing stood firm and exerted pressure that forced those in power to take action. They became a school of justice, teaching generations the importance of confronting the past and ensuring justice for victims.

We learned nothing about the memory of the war in schools, and there was no official or social will to build a state that acknowledges what happened. Everything my generation knows about the war, we learned from the Families' Committee.

Today, their struggle has gone beyond Lebanon's borders. Movements in Syria, Iraq, and elsewhere have drawn inspiration from their experience, learning lessons in confronting oblivion, denial, and marginalization.



Habib Nassar
Human Rights
– Activist
Currently
responsible for
Victim Engagement
and Support
at the United
Nations
Independent
Institution on
Missing
Persons in Syria



On this anniversary, as the national memory recalls painful scenes from our contemporary history, we affirm that building the state on solid foundations cannot be achieved without sincere acknowledgment and genuine reconciliation among the Lebanese people.

National self-reflection first requires that our people be able to confront their history with courage and responsibility; to recognize the sacrifices made for Lebanon, as well as to acknowledge the mistakes that were committed, and to work toward addressing them in a spirit of justice and fairness.

From this perspective, the Ministry of Justice is committed to playing its central role in accompanying this process, through working with all relevant parties, foremost among them the National Commission for the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared, to uphold the right to truth and to support all necessary legal and institutional steps in this regard. True reconciliation cannot be achieved without ensuring justice for victims and their families.

Uncovering the fate of the missing and forcibly disappeared persons, and addressing this humanitarian and ethical issue with full responsibility, is an integral part of building a society reconciled with itself and a state that respects its citizens and embraces their suffering.

On this anniversary, we renew our commitment that justice will remain the foundation of reconciliation, and that the Ministry of Justice will remain at the forefront of efforts to consolidate a state governed by the rule of law and institutions — a state built on truth, not its suppression; on transparency, not denial.

Lebanon deserves that we provide it with an honest memory, fair justice, and a future worthy of the sacrifices of its people.



**Adel Nassar
Minister
of
Justice.**



Do We Still Need to Convince Anyone?

I adjusted my position on the barber's chair to relax and let Khalil, the young barber, style my hair as he usually does every few weeks. A few minutes later, he begins his questions:

"Professor Adeeb, you were 18 years old when the 1975 war began. Surely you belong to the fortunate generation that had the chance to take part in these historic events, filled with hope for change and revolution?"

Convincing Khalil that war — civil war in particular — is horrific beyond description, that there is nothing good or romantic about it, and that it bears no resemblance whatsoever to the patriotic and revolutionary songs we used to sing, and still occasionally sing, was not easy. Despite repeating this conversation regularly whenever I visit Khalil's barbershop near my home, he remained unconvinced.

Then came the events of 7 May 2008 and the militia incursion into Beirut. By coincidence, about two weeks later, I found myself once again on Khalil's "confession chair." As soon as I sat down, he asked:

"So during the war in 1975 and the years that followed, was the situation like what we experienced two weeks ago? We lived through several days of fear and terror. Was that what it was like in your time?"

"Yes," I told him, and fell silent.

I did not need any explanation or argument to convince him.

Does anyone else still need to be convinced?

And for those who remain hesitant, simply remember that the 17,000 missing and forcibly disappeared persons are the enduring witnesses to the crimes and the horror that have continued for 50 years.



**Adeeb Nehme
Development
Consultant and
Member of
the National
Commission for
the Missing
and Forcibly
Disappeared**



The Lebanese state has never defined a timeframe for the war.

The laws addressing the war, such as the 1991 Amnesty Law and the 2018 Law on the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared, do not propose a timeframe for the war. Rather, the General Amnesty Law repeatedly refers, in its provisions, to an arbitrary date marking the end of the period covered by the amnesty: 28 March 1991.

In the absence of such a definition, civil society imposed an annual date for discussing the war: 13 April. This date is presented as the beginning of the war, or wars, in Lebanon.

It is true that other dates could have been chosen, but this is not our concern here.

What matters is that the date chosen to commemorate the war is a violent day that resulted in a massacre and a deep division within Lebanese society... a point of no return in a spiral of escalating violence that has not ended until today, even if it has taken different forms and involved new actors.

Is it not surprising that Lebanese society commemorates the beginning of the war rather than its end, as is the case in other societies?

This is happening fifty years after that event, and thirty-five years after the re-establishment of central authority, marking what is referred to as the post-war era.

The commemoration of 13 April represents an accusation against Lebanon's ruling system. It constitutes a condemnation of the management of the post-war period, of the officially adopted policy of forgetting, and of the de facto amnesty granted for the war crimes committed by the warlords who seized political power. Commemorating this anniversary, preserving this memory, is an act of resistance. It expresses the need to tell the truth and to reconcile not only with others, but also with ourselves. It reflects the need for a different way of turning the page: one that frees society from the reality imposed by the militias/parties/mafias, which have sought to imprison society in the pains of the past and keep it in a permanent state of present uncertainty and fear of the future, under the threat of a new 13 April that they periodically invoke—as witnessed on 7 May 2008 and in the Tayouneh clashes on 14 October 2021.



Jihad Nammour
Lecturer at the
Institute
of Political
Science, Saint
Joseph
University.



The thirteenth of April is not a passing date for the Lebanese people; it is a deeply rooted milestone in their collective memory, as it left its mark and came close to bringing this nation to an end, given what was being planned for it behind the scenes of international politics, had circumstances not emerged that helped save it and move it into a new phase.

Transformations and attempts led to the cessation of that war, a war whose declared causes and premises came to an end. Yet, its other face continued to persist, through what represented a historic threat to this homeland, distinguished by its composition and its location. Lebanon has remained, and continues to remain, within Israel's sights since 1948 until today. Repeated occupations and Israeli wars have continued, undermining security and stability not only in our country but throughout the region and the world.

For we remain, and will continue to be, a homeland of diversity and distinction — a reality that Israel considers incompatible with its racist entity.

Today, after half a century, we must assess all these years: what have we learned from that period and its hardships? How can we preserve a homeland of freedom, dignity, and sovereignty? And what means are available to strengthen our internal reality?

Yes, solidarity, integration, and a unified internal position alone are the factors that have enabled Lebanon to preserve its territory and its entity despite all projects aimed at weakening it and controlling its decisions.

All of this will only be possible by turning our attention to the Lebanese human being — the source of strength and presence, and the foundation upon which this homeland is built.



**Qassem
Hashem
Member
of Parliament
(MP)**



On the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared Persons in Lebanon

on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Lebanese War

The Lebanese war has a defined age, marked by a starting point: 13 April 1975...

But each of the missing and forcibly disappeared persons has an age that has been suspended, perhaps fixed on every single day of those dark days.

The most present among us are those who disappeared in that absence. An overwhelming presence — and how could it not be — in the lives of fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, wives and children?

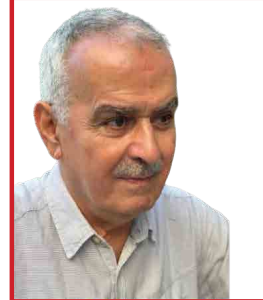
They are the ones seeking a resolution, and we seek it for them, before their own turn arrives to join those who were taken by death while they still carry the burning pain of hearts that never cease waiting for their loved ones...

If there is a solution, it lies with two categories of officials: those who led, encouraged, and carried out the crimes, and those new leaders who assumed power in the presumed era of peace.

The solution that must be pursued with the first category should be humanitarian and moral — a moment of conscience — through public or confidential confessions (by those who are still alive, before they too disappear through death), via a confidential confession mechanism that would exempt them from punishment after fifty years of the Lebanese war (although they are already exempt, for who was ever held accountable in the first place?).

Confessions in which perpetrators acknowledge that they carried out abductions and reveal who was taken, when and where they were taken, and the fate of those who disappeared.

The solution with the second category is rational and practical: supporting the work of the Families of the Missing Committee by seriously working to establish specialized investigation and inquiry committees, under the supervision and implementation of experienced and credible local and international humanitarian institutions. These committees must be granted the necessary powers and facilities, and all obstacles preventing them from accessing information must be removed — through archives, testimonies of individuals, and perpetrators' confessions.



Jean Hashem
Writer



The fiftieth anniversary of the outbreak of the Lebanese war is not only a reminder of a past event; it is a reflection of a reality that has still not overcome the consequences of that war.

Fifty years have passed, yet thousands of missing persons still have an unknown fate, while their families remain trapped in a painful wait and a deep sense of abandonment.

This anniversary is not simply a moment of reflection. It is a warning to a state that has failed to assume its responsibilities, and to a society that promotes reconciliation while leaving the truth buried.

It is an opportunity to break the silence surrounding the issue of the missing and to reject attempts to erase the crime under the slogans of amnesty or forgetting.

The war has not truly ended as long as its wounds remain open and justice remains delayed.

Fifty years are enough to begin dismantling the culture of impunity and to establish a courageous path toward uncovering the truth and holding those responsible accountable.

Continuing to ignore this issue is a renewed violation of the dignity of the victims and of the future of a country that claims to have achieved peace without confronting its past.

On this fiftieth anniversary, we do not need official statements; we need genuine political will and a clear decision: there can be no reconciliation without revealing the fate of the missing, and no future without justice.



**Shaden
Nuwayhid Hani**
Researcher
in the fields of
Philosophy
of History
and Transitional
Justice, and
Activist in the
Common
Good Movement



The Absent Who Is Truly Present

Some people listen for his footsteps before his fingers touch the door, announcing his arrival. Yet the sound of those footsteps never comes. The fingers never knock on the door waiting for someone to open it, and those inside never manage to accept that what they hear is nothing but recurring dreams — dreams that return over the years with the same tense and restless rhythm.

No one comes to put an end to life's uncertainty with certainty, and no one leaves memory behind and accepts permanent absence.

No, what happened and what continues to happen is not beyond understanding or expectation. Quite the opposite. There are those who remain forever longing: a wife, a fiancée, a mother, a sister, a father, and a brother — waiting and waiting. Only those who endure it know the burning ache of longing for the absent who remains present. Questions remain suspended, awaiting an answer from an authority described as a responsible state or a competent institution. An answer awaited by many women and men, yet it never comes.

The pain does not heal, and the wounds of wars do not close. The suffering of orphans, widows, and those deprived of their spouses remains suspended on a wooden cross with rusted iron nails.

As if what happened over such a long period of time were nothing but an eternal curse, one difficult to challenge by unraveling its mysteries and, ultimately, escaping its flames.

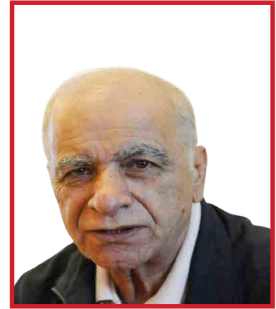
Thousands upon thousands of missing and forcibly disappeared persons continue to be denied by those responsible for their disappearance — reassured by the absence of justice, transparent investigations, and convincing answers to painful questions...

A war does not end simply because someone declares that it has ended.

A war ends when the banners of truth, forgiveness, and reconciliation are raised.

Anything else leaves wounds deeply buried within hearts and souls.

And so, the dead do not truly die, nor do the living truly live. Life remains suspended upon the weakness of a fragile spirit, for all eternity.



**Dr. Zuhair
Hawwari
Secretary of
the Executive
Office of the
Secular
Democratic
Leftist Action
Organization.**



Half a century has passed since the Lebanese war.

Was it a civil war or a war of others fought on our land? It does not matter as much as the need for us, as Lebanese, to work to ensure that it never happens again.

A war that took away many loved ones who fell victim to it, while others disappeared without leaving any information behind. Their families continue to wait, and some of them passed away without ever receiving a piece of information or news that could have brought them comfort and eased their pain.

This bleeding wound, which has remained open for decades, could be partially healed if the families of the forcibly disappeared and missing persons were to receive even the smallest piece of information about their loved ones.

This responsibility lies with the government, with the militias that fought one another, or even with individuals who took part in the war and could provide official authorities with information about what their hands had committed, so that these authorities could inform the families of the missing about their fate.

It is heartbreaking that mothers and wives should remain haunted for years by the presence of a missing son or husband, only to pass away carrying this pain with them.

This is a file that requires careful handling and diligent work. Its essence is humanitarian, and its goal is to reach the desired outcome, even if the search is difficult.



**Yazbek
Wehbe
Journalist and
University
Professor**



On the 50th anniversary of the Lebanese war,

we do not want to remember it as a historical event alone; we want it to become a moment of justice, awareness, and decision.

A moment of justice through finding a solution to a deeply important humanitarian issue: the issue of the kidnapped and forcibly disappeared persons.

We must ease the pain of mothers who are still waiting for the return of their children, and of families who still have no answers about the fate of their loved ones.

A moment of awareness that the war was not merely a fight between militias or a conflict between sects, but was also the result of the exploitation of Lebanese divisions by external actors and the incitement of leaders who used Lebanese people as fuel for their wars, while preserving their own privileges and gains.

A moment of decision: not allowing the heirs of these same leaders to rule with the mindsets of the past, benefiting from the weakness of the state and the deterioration of its institutions, and not allowing ourselves to be drawn into the same wars under new slogans.

We cannot remember the Lebanese war without reflecting on its profound lessons.

We must raise our voices loudly to demand the revelation of the fate of the missing, the prosecution of those involved in crimes of enforced disappearance, and the prevention of the return of the game of nations and the sectarian discourse that was the primary cause of the outbreak of the war.



**Paula
Yacoubian
Member of
Parliament
(MP)**



Fifty years after the war in Lebanon, memory continues to raise its questions.

This book brings together reflections from individuals working in different fields, writing about the war as they see it today—its meaning, its shadows, and what we can learn from it.

It is an invitation to remember, not as a return to pain, but as a step towards **reconciliation, towards a deeper understanding of the past, and towards building a future in which there is no place for the repetition of violence and disappearance.**