

Eli Callaghan
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Dr. Hanson
Research Paper

Lebanon 1983-1984: A Link in the Chain of Middle Eastern Bloodshed

The issues in Lebanon during the early eighties were only a link in the chain of violence that has mutilated the Middle East. Lebanon was a surprisingly stable country of the Middle East; it was neutral in all conflicts and thus had a chance to develop somewhat modern cities such as Beirut. However, in 1948 the Arab-Israeli conflict was displacing hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who were forced to flee Israel. The stream of Palestinian refugees grew even greater after a second conflict in 1967 from an increasingly aggressive Israel. Yassir Arafat assembled some 300,000 Palestinian refugees under the PLO that acted as their makeshift government. South Lebanon, just north of Israel, soon became a war zone initially between the PLO and the dominant Maronite Christians. In June of 1976 Syria deployed 40,000 troops over the Syrian/Lebanon border to the east to support the Maronite Christian brigades. Reagan deployed the Marines on August 25 of 1982 to aid the PLO evacuation as militia who forced officials to resign overthrew the government. However the Syrian forces gathered to the north quickly intimidated Israel, where most Palestinians were. Ariel Sharon defended his approval of an IDF strike against these forces for plausible reasons. "If we would have tolerated that development, the Syrian armored forces would have consisted of 600 tanks protected by an extensive missile umbrella. Their missile batteries fired at our planes. We had no choice other than to approve a military operation to destroy the

missile build up.”¹ Israel’s involvement made the situation very awkward for U.S. relations in the Middle East which was now seeing their intimate ally of Israel make an ultimatum against the PLO whom the U.S. had just evacuated to refuge. “Lebanon demands that the No. 1 priority in the talks be given to withdrawal of Israeli troops. But Israel says it will not pull out until it gets guarantees that the PLO will be denied bases in Southern Lebanon from which it can attack Israel”². Lebanon was left with no president when the interim government was taken in a Syrian militia coup d’etat. Hezbollah and forty other private militias, including militant PLO members, and a fragmented nation of Palestine, have perpetuated the violence.

¹Bredan P. Rivers., “Israeli Onslaught Wipes Out Syrian Missiles in Lebanon,” *Journal of Electronic Defense* vol.24 (June, 9, 1982). Available from: Gale, Student Resource Center-Gold, Menlo School Lib.<<http://library.menloschool.org>>_(accessed April 3, 2004).

² Sami G. Hajjar., “Peace in Lebanon? ABC’s of Complex Puzzle.” *U.S News & World Report* vol.94 (January, 10, 1983). Available from: Gale, Student Resource Center-Gold, Menlo School Lib.<<http://library.menloschool.org>>_(accessed April 3, 2004).