

## THE PALESTINIANS AND THE OUTBREAK OF CIVIL WAR IN LEBANON (1975)\*

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After its expulsion from Jordan in 1970, the Palestinian liberation movement began to operate from south Lebanon, where the mountains around Mt. Hermon offered favourable natural conditions for guerrilla activities. The weakness of the Lebanese state and support from some Lebanese factions and Arab states enabled the Palestinians to build a state within a state in Lebanon (similar to the one they had previously built in Jordan) with refugee camps under Palestinian control, all important Palestinian organizations having an independent base in Beirut and widespread infrastructure and fortifications in southern Lebanon.<sup>1</sup> Palestinian guerrilla squads carried out attacks against Israel or fired rockets into their territory. There was a permanent cycle of Palestinian attacks and Israeli retaliations. However, Israeli bombing affected not only Palestinians but also Lebanese from the countryside – especially Shiites, thousands of whom were forced to flee their homes and move to the crowded suburbs of Beirut, angered by a government that did not protect them from the Palestinians or the Israelis. Moreover, conflicts arose between Palestinian armed groups and the Lebanese army, which was trying to prevent the assaults. Political tension in Lebanon was growing.

**Key words:** Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, shift of the PLO headquarters to Beirut, growing political and sectarian tension in Lebanon, outbreak of the civil war

On the international level, the year 1974 was markedly successful for Palestinian Arabs. The Palestine Liberation Organization was recognized as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people by many international organizations, e.g. the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and the Arab League. Furthermore, on 22 November 1974, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution No. 3236

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<sup>1</sup> RABINOVICH, I. *Waging Peace: Israel and the Arabs*, p. 16.

which reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, national independence and sovereignty, including the right of the Palestinian people to regain their rights by all means in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.<sup>2</sup> The recognition of the rights of the Palestinian people by the largest international organization was the climax of the international achievements of the PLO and its Chairman Yāsir ʿArafāt, who became an internationally respected representative of the people of Palestine. While Yāsir ʿArafāt was highly successful on the international level, the situation in the main “headquarters” of the Palestinian resistance movement was gradually changing for the worse.

The PLO chairman became one of the strongest and most influential personalities in Lebanon. In the internal politics of Lebanon, the position of Yāsir ʿArafāt stemmed from his status and achievements on the international level but also from fear. The Palestinians, who openly declared their sympathy to the PLO and whose numbers were increasing, were viewed by common Lebanese people as criminals and street gang members who were bothering, robbing or suppressing civilians and illegally breaking into shops, bars or night-clubs. Despite requests from local authorities, neither Yāsir ʿArafāt nor the PLO leadership took measures against these activities.<sup>3</sup> As Lebanese security organs failed to protect their own people, anger was aimed at the political leadership of the country.

Al-Fatḥ and other resistance groups and organizations existing within the PLO relocated their official headquarters, military bunkers and social and commercial institutions to Beirut, the capital. Many of the city’s residents referred to Yāsir ʿArafāt as “the mayor of Western Beirut” – the Islamic part of the city. The residence of the PLO on Boulevard Kūrniš al-Mazraʿa could be easily recognized by its vivid emblem. Armed men would often be seen leaving the PLO building and getting into big Land Rover vehicles and Mercedes cars driving around at high speed and ignoring other drivers and pedestrians.<sup>4</sup> This behaviour became a source of tension between Lebanese civilians and Palestinians.

Relations between Palestinians and Lebanese civilians were not the sole source of tension in Lebanon in the mid-1970s. Lebanon was the scene of many other conflicts and tensions occurring in different areas of social and political life. The presence of the PLO and Palestinian refugees in the country just triggered events that were to take place in Lebanon sooner or later.

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<sup>2</sup> Available at <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/738/38/IMG/NR073838.pdf?OpenElement>.

<sup>3</sup> ABURISH, S. K. *Arafat: From Defender to Dictator*, p. 151.

<sup>4</sup> RUBIN, B., RUBIN, J. Colp. *Yasir Arafat: A Political Biography*, p. 78.

Lebanon has always been divided by religion. The confessional system of political power granted in the Constitution of Greater Lebanon from 1926 favoured Christians over Muslims. Maronites,<sup>5</sup> the largest Christian group since the adoption of the newly revised Constitution in 1934, were allocated the Office of the President<sup>6</sup> and thus they amassed power which did not reflect their real standing in the population of the country.<sup>7</sup> Lebanese Muslims, forming the majority of the population, had been struggling for years to achieve the same rights for themselves. Only seven out of seventeen officially acknowledged religious confessions had real political power. In addition to the three largest groups (Sunnites, Shiites, and Maronites), government posts were allocated to Druzes, Orthodox Christians, Greek Catholics and Armenian Christians.<sup>8</sup> Gradually, the Shiites gained a majority over the historically larger group of Sunnites. Arab Christians from Palestine, who had fled to Lebanon after the first Arab-Israeli war in 1948, assimilated quite quickly with Lebanese Christians and considered themselves Lebanese civilians. Palestinian Muslims, who had strengthened the Muslim majority, however, still felt like Palestinians.<sup>9</sup>

The turmoil in Lebanon was the result of the internal struggle for the direction of the country. It was a struggle between Lebanese patriots (separatists, particularists and loyalists), who viewed Lebanon not as a part of a great Arab homeland, but as a link between the West and the Middle East, and Arab nationalists, who were striving to establish closer relations with Syria and other Arab countries. From 1957 some Lebanese politicians, inspired by the Pan-Arabism of the Egyptian President Jamāl ʿAbdunnāṣir, were trying to thwart the extension of the presidential term of Kamīl Shamʿūn (1952 – 1958), who refused the Pan-Arab ideology.<sup>10</sup> The United Arab Republic and the growing popularity of Pan-Arabism and its national leader, Jamāl ʿAbdunnāṣir, resonated in Lebanese society, creating pressure on the government. At the beginning of May 1958, the internal political situation gave rise to extensive demonstrations in numerous Muslim towns. Historians refer to the aforementioned events as the first Lebanese civil war. The events resulted in the intervention of the US army

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<sup>5</sup> The Maronites are a Christian ethno-religious group which derives its name from St. Mārūn.

<sup>6</sup> The first President of Lebanon was the Greek-Catholic Shārīl Dabbās (Charles Dabbas) (1926 – 1934). In Ar-RAYYĀSHĪ, Iskandar. *Ruʿasāʾ Lubnān kamā ʿaraftuhum*. [The Lebanese Presidents as I have known them], pp. 40 – 41.

<sup>7</sup> GORDON, D. C. *The Republic of Lebanon*, p. 20.

<sup>8</sup> Al-ʿAQQĀD, Ṣalāḥ. *Al-maṣriq al-ʿarabī al-muʿāṣir* [The Contemporary Arab East], pp. 26 – 27;

<sup>9</sup> GOLDSCHMIDT, A. Jr., DAVIDSON, L. *A Concise History of the Middle East*, p. 359.

<sup>10</sup> *Az-Zuʿamāʾ al-mārūnīya, min Ḥabīb as-Saʿd ilā Samīr Jaʿjaʿ*. [The Maronite Leaders from Ḥabīb as-Saʿd to Samīr Jaʿjaʿ], pp. 109 – 110.

at the request of President Kamīl Shamʿūn on the basis of the Eisenhower Doctrine. By the end of July 1958, the situation eventually calmed down as the six-year functional presidential term came to an end and Kamīl Shamʿūn was succeeded by Fuʿād Shihāb (1958 – 1964).<sup>11</sup> The new president strengthened the executive branch, weakening the role of traditional leaders. He strived to reach a compromise between various religious factions sustaining the development of infrastructure, communication and health care. His term in office is officially recognized as a period of political and economic stability in the country.<sup>12</sup>

The civil conflict in Lebanon was also demonstrated in the relationships between a privileged group of land owners and wealthy merchants, who were striving to maintain the status quo, and a large group of poor (mostly Muslim) people fighting for a higher degree of equality. This gap between the rich and the poor was, especially in Beirut, immense and unbearable. High residential houses were built in neighbourhoods of numerous shacks constructed from cinder concrete blocks and corrugated iron. The government failed to impose taxes on the income of the wealthy citizens; instead, it introduced a high consumption tax on cigarettes and other consumer goods purchased mostly by the underprivileged population. Most employers were not willing to pay the minimum wage to their employees and they preferred to hire Palestinian refugees or those from the southern regions, who were willing to work for a lower income.<sup>13</sup>

Consequently, the internal as well as external forces created a polarized society divided into two ideological blocs – the right wing (supporters of the status quo) and the left wing (advocates of change). Rich people and Christians inclined to the right side of the political spectrum; furthermore, they were supported by a few conservative (reactionary) Arab governments as well as Israel, Iran and the West. The left spectrum was represented by an alliance between the Palestinian resistance movement and Lebanese left-wing national movements supported by some Arab governments, socialist groups and states.<sup>14</sup> The majority of Middle East states were armed by either the Eastern or the

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<sup>11</sup> SORBY, K. R. *Arabský východ (1945 – 1958)* [The Arab East (1945 – 1958)], p. 242; WANNER, J. *Ve stínu studené války. Střední východ v letech Eisenhowerovy doktríny, 1956 – 1960.* [In the Shadow of the Cold War. The Middle East during the Eisenhower Doctrine], p. 158.

<sup>12</sup> SORBY, K. R. *Libanon po občianskej vojne 1958.* [Lebanon after the 1958 Civil War]. In ŽENKA, J. (ed.). *Středomorie v dějinách.* [The Mediterranean Area in History], pp. 107 – 108.

<sup>13</sup> GOLDSCHMIDT, A. Jr., DAVIDSON, L. *A Concise History of the Middle East*, p. 359.

<sup>14</sup> SORBY, K. R., SORBY, K. Jr. *Blízky východ v medzinárodnej politike (1971 – 1990).* [The Middle East in International Politics (1971 – 1990)], p. 94.

Western bloc. Weapons were often smuggled into Lebanon in peacetime and as a result many people in Lebanon were armed in the mid-1970s.<sup>15</sup>

In 1969, Kamāl Junbulāt, the political leader of the Druze community, formed a broad coalition called the *Lebanese National Movement* (al-Ḥaraka al-waṭanīya al-lubnānīya). It consisted of (1) *the Progressive Socialist Party* (al-Ḥizb at-taqaddumī al-ishtirākī) founded by Kamāl Junbulāt, (2) *the Syrian Social Nationalist Party* (al-Ḥizb as-sūrī al-qawmī al-ijtimāʿī), (3) *the Lebanese Communist Party* (al-Ḥizb ash-shuyūʿī al-lubnānī), (4) *the Independent Nāṣirist Movement of Ibrāhīm Qulayāt* (al-Murābiṭūn), (5) *the Arab Socialist Baʿth Party* (Ḥizb al-baʿth al-ʿarabī al-ishtirākī) and other minor organizations. The coalition promoted administrative reforms, the abrogation of sectarianism from politics and last but not least freedom for Palestinian guerrilla activities.<sup>16</sup>

On the other side of the spectrum were the political leaders of the Maronites, who objected to the presence of Palestinians (the Palestinian resistance movement) in Lebanon. This community highly prospered from the existing sectarianism and its leaders were ready to use force to maintain the status quo.<sup>17</sup> The right-wing Maronite bloc consisted of the following organizations: (1) *the Lebanese Phalangist Party* (Ḥizb al-Katāʿib al-lubnānīya), a well-organized political party led by Pierre al-Jumayyil and his two sons Bashīr and Amīn; (2) *the National Liberal Party* (Ḥizb al-waṭanīyīn al-aḥrār) led by the former Lebanese president Kamīl Shamʿūn and his sons; (3) *the Order of Maronite Monks* (ar-Rahbānīyāt al-kātūlikīja) led by Sharbal Qassīs, notoriously known for being an advocate of crusades against Muslims; (4) *the Mardaites Brigade*<sup>18</sup> (Liwāʾ al-Marada), the militia of Sulaymān Franjīya, the president of Lebanon, and his son Tony;<sup>19</sup> and (5) other minor local armed groups – *the Guardians of the Cedars* (Ḥurrās al-arz), *at-Tanẓīm*, *The Lebanese Youth Movement* (Ḥarakat ash-shabāb al-lubnānīya) and other groups.<sup>20</sup> Both blocs had armed militias.

Another important segment in the manifold sectarian mosaics was the Shiite *Movement of the Dispossessed* (Ḥarakat al-maḥrūmīn), later known as the *Amal* (Hope) *Movement*, which was founded in 1974 by Imam Mūsā aṣ-Ṣadr. The *Movement of the Dispossessed* was the first attempt to politically organize all

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<sup>15</sup> FARĪD, Faṭīn Aḥmad. *Ḥurūb Lubnān. Dirāsa taḥlīliya*. [Wars of Lebanon], pp. 52 – 53.

<sup>16</sup> BARAKAT, Halim. The Lebanese War and the Middle East. The Social Context. In HALEY, E. P., SNIDER, L. W. (eds.). *Lebanon in Crisis*, p. 4.

<sup>17</sup> SORBY, K. R. Lebanon during the Shārīl Ḥulw Presidency, 1964 – 1970. In *Asian and African Studies*, pp. 100 – 101.

<sup>18</sup> The Mardaites were a (Christian) warrior group who resisted the Arab invasion in Syria in the seventh century. The Maronite claim of being descendants of the Mardaites was to become an important national tradition. In HITTI, P. K. *Lebanon in History*, p. 246.

<sup>19</sup> ODEH, B. J. *Lebanon. Dynamics of Conflict*, p. 114.

<sup>20</sup> WINSLOW, C. *Lebanon: War and Politics in a Fragmented Society*, p. 192.

Shiites in the Lebanese sectarian community.<sup>21</sup> Both opposing blocs strove hard to gain Imam Mūsā aṣ-Ṣadr on their side. As the Shiite community in Lebanon was the most underprivileged minority in the country, it was expected that they would support the *Lebanese National Movement*. However, the Shiite community represented by the *Movement of the Dispossessed* was willing to fight for better conditions only within the existing system. In the course of various negotiations, Mūsā aṣ-Ṣadr reassured the Maronite representatives that in the case of political reform they would be granted the presidential post.<sup>22</sup> The Shiites and Maronites were not on friendly terms with the Palestinians. The former were not willing to accept that their villages and homes were changing into military bases; the latter were trying to support their own extremist movements.<sup>23</sup>

Due to the tension between the different segments of society, violence in the country was on the rise. Some conflicts were purely internal – in Tripoli or between traditionally hostile families in Zaghartā.<sup>24</sup> The number of bomb attacks and assassination attempts (which had occurred in the country even before 1975) was increasing, but still, the situation was not beyond control. The *Cairo Agreement*, which requested the PLO to consult every attack of Palestinian guerrilla squads against Israel with the Lebanese government, was in effect just a formality.<sup>25</sup> Palestinian attacks against Israel brought about Israeli retaliation. During these assaults, many Lebanese civilians died and the tension between Palestinians and some other segments (especially Christian segments) of Lebanese society escalated.

The Lebanese government was facing a two-fold dilemma. It could either choose a risk of civil war outbreak by preventing the Palestinian armed squads from assaulting Israel or it could send armed forces to the south so as to defend their territory against Israel, a much stronger enemy.<sup>26</sup> In most cases, the Lebanese military did not oppose the Israeli army. The opponents of the government used these situations to publically denounce the inability of the Lebanese government to protect its own citizens. The inertia and weakness of the Lebanese government was demonstrated on 12 – 14 January 1975 when Israel attacked the village of Kafar Shūbā situated in the south-east of the country. The attack forced 1,500 villagers to flee their homes.<sup>27</sup>

The *Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine* (PFLP), one of the largest groups in the *Palestine Liberation Organization*, carried out individual attacks

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<sup>21</sup> SHANAHAN, Rodger. *The Shia of Lebanon*, p. 107.

<sup>22</sup> EL KHAZEN, Farid. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon 1967 – 1976*, p. 236.

<sup>23</sup> KAPELIOUK, Amnon. *Arafat*, p. 150.

<sup>24</sup> WINSLOW, C. *Lebanon: War and Politics in a Fragmented Society*, p. 173.

<sup>25</sup> SORBY, K. R. Lebanon and the 1969 Cairo Agreement. In *Archiv Orientální*, p. 80.

<sup>26</sup> MARSHALL, J. V. *The Lebanese Connection*, p. 61.

<sup>27</sup> GORDON, D. C. *Lebanon. The Fragmented Nation*, p. 86.

against Israel. The above mentioned January events launched a series of armed conflicts between the PFLP and the Lebanese military, which after the Israeli attacks took measures against the Palestinian armed groups that were responsible for most attacks against Israel. In reaction to the strikes organized by the Lebanese military, the PFLP armed forces fired six rockets at the Lebanese military barracks in Tyre. Yāsir ʿArafāt accused the PFLP factions of futile provocations.<sup>28</sup>

In reaction to the events in Kafar Shūbā, Pierre al-Jumayyil, the leader of the *Lebanese Phalangist Party*, seized the opportunity to publically criticize the PLO. He appealed to its leaders to restrain the influence of the “anarchists” within the organization. On 20 February 1975 he supported a referendum on the Palestinian presence in Lebanon. Pierre al-Jumayyil declared that at least 60 per cent of the Lebanese population would welcome the request of the *Phalangist Party* to strengthen the control of Lebanese institutions over Palestinians. In his public statement, he accentuated that Lebanon was gradually losing its sovereignty and called for immediate action.<sup>29</sup>

An episode which took place at the end of February 1975 in the town of Sidon and which involved Palestinians activated the whole country. The problem evolved around a conflict about fishing rights. Kamīl Shamʿūn was one of the representatives of a newly-founded consortium sponsored by Lebanese and Kuwaiti capital which had a fishing concession along the coast of southern Lebanon. The company, called Proteine, benefited from modern fishing equipment and a mechanized fishing fleet.<sup>30</sup> Local fishermen, who were used to traditional ways of fishing handed down from generation to generation, were afraid that the new company would deplete most of the sources of fish and that they would lose their daily bread. In protest the fishermen built roadblocks on the coastal highway to Sidon. This essentially commercial issue was soon politicized and presented as a fight between mostly poor Sidon Muslims and wealthy Christians in Proteine.<sup>31</sup>

On 26 February 1975, a protest march which was led by the Sunnite member of the Lebanese parliament and the founder of the *Popular Nāṣirist Organization* (at-Tanzīm ash-shaʿbī an-nāṣirī) Maʿrūf Saʿd, was stopped by the local police militia and military. An initially small conflict evolved into extensive riots with the use of firearms.<sup>32</sup> A two-day gunfight left numerous casualties, including the death of one soldier and several demonstrators. Maʿrūf

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<sup>28</sup> WINSLOW, C. *Lebanon: War and Politics in a Fragmented Society*, p. 173.

<sup>29</sup> HALEY, E. P., SNIDER, L. W. *Lebanon, in Crisis*, p. 33.

<sup>30</sup> GORDON, D. C. *Lebanon. The Fragmented Nation*, p. 87.

<sup>31</sup> WINSLOW, C. *Lebanon: War and Politics in a Fragmented Society*, p. 174.

<sup>32</sup> HARRIS, W. *Lebanon. A History, 600 – 2011*, p. 227.

Sa<sup>c</sup>d was injured and died on 6 March 1975.<sup>33</sup> The news about the gunfire directed at the protesters spread quickly to the other parts of Lebanon, sparking off extensive riots in Beirut and Tripoli.<sup>34</sup> The government responded by temporarily withdrawing the governor of al-Janūb (South) province, which included Sidon.

Though it was not clear which side of the conflict in Sidon was the first to fire, the Muslim community around the country was convinced that the military was supporting the Christians. Representatives of the left wing of the political spectrum, the opposition and Sunni parties seized the opportunity to condemn the army, which did not hesitate to use violence against its own citizens instead of protecting them against Israeli air raids. The demonstrators supported by the opposition requested the resignation of Iskandar Ghānim, the Chief of the General Staff of the army, and the reorganization of the military, ensuring that the office posts would be divided equally between Muslims and Christians.<sup>35</sup>

The situation became even more intense on 1 March 1975. The military was ordered to remove the roadblocks from the southern highway leading to Sidon, which had been built by the protesting fishermen. As they approached the site, they became the target of gunfire. The gun fight continued for two days and brought about the deaths of seven soldiers and at least nine civilians. The Lebanese military positions were also under fire from Palestinian rockets launched from the <sup>c</sup>Ayn al-Ḥulwa camp.<sup>36</sup> Though it was not clear which Palestinian armed group held responsibility for the attacks, most probably it was the PFLP.

The funeral of Ma<sup>c</sup>rūf Sa<sup>c</sup>d on 7 March 1975 sparked off further massive demonstrations throughout the country. Even though the protests were happening on a daily basis throughout March, none of the demonstrators' requests was fulfilled. The call for the reorganization of the army with an equal number of Muslims and Christians was supported by a group of prominent Muslims represented by former Lebanese prime ministers.

Out of all the conflicts and clashes in the Lebanese society, the Palestinian issue proved to be the most apparent. Mutual provocations occurred daily, but none of them was as tragic as an event in the first half of April. On 13 April 1975, a Sunday morning, *Phalangist Party* sympathizers gathered in <sup>c</sup>Ayn ar-Rummāna, a Christian district of Beirut, to witness the consecration of a new Maronite temple. The party leader, Pierre al-Jumayyil, was also present at the event. In the neighbourhood of the temple, a vehicle without license plates

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<sup>33</sup> FARĪD, Faṭīn Aḥmad. *Ḥurūb Lubnān. Dirāsa taḥlīliya* [Wars of Lebanon], p. 50.

<sup>34</sup> WINSLOW, C. *Lebanon: War and Politics in a Fragmented Society*, p. 174.

<sup>35</sup> WEINBERGER, N. J. *Syrian Intervention in Lebanon*, p. 145.

<sup>36</sup> O'BALLANCE, E. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975 – 92*, p. 5.

suddenly broke through the barriers around the area of the gathering.<sup>37</sup> The car was driven by a group of Palestinians, probably members of the PFLP, who suddenly opened fire. As a result, three people were killed (including the personal guard of Pierre al-Jumayyil) and several others suffered injuries.<sup>38</sup> The Phalangist militia planned an immediate response.

Later the same day, a bus carrying Palestinians who were returning from a political rally organized by the PLO left the Palestinian camp of Šaṭīlā in Beirut. The bus, heading to Tal az-Zaʿtar, was passing through the Christian district of ʿAyn ar-Rummāna when it became the target of open Phalangist fire which killed 28 PLO members.<sup>39</sup> The majority of the killed were members of the *Arab Liberation Front* (Jabhat at-tahrīr al-ʿarabīya), which was politically tied to the Iraqi-led Baʿthist movement.<sup>40</sup> The number of Palestinians who were killed in the massacre differs in historical sources from 22 to 29 deaths.

In any case, this event is commonly presented as the spark that set off the Lebanese war.<sup>41</sup> In the course of the two days that followed, Beirut was paralyzed by automatic gunfire and rocket explosions between PLO and Christian Phalangists. Clashes were reported in various parts of Beirut, especially in the vicinity of the Palestinian refugee camps. Palestinians managed to hurt the core of the enemy by destroying a few *Phalangist Party* offices and firing rockets at shops and factories situated in the Christian district. Both sides of the conflict began to build fortifications around their districts. Numerous barricades appeared in the streets, which were filled with armed gangs and criminals.<sup>42</sup> Heavy fighting resulted in more than 300 deaths in just three days.

As soon as the fighting had erupted, the opposing sides began to blame each other. The day that followed the bus massacre, Yāsir ʿArafāt summoned an extraordinary session of the PLO Executive Committee, sending a report to the majority of Arab political leaders. In this report he described the *Phalangist Party* leaders as the puppets in the hands of imperial powers and world Zionism, whose main goal was to provoke crisis and escalate problems between the PLO and Phalangists.<sup>43</sup> After the PLO Executive Committee Session, its chairman declared that all the dead on the bus were unarmed civilians. In reaction the Phalangists published photos of the three killed in front of the

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<sup>37</sup> There was a quarrel between the gathered people and the crew of another unmarked vehicle before this incident – TM.

<sup>38</sup> WEINBERGER, N. J. *Syrian Intervention in Lebanon*, p. 147.

<sup>39</sup> KHALAF, Samir. *Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon*, p. 229.

<sup>40</sup> HALEY, E. P., SNIDER, L. W. *Lebanon in Crisis*, p. 34.

<sup>41</sup> ABŪ GHARBĪYA, Bahjat. *Min muḍakkirāt al-munāḍil Bahjat Abū Gharbīya: Min an-nakba ilā al-intifāḍa, 1949 – 2000*. [Memories of the Freedom Fighter Bahjat Abū Gharbīya: From Disaster to Uprising], p. 478.

<sup>42</sup> KHALAF, Samir. *Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon*, p. 229.

<sup>43</sup> HALEY, E. P., SNIDER, L. W. *Lebanon in Crisis*, p. 34.

temple in ʿAyn ar-Rummāna district as well as the photos of the injured and vigorously denied Arafāt's statement about the civilians.<sup>44</sup>

The Lebanese government headed by Rashīd aṣ-Ṣulḥ lacked the power and authority to end the violence. The Lebanese prime minister, the PLO and the *Phalangist Party* appealed to other Arab states, indirectly requesting help. Consequently, on 14 April 1975, at the request of the Egyptian Prime Minister Anwar as-Sādāt, the Arab League Secretary-General Maḥmūd Riyāḍ came to Beirut so as to negotiate a ceasefire.<sup>45</sup> The Secretary-General participated in two-day negotiations with the PLO and the *Phalangist Party* representatives as well as with the prime minister and the president. In the evening of 16 April 1975, the Lebanese Prime Minister Rashīd aṣ-Ṣulḥ announced the first ceasefire in a series of hundreds that were to follow.<sup>46</sup>

Life in Beirut seemingly returned to normal – barricades disappeared from the streets and banks and shops opened – but a political solution was far from being accomplished. Verbal clashes between the conflicting sides continued. Having reached an agreement with the Lebanese President Sulaymān Franjīya and the Arab League Secretary General Maḥmūd Riyāḍ, the *Phalangist Party* leader Pierre al-Jumayyil promised to discipline the two men who had participated in the bus massacre, but the Palestinians maintained that the assault had been carried out by seven armed men and requested that all of them be held responsible.<sup>47</sup> Pierre al-Jumayyil refused the idea, and instead he insisted that Yāsir ʿArafāt and the PLO leadership distance themselves from such ultra-left factions as the PFLP.<sup>48</sup>

From the onset of the conflict, other groups, political parties and movements became involved in the clashes. The militia of the *National Liberal Party* headed by the former president, Kamīl Shamʿūn, occasionally assisted the *Phalangist Party* militias in organizing provocations and assaults against Palestinians and the PLO. In addition, the militias of the Lebanese National Movement participated in a number of gun fights with the Phalangists, although their influence on the conflict was primarily viewed in the political and not military sphere. After the bus massacre, Kamāl Junbulāḡ appealed to two Phalangist ministers to leave the government as early as 13 April 1975 at the official meeting of *Lebanese National Movement* members, and in addition he called for the dissolution of the *Phalangist Party*.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> ABRAHAM, A. J. *The Lebanon War*, p. 2.

<sup>45</sup> O'BALLANCE, E. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975 – 92*, p. 3.

<sup>46</sup> HALEY, E. P., SNIDER, L. W. *Lebanon in Crisis*, p. 35.

<sup>47</sup> O'BALLANCE, E. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975 – 92*, p. 3.

<sup>48</sup> ABRAHAM, A. J. *The Lebanon War*, p. 3.

<sup>49</sup> WINSLOW, C. *Lebanon: War and Politics in a Fragmented Society*, p. 176.

The ceasefire from 16 April 1975 was in effect just for one day. At night, open fire from automatic weapons filled the streets of Beirut again. The *Phalangist Party* militias and armed groups from the PLO attacked and provoked each other. Kidnappings occurred on both sides. The Lebanese army remained inert despite the fact that both the *Phalangist Party* and the *Lebanese National Movement* requested action.<sup>50</sup> The Prime Minister Rashīd aṣ-Ṣulḥ opposed the idea as he was unwilling to entrust the government with supervision over the ceasefire. His motives were probably influenced by the fact that the supreme military command and most military officers were Christians, a circumstance that could provoke the other side.

A hostile campaign and erratic clashes between the PLO and the left wing of the political spectrum on one side and the *Phalangist Party* and its allies on the other persisted throughout May. The skirmishes between the sympathizers of both sides were transferred to other regions of the country, especially to Tripoli, Sidon and Tyre. Moreover, the crisis moved to the government. On 7 May 1975, six ministers (mostly Christians) resigned, followed by five others on 12 May. They asserted that the government had failed in the course of recent events and the February Sidon incidents. The designation of the government and long-term pressures from relevant political parties and movements forced Rashīd aṣ-Ṣulḥ to submit his resignation to President Sulaymān Franjīya on 15 May 1975. The president accepted this, but Rashīd aṣ-Ṣulḥ was asked to stay on as caretaker prime minister.<sup>51</sup>

In his resignation speech, Rashīd aṣ-Ṣulḥ directly addressed the party responsible for the recent events in Lebanon: “The *Phalangist Party* must shoulder full responsibility for the massacres and the repercussions that followed, as well as the victims, and the material and moral damage caused to the country.” Moreover, he proposed that long-term Muslim residents (meaning Palestinians) who had been living in UNRWA supported refugee camps since 1949 should be given Lebanese citizenship.<sup>52</sup> In the Lebanese parliament, the proposal of the former prime minister was called into question by Amīn al-Jumayyil, who argued that giving automatic Lebanese citizenship to Palestinians would completely destroy Lebanese national identity and would lead to similar clashes as the ones in Jordan in 1970.<sup>53</sup>

On 17 May 1975 President Sulaymān Franjīya took the initiative and summoned a meeting, whereby he invited the Egyptian and Saudi-Arabian ambassadors, some other high Lebanese military officers and the PLO

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<sup>50</sup> WEINBERGER, N. J. *Syrian Intervention in Lebanon*, p. 151.

<sup>51</sup> O'BALLANCE, E. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975 – 92*, p. 6.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>53</sup> ABRAHAM, A. J. *The Lebanon War*, p. 4.

Chairman, Yāsir ʿArafāt.<sup>54</sup> One of the topics discussed was the incident of 13 April. Sulaymān Franjīya said that the PLO leadership had been reminded several times by Lebanese military officials to avoid the Christian district of ʿAyn ar-Rummāna as their presence would anger local residents. The Lebanese president publicly appealed to Yāsir ʿArafāt to follow the *Cairo Agreement* of 1969.<sup>55</sup> Yāsir ʿArafāt made it clear that he had always tried to follow it but it was important to understand that the PLO was not unified or well-disciplined, and that he could not guarantee a uniform reaction by all units and groups in the organization.<sup>56</sup>

In the course of the discussion, Sulaymān Franjīya, nervously accused the PLO of creating a situation in which Lebanese citizens were assaulting and killing each other. Moreover, he declared that ʿArafāt’s behaviour was unacceptable for Lebanese citizens. In response, Yāsir ʿArafāt claimed that he had not done anything wrong, and that in reality he and his people were the true victims because the Christian right wing was preparing a war to exterminate them.<sup>57</sup>

Sulaymān Franjīya lost his patience and screamed: “Proof! Proof! Be honest for once and give me documents supporting your allegations!” Yāsir ʿArafāt, having tears in the eyes, closed a small notebook in front of him and answered back: “I won’t tolerate being talked to like that. I am a fighter, and it was as such that I was elected to head the Palestinian movement and not thanks to a one-vote majority in an assembly of notables.”<sup>58</sup> In this statement, Yāsir ʿArafāt openly underrated the legitimacy of the Lebanese president by suggesting that he had a stronger authority among Palestinians than the Lebanese president among the Lebanese population, which was confessionally divided.

The ceasefire of 16 April 1975 was repeatedly broken by both sides, but was definitely terminated on 20 May 1975, when strong fighting broke out between the Phalangists and Palestinians in Beirut.<sup>59</sup> The Palestinian press agency Wafa accused the Phalangists of escalating violence and intending to expel the Palestinian community from the Tal az-Zaʿtar refugee camp. The camp was subject to mortar fire and bomb attacks; as a result, new PLO forces were sent to the site.<sup>60</sup> Four days of fighting resulted in 28 mortal casualties and more than a hundred injured.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> RUBIN, B., RUBIN, J. Colp. *Yasir Arafat: A Political Biography*, p. 79.

<sup>55</sup> SORBY, K. R. Libanonská občianska vojna 1975 – 1976. [The Civil War in Lebanon, 1975 – 1976]. In *Studia Politica Slovaca*, p. 57.

<sup>56</sup> WEINBERGER, N. J. *Syrian Intervention in Lebanon*, p. 147.

<sup>57</sup> RUBIN, B., RUBIN, J. Colp. *Yasir Arafat: A Political Biography*, p. 79.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>59</sup> O’BALLANCE, E. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975 – 92*, p. 7.

<sup>60</sup> ABRAHAM, A. J. *The Lebanon War*, p. 4.

<sup>61</sup> WINSLOW, C. *Lebanon: War and Politics in a Fragmented Society*, p. 177.

Intensifying conflicts and mutual accusations in the government, state institutions and the military caused the swiftly accelerating disintegration of the Lebanese political leadership, which forced President Sulaymān Franjīya to adopt measures which came as a surprise. On 23 May 1975 he appointed a military Cabinet (the first from 1943 – TM) presided over by retired Brigadier-General Nūraddīn ar-Rifāʿī, a highly respected figure in society with the reputation of a personality without political ties. The first day in office he surprised the representatives and the sympathizers of Muslim parties by appointing the controversial General Iskandar Ghānim as the Minister of Defence. The government consisted of eight members – four Christians, three Muslims and one Druze. Except for the minister of foreign affairs, all other members of the government were military officers.<sup>62</sup>

The appointment of a military Cabinet came too late. In May 1975, the Cabinet could not avert further fighting and intensifying clashes. Simultaneously, it was unable to restore the authority of the central government in some parts of Beirut and in coastal cities of Tripoli, Sidon and Tyre, where independent armed groups were gradually becoming more and more autonomous.<sup>63</sup> Immediately the Cabinet had to face strong resistance from the Muslim political spectrum of Lebanese society. Two strong rivals, former prime ministers – Šāʿib Salām and Rashīd Karāmī – followed by a Maronite Christian and a member of the opposition, Raymūn Iddah (Raymond Eddé) made a public statement on 24 May 1975 challenging the president to dissolve the Cabinet. They were supported by Kamāl Junbulāt.<sup>64</sup> The nomination of the military Cabinet brought about new militias participating in the clashes such as the Shiite militia *Fityān ʿAlī* (ʿAlī's Youth)<sup>65</sup> as well as the *Communist Party* and Kamāl Shamʿūn militias.<sup>66</sup>

Not only had Kamāl Junbulāt offered the Palestinians military support, but also political, civil, and military cooperation with his Lebanese National Movement. Although the Palestinians were concerned about the newly appointed Minister of Defence, Iskandar Ghānim, who had previously taken measures against them several times, the PLO representatives claimed that they were not concerned in meddling in the internal affairs of Lebanon. Furthermore, they refused to comment on the formation of the new Cabinet.<sup>67</sup> The PLO leadership endeavoured to disavow the conflicts and in their public statements they stressed that the clashes were the result of the internal problems of

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<sup>62</sup> WEINBERGER, N. J. *Syrian Intervention in Lebanon*, p. 151.

<sup>63</sup> O'BALLANCE, E. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975 – 92*, p. 8.

<sup>64</sup> WEINBERGER, N. J. *Syrian Intervention in Lebanon*, p. 152.

<sup>65</sup> The militia was not linked to the imam aṣ-Ṣadr, but were a component of the Lebanese National Movement.

<sup>66</sup> WINSLOW, C. *Lebanon: War and Politics in a Fragmented Society*, p. 177.

<sup>67</sup> WEINBERGER, N. J. *Syrian Intervention in Lebanon*, p. 152.

Lebanon. As a matter of fact, in this period of the conflict the largest Palestinian group within the PLO – the al-Fatḥ movement – was engaged in the clashes verbally, not *viet armis*. Predominantly, only smaller armed squads directly participated in the clashes at this stage of the conflict.<sup>68</sup> Despite the statements of the PLO, the April incident in the ʿAyn ar-Rummāna district and subsequent events dragged all Palestinian factions present in the country without exception into the conflict in Lebanon.<sup>69</sup>

The Phalangist press criticized the unrestricted PLO military operations against Israel and appealed to other Arab states to comprehend the position of the Phalangists. They argued that on Lebanese territory, the PLO had total military and political freedom which proved that the PLO had created a state within a state in the country. The *Phalangist Party* struggled hard both to restrict PLO operations in the border territories and to withdraw its members from Lebanese cities. The PLO swiftly refused this request and made a statement that any attempt to adopt such legal measures in the government or in parliament would be considered an act of hostility. Having discussed the matter with his military officers, General Iskandar Ghānim claimed that *de bene esse* the government would not declare a state of emergency. This decision was viewed as another step directed against Palestinians as the shells and rockets rained on the PLO offices and port buildings. Explosive charges detonated in the vicinity of Yāsir ʿArafāt's office.<sup>70</sup> The prominent Shiite Imam Mūsā aṣ-Ṣadr made a peculiar antiwar protest by declaring a hunger strike at aṣ-Ṣafā' mosque in Beirut on 26 May 1975.<sup>71</sup>

As the civil war began in Lebanon, Syria was compelled to adopt a standpoint. The war and its direction was a dilemma for the Syrian government.<sup>72</sup> As Syria was trying to control both Lebanon and the PLO, it had to be cautious. Had it publically supported Muslims, left-winged parties, and Palestinians, it could have provoked the USA and Israel into intervention on the side of Christian Phalangists and right-wing parties. As the Syrian President Ḥāfiẓ al-Asad was aware of the threat, he decided to employ diplomatic measures and sent a delegation to Lebanon led by the Minister of Foreign Affairs ʿAbdalḥalīm Khaddām. On 25 May 1975, they met with the Lebanese President Sulaymān Franjīya so as to negotiate the necessity of a military

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<sup>68</sup> EVRON, Y. *War and Intervention in Lebanon*, p. 11.

<sup>69</sup> ABŪ FACHR, Ṣaqr. *Al-Ḥaraka al-waḥānīya al-filasḥīnīya: Min an-niḍāl al-musallaḥ ilā dawla manzūʿat as-silāḥ*. [Palestinian National Movement: from Armed Struggle to a Demilitarized State]. Beirut: Al-muʿassasa al-ʿarabīya li-d-dirāsa wa-n-nashr, 2003, p. 36.

<sup>70</sup> ABRAHAM, A. J. *The Lebanon War*, p. 6.

<sup>71</sup> MARDELLI, B. A. *Middle East Perspectives: From Lebanon (1968 – 1988)*, p. 291.

<sup>72</sup> SORBY, K. R. Syria and the 1975 – 1976 Civil War in Lebanon. In *Asian and African Studies*, p. 200.

Cabinet. Other people who participated in the negotiations included the Syrian Commanding Air Officer, Nājī Jamīl, the representatives of the *Lebanese National Movement*, the *Phalangist Party*, the *National Liberal Party*, Sunnite parliamentary parties, the Maronite Patriarch Anṭūniyūs III, Buṭrus Churaysh and PLO representatives.<sup>73</sup> The negotiations were probably successful, as on the following day the government resigned.<sup>74</sup> General Nūraddīn ar-Rifāʿī remained in function while President Franjīya negotiated about his successor.

On 28 May 1975 the president appointed Rashīd Karāmī to form a new government which took him more than a month. Muslim parties opposed the participation of the *Phalangist Party* members in the Cabinet despite the fact that the Phalangists represented a notable political force and without them it would be impossible to achieve a proper solution. On the contrary, Kamīl Shamʿūn claimed that he would not accept a Cabinet without the *Phalangist Party* representatives.<sup>75</sup> On 30 May 1975 Lebanese radio declared that the new Cabinet should be composed of prominent Christian and Muslim leaders. However, because of mutual discrepancies and verbal skirmishes, conflicts intensified again and new fighting broke out in numerous places.

Continuous accusations intensified the verbal aspect of the conflict. The PLO leadership and the left wing accused the American CIA of providing militarization and logistic assistance to the Phalangists. In addition, Kamāl Junbulāt indicated that the *Phalangist Party* and Israel were collaborating with each other. At the same time, the Egyptian press released news that Libya was providing ultra-left forces and the PLO with large sums of dollars with the aim of sustaining instability in the country.

Despite the hostile campaign, the designated Prime Minister of Lebanon, Rashīd Karāmī, issued a memorandum in the first half of June appealing to the PLO and Lebanese parties to settle their mutual conflicts in a peaceful way. In addition, he stated that once peace had been established, all troublemakers would be punished. Both parties agreed with the ceasefire and by mid-June, the barricades in Beirut had vanished, the roadblocks had been removed, gunmen had disappeared from the streets and business went back to normal.<sup>76</sup> This restoration of order was, however, reached with the contribution of Syrian “diplomatic intervention”. The Syrian Minister of Foreign Affairs, ʿAbdalḥalīm Khaddām, visited Lebanon once again on 17 June 1975, negotiating with all sides of the conflict.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> WEINBERGER, N. J. *Syrian Intervention in Lebanon*, p. 152.

<sup>74</sup> O'BALLANCE, E. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975 – 92*, p. 8.

<sup>75</sup> ABRAHAM, A. J. *The Lebanon War*, pp. 6 – 8.

<sup>76</sup> SORBY, K. R. Snaha Sýrie získat' postavenie regionálnej mocnosti na Blízkom východe, 1970 – 1976. [Syria's Quest to Become a Regional Power in the Middle East, 1975 – 1976]. In *Studia Politica Slovaca*, p. 92.

<sup>77</sup> DEEB, M. *Syria's Terrorist War on Lebanon and the Peace Process*, p. 9.

The negotiations regarding a permanent solution to the problem headed by Rashīd Karāmī were not successful. The attempts to get the *Phalangist Party* members into the government also failed. On 23 June Beirut witnessed gunfire again. Nobody could tell for sure who sparked off the gunfire between the Christian district of °Ayn ar-Rummāna and the neighbouring Muslim district of ash-Shiyāh; nevertheless, shooting continued into the night. In contrast to the previous incidents, now the ceasefire was supervised by the military. The armoured vehicles of the Lebanese army patrolled in both districts so as to demonstrate their power and authority. In his report about the incident, Brigadier-General Sa°id Naşrallāh stated that the responsibility for the gunfire should be ascribed to the militant right-wing groups and ultra-left forces within the PLO.<sup>78</sup> After these events, the seedbed of the conflicts, which had been peaceful after the Beirut truce, were ablaze again.

Despite the fact that the majority of gunfire, kidnappings, fighting and mutual accusations involved both Palestinians and Phalangists, the PLO refused to admit its responsibility for the civil war. In his television statement on 25 June 1975, the PLO Chairman Yāsir °Arafāt emphasized that the PLO was not involved in the Lebanese conflict.<sup>79</sup>

More than a month after his appointment, on 1 July 1975 Rashīd Karāmī introduced his new six-member Cabinet. The new government was to reflect the structure of Lebanese society.<sup>80</sup> Sunni Muslims were represented by Rashīd Karāmī (the Prime Minister) and Maronite Christians were represented by Kamīl Sham°un (the Minister of the Interior and Labour). The other members of the Cabinet were Ghassān Tuwaynī from the Greek Orthodox Church (the Minister of Information and Planning), Fīlīb Ṭaqlā from the Greek Catholic Church (the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Tourism), °Ādil °Usayrān, a Shiite (the Minister of Justice and Agriculture) and Majīd Arslān, a Druze (the Minister of Healthcare and Industry).<sup>81</sup> No government posts were given to the *Phalangist Party* of Pierre al-Jumajjil or to the Lebanese National Movement of Kamāl Junbulāt.

On the day of the nomination of the new government – 1 July 1975 – a new ceasefire was accomplished. It is important to emphasize that both events occurred just three days after another visit by the Syrian Minister of Foreign Affairs. On 29 July 1975, °Abdalḥalīm Khaddām had participated in Lebanese-Syrian-Palestinian negotiations with the designated Prime Minister Rashīd

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<sup>78</sup> ABRAHAM, A. J. *The Lebanon War*, p. 8.

<sup>79</sup> FARĪD, Faṭīn Aḥmad. *Ḥurūb Lubnān. Dirāsa taḥlīliya* [Wars of Lebanon], p. 58.

<sup>80</sup> RIZQ, Rizq. *Rashīd Karāmī. As-siyāsī wa rajul ad-dawla*. [Rashīd Karāmī. Politician and Statesman], p. 135; EL KHAZĒN, Farid. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon 1967 – 1976*, p. 296.

<sup>81</sup> WINSLOW, C. *Lebanon: War and Politics in a Fragmented Society*, p. 178.

Karāmī, the PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, General Iskandar Ghānim, and the leader of the pro-Syrian Palestinian resistance organization aṣ-Ṣāʿiqa, Zuhayr Muḥsin.<sup>82</sup> Zuhayr Muḥsin<sup>83</sup> was (with the exception of the PLO chairman) the only leader of a Palestinian organization within the PLO who had been present at the meeting. This factor as well as the multiple participations of ʿAbdalḥalīm Khaddām at the meetings with the most prominent representatives of Lebanese political life, chairmen and leaders of the most influential political parties and movements, was the beginning of direct intervention by Syria in the internal politics of Lebanon.

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<sup>82</sup> DEEB, M. *Syria's Terrorist War on Lebanon and the Peace Process*, p. 9.

<sup>83</sup> Zuhayr Muḥsin was appointed as leader of aṣ-Ṣāʿiqa directly by Ḥāfiẓ al-Asad.

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