

Lebanese also among the missing

By Marilyn Raschka
Special to the Tribune

BEIRUT—News reports focus on the plight of foreign hostages held in Lebanon and the anguish of their families, but Lebanese are also victims of the same vicious game.

The Green Line that divides Beirut into predominantly Christian and Moslem sectors has been a notorious danger spot since it was established in 1975 at the start of the civil war.

It was then that the "battle of the IDs" began, with random kidnappings and killings by one side or the other depending on the religion stated on the victim's ID card.

Seventeen Westerners, including eight Americans, are among the missing in Lebanon.

The Associated Press office in Beirut is a quiet shrine to Terry Anderson, who was the news agency's Middle East bureau chief before he was abducted five years ago Friday.

Along one side runs a bulletin board dedicated to photos and news stories generated by the kidnapping. The photos show the change in the face of the man who had come to Beirut from Tokyo.

Even greater changes are reflected in the photos of 4-year-old Sulome Theresa Anderson, born three months after her father's abduction. One photo shows her hugging a picture of her father, another smelling a flower and a third blowing out birthday candles.

Anderson left the office March 16, 1985, to play tennis just a couple of blocks away. Kidnappers using the then little-known title of "Islamic Jihad" abducted him, touching off a worldwide storm of



Agence France-Presse photo

A member of the Christian Lebanese Forces militia uses a damaged car for protection Thursday in

Beirut, where rival forces are battling for control of the city's Christian sector.

publicity.

Similar incidents involving ordinary Lebanese get no such publicity.

Along the Green Line recently, a woman driving from East to West Beirut offered a lift to a young man. When she saw that the crossing was deserted, she decided to turn back.

"But the young man begged me to keep going. It was the worst decision I ever made," she said.

Four gunmen stopped the car and demanded the young man's papers, but he wasn't carrying them.

"I think he deliberately left them at home because that was the year people were being killed according to their religious affiliation, marked on their IDs," the woman said.

The man's precautions were to no avail. He was dragged away,

and the woman never saw him again.

The family of someone who disappears is in legal limbo for 10 years, after which the person is considered legally dead.

"My husband's bank accounts are frozen," said a Lebanese woman whose husband disappeared in 1985. "People call me and others like me 'dead-alive widows.'"

Her affluent brother-in-law and his wife and son had been kidnapped the week before, and it was assumed a ransom would be demanded.

"Exactly a week later my husband made two withdrawals from the bank and went to talk to the kidnappers," whose identity he knew, she said.

He never came back.

She did not officially report the

kidnapping until two months ago, as a step toward having funds released. It is a process filled with red tape.

Meanwhile, she supports herself and her two college-age children by holding down two teaching jobs, and she occasionally gets money from her husband's relatives abroad.

On several occasions she has been approached by people who claim to have access to information about her husband, for a price usually around \$200. She has never paid.

For her children's sake, she uses the present tense when referring to their father. But she admits there is little hope he is alive.

"The foreign hostages' families have support from so many sources, including their government," she said. "We have no one."

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