

The Shelling of the Palestinians in Lebanon

Nahr al-Bared Flees to Beirut

By [Dr. Marcy Newman](#)

Global Research, May 26, 2007

Electronic Lebanon 25 May 2007

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#)

In-depth Report: [PALESTINE, THE WAR ON
LEBANON](#)

As we walked in to Shatila refugee camp in Beirut this morning we were approached by a family from Nahr al-Bared refugee camp in Tripoli who was wandering the streets of the camp in search of a place to live. They fled the violence in their camp and made it to Beirut to seek shelter. This family is one of 100 families who are now residing in Palestinian homes inside Shatila camp, with around 30 people to each two-room flat on top of the already family living in these homes and some of these homes have no electricity.

Families fled with only the clothes on their back, and sometimes a small plastic bag of medications for people with chronic illnesses. Some left relatives behind in Nahr al-Bared because when their houses collapsed from the Lebanese army's bombing they lost their identity cards and thus cannot leave the camp or move about freely inside Lebanon. In nearby Mar Elias camp there are two families and in nearby Bourj al Barajneh refugee camp there are also 250 families (636 people) from Nahr al-Bared who are also camped on the floors of people's homes after fleeing the violence in their northern camp. Of these families many arrived with serious chronic illnesses. One woman fell down and needs an x-ray, but cannot afford it. Others need dialysis for kidney disease. Others suffer from diabetes and have no insulin. It felt ironic to be contending with the needs related to this new "occupation" of Palestinians in the north and their exodus given that today is Lebanon's national holiday honoring the end of the Israeli occupation of (most) of South Lebanon.

While the U.S., Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia sent military aid to reinforce the Lebanese army in their siege on Nahr al-Bared refugee camp, which was rekindled today with heavy shelling, we spent the day delivering humanitarian aid to refugees from Nahr al-Bared who are in Badawi camp, as well as in these three other Beirut-area refugee camps. We found three college students from Nahr al-Bared who attend Beirut Arab University and Lebanese American University whose house was destroyed by the Lebanese army; some of their relatives are in Badawi and some are missing. They had no money, no food, and could not pay their rent which is due on the first of the month; we gave them money to cover these expenses.

We sent a convoy up to Badawi with 200 tons of relief, including baby formula, diapers, and more medicine for Nahr al-Bared refugees staying in people's homes because they are not getting NGO aid, which is only being directed to the refugees living in the UNRWA schools. After assessing the situation in Shatila and Bourj al Barajneh camps we sent a doctor to follow up on the chronic illnesses and administer medications as needed. We found homes for five families who were homeless in Shatila. And we purchased hygiene and food kits for families in Shatila and Bourj al Barajneh camps, which should last each family one week and

which will be delivered this morning.

I hear that the media in the U.S., if it is reporting on the situation here at all, is linking this to al-Qaeda. This could not be further from the truth, although in Hassan Nasrallah's television speech tonight we certainly had a glimpse of how this may indeed emerge here. For instance, parliamentary leader Sa'ad Hariri's support for Fatah al-Islam, including helping them get out of jail and moving them — with the acquiescence of the Lebanese army — from Ein al-Helwe refugee camp in Saida, Lebanon, where Palestinians kicked them out, to the Tripoli area is akin to the U.S. fostering support for al-Qaeda in Iraq. Now this group funded and supported by Hariri is being attacked, along with Palestinian refugees, by the very entities that created it and no one has answers as to what motivated this political maneuvering. The group resides inside the city of Tripoli itself, but very few homes or families have been bombed or affected by the military violence; this civilian population is not experiencing collective punishment as are the Palestinians inside Nahr al-Bared.

The media in Lebanon is no better. The Lebanese army reported yesterday that only one Palestinian has died in Nahr al-Bared. In our brief mapping of the refugees from Nahr al Bared refugee camp, which is not anywhere near complete, we have found and confirmed the following people have been killed by the Lebanese army:

1. Montaha Kamal Khalil
2. Ahmad Daghoul
3. Ra'ed el Shans
4. Abd el Latif Al Kaza'
5. Oday Nser Ismail, 16 years old
6. Jihad Abo el Ez, 35 years old
7. Ashraf Akl, 30 years old
8. Adel Younes, a teacher, 50 years old
9. Lina Jabr, 18 years old, her house fell on her
10. Abo Leiman Bhnan
11. Sleiman Bhnan, a doctor
12. Nayef el Saleh
13. Amer Nadwa
14. Saeed Sleiman

The Lebanese army also bombed the following civilian institutions in Nahr al-Bared camp:

1. Jenin Medical Center
2. Amal Medical Center
3. Bayt el Maqdes
4. Palestine Center, Dr. Fathala
5. Khaled Ben Walid Mosque
6. Al Quds Mosque
7. Al Jalil Mosque

As the refugees continue flow into refugee camps around Lebanon, approximately 15,000 remain in Nahr al-Bared trapped for a variety of reasons. We will continue to administer aid through grassroots organizations on a house-to-house basis.

Dr. Marcy Newman is a Visiting Professor at the Center for American Studies and Research at the American University of Beirut and a Fellow at the Initiative for Middle East Policy Dialogue.

For more information please email Marcy Newman at marcynewman@gmail.com.

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Articles by: **[Dr. Marcy Newman](#)**

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