

The News  
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Lebanon diary

*Thank you, civilised West*

By Fatima Bhutto

BEIRUT: My friend Omar left Beirut two nights ago. His family's house, close to the sea, was rocked by the sound of explosions and air strikes all night and all day long. After having to spend many an hour sheltered in their corridor, Omar and his family decided to head to the mountains for some respite from the war. And they're the lucky ones.

Omar, whom I've known since kindergarten, just sent me the link to a website called [www.fromisraeltolebanon.org](http://www.fromisraeltolebanon.org). Its opening page reads "From the Lebanese people to the so-called 'civilised' West — thank you". Underneath the caption comparing the 1941 Nazi blitz of London to the Israeli bombing of Lebanon are pictures of both cities. You can only tell them apart because the London photos are in black and white. That's it. The 'civilised' West are not the only ones the Lebanese people are thanking, they're also thanking the Arab nations — who apart from Syria have come out excitedly calling for Lebanon to cease and desist with this nonsense they call the resistance.

The website is obviously sensationalist. There is a photograph of young Israeli girls in Kiryat Shmona writing messages on Israeli rockets, and below it, a photograph of a young Lebanese girl killed by one of those very rockets. There are exclamation marks everywhere, the text is set in bright red, and there are so many haunting pictures of the children killed by Israel's bombs and missiles. Within 24 hours of it appearing online, the website was shut down. Last night it was there, this afternoon it isn't. Even the internet is picking sides. But the war of disinformation is one that also has to be fought by the Lebanese today.

Medical envoys are being targeted by Israel in the southern most part of the country, as are trucks transporting food and relief goods to the injured and displaced. The 270 murdered by Israeli warplanes and artillery are mostly civilians. Firefighters from areas like Jiyeh and Dahiye are being forced to ask local residents if they might have any water to spare, because you see, they just don't have enough.

And all organisations like Human Rights Watch and the United Nations are interested in doing, it seems, is placating Israel. The UN has offered to set up a security zone in the far south, near the border with Israel — replicating the set-up Israel had going until 2000 whereby they occupied Lebanon under the guise of patrolling a 'security zone'. They're sending envoys to the region who pose by the rubble of Beirut shaking their heads in horror and clucking their tongues in disbelief

and then in the same breath call for Hezbollah to be disarmed. So that Lebanon can be left to fend for itself, since the Arab world has turned its back on them.

"Don't ask me what to do" shrugged the Secretary-General of the Arab League, Amr Moussa (Egyptian). King Abdullah II (Jordanian) warned of "the region being dragged into adventurism that does not serve Arab interests". Hold your breath, we're not done yet. Saud al Faisal, his Excellency the Foreign Minister (Saudi Arabia) stepped in to condemn Hezbollah's retaliation against mass Israeli attacks as "irresponsible". Ah. So there we have it. The Axis of Acquiescence. Thanks to American petrodollars, the leaders of the Arab League speak a new language. "Arab interests" translates into whatever it is compatible with American interests; Donald Rumsfeld now sets the agenda and lets us know, along with the one dimensional help of Thomas Friedman, what it is the Arabs really want. "Irresponsible" now applies to the resistance movement, not the criminal actions of the Israeli state. And revolution — unless dictated by Washington — is "adventurism".

However, even though the governments of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt are ever so ready to submit to the dictates of Tony Blair and George W Bush, their people are not. A woman journalist confronted Secretary Moussa at an Arab League press conference in Cairo when he stumbled into doubletalk about diplomacy and advocated a 'let's just wait and see' strategy. "Diplomacy?" she said, "you've been talking diplomacy for 50 years. Why don't you just use your oil already?" Moussa giggled nervously. This was Cairo, journalists aren't supposed to be able to ask questions like that anymore, a law had been passed only weeks before cracking down on the freedoms of the press. He ignored the question and pointed to another journalist, who stood up and began to shout at him. By the end of the press conference, Moussa and his Saudi counterpart weren't being asked questions, they were being taken to task. They were berated over their lack of solidarity with the Lebanese people, over their lack of support to the resistance led by Hezbollah and the Palestinian people, and for having presided over the death of Arab unity.

Hasan Nasrallah, Hezbollah's Secretary-General, spoke to the citizens of Moussa's and al Faisal's countries. "I know that your governments are incapable of doing anything," he said, "but you are concerned and should take a position over what is happening". And they did. Protests are taking place all over the Middle East. At a large demonstration in Damascus, the people and their leaders showed their solidarity with their neighbours and carried large Lebanese flags. Imagine, the red, white and green of the Cedars, held high in Syria a year after Syrian troops left Lebanon and the two countries entered a phase of particularly tense relations.

But it happened, and elsewhere too, in Tel Aviv for one. Funds are being set up to send monetary assistance to the Lebanese Red Cross and to the Lebanese people who are not fortunate enough to have off-shore bank accounts. Emails with links to local news sources are being sent and first hand accounts from the front line are being forwarded all around the world. Pictures of Karim Qobeisi, a two-year-old boy from Nabatieh who survived an Israeli explosion, are being seen. His face is covered

in dried blood, somebody else's perhaps, and his hand and elbow are in casts. He is being shown to those who insist that Israel's right to 'self-defence' is non-negotiable and who insist they are fighting 'terrorists'.

The outside world has to know what is happening. They have to know that there is an unbelievable amount of children being killed everyday. They have to know that while there are Lebanese bemoaning the Hezbollah and the closing of the summer sales, there are also those that are determined to fight back against Israeli aggression and claim the resistance movement as their own. They have to know that there is no such thing as 'we had no choice', not here, not for these people. They have to know that the violent and hyper paranoid Israeli military has been defeated before, and can be again.

\*It moved to <http://fromisraeltolebanon.info/>