

When the Missing Contribute to Building Civil Peace

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«As long as George hasn't come back, I don't care about peace in Lebanon nor about reconstruction.» That was what George's mother told a journalist when asked about her thoughts on peace and the start of reconstruction.

Peace was declared in Lebanon (1990)* without heeding the tragedy of missing persons and their families, which means that peace was and remains imperfect, fragile and at risk of relapsing into conflict. What is regrettable about an official course that got it wrong when closing the book on the war has now become laughable as this «official» side has now turned to accusing the families of the victims of undermining the civil peace and laying the ground for a new war, every time they demand for their right to know the fate of their missing.

What is most revealing of the fragility of this «peace» is the return of officials to belligerent discourse at every chance they get and with any disagreement, and their supporters taking it to the streets, threatening people's security and safety.

Twenty-nine years after the proclamation of that peace «a topdown», externally enforced proclamation of peace, a law was passed a nationally driven grassroots, «bottom up law» was passed aiming to strengthen civil peace by revealing the fate of the missing and the forcibly disappeared according to its

explanatory statement.***

The families of the missing and the forcibly disappeared succeeded in enshrining their right to know the fate of their loved ones in a legal document. The application of the provisions of this law is the inevitable path toward real reconciliation. Only the truth about the fate of the missing-alive or dead-would open the door to forgiveness. Recognizing the war crimes and the extent of injustice inflicted on their families will contribute to alleviating their chronic suffering and delivering them from their «victimhood».

Knowing the truth is a right enacted by the families. It is, first and foremost, a societal right that applies to knowing all the facts, and lays the groundwork for rebuilding the state on the basis of a unified memory, and of equality, justice and democracy. The State's formal approval of the search for missing persons means searching for them as human beings, as equal citizens without any sectarian, religious or regional discrimination rather than as subjects of religious groups. This is the first foundation of peacebuilding

and of inoculating society against a relapse into war. Some may say, enough with speculation and cheering for this law, there's no government in Lebanon to implement it, surely, you're dreaming?!

It is our right to dream of a homeland after our «chickens have hatched». To raise them, we need a «trough» of information from everyone, perpetrators and non-perpetrators alike. Let everyone benefit from our exchange of knowledge for forgiveness because we look forward to the resurrection of a nation that comes together on the basis of the true values of civil peace.

We ask the State to give us a hand and contribute to building civil peace.

*On November 5, 1989, the Parliament ratified the Taif Agreement, by virtue of which hostilities were ended in Lebanon

**Ibid., i.e. The meeting of Lebanese MPs in the city of Taif, Saudi Arabia, and the approval of the Taif Agreement

***On November 30, 2018, the Parliaments enacted Law No. 105 (Law for the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared), as a result of the 36-year-long unflagging struggle of the families of these victims