

# ANERA

## NEWSLETTER

AMERICAN NEAR EAST REFUGEE AID

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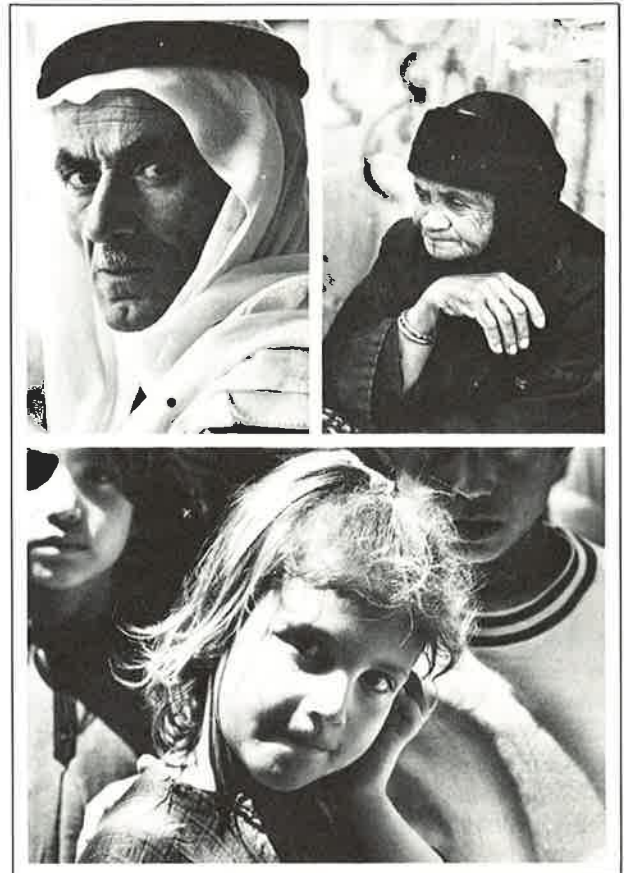
## THE FACES OF LEBANON

**L**ebanon today is almost synonymous for chaos and warfare. But for years, Lebanon was the West's gateway to the Arab World. The most liberal of all Middle East countries, Lebanon was a host to a vast variety of peoples, both nationals and foreigners. Lebanon has often been described as a mosaic, each community contributing its own color to the whole.

Beirut was—and is—the focal point of the picture, and the many faces of Lebanon were most vivid there. Each of the many religious communities had its special neighborhood where customs centuries old lived on. At the same time, visitors from all over the world reveled in Lebanon's freedom and modernity. Businessmen from east and west, journalists and travellers, all found in the relaxed atmosphere of Beirut both the beauty of the Arab world and the openness of the West. And many fleeing persecution at home found their way to Beirut. For centuries, Lebanon has been a haven for refugees.

But the exquisite mosaic was a fragile one, cemented by tenuous bonds. In 1975, fissures appeared as long-standing resentments began to surface. In a few short months, Lebanon erupted into violence, beginning a destructive civil war that continues unabated. As rival factions battled for control of the country, the mosaic shattered.

The extremes of Lebanon's tragedy are proportional to the country's uniqueness in the Arab world. Lebanon differs from other countries in the Middle East in both its physical and human geography. Physically, Lebanon's distinctive features are its mountains, its relative abundance of water, and its access to the Mediterranean. The nation is situated on two mountain ranges—the Lebanon in the west, from which comes its name, and the Anti-Lebanon range on the east, which forms



the border with Syria. The two ranges are separated by the fertile Bekaa valley. Before the twentieth century, Lebanon consisted of the Mountain, a mountainous region lying along the Lebanon range. In 1920 modern Lebanon was formed when the French incorporated the Bekaa valley, Beirut and the areas around Tripoli in the north and Sidon in the south into an entity known as Greater Lebanon. Within this tiny country—any part of Lebanon can be reached by car within half a day—exists great diversity, ranging from sandy coast to mountain peaks of 9,000 to 10,000 feet.

### AMER Responds to the *Intifada*

AMER, ANERA's Medical Division, in June shipped \$85,000 in life-saving medicines to hospitals and clinics in the West Bank. The continuing violence and severe lack of funds have resulted in a health-care crisis for the Palestinians. **Eli Lilly & Company, E.R. Squibb & Sons, Marion Laboratories, Parke-Davis, and The Upjohn Company** generously donated important antibiotic and cardiac medicines.



## RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

The most outstanding feature of Lebanese society is the many different religious sects. There are sixteen officially recognized groups, made up of Christians, Muslims and others. None of these groups has a clear majority, although one sect may be dominant in a certain area. Each group has its own sense of identity, separate from the others, its own powerful families and special interests. But the different sects do interact and compete, a fact which has led to both the flourishing and failing of the nation. Indeed, much of the history of Lebanon is the story of the tension involved in balancing the claims of each for power.

While some of the sects represent larger religions, several of the important sects are indigenous and specific to Lebanon. The main Christian sect of this type is the Maronites. They take their name from a fifth century saint, Marun, from the Orontes valley in northern Syria. Originally they adhered to a belief in what is known as the Monothelete heresy, that Christ has two natures but one divine will; this belief was eventually discarded when the sect entered into communion with the Roman Catholic Church between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries. In the eighth century the Maronites migrated to northern Lebanon and settled in the Mountain, where they continue to be the plurality to this day.

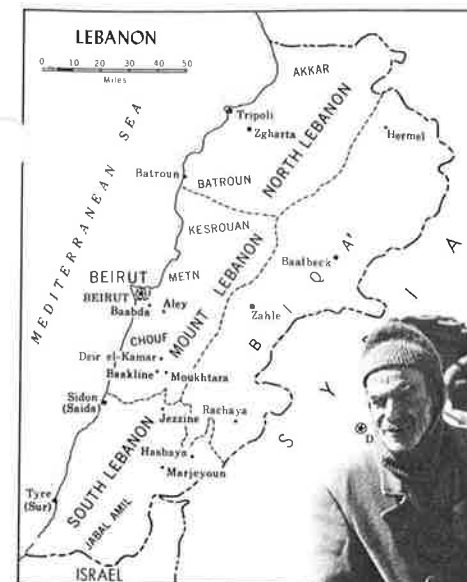
Many Maronites consider Lebanon not as the western edge of the Arab world but as the eastern outpost of the Christian west. During the Crusades, for example, the Maronites allied themselves with the Christians. Identification with French culture has been strong, and the use of the French language supercedes that of Arabic in some Maronite circles. The Maronites dominated political and economic life prior to the outbreak of the Civil War in 1975. Other Christians are the Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholics, and Armenians who arrived in Lebanon after the Armenian massacres around World War I.

The Druze are a second group unique to Lebanon. Their origins are in Islam, but in the eleventh century they converted to the teachings of the Isma'ili Shi'ite Fatimid caliph, al-Hakim. The Druze came to Lebanon from Egypt for much the same reason as the Maronites: the rugged Mountain provided a relatively inaccessible refuge where they could practice their differing beliefs

as they chose. Little is known about these beliefs, as the faith is kept secret by the *uqqal*, or initiated. The Druze are for the most part a closed community, and they reject converts and marry among themselves. They also practice *taqiyya*, or the concealment of their faith from outsiders. The Druze have generally displayed tolerance towards other religions, but are renowned as fierce fighters. They still maintain their traditional stronghold in the Shuf mountains, with other adherents living in Syria and Israel.

Among the Muslims are the Shi'ites, members of a branch of Islam that traces the line of descent of the caliphate (succession to the Prophet) from 'Ali, the son-in-law of Muhammed through the twelfth Imam in succession. The Shi'ites believe that this imam disappeared, but will return one day as a savior. Both economically and socially, the Shi'ites form the bottom rung in Lebanon. Until the late 1960's, they were concentrated in rural areas. But poverty and violence have driven huge numbers to Beirut, where many now live in slums as refugees. They now are the second largest sect in Lebanon, and in recent years have begun to make serious bids for power.

Lebanon also has a large population of Sunnite Muslims, members of mainstream Islam as practiced in most Arab Muslim countries. This group holds the historical line of succession to be valid. Since the fourteenth century the Sunnites have been the dominant Muslim group in the area. The great mass of Sunnites, along with many Greek Orthodox, entered the system only with the creation of Greater Lebanon in 1920, when Beirut and the coast were finally integrated. Sunnites are for the most part highly educated, and tend to live in the cities, where they have been leaders in the fields of commerce, business and industry. For the most part, the Sunnites tend to view Lebanon quite differently from the Maronites. Their orientation is to the east, not the west and they consider Lebanon as an essential part of the Arab world, sharing its language and culture. The Shi'ites share this worldview, but see themselves nevertheless as an oppressed minority within Lebanon and in the larger Arab world.



## POLITICAL CONTENTION

The many different groups in Lebanon were united in 1920 with the establishment by the French of Greater Lebanon, which encompassed what is modern-day Lebanon. A constitution was written in 1926 and revised in 1934 which provided for a parliamentary form of government. With all of these different groups, each with their conflicting interests and goals, some sort of mechanism was necessary for the smooth running of the country.

During the 1930's, an oral agreement between two prominent representatives from the Maronite and Sunnite communities effectively created a working political

formula known as the National Pact. Two traditions of modern Lebanese government resulted from the agreement. The first decided the distribution of parliamentary seats and government posts, based on an official census taken in 1932. This census established that the Christians outnumbered the Muslims by a ratio of 6 to 5; posts and seats were distributed accordingly. It was also soon established that the President would be a Maronite, the Prime Minister a Sunnite, and the President of the Parliament, a Shi'ite. This system enabled all of the groups to be involved in government at the highest levels.

The second tradition bound both Christians and Muslims to uphold Lebanon's unique sovereignty. Christians agreed to refrain from establishing allegiance to a Western power, while Muslims would resist the temptation to join Lebanon to another more powerful Arab state. It was understood that the system of representation would continue. These two traditions effectively enabled Lebanon's many sects to enjoy representation and participation in the system.

However, the basis of these agreements, the census of 1932, became outdated over the years. The birth rate among Muslims is higher than among Christians, and Muslims soon suspected that they formed the nation's majority. However, the Maronites, the dominant sect in Lebanon, refused to allow another census for fear of losing the position they had attained. The exclusion from power and prosperity suffered by the Muslims, particularly the Shi'ites, produced increased tension and potential for fragmentation.

In 1975 the delicate balance which maintained unity among Lebanon's many sects broke down. The accumulated hostilities and hatreds of years past burst into flame. Alignments defy easy categorization into class, religion, or ideology; the multiplicity of factions, each with their own goals, confuse the nature of the struggle and contribute to the fruitlessness of the search for a resolution. The conflict was further fueled and highly exacerbated by the intervention of regional governments and global superpowers. Thirteen years later the war is still burning. And after more than a decade, much of Lebanese society is in ashes.



## FACES OF COMPASSION

Amidst the destruction and despair, a few groups are working to bind the wounds of their country. ANERA works with these organizations to provide assistance on a non-sectarian basis. ANERA began a scholarship program in 1987 with al-Kafaat, a center for rehabilitation and training of the impaired and destitute.

Participants can sponsor a needy child for one year of education and rehabilitation. Currently ANERA is able to assist over 140 children, the majority of whom suffer from physical disabilities, mental retardation, or sensory impairment. Others come from poor or broken families, and find both opportunity and a daily refuge at the school.

ANERA also assists local Lebanese relief organizations working to help the needy without regard to religion. Groups like AMEL Association, Secours Populaire (Lebanon Popular Help), and the American University of Beirut Hospital provide food, shelter, clothing, blankets and health care to victims of conflict. Despite the violence, the chaos, the poverty, the dedicated individuals who make up these institutions daily show the face of compassion and humanity to the destitute and frightened people of Lebanon.



Modern buildings damaged in the Civil War still await reconstruction.

**IN HONOR OF:**

*Cause of Justice \* Robert E. Dutcher \* Haj. Mahmoud Farah & wife Naimeh \* Thomas Jefferson \* Freedom & Justice \* Jesus Christ \* Mrs. Patricia Jones \* the birth of Rami Yehia Moussa \* Elizabeth Rose Nejme \* Palestinian Children \* Palestinian Refugees \* Mousa Abed Sammor \* Sufferings of Palestinians \* Mrs. F. West \* Victims of Occupation \* Wojdowski Family*

**MARRIAGES:**

*Mr. & Mrs. Leroy V. Mills \* Dr. Roger Moushabek*

**BIRTHDAYS**

*Rev. Daniel Appelyard \* Dee Sprafka*

**MEMORIAL**

*Walker Bush \* Anna Christy \* John H. Davis \* Marcia Gracias \* John A. Horsepian \* Abraham Lincoln \* James S. Lipscomb \* Michael & Rose Petrella \* Dr. Edward Quade \* Mary Frances Rose \* Murdered Palestinians \* Moussa Shabandar \* John Sicilian*

Enclosed is a gift for ANERA's relief work in Lebanon:

\_\_\_\_\$15    \_\_\_\_\$25    \_\_\_\_\$50    \_\_\_\_\$100    \_\_\_\_\$500    \_\_\_\_\$1000

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

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I would like to provide a 1-year scholarship for a child in Beirut. (\$100 per child)

\* Sponsors receive a photo of the child and a letter from the school during the year.

Contributions to ANERA are tax-deductible and should be sent with this form to the ANERA office.  
Thank you for your help!

*Text by Margaret Bay, ANERA's Executive Assistant. Design by Monica Freres.*

**ANERA**

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ANERA OFFICERS, 1987-88

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Dr. Peter Gubser, President  
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