

Poor, Poor Lebanon

by Janet Jagan

The wanton destruction by Israeli military of the sovereign state of Lebanon has brought sorrow not only to the millions of displaced Lebanese citizens, but to that part of this world that cares about people and their well being.

In very recent times we have witnessed the cruel and ruthless invasions of three nations – Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanon. Millions of people have lost their homes, their means of livelihood, their husbands, sons, daughters and are living under unbearable conditions. The death toll in Iraq since the US invasion is incalculable, but is somewhere in the tens of thousands.

Poor, poor Lebanon had just reached the road to recovery and had a vibrant economy with newly built infrastructure and modern housing, much of which had been lost in the rough years of the 1980s when Israel had occupied parts of Lebanon for years, where fighting went on for years and life was dangerous in that small country bordering Israel.

Israel, over a month ago, invaded Lebanon after Hezbollah sent rockets into Israel in retaliation and support for the Palestinians who were being slaughtered by Israel's rockets and bombings on their own territory.

Instead of dealing with Hezbollah as a separate force, the Israelis attacked the country in which they are stationed – Lebanon. The whole state of Lebanon was, therefore, considered responsible for what a group or section was doing. The Israelis meant that the whole of Lebanon, women and children who had the highest death rates, were to pay for the rockets launched by Hezbollah. The tables turned, and the Lebanese victims turned against the Israelis, as have most of the Middle East nations, the world and even Israeli citizens.

The USA attempted to be the peacemaker, but no one accepted that role, since the US is much, much too close to Israel. The militarization of Israel, as is no secret, has been carried out by help from the USA and the unusual show of force by the occupying Israeli military – 30,000 troops, has reinforced the anti-American, anti-Israeli attitudes in the Middle East.

If Israel in the long term is to survive, and few really want its demise, it will have to change and seek peaceful, not hostile relations with other nations in the area. That is, for the future, Israel's only way to survival and it is about time that Israel accepted the reality that it cannot be at war forever and expect its people to be content and secure. The diplomacy of peace should be accepted as the way forward – the only way. The Palestinians' right to a homeland has to be respected and an urgent solution, to restore the Palestinians' rights to stolen lands, must be found.

Israel's expectations of a quick victory in Lebanon failed in the light of Hezbollah's tenacity. The widespread killing of civilians and the wanton destruction of homes have brought world sympathy to the Lebanese people and the opposite to Israel. Israel also played its cards badly during the United Nations Security Council debates to bring about an end to the fighting. One day after the unanimous vote in the Security Council, for a ceasefire, Israel stepped up its invasion, sending in more troops and military hardware. Hezbollah responded by sending some 250 rockets into Israel.

An end to hostilities is to begin now and it is hoped that no more lives will be lost and no more destruction will take place. Lebanon has already suffered about \$4billion in losses to the economy and infrastructure. Peace in the Middle East seems far away. The US is in a quagmire in both Iraq and Afghanistan. No one who has responsibility for these sufferings seems to really care. The United Nations is doing its best to garner humanitarian aid to those who are caught in the middle of the aggressions, but that is not enough. The super power and its acolytes who create wars and invasions are steering a dangerous course, disrupting countries and peoples, denying nations their sovereign rights and increasing the poverty and hopelessness, as well as the number of refugees all over the world.

We can only hope that the UN Resolution on Lebanon will be successful, so that the Lebanese people can again, rebuild their country and hopefully, live in peace.

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