

The Peace Building in Lebanon

News Supplement



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Special Edition

This supplement is produced by the UNDP «Peace Building in Lebanon» project and funded by Germany. The Arabic version is distributed with An-Nahar newspaper while the English version is distributed with The Daily Star and the French version with L'Orient-Le Jour.

The supplement contains articles by writers, journalists, media professionals, researchers and artists residing in Lebanon. They cover issues related to civil peace in addition to the repercussions of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon and the relations between Lebanese and Syrians, employing objective approaches that are free of hatred and misconceptions.

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«When life is low, a friendly smile can transform sorrows into hope for a better future» - © Illustration by Tony Maalouf



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Syrian Serial Drama: There's Hope in Sadness That Challenges War and the «Pennies» of Capitalism



© A scene from the series Ghadan nallagi

In the Grip of Immobilism

The Lebanese State deserves a medal for the not-so-glorious distinction of never failing to miss the boat. Missed opportunities are strung like the beads of an immeasurable rosary and no deadline, be it constitutional or simply necessary for basic administrative function, is now met. One would think that the whole country has somehow mysteriously frozen in space and time.

Lebanon has squandered two full years in its search for the President of the Republic. Although parliamentary elections were held last May under a flawed electoral law, the political class is still unable to create a government. And even when a cabinet does see the light of day, its very structure, which is based on permanent consensus, would make it a paralyzed institution, incapable of making any decision.

The country has also missed the boat of effective municipal waste management. Since the outbreak of the crisis two years ago, no viable decision has been made due to conflicts of interest. The only easy-way-out solution proposed relies on landfills whose location is being fiercely negotiated with different community leaders.

There has also been corner-cutting when it comes to power shortages. Nearly 30

years after the end of the war, power rationing is still in place on a large scale and no decision has been made regarding the installation of new plants or, what would be an even better solution, exploring renewable energy options (hydraulic, solar, wind). Finally, a partial and shaky resolution was imposed by renting highly polluting powerships, without even tackling the main issue.

The public authorities' display of apathy has even extended to the issue of Syrian refugees. Instead of ensuring that they are registered and properly settled in geographically defined camps, the State has subcontracted the problem to NGOs and the UN relief agency. At the same time, red tape has been worse for investors and other wealthy Syrians, who have opted to put their money elsewhere.

In short, there have been missed opportunities in cutting corners and generalized inaction, with the Lebanese political class putting on show such a measure of immaturity that the Lebanese are wondering today whether mechanically celebrating the independence of their country year in year out might be somewhat improper.

Gaby Nasr

Managing Editor - L'Orient-Le Jour supplements

Questions and Concerns Are a Humanitarian Obligation

The Holy See Secretary of State did not declare that Syrian refugees would not return to their homeland definitively, as some would like to interpret. What he did say was that the international community had no intention of returning them at this time, especially that the Russian initiative failed. Lebanon no longer has a card except for the timid return led by the Director General of General Security Major General Abbas Ibrahim. As reluctant and timid as it may seem, this option is the only possible and currently available one until regional conditions are unblocked and untangled, as the issue is rather political than humanitarian. The accusations levelled by Lebanese actors at UN institutions of encouraging non-return are misplaced. The General Security, which is currently coordinating the return, faces great difficulties and the revision and agreeing of names is a time-consuming effort so as not to send back those who could be at risk of retribution

from the regime. This is carried out by the United Nations, as it is explaining to the returnees the living conditions and what would be available to them, whether they would be returning to their villages, and whether houses or shelters are available. These questions – which are also concerns – are the minimum humanitarian obligation to be met in trying to secure the life of these refugees, who although may be a burden to Lebanon, have the right to live in humanitarian conditions at the least. Some of them may not be seeking an easy and comfortable life, but they do not wish death nor another return to Lebanon fleeing an undignified return to their homeland. Ensuring proper return conditions is essential, even if the return would be delayed for a few months... only.

Ghassan Hajjar

Editor in Chief - An-Nahar newspaper



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I Am Returning to My Country

Nasri Sayegh*

I am returning to my country. I miss its good mornings. I dream of dozing off and sleeping under its stars. I yearn to walk barefoot on its soil and its beaches. I want to make up for my absence. No one knows the measure of my distress. I would like to put my arms around the walls of my house. And knock its door with my tearful voice: Behold, I have returned, my country.

I'm wearied of displacement. Oh, the afflictions! The most terrible of which is making me feel like a burdensome «guest». Guests are burdensome usually, but they are even more so when they have no shelter, money, food, medicine, book or smile. My stay, or rather our stay, turned into a nightmare. They made us lose our real names. I love our names. They make us who we are. Without them we are no longer ourselves. We have become figures referred to as the refugees. This characterization used to arouse indignation in me, stripping away my humanity. I felt as if I was an object rather than a human. An object perceived with hostility. However, few understood us and knew how to deal with us, as one of the tormented of this land forsaken to violence.

I was a big family in my country. Where is my father? Where is my mother? Where are my brothers? Where is everybody? Why is no one with me? I ask about them in knowing silence. The war killed them in succession. There is no one left to call me my son, my brother, my pillar of strength. These names and epithets are dead. We've been bared in this humanitarian bare land. That is the curse of wars.

I am returning to my country, firstly because it's my country. And no one can snatch it away from me or take it away from me. It has been mine since the day I was born, since my ancestors. It's mine and my children's. My mother comes after my country and I'm returning to my mother's bosom...

I'm tired of longing and yearning. I am wearied by the enforced banishment and silent wandering through the alleys of the camps, seeing the misery and the miserable. Every day was as tall as a rattle and as big as gut-wrenching pains. I did not think about the food we had. A little would make us full. I was looking here for a living, for medicine, for a hunk of bread, for a book, for clothes. My dreams compensated for the misery of my waking hours. I always dreamed of my country, of mountains I was climbing, valleys I was descending and beaches in whose sunshine and waves I was bathing. There, our happiness was small, but it was as big as our biggest dreams. Dreams of growing up, learning, excelling, falling in love and having children. Dreams of specializing to become engineers, doctors, lawyers, teachers and managers. Some of us dared to be creative through paintings, sculptures, music, poetry, novels and theater. In our country, despite all the difficulties, we were normal beings, living in modest, neat, loving homes with their windows wide open to the sun and the wind. We were beings working diligently and getting tired, toiling and living truly by the sweat of our brow, and dreaming delectably of looking forward and upward. It is true that we often grumbled. Our country is beautiful, noble and imbued with history. It was plagued by political lethargy, social inertia and a lack of freedoms. Yet, the horizon was not overcast—we would dream of the wingspan of birds. How beautiful our dreams there! How terrible our nightmares beyond it! The nightmare of displacement, the nightmare of despair and hopelessness, the nightmare bumming for a fistful of money or food or a scrap of

medicine. The nightmare of risking death, going through migration pirates to cross seas that washed you ashore a corpse.

Arguably, the worst thing a refugee experiences is the loss of faith in humanity. If not for the bare minimum consideration. Lebanon and Syria are light years away despite the short distance separating them. The return that was daily on our minds was moving further and further from us. I listen to Syria's daily tragedy, and I burst out in anger, twist in sorrow, and overflow with silence and taciturnity. What brought on all these wars on my people? What kind of war are these related wars? How much stone has been ground? How many houses have collapsed and turned into graves? How many villages have been wiped out? How much land has been burned? How many of our peoples have been killed? How many persons have been displaced in the steppes of alienation, torment and waiting?

Sometimes, I doubted my return, or rather our return. What was left for us to return to? Why would we return and when? There is no sound more powerful than that of guns, rockets, planes, missiles and prohibited weapons. I frequently lamented Syria and wept over it; I would say, Syria is gone. Syria is no longer itself. It has slipped back into the Stone Age. The people who were kind and normal have become incomprehensible. They splintered in rancor. They have become many peoples, tribes and rebellions. Syria now banishes its peaceful people and welcomes enemies, the enemy of enemies, and regional, international and internal wars. Religion blended with politics and politics blended with weapons. Words died... Oh God, when will the bleeding of peoples and the fleeing from our country across seas end, the country of torment, displacement, humiliation, mendicancy and death in boats of nonoptional mass suicide?

I am returning to my country. They say things have got better. Nowadays I wake up in the morning feeling optimistic. I check the news and I find a small glimmer; it looks large to me. We often have setbacks. Conditions for return are not present yet. We have become very burdensome. They have said foul and insulting words to us. Man can find no dignity except in his own country. During my humiliating stay in the refugee camp, I knew that my house, that all our houses, had been reduced to rubble. No skies for them. No skies above them. No

evenings to reassure them. Nothing to guide them but the crowing of negligence. They are a witness to the age of barbarism. I wonder who invented wars? Damn him! Wars are the original sin that man committed and continues to commit. I will return tomorrow or after tomorrow or the day after. I am always returning. No one can take my country away from me. The Lebanese have the right to grumble, but it is their brotherly and human duty to show consideration to my feelings.

We are an additional burden of problems. True. This was not our choice. This is the tax levied by wars on neighboring countries. However, I don't hold a grudge against Lebanon. It is the country that took me in, sheltered me and offered me safety. I cannot but thank it and apologize for what it had to endure with its economy, environment and security. I do not await an apology from it because a part of it has hurt our feelings. Mutual forgiveness is a virtue of the honorable.

Tomorrow, as I return to my country, I believe that one of my primary duties would be expressing gratitude to humanitarian organizations. To be a human being only with human virtues and nothing else would be good enough.

I will not ask who will receive us in our homes. Those who reside there, in our country, are family and friends, even if we

are different. We are not like peas in a pod.

We are not peas at all.

The war has taught us a lesson, the extent of devastation, murder, destruction, savagery... peace is our next banner.

There is no value in any country if it does not live in peace.

Peace be upon you, Syria and its people.

Peace be upon you, Lebanon and its people.

We shall return.

* Writer and journalist



In the Eye of the Beholder: The Reception and Perception of a Constructed Other

Rouba El Helou*

Summer of 1860, thousands of civilians fled Mount Lebanon to Damascus following the eruption of a civil war. Those refugees were given protection and shelter in the house of the Sufi scholar Emir Abdelkader El Jazairi. Winter of 2017, the French olive farmer from Roya (southern France) Cédric Herrou is on trial for helping migrants and turning his farm into a refugee camp.

In the collective memory and historical studies on displacement, these two incidents have nothing to do with each other. However, in the cultural memory of humanity those two men have a lot in common: personal empathy and solidarity that is unchangeable from the 19th until 21st century, from the peaks of the French Alps to the Damascene suburbs.

The aforementioned cases, among many other related stories, are deeply rooted in numerous media representations, which are the proverbial 'first rough drafts of history'. One wonders what enrages public opinion against refugees today? Why are they portrayed as a threat to national security, a burden to the economy and a reason to fear poverty, crime and disease?

In the past, media portrayals of refugee issues in countries based on rule of law and enjoying a relatively high level of freedom of expression had led to exceptional levels of sympathy for refugees. This was rooted in an appreciation of their clear need for assistance while «fleeing oppressive regimes» or «ethnic and religious or racist violence» and based on international treaties and agreements.

Today, however, and around the world, people seem to look at migration and refugees differently.

In Lebanon, we quite often underestimate the historical layers of tragic events which occurred from the 19th century until the present. Therefore any analysis of media representations should consider the numerous layers of displacement and its effect on the identity formation of Lebanese society, and the media in particular. Even more important is to consider the historical reception, perception and impact of the numerous waves of refugees, who are now residing in Lebanon. Additionally, the internal displacement within the country during the civil war (1975-1990) has not been resolved completely, almost 30 years after it ended. All of this contributed in the construction of a misrepresented «Other» – who does not «look like us» – in media discourse. This same discourse was quite often loaded with biased language and full of latent imagery and meanings, which make us wonder if media shapes this discourse

The many layers of reoccurring displacement and civil war, still impact media coverage. Negative stories, often based on unsubstantiated sources, portraying Syrian refugees as a burden on the economy, abound

or whether it is merely the result of societal reflection? The story of the Syrian-Armenian Alber Kuyumjian is a remarkable example of this. During the Lebanese civil war, Kuyumjian's father hosted his Lebanese-Armenian relatives in his house in Aleppo. Today Alber Kuyumjian is a refugee in Lebanon, living in an apartment with his relatives, as mentioned in an article published in 2015 on the Armenite website with the title Between Anticipation and Misery: The Syrian-Armenian Refugees of Lebanon⁽¹⁾. In the words of Kuyumjian, the reader is clearly able to discover the difficulties and the othering of Armenians coming from Syria to Lebanon. He says: «Maybe they don't have money now, but we are not asking much. We are being treated as foreigners.»

Though Armenians in Lebanon represent one of the most successful cases of integration, few people realize that Armenians arrived to Lebanon in four unique waves: as of 1915 following the WWI Genocide; the transfer of the Alexandretta (Hatay) Armenians to Anjar in 1939; the influx of Armenians from Palestine during the Nakba in 1948; finally the arrival of Syrian-Armenians primarily from Aleppo during the Syrian crisis. The Palestinians experience, first coming to Lebanon in 1948, is similarly layered. They have remained marginalized and impacted the Lebanese perception of displacement and reception, creating a dominant juxtaposition of the «Good Armenian vs. Bad Palestinian».

Since 2011, with the influx of the Syrian refugees to Lebanon, these past experiences and loaded media discourse have taken their toll. The many layers of reoccurring displacement and civil war, still impact media coverage. Negative stories, often based on unsubstantiated sources, portraying Syrian refugees as a burden on the economy, abound. According to UN figures, Syrians refugees spend 1.5 billion dollars annually on housing, food, clothing, and other necessities⁽²⁾. Most of the problems that Lebanon has been facing during the last decade are either the result of official incompetence and a protracted lack of developmental policies on the part of the central government or are caused by the overall crisis in the MENA region and not the direct result of the refugees presence in any specific country. More recently, stories related to criminal and terrorist threats to security, emanating from the informal camps and settlements scattered throughout the country, attempt to paint refugees with a negative brush.

Which images have media coverage left behind? Is media discourse symbolically alienating refugees? What impact do years of layered experience with displacement have? Again we ask the recurrent question: do media shape realities or are they their results? Do the portrayals of refugees lie in the eye of a Lebanese beholder?

These answers will need more time to be developed. A good start would be by reflecting on how exclusion is manifested in our society and in our media, in overrepresented and/or underrepresented images which are embedded in our psyche, which lead to a «symbolic annihilation» of whatever doesn't suit us or look «like us». It is a protracted mediated textual process. If neglected it will thwart access to justice, to the enjoyment of human rights and to freedom of expression; it will create other layers of inequalities and the social exclusion of the «Other».

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(1) Keshishian Vahakn (13 January 2015). Between Anticipation and Misery: The Syrian-Armenian Refugees of Lebanon, The Armenite. URL: <http://thearmenite.com/2015/01/anticipation-misery-syrian-armenian-refugees-lebanon/> [Accessed on November 21, 2018]

(2) For more information please see El Khoury, Bachir (16 August 2017). The Economic Benefits of the Massive Presence of Syrian Refugees, The Peace Building in Lebanon, News Supplement.

Syrian stories in Lebanon's reality

Hassan Sahili*

Despite the difficult circumstances in which they have found themselves in Lebanon since the outbreak of the Syrian war, Syrian activists and artists have had countless achievements over the past years, both at the individual/professional level in their areas of specialization or at the general level dealing with the social crises around them. This article sheds light on four such individuals, each of them offering an overview of their life since moving to Lebanon, shedding light on the course of their experiences and the ways they have adapted to the difficulties faced by Syrians in general in Lebanon.

Oweiss Mkhallalati

Oweiss Mkhallalati actually became a «television actor» only a few months after leaving Damascus and settling in Beirut, where his role in *Al Hayba* quickly made him one of the prominent names of TV series. However, Oweiss is originally a brilliant stage actor, even if television is taking up most of his time today. During his studies at the Higher Institute for Dramatic Arts in Damascus, he appeared in many productions at the National Theatre with artists such as Fayez Kazak and Ayman Zeidan, among others. In Beirut, he was part of two theatre works (*Above Zero* by Ossama Halal and *Tachycardia* directed by Jamil Arashid).

Oweiss is no stranger to Beirut, as he had visited it many times in the past, before the war, for tourism or to attend cultural and theater festivals. Today, he is on top of his craft in Beirut. «The love I receive from the Lebanese public gives me the energy and strength to continue, and this is a great responsibility that I should give back to them,» Oweiss told the Peace Building in Lebanon supplement. «I understand the difficulties that Syrian actors face in Lebanon; the country is still going through crises and the civil war has ended only recently and may be back at any moment.»

Oweiss has been part of series such as *Al Arrab (The Godfather)*, *Khumasiyat Al Gharam (Love Quintets)* by Hatem Ali, and *Halawat Rouh* by Shawki Al Majiri, and the two films *Morine* (Toni Farjallah) and *The Day I Lost My Shadow* (Soudade Kaadan).



© From Mkhallalati's Facebook page

Sally Sharaf

Sally was forced to leave her university in Damascus when she was still in her fourth year majoring in architecture. She fled to Lebanon from the security-related turmoil that her family experienced in late 2011. She lived in Zahle, not far from the Syrian refugee camps. There she witnessed the death of many of them from cold and difficult living conditions. This prompted her to start several individual initiatives to help, before joining Molham Volunteering Team, which is active in countries with Syrian refugees. Molham Team later became an internationally recognized organization based in France and Turkey.

Sharaf's work has varied over the past years, including providing medical guarantees for refugee families, empowering women and widows through education and vocational training, educating refugees, managing and developing an orphanage, and helping children in special situations overcome trauma and psychological crises. Sharaf is also currently the program coordinator at «House of Peace», an organization that works on initiatives to strengthen Lebanese and Syrians relations and to change received ideas they have about one another. She recently completed her studies at AUL in Lebanon, majoring in interior design. «Before coming to Lebanon, I had everything,» says Sharaf, «I didn't care about the problems of others or what was happening outside the small circle I was living in in Damascus. When I lost everything, I learned to appreciate things in a new way and I understood that many people didn't have all the opportunities that were available to me, not even the opportunity to live in dignity.» She adds: «When I saw my countrymen dying daily in front of my eyes in the camps in Beqaa and Beirut, I could not stand it any longer. I realized that any one of us is capable of changing the lives of many people with a simple act and that a large number of people are waiting for a small chance to save themselves.»



© Sally Sharaf

Soudade Kaadan

Kaadan has had a close relationship with Lebanon since before the Syrian war. She studied filmmaking at Saint Joseph University (2004-2007) and has worked on art projects with Syrian and Lebanese collaborators for a long time. Her latest film *When I Lost My Shadow* received several international awards. Kaadan has also directed two documentary films in previous years.

After her definitive move to Beirut in 2012, Kaadan decided to open her own production company, KAF Productions. «I filmed several projects in Lebanon about Syria. I got to know a large number of Lebanese regions that have many things in common with Syria, such as Akkar, Beqaa, Hermel, Tripoli and a number of neighborhoods in Beirut. When my Lebanese friends saw some of my films, I was surprised that they did not know much about the regions where they were filmed, even though they were charming and very beautiful,» says Kaadan, «I realized that they were simply afraid to go there.»

Even though Syrian artists face many problems if they decide to make films in Lebanon on a shoestring budget, in addition to discrimination on the market in general, Kaadan managed to carry out many creative projects that make Lebanon a springboard to becoming an international artist. «The cultural potential and the margin of freedom in Lebanon, which is lacking in other Arab countries, have allowed me to enrich my experience and meet a large number of actors in the cultural and artistic fields who have helped me develop my work and make it more mature,» says Kaadan.



© Julien Chalan

Shady Muqresh

Muqresh has been working in theater since 1996. After graduating from the Higher Institute for Dramatic Arts in 2004, Muqresh went on to work in several television series and films. He returned to theater after moving to Lebanon in 2014. To date, he has been involved in more than 35 productions.

Muqresh has used his long stage experience in an interactive drama project entitled *My Imagination Is Always Bigger* (2018) and aimed to develop the skills of theatre trainers and actors with the aim of helping Lebanese and Syrian children overcome barriers to communication through simple traditional games and folk tales. The project ended with interactive theater performances involving more than 150 children in schools in Beirut and Beqaa. Today, Muqresh seeks to expand the project to include entire families and not just children.

«I am very familiar with the shared residues of memory that the Lebanese carry of the Syrians and the stereotypes and the reciprocal negative ideas between the two peoples,» Muqresh told the Peace Building in Lebanon supplement. «But I try to look objectively at the crisis we experience today, in the hope of lighting a candle in the dark, even if this is done by involving Lebanese and Syrian children in saving a princess from the clench of a dragon.»



© From the series Matfoob Ri'el

Stereotypes in a Society of Multiple Belongings

Hani Rustom*

When I think of writing a story about stereotyping in Lebanese society, the first thing that comes to my mind is the stereotypes that Syrians are subjected to in Lebanon, given that I am a Syrian who has lived in this country for 10 years. Over that period, I have experienced many generalizations regarding Syrians, which come in all forms and shapes, starting with the almost absolute rejection of the presence of Syrians in Lebanon after the assassination of Rafik Hariri and up to this day.

I did not understand the meaning of belonging to a group or being rejected by another group until the assassination of Rafik Hariri. I was sitting in class at a university that is an exemplar of an open and progressive university in Lebanon. «You are the ones who killed the martyr Rafik Hariri, why don't you get out of Lebanon?» A short sentence uttered by one of my classmates. I did not understand at first what he was saying! We who? Why did we kill Rafik Hariri? And why should I get out of Lebanon when I consider Lebanon to be my second home, not just because I live here, but also because half of my family are Lebanese nationals and lives here? But this view soon changed and the group I belong to became a popular and welcome group in Lebanon following the outbreak of the Syrian revolution. Hence, after being a young man afraid of speaking on the street lest someone detects my accent, I became a young man overemphasizing his speech for a more prominent Syrian accent. This was followed by a return to the community that constitutes a burden on Lebanese society in every sense of the word. Today, I find myself stuck in a spiral of rejection and acceptance.

After all these years, I can confidently say that I am a man of multiple belongings. Someone seeking security in a country whose citizens do not feel secure. In a country encircled from every direction by two countries with raging wars and divided by political and sectarian polarization, how do I lead a life of a singular belonging to a unique group? How can I but wear shorts in Beirut and put on trousers in Tripoli? How can I but try to find a French tutor for a course on French language basics? In a city that has no place for me if I do not say *bonjour* to the taxi driver in Achrafieh? In a city where I hide my Syrian identity card at the security checkpoint and pull out my Saint Joseph University student card? How can I but think in the mornings of the many questions that shape my day and behavior in the two opposing cities I travel between? There are many questions, but, first and foremost, who am I?

I am a human being. I live on the planet Earth, in the Middle East. I have Syrian nationality. I was born and raised in a small village on the periphery of Syria. I come from a Muslim family. Sunni, Hanafi, male, short, black hair with a mole on the left cheek.

I am a refugee who has fled his country to grab someone else's job in Lebanon. I am someone who will marry a Lebanese woman and deprive someone else of the chance of getting married. I am someone who causes the economy to stumble in a country whose citizenship half of my family holds. I am the saboteur who destroyed his country and has now come to Lebanon to destroy it too. I am the Sunni ISIS fighter who will rape the women of this country and cast them aside ruthlessly.

I am a human being. I live on planet Lebanon. I have Syrian nationality. I come from a country with a raging war. I fled, leaving everything behind to save my life. I have lost my ten cousins to imprisonment and death. I did not attend their funerals nor weep at their graves. I am someone who

has lost his childhood friend to drowning as he fled the death machine in Syria. I was only able to pull out his body on the Syrian-Lebanese border after ten days for fear of snipers from the Syrian army. I am someone who has been dreaming of him for seven years as if he had just died yesterday. I am the child who has not slept in his bed on the upper floor, who has not had milk from his grandmother's cow and who has not fed his neighbor's donkey for ten years. I am the photo that my mother sent me months ago. A picture of me at the age of five sitting on the lap of a family friend who was kidnapped seven years ago at a security checkpoint in Homs and whose return we still await to this day. I am a message from my father in the morning that the house misses you.

I am all of the above. I am none of the above.

I am the Psychotherapist who has been working for seven years in the psychological and social field in Lebanon, trying to understand the causes of conflicts and wars, ignoring all my identities and belongings. I try to understand stereotyping in Lebanese society. To understand stereotyping, one must first go back to the origin of the word (*namatiyya*) in Arabic, with the root being the verb *namata*. The verb means to arrange or make in a particular type or manner. When used with vocabulary, it means to arrange them by their denotations. What makes a person tend to box in others in a specific type and manner? Or arrange them according to their denotations of language, color, race, historical experience? Stereotyping is fundamentally linked to the propensity of individuals to divide the world into discrete groups and units. People feel more comfortable viewing the world classified into different human groups with specific characteristics and attributes, not just classified geographically.

People's proclivity to stereotype results from their social and educational baggage acquired during childhood from one's parents who may prefer certain friends to others. From the mother who tells her child not to play with this kid but rather play with that kid who's better. From school where the child learns that there are bright and dumb pupils and that straight-A students sit in the front of the class while the lazy ones are in the back. From the media talking day in and day out about the other as a life-threatening scourge. In addition, the position of people within a group with a specific structure and characteristics

People's desire to belong to a community is an innate and natural need that stems from the fact that man is a social animal who has desires and needs that he shares with individuals who resemble him

facilitates interaction with others. We cannot interact with each individual at a time when we have to deal with dozens every day. It is easier for us to deal with the person with a Syrian accent as a Syrian without thinking about everything that might have happened to them or helped shape them as an individual.

Interacting with people on an individual level and viewing each one as a discrete entity with all the human experiences – which may be harsh and violent in many cases – is considerable pressure on us and requires great energy to generate a high level of human compassion, kindness and understanding. Generating this compassion, kindness and understanding is travail for a society that is rife with divisions, ravaged by war and severed by political and sectarian interests. This mechanism also spares us the trouble of analyzing the information we receive from individuals discretely and makes it easier and simpler to apply to different groups saving us time and energy.

When discussing stereotyping in society, we cannot disregard the societies that are internally stereotyped and we should try to understand their mechanism of action in terms of dealing with the stereotyping of others and stereotyping other people in return. In other words, when the Syrian community in Lebanon is subjected to verbal and psychological abuse and repeated stereotyping on various issues, its members feel the danger of the other. The other is everyone who represents the other side. It is the opposite of the Syrian society in Lebanon. The other is the host. The other is someone who does not understand the pain, who did not experience seeking asylum, displacement. All this eventually leads to the formation of an entity very similar to the images imposed by the other. This may often lead to the formation of groups that draw their own temporal and spatial boundaries, whether defined geographically or virtually.

For example, if we go to Facebook and do a little search for Syrian groups in Lebanon, we will find dozens of pages, such as the Association of Syrian Students in Lebanon, the Association of Muslim Scholars in Lebanon, etc. Each of these associations represents specific belonging and thought to their members. Their members have come together because of a desperate psychological need to have a place that provides them with psychological and personal satisfaction for what they may have lost abroad.

Finally, people's desire to belong to a community is an innate and natural need that stems from the fact that man is a social animal who has desires and needs that he shares with individuals who resemble him. But this need may sometimes become destructive when a person rejects the other and views them as a scourge, thus there is no place that can fit both. I do not know if it would be easy to change this reality. But human compassion, kindness and understanding are no doubt the magical potion that can easily change the world.

The Theory of Evolution

Madonna Adib*

I moved to Beirut three years ago. I remember how surprised everyone was then at my decision. «Why would anyone leave Montreal to come to Beirut!» I thought at the time that Beirut was the city of my dreams and that this mixture of East and West was what I was missing in my life!

When I arrived in Beirut, it was the time of social movement. A friend who was a civil society activist in Beirut asked me to join them at a demonstration. I really wanted to take part but I was reluctant at first. I remembered the start of the Syrian revolution when some people said that the Palestinians residing in Syria did not have the rights to participate in demonstrations, as they were not Syrians! That's outrageous! Who then has the right to take part in demonstrations if not the residents of a country?

I asked my friends if it was alright to participate. And the answer was unequivocal: Of course it is! You live here! At this moment, I was convinced that Beirut is the most beautiful city! Whoever said that the Lebanese people were racist? I took part in the demonstration for two reasons:

Firstly, because I felt strongly about the issue.

And secondly, because I wanted to see a «normal» demonstration – and by «normal» I mean relatively free of violence or, more precisely, free of live bullets shot at demonstrators.

I arrived at the demonstration in downtown Beirut. I was surprised to see young men and women with faces painted with the flag of Lebanon, wearing short shorts and miniskirts. I felt like crying! Of course, my problem wasn't what the demonstrators were wearing. But demonstration clothes mean something altogether different to me! They are the clothes that will allow me to run as quickly as possible, and every piece of clothing that does not allow me to roll on the ground is automatically stricken off from my options.

That was the moment I made my decision: Yes, I want to stay in this city!

A few months later, I was walking around in a shopping mall. As I was trying to find a pair of trousers in my size, a sales assistant rushed to help me:

«Can I help you?»

«Yes. Do you have this in size...»

«Oh! You wouldn't think you're Syrian by looking at you!»

«Oh! And how do Syrians look like?»

A leaden silence. She tried to justify what she had said but I didn't want to hear any of it. The only thing going through my mind over and over again was the history lesson: Lebanon was founded in 1920 and became a republic in 1926.

In other words, based on the theory of evolution, not enough time had passed to make a Syrian look different from a Lebanese!

I come out of the store literally shaken. I get in my car and headed for Hamra. I get there – I didn't know my way around the



© «Pack your bag little girl, it's time to go». - Artist: Tamar Qaddoumi
Director Pablo Lozano for Tic Motion Studio

city well at the time – and while waiting at stoplights – my speedometer at zero – I look right to check whether I could go in that direction. This is when a woman crossing the street stops right in the middle of the road, in front of my car, and yells: «Look where you're going, moron!» She turns back and walks to my window. She yells: «Go back to your country!» I was surprised and couldn't understand why. I remembered that I was driving my dad's car with a Damascene registration plate. When the woman read Damascus on the plate, she was able to tell right away that I was a «moron».

«Reverse racism»:

«Ah! What's that accent?»

«Syrian.»

«No way! I just love Syrians. Syrians are the best!»

My inner voice: No! I know terrible Syrians!

«Daily racism»:

I was sitting at a bar having a conversation. A man comes up to me, noticing my accent – which is unmistakably Syrian – and, looking me in the eye, shouts drawing out all the vowels in an exaggerated Syrian accent: «Hooow aaare yooou? I caaan speeek Syriaaan veryyy weeeell!» Expecting me to laugh at his sense of humor. But all that was going through my head was:

1. Why are you shouting?
2. Listen carefully to me. Do I speak that way? If I don't speak that way, what are you doing? What are these random sounds?
3. There's no such thing as a Syrian accent. We have to agree that Syria is big and that each region has its own accent. Listen here sweetheart; what you've just done was, at best, a failed attempt at a Damascus accent.

Usually the conversation goes this way:

«The Syrians have sapped the life out of the country. They took our jobs, electricity, water...»

Then someone suddenly remembers that I'm Syrian and they look at me as if complimenting me:

«But you're different, you're nothing like them.»

Angered by this idiotic sentence: «Who are those people who I'm different from? I'm them, by the way! Who are you talking about?»

Several months later, it's the decisive blow. My friends and I decided to spend the day at the pool at a girlfriend's in Brummana. We did not expect that it would be as noisy as it was, as there was a construction site across from her house. My friend eventually decided to have a nude swim. Another friend turns to me tilting her head in the direction of the construction site: «The Syrians will calm down when they see her.»

For a second, I didn't get what she was talking about, thinking to myself: «Why would the Syrians calm down when they see her? How did she know that the residents of the building were Syrians? Plus the building is under construction!» That's when it hit me. I cried out: «You mean the construction workers?» She panicked too because she was surprised herself at what she had said. She was not aware of mixing up profession and nationality!

I didn't get it! In Syria, there are doctors, lawyers, construction workers... Naturally, we are all Syrians, so I would never call a construction worker anything but that!

Then came my great shock:

At a friend's, a girlfriend asked me:

«Have you seen the documentary about the Lebanese civil war?»

«No.»

«You should watch it. Then you'll learn the reason for the Lebanese people's racism towards Syrians.»

«I already know the reason.»

«Oh. I didn't. I used to think it's because the Syrians are black and ugly and all that.»

«And you feel that you're white?»

«Oh, no, no, no. That's not what I meant...»

First, I wondered what the word «black» means? Does it mean dirty? Tanned? Dark-skinned?

Of course, all of the above is unacceptable. My friend went on trying to explain what she meant. I already knew what she meant but one of my problems at the time was the random use of words.

A friend of her parents overhears our conversation and gets involved:

«No, you can't tell a Syrian from how they look.»

(I would like to mention here that she's talking about «Syrian» as if it were a different species: Meet the panda on National Geographic!)

«You can tell a Syrian from his smell,» she went on.

«Smell,» eternally shocked, I asked loudly. She could tell from my voice and expression that what she had said was unacceptable, so she tried to explain:

«It's normal. It's probably the spices they eat.»

Let's observe a minute in memory of the region's political, social, historical and geographical culture.

I tried to explain to her a little about the history of the region and the separation of Lebanon from Syria. But she wouldn't listen or understand and continued:

«It's normal. Each people has its own smell.»

I have lost my temper at this moment. She had to stop talking immediately, as with each additional word the conversation could only go downhill from there. I tried to explain to her how she was confusing nationality with a thousand other problems. She felt at that moment that she had to apologize and said: «I'm sorry if the truth hurts.»

That's when I lost all hope and realized that it was beyond redemption. The problem is that we are in a country where professions are distributed by nationality, a country that does not allow a Syrian to be anything but a construction worker in very bad conditions under the scorching sun. In such conditions, they'll surely sweat and have dark skin. And most surely they won't smell of *Blue de Chanel*!

Syrian Serial Drama: There's Hope in Sadness That Challenges War and the «Pennies» of Capitalism

Maher el Khechen*

«So you think we should just accept it and live in sorrow? I say we have to live, never be sad... All that God sends our way is good.» This is how Warde (played by Karis Bashar) tries to comfort her neighbor Um Abdo, before bursting into tears: «Um Abdo... she's suffocating.» Warde is bemoaning the affliction of the Syrian war in the serial drama *Ghadan naltaqi* (Tomorrow We Meet), written by Iyad Abou Al Chamat and Rami Hanna and directed by Hanna. She is also bemoaning her displacement. She laughs, cries, suffers, remembers the war, experiences genuine love, is bashful and dances. Warde is that graceful sadness and the pain that Syrians encounter as a result of the war. She is the dreamy eyes of someone who genuinely «loves to love». Thus, the series (2015) depicted the war, its tragedies and its repercussions. The Syrian war has spared no home, leaving behind loss, death, suffering, displacement, pain...

Serial television drama has borne the brunt of part of the Syrian suffering as a result of the war. It has suffered wherever its makers have sought refuge. Syrian drama has been in a trough. That Syrian drama is in a period of stagnation is not surprising and we are not called upon as viewers to condemn this or declare its death. Serial drama has had its fair share of «Syrian sadness» and the weariness brought on by seven years of war. It has earned the right to make us wait for its return as we had previously waited for its series, without burdening it with our judgments and offering our unsolicited opinions to its artists. What we should do is hope that it rids itself of its sorrow and exploitative capital.

Despite all the suffering, most businessmen in Syria and abroad are driven only by capital and ways of investing it. At the end of the day, war – with its fragmentation, displacement and destruction – is a space where businessmen can pick up where predecessors left off or capitalize on the misfortune of Syrian drama. «Decisionmakers in Syrian drama are mostly people who know little about the profession and its true needs,» says Iyad Abou Al Chamat, Syrian actor and writer of *Ghadan naltaqi* and *Tango*. This is not surprising in a financial battlefield aimed at controlling a new market.

Those who are currently producing Syrian drama are businessmen and politicians who control the series industry – and hence its content – as a commodity to be sold and bought and subject to the whims of the market rather than that of art. This is true for all production sectors, even the arts. In the final decades of the 20th century, the private sector began to enter the domain of serial drama and the companies were owned by friends of the Syrian government or its inner circle.

The difference today is that following the 2011 events and the departure, whether voluntary or forced, of a large number of actors, directors, writers and even producers to nearby cities or European cities, the number of small and medium production companies has grown. This has happened under the banner of getting Syrian drama out of its predicament and bringing it back to its heyday. On the other hand, other large companies closed down. «I'm basically a businessman... and the



© A scene from the series *Ghadan naltaqi*

drama industry is one of the areas of my activity. We should be present on the market to restore the greatness of Syrian drama,» says the businessman Rida al Halabi about his return to Syrian drama production again through Cut Art Production, which produced the series *Hawa Asfar* (Yellow Air). Serial drama production is «one of my hobbies», said al Halabi after a press conference to announce the release of *Hawa Asfar*, which he failed to distribute and run last Ramadan despite casting many Lebanese actors (Yusuf al-Khal, Fady Ibrahim, etc) along with Sulaf Fawakherji, Wael Sharaf and Fadi Sbeih.

Establishing companies has become a commonplace practice without any of them achieving a steady course in this field. *Imar al Sham* is a company founded in 2016 by Basem Zaitoun, a founding member of two engineering and real estate companies and a board member of Syria International Islamic Bank. Zaitoun says that he founded the company to bring Syrian drama back to its heyday. The company launched its own channel, *Lana*

(For Us), which aired the company's latest series *Al Waqwaq* (Wakwak) and other series. The channel is owned by Syrian businessman Samer Fawz, who has political clout and who has made a strong entry into the business world with huge acquisitions in Syria and abroad.

Sama Art International, a production company, was founded in 2012 by businessman and member of the People's Council Mohammad Hamsho, who appears in many political stories, without having anything to do with Syrian drama as a profession or an art form. Mohamed Kaband, director of Kaband for Art Production and Distribution (founded in 2007), is also a businessman and a member of the Syrian parliament. Maestro for Art Production was founded last year by the engineer Azzam Alian (no stranger to political stories either). There are many other companies established recently, with most of them with no more than one series under their belt.

So, most of Syria's drama production companies, which have grown in number, are owned by businessmen and politicians

who publicly claim to wish to bring Syrian drama back to its heyday. In reality, they seek to make financial profit and consolidate personal political influence or the influence of the regime they support. «Drama is made with pennies,» says Abu al Shamat about drama's current situation. Outside of Syria, some companies operate either through offices in Beirut or the UAE to produce series for a marketing share outside.

Ramadan has drained Syrian drama just as the war has, and plunged it further into a spiral of financial interests (offer and demand) and in a race of quantity over quality, further tightening the noose. According to Abou Al Chamat, it is very difficult to require a producer to shoot a 30-episode series in 60 or 70 days. «This goes against the production and artistic process as a whole,» he says. «What worked pre-2010 is difficult to compete with today, as audiences have more options now and most of them watch Netflix.»

Churning out shows to make it in the «Ramadan race» undermines the value of Syrian artistic production. As a result,

most works find themselves «out of the race» few weeks before Ramadan, as was the case with *Hawa Asfar* and other series. The release of some of them was postponed from last year, such as *Coma* or *Psycho*, starring Amal Arafa and co-produced by her. The drama production machine is financially oriented, buying a story and producing it with famous actors or «faces» and often releasing an artistically second-rate work.

This setback faced by serial drama was also exploited by television stations. These stations have set conditions on airing certain series and can refuse to run a series if it is fully a Syrian work. If a station does agree to run a Syrian series, «they prefer that it not to tackle reality or to deal with the circumstances of war,» according to Iyad Abou Al Chamat. «There's an attempt to trivialize drama content,» he adds, «It's a tacit agreement between the market and the stations to refuse serious works and demand entertainment for people. This is what was imposed on us as workers in this profession: either respond to market demands or find another profession.»

Syria doesn't have its own drama market, which gives rise to the need for foreign stations. Therefore, politics has a role in the problem of showing Syrian drama in the Arab world, especially after the war. Stations in the Gulf have given up Syrian drama as a political stance and response to the regime in Syria. Airing series and production have continued only in the UAE, where there is capital flow, and Dubai and Abu Dhabi stations have run Syrian works and sometimes produced them, such as the series *Al-Muhallab*. Yet, series produced there are not considered Syrian. For example, the series *Bintithar al Yasameen* (Waiting for Jasmine) (2015), made by an exclusively Syrian team, was nominated for an international award as an Emirati series (produced by *Ebla International*).

There are less opportunities for showing serial drama and they are now besieged in terms of production, distribution and airing. Of the drama series that were released outside of Syria, Lebanon was present in most of them, either in terms of filming or production, with Syrian actors participating in series of Lebanese production, without being considered by the author of *Tango* as Syrian drama.

In Lebanon, Syrian artists tried to express their feelings, suffering, and the pain of war and displacement through largely independent musical and theatrical works. The quantity and artistic details of such attempts is not what matters, but rather their very existence.

Syrian actors take part in several Lebanese series. There are *Julia*, *Tareeq* (A Road) and *Al hayba* in two parts, in addition to previous series starring Abed Fahd and Taim Hassan, among others. «The production situation is better, in terms of the number of days of filming or financial possibilities, and has better distribution opportunities and higher ratings,» says the writer of Lebanese production *Tango* (Eagle Films). «It often lacks the depth that we could get if we produced a Syrian drama in a better situation... In a joint drama [production], we stick to setting.» Lebanese drama is no better than Syrian drama except in terms of production capital. Unfortunately, this has the upper hand in today's market. What matters to



© A scene from the series *Hawa Asfar*

Lebanese production companies is buying viewership with often poor scripts and acting in series driven by suspense. Drama is embroiled in politics, classes and capitalism considerations, as is the case in Syria, representing a certain class in Lebanon. The biggest issue it tackles is religious rapprochement between Christians and Muslims, albeit without going into detail. Comedy series are no better.

According to Abou Al Chamat, «there's joint interest». Joint drama series (which in his view is better referred to as Lebanese) are an outlet for Syrian artists who want to maintain their place in drama, «until Syrian drama is back in order». Yet this participation contributed to improving Lebanese drama, in terms of gaining actors with high artistic skills and in terms of stories with better plots than what was available before. But joint works are only a «temporary solution».

According to the writer, *Tango* (directed by Rami Hanna) is «a television series that aimed to achieve high viewership». «*Tango* is an impersonal story and I wouldn't call it a drama project,» he continues, «It is a series where we tried to be faithful to the content and make it to an acceptable artistic level.» Producers turn down stories of war and suffering of the Syrians and their daily lives, thus keeping serial drama makers from expressing what they are inclined to write about as a result of the war and their daily lives and the concomitant sadness and suffering. These themes are a 'headache' for all producers, according to Abou Al Chamat.

Many works bearing «Syrian sorrow» within their episodes did not see the light, but some of them aired, the most beautiful of which in terms of art and content is *Ghadan Naltaqi*. Naturally a beautiful work would come out from an earnest endeavor. «It was a very personal desire to express our reality as a people,» says the series writer, «We took on a project that we were experiencing, in its details, repercussions, feelings and pain. It was a very personal project for us and for Syrians... so I treated it as cinematic film.» This is the difference between Syrian drama and joint Lebanese

drama that aims for large viewership without tackling a realistic issue or story. The other side of the problem is that most drama professionals place a lot of blame on writers. At seminars in Syria held by actors such as Duraid Lahham and Mustafa el Khani (2017) with the Minister of Information, in addition to interviews with Syrian artists, most current writers are blamed for offering weak stories.

War does not impose certain standards, but rather all standards disappear and the field is open for exploitation, whether consciously or naively. Just like businessmen who seize the opportunity to exert control, a large number of writers rise to claim their place to a backdrop of insipid texts and the absence of old writers. This is happening during a war trauma whose results have yet to be dealt with before expecting recovery. According to Abou Al Chamat, most young drama writers present their works without having knowledge of how they should be written and stop at having an idea for a story. «When a writer learns how to divide the page, he immediately starts writing the first scene,» says Abou Al Chamat, «This is what has led Syrian drama to the place where we are today. Whereas the writers who know the techniques of the profession should be excused.»

The other writers will not bear the bulk of the responsibility. The work of writers in particular was not easy even before the war years, and this is recognized by actors and writers, some of whom still support the Syrian government. They believe that writers know the red lines and try not to overstep them. «Writers are excused. They walk a tight rope in terms of censorship and have to balance a set of formulas to please Gulf stations, their conscience as writers and their artistic desire to create good quality works,» says Abou Al Chamat. «While producers ask that they not choose narrow or problematic options; what producers care about is distribution.»

Censorship and political pressure have not loosened their grip on Syrian works during the war, nor had they done so before the war. Most series are subject to the whims of censorship authorities or those of production companies, and each bold

series (or most series) has a story in the background and political and financial interests, with greater dominance of the former. Today, the situation is no different, except in the fact that it is subject to market pressures that push them away from the suffering of the Syrians, and therefore consider them a commodity with no demand. There is also the pressures of the new producers, those who have amassed capital and power to enter a world where they see a new opportunity for profit and convey various messages – not realistic drama messages.

The war is still leaving behind sorrow in the countries of displacement and in all the circumstances that the Syrians are experiencing. But this sadness will not sap drama of the passion to get back to its feet. The war and its tragedy are the birth of something beautiful, and the desire and pursuit of healing.

Drama will not end for me or for fans who look forward to watching the «beautiful sadness» in the future nor for the writer of *Ghadan Naltaqi*. He sees that the adversity of drama as a period of introspection for the industry and its makers, that its recovery is «only a matter of time», and that the crisis it is facing will come to an end «because there is much talent, there are people with passion, there's a strong foundation». The solution to this drama crisis will come when people begin to wonder about the solution, according to the writer, and this is accompanied by the creation of a Syrian market that is not dependent on pleasing a station or the pity of another.

We will wait, and that is what we live for sometimes. We will wait for time to go by and then Syrian drama will reflect its sadness and passion that the war hides in texts that are sure to come. In our waiting, there's the usual hope and dreams small and big: for drama to lift from the narrow corridors and its suffering what would comfort its path, and to take from the capitalist system and its capital to work against it, i.e. unleash its passion and war sorrow in defiance.

Similarities between Child Trafficking and the Risks of Adoption

Zeina Allouche*

On July 19, 2018, the Directorate General of Internal Security Forces announced that the Information Division had apprehended members of a human trafficking ring operating between Lebanon and Syria accompanied by 130 persons (alraaiaonline, 2018). This is run-of-the-mill news, as the illegal cross-border traffic between Lebanon and Syria is old news, just as with any other two neighboring states. Undoubtedly, this movement has intensified as a result of the ongoing war in Syria and the new conditions set to control the movement of refugees from Syria into Lebanon. In such circumstances, it is also foreseeable that gangs that facilitate illegal cross-border movement will proliferate, at times through bribes and at others by securing hidden rugged passages in a mountainous terrain.

Such movement is often classified as people smuggling, which witnesses major booms at times of war, in particular, despite all the associated risks. We still remember the news of the tragedy that claimed the lives of 16 Syrians who were buried in the snow during an attempt to enter Lebanon in pursuit of safety using a smuggling route (UNHCR, 2018). Women, children, men and elderly people are forced to take arduous roads in harsh weather conditions in the summer and in the bitter cold and snow of winter, which leads to the death of many of them, while dozens of them fall into the hands of gangs and security forces.

The July 19, 2018 incident, however, is of particular interest, as it was reported that there were 55 children in the group crossing the border, facilitated by the smuggling ring. Such news should sound the alarm regarding the reasons for such a large number of children, especially that the process of apprehending the gang was shrouded in mystery.

Many questions should be raised about the large number of children among the group of 130 people: Were they accompanied by their parents?

If not, what could have been their fate? Is there a possibility that children smuggling was for illegal adoption?

This has not been the only incident indicating that children, especially those coming from Syria or born in Lebanon, could be victims of trafficking. The world is full of families—mostly foreign—that wish to adopt a child, but they prefer to bypass the long waiting lists and background checks to assess their suitability to adopt in their countries. Those families longing for a child are directed towards those parts of the world which are suffering from conflicts, natural disasters, and poverty, making a fertile ground for fast track adoption. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) issued a special report in 2014 to examine the risks of intercountry adoption and similarities with trafficking in children and whether the practice envisaged the best interests of the child. In this report, Nigel Catwell sought to show the similarities between trafficking in children and the global adoption movement. It is worth noting that the many reports highlighting the high demand for



The Orphanage is based on a photo reference from a day nursery in Beirut. © Daniel Drennan

Daniel Drennan, who was adopted from Lebanon to the United States, spent many years in search of his biological mother in Lebanon to finally find her resting there. He visited her grave and knocked three times to let her know that he had found her. He hoped his mother could finally find peace. Daniel says that the world views adoption as a solution, instead he calls for revisiting it as the root of the problem for many adoptees like him who were separated from their biological mothers, environment, land and roots.

(Drenann, 2016)

children for adoption have led to a global market for facilitation of intercountry adoption in illegal ways, especially in countries of origin. Most of the children adopted internationally come from poor countries or conflict zones, or through the illegal movement of refugees across borders (Cantwell, 2014). This is confirmed by many international reports, as the Hague devoted a full session on Child trafficking in the context of intercountry adoption in 2010 (Smolin, 2010). Badael-Alternatives⁽ⁱ⁾ has already announced that the trafficking of children from among the Syrian displaced exists in Lebanon, confirming the story that was reported by the Arab media and told by Franken Lamb, who admitted that he paid USD 600 for four children instead of the USD 1,000 requested by the woman who was accompanying them. The woman claimed that she had taken them into her care after the death of their parents in a raid on the city of Aleppo (MBC, 2016). However, this story, too, was swept under the rug and was not pursued transparently and publicly.

(i) <http://badael-alternatives.org/>

Unfortunately, conflict zones and the resulting internal displacement and cross-border migration are a breeding ground for traffickers, whose activities are viewed, both in terms of legality and a general social perspective, as illegal and punishable by law. But this trafficking has a hidden face relating to the movement of children in the context of illegal adoption. Many people turn a blind eye to such paths accommodating the general view that adoption is an act of charity saving an orphan from a painful reality and giving him/her the opportunity to live in the bosom of a foreign family. However, child trafficking for intercountry adoption, in the context of adoption is still considered as people smuggling and a very lucrative business, with a child costing up to USD 100,000.

This reality was documented by Badael-Alternatives into a database that has so far included more than 2,000 illegal adoption cases during the Lebanese war. The organization estimates the number of victims of illegal adoption across Lebanon at more than 10,000 children who were taken out to several countries, including France, Switzerland, the Netherlands and

the United States (Allouche, 2015).

Over the last decade, Lebanon has witnessed the return of many of those who have been adopted in foreign countries as they search of their roots. They represent the first generation of adoptees who realized the basic need to know the truth and to understand how they were severed from their biological environment. This coincides with a global movement against adoption as a better shelter for children in need of alternative family care. It should be noted that this awareness was enshrined in the Hague Convention, which stressed the need to limit intercountry adoption as a result of blatant illegal acts in the form of child trafficking (Hague, 1993).

Although the general view of intercountry adoption is that it is a change for an orphan to have a new family, Graff (2008) refers to international adoption as «the lie we love». «Foreign adoption seems like the perfect solution to a heartbreaking imbalance: Poor countries have babies in need of homes, and rich countries have homes in need of babies. Unfortunately, those little orphaned bundles of joy may not be orphans at all,» he concludes. Many studies confirm that persons who have been forcibly separated from their biological parents are more likely to come in conflict with the law and be incarcerated. They often do not pursue formal education beyond the intermediate stage, and suffer from health, physical and mental problems. They are more likely to be addicted to drugs and are more likely to be unemployed and to experience homelessness (Iglehart, 1995). Many interviews with victims of intercountry adoption also reveal deep problems at the level of personal identity, belonging and the ability to create a connected family (Blackstock, 2011).

Child trafficking for intercountry adoption is a phenomenon concomitant with emergencies, wars, illegal immigration and natural disasters. It is a covert trade because it involves illegal channels such as cross-border smuggling, obtaining falsified documents, withholding information and financial transactions. The most serious consequences of this trafficking are the negative effects on the child and the adoptive family alike. The biological family, especially the mother, remains absent from the general picture.

** Executive Director of Badael Alternatives NGO,
 Expert in Child protection*

An overview of international standards

In addition to the 1993 Hague Convention, which sets ethical standards for intercountry adoption of children, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, at its 39th session in 2005,⁽ⁱ⁾ noted the need to curb international adoption and respect international instruments for the protection of unaccompanied or separated children, reaffirming the following:

- Adoption of unaccompanied or separated children should only be considered after ensuring that the child's status is suitable for adoption. In practice, this means that every step should be made to trace and reunite family members.
- Adoption must be done with the consent of the parents and not be induced by social and moral pressure, or by financial incentives.
- Adoption must be the result of a judicial decision.
- Unaccompanied or separated children must not be adopted in haste at the height of an emergency.
- Adoption should be in the best interests of the

child and be carried out in keeping with national and international laws.

- The views of the child, depending upon his/her age and degree of maturity, should be sought and taken into account in all adoption procedures. This requirement implies that he/she has been counselled and duly informed of the consequences of adoption and of his/her consent to adoption, where such consent is required. Such consent must have been given freely and not induced by payment or compensation of any kind.
- Priority must be given to adoption by relatives in their country of residence. Where this is not an option, preference will be given to adoption within the community from which the child came or at least within his/her own culture.
- In all cases, the child's file must be stored and no documents falsified so that the child's right to know is ensured and he/she can reconnect with his/her biological family.
- The adoptive family must undergo psychological assessments to prove their eligibility to adopt and it must acknowledge the child's right to know.

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(i) CRC/GC/2005/6 1 September 2005

At Their Stopover, Syrian Women Decide to Prevent Pregnancies

Rana Najjar*

The high number of births in societies experiencing disasters and wars is a natural and recurrent corollary according to sociologists. Throughout history, there have been spikes in the number of births after the end of wars, as was the case in Iraq, for example, or in the United States and Europe after World War II between 1946 and 1964, the period of the demographic phenomenon known as the «baby boom». However, that is a bygone era. Today, in the era of nanotech, social media, digital awareness and the precedence of the individual over the group, assumptions have changed. Nevertheless, passed-down customs and traditions encourage two births at least, especially in Arab societies, and particularly among Syrian refugees who now stand at 1.3 million in Lebanon, according to the General Directorate of General Security.

Procreation is a natural law, the key to the continuation of life and the dream and right of any couple. But this continuation of life is at risk and the dream falters from the first cry of a newborn who comes out of his mother's womb in a strange land. This strange land has no home for him and no country to protect him. His family lives there below the poverty line, without healthcare or social security and without international protection and faces legal problems relating to travel documents, marriage and birth registrations, etc.

Contrary to the accounts about Syrian refugees being «settled» and comfortable, wishing to remain in Lebanon for the rest of their lives, Syrians in Lebanon actually realize that this is not their destiny. They have been forced to live in these harsh conditions, which have left them in a dark tunnel just for demanding their freedom and fleeing oppression, killings and hunger. They know full well that Lebanon is just a stopover, even if it is going to be a long one. Based on this, a significant number of Syrian refugees refuse to have more children so as not to turn this joy into misfortune to be suffered by angels by no fault of their own, who were born in the diaspora without schooling or employment. Amna, Fatima and Manar are three exemplars of this group not covered by the Lebanese media. They refused to have their children lead a harsh life and be born in a country that is just a stopover where no one knows when the train makes it to safety.

When Amna, 25, fled Rif Dimashq with her husband Ahmad and her mother-in-law in 2011, she was a newly-wed bride. With an expanding belly, she writhed in pain between the military checkpoints and under the bombs to save her life and that of her unborn baby. Amna suffered severely during her first childbirth, and had it not been for volunteers in the Shatila camp where she lived, her daughter Salam would have died in her womb, a victim of poverty and destitution. She was born in UNRWA's Burj al-Barajneh refugee hospital, after all hospitals in Beirut had turned her down because she had no money to offer.

«I tried to kill myself more than once to rid myself of mental and physical torment and spare my unborn baby the life of destitution awaiting it,» says Amna. «But I persevered and cleaned houses, and endured the insults of strangers and my husband,» she continues. «We suffered a lot before my husband found work, we used to eat and drink whatever good samaritans would bring us, and sometimes we would go to bed hungry.» When things «got better», Ahmad was making LBP 200,000 to



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support them. After a while, the landlords got angry with the husband and expelled him. «We went back to the house of our relatives in Shatila until my husband found a second job and it was then that I conceived with my second child!»

They were forced to move to the Dalhamiyah camp in Bekaa where Amna began working with an organization distributing food and clothing to newly arrived refugees. «In this organization, I met a woman who would sit with us after we would finish packing clothes and food, and enlightened us in matters of life that we knew nothing about.» This woman changed Amna's life, who decided to take birth control pills so she would not have another baby, as she did not have the money for the schooling of her two children being the only breadwinner of her family after her husband left work again. Ahmad had a difficult temperament, according to Amna. She can never forget the beatings with his belt or his insults to her «in public in front of other people». A year had passed after the birth of Mohammed and Amna did not get pregnant. Her mother and mother-in-law started analyzing this, saying that the girl was sick and should see a legal midwife, while Ahmad fretted about his manhood. «Are you taking oral contraceptives?» he asked his wife. At first, Amna was scared and denied it. But soon the secret was out

and he beat her and left her with a bleeding nose. Amna refused to have a third child «because I do not want to give birth and leave my children on the street, begging and being harassed by everybody.» But Ahmad and his mother gave Amna an ultimatum: give birth or divorce! Amna was at a loss and dejected, thinking about giving her children an education and providing the necessary food, clothing and heating, «so as they would not die as others have of the bitter cold Bekaa weather.» But after two years of marital rape without bearing a child, the dear husband decided to stop Amna from working and take the children out of school. «I did not go to school, and look at me, I'm am no less a man because of it. I will go back to Syria and work there in agriculture and I will teach them how to get money from their land.» This is what Ahmad decided after Amna's great suffering, enduring his beatings and berating. Nevertheless, after the mediation of relatives and Amna's brothers, Ahmad agreed to leave the daughter Salam to Amna, to be brought up in Lebanon, while he would return with his mother and son to Syria and re-marry another woman who would bear him more children. «So I paid for my decision not to give birth twice with divorce and my son being taken away from me,» says Amna, tearful.

Women like Amna are treated unjustly by their insular community. They either give in to the rule of the group or they rebel and win. The latter is the case of Fatima, 35, who carried a gas tank to induce a miscarriage of what was to be her fourth child. She convinced her family and neighbors in Muhammara camp in North Lebanon that she had had a miscarriage in the second month of her pregnancy. She agreed to this with her husband Hossam, who worked as a painting teacher in Syria before rebelling against the Ba'ath regime and being arrested and prosecuted, and eventually fleeing to Lebanon. «God blessed us with three children and gave us a brain to reason with it,» says Fatima, who worked as a sales assistant in a textile shop in Aleppo before becoming unemployed in Lebanon. «One child's registration at government agencies costs us a figure we cannot afford, so what about milk, food and school expenses?» says her husband. «God will forgive us because he knows our situation. We cannot guarantee that this child will survive a week. He has no country now, no passport. So do we implicate it in a cruel and unjust life as we have implicated our families and our other three children?» Manar, 19, on the other hand, who has been married for two years, set out the condition to her family and husband that she would not give birth before returning back home in Homs. She fled to Lebanon as a child, her memories filled with death after her brother was killed in front of her by unknown gunmen – from that day, she has difficulties sleeping. This beautiful girl, who completed her education at a public school in Saida (South Lebanon) where she lives with her mother, father and her younger sisters, knows what she wants. «I got married to fulfill part of my religion duties, but religion tells us to balance things and I have many projects today, first that I graduate from university where I'm studying psychology. And then go back home to bring up my children there in the shelter of a real home where they have the right to play, sleep and warmth. Here, I can't even rent a house because I live with my husband's family [nine people] in a small apartment.» Her husband Rami, who works as an electrician, agrees with her plan, saying that he does not want his children to be born in the dark as if they were street children. «We will soon return to Syria and build a life far from humiliation; the war will not go on for longer.» Manar concludes: «Either my son is born free or he will not be born.»

* Journalist and human rights activist

Can Sports Help the Lebanese Get Unified?

Jamil Mouawad*

In the wake of the 1975-1990 Lebanese civil war, the official discourse of the state-building project was characterized by key «fundamental provisions», which demonstrate the aspirations of moving from «mini-states» to a «state». Among the provisions regarded as the springboard for the state reconstruction process figure the «consolidation of the National Unity». Almost, two decades later, state institutions and national elite failed to nourish a sense of societal belonging to a nation. The Lebanese are said to revert to their primordial identities to the extent that the religious communities act as the intermediaries between the state and the society. But this is only part of the story. There are some arenas – like sports that can act a vital medium to express and reformulate identities and meanings – where the Lebanese tend to imagine a defiant nation amidst the so-called breakdown or disintegration of the state and flailing national identification and belonging. This is the case when Lebanese almost got qualified to the Brazil 2014 World Cup.

Football, Nationalism and Sectarianism

Sports cannot be looked at simply as an isolated domain of fun, entertainment and distraction. They also can serve to explore questions of nationalism and nation-state building and are directly implicated in nation-building projects.

The growing literature on sports in Lebanon sheds light on how almost all the clubs have a certain sectarian identity, or to say the least, are identified according to their sectarian affiliation. From this perspective, football in post-war Lebanon has been a tool to renew and duplicate the dynamics of the sectarian political system in Lebanon. Therefore, the politics of sport did contribute directly to national disintegration and lack of national unity. But sports should not strictly look at how the politics from above, or how clubs are managed, and federations are run. They should also tackle how normal citizens respond to national victories and how they contribute from below to imagine a united and defiant Lebanon.

Lebanon: A Strong and Defiant Nation

With the kick-off of the qualifying rounds to the 2014 World Cup, the Lebanese team was for many a hopeless case. This was partially due to the absence of sufficient infrastructure and a powerful and functional league as well as the lack of popular support from the audience due to the prohibition of people attending games for fear of sectarian clashes and as a result of a highly politicized Football Association. However, the Lebanese national team improved its performance day after day, scoring victories against the strongest teams in Asia including South Korea, Iran and Kuwait. As the team began to win, it acquired attention from public opinion, turning it away from the backdrop of what was happening in the country including political deadlock and clashes on the street. The victory of the national team against South Korea, for instance, was described as the only event that effectively united the people in a divided Lebanon, irrespective of their sectarian background. As the victories unfolded, a defiant Lebanon began to be imagined.

In the final and decisive round of the FIFA World Cup qualification, Lebanon was competing in Group A, which included Uzbekistan, South Korea, and most significantly Qatar and Iran. The latter two



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countries are known for having direct interests in the Lebanese political scene. Competing against both teams the normal Lebanese citizens felt liberated from this influence.

These games became an expression of an 'imagined nation,' which can be strong, defend its rights, and compete with other powerful countries instead of yielding to their rules. During the match against Qatar, one Lebanese fan held a big 'banana' balloon [*mawza* in Arabic] in order to ridicule the Qatari Emir's wife, Sheika

Moza. In other words, football provided a sense of connectedness through which the Lebanese people asserted themselves on a regional level. National fervor and patriotism similarly were conspicuous during Lebanon's match against Iran. Another case in point is the night following Lebanon's victory against Iran in Beirut, a sports TV anchorman recited a poem to praise Lebanon.

The poem reads:
We return full of will... relentless

Like a phoenix we return from under the rubble, from under the debris... the cedar heroes have Returned on the day of victory, on the day of glory.

Indeed, the country that uses candles the most Won over Iran whose power is utmost, Over its nuclear reactor The country whose sons long to the light of a lamp To the detriment of Iran has become a champ And in two years you might see it in the Samba land

The poem made Lebanon appear proud ('we return full of will, relentless') despite its limited resources ('under the rubble, from under the debris'), which affected the daily lives of the Lebanese people ('uses the candles the most'). Most importantly, the defiant character of Lebanon emerged facing the powerful Iran ('whose power is utmost'), which played a major role in Lebanon's politics specifically with its unconditional support of Hezbollah. While the poem concluded hoping to see Lebanon playing in the Samba land, meaning Brazil, where the 2014 World Cup was hosted, this line also echoed a myth related to the figure of the savvy Lebanese merchant found in different corners of the world. The myth promised that, once qualified, Lebanon would be 'playing' on its own ground that is the Brazilian ground, as the poem also said. In fact, Lebanon's largest and oldest immigrant community is found in Brazil. Therefore, the support for the national team came from both the Lebanese people who lived in Lebanon and the diaspora.

This experience, indeed, does not suggest that sectarianism is not important in Lebanon. Instead, it is an important lesson for researchers, pundits and journalists to shed light on different areas where the Lebanese people have the chance to render the sectarian variable almost dull, meaningless and anachronistic.

* Researcher

Use Guns in Their Right Place

Fadi Abi Allam*

In July of 2002, Ahmed Mansour came in with his assault rifle from his house in South Lebanon and killed a group of his colleagues at their place of work at the teachers' Compensation Fund in the UNESCO district in Beirut. His crime was dubbed the «UNESCO massacre». The perpetrator was apprehended, tried and executed after receiving a death sentence. That crime was perpetrated with an illegal weapon; it was not the first one that day and it sure was not the last. We need to look back and examine the series of painful events and how they occurred to understand the dangers of the phenomenon of illegal guns and celebratory gunfire in order to respond to them and control them with a view to strengthening our human security, in the hope this would lead us to the best methods to effectively address this phenomenon.

On October 2, 2004, in the neighborhood of Hay el Sellom in Dahiyeh, the southern suburb of Beirut, a man was showing off his firearm like a toy when a bullet shot out and ripped through his head.¹ On September 27, 2004, in the town of Btekhayn in Baabda, a family dispute led to the death of a lawyer and her daughter at the hands of a young man who killed his relative and then committed suicide. Thus, the dangers apply to the person bearing the weapon himself. If the weapon is mishandled, he himself could end up the victim, then the closest people in his family. For example, on August 26, 2003, a young man killed his father in Raashin, Keserwan, over family issues.² On August 6, 2003, a father killed his daughter and his wife in Hadath.³ During the night of May 24, 2017, in Jennata in South Lebanon, Mahmoud killed his wife and minor daughter and committed suicide.⁴ On June 5, 2018, in the town of Dawra in old Akkar, a family clash degenerated following a dispute over a plot of land leading to the killing of Hosni al-Sahmrani (24) and the injury of his father with bullets fired by his brother. On 12 June 2018, also in Akkar, Ahmad Ayyash fired an assault weapon at his wife (25) and son who was not yet five years old.⁵ Thus, the availability of guns may lead a person to search for a victim, where he himself may become the victim, as mentioned above, or members of his family. This may help commit a crime because a moment of anger is a moment of temporary madness that may prompt a human being to utter words and do things that he may regret later on, after he comes to his senses. An apology and compensation may not be enough to restore the relationship,

especially if the act has led to permanent disability or death, then there is no way to bring back a life that has been lost.

On July 28, 2003 in Tekrit, Akkar, an 8-year-old boy was killed by a bomb he was playing with and his sister was injured. On April 7, 2017, Khutab Thaibesh received a shot in his hand from his father's pistol that he was playing with in the al-Tira neighborhood of Ain el-Hilweh camp, Saida.⁶ On August 3, 2018, another tragic incident in Baalbek killed 12-year-old Bahaa Hleihel after playing with his father's pistol. Yes, this is how lightly some people take weapons, as if they were toys. Weapons are not toys, either for children or adults. They are nothing but a tool for violence, murder, death and crime. If we want them for protection, keep weapons in their right place, otherwise they are a preeminent danger to our human security.

The use of weapons in our individual conflicts is rife; these are scenes that no rational person or civilized society would tolerate. On August 31, 2003, two people were killed and one person wounded in a dispute over the installation of an air conditioner. On June 14, 2004, one woman was killed and six people wounded in a dispute over land irrigation. On January 1, 2004, in Ajaltoun, Keserwan, some people were annoyed by a neighbor slamming the door of his car. They killed his two boys and wounded five, before fleeing the scene.⁷ On April 25, 2011, four people were wounded in a clash over a pre-paid mobile card in Baalbek.⁸ On April 17, 2017, Mark Yammine opened fire on Khalil Qattan and Talal Hameed al-Awad in Qabb Ilyas over a cup of Nescafe,

killing them.⁹ Then there was Roy Hamouche from Mansourieh, who was added to the list of victims of illegal weapons as a result of a minor traffic incident on June 6, 2017. In Baissour, music turned from a source of joy to a source of sorrow as General Security inspector Makram Mulaeb died after sustaining a shot to his leg.¹⁰ In June of this year, in Brital, four-year-old Rua Mazloun died of a stray bullet following an armed clash between a group of young men over whose right of way it was. About a month before that incident, six-year-old Lamis Naqoush from Baalbek had met a similar fate as a result of a personal issue in the city. On August 6, 2018, Alaa A. fired a military weapon in Adloun, el-Zahrani, on three colleagues working in a company from which he was fired.¹¹ And the list goes on. Yes, they had no other way other than weapons to deal with their conflicts, since the skills and methods for peaceful conflict resolution and properly handling anger are not part of their culture and are not included in our educational curricula.

As for the celebratory gunfire, its uses and its victims, there is hardly an occasion in many areas of Lebanon where firing off rounds of bullets is not one of the favorite forms of expression of some Lebanese. These occasions include the release of election results. Thus, in 2005, Speaker Nabih Berri declined to hold a congratulatory reception for his win as Speaker of the Parliament as a result of the death of two people and injury of ten from stray bullets fired celebrating his win. Coinciding with the return of *haji* pilgrims, a young woman, Rim Shaker (18), died as a result of an injury to her head from a stray bullet in front of her



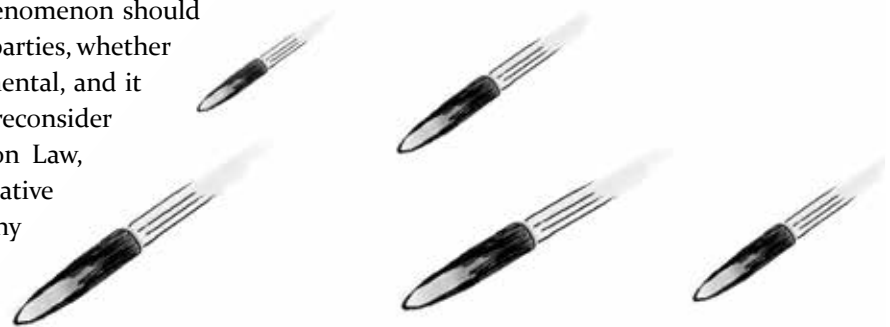
house in the town of Muhammara, Minieh District, on September 11, 2017.¹² The announcement of the results of official school examinations is also one of such events during which people take up this backward habit of expression. Of course, this leads to casualties as during the latest incident on June 22, 2018 when a nine-year-old girl was injured in Aabdeh with a stray bullet. On August 15, 2018, Ali H.A. (94), from Mishmish, Akkar, died from a stray bullet injury in front of his house.¹³ When a bullet is fired, the sound it makes frightens people and sows panic, confusion and fear. There have also been incidents of not only bullets fired but also grenades and RPGs on some occasions. There is also the issue of material losses where the cost of a bullet ranges between LBP 1,500 and LBP 3,000. The shooter also undermines the authority of the State by violating its laws. The shooter is often trying to display false bravado, which is in fact merely a show of weakness and inability for civilized expression, where he is unable to express himself in any other way but this backward form of expression. This method dates back to around 8,000 BC, when rattling was the easiest sound to make to express feelings of joy and sorrow, rather than literature and arts. When a bullet is fired, it can kill man or animal; cause permanent disability; light a car, a gas station, a home or a forest; damage solar panels, plastic tents or water tanks; or result in other forms of material damage.

We may not know the magnitude of damage and what it may lead to, but there will definitely be damage, and potentially murder. If the shooter accepts to be a potential murderer, he is therefore a murderer, and society must deal with him accordingly. The legal controls in accordance with the amended law N° 71 of 2016 made it become an appropriate law to deal with such crimes. By virtue of this law, the shooter of a licensed or unlicensed weapon is subject to a minimum sentence of six months' imprisonment and eight times the minimum wage, confiscation of his weapon and a lifetime ban on a weapons possession permit. These sanctions may increase depending on the extent of the damage caused by the act.

Given that behavior of people is determined by a society's culture and not just by the deterrence of law; it is a culture based on knowing the consequences of a person's actions, a culture of peace and the peaceful

resolution of conflicts, staying away from the language of violence. This phenomenon should be addressed by all concerned parties, whether governmental or non-governmental, and it is the duty of the legislature to reconsider the Weapons and Ammunition Law, which was issued by a legislative decree in 1959. There are many reasons for reconsidering it, not least of which is that after it was issued, Lebanon experienced a civil war between 1975 and 1990, in which weapons entered almost every house, and Lebanon is currently ranked 9th in the list of civilian guns per capita according to the Small Arms Survey. There have also been many international mechanisms introduced that must be taken into consideration in order to catch up with civilized development in the world, including the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects; the Arms Trade Treaty; the Firearms Protocol; and the International Tracing Instrument. The law aims primarily to develop and regulate primarily before deterring and punishing, and the executive branch should not limit itself to the application of the law through the security institutions, notably the Internal Security Forces. The other ministries have other roles, such as the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Information, etc. Other influential forces involved in the shaping of the society's culture also have active roles; these include associations, parties, religious and media institutions, schools, universities, municipalities, *mukhtars*, trade unions and the private sector.

This a collective responsibility and everyone should abide by the law and build the society's culture. Let us keep home a safe place for the family and disarm it if keeping a weapon is not necessary for protecting oneself. If it is necessary, let it then be kept out of sight and not available to any member of the family. Let us avoid carrying it around lest it becomes a source of shame at a moment of anger and leads us where we don't wish to go. Let us avoid using weapons to express feelings of sorrow and joy, as there are



other civilized ways of doing that. Let us teach our children not to come near guns or touch them, because they are a danger to them. Let us avoid playing with weapons and showing them off to people, especially children. Let us amend the relevant law and work together towards applying it properly.

The chaos of possession and use of weapons is a calamity to human societies throughout the world. Lebanon is not exempt from this phenomenon. Developed countries have succeeded in controlling it. Let our country lead in performing its duty with regard to this issue and put an end to it by controlling guns and not necessarily through disarmament. Let it set the example for other states in the region. It is not a matter of either stripping people of guns or letting this chaos go on and bearing the terrible consequences. But rather it is a matter of regulating guns and exerting control, which can be done under the banner «Use Guns in Their Right Place». There is no doubt that the task is daunting, but it is not impossible. Our success is certain if we believe in the importance of this humanitarian, moral and human issue, and if we succeed in keeping it away from politics and placing it exclusively within the framework of human security.

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The Remains of a Human Being

By Artist Ghassan Ismail

It is that soul that had tasted the bitter life and what little remains of it. Everyone wants more while it gulps from the glass of pain, in horrible silence.



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