Visual Representations of Martyrdom in the Lebanese Civil War: Secularism,

Nationalism and Religious Narratives, 1975-1990

by

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A Note on the Transliteration & Translation of Arabic

My rudimentary knowledge of Arabic demanded I seek outside sources for translation of the Arabic in these posters. No standardized transliteration of Arabic exists, so all terms are given by what I deemed to be the common translations of names and places. All of the translations used in this paper are taken from those given in Zeina Maasri's 'Off The Wall: Political Posters of the Lebanese Civil War', or from the generous work done by members of the online r/Arabic community. All translations from the latter source can be found   here: http://www.reddit.com/r/arabic/comments/q7647/need_help_translating_martyrdom_post ers/. Where possible, translations were cross-referenced.

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Preface

On 4 January 2011, a twenty-six-year-old Tunisian street-vendor named Muhamed Bouazizi, driven to desperation after a spate of abuse at the hands of government officials, doused himself in petrol and set himself alight. While by all accounts Bouazizi's self-immolation should have passed unnoticed, his act of defiance sparked a revolution that led to the overthrow of Tunisia's autocratic leader Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and influenced similar regional movements. Bouazizi was declared a martyr, not for Islam, although he was a Muslim, but, to quote his mother, "all of the Tunisian people."[1] He was constructed as a secular figure, whose sacrifice transcended the parochial boundaries of class, religion and nationality through his single act self-destructive defiance.

The framing of Bouazizi's death as martyrdom was counter to the conventional popular understanding of martyrdom in the west, which, following the 9/11 attacks on America, has been narrowly conflated with suicide bombing. The attacks led to a plethora of works written by academics clamoring to explain the phenomenon of the 'suicide martyr' to an increasingly insecure public fearful of religious extremists bent on sacrificing themselves as a martyr. In the course of critiquing all of Middle Eastern society in one broad swathe, prominent Orientalist scholar Bernard Lewis ruminated that "if the peoples of the Middle East continue on their present path, the suicide bomber may become a metaphor for the whole region, and there will be no escape from a downward spiral of hate and spite, rage and self-pity, poverty and oppression."[2] Conversely, the emergence of the supposed religious phenomenon of the martyr is, in Lewis' view,

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[1] Agence France-Presse, *Family Mourns Tunisian Revolt's First 'Martyr'*, (Agence France-Presse, 2011). http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0EKQFf8kiyo (Accessed 23 March 2012)
[2] Bernard Lewis, "What Went Wrong?," The Atlantic, http://www.theatlantic.com/past/docs/issues/2002/01/lewis.htm.

indicative of the regions' historical failure to join in the project of modernization. Taking Bouazizi's martyrdom as an inspiration, my broader intent with this paper is to counter the view that martyrdom is solely a religious phenomenon, and to show how the martyr has been constructed in particular historical situations as a secular politicized figure. There is more to martyrdom than suicide bombing, and by understanding the complexity and variety of these representations, I hope to contribute to the scholarship that recognizes the maturity and depth of contemporary Middle Eastern political and social culture.

Before I do so I would like to briefly outline what it is I mean when I use the words 'secular' and 'martyrdom', two terms whose definitions in popular and academic discourse are amorphous at best. While in contemporary usage secularity has come to mean almost anything not of or relating to religion, this sharp distinction has little analytical utility in the study of how cultural and religious concepts become codified in nationalist discourses. Anthropologist Talal Asad has written extensively on the conceptual linkages between supposed secular and religious ontologies, particularly in regard to the fluidity of contemporary cultural transmission and the way the modern state constructs and promotes its own legitimacy. In *Formations of the Secular* Assad quotes Charles Taylor, who defined secularity as the "attempt to find the lowest denominator among the doctrines of conflicting religious sects."[3] Benedict Anderson placed religious communities as the conceptual antecedents to the modern nation state in his lauded *Imagined Communities*, arguing that individuals of differing cultures and languages would nonetheless understand each other through the shared ideographs of their religious

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[3] Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003). 2

traditions.[4] Secularity then, if we are to take Anderson and Asad's arguments, is not simply a concept's state of 'not being of' or 'not relating to' religion but may also be a concept whose constituent parts can be shared and commonly understood across religions, cultures and temporal spaces.

Martyrdom is one of Anderson's shared ideographs in that while different communities and cultures conceptualize martyrdom in widely divergent ways, there is a basic narrative structure that each can share in. While the term 'martyr' in English, and its Arabic analogue *'shahid'*, are both rooted etymologically to the secular act of 'witnessing' in a legal context,[5] it was adopted as a loanword in the Christian, Jewish and Islamic traditions to refer to one who had died for their faith. It was within these faiths that martyrdom acquired a specific narrative and descriptive format. "In it's purest form," writes Samuel Z. Klausner, "martyrdom is a voluntary, conscious, and altruistic readiness to suffer and offer one's life for a cause."[6] A martyr is generally presented as a hero fighting for a cause, who, although foreeseing harm done to them by their opponents, carries on despite the risk. Who can, and cannot be a martyr varies, as civilians, fallen soldiers, politicians, and public leaders have all, at one point or another, been memorialized by Middle Eastern communities as martyrs. When the son of Syrian leader Hafez al-Assad was killed in a car accident in 1990, for example, government run news

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[4] Benedict R Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Rev. ed. (London England; New York: Verso, 2006). 12

[5] Paul Middleton, *Martyrdom: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: T & T Clark, 2011). 6

[6] Samuel Z. Klausner, "Martyrdom," in *Encyclopedia of Politics and Religion*, ed. Robert Wuthnow (Washing, D.C: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1998). 494

agencies referred to him as a martyr to the state.[7] Mohammad Bouazizi, as mentioned

before, was hailed as a martyr to the Tunisian revolution.

The framing of these two incredibly dissimilar figures as martyrs attests to the

malleability of martyrdom, and was made possible, in part, by the reconceptualization of

martyrdom as a secular concept that took place in the Middle East throughout the 20th

century. In the broader study of the links and divergences between the secular and the

religious in the Middle East, we must, in the words of Talal Asad, "discover what people

do with and to ideas and practices before we can understand what is involved in the

secularization of theological concepts in different times and places."[8] By examining how

martyrdom was conceptualized and formed in the modern Middle East, we can get a

broader view of the ways in which the cultures of the region mediate and augment their

cultural   practices   and   respond   to   the   ever-shifting   challenges   they   face.

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[7] Lisa Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria*
(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). 58
[8] Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. 192

Part I

Introduction

The Lebanese Civil War of 1975 to 1990 provides an unparalleled opportunity to view the concept of martyrdom as it was utilized, formed, augmented and presented by the combatants in the context of protracted civil strife. Utilizing textual and visual representations of martyrdom produced by the militias and political parties of the civil war, I argue that martyrdom was formulated by the combatants as a political act rooted in the nationalist discourse of the Lebanese political system. While each militia espoused different political, social, and religious platforms, all of the militias utilized martyrdom as a central component of their media strategies and externalized representations of communal and political identity. Through commemorative posters, the militias in effect took ownership over the sacrifices of a particular fighter who had died for their cause. In this context, the material loss of a partisan became an ideological victory; the public representation of a martyr's sacrifices, pasted in poster form across the walls and telephone poles of Lebanese cities, attested to the power, prestige, and political relevance of a parties struggle against those 'others' who would threaten them.

These posters were facets of the complex web of media strategies that saturated the public sphere of the Lebanese civil war. As centralized state control became increasingly weak following the outbreak of war in 1975, each militia in effect became masters of its own domain in its ability to exert, through force or persuasion, its particular party message. In concert with radio, television and other print media that each party controlled or produced, these posters not only delineated the physical boundaries of a militia's area of control but also acted as symbolic sites of ideological contestation; a

symbolic space where militias could express their collective sense of political, social and religious identity.[1] They were points of recruitment, activism as well as propaganda, providing a visual accompaniment to the physical battle for the domination of Lebanon's political fate.

This paper will be divided into three sections. In the first section I largely eschew direct analysis of the primary source material of martyrdom posters and other publications produced by the parties in favor of a more analytical look at how the age of Lebanese nationalism gave rise to new secularized conceptions of martyrdom. I argue that martyrdom as a concept, as a shared and common discourse across the many constituents of the Lebanese confessional community, must be seen as a modern expression the nationalist discourses that were at play in the formation of regional national identities. It is in times of conflict, first during the Lebanese struggle for independence and again in the civil war of 1958, that martyrdom underwent this drastic reconceptualization. The second chapter will discuss how the major combatants in the civil war of 1975-1990 utilized and presented the martyrdom of their members through the particular language and imagery of their political, social and, in the case of Hezbollah, religious traditions. In the third and final section I will examine how the latter years of the civil war gave rise to new conceptualizations of martyrdom, encompassing women's roles and representations in the conflict as well as the new phenomenon of suicide bombing.

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[1] Each major militia owned their own radio-station at one point or another during the war, and some even had their own pirate television stations. See: D.A. Boyd, "Lebanese Broadcasting: Unofficial Electronic Media During a Prolongued Civil War," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* Vol. 35, no. 3 (1991). 269-287

Contemporary Scholarly Views of Martyrdom in Lebanon

American social historian Michael Johnson writes that scholarship on the conflict between Lebanon's confessional, communal and ethnic communities can be broadly divided into three strains: 'situational', 'primordial' and 'syncretic'.[2] Studies of how martyrdom was represented in Lebanon have generally deferred to the two former categories of analysis, utilizing a semiotic approach to the militias' representations of martyrdom in order to demonstrate how martyrdom was rooted in an age-old religious framework of the Christian and Islamic traditions. In this reading, martyrdom is treated as a cultural 'given'; a cultural trait that is essentially ahistorical. The utility of martyrdom in contemporary Lebanese society lay in its ability to embody, in the words of German writer Christoph Reuter, "reawakened medieval myths and popular-culture hero-worship."[3] Martyrdom is consistently portrayed in these studies as a nascent cultural trait, lying dormant until reawakened by instances of social or political discord and as a cultural narrative, martyrdom is contextualized as a 'pre-modern' phenomenon specific to those cultures that hold, as the Lebanese are said to do, to 'tribalistic' social formations.[4]

In their study of martyrdom during the 1975 to 1990 Lebanese civil war, Khaled Nasser, Farrah Dhabbous and Yasmine Dhabbous write, "in all cases the concept [of martyrdom] is informed (and rendered important) by the religious frame of mind

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[2] Michael Johnson, *All Honourable Men : The Social Origins of War in Lebanon* (Oxford; London; New York L.B. Tauris Publishers; New York: Center for Lebanese Studies ;
Distributed in the United States and Canada by St. Martin's Press, 2001). 12
[3] Christoph Reuter, *My Life is a Weapon : A Modern History of Suicide Bombing* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004). 13
[4] Tribalism has been the key analytical tool of prominent Lebanese scholar Samir Khalif and has become a staple of Lebanese scholarship. See: Samir Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon: a History of the Internationalization of Communal Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

characterizing the area, even among secular parties."[5] The authors argue that three components explain why the "Lebanese integrate religious values in their communal culture": first, that "their national consciousness is strongly affected by the country's geographical and psychological proximity to the birthplaces of Judaism, Christianity and Islam"; second that, "religion […] is integrated in the political and social distribution of power and institutions in Lebanon"; and finally, that "Lebanon was historically occupied by empires with distinctive religious identities."[6] It is for these reasons, they argue, martyrdom is rooted firmly in, and can only be understood by, its religious roots.

However, both their first and third reasons are counter to the demographic and political history of Lebanon. In relation to their first point, Lebanon's proximity to the historical birthplaces of the three major monotheistic traditions, namely Jerusalem and Mecca, does little to explain how martyrdom in Lebanon was actually sustained or informed by the geographic proximity to these centers. Nor does it explain how such a connection might have been propagated over the hundreds of years since each of those traditions' founding. This perspective becomes more untenable when one considers that Jerusalem is rarely visualized or commented on by the combatants of the Lebanese civil war in relation to martyrdom, as we will see in the second and third sections of this paper. As to their final point, the mountainous terrain of the Metn and Shouf mountain ranges, which form the geographical spine of the modern Lebanese state, have historically supplied the dominant religious minorities of Lebanon - the Druze, Maronite, Orthodox and Shi'ite, as well as a host of other minority sects – an enclave buttressed from the ravages of empires and crusades which flowed through the region, leaving their third

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[5] Khaled Nasser Yasmine Dabbous, Farah Dabbous, "Across the Bridge of Death: The Culture of Martyrdom in Lebanon," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* Vol 13, no. 1 (2010). 594
[6] Ibid, 612

point irrelevant to the demographic history of the region.[7] To their second point, simply portraying martyrdom as a 'religious' cultural tradition obscures the ways in which martyrdom has been molded and transformed throughout the 20th century into a discursive narrative that can be shared and understood across confessional boundaries. The remainder of this chapter will outline how this transformation took place in Lebanon's foundational period of national agitation.

Abd' Al-Karim al-Khalil & The 1916 Martyrs of Independence

As Lebanon fashioned itself into a imagined community out of its pre-existing constituent religious sects, the language of martyrdom was utilized by Lebanese nationalists to bolster a sense of collective identity that transcended the parochial discourses of each tradition. This process of secularization began in the early part of the 20th century, as leading pan-Arab and Lebanese nationalist figures appropriated the discourse of martyrdom and employed its narrative of noble sacrifice to their secular struggle for self-determination. Leading Arab nationalists were consistently persecuted by the Ottoman 'Young Turks' administration that sought to quell pan-Arab movements across its territory. The execution in 1915 of pan-Arab nationalist 'Abd al-Karim al-Khalil, leader of the 'Society for Arab Revolution', gave the Arabist movement in Lebanon their paradigmatic martyr. Al-Khalil was born in the historical region of Jabal 'Amil, what is now Lebanon's deep south, and was a member of the prominent Shi'ite 'Amili community, who themselves had a long tradition of political martyrs going as far

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[7] Anderson, *Communties*. 12

back as the 14th and 15th centuries.[8] This tradition of communal sacrifice was rooted in

the slaughter of the 8th century figure of Imam Hussein, whose death at the battle of

Karbala by forces of Sunni Caliph Yazid I provided the Shi'ites with their primary

narrative of self-sacrifice. This narrative was once again utilized in the context of al-

Khalil's death at the hands of Ottoman authorities, which according to Tamara Chalabi,

"elevated the Arab cause to a more sacred level. It gave them a martyr and a focal point

for realizing their mission. It represented the climax of the Arabist movement in

Lebanon."[9]

This narrative of self-sacrifice for the community, previously imagined and

utilized in a purely Shi'ite context of historical oppression now became one augmented to

encompass the secular co-religious nationalist movement. The poetic language commonly

attributed to martyrdom can be seen in a poem written shortly following al-Khalil's death

by Nabitiyeh intellectual Sulayman Dahir:

> Neither my killing nor my crucifixion did I heed
> If my death were to revive my people
> And death is tastier than the breeze of youth
> Whose enamoured heart is primed
> No person reaches that elevated meadow,
> If he doesn't pass through the thorny peak
> My favourite thirst is my nation's quenching
> And its praying is sweetest in my hunger.[10]

Two aspects of this poem are particularly instructive and embody many of the basic

narratives of martyrdom that continued into the Lebanese conflicts of the 20th century.

First is the framing of al-Khalil's death as 'reviving' the community. While the death of a

prominent figure in any movement is undeniably a negative outcome, al-Khalil's

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[8] Tamara Chalabi, *The Shi'is of Jabal 'Amil and the New Lebanon: Community and Nation State, 1918-1943* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). 28
[9] Ibid. 52
[10] Quoted in: Muhammad Jaber El-Safa, *Tarikh Jabal 'Amel* (Beirut: Dar al-Nahar, 1998). 211

execution was conceptually reversed to provide ideological meaning and legitimacy to the cause that he had died for. Second is the poly-confessional discourse of the poem. Dahir refers to al-Khalil's death as a 'crucifixion' suggesting a link to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the central figure of the Christian tradition, into a contemporary, poly-religionist and pan-Arab movement. It was the inclusivity of this movement that created a narrative space where the martyr figures of the Christian and Islamic traditions could be swapped, suggesting that at this early stage of the nationalist movement, the image of a martyr was beginning to be decentered and conceptually expanded.

This inclusive narrative of the nationalist movement was further entrenched with the hanging of 14 nationalists on 16 May of the following year in the *place des armeés*, a central square in Beirut. The Ottoman authorities indicted the group for collaborating with the French, who were keen to support any movement that destabilized the Ottoman position in the Levant. [11] While each of the condemned had radically different conceptions of national identity in mind when they pronounced their love for the nation on their way to the gallows, they were all equally incorporated into the Lebanese state's narrative of national birth.[12] "These martyrs," writes Lebanese journalist Amhad Kassir, "still today commemorated in Lebanon and Syria on 6 May every year, were in part Arab nationalists, in part Lebanese Nationalists."[13] Of the fourteen hung that day, all but one were Muslim, however four more Christian Arab-nationalists were hung on the same day in Damascus, indicating that the nationalist struggle clearly transcended confessional

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[11] Helena Cobban, *The Making of Modern Lebanon*, The Making of the Middle East (London: Hutchinson, 1985). 62

[12] Two terms for the nation were used by the men as they gave their speeches preceding their hanging: *al-watan*, translated literally into a more secularized 'homeland' and *al-umma*, which is more generally understood as the Arabic name for the Islamic community as a whole.

[13] Samir Kassir, *Beirut* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010). 245

lines. When no clergyman could be found to give Orthodox Christians Petro Pauli and George Haddad their last rites before their hanging, Pauli is said to have turned to Haddad, telling him that, "if I was destined to fulfill this religious duty at the hand of a Muslim sheikh, I would not hesitate because religion is an above matter."[14] In this passage there is the beginnings of a breaking down of the conception of how religion relates to one's national community. Pauli sees his sacrifice for the nationalist cause as a 'religious duty', indicating that Pauli was not in any way expressing an atheistic view in regards to nationalism. However in referring to religion as 'above matter', Pauli clearly conceptualized the nationalist cause as one that transcended confessional boundaries, making it possible for his act to be sanctified by any member of a religious order.

Initially interred in a ditch on the Beirut beachfront, the bodies of the fourteen martyrs were eventually reburied by French authorities in a small graveyard above the Rue Corniche, although the place is, according to Lucille Volk, left unmarked and continues to be a place of curiosity.[15] The tombstones of the martyrs, whose marble graves were only denoted by their names, dates of death and honorary title of martyr (*shahid*), purposefully ignore each martyr's religion, a sign of their position as national, rather than purely confessional figures. The grave of Omar Hamid carried an inscription that testified to the new conceptualization of national sacrifice that was separate from confessional identity:

> Write on my grave, you people of my nation
> A verse that will be repeated by the mouths of the envious;
> This is the grave of a martyr of his country
> This is the martyr to his love of Arabs[16]

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[14] Quoted in: Lucia Volk, *Memorials and Martyrs in Modern Lebanon*, Public cultures of the Middle East and North Africa (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010). 48
[15] Ibid. 51
[16] Ibid.

The inscription is indicative of this new conception of martyrdom, blurring the distinction between a secular nationalist figure and the more traditional conception of a martyr as a religious figure.

Following nominal Lebanese independence in 1930, the *place des armeés* was renamed to Martyr's Square in honor of those who were hung there in 1916 and since that time has been a central place of state-sponsored national commemoration. The square became only one of many places of official memorialization of martyrs. The Lebanese 'Tomb of the Unknown Soldier', which for political reasons is solely a place of military commemoration, carries the inscription: 'Glory and Eternity to our Martyr-Heroes'. The partisans who had fallen in the 1958 civil war between Pan-Arab, leftist forces and the government were presented as 'martyrs of a popular uprising'. Significantly, the leftist Lebanese National Movement created its own martyr cemetery outside of Beirut, and in keeping with their socialist platform, formed the site as a place of political and ethno-religious solidarity, featuring symbols of all major world religions, including a plaque dedicated to Darwinism.[17] The construction of a martyr's cemetery in opposition to the government-sponsored martyr's memorial destabilized the government's control over the discourse of martyrdom as a sacrifice for the state. It spoke in opposition to what Liz McQuiston calls the "official voice" of establishment commemoration which is counter to the "unofficial voice" of those who would "question, criticize or reject" those systems of hegemonic control over memorialization.[18]

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[17] Volk, 94

[18] Liz McQuiston, *Graphic agitation: Social and Political Graphics Since the Sixties* (London: Phaidon, 1993). 27

In this pre-independence period, martyrdom was central to the formation of a national narrative of sacrifice for the imagined community of Lebanon. Nationalist leaders and authors sought to garner support through the deaths of those killed by the Ottomans in 1916 in order to create a sense of national identity that transcended the parochial limits of each adherent's sectarian community. The particular national vision that these martyrs held on to was less important to these elites than framing their sacrifice within a narrative that was relevant to what these national elites deemed to be the present concerns, whether that be independence under Ottoman rule, or in the context of nation-building in the new Lebanese state. The state-sponsored language of martyrdom changed little from this period, as shown in a eulogy to a fallen soldier given in 1990 by an unnamed army commander:

> You were noble in your giving, and your fate served as a symbol of martyrdom and loyalty. On the mountain slope filled with the fragrance of martyrdom, you composed an epic of sacrifice, recited the heroes' anthem and entered the consciousness of the nation [...] We, soldiers, have long resisted the enemy […] even if our martyrs fall one after the other."[19]

Although the eulogy was given eighty years after Sulayman Dahir composed his poem to memorialize Abd' al-Karim al-Khalil, there is a remarkable similarity in poetic allusions and imagery used to memorialize the two fallen figures. Grand, mountainous terrain is present in both, referencing the long tradition of Lebanese nationalists utilizing the geographical markers of Lebanon to form a nationalist narrative. Martyrdom was portrayed as a positive, reinvigorating sacrifice in both as well. Here, sacrifice is linked with the constantly renewing natural world in order to conceptualize the loss of a fighter into an attractive, moral victory for the community.

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[19] *Al-Jaysh*, no. 187 (Jan. 2001). Quoted in: Oren Barak, "Commemorating Malikiyya: Political Myth, Multiethnic Identity and the Making of the Lebanese Army," *History & Memory* Vol. 13, no. 1 (2001). 76

The framing of martyrdom as a reinvigorating act, as well as the symbolism of Lebanon's geography was incorporated into the Lebanese national flag.[20] The flag was drawn by parliamentarian Henri Pharaon in 1943 shortly before the evacuation of French troops. The red bands on the top and bottom of the flag represent the blood of the martyrs that were killed in the struggle for liberation both from the Ottoman and French authorities, while the white band is a "symbol of the Lebanese snow-capped mountain peaks."[21] The green cedar tree in the center of the flag, symbolizing continuity, power and immortality, is mandated in Article 5 of the Lebanese constitution to be touching the two red bands of martyrdom.[22] In the flag, as well as in the poems written in commemoration of the fallen soldier and al-Khalil, martyrdom is presented as an act that sustains the nation, represented by the cedar tree. While the flag later became known as a symbol of Maronite Christian dominance, at this time the flag was imagined as an inclusive, national symbol around which the constituent communities of Lebanon could rally.

Conclusion: Shifting Forms of Martyrdom in the Nationalist Age

From the very inception of the Lebanese state, the figure of the martyr was co-opted by political elites into the language and imagery of nationalism. As martyrdom was a concept rooted in both the Christian and Islamic traditions, it became the perfect symbol to express a political and social program that bridged the gaps between the two. Moreover, the state's need to build solidarity across confessional lines meant that by

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[20] Fig. 1.1
[21] "Symbols of the Republic," Lebanese Government. (Accessed 17 April 2012: http://www.presidency.gov.lb/presidency/symbols/flag/flag.htm)
[22] Republic of Lebanon, "The Lebanese Constitution," ed. Lebanese Parliament (Beirut: GPO, National Assembly). 2

fashioning martyrs to the cause of nationalism and independence, the state in essence presented itself as an entity which was both constituted of, and separate from the religious and sectarian groups of Lebanon. When war again broke out in 1975, each competing faction utilized martyrdom as a tool by which they could create solidarity both within, external to, and independent of the religious traditions of their members. It is this that explains how the parties of the Lebanese civil war who espoused Marxist, Fascist or nationalist programs utilized martyrdom as a discursive tool as much – indeed in some cases were more inclined to use the discourse of martyrdom – as those parties whose political programs were narrowly representative of a particular confessional community. This was made possible by the secularization of martyrdom in the national period, where a martyr, for the first time, could be a figure that died for a cause beyond their sectarian identity. Indeed it was their position as a martyr for the state that transcended those boundaries.

Part II

<u>Introduction: All the King's Martyrs</u>

In the previous section I argued that martyrdom, as an expression of political discourse in Lebanon, must be perceived as an inalienable component of modern confessional Lebanese political discourse. Far from viewing martyrdom as a simple atavistic expression of the 'noble sacrifice' of an adherent's monotheistic forebears, martyrdom in Lebanon is better understood in the particular context of the confessional Lebanese political system of memorialization. This section will show how the militias continued the political appropriation of martyrdom outlined in the previous section, utilizing the now secularized language of martyrdom to bolster their claim to political legitimacy. Martyrdom as a concept was in essence democratized and expanded as each militia employed the narrative of martyrdom within the discourses of their political, and in some cases, religious traditions.

This section will address two distinct types of martyrs. First are martyrs who were seen as leaders of their communities, each of whom was presented as a paragon of sacrifice that embodied the very essence of what their party stood for. Second are rank-and-file fighter-martyrs who died in the course of the struggle and whose designation and publication as martyrs served both a social commemorative function and a discursive political function. While the loss of a fighter or a political leader were both clearly blows to a party's material strength, the martyrdoms of their leaders and fighters were fashioned as ideological victory by the militias, giving vitality and meaning to their struggle for dominance.

Leadership Through Martyrdom in the Militia System

Each of the warring parties of the Lebanese civil war suffered from the loss of its foundational leader, and with the exception of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP), each party lost these figures shortly before, or during the conflict. Kemal Jumblatt, leader of the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) and the Maronite Phalange militia leader Bashir Gemayel were members of the distinct Lebanese social class of *Zo'ama*.[1] The *Zo'ama* in Lebanese society were rooted in the feudal clientist social structure of pre-state Lebanon, the status of these figures wryly described by Robert Fisk as individuals whose "pronouncements, conspicuous wealth, bodyguards, cruelty, education and private armies proved more efficacious than any electoral appeal."[2] The *Zo'ama* had long become central to the clientist political and economic system of Lebanon, where the elite positions of feudal lordship became entrenched in the Lebanese political system first under the French mandate, and then codified in the National Pact of 1943 through which they became elected representatives. As Lebanon had long been constituted of communities divided on religious affiliation, in some cases these leaders were representative of not only a political or economic elite, but religious leadership as well.

"While each [leader] led a major political faction and ideological current during the war," writes Zeina Maasri, "these leaders also came to represent, throughout the war, narrow and distinct confessional communities: Druze, Maronite and Shi'ite."[3] While this was broadly the case in Lebanon, this statement obscures the complexity of many of these

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[1] Za'im literarally translates to 'boss' or 'chief' and can be pluralized to 'Zo'ama'.

[2] Robert Fisk, *Pity the Nation: Lebanon at War*, 3rd ed. (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). 75

[3] Zeina Maasri, *Off the Wall: Political Posters of the Lebanese Civil War* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2009). 58

figure's roles. Shi'ite leader Moussa al-Sadr and Druze *Za'im* Kemal Jumblatt enjoyed broad multi-confessional support in the early stages of the civil and war and espoused decidedly anti-sectarian political and social platforms. Moreover, fallen political leaders such as Antun Saadeh, ideological father of the SSNP, became known as ideal representatives of their communities without being incorporated into the *Zo'ama* culture. These leaders were consistently presented as the idealized representatives of a party's political platform, individuals who embodied the community's relationship and struggle with their national identity.

Although a *Za'im* of the Druze community, Kemal Jumblatt was a committed secularist. In his role as leader of the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP), he rejected sectarianism as a matter of policy and fought for a de-confessionalized Lebanese state, with himself as president, a position denied to him by the National Pact of 1948. The National Pact set aside positions of government and civil service proportional to particular religious communities based on their population. As the Druze only constituted 6% of the population at the time of the 1932 census on which the Pact was based, the Druze were largely excluded from the major positions of power in the confessional Lebanese system.[4] The PSP ideal was to impose an entirely new superstructure on Lebanese society, replacing the clientelist system that had dominated Lebanese politics throughout its modern history with a system that was, in the words of Lebanese historian Fawwaz Trablousi, "'bourgeois', modern and non-sectarian instead of 'feudal', sectarian

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[4] Theodor Hanf and Centre for Lebanese Studies (London England), *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon : Decline of a State and Rise of a Nation* (London: Centre for Lebanese Studies in association with I.B. Tauris, 1993). 88

and 'underdeveloped'."[5] The early stages of war pitted the Jumblatt-led Lebanese National Movement (LNM), which included Palestinian and Communist groups, against the Maronite establishment. On the eve of LNM victory, Syrian forces stepped in, fearing a destabilization of their interests that had been so well served by Maronite dominance. Following the LNM defeat, Jumblatt was assassinated on 16 March 1977, likely at the behest of the Syrians, although as with many political assassinations in Lebanon, the details remain obscure.

In posters commemorating the second annual commemoration of Jumblatt's assassination, the narrative of cosmopolitanism central to the global socialist struggle is presented visually through the large globe behind Jumblatt's head.[6] Arab nationalist unity, an integral component of the PSP platform, is referenced by the borderless geographic representation of Arab countries just below the globe. Jumblatt's ideal of Arab unity extended beyond Lebanon to encompass the traditional Arab lands of the Magreb and Mashreq, in direct opposition to the Maronites, who preferred to link the contemporary Lebanese state with the pre-Islamic Phoenician empire. In another poster of almost identical style, May 1st, a day generally understood as a day of agitation for worker's rights, was refashioned as 'Jumblatt's International Day', a clear attempt to co-opt the globalist discourse of international socialism and refashion its meaning into the idealized personality cult of Jumblatt.[7] These two posters crafted a narrative of socialized internationalism that spoke to the values the party wished to outwardly project. Moreover, these values were consistently and inextricably linked to the figure of

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[5] Fawwaz Taraboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon* (London England ; Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto, 2007). 203
[6] Fig. 2.1
[7] Fig. 2.2

Jumblatt, who, through death, had become an idealized embodiment of the values of socialist struggle.

Another poster utilized a quote from Jumblatt where the values of martyrdom as a collectively reinvigorating act was central: "Is there anything more noble," he asked rhetorically, "than crossing over the bridge of death into the life that revives others and genuinely supports their cause and that strengthens the model of resistance and sacrifice in the souls of activists?"[8] In this quote, the message is that the community is strengthened, rather than weakened, by the loss of its leader, a common motif in the language of leadership martyrdom, which frames a physical loss as an ideological victory. In a similar vein, other posters present Jumblatt within stylized images of rebirth and peace, visualized in one such poster by placing the ever-wistful face of Jumblatt against a dove, surrounded by the faceless masses coalescing into the center of the image.[9] Another image places Jumblatt's face in the center of a flower, establishing martyrdom as an essential component of political and ideological rebirth.[10]

In their struggle with the Maronite government, the PSP fit its movement in with other 20th century resistance movements that had suffered the loss of their ideological figureheads. One such poster placed Jumblatt in a stylized relief next to legendary Marxist resistance fighters of the 19th and 20th centuries: Gemal Abdul Nasser (Egypt), Patrice Lumumba (Congo), Che Guevara (Cuba) and Ho Chi Minh (Vietnam).[11] The local historical link between Jumblatt and resistance was represented in the poster by an

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[8] Fig. 2.3
[9] Fig. 2.4
[10] Fig. 2.5
[11] Fig. 2.6

image of Tanios Chahine, who led a peasant revolt in 19th century Lebanon.[12] The text

reads: 'Against Imperialism & Zionism', linking the PSP struggle against Israel against a

backdrop of global liberation movements. Together, these images reinforce Jumblatt as

the locus of the Leftist communal values, those of universalism, socialism and the global

resistance struggle against capitalist oppression.

The election of Bashir Gemayel as president in 1982 was a time of great

celebration amongst Maronites, who had successfully, with help of the Syrians and later

the Israelis, beat back the progressive forces of the LNM and reaffirmed their primacy in

the Lebanese political system. Yet only a week after his election, the hopes of the Israelis,

as well as many in the Maronite community, were dashed when on 14 September 1982 a

bomb exploded in a building where Gemayel was giving an address. Before his death,

Bashir was clearly aware of the importance of forming this narrative of idealized

leadership around his person, telling the crowds at his inauguration that his election

represented the "incarnation of the nation embodied in the state," as well as it constituting

"the first time [...] the nation takes charge of the state."[13] This breaking down of nation,

state and individual is portrayed visually in Fig. 2.7, where a heavenly light bears down,

illuminating Lebanon through the image of Gemayel.[14] Memorialization of Gemayel's

death was thus subtly shifted to identify the leader with the national cause, making the

two inseparable. This mythologization of Gemayel expressed itself socially in the

apocryphal story of his survival after his martyrdom. The story was a common narrative

following his death, an idea which Fisk argues "became a fixation [that] the Phalangist

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[12] Maasri, *Off the Wall.* 59
[13] Taraboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon.* 216
[14] Fig. 2.7

leadership was quick to take up."[15] Gemayel was thus taken out of his secular role as President and, after his death, placed into the iconic imagery of Christian resurrection. Unlike Jumblatt, whose posters portrayed him as the ideal secularized socialist, Gemayel was imbued with the idealized narrative of messianic religiosity. However none of the posters commemorating Gemayel's martyrdom reference religious iconography explicitly, in keeping with the inherently secular conceptualization of martyrdom whose utility lay in its separation from overt linkages to a confessional community.

The resurrection narrative was central to the mythmaking agenda of the Phalangist forces. The image of Gemayel was consistently reproduced to infer that he was in some way providing leadership from beyond the grave. In keeping with the Maronite's ideological and political orientation to the West, the Lebanese Forces produced a poster the year following Gemayel's death in the style of the iconic American wartime 'Uncle Sam' recruitment posters. The illustrated poster placed Gemayel in white, almost comically styled clouds pointing to the viewer while the caption, just like its American analogue, reads 'I Want You!'.[16] Thus the personality cult that Gemayel had so carefully groomed was as useful to his party after his death as it was before. Gemayel was presented elsewhere as providing almost physical and material support to the fighters of the Maronite community. A poster with the caption 'continuing the procession', shows Gemayel handing a gun off to a Maronite fighter from out of frame.[17] Prior to his death Gemayel had been in the process of altering his public image away from that of a militia leader to a more official persona needed for someone who wanted to assume the presidency, and these posters reflect that culmination of that shift. These posters

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[15] Fisk, *Pity*, 463
[16] Fig. 2.8
[17] Fig. 2.9

encompass the dualist construction of his figure; where in Fig. 2.7 Gemayel's collared shirt and pensive face portray the serious, calm and thoughtful idealization of 'Gemayel the Politician', the other two idealize him as a fatigue-wearing military leader. As a result the Maronite militias could use either representation depending on what message they were intending to convey and which audience they wished to reach.

Although not strictly a member of the *Zo'ama*, Shi'ite leader Moussa al-Sadr was well-respected by a broad swathe of disenfranchised Lebanese due to his ecumenical approach to social welfare and his profoundly humanist approach to domestic politics. By the time of his assassination in 1977 on the orders of Libyan President Moamar al-Qhaddafi,[18] al-Sadr had managed to become deeply implicated in the confessional politics of Lebanon's political system, despite his lack of local family ties and his position as representative of the traditionally marginalized Shi'ites. Fawwaz Trablousi writes that he used this position to open a new kind of dialogue and worked to "build a third force between the traditional [Shi'ite] leadership of the As'ads and the parties of the left, especially the LCP, the OCA [Organization of Communist Action] and the Ba'ath, which were highly influential among the southern public, especially the youth."[19] In the late 1960s, Al-Sadr founded the 'Movement of the Disinherited', which, in his words, was a movement for those who, "feel deprivation in their actuality, of those who feel anxious for their future, and of those who shoulder their responsibility toward the disinherited and the anxious with honour and enthusiasm. It is the Lebanese movement

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[18] The bizarre details to this story can be found here: NA, "Lebanon Shiite leader was 'liquidated' in Libya," *France 24* 2011. http://www.france24.com/en/20111109-lebanon-shiite-leader-was-liquidated-libya (accessed: 23 March 2011)
[19] Trablousi, *History*, 177

for the best."[20] The movement became an alternative for disenfranchised Shi'ites, as well as others from other traditions, offering "an engaged and activist Islam that responded to contemporary problems with contemporary solutions."[21]

The movement later became formalized as Amal, which formed the backbone of the Shia resistance, along with the more radical Hezbollah, saw al-Sadr as its spiritual and intellectual godfather. After al-Sadr's death Amal and Hezbollah were in direct competition over who would assume leadership and representativeness of the now radicalized and powerful Shi'ite movement. Both parties would utilize the image of al-Sadr in a direct attempt to give their own movement legitimacy through his image. Al-Sadr is portrayed in Hezbollah posters as the 'natural' link between the Iranian model of Shi'ite mobilization, represented by Iranian revolutionary leader Ayatollah al-Khomeini and the distinctly Lebanese one, represented by al-Sadr. In one such poster Khomeini is quoted as saying that al-Sadr 'was like a son to me', while al-Sadr directs his followers to 'form a culture of war and employ all resources in our battle with Israel'.[22] Another simply designed poster presents the smiling face of al-Sadr alongside a quote that al-Sadr would utilize consistently in his speeches and writings: 'Israel is an absolute evil'.[23] As both Amal and Hezbollah competed over who would assume leadership in the struggle with Israel and of the Shi'ite masses, al-Sadr's image was a central way in which these organizations would frame themselves as the inheritors of al-Sadr's legacy.

Al-Sadr's disappearance was treated as martyrdom from the outset, and posters of him were produced by Amal in the established style of the martyrdom poster, indicating

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[20] Maasri, *Off the Wall* 64
[21] Volk, *Memorials.* 119
[22] Fig. 2.10
[23] Fig. 2.11

that the process of idealized memorialization was quickly taken up. Lucille Volk writes that Al-Sadr's disappearance led some Shi'ites to "believe that he was their hidden Imam who had temporarily shown himself but had returned into occultation," which cemented his mythical status, and that following his disappearance "photographs of Sadr appeared on billboards in Beirut's predominantly Shiite neighborhoods." His disappearance became, she writes, "an occasion for an annual commemorative rally of his supporters, which, according to the analysis of Augustus Richard Norton, is what kept Amal alive."[24] The depth of al-Sadr's mythology is attested to by the sheer amount of posters that simply portrayed al-Sadr sitting and smiling, his meaning and power assumed rather than given explicitly.[25] While these posters served a commemorative function of memorializing al-Sadr as a respected leader, Hezbollah and Amal were also engaging in a certain degree of power politics by linking the image of al-Sadr, and the positive connotations that came along with it, with their own movement.

Few parties in the civil war were as committed to the cult of personality surrounding their leader as the Syrian Social Nationalist Party[26], which consistently utilized the image of its founder, Antun Sa'deh, along with his quotes and pronouncements in favor of Pan-Syrianism. Sa'deh's execution by the Lebanese government in 1949 provided the organization with its paradigmatic narrative of sacrifice in leadership and the party continuously utilized the language of martyrdom to build a cult of personality around his idealized figure. Daniel Pipes notes that throughout the SSNP's history, the party has generally been seen by western academics as "an activist

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[24] Volk, *Memorials.* 121
[25] Fig. 2.12
[26] Known in Arabic as *Al-Hizb al-Suri al-Qawmi al-Itjima'I* or *Parti Populaire Syrien* in French. Throughout this paper I will use the Anglicization.

right-wing movement of a slightly dotty kind," a "lunatic fringe," "farcical," "idiotic,"
and representing an ideology of "thwarted idealism twisted into a doctrine of total
escape."[27] Whatever the merits of these estimations, throughout its checkered history the
SSNP had proven itself to be a remarkably resilient organization; and more relevant to
the purposes of this study, it has utilized the various conceptions of martyrdom to great
effect. As shown in a later section of this paper, the SSNP became the most prolific
utilizer of suicide 'martyrdom operations' in the latter stages of the civil war, outpacing
even Hezbollah.

As a party founded along loosely fascistic lines, the SSNP has always closely
identified with Sa'deh's personality and ideals. The posters commemorating him are best
seen as a facet of the party's construction of Sa'deh's cult of personality. Following his
return to Lebanon from São Paulo in 1929 where he was educated, Sa'deh set up the
party in 1932 on three main platforms: "radical reform of society along secular lines, a
fascist-style ideology, and Greater Syria."[28] Sa'deh envisioned this 'Greater Syria' as
incorporating the states of Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Trans-Jordan, Palestine and parts of
Turkey. Although born a Greek Orthodox, Sa'deh rejected any national identity that
would clash with his 'pan-Syrian' platform and fully rejected sectarianism, envisioning
the individual as represented by the state in his or her totality. His reformist platform
called for "separation of church and state, prohibition of the clergy from interfering in
politics, removal of barriers between sects, abolition of feudalism, and the formation of a
strong army."[29] These tenets continued to be SSNP's key to a strong base throughout the

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[27] Daniel Pipes, "Radical Politics and the Syrian Social Nationalist Party," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* Vol. 20, no. 3 (1988). 303
[28] Ibid. 304
[29] Ibid.

twentieth century, appealing to non-Sunni minorities, where secularism allowed a "level

playing field," which in effect, "eras[ed] their historic disabilities."[30] As a party that

sought a multi-confessional base, the SSNP formed an anti-sectarian and inclusive

narrative centered on strong leadership and cult of personality.

Sa'deh was consistently portrayed, in traditionally fascistic fashion, as the

distillation of his party's ideals. A poster produced in the 1980s places the image of

Sa'deh within the party's 'Zawba'a', or 'hurricane' logo, each arm representing the four

virtues of the party: freedom, duty, discipline and power.[31] The poster commemorated

Sa'deh's execution in 1949 by the Lebanese government, which viewed him as a

subversive agitator. The text reads, '8 July, commemoration of Sa'deh's martyrdom. I die

yet my party remains'.[32] The poster embodies the themes of continuity and sustained

vitality despite the death of the party leader, and implies that the group is strengthened by

his death. Conversely, the party commemorated Sa'deh's birth as well, underscoring his

synonymy with the body politic of the party and inferring that from the moment of

Sa'deh's birth, the struggle for pan-Syrianism began. A poster commemorating Sa'deh's

birth reads: '1 March, The birth of the national resistance in a nation thought to be extinct

by its enemies.'[33] The mythologization that took place in the posters of Sa'deh was made

possible by Sa'deh's execution, which was then fashioned as martyrdom by his followers.

As a narrative tool, Sa'deh's execution was ideal for the formulation of the party's

identity as a group that found power and strength in its marginalization and oppression.

Whether a founding figure or a member of the Lebanese *Zo'ama,* leader martyrs

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[30] Ibid. 307
[31] Michael W. Suleiman, *Political Parties in Lebanon* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967). 134
[32] Fig. 2.13 (Maasri)
[33] Fig. 2.14 (AUB)

were consistently portrayed by their militias as embodying those values to which the party adhered. In their status as both leaders of their community and martyrs, they became untouchable, mythological figures. "No militia or political leader," Fisk writes, "is so powerful - his name never so influential - as when he is dead, enshrined on wall posters and gateposts amid naively painted clusters of tulips and roses, the final artistic accolade of every martyr in Lebanon."[34] As central as these leaders were to the martyrdom traditions of the parties and militias of the Lebanese civil war, it was the rank-and-file fighter martyrs who, in death, were presented as figures to be esteemed and ultimately, emulated. All parties, whether avowedly secular or rooted in a religious framework, presented their martyrs as figures who have sacrificed for their concept of 'Lebanon' as a nation.

The Noble Sacrifice of the Fighter-Martyrs

        The most common type of martyr, and the one most represented visually was that of the fighter-martyr who had been killed in the course of their duty to the party. These 'obituary' styled posters generally followed a common model and included basic biographic information, including the context of their death, dates of their birth and death, and a headshot. The standard form across all parties spoke not only to the 'mass marketization' of martyr memorials in Lebanon, but also to the basic utility of martyrdom language, which allowed each party to appropriate martyrdom, presenting 'its' martyrs as ones who had died for the true cause. With few exceptions, these martyrs were individuals who died in active battle, but who had not actively sought death. Occasionally a poster would be produced which collected these fighter-martyrs into a single poster,

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[34] Fisk, *Pity*. 93

usually to commemorate a battle or commando operation in which large numbers of partisans had fallen.

Maasri argues that the most basic function of these posters was, and continues to be, a social one, as in Lebanon "it is common practice […] to post obituaries in public spaces, primarily around where the deceased lived and worked, to inform neighbors and acquaintances of the death, condolences, and funeral proceedings."[35] The militias took this social practice and molded it into the militia system, representing in the posters the value system and political underpinnings of their group. These martyrs were noble figures, who unlike the leaders we have seen above who were mythologized and inaccessible in their status, the power of these martyrs lay in their accessibility as members of the community who had died fighting for a cause. As such, each martyr, across the ideological divide, was presented as a national figure, a person who died either for his or her community or for their perception of the nation they belonged to. The difference, however, between these martyrs and the groups that represented them was in the way that each of them conceived and approached their sense of a nation. Some groups fashioned the nation as a political community, others as a social one.

The primacy of Jumblatt in PSP martyrology is made clear by his place even in those posters produced to commemorate the rank-and-file fighter-martyrs. One such poster presented eighty-two martyrs who had died in the 1983 battle with Maronite forces for control of the Shouf mountains range, the traditional homeland of the Druze.[36] The poster, entitled 'The martyrs of the PSP, Aley' is simple in design, presenting a headshot of each martyr with their names, but provides no details of the specific circumstance of

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[35] Maasri, *Off the Wall.* 88
[36] Fig. 2.15

their death. The ever-present Jumblatt is presented in a larger image, linking the primacy

of his death with those of these recent martyrs, as they now share in the noble sacrifice of

the founder of their party. The sheer amount of martyrs here goes beyond the simple

memorial function of other posters towards a direct political statement of legitimacy

through martyrdom; in effect taking ownership over these individuals and utilizing the

memory of them as a tool to bolster the party's legitimacy.

This simple layout serves a tri-partite role; first as on obituary to the fallen,

second as a commemoration of a battle which is deemed important by the party, and third

to define the PSP, as well as Jumblatt as defenders of the traditional homeland of the

Druze people and the stronghold of PSP support. The poster therefore cleverly embodies

a clear sectarian message, portraying these martyrs as defenders of a specific geographic

place which would have meaning both for the traditionally Druze base of the PSP as well

as the non-Druze supporters of the party. The importance of Aley as both a strategic and

cultural location would have been clear to whoever was viewing the poster, and the

producers of the poster leave that importance ambiguous to allow for multiple

interpretations. However, the PSP never at any point entirely disavowed their public anti-

sectarian message, producing another poster of Saud al-Zahri Abu Mauin, leader of the

National Socialist Party, which contained the caption, 'Our martyrs are heroes of the

crossing from sectarianism to secularism.'[37]

The PSP's Palestinian allies in the LNM were more prolific in their production of

martyrdom posters, with groups – loosely collected under the banner of the Palestinian

Liberation Organization (PLO) – such as the Democratic Front for the Liberation of

Palestine (DFLP), Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Arab Liberation

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[37] Fig. 2.16

Front (ALF), and Fatah producing a staggering array of visual propaganda in their struggle for a national homeland in Palestine. Initially the posters of the Palestinian resistance presented their martyrs as active martyrs who had died in operations across the border in Israel, or later, during engagements with Israeli forces following the latter's invasion of Lebanon. While the stated aim of the PLO was to liberate its homeland from Israeli occupation, it is worth briefly outlining how the PLO became deeply entrenched in the intra-Lebanese conflict.

Despite Maronite objections, the Lebanese army and the PLO had reached an agreement in 1969 known as the Cairo Accords, effectively giving the Palestinian *fedayeen*[38] free reign to conduct their operations from Lebanese soil and transferring control of the refugee camps to the PLO. This agreement was strained following the PLO's ejection from Jordan in 1970, an event known as 'Black September', and which resulted in the PLO's move to Beirut as a base for its operations. In effect, the PLO now enjoyed a status akin to a 'state within a state'. Edward Said claims that the Beirut period was the "first truly independent period of Palestinian national history," and that Lebanon very much acted as a "substitute for Palestine."[39] With the outbreak of war in 1975, the PLO became increasingly focused less on its conflict with Israel, and more oriented towards fighting Maronite forces.

The full irony of the PLO involvement in the civil war can be seen through the statement of Salah Khalaf, a senior PLO strategist who – while the Palestinians set up positions to attack Maronite forces in the mountain stronghold of Sennine – said that the road to Palestine led through: "Uyun al-Siman, Aintura and even Jounieh itself to prevent

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[38] Colloquial term for Palestinian fighters who would attack Israeli targets in cross-border attacks.
[39] Edward Said, "Palestinians in the Aftermath of Beirut," *Journal of Palestine Studies* Vol. 12, no. 2 (1983). 5-8

any further threat to the Palestinian presence in Lebanon'.[40] These towns lay in the Christian heartland north of Beirut, the entirely opposite direction to the lands of Palestine on Lebanon's southern border. The clear, nationalistic martyrdom language in the posters of this period should be understood not as simple markers that the PLO was entirely oriented towards the Israelis, but indeed that it was fully enmeshed in the confessional conflict of the Lebanese civil war.

The poster styles of the PLO are by and large of a greater visual complexity and variety than the martyrdom posters of other groups, likely due to the Palestinians' "rich experience in the production of posters and through their alliance with the left-wing parties, provided the latter with a creative framework in which the design of political posters could flourish."[41] The obituary posters of the PLO consistently referred to the 'homeland' of Palestine, commonly linking the idea of martyrdom with the 'land' as a physical, as well as conceptual, entity. A PFLP poster commemorating 'martyr's day' on the 9th of March, juxtaposed the concept of martyrdom with oppression, visualized by two hands seen gripping the dirt, covered by barbed wire.[42] The text reads: 'our martyrs […] are our bridge of return', again referencing the need for martyrdom as a central component of the struggle to regain Palestine. The importance of land, unsurprisingly, was central to the mythmaking of Palestinian militias, who perceived themselves as dispossessed from their homeland, as referenced in numerous another posters commemorating 'Land Day'.[43]

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[40] Fisk, *Pity.* 65
[41] Maasri, *Off the Wall.* 52
[42] Fig. 2.17 (AUB)
[43] Fig. 2.18 (AUB)

The P.F.L.P chose the 9th of March as their day to commemorate martyrs due to the 1973 martyrdoms of prominent members of their group in Gaza. In a poster commemorating one of these fighters, Mohamed al-Aswad, known as the 'Guevera of Gaza', is said to have died 'so that the flags of the popular struggle may rise until liberation'.[44] The barely distinguishable crowds, as well as the linking of al-Aswad to the mythic figure of Che Guevara are indicative of the P.F.L.P's Marxist roots, and much like the images of Jumblatt, internationalizes their conflict, and subsumes it into the global anti-capitalist movement. The 'active' nature of al-Aswad's struggle is noted by Dhabbous et. al., who argue that "the message [of the poster] stresses the valor of the martyr who seems to have actively sought martyrdom for the sake of the Palestinian cause."[45] While this poster follows a similar format of an obituary, the particularized language and seeming canonization of al-Aswad gives him prominence.

Posters which refer to martyrdom as a concept, rather than as simply just an 'act' to be inspired by, are common. A poster produced by Fatah simply entitled 'The Martyr' presents a horizontal figure wrapped in a kiffiyeh,[46] a rose growing out of the martyr's chest.[47] Again, the linking of the ideas of rebirth and martyrdom are referenced through the image of the rose, the idea, not necessarily that the martyr will literally 'live again', but that the martyr dies so that another entity, a rose representing Palestine, can grow and flourish. Of all of the posters produced in Lebanon during this era, the only explicit reference to a religious figure is that of Jesus Christ in a poster produced by the PLO.[48]

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[44] Fig. 2.19 (AUB)
[45] Yasmine Dabbous, "Bridge." 603
[46] A kiffiyeh is a traditional headscarf that came to be known as a symbol of the Palestinian struggle for independence.
[47] Fig. 2.18 (AUB)
[48] Fig. 2.19 (AUB)

Given the patterns of secularization that martyrdom underwent throughout the 20th century, the absence of direct references to religious figures is understandable and its inclusion here is best understood in the confessional politics of civil war Lebanon. The poster discursively linked the passion of Jesus, replete with its narrative of suffering through injustice and oppression, to contemporary images of struggling Palestinians. The poster's production and dissemination in Lebanon was likely a direct message to the Christian Maronites whose political and military leadership were in active and sustained conflict with the Palestinian community in Lebanon. The short caption, which anachronistically refers to Jesus as 'The Palestinian', includes a French translation to imply that the message is intended not only for the Arabic speaking Muslim population of Lebanon, but as a message to the francophone Maronites as well.

The 'obituary' posters of the Palestinian groups are largely cohesive throughout the constituents of the PLO and generally make reference to the glory of martyrdom and the inevitability of victory for their cause. In the martyrdom poster of Mustafa Alal Sadiq Kazbir, born in 1966 in al-Rashidiya, Morroco, he is shown to have been married, a symbol of his (and we might say his wife's as well) added sacrifice to the Palestinian cause.[49] After a brief description of a 'heroic confrontation' with Israeli forces in the southern village of Beit Bahoun in 1984, the epitaph ends, 'Glory for the martyrs and victory for the revolution'.

Similarly, the martyrdom posters of the Lebanese Communist Party (LCP) link the death of its fighters to the de-confessionalization of Lebanon as a precursor to the broader struggle against global capitalist imperialism. The primacy of 'land' as a continual motif, as it is across the political spectrum, in the ideological formulation of

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[49] Fig. 2.20 (AUB)

martyrdom is present in the LCP martyrdom posters, one poster reading: 'The land is

ours. The martyrs of defiance to occupation in defense of the nation's land'.[50] The

martyrs are presented here as singularly national symbols, their disembodied arms,

holding Kalashnikovs rising from the ground. As with the Fatah poster, which presented

the depersonalized martyr wrapped in a kiffeyeh, another LCP poster presents its martyrs

as red stars dotted around the landscape of Lebanon, identifying places which the LCP

has given martyrs in a year.[51] The text reads: 'Martyrs of the Lebanese Communist Party,

March 1975 – March 1976; martyrs in the battle against the fascist isolationist plan in

defense of Lebanon, its unity, Arab identity and in defense of the Palestinian resistance'.

In both posters the martyrs gave their lives both for the broader Communist – a trans-

national movement – as well as the nationalistic Lebanese struggle. This mediation

between a nationalist struggle, linked with trans-national ideals is a common trait among

the militias of the Lebanese Civil War. However, this mediation is entirely broken down

in the posters of the S.S.N.P who were by far the most prolific producers of martyrdom

posters during the latter part of the civil war. While better known for their prolific use of

'martyrdom operations', which I will address in the following chapter, the SSNP

commemorated their fallen partisans with remarkable zeal. The 'obituaries' of the SSNP

largely followed the common style, usually accompanied with a quote from Sa'adeh.

These posters were largely produced during the SSNP's adoption of a Lebanese

nationalist platform as a member of the Lebanese National Resistance Front (LNRF), an

anti-Israel coalition along with Ba'thist and Communist parties. As a result, and in

contradiction of the earlier tenets of the parties, the producers of S.S.N.P posters

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[50] Fig. 2.21 (Maasri)
[51] Fig. 2.22 (Maasri)

consistently present their martyrs as figures who have died for the 'unity' of Lebanon and 'national belonging'.

The martyrdoms of 'Aref Ahmad Zneet, Ibrahim Youssef Ataya, Khalil Ilyas Abu Haidar and Kanj Abdo Madhi are representative of the common 'obituary' style produced by the SSNP.[52] Each includes a quote from Sa'adeh, proclaiming that 'the highest form of martyrdom is the martyrdom of blood', exalting their dead as the most laudable form of sacrifice. The posters of the SSNP are perhaps the tightest visually, containing only as much information as was necessary to link these martyrs with the themes and ideals of the party, embodied in the Zawba'a and Sa'adeh's quote.

While Bashir Gemayel occupies the central place the martyrological tradition of the Maronites, there are some surviving examples of 'obituary' styled posters. The Martyrdoms of Abdo Joseph Kaffouri and Aadil Jamil Tartoori, produced by the National Liberal Party, a center-right political party established by Maronite *Za'im* and former President Camille Chamoun, were presented in the simplistic style of 'obituary' posters, both with the heading "We sacrifice our souls for Lebanon,"[53] and a simple epitaph designating the 'front' on which they died. Another poster produced by the Kataeb presented eight martyrs as cedars, the national symbol of Lebanon. The Cedar tree is largely "understood as a reference to Phoenician, *not Arab* Lebanon,"[54] as the common view of Maronites was to see themselves as at their core a Mediterranean people. Much like other posters we have seen, martyrdom is presented as an act that strengthens the community, and in this case is seen as 'Lebanon' as a nation. As with the images and statements of Bashir Gemayel, Lebanon is made synonymous with the Maronite identity

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[52] Fig. 2.23
[53] Fig. 2.24
[54] Yasmine Dabbous, "Bridge." 610

through the caption which reads, 'They died for Lebanon to live. The martyrs of the Kataeb in Antelias.'[55] The making of confessional group and nation as synonymous, as well as the primacy of sacrifice is embodied in a poster produced by the Tanzim party, where the image of an anonymous fighter's blood, seeping from his body, forms a Lebanese flag.[56] The figure overlays a border outline of Lebanon, while the text reads: 'If you love it, work for it'.

Only one individualized martyrdom poster of Amal survives, although it breaks many of the standard styles of the other groups in its detail and complexity. In contrast to other partisans, this martyr is given primacy and detail precisely because of his banality and humanity, a Lebanese 'working class hero'. Ali 'Abu Husain' Nimr al-Ghadban was martyred in 1985, although no details are given on the cause of his death.[57] This poster includes an incredible amount of biographical information, more than any other, beginning with a Quranic inscription:

Allah has preferred those who strive hard and fight, above those who sit (at home) by a huge reward. The Amal movement presents to its faithful audience the warrior architect martyr Ali Nimr al-Gadban, 'Abu Husain' Born in 1958, Al-Ghabdan had a son, joined the movement in 1979, excelled in many military rounds, earned the civil architecture certificate in 1983, took part in ever war the Movement has fought and was the perfect example of loyalty and self-sacrifice, held many posts in the movement, the last of which was West Beirut where he stayed until his martyrdom. He was martyred for both the Lebanese and the Palestinian people.

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[55] Fig. 2.26 (AUB)
[56] Fig. 2.27 (Maasri)
[57] Fig. 2.28 (AUB)

The epigraph ends with a vow from the party to, 'never give up the cause he was martyred for'. This poster is remarkable precisely because it largely eschewed the grand narratives of other posters. Here, the normalcy of al-Ghadban is put at the fore as a way to give the martyr a humanistic quality. He is, in the poster, a loyal, hard-working, educated family man and it is his standard, almost unremarkable position that gives the party cause to commemorate him in detail. In contrast, the posters of Amal's rival in the Shi'ite movement, the Islamist group Hezbollah, fashioned their fighters as idealized representatives of the Shi'ite martyrological tradition.

The Centrality of Karbala and the Tenacity of Martyrdom in Hezbollah's Worldview

Hezbollah's conception of martyrdom and their position within the context of the Lebanese political climate demands a more in-depth analysis, as the party broke the trends of secular nationalist conceptions of martyrdom and political engagement that was outlined in the discussion of the other parties. While religious imagery was largely absent from the posters of the more entrenched and established parties of the civil war, Hezbollah presented its view of martyrdom in an explicitly Islamic context that was representative of its overall rejection of secularism as a political philosophy. Hezbollah was very much a product of its time. With the disappearance of Moussa al-Sadr in 1978, the Shi'ite resistance movement began to split along doctrinal lines. Amal, the party founded by al-Sadr as the political wing of his 'Movement of the Disinhereted', had always walked a fine line between the 'Legalist' and 'Radical' movements in Shia popular discourse.[58] The invasion of Israel in 1982 prompted the founding of Hezbollah by a group of more radical Shi'ite clerics, including Imam Rageh Harb, Shams al-Din and

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58 Taraboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*. 230

Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah who were influenced by the teachings of Iranian revolutionary leader Ayatollah al-Khomeini as a military resistance organization dedicated to the removal of Israel from the predominantly Shi'ite Lebanese south.

Hezbollah was deeply influenced by the 1979 Iranian Revolution. Khomeini was instrumental in the formation of a new type of radical Islamist politics that united the spiritual and political aspects of Islam into a coherent ideological platform. Martyrdom was a central component to this worldview, which presented the world as embodying a dualistic formation which split the world in an antagonistic struggle between the truth of Islam's power and those who would reject the word of God in order to impose their will. For Hezbollah, this "notion of political action is the division of the world," writes Amal Saad-Ghorayeb, "formulated by Khumayni into 'oppressors' (*mustakbirin*) and 'oppressed' (*mustad'afin*). So pivotal is this conceptual dichotomy to Hizbu'llah's political thought that it is invoked in almost every official's speech."[59] This political view was a revival of the historical narrative of self-sacrifice and oppression that was embodied in the death of their tradition's founder the Imam Hussein.

The defining moment in Shi'ite martyrology came in 680 CE, when the armies of Muhammad's grandson, Husayn ibn Ali, leader of a breakaway sect of Islam, was defeated in the 'Battle of Karbala' during a struggle for leadership of the Islamic community by the much more numerous and powerful armies of the Sunni caliph Yazid I. The centrality of this event in Shi'ite religious discourse cannot be overstated. Imagery of the catastrophic destruction of the entire Shi'ite community, including men, women, and children at the hands of a powerful, hostile enemy became the central myth of Shi'ites

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[59] Amal Saad-Ghorayeb, *Hizbu'llah : Politics and Religion*, Critical studies on Islam (London ; Sterling, Va.: Pluto Press, 2002). 16

whose discourse continues to revolve around a sense of oppression, sacrifice and perseverance through violent repression. The hagiographical tradition of Husayn highlights his pious sacrifice in defense of his community, his martyrdom serving as act to be emulated by his followers and which is enacted and embodied in the flagellation rituals of the Shi'ite Ashura festival.

The Ashura festival sustained the narrative of Husayn's self-sacrifice and martyrdom in the Shi'ite tradition, allowing those same narratives to once again be utilized by Hezbollah in their formation of a martyrdom narrative. While Ashura had been a central festival in the Shi'ite tradition since its formation, it took on greater importance for the Lebanese Shi'ite community under Israeli occupation. "Ashura had originally   been   celebrated   in   a   rather   modest   way, writes Michael Johnson, while prior to the invasion, "the passion play was more a village festival than an assertion of Shi'a identity, to the extent that Christian villagers would sometimes take minor roles in it."[60] In times of conflict and when the Shi'ite community perceived itself under threat, the martyrdom narrative of Husayn took on new meanings and was expressed in new forms. Rola al-Husseni writes that "the Karbala narrative [had] proven to be a relatively [...] flexible set of symbols, the interpretation of which has readily evolved in accordance with changing political trends."[61] Conversely, The Karbala narrative was used by secular parties as a way to mock the Shi'ite groups to whom they were opposed. A pro-Syrian Murabitun militia leader issued statements in 1985 under the name of Yazid I, the Sunni leader in whose name Hussein and his retinue had been

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[60] Johnson, *Honourable.* 159

[61] Rola el-Husseini, "Resistance, Jihad and Martyrdom," *The Middle East Journal* Vol. 62, no. 3 (2008). 404

slaughtered.[62] This new conception of memorialization followed the politicization of the Karbala narrative first by Khomeini and then by the formative religious thinkers of Hezbollah.

The Karbala paradigm was central to the ways in which Hezbollah conceptualized contemporary martyrdom. Hezbollah conceptualized their struggle through the rubric of *jihad*, an individual's struggle not only with external forces, but with the internal contradiction inherent in human existence. However it was the former conceptualization of morality that the scholars of Hezbollah explored in their religious edicts justifying violence. Saad-Ghorayeb writes that "An integral part of Hizbu'llah's conceptualization of *jihad* is the notion of martyrdom [...] the *wajib shari'* [A religious obligation] to launch a defensive *jihad* not only entails a willingness to fight for God's cause, but also a willingness to die for this cause - both of which are exemplified by the Karbala episode."[63] Four aspects of the Karbala narrative are consistently utilized in Hezbollah's representations of martyrdom. The centrality of death through violent struggle was consistently presented visually through the images of blood. The narrative of martyrdom providing the community with its surest sense of vitality is very much in play here, where Imam Hussein's sacrifice was presented as giving the Shi'ite community its very *raison d'etre*. Sacrifice for the community was a profound act of giving one's self in their entirety to the cause, where death becomes the ultimate noble sacrifice to one's community.

The poster commemorating the assassination of Hezbollah founding member and cleric Imam Rageh Harb embodies the narratives of communal renewal through

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[62] Johnson, *Honourable.* 67
[63] Saad-Ghorayeb, *Hizbu'llah : Politics and Religion.* 127

martyrdom, his face positioned above a sea and a smattering of blood out of which a red flower grows.[64] The flower is placed next to a Kalashnakov as well as the outline of a bird formed from the blood, which suggests that struggle and rebirth, peace and blood are all intertwined. The inherent contradictions between these images was an element of Hezbollah posters that was utilized consistently, pushing the viewer to reconsider basic assumptions about life and death and re-contextualizing them in the framework of militant struggle against occupation. 'Do not think of those that have been slain in God's cause as dead," declares the poster, quoting a passage from the Quran, "Nay, they are alive!' The blood and the outline of a bird, representing freedom, form a version of a Yin & Yang, presenting freedom and blood as intimately linked together. In another poster Harb was presented alongside a caption which reads, 'We will cross a sea of blood to reach God's blessed victory'.[65] The blood here is indicative of the asymmetrical style of guerilla warfare that Hezbollah was engaged in with Israel, reinforcing the centrality of death and sacrifice in the Shi'ite conception of resistance while the benevolent image of al-Khomeini reasserts the trans-national component of the Shi'ite struggle.

In the militarily imbalanced warfare between the Islamic resistance and the Israeli army, high casualty rates were assured. This aspect of the contemporary struggle fit perfectly with the narrative of al-Hussein's massively outnumbered forces at the battle of Karbala. Another poster commemorating the deaths of seven fighters proclaims, "The blood of martyrs is the most honest expression of blood vanquishing the sword."[66] As the narrative of freedom through martyrdom is so strong, birds were commonly introduced into martyrdom posters as a way of linking the deaths of fighters to the notion of spiritual

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[64] Fig. 2.29
[65] Fig. 2.29 (Maasri)
[66] Fig. 2.30 (AUB)

freedom. A poster of nine martyrs portrays this link visually with typical 'obituary' styled photos as well as by silhouetted figures holding flags and weapons, all framed by a flock of flying birds.[67] The text of the poster defines these fighters as 'The Islamic Resistance. Our glory, our pride and the prince of Martyrs. They guide our path'. The 'prince' here refers to Ahmad Qassim, who was the first to carry out a suicide bombing operation and, as discussed in the following chapter, was raised to an elevated status. Hezbollah's martyrs were presented as figures that embodied the sacrifice of al-Hussein in their self-sacrifice not only for the direct community's parochial interests, but for the broader Islamic struggle against oppression. Martyrdom is not presented as a mere facet of the resistance towards Israel, as Hezbollah was at this time a purely military organization, but as the primary method in which to eject the Israelis from Lebanese territory.

The image of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, the third holiest site in Islam, features prominently in the martyrdom posters of Hezbollah. The intent here was to expand the discursive framing of martyrdom beyond just the present conflict with Israel and link the battle in the south of Lebanon to the broader pan-Islamic struggle to liberate Palestine from what Hezbollah frequently termed the 'Zionist occupiers'. The utilization of this pan-Islamic icon cements the Islamic resistance as one not limited to the more parochial struggle to liberate only Lebanese territory, but the historic icons of Islam as well. One such poster substituted Mecca with Jerusalem as the *kiblah*, the direction to which Muslims pray.[68] The poster is framed by a prayer niche, creating a visual perspective towards Jerusalem, which according to Zeinna Maasri, "claims Jerusalem as

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[67] Fig. 2.31 (Maasri)
[68] Fig. 2.32

the kiblah of the mujahidin [religious soldiers], its liberation the ultimate Jihad."[69]

While the theme of nationalist conceptions of martyrdom holds for the large proportion of militias and groups of the Lebanese civil war, there was something quite different about the way in which Hezbollah conceptualized and presented martyrdom through their posters and proclamations. For the other groups, martyrdom was such a powerful narrative because it could be so broadly interpreted among a wide array of differing conceptions of ideas about what could constitute a noble death. However, with the posters of the Islamic resistance, there is an incredible specificity and historical depth to the Shi'ite tradition of martyrdom which has been distinctly cultivated in their culture over hundreds of years. While there were of course narrative linkages between Hezbollah's conceptions of martyrdom and the imagery they use to express that – the utilization of blood which is present in the posters of the SSNP, for example – the religious tradition of Hezbollah, not to mention the very different role it played in relation to other groups of the civil war, gave the posters of Hezbollah their particular style.

Conclusion: The Noble Sacrifice of Martyrdom

Whether a Za'im, a political leader, or an ordinary fighter, these martyrs were presented by the parties and militias of the Lebanese civil war as paragons of sacrifice. For the secular Marxist parties, their martyrs sacrificed not only for their vision of Lebanon as a de-confessionalized socialist state, but also for the grander narrative of the global resistance struggle. Although parties with radically different political platforms, the SSNP and Maronite Phalange presented their martyrs as purely nationalistic figures, individuals who were made greater through their sacrifice for the state. In all cases,

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[69] Maasri, *Off the Wall.* 97

however, the martyr was given meaning through their death for a higher cause. The sacrifice is made 'nobler' not through the repetitious act of atavistic mimicry of a long dead religious figure, but through the political and nationalistic programs of the militia they died for. While the martyrs described above were very much in keeping with the secularized conceptualization of martyrdom, Hezbollah's presentation of its martyrs broke this trend. Hezbollah utilized the Shi'ite martyrdom tradition of the Ashura festival to make their battle with Israel co-temporal with past instances of perceived injustice. While Hezbollah reached into past for inspiration, the narrative of martyrdom they constructed was profoundly modern and made possible by the particular historical context of military invasion and oppression. As we will see in the next chapter, Shi'ite groups would radically reformulate the pre-existing boundaries of martyrdom by introducing a new   and   previously   unseen   figure   of   the   suicide   bomber.

Part III

Introduction: Expanding Conceptions & New Formations of Martyrdom

The period of entrenched and profound instability that defined the war's continuation into the 1980s gave rise to new conceptualizations of what could constitute a martyr. Despite cultural and religious prescriptions against suicide, the militias began to use a previously unseen method of warfare euphemistically termed 'martyrdom operations' by the militias, but more popularly known as suicide bombing. A sign of the expanding gender roles that the conflict necessitated was the inclusion of women in suicide bombing missions, known euphemistically by the militias who utilized them as 'martyrdom operations'. These operations were contentious, and the Lebanese National Front, Amal and Hezbollah, the groups who carried them out, utilized the established tradition of martyrdom and martyrdom posters to legitimize this new method of warfare. This chapter will first detail the adoption of suicide bombing and its utilization as a propaganda tool, followed by a discussion of how the role of women in the militia system created particular gendered images that were then employed in the representations of female suicide bombers.

American political scientist Robert Pape has argued that suicide bombing is a result, uniformly, of foreign occupation. "What nearly all suicide terrorist attacks have in common," he writes, "is a specific and strategic goal: to compel modern democracies to withdraw military forces from the territory that the terrorists consider to be their homeland."[1] While Pape's thesis is useful in understanding suicide bombing in a geo-strategic context, it ignores the ways in which the militias of the civil war utilized suicide

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[1] Robert Anthony Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (New York: Random House, 2005). 4

bombing as a public relations tool and as a method by which they sought to garner support for their cause. Despite the decreasing effectiveness of suicide operations over time and Hezbollah's disavowal of the tactic, they continued to be utilized by the secular militias as a tool of political campaigning; a method by which the leftist parties could call for support and legitimize their secular vision of Lebanon and counter the rising legitimacy of the Islamic resistance as a political force.

Martyrdom as Self-Destruction: Politics and Power in the Militias' Representations of Suicide Bombers

On the 10 November 1982, the Israeli headquarters in Tyre was leveled in a massive explosion, killing upwards of 100 people inside, including some twenty Palestinian civilians who were waiting to be interrogated. The Israeli government initially blamed the attack on a gas leak, but it quickly became known that an individual had driven a car into the foyer of the building that then exploded.[2] A variety of different groups claimed responsibility for the attack, but none were well known or representative of an already established party. French news reported receiving a letter from the 'Armed Struggle Group', while Beirut papers more credulously reported a previously unheard of organization calling itself the 'Military Command of the Lebanese National Resistance' claiming responsibility.[3] However, the identity of the attacker, in contrast to the more traditional martyrdom operations seen in the previous chapter, remained unknown and unpublicized.

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[2] Edgar O'Ballance, *Civil war in Lebanon, 1975-92* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998). 132
[3] Associated Press, "Report on Lebanon," *Associated Press*, November 11 1982.

The success of the Tyre operation prompted three more attacks the following year, most notably against the U.N sanctioned multinational force of American, Italian and French troops. On 11 November 1982 two bombers, each driving a pickup truck laden with explosives, drove into the barracks of American and French troops in a coordinated attack, killing upwards of 300. Again, the identities of the bombers were not released, although responsibility for the attack was once again claimed by a previously unknown organization, this time calling itself 'Islamic Jihad'.[4] A message sent to local news sources emphasized the local nature of the resistance, likely in response to charges from the press that the burgeoning Shi'ite resistance groups that had begun to spring up were little more than Iranian proxies:

> We have carried out this operation against the fortresses of reactionary imperialism to prove to the world that their naval and artillery firepower does not frighten us. We are soldiers of God and we are fond of death. We are neither Iranians nor Syrians nor Palestinians. We are Lebanese Muslims who follow the principles of the Quran.[5]

Little was, or still is known about this group, and while most governments and analysts assume it to be a moniker of what would later become Hezbollah,[6] the connection between the two groups will likely remain obscure. The identities of the attackers remain unknown and to date, no party has officially claimed the attacks as their own.

It is clear that at this early stage, the groups who carried out their attacks chose to keep the identities of both themselves, and the attackers secret. This secrecy was in stark

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[4] NA, "Islamic Underground Group Claims Responsibility " *United Press International*, November 4 1983.

[5] Fisk, Pity, 520

[6] Marius Deeb, *Militant Islamic Movements in Lebanon: Origins, Social Basis, and Ideology*, Occasional Paper Series (Washington, D.C: Georgetown University, 1986). 19

contrast to the utilization of martyrdom by the more established militias, whose martyrs were proudly pronounced in the posters and slogans seen in the previous chapter. According to Robert Fisk, the suicide bombers' photographs were secretly "pasted up on the walls of west Beirut with all the other militia martyrs. But on the posters, the circumstances of their death were obscured. The captions announced that the men had been 'martyred' in a Shia area of the city while fighting 'the enemies of Islam'."[7] This secrecy was likely due to the fact that suicide bombing was still very much a contentious and unknown phenomenon, and reactions to it in Lebanese society were wide-ranging, even among those who shared the overall goal of expelling the Israelis.[8]

However this began to change in 1984, due to a range of factors. First, the breakup of the Shi'ite resistance that followed from the death of Moussa al-Sadr began to settle; with al-Sadr's Amal party competing with the new conglomeration of radical Islamic militant groups under the Hezbollah banner. Second, the continued Israeli occupation of the south radicalized an already brutalized population, and as a result suicide attacks became increasingly accepted as a justifiable response to the litany of Israeli human rights abuses. While the Shi'ites of the south initially welcomed the Israelis as liberators from the excesses of the PLO, the mood quickly soured as the occupiers became increasingly oppressive in its tactics.[9] Finally, suicide attacks were initially an extremely effective weapon in the asymmetrical warfare of the guerilla resistance and while its effectiveness waned, it remained a key component in the media strategies of the militias.

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[7] Ibid
[8] Maasri, *Off the Wall*. 94
[9] Pape, *Dying*, 132

Suicide bombing was very much a contested and controversial act, as evidenced by the extent to which religious and political leaders aligned with the various parties went to justify its use. Lebanese Shi'ite clerics Shams al-Din and Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah wrote extensively on suicide bombing, arguing that in a context of direct oppression and occupation there should be no distinction between a fighter-martyr and a suicide bomber. Neither al-Din nor Fadlallah were ever directly involved in the official apparatus of Hezbollah, nevertheless their status gave suicide bombing the theological legitimacy that Hezbollah needed to carry out the operations. Two passages of Fadlallah outline this view: "If an oppressed people does not have the means to confront the United States and Israel with the weapons in which they are superior, then they [can use] unfamiliar weapons."[10] The reference to suicide bombing as an 'unfamiliar weapon' attests to the new and contested nature of suicide operations, something out of the ordinary, only justified through the massive imbalance in military capability. Moreover Fadlallah believed that as far as Islamic jurisprudence was concerned, there could be no distinction between the suicide bomber and any other fallen fighter, telling a group of Palestinian militants that, "Muslims believe that you struggle by transforming yourself into a living bomb like you struggle with a gun in your hand. There is no difference between dying with a gun in your hand or exploding yourself."[11] Such proclamations from a respected public and religious figure such as Fadlallah gave these new tactics

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[10] See Martin Kramer, "The Moral Logic of Hizballah," in *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind*, ed. Walter Reich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). available at http://www.geocities.com/martinkramerorg/MoralLogic.htm (last visited 23 March 2012)

[11] See Martin Kramer, "Sacrifice and 'Self-Martyrdom' in Shi'ite Lebanon,," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 3, no. 3 (1991). available at http://www.martinkramer.org/sandbox/reader/archives/sacrifice-and-self-martyrdom-in-shiite-lebanon/-n12 (last visited 23 March 2012)

legitimation not only in a secular context, but also in the Shi'ite tradition of Islamic jurisprudence.

There are competing accounts of when the identity of the 1982 Tyre bomber became public. American Middle East analyst Martin Kramer claims that a copy of the Hezbollah newspaper *al-Ahd* revealed the identity of Ahmad Qassir, a fifteen-year-old son of a fruit-seller, on 19 May 1985.[12] However, a poster commemorating the second anniversary of the attack, produced in 1984, suggests that Qassir's identity was known and utilized prior to this. The text exalts his status as the first in the chain of suicide attacks: "the first in the reign of heroism, the pioneer of martyrdom operations; the happy martyr Ahmad Qassir 'Haydar' [Lion]; the destroyer of the headquarters of the Israeli military governor in Sour [Tyre]"[13] Another Islamic Resistance poster produced in a similar visual style and linguistic typography was clearly one of the first to note Qassir's identity: "we announce with all proud (sic) and appreciation and we dedicate to Hazrat Khomeini the martyr Ahmad Qassir 'Haydar'. We testify the blood of the martyrs in the night of Jabl' Amel to continue all the way to victory."[14] Both of these posters predate the official founding of Hezbollah and although undated, was produced at a similar time as the previous poster. As such, it lacks the distinctive Hezbollah logo that the group would use in their later posters. Nonetheless, the posters represent a clear interjection on the part of the Islamic resistance into the public media sphere of the Lebanese civil war and a sign of the group's growing role in Lebanese politics.

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Fig. 3.1

[14] Fig. 3.2 Note: Hazrat is an honorific title literally meaning 'presence', but can be understood as 'His Holiness'.

By 1984, martyrdom operations had by and large become an accepted and understood discourse in the context of the resistance to Israeli occupation. On 16 June Balil Fahs, a seventeen-year-old unskilled worker, rammed his car filled with explosives into an Israeli military convoy, wounding five soldiers.[15] The attack was claimed by Amal, their first, and was immediately memorialized in poster form.[16] One such poster proclaims Fahs to be the 'groom of the South', a title that held a great deal of meaning. Fahs was to be married the week following his operation, which as a narrative tool exemplified his commitment to the resistance over any other material or physical concerns. His youth also referenced the death of Hussein's nephew Qasim, who was killed along with his uncle at Karbala and like Fahs, was to be married shortly after his death.[17] Fahs' sacrifice, then, could be construed by Amal both in the context of the Karbala paradigm, but also more broadly under the generalized tropes of selfless sacrifice inherent in martyrdom. Unlike previous martyrs of the Islamic Resistance, Amal was quick to capitalize and publicize their deaths, engaging in the mythmaking so necessary to the formation of national resistance figures. However, the publicization of Fahs' death had unintended consequences. A week after his death Israeli troops occupied the village of his wife-to-be, and on finding her house empty, proceeded to destroy the village mosque.[18]

The reasons behind the Islamic Resistance's decision to release the name of Qassir was likely a product of the group's struggle with Amal over who would be seen as the leader of the Shi'ite resistance. The Islamic Resistance was only then beginning to

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[15] Farouk Nassar, "Israelis Hurt in Car Explosion " *Associated Press, ,* June 16 1984.
[16] Fig. 3.3
[17] Reuter, *My Life is a Weapon : A Modern History of Suicide Bombing.* 49
[18] NA, "Israelis Surround Village, Mosque Collapses " *Associated Press* (1984).

organize and become a defined entity – they were still only a year from declaring their manifesto as 'Hezbollah' – and was in desperate need of the political clout that a strong martyr narrative could provide. Amal's martyrdom operation of Bilal Fahs was in direct competition with the narrative of Islamic Resistance as sole representative of the Shi'ites, and as such the production of the Qassir posters can be seen as a part of the media battle that pitted the two Shi'ite groups against each other. The two camps would go on to engage each other in direct fighting in 1987 for control of areas of Beirut, resulting in the near destruction of Amal, and these competing images were a forerunner to the more direct conflict that was to come. Hezbollah would continue to utilize martyrdom operations throughout 1985, but following the Israeli withdrawal late that year, they abandoned their operations for more traditional methods of resistance against the proxy South Lebanese Army. Fahs' operation would prove to be Amal's only suicide bombing, and Fadlallah revoked his edicts allowing martyrdom operations, arguing that the withdrawal had removed the clear, direct oppression that would justify suicide as a tactic of warfare.[19]

Martyrdom operations did not go unnoticed by secular pro-Syrian groups who were engaged in the resistance against the Israeli occupation. In 1982, in response the Israeli invasion, the previous constituents of the Lebanese National Movement (LNM) now joined with the pro-Syrian Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP) to form the Lebanese National Resistance Front (LNRF). Of all forty-one suicide attacks between 1982 and the end of the civil war in 1990, when martyrdom operations largely ceased,

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[19] Ariel Merari, *Driven to death: Psychological and Social Aspects of Suicide Terrorism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010). 31

twenty-one were carried out by this group or its secular allies.[20] The SSNP's adoption of this new conception of self-destructive martyrdom is indicative of the broader patterns of cultural and political diffusion that had taken place in Lebanon throughout the 20th century. Similarly to the transformation of martyrdom into a nationalistic sacrifice through the death the Shi'ite nationalist Abd' al-Karim al-Khalil discussed in the first chapter, Shi'ites once again laid the foundations for the conceptual renewal of martyrdom. The secular parties would appropriate many of the visual narratives of Hezbollah, yet they would consistently frame the sacrifice in the secular political narratives of their parties' platforms.

On 12 March 1985, Wajdi Sayegh, a 19-year-old Druze man, drove a Mercedes-Benz packed with explosives into an Israeli military convoy, killing himself and wounding a soldier.[21] Sayegh was a member of the secular SSNP, whose rhetoric, as seen in the previous chapter, was entirely couched in the language of nationalistic Pan-Syrianism. His martyrdom poster follows an almost identical style to the more traditional martyrdom posters, including a quote where Sayegh justifies his actions: "The Israeli enemy is an enemy of my nation and we will never let them rest."[22] The poster's imagery is suggestive of the SSNP's visual orthodoxy, encompassing all the symbolic imagery of the party. The raised arm of Sayagh is indicative of the party's fascist roots while the logo of both the LNRF and the SSNP and the reference to the national struggle. All the indicators are direct claims of party ownership over Sayegh's martyrdom. His sacrifice is indicative of the cross-confessional boundaries of martyrdom operations. Sayegh's Druze religion is muted, in contrast to the religious tropes that are put to the fore of the posters

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[20] Pape, *Dying*, 203
[21] G.G LaBelle, *Associated Press*, March 12 1985.
[22] Fig. 3.4

of the Islamic Resistance, reflecting the conceptualization of the nationalist struggle as one that transcends confessional boundaries.

The posters commemorating the Naharaya operation, where four fighters from the Palestinian Liberation Front (PLF) attacked an apartment complex in northern Israel, is presented under the banner of the LNRF. The event is noteworthy in that although the operation was intended to result in a prisoner swap and the direct intent was not martyrdom, posters were produced beforehand, suggesting that the handlers and fighters knew the operation would likely result in their deaths. All four were killed in the attack. The martyrdom poster of Muhammad Mahmoud, identified as the leader, was almost certainly produced in the same room as the other posters of the SSNP, giving an insight into the otherwise obscured production methods of the party and the simplicity of the party's media production capacity. Another poster was produced in the same style, showing the four fighters proudly holding their weapons in preparation for the attack.[23] As with the poster of Sayegh, the intent behind the operation is made clear through a quote of Mahmoud: "the road to the liberation of Palestine is not bent, and does not pass through Camp David; it passes first and foremost through armed struggle." Here there is a measure of continuity between the posters of Hezbollah and the secular parties. The liberation of Palestine, and the removal of Israeli occupation, unites the two groups through a rejection of the peace process and the formulation of a specifically militant Lebanese response to the crisis. An interesting aspect of this poster is the way in which is self-references the martyrdom operations of previous individuals, the poster to Mahmoud's right a sketch of a memorial poster to Habib Sharturi, the SSNP adherent

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[23] Fig. 3.6

who carried out Bashir Gemayel's assassination.[24] Although Sharturi had not carried out a suicide bombing operation, the assassination of Gemayel was a proud moment for the SSNP and they had previously produced a finalized version of the sketch seen in Mahmoud's poster.[25]

In contrast to the stern, political posters of the SSNP, the martyrdom poster of Jamal Satee, a member of the Lebanese Communist Party embodied a more humanistic presentation of suicide martyrdom. Twenty-three-year-old Satee led a mule driven cart loaded with 400kg of TNT into an Israeli-backed South Lebanese Army center in 1985, killing himself and a civilian bystander.[26] The quote on his martyrdom poster is taken from a letter apparently left with his family, where the reasoning for his actions rests firmly on the inhumanity of the Israeli occupation: "I don't care about when or where or how I die; all that matters for me is for the revolution to remain aflame all around the earth so that the world, with all its' weight, never sleeps on the bodies of the poor again."[27] In another letter, Satee is also quoted as telling his family that his martyrdom was, "for the future generations not to see the face of any Zionist soldier violating their dignity and oppressing them and preventing them from moving their own country and arresting them in prisons."[28] Satee's comments embodied the romantic socialist ideal of self-sacrifice for the poor and downtrodden, reminiscent of the literary tradition of socialism and its focus on the marginalized sections of society.

The martyrdom operations of 'Issam abd el-Satir and Mana' Hassan Kataya were presented in their posters as the vanguard of the Arab Socialist Ba'ath party. Both carried

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[24] Fig. 3.7
[25] Maasri, *Off the Wall.* 63
[26] NA, "Suicide Bomber on Mule Strikes at Militia Base", *United Press International*, August 6th 1985
[27] Fig. 3.6
[28] NA, "Suicide Bomber on Mule Strikes at Militia Base"

out their operations by driving a bomb-laden car into Israeli checkpoints, Kataya on 25 August, 1985 and el-Satir a few months later of 3 September.[29] Their posters were very much in keeping with the stately romanticism of the Syrian regime's media strategies. Syrian president Hafez al-Assad is quoted in el-Satir's poster, giving legitimacy to their act: 'Martyrs are the most benevolent in this world and the noblest of all humans'[30]. El-Satir is placed firmly in Ba'ath party orthodoxy, an 'Eagle' of the party. The Lebanese Ba'ath Party was arguably the most Syrian oriented group of all the secular parties. However, it is worth noting that the martyr's position as a member of the Ba'ath party is given textually, subservient to the LNRF logo at the top, giving el-Satir a firmly Lebanese resistance context.

There is little in the way of source material that suggests the controversial nature of suicide bombing was ever addressed by the leadership of these secular parties. As shown in the Ba'ath party poster above, the euphemistic use of the term 'martyrdom operation' to describe their actions side-stepped the self-destructive component of the act and places it firmly in the already established, generalized tradition of martyrdom. While not offering justifications, pro-Syrian politicians and leaders were vocal about the utility of suicide bombing as a public relations tool, Inaam Raad, a pro-Syrian Lebanese politician told a reporter that, "members of our party have been participating in the resistance since the summer of 1982, but what you call suicide or sacrifice operations seemed only to be people with religious motivations. Now people die for nationalistic reasons."[31] His comments were a part of the LNRF's positioning itself as a secular

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[29] NA, "Suicide Car Attacks South Lebanon Army," *Xinhua News Agency*, August, 1985 1985.
[30] Figs. 3.8 & 3.9
[31] NA, "Young Lebanese Seek New Martyrdom, Suicide Bombers Emerge as Martyrs " *Washington Post*, May 12 1985.

alternative not only in the struggle with Israel, but over legitimacy within the politics of the Lebanese state system as well. Martyrdom was the ideal narrative the parties could utilize in order to show their commitment to battling Israeli and representativeness of the Lebanese public. "Who are the leaders of the National Resistance?" asked Raad rhetorically, "The martyrs."[32] As a matter of policy, the parties of the LNRF ultimately sought a secular, non-confessional government to follow from the civil war, and by increasing their prestige and presenting an image national commitment through martyrdom operations, the secular parties were in effect engaging in a very violent and destructive form of political campaigning. As these parties sought to identify themselves as a secular, pluralistic and modern alternative to the Islamic Resistance, they introduced a new and previously suppressed aspect to martyrdom: women.

The Angels of the Militias: Gendered Representations of Conflict & Femininity

Women's involvement in the Lebanese civil war radically challenged traditional gender roles and as women became involved in all aspects of the militia structure, they began to be represented and utilized as a part of the militias' media strategies. Party politburos of the leftist groups utilized images of women to discursively promote their party's inclusivity and broad appeal, yet consistently incorporated imagery and text into these representations that reaffirmed traditional gender roles. New formulations of feminized martyrdom followed from the secular parties' progressive platforms that, officially at least, espoused gender equality. As such these figures were contested figures and remained highly gendered. The effect was that their status as women was lauded in some aspects, and passed over in others. This is evidenced most acutely in the 1985

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[32] Ibid

introduction of female suicide bombers, whose self-destructive acts ran counter to both the cultural prescriptions against suicide, as well as traditionally patriarchal nature of Lebanese society and women's relegation of women to the home sphere. The phenomenon of female suicide bombers was indicative of the ways in which gender was being transformed. The representation of these women in party media gives an indication of the ways in which these parties were grappling and adapting to women's introduction in the political realm by reasserting women's traditional gender roles.

These roles were commonly reinforced through the political posters of the militias, although they are most apparent in the leftist posters of more Marxist influenced Palestinian resistance. In the posters of the PLO, women are commonly presented in traditional Palestinian garb and linked to 'Land Day', placing them as the embodiment of cultural continuity, tradition and the women's role as provider.[33] While women could be presented as fighters, posters commonly juxtaposed the framing of women and power with symbols of feminine domesticity. A poster of the PFLP commemorating 'International Women's Day' presents two women holding Kalashnikovs, the paradigmatic symbol of armed resistance, above a long-shot of a refugee camp.[34] The poster discursively asserted that women were a part of the resistance, but their natural and traditional place is that of the home. The autobiography of Rosemary Sayigh gives some indication of the contested nature of women's role in the resistance. She writes that while she was content cook for the camp on account of her greater skill, she demanded that all the men help equally in the work:

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[33] Fig. 3.10
[34] Fig. 3.11

> I didn't accept being 'the woman in the base' […] I don't believe that women work
> alone or organize alone […] everything should be men and women. Women have
> fantastic abilities, they can work at anything, they should be in the middle of
> every action. That's my view.[35]

Women were occasionally highlighted and presented as fighters in their own right, and posters would commonly place female figures replete with Kalashnikovs, next to male figures.[36]

It was not only in the Palestinian militias that women had to fight for their acceptance in the patriarchal militias structure. Israeli journalists claimed to have come across two female Phalangists who carried with them bags of amputated fingers and earlobes in an effort to combat the image that they would be viewed as second-rate or less fierce combatants. [37] That women would need to be induced to commit atrocities likely speaks to the journalists own expectations of gender roles, but the story nonetheless denotes that women's roles in the militia system was a contentious topic. According to Lamia Rustam Shehadeh, the female fighters of the Christian militias came from all social classes and although families generally refused to let their daughters fight, many would simply run away and join without their knowledge.[38]

A more traditional method of women's participation in the militia system came through the potential position as a 'mother of a martyr'. Women whose children had died fighting for a militia were given special rights by the militia and were entitled to support,

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[35] Rosemary Sayigh, *Too Many Enemies* (London ; Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Zed Books, 1994). 248
[36] Fig. 3.12
[37] Johnson, *Honourable.* 33
[38]Lamia Rustum Shehadeh, "Impact of Armed Conflict on Gender Roles in Lebanon," in *Gender and Violence in the Middle East*, edited by Moha Ennaji and Fatima Sadiqi (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2011). 88

commonly coming in close contact with party officials.[39] Babab al-Sadr, the sister of the slain Shi'ite imam Moussa al-Sadr, claimed that being the mother of a fallen fighter constituted the noblest sacrifice a women could make: "the line of martyrdom keeps us through history revered and honored… it is this path in which we find noble sisters accept, full of love, to be mothers of martyrs. They have accepted to draw near God becoming mothers of martyrs"[40] A poster produced by Fatah's 'Palestine Martyr's Works Society', an organization which oversaw the group's 'martyr mothers', exemplifies this idealization of the woman as a traditional caregiver.[41] The workers – all working men - are extensions of her flowing hair, simultaneously placing the female figure as the source of the resistance while her demure dress suggests traditional, rural femininity. The presentation of women as both passive and active figures in the media of the Palestinian resistance was a facet both of that movement's progressive political roots, and was also an expression of the militia's intent to show how their struggle transcended traditional boundaries, while still, when it was useful, maintaining them.

Feminized Self-Destruction: The Case of the Female Suicide Bomber

This dualistic representation of women as both active, masculinized figures and passive, domesticized objects of control continued with the representations of female suicide bombers. On 9 April 1985, sixteen-year-old member of the SSNP San'a Youssef Muhaydli became the first female suicide bomber when she drove her explosive-laden car into an Israeli position, killing two. News reports claimed that she had been influenced by

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[39] Julie Marie Peteet, *Gender in Crisis : Women and the Palestinian Resistance Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991). 185
[40] Shehadeh, *Gender*, 84
[41] Fig. 3.13

the operation of Wajdi Sayegh, mentioned above, and demanded that the party give her a mission, despite the party's attempts to dissuade her from it.[42] Her martyrdom poster, produced in the recognizable style of the party, shows her smiling in front of the party's emblem, the caption reading, 'I am now planted in the south, I soak its earth with my blood'.[43] Visually she was presented in the masculine garb of the party fatigues, as seen in another poster where another militiaman held her hand up in the sign of victory while she stared into the camera. The small sign of her hand in his is subtle, but nonetheless signifies male control and assertion of power. Muhaydli's operation was widely publicized by the party, who quickly dubbed her 'The Bridegroom of the South', a moniker that was taken up in the Beirut presses.

This bridal narrative became the central mythmaking tool of the militias in regards to the female martyrdom operations, and all following female martyrs were given the same designation. In marriage, the assumptions of purity and chastity before the loss of virginity, represented in blood, are consistently utilized in SSNP literature: "The bride of the south who was married off to the entire homeland (*al-watan*)… exploded her chaste body in a red storm above the land of the resisting south."[44] The 'red storm' in her quote is a reference to the Zawba'a, the SSNP's distinctive logo representing the four core virtues of the party outlined in the previous chapter: freedom, duty, discipline and power. The carrying out of Muhaydli's operation was presented as a moment of consummation, where her loyalty to her country and her party are actualized: "From the bright blood of Sana' will emerge the explosion of freedom … and from her honorable

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[42] Scheherezade Faramarzi, "Girl Who Crashed Car Bomb Into Israelis First Sent Mother Present", *Associated Press*, 11 November 1985

[43] Fig. 3.14

[44] Quoted in Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria*. 64

face radiates the hopes of coming victory … and from her pure blessed body flowers the spring of the eternal nation."[45] The framing of Muhaydli's death as such allowed her martyrdom to be imbued with an staggering array of cultural and psychological significance, embodying a purified sexuality wrapped in the bloodied and brutal sacrifice to the nation.

The extent to which the pronouncements and quotations attributed to Muhaydli are genuine or fabrications of the party is uncertain, although undoubtedly her carrying out of the operation attests to the extent of her conviction. Nevertheless, her statements clearly fit into the narrative of the SSNP described above, which frames her martyrdom as above all a nationalistic sacrifice: "All my life I have been thinking of a revolutionary action. I have decided to fulfill my duty toward the south."[46] The Syrian government traditionally adopted the martyrdoms of the SSNP as their own, but it was some time before the leadership would give their explicit sanction to a woman carrying out a martyrdom operation. Soon however, the Syrian authorities presented Muhaydli's martyrdom as one that was carried out in devotion to the Syrian leader, Hafez al-Assad. The canonization of Muhaydli's martyrdom included a letter supposedly from her parents to the Syrian leader, referring to al-Assad by the prefix "foreordained of the resistance and guardian of right and honor." Al-Assad had long been nurturing a personality cult build around the position of national fatherhood, and the letter fit this narrative. The letter reads: "She was our only daughter and now she is your daughter also. She cherished you and loved you before her martyrdom."[47] While the veracity of the document is doubtful, it demonstrates how Muhaydli's martyrdom could be incorporated into the al-Assad

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[45] Ibid
[46] Quoted in Faramarzi, *Present,* 11 November 1986
[47] Quoted in Wedeen, *Ambiguities*, 62

personality cult. As this use of martyrdom is far from the commemorative, social function of memorialization, its cynical nature highlights just how broadly, and with differing intentions, an institution might utilize martyrdom for its own parochial interests.

Six more women would carry out martyrdom operations that year, although Muhaydli would continue to hold a similarly paradigmatic role in the SSNP's martyrological commemorations as Ahmad Qassir's martyrdom did for the Islamic Resistance. The next female martyr was a nineteen-year-old orthodox Christian named Lola Elias Abboud who was the Lebanese Communist Party's first suicide martyr. In contrast to the martyrdom posters of the SSNP, the LCP's posters were more restrained, embodying modern femininity represented in the obvious airbrushing of the photo and Abboud's relaxed attire. The posters contained more conservative political messaging as well, the obligatory quote in her poster is marked as taken from her application to the party: "The National Resistance Front is the only way for liberation and unity and democratic change."[48] The LCP's next female martyr, Wafa'a Nur al-Din would be memorialized in almost identical style, her quote embodying a fealty to the party: "There is no way except the way of national resistance."[49] In a video taped shortly before she carried out the operation, al-Din is framed by the martyrdom poster of Lola Abboud, placing the two martyrs within the same narrative of nationalistic sacrifice.[50] The video interspersed her narrative with videos of Beirut street-fighting and still images of Che Guevara, linking her sacrifice to the local Lebanese struggle as well as the broader global Marxist movement.

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[48] Fig. 3.14
[49] Fig. 3.15
[50] Video can be viewed here: http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xja2ow_martyr-wafa-nurredin-lebanese-communist-party-jammoul_news (Last accessed 23 March 2012)

A poster was produced on the occasion of the first anniversary of San'a Mehaidli's martyrdom operation in 1986, which, according to the text of the poster, was also dubbed the 'Week of the Female Resistance Fighters'. The poster incorporated all of the female martyrs of the previous year in a visual style that was in contrast to the stark formality of the previous posters of the SSNP. The childish, free-flowing pastels of this poster embodied a more direct femininity than other posters and placed the martyrs in an idealized, colorful context that served to reassert the more traditional categories of the female martyr. The only martyr that is missing is Norma Abu Hassan, a twenty-six-year-old Christian schoolteacher undertake a car-bombing mission in August 1986. She would be the SSNP's last female martyr, and her martyrdom poster reasserted the form and style of the previous presentations of female bombers as officialized masculine figures of party orthodoxy.[51]

All of the women female bombers of the SSNP were accessorized wearing a red beret, a feature that is not apparent in any of the posters of male suicide bombers. The red cap was indicative of the party's focus on blood as a signifier of purity and attachment, and its appearance solely in association to women could only reference the party's gendered linking of purity, chastity and virginity with the violent and destructive act of feminized suicide bombing. The posters belie a certain insecurity on the part of the producers over how, and in which way it was best to encapsulate these women visually. The result was an amalgam of both, where women were powerful figures capable of doing and carrying out the actions traditionally associated with men, but where it was equally necessary, in order to preserve their notable status, to signify their femininity. It was their femininity after all, which set these fighters apart.

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[51] Fig. 3.16

Conclusion: Manufacturing Consent Through Suicide Bombing

      Whether representing male or female martyrs, these posters cannot be separated from the political and social climate of their time. More so than the traditional martyrdom posters seen in the previous chapter, the visual representation of suicide bombers served as tools of political campaigning and methods of popular legitimation. They were a central component of the militias' strategy to make the suicide operations culturally and socially acceptable in the eyes of the Lebanese public who, they hoped, would back their parochial vision of Lebanon. Some would find more success than others. Hezbollah continued to grow and would turn to armed struggle in the battle with Amal over leadership of the Shi'ite resistance, a struggle that eventually led to the mass desertion of Amal forces to Hezbollah. The LNRF had always shot above their weight in terms of popularity and military might and after a slew of leadership assassinations and heavy losses in battle the group effectively ceased to function as an effective fighting force. However, the implications of suicide bombing and women's involvement in it cannot be understood. The tactic would be adopted in conflicts globally, with diverse groups incorporating and presenting the act to their audience in ways specific and particular to their struggle. In Lebanon, the war effectively broke the cultural taboo of women's involvement in politics and conflict and they would continue to join and fight for the militias henceforth.

Epilogue: Watching From the Ruins

The Lebanese civil war left many relics. In downtown Beirut and its suburbs, as well as other cities and towns in Lebanon, half-devastated buildings still stand, attesting to the brutality that was inflicted on the country by both foreign armies and the warring factions of Lebanese society during the civil war. On the walls of these ruins political parties continue to fix their posters, except now they compete with billboards selling consumer products to the new middle classes that nominal peace has allowed to grow. Yet despite the development and continued production of visual media in the post-war years, the martyrdom posters discussed in this study can still be seen, commonly hanging from light-posts or fixed to the lingering ruins of apartment complexes. I first encountered these images in April 2006 while driving through Tyre, where from each light-post hung old, worn photos of young men. When I asked who these men were, my Lebanese companion informed me that they were all *shuhada*, martyrs from a civil war that I was only vaguely aware of. As we drove on the posters continued unabated, I began to ask myself what processes and systems made such public memorialization possible.

This paper represents a belated foray into answering some of the questions I began to ask myself that day. I have argued that contrary to the established scholarly consensus of martyrdom in Lebanon, there is a strong current of nationalism in the way that martyrdom is formulated in Lebanon. The intent is not to psychoanalyze the motivations of individual fighters or the culture as a whole, but rather to illuminate certain aspects of cultural processes that are commonly passed over in studies of Lebanon. There can be other avenues to understanding the violence between certain aspects of Lebanese society that does not reduce it to a simple expression of religious

intolerance or xenophobic clan solidarity. Religion does play an incredibly important role in all this, but to say that it is the *sole* rubric in which to understand martyrdom, as some authors I mentioned have, is to ignore the nuances of Lebanese political and social culture and to completely disregard the history of the country's secular movements.

Lebanon is not an island. While I have focused on martyrdom solely in the political boundaries of the Lebanese state, my argument for a more complex understanding of the relationships between religious and secular phenomenon has implications for the broader region. As shown in the second chapter, Palestinian groups shared a similar conception of national sacrifice through martyrdom, suggesting that Palestinian nationalism underwent a similar historical reconceptualization of martyrdom to what, I argue, occurred in Lebanon. As Lebanon was the birthplace of the new formations of martyrdom expressed in suicide bombing, contemporary research into its continued use in a variety of global arenas must take into account that these self-destructive acts were utilized and formed in large part by secular parties, a point lost to many in the western foreign policy establishment. Understanding the ways in which sacrifice and martyrdom has been conceptualized is as important now as ever. As popular movements in the Middle East continue to agitate against entrenched oligarchies, and as these movements carry their martyrs through the streets in funeral processions, it is imperative that we understand the particular historical context of martyrdom's cultural and political formation.

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Appendix

The posters compiled and used in this paper come primarilys from the American University of Beirut Archives, which can be accessed here: **http://ddc.aub.edu.lb/projects/ jafet/posters/index.html**. All other posters come from Zeinna Maasri's publication, 'Off The Wall: Political Posters of the Lebanese Civil War' as noted in the bibliography. Each poster is designated by a number corresponding to the chapter in which it is referred to, the group that published it, and where possible, the specific name of the designer. The posters will be marked either by 'Maasri' or 'AUB' designating which source it can be found.

Part I

Fig. 1.1 Government of Lebanon, 1943
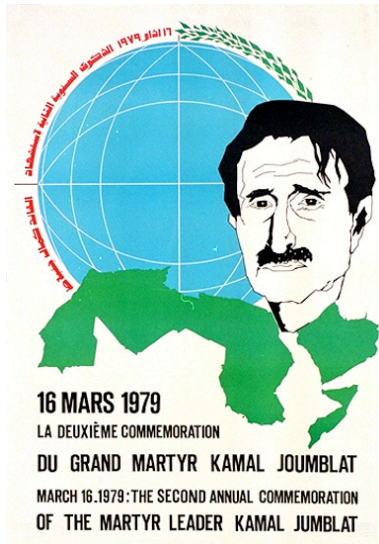
Fig. 2.1, Progressive Socialist
Party, 1979 (AUB)
Anonymous
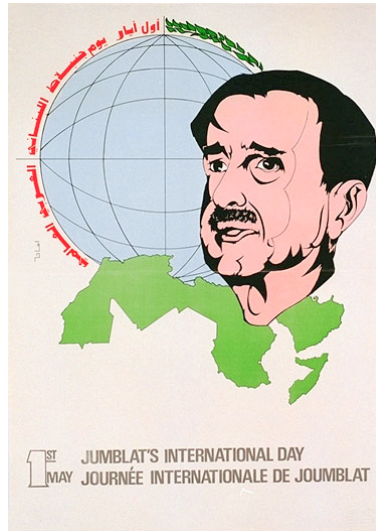
Fig. 2.2, Progressive Socialist
Party, 1979 (AUB)
Anonymous
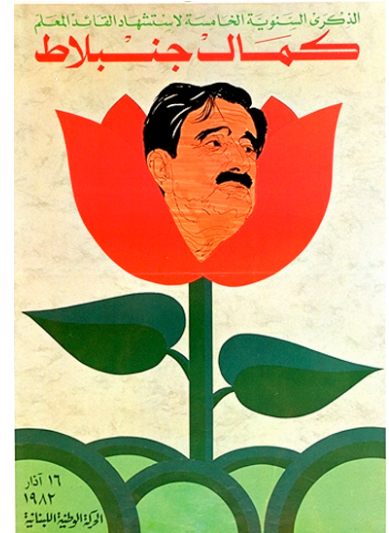
Fig. 2.5, Progressive Socialist
Party, late-1970s (AUB)
Anonymous

Fig. 2.3, Progressive Socialist
Party, 1982 (Maasri)
Anonymous
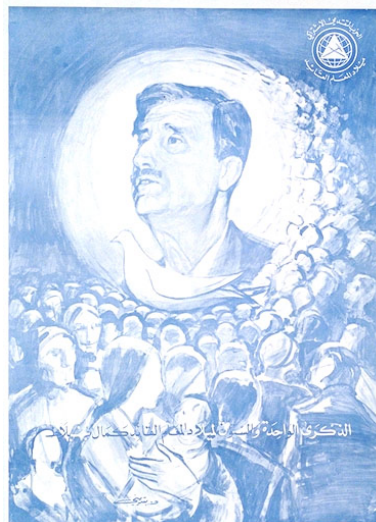
Fig. 2.4, Progressive Socialist
Party, 1978 (Maasri)
Anonymous

Fig, 2.6, Lebanese National
Movement, 1977 (AUB)
Anonymous

Fig. 2.7, Lebanese Forces, 1983 (Maasri)
Raidy

Fig. 2.9, Lebanese Forces, 1983
(Maasri)
Raidy

Fig. 2.8, Lebanese Forces, 1983 (Maasri)
Pierre Sadek

Fig. 2.11, Hezbollah, 1980s
(Maasri)
Anonymous
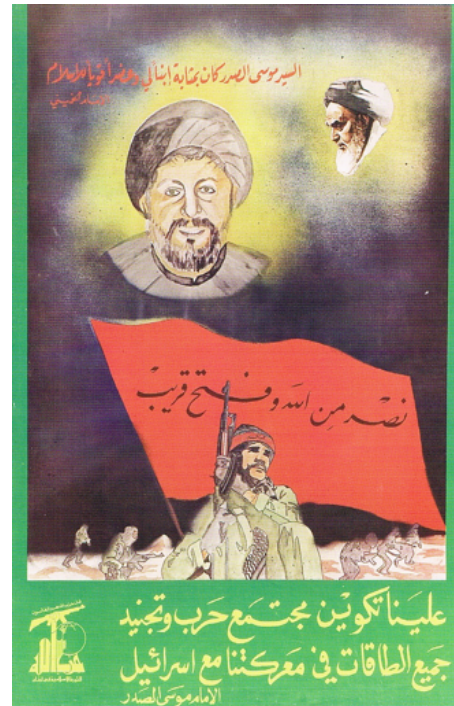
Fig. 2.10, Amal, 1978 (AUB)
Anonymous
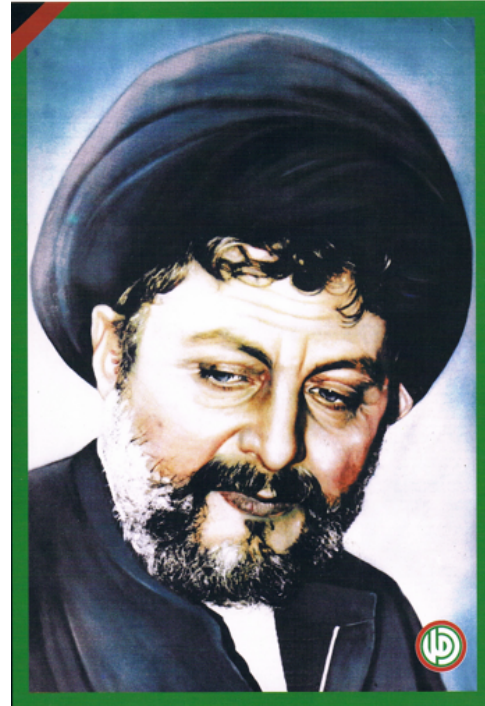
Fig. 2.12, Hezbollah, 1985 (AUB)
Anonymous
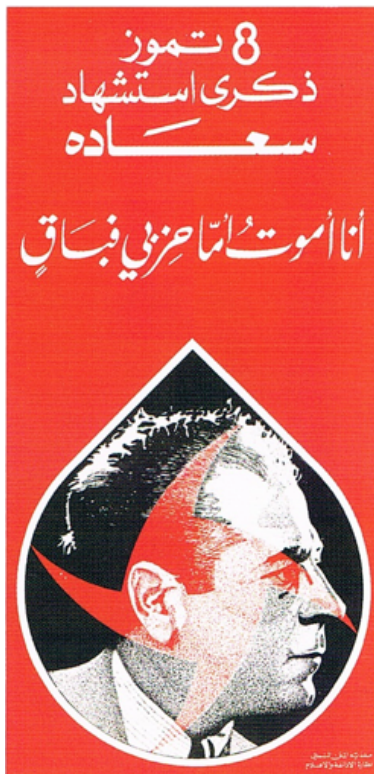
Fig. 2.13, Syrian Social Nationalist Party, 1980s (Maasri)
Roger Sawaya

Fig. 2.14, Syrian Social Nationalist Party, 1977 (AUB)
Tammouz Knayzeh and Camil Baraka
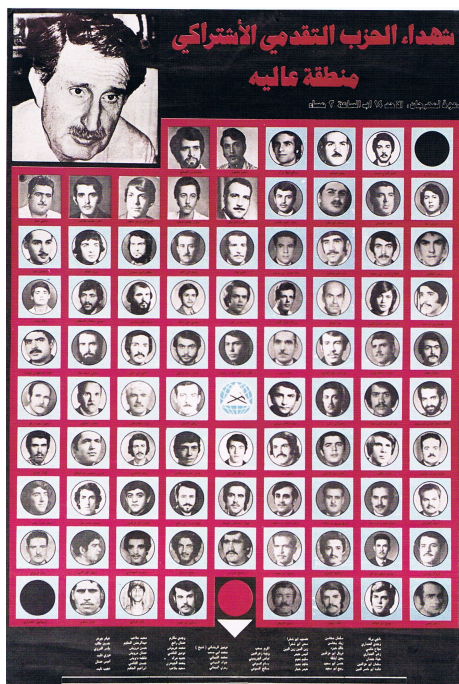
Fig. 2.15, Progressive Socialist Party, 1983 (AUB)
Anonymous

Fig. 2.16, Progressive Socialist Party, late 1970s (AUB)
Anonymous

Fig. 2.17, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, 1979 (Maasri)
Anonymous

Fig. 2.16, Palestine Liberation Organization, late-1970s (AUB)
Anonymous

Fig. 2.19, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, late 1970s (AUB)
Anonymous

Fig. 2.18, Palestinian Liberation Organization,
late-1970s (AUB)
Anonymous

Fig. 2.19, Palestinian Liberation
Organization, late-1970s (AUB)
Anonymous

Fig. 2.20, Popular Front for the Liberation
of Palestine, 1977 (AUB)
Anonymous
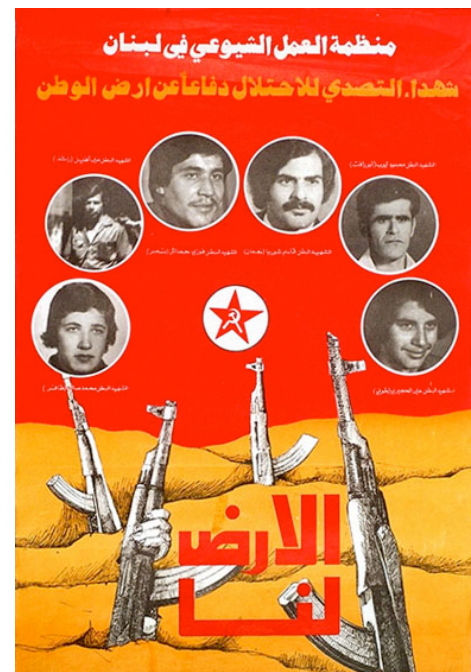
Fig. 2.21, Lebanese Communist
Party, 1980 (Maasri)
Anonymous

الحزب السوري القومي الاجتماعي
ان ازكن الشهادات هي شهادة الدم

الرفيق الشهيد
ابراهيم يوسف قطايا (مواليد نبحا 1957)
استشهد في معارك الفن الشمالي بتاريخ 11/5/1985 دفاعاً عن وحدة لبنان وانتمائه القومي

الحزب السوري القومي الاجتماعي
ان ازكن الشهادات هي شهادة الدم

الرفيق الشهيد
كنج عبده ماضي (مواليد شبعا 1960)
استشهد في معارك الفن الشمالي بتاريخ 11/5/1985 دفاعاً عن وحدة لبنان وانتمائه القومي

الحزب السوري القومي الاجتماعي
ان ازكن الشهادات هي شهادة الدم

الرفيق الشهيد
خليل الياس ابو حمود (مواليد بكفتا 1950)
استشهد في معارك الفن الشمالي بتاريخ 11/5/1985 دفاعاً عن وحدة لبنان وانتمائه القومي

شهداء الحزب الشيوعي اللبناني
آذار 1975 / آذار 1976

لا أعرفهم
لكني أعرف فيهم دربي
وبطاقة حزبي
أعرف فيهم شعبي
لا أعرفهم
لكني أعرف فيهم زمني
أعرف فيهم وطني

استشهدوا في المعركة ضد المخطط الانعزالي الفاشي
دفاعاً عن لبنان ووحدته وعروبته وعن المقاومة الفلسطينية

Fig. 2.22, Lebanese Communist Party,
1976 (Maasri)
Anonymous

الحزب السوري القومي الاجتماعي
ان ازكن الشهادات هي شهادة الدم

الرفيق الشهيد
عارف احمد زنيط (مواليد اللبوة 1958)
استشهد في معارك الفن الشمالي بتاريخ 11/5/1985 دفاعاً عن وحدة لبنان وانتمائه القومي

Fig. 2.23, Syrian Social Nationalist
Party, 1980 (Maasri)
Anonymous

Fig. 2.24, National Liberal Party, 1976 (Maasri)
Anonymous
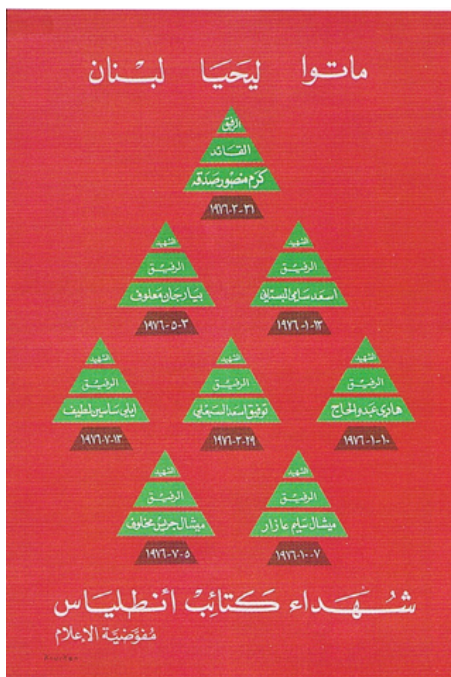
Fig. 2.26, Phalange Party,
late-1970s (Maasri)
Anonymous

Fig. 2.27, Tanzim, 1977 (Maasri)
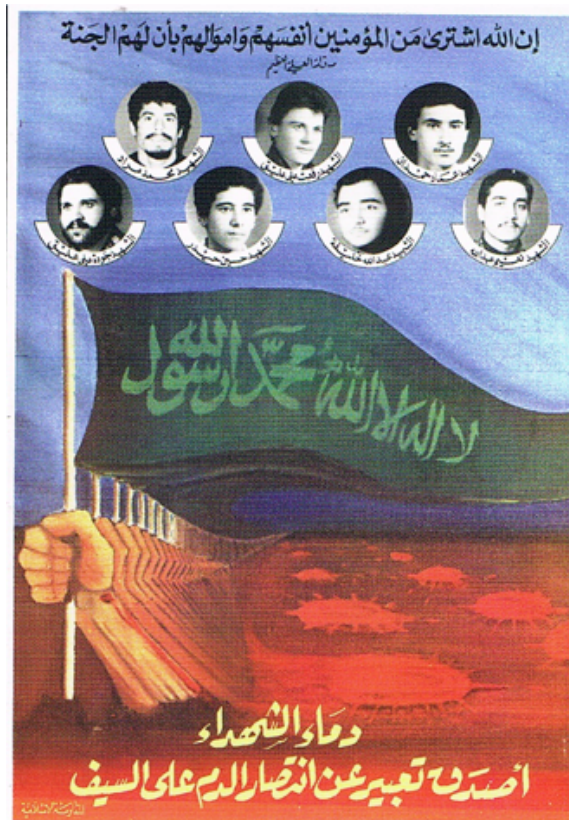**Anonymous**
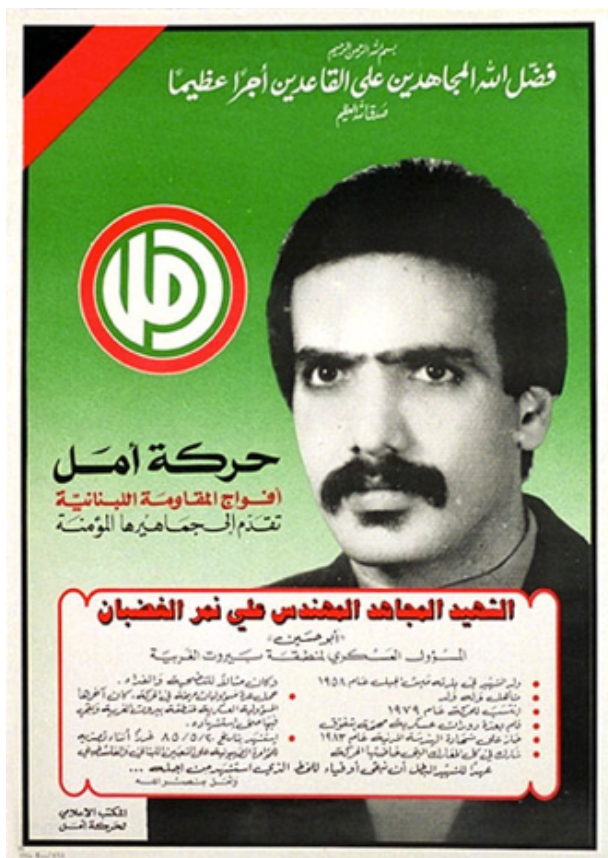
Fig. 2.28, Amal, 1985 (AUB)
Anonymous

Fig. 2.30, Hezbollah, mid-1980s (AUB)
Anonymous
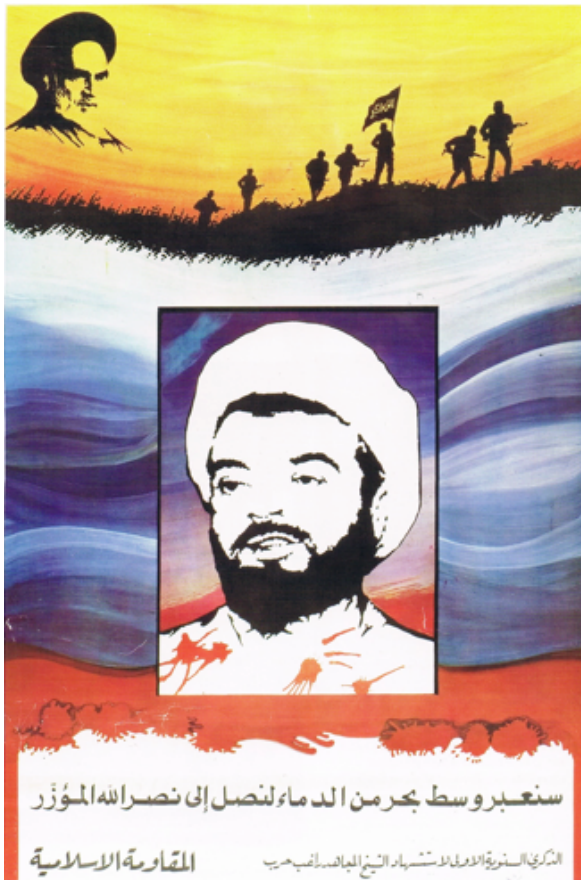

Fig. 2.29 Hezbollah,
1985 (Maasri)
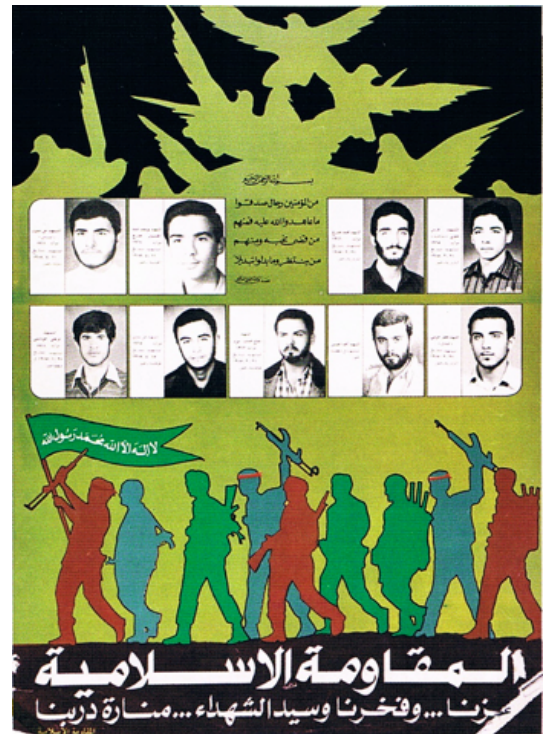**Anonymous**

Fig. 2.31, Hezbollah, 1985 (Maasri)
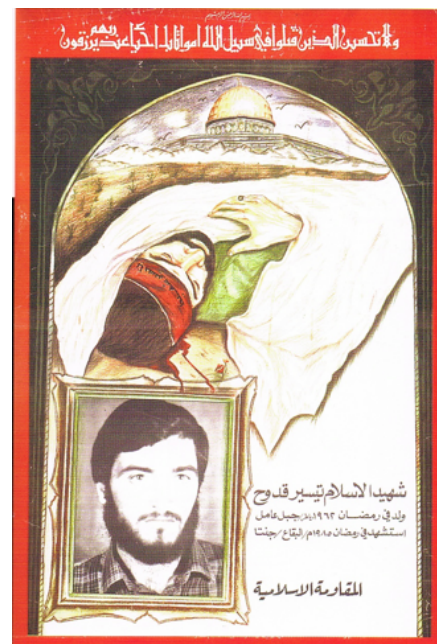**Anonymous**

Fig. 2.32, Hezbollah, 1985 (Maasri)
Anonymous

Fig. 2.32, Hezbollah, 1985 (Maasri)
Anonymous

Part III

Fig. 3.1, Hezbollah / Islamic
Resistance, 1984 (Maasri)
Anonymous

Fig. 3.2, Hezbollah / Islamic
Resistance, 1984 (AUB)
Anonymous

Fig. 3.3: Amal, 1984 (AUB)
Nabih Kdouh

Fig. 3.4, Syrian Social Nationalist Party /
Lebanese National Resistance Front, 1985
(Maasri)
Anonymous

Fig. 3.6, Syrian Social Nationalist Party /
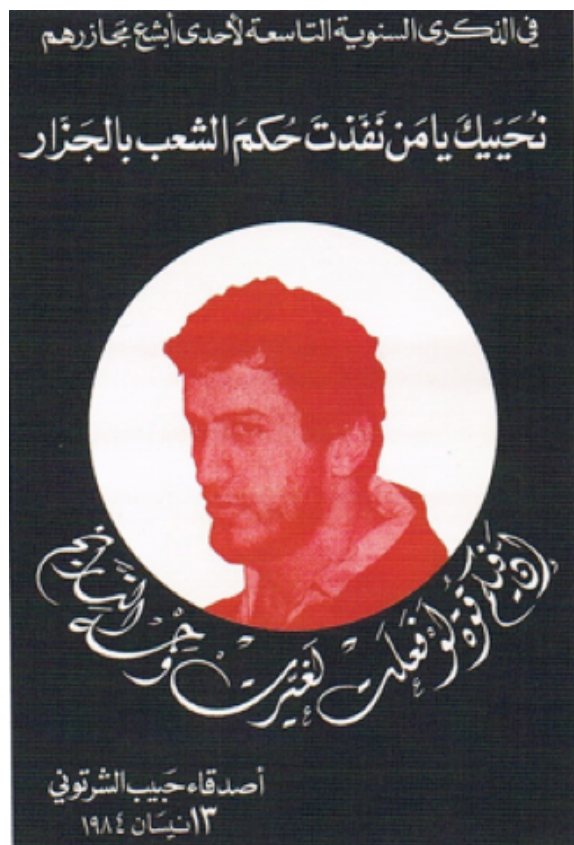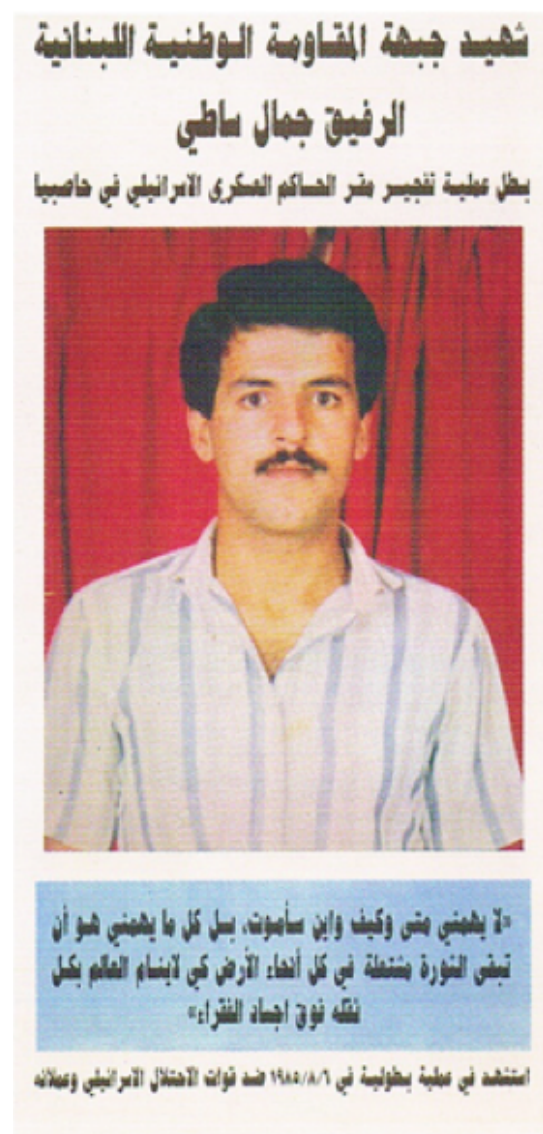Lebanese National Resistance Front,
1984 (Maasri)
Anonymous
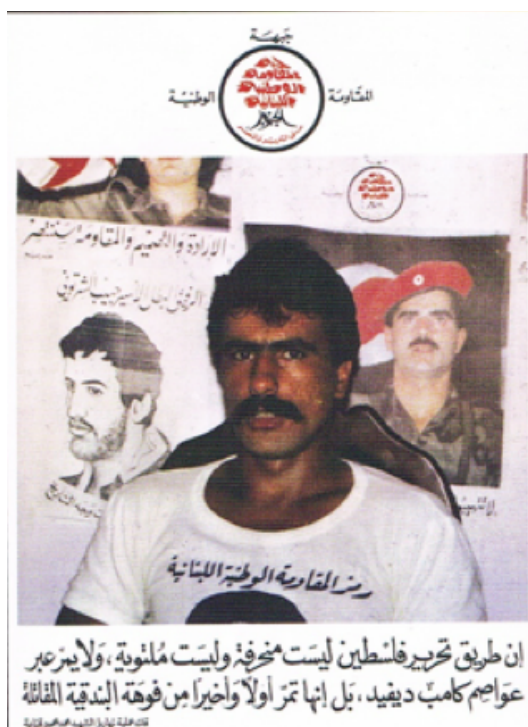
Fig. 3.5, Syrian Social Nationalist Party /
Lebanese National Resistance Front,
1985 (Maasri)
Anonymous

Fig. 3.7, Syrian Social Nationalist
Party / Lebanese National Resistance
Front, 1985 (Maasri)
Anonymous

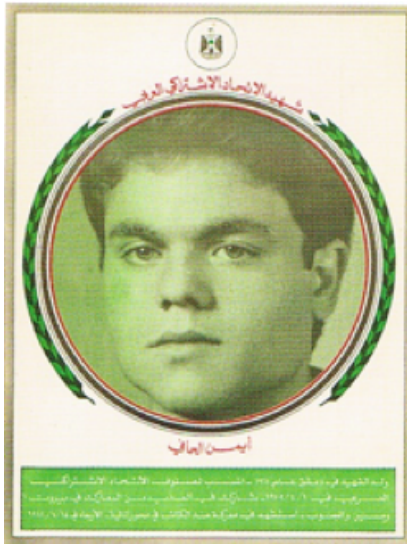
Fig. 3.8, Lebanese Communist
Party, 1985 (Maasri)
Anonymous

Fig. 3.8, Arab Socialist Ba'ath
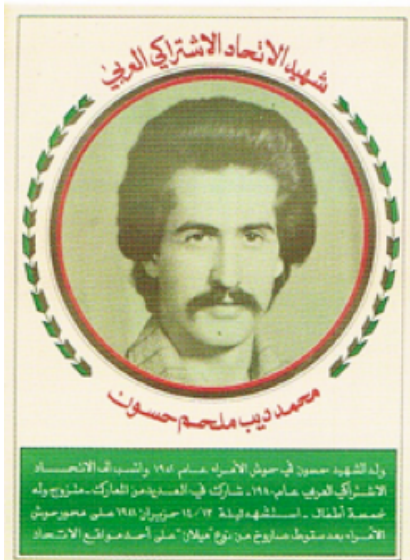Party, 1985 (Maasri)
Anonymous

Fig. 3.9, Arab Socialist
Ba'ath Party, 1985 (Maasri)
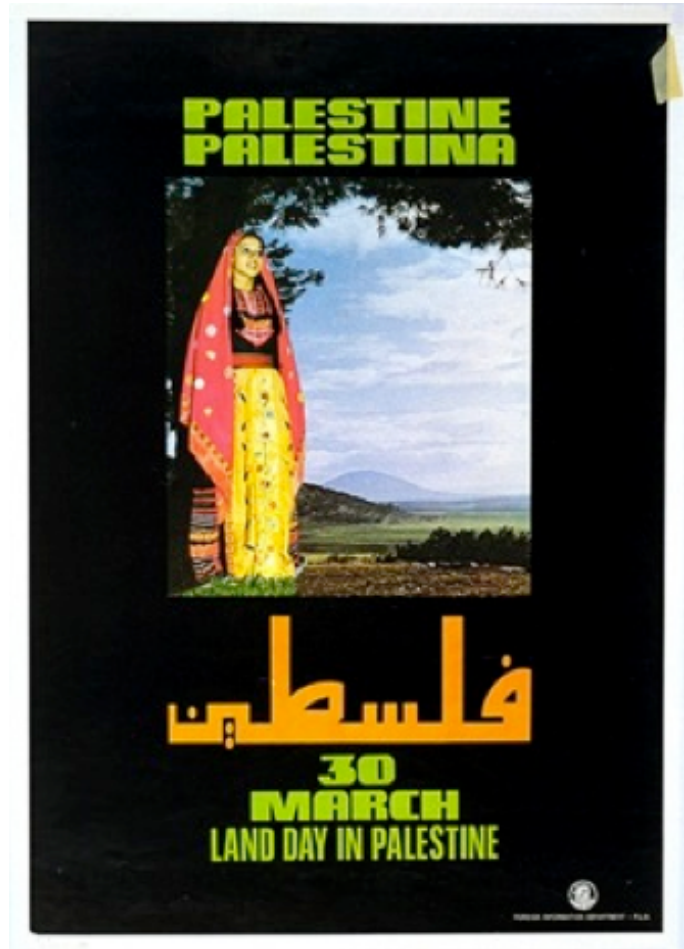**Anonymous**

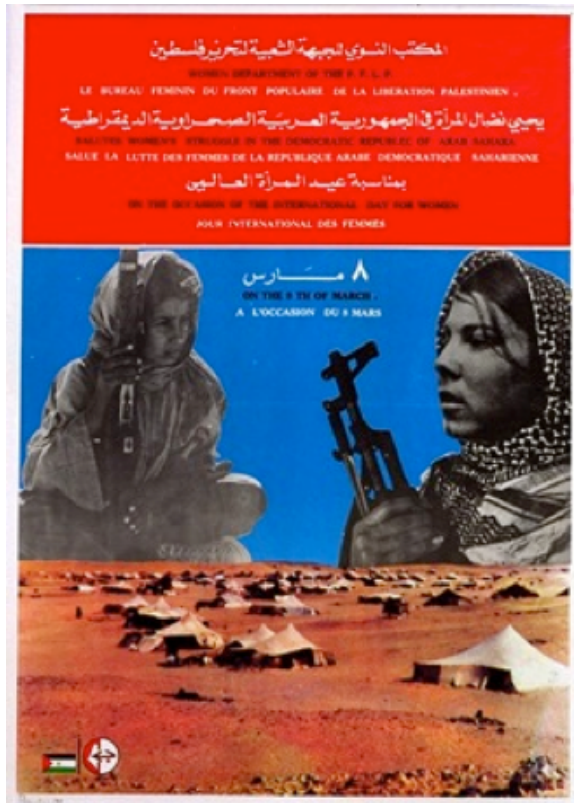Fig. 3.10, Fatah, 1978 (AUB)
Anonymous

Fig. 3.11 Democratic Front for the
Liberation of Palestine, late-1970s
(AUB)
Anonymous

Fig. 3.13, Palestinian Liberation
Organization, late-1970s (AUB)
Anonymous

Fig. 3.12, Palestine Martyr's Works
Society, 1978
Anonymous

جبهة المقاومة الوطنية اللبنانية

أنا الآن مَزروعَة في ترابِ الجنوب أسقيه مِن دَمي

3.14, Syrian Social Nationalist Party / Lebanese National Resistance Front, 1985 (Maasri)
Anonymous

شهيدة جبهة المقاومة الوطنية اللبنانية

لؤلؤة البقاع لولا الياس عبود

«جبهة المقاومة الوطنية هي الطريق الوحيد للتحرير والتوحيد والتغيير الديمقراطي»

«من طلب انتساب الشهيدة لولا الياس عبود الى الجبهة»

استشهدت في عملية بطولية في ٨٥/٤/٢٦ ضد قوات الاحتلال الاسرائيلي وعملائه.

Fig. 3.15, Lebanese Communist Party, 1985 (Maasri)
Anonymous

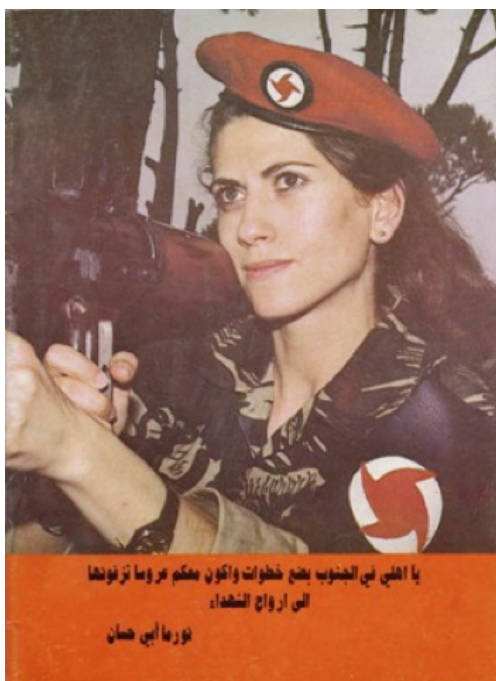يا اهلي في الجنوب بضع خطوات واكون معكم عروسا تزفونها الى ارواح الشهداء

نورما أبي حسان

Fig. 3.16, Syrian Social Nationalist Party, 1986 (AUB)
Anonymous