Chapter III

PALESTINIAN ARMED PRESENCE IN LEBANON AND THE ISRAELI RAIDS
The Palestinian presence in Lebanon originated with the first Arab-Israeli war of 1948. The tragic turn of the war motivated an influx of over 140,000 refugees mainly from North Palestine (Eastern and Western Galilee) into Lebanon. Unlike the Armenians, the Palestinian refugees were not incorporated into Lebanon's own population, both because this was the policy decreed by the Arab League in order to preserve their national identity and because of Lebanese Christian opposition to such an increase in Lebanon's Muslim population. Initially the refugees were temporarily settled in transit camps built in Southern Lebanon but from 1950 onwards the Lebanese government began to transfer the Palestinians to camps scattered throughout Lebanon.

For almost two decades after they had been rendered homeless the main theatre of Palestinian activities was Jordan. Nevertheless, the Palestinians in Lebanon were involved in Lebanese politics, especially in student circles.


(that of American University of Beirut in particular) and at times in political strife such as the 1958 crisis. During the crisis they sympathized with the Lebanese Muslims and many among them took part on an individual basis in the Nasserist uprising. The role of the Palestinian refugees in the domestic politics of Lebanon, however, was within bounds and they were no more than auxiliaries to Lebanese leaders of pan-Arab and Nasserite leanings. The Palestinians lacked an identity of their own, awareness of their role, independent means, a leadership of their own and a theory of action to direct their activities.

3. In 1958 Lebanon had been plunged into a brief civil war under the combined pressure of certain domestic and regional developments. The upsurge of messianic pan-Arab nationalism under the leadership of Nasser had aroused grave concern among the Lebanese Christians. A section of Christian leadership, headed by President Kamil Shamun advocated a resolute policy based on unambiguous cooperation with the West against the wave of revolutionary pan-Arab nationalism. This was construed as a betrayal of the Arab cause and violation of the National Pact by the Lebanese Muslims. The matter was further complicated by Shamun's decision to modify the constitution to enable his re-election for a second consecutive term. A majority of the Muslim leaders and a few Christians opposed this and during the 1957 Parliamentary elections Shamun sought to exclude them from the new Parliament. Tensions mounted further after the formation of the United Arab Republic in February 1958 and a civil war broke out between Shamun's supporters and his opponents most of whom were Muslims. For studies on the 1958 crisis see M.S.Agwani, ed., The Lebanese Crisis 1958: A Documentary Study (London, 1965); and Fahim I.Qubain, Crisis in Lebanon (Washington, D.C., 1961).

(a) **The Emergence of a Palestinian Identity**

The Arab Summit meeting in Cairo in 1964 is an important milestone in both Palestinian and Lebanese history and marks a turning point in Lebanese-Palestinian relations. The summit had been held in order to coordinate a policy aimed at counter-acting Israel's recent action of diverting the waters of river Jordan for irrigation. The Jordan river's headwaters originate in Lebanon from the Wazzani and Hasbani rivers. Members of the Arab Summit, therefore, recommended that these waters be diverted to Jordan and Syria while a United Arab Command be established along the Lebanese-Israeli frontier for the purpose of guarding against any Israeli attacks. The Lebanese President Charles Hilu agreed to the proposals, but on condition that no Arab troops would be stationed without Lebanon's formal request.\(^5\)

The Arab summit took another very important decision. Since the establishment of the State of Israel all matters relating to the Palestine issue had been handled by the Arab League in which the Palestinians had no direct representation. The Arab League decided to establish a Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) which would serve as the official representative of the Palestine national interest. Under the PLO a Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) was to be

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5. Ibid., pp.23-25.
set up in order to enable the Palestinians to participate in the overall Arab effort aimed at liberating Palestine. Lebanon voted for the establishment of the PLO but insisted that its military arm, the PLA could have no bases in Lebanon. Any Palestinian resident of Lebanon who wanted to join the PLO could do so only by leaving the country and renouncing the right to return. 6

Prior to the formation of the PLO, a secret organization espousing armed struggle had been formed in 1959 among Palestinian patriots living in various countries. This organization led by Yasser Arafat was called Palestine National liberation Movement and was known by a reversal of its Arabic initials as Fath. 7 From 1965, until the Arab-Israeli war of June 1967 three other guerilla organizations emerged two of which, the Venegance Youth and Heroes of Return were connected to the Arab National Movement led by George Habash. The third group, the Palestine Liberation Front was formed by Palestinian officers trained in Syrian army. In 1967 these three groups merged into one to form the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) under George Habash. 8 Fath and PFLP constituted the base of

6. Ibid., p.25.
what came to be known since 1967 as the Palestine Resistance Movement (PRM).\(^9\)

The popularity of the PRM among the Palestinians and Arab masses rose after the defeat of the regular Arab armies of Egypt, Syria and Jordan in 1967. The sweeping Israeli victory "discredited not only the Arab regimes but also the PLO whose verbal extremism had not been matched by military successes during the brief war".\(^{10}\) The rise of the PRM resulted in a temporary decline of the PLO. The PLO Head, Ahmed Shuqairi had to resign in December 1967 and his successor Yahya Hammouda realized that the PLO would have to associate the guerilla organizations if it was to survive. In July 1968 an agreement was reached between the PLO, Fath and PFLP according them representation in the Palestine National Council (PNC). During that year the guerillas, particularly Fath became very influential within the PLO and in February 1969 they established control by electing Arafat as Chairman of the PLO executive committee.\(^{11}\)

9. There were two other guerilla organizations that belonged to the PRM. First there was the Syrian sponsored Vanguard of the Popular Liberation War better known after its militia Saiqa. It was created after the June 1967 war and was the direct instrument of the Syrian regime. The other organization called Arab Liberation Front was much smaller and followed the directions of the Iraqi Baathist regime.


(b) The PRM Strikes Roots in Lebanon

The rise of the PRM after June 1967 led to a transformation of the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon into strong-holds of the guerilla organization. Prior to 1967 Fath had organized a few secret cells in some of the camps. The Deuxieme Bureau (Army Intelligence Bureau) had, however, maintained a strict surveillance over the camps and foiled most of the attempts to infiltrate into Israel. As early as December 1965 one of the Fath's commandos Jalal Kawash was arrested by the Lebanese Army as he prepared to lead a military operation into Israel. He died in custody a few days later and a communique from the Lebanese Defence Ministry announced on 11 January 1966 that Kawash had committed suicide during interrogations. This version was strongly contested by Fath which claimed that Kawash had been tortured to death. In June that year another commando was killed in a skirmish that took place between Lebanese security patrol and commandos near the Israeli border. During the same summer Arafat himself was arrested while entering Lebanon after a reconnaissance mission in Israel. Syria subsequently had to intervene to get him released.

Following the June 1967 war there was a tremendous upsurge in sympathy for the commandos among the ranks of the Lebanese Muslims. The Battle of Karameh in March 1968 in the Jordan valley gave a further boost to the popularity of the PRM. The following month when the first Lebanese volunteer in the Palestinian commando ranks, Khalil al-Jamal, was killed in action a quarter of a million people participated in his funeral. Later the funeral procession was turned into a massive demonstration demanding freedom of action for the PRM in Lebanon.

Despite the lack of official sanction, the build up of commando bases and the training of commando militias in southern Lebanon continued at a rapid pace throughout 1968. The Syrian authorities assisted the PRM in establishing commando bases and developed special lines of supply connecting these bases with Syria.

(c) The PRM as a Domestic Factor

The rise of the PRM had deep repercussions on the domestic politics of Lebanon. For the Lebanese Muslims, particularly the Sunnis who had always shown indignation at the artificial isolation of Lebanon from pan-Arab


concerns the PRM presence was a welcome opportunity to involve Lebanon more actively with Arab world. At the same time to the average Lebanese Muslim "who saw the Christian political ascendancy in the country as a sort of domination, the presence of Palestinian commando movement appeared as a security. To let down the Palestinians, to him, was, tantamount to letting down the Muslim Lebanese cause". 18

The leftists and progressive forces, with a vested interest in changing the Maronite dominated political system, saw in the PRM and the issue of its continued presence and freedom of activity a rallying point around which their sphere of influence could be extended. They united in a front called the Front of National and Progressive Parties and Forces, better known as the National Movement (NM) headed by the traditional Druze leader and President of the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) Kamal Junblatt. 19 The NM extended its unreserved support to the Palestinian cause in Lebanon.

18. Salibi, n.4, p.54.

19. The NM was comprised of six major parties or organizations. Apart from Junblatt’s PSP, there were (1) the Independent Nasserite Movement led by Ibrahim Qulailat, (2) Lebanese Communist Party led by Niqula al-Shawi, (3) Organization of Communist Action led by Muhsin Ibrahim, (4) Arab Socialist Baath Party led by Abd al-Majid Rifai, and (5) Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party led by Inam Raad. There were a number of minor organizations allied to the NM the prominent ones being the 24th October Movement of Faruq Maqaddam and the Populist Nasserite Organization led by Mustafa Saad.
As a result of the growing Muslim and Leftist support to the Palestinian cause the Catholic Christians, particularly its Maronite component began to view the PRM presence as a threat to their established position in Lebanon. The principal Maronite leaders could rightly perceive that the PRM "might catalyze a movement for change among those sections of the Lebanese population who were either frozen out of effective participation or limited by custom to an inferior position vis-a-vis the Maronites". This growing concern regarding the PRM was one of the reasons for the three principal Maronite parties, the Phalangist Party led by Jumayil, the National Liberal Party led by Kamil Shamun and the National Bloc led by Raymond Edde - to come together and form an alliance known as the Triple Alliance in March 1968. The electoral gains scored by the Alliance in the parliamentary elections held that year was indicative of the deep sense of insecurity felt by the Catholic Christians due to the PRM presence.

(ii) Israeli Raids Against Lebanon: Aims and Objectives

Ever since the signing of the GAA between Israel and Lebanon in March 1949, quiet had prevailed on the border


between the two countries except for occasional incidents like burning down of an Israeli barn or theft of an Israeli herd or Lebanese villagers straying across the international boundary into Israel to graze cattle. Soon after the GAA had been signed, in April 1949 the UN had set up a Conciliation Commission for Palestine charged with the task of sponsoring Arab-Israeli peace discussions. During negotiations at Lausanne the seat of the Conciliation Commission, Tel Aviv had proposed to Lebanon that the ADL between the two countries be transformed by a treaty of peace into an official, internationally recognized boundary. Beirut dismissed the Israeli proposal, for its acceptance would have implied (a) Lebanon’s defection from an Arab World hostile to Israel and (b) a de facto alliance between the Jewish state and the Catholic Christians of the Levent. Lebanon on the other hand had made two counter-proposals of its own. First that the Palestinians who had fled to Lebanon during the 1948 war be repatriated to Israel and second that the portion of Western Galilee which had been set aside by the UN Partition Plan of 1947 for the Arab sector of Palestine be handed over to Lebanon. Predictably enough Israel rejected the Lebanese proposals and the discussions at Lausanne ultimately ended in

23. Ibid., p.59.
deadlock. Lebanon thereafter settled into a policy of non-recognition of Israel while at the same time trying its best to avoid any and all acts of provocation that could bring about an Israeli military intervention.

Article VII of the GAA established an Israeli-Lebanese Mixed Armistice Commission (ILMAC) under UN auspices. ILMAC was authorized to establish two headquarters—one at the Israeli frontier post at Metulla and the other at the Lebanese frontier post at Ras an-Naqurah. The mission of the ILMAC was to enforce, on the basis of unanimous consent the provisions of the GAA. The ILMAC met at periodic intervals and rarely had serious complaints to deal with. Minor disputes relating to cross-border thefts, wandering livestock or grazing of cattle on the wrong side of the ADL that were presented before it were expeditiously settled. Lebanon was always eager to see that the ILMAC performed effectively and this eagerness in fact bordered sometimes on obsequiousness. In 1955 some Israelis were killed by Arab infiltrators from Lebanon. The incident so alarmed the Lebanese authorities that they set about immediately to remove "all refugees and people other than old established residents... from a zone ten kilometers deep on the Lebanese side of the border."  

By paying careful attention to Israeli sensitivities in the border area, Lebanon bought nearly two decades of peace with its southern neighbour. The situation began to change from the mid-sixties onwards with the rise and growth of PRM in Southern Lebanon. While it is true that the Lebanese army maintained strict surveillance over Palestinian camps, there were limits to its capacity to control Palestinian activity in the south. Lebanon’s armed forces was small in size which by 1968 had reached a strength of 13,200\(^{26}\) and such a small force found it extremely difficult to enforce discipline on a growing numbers of commandos who were receiving financial and logistical support from other Arab States particularly Syria. Thus despite the army’s strict surveillance Palestinian guerillas did manage to carry out occasional commando operations against Israel.

The rise and growth of the Resistance Movement in Southern Lebanon brought in its wake Israeli raids, a phenomena from which Lebanon had been totally free till the mid-1960s. The first Israeli raid against Lebanon was launched on 28 October 1965 when units of the Israeli Army crossed the frontier and dynamited three water reservoirs and the house of a Lebanese village chief thereby killing one Lebanese woman.\(^{27}\) In time, this kind of raid was to become a routine affair in much of Southern Lebanon.

\(^{27}\) Daily Star (Beirut), 30 October 1965.
On the face of it Israeli raids were in response to commando operations launched by the PRM from Lebanon against Israel and formed a part of its overall policy of reprisal against Arab states. In the language of strategic theory Israel's reprisal policy exemplified coercive diplomacy intended to affect an opponent's will rather than impose a military solution. This strategy was most often used in the mode of negative compellance, that is an attempt to persuade the target nation to stop taking certain actions. Israel wanted to oblige Arab government to cease permitting infiltration across their borders by convincing them that the cost of doing so were prohibitive. The reprisal policy had been initiated in the early fifties in the face of large-scale infiltration by Palestinian refugees from the West Bank and Gaza. In the beginning, Israel retaliated clandestinely in the primitive 'eye for an eye' fashion. A small group of IDF personnel would secretly cross the border, lay an ambush somewhere, causing thereby a number of casualties and then retreat. Israeli retaliation was usually "calibrated to the scale and linked to the timing and location of the Arab act directly preceding it". 28 This type of response, however, failed to put an end to infiltrations and soon Israel changed its strategy to one of massive retaliation i.e., a deliberate disproportion between

Arab provocation and Israeli response as a means of compelling Arab governments to take firm measures against Palestinian infiltration.29 Such a policy had been applied against Egypt, Syria and Jordan and had been largely successful. Apprehensions over Israeli reprisals was a major factor discouraging these countries from permitting Palestinian guerillas to operate on their territory. A deeper analysis of the Israeli raids against Lebanon, however, suggests that in applying this policy to Lebanon, Israel had certain fundamentally different expectations. To begin with, commando operations from Lebanon never really posed a serious threat to the security of Israel's northern settlements and in any case remained far below those launched from Jordan which was the main base of the PRM till 1971. The camps in the Arkoub of Lebanon were strictly subsidiary.

The Jordanian civil war of September 1970 and the subsequent mopping-up operations by the Jordanian army in the spring of 1971 caused the focus of PRM activity to shift to Lebanon.30 Nevertheless raids from Lebanon into Israel remained limited in scope primarily because of two reasons. First, the PRM was militarily weakened after the

29. Ibid., p.59.
Jordanian crisis and simply did not possess the necessary wherewithall to carry on guerilla activity on the scale on which it had done so before 1971. Though commando buildup began in the Arkoub immediately after their expulsion from Jordan it took more than two years for the commandos to regroup, reorganize and re-equip themselves so as to partially offset the losses suffered in Jordan. Secondly, conducting raids from the Arkoub region was a difficult task as the Israelis were in good positions in the overlooking hills, and had constructed a supply road, some of which lay within Lebanese territory. In summary, guerilla activity in Southern Lebanon between the third and fourth Arab-Israeli wars was not particularly effective and had a very limited impact on Northern Israel. The commandos were, for the most part, restricted to the Arkoub region of Lebanon. With a few minor exceptions their cross-border activities were limited to the occupied Golan Heights and had little effect on Israeli settlements lying close to the ADL. It is worth noting that it was not until May 1974 that Israel began to build a barrier along the ADL. Between 1965 when Palestinian commandos first made their appearance in Southern Lebanon and the summer of 1974, the border between Lebanon and Israel contained no significant physical obstacle.

If the Palestinian guerillas did not pose a serious military threat to Israel's northern settlements then why is it that Israel resorted to a policy of conducting incessant raids against Lebanon? Between 14 June 1968 and 10 June 1974 (2188 days) UN observers reported 3036 Israeli violations of Lebanese territory which included twelve major operations. During these raids hundreds of Lebanese citizens, apart from Palestinians were either killed or wounded, thousands rendered homeless as a result of the destruction of their hearth and homes and the crops of many villages burnt to ashes. The intensity of Israeli raids suggests two things. First, the Israeli intention was to liquidate all or any manifestation of Palestinian nationalism particularly its militant variant so forcefully represented by the Palestinian guerillas. Second, the Israeli strategy was intended to facilitate the attainment of certain long term aims with regard to Lebanon. Israel was aware of the deep sectarian cleavages in Lebanon and the conflicting perceptions of Christians and Muslims towards the presence of Palestinian guerillas in Lebanon. By resorting to a relentless series of raids Israel's aim in the long run was to bring about a polarization between the Lebanese Christians and Muslims over the issue of

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presence of Palestinian guerillas in the country. Such a polarization, Israel calculated, would undermine the uneasy national consensus, reinforce trends towards Maronite separatism as well as generate intense political strife. Domestic political strife could then lead to Lebanon's partition, a theme to which the Israeli leaders were not averse, while at the same time giving Israel the option of asserting de facto control over Southern Lebanon or even its annexation. That a breakdown in the national consensus and domestic political upheaval was indeed one of the Israeli objective is clearly visible by an analysis of the nature and pattern of Israeli raids from the late 1960s till the onset of the Lebanese civil war.

(iii) The Airport Raid and Its Aftermath

During the course of 1968 the divisive repercussions of the PRM presence on the domestic politics of Lebanon had gradually begun to surface. It was at this stage that Israel decided to step up its campaign of raids into Lebanon. The opening shot in this stepped up campaign was the Israeli attack on 12 May 1968 on the Lebanese border village of Houla. Throughout that summer Lebanese border villages came under heavy shelling leading to destruction not only of homes but of crops and orchards which served as the principal

34. Daily Star, 13 May 1968.
means of livelihood of the people residing there. This was, however, a mere prelude to what was going to take place in December that year. On 26 December an Israeli EL AL airliner was attacked on the tarmac in Athens by two Palestinians belonging to the PFLP. As the two Palestinians involved in the attack had come from Beirut a few days earlier Israel immediately held Lebanon responsible for the incident. Moshe Carmel, the Israeli Transport Minister declared that Israel would not "relieve the Government of Lebanon from responsibility for acts of sabotage organized on Lebanese soil with governmental encouragement". 35 Despite Lebanese denials of any complicity in the Athens airport incident, Israel carried out a sensational one hour raid on the Beirut International Airport on 28 December. Helicopter borne commandos arriving from the direction of the coast landed at the airport at night and destroyed thirteen civilian airlines which they found standing on the tarmac. 36 This devastating attack was specifically intended to generate a political upheaval in Lebanon over the issue of Palestinian presence. Israeli hopes were not belied for it led to one of the longest governmental crises in the history of independent Lebanon.


36. Of the thirteen planes destroyed 8 belonged to Middle East Airlines, 3 to Lebanese International Airways and 2 to Trans-Mediterranean Airways. See Arab World, 29 and 30 December 1968.
As a result of the Israeli raids of the previous months the political situation in the country had already become tense. A bitter controversy had been raging as to what should be the Lebanese response to these raids. While the Muslims and leftists were demanding a strengthening of the armed forces, the Maronite leaders were calling for greater curbs on the Palestinians. Rising tension had led to violent clashes between the youth wing of the Phalangist Party led by Pierre Jumayil’s son Bashir Jumayil and pro-Palestinian demonstrators on 7 November. Prominent pro-Palestinian leaders charged that Pierre Jumayil, who was then the Interior Minister, was the brain behind the attack on the demonstrators. On 11 November pro-Palestinian students from the Arab University of Beirut and from the schools in predominantly Muslim neighbourhoods of Beirut staged massive demonstrations against the Interior Minister which ended in violence and rioting. Three days later pro-Phalangist students were out in the streets of Beirut demanding curbs against the Palestinian guerrillas and attacking their Lebanese supporters. In Tripoli demonstrations were staged against the Palestinians leading to violent clashes and the death of one following which the government imposed indefinite curfew and a ban on all demonstrations. By launching such a sensational raid on

37. *Arab World*, 8 and 12 November 1968.
the Beirut Airport in the midst of this surcharged political atmosphere the Israeli intention clearly was to further aggravate the situation.

The response of the Lebanese authorities to the raid revealed almost unbelievable incompetence. The army's humiliating inaction angered the population. The Muslims and radical organizations immediately raised an outcry over the lack of protection at the airport and the failure of the army to move against the raiders during the time they were there. When the Lebanese Chamber of Deputies met in an emergency session to discuss the raid Junblat demanded "immediate conscription" as the only way to counter Israel. Defending the commandos he said that they "are the only ones who can defend our dignity as long as the officials cannot". 39 Meanwhile in Beirut representatives of several political organizations supporting the commandos met and issued a statement urging the government to enforce compulsory conscription. On 3 January 1969 students of Arab University of Beirut and Muslim schools went on a strike demanding compulsory military service, distribution of arms in the south and resignation of those responsible for the failure to defend the airport. 40 Popular demonstrations in solidarity with the Palestinians and condemnation of the army's inaction were organized throughout the country.

Lebanon's Maronite leaders, however, were opposed to military conscription. The Lebanese Army from its very inception had been a Christian officered army while the rank and file included all the major religious sects. The provision that the Army Commander be a Maronite was a major element of the sectarian system. Military conscription would have meant an influx of Muslim officers threatening the Maronite monopoly of the officers corps. Thus while the Muslims of the country over were demanding conscription the Maronite leaders came out with the argument that Lebanon's best defence against Israeli raids was to curb the PRM itself which was the cause of Israeli attacks.

As a result of the enormous pressure from his Muslim constituents to adopt a policy of militant support towards the Palestinians the premier Abdullah Yafi resigned on 8 January 1969.

(a) Armed Conflict Between the Lebanese Army and Palestine Guerillas

Relations between the Palestinian guerillas and the Lebanese Army which had never been cordial deteriorated sharply after the airport raid. Clashes between the two


42. For the reaction of Maronite leaders to Muslim demands see Arab World Weekly (Beirut), no.13, 11 January 1969, pp.3-4.
began to occur with increasing frequency from mid-January onwards. In April popular demonstrations against the army were held throughout Lebanon and on 23 April clashes between the security forces and the protesters led to the death of ten. The bloody clashes led to the imposition of emergency and Premier Karami (who had replaced Yafi in January) realizing that he ran the risk of antagonizing his Muslim constituents if he continued to associate himself with a regime that espoused only the Christian point of view resigned on 25 April. Speaking in a frank tone about the PRM presence, Karami in his resignation speech spelled out clearly the fact that there were two trends in Lebanon: one supporting the PRM and the other opposed to it. "Therefore" he said "any government adopting one trend rather than the other will inevitably cause a split in the country". The political crisis arising out of the airport raid had led to a second governmental resignation within a short span of four months.

As the political crisis dragged on with no Muslim leader of national stature prepared to assume the office of the Prime Minister, Israel decided to employ air power for the first time against Lebanon. On 11 August the Israel Air Force (IAF) went into action against Palestinian positions

44. For the text of Karami's speech see, Arab World Weekly no.28, 26 April 1969, pp.vii-viii.
in Southern Lebanon. The following month a large force of infantry attacked the Lebanese village of Halta, killing several people and destroying a large number of buildings. On 3 and 4 October Lebanese villages came under Israeli attack once again, leading to an even greater loss of lives and property.

With the political crisis still simmering and tensions running high in the country, the new round of Israeli raids sparked off a large scale conflict between the guerillas and the Lebanese Army. On 28 August fighting broke out between the army and Palestinians in the Nahr al-Bared refugee camp near Tripoli, in North Lebanon. By October tensions rose to such an extent that US Assistant Secretary of State Joseph Sisco was prompted to publish a note of concern (on 12 October). Less than a week later, on 18 October, heavy fighting broke out between the Palestinians and Lebanese Army units throughout Southern Lebanon. Within a few days the hostilities spread to Biqa valley. On 23 October there were first signs of Syrian intervention as Saiqa units - though part of the PLO but in fact under the command of the military branch of the Syrian Baath Party - attacked Lebanese army units in the border town of Masnaa. Simultaneously there was an attempt by the PRM to capture

46. Ibid., 6 September and 6 October 1969.
new positions in Muslim sections of Beirut and in Tripoli, where local Muslim and radical organizations joined the Palestinian fighters. Some of the severest clashes during this period took place around Tripoli when Palestinian guerillas on the outskirts of the city cut it off from highway access to Beirut. Inside Tripoli the forces of 24 October Movement led by Farouk Mukaddam clashed with the security forces leading to large scale casualties. With hostilities rapidly spreading to all parts of the country and with early signs of Syrian involvement, the Lebanese President evidently felt incapable of coping with the crisis and turned to President Nasser for mediation.

(b) The Cairo Agreement

During three days of negotiations held in Cairo from 1-3 November, the Commander in Chief of the Lebanese Army Emile Bustani and the PLO Chairman Arafat met with the Egyptian War Minister Lt.General Mahmoud Fawzi and an accord was signed which came to be known as the Cairo Agreement. According to its terms which were supposed to be kept "secret" the Lebanese Army agreed to allow the Palestinian guerillas free access to Syrian supply lines and relaxed restrictions previously placed on the refugee camps. The Palestinian Armed Struggle Command (PASC) could set up armed units in the refugee camps. Palestinian residents were free

47. Middle East Record, vol.5, part 5, 1969-70, pp.909-17.
to join the armed struggle. Representatives of the PASC were to meet the Lebanese Army Command regularly for purposes of coordination. Lebanon would continue to exercise full sovereignty over those areas where the PRM had set up bases. The PASC for its part would see to it that proper discipline was maintained among its ranks. The Palestinians were forbidden to adopt any position on Lebanese internal affairs. The signing of the Agreement paved the way for the formation of a new government and in November exactly seven months after he had resigned Karami once again formed a new cabinet. After a debate in the Chamber of Deputies the Agreement was ratified though its specific terms were not discussed.

The Cairo Agreement amounted to a victory for the PLO and their Lebanese allies and a defeat for the Maronite-dominated Lebanese government. It legitimized the right of the PLO to maintain centres in Lebanon. No other Arab government had ever agreed to such an arrangement before. The Cairo Agreement therefore caused considerable alarm in Israel. In no case could Israel permit the transformation of the strategically important Southern Lebanon into a

48. For the text of the Agreement see Al-Nahar, 20 April 1970 cited in Arab World, 20 April 1970. Abridged versions of the Agreement had appeared earlier in many Lebanese newspapers. However, in April 1970, Al-Nahar for the first time published the full text of the Cairo Agreement which - though the Minister of Information would not concede it - was apparently authentic. Al-Nahar was prosecuted by the government for having published the Agreement.
Palestinian stronghold. Neither could it permit a Muslim or radical takeover of Lebanon - a takeover which the PRM presence could foster in the near future. The Cairo Agreement itself was an indication of a shift in the sectarian balance of power inside Lebanon. The Israeli response was to intensify its raids against Lebanon still further in order to create such a state of chaos that it would lead to a total breakdown of organized political life in the country.

(iv) Intensification of the Israeli Raids: From the Cairo Agreement to the Crisis of May 1973

Soon after the signing of the Cairo Agreement, on 6 March 1970 the Israeli Northern District Commander, Major General Mordechai Gur threatened to "turn a six-mile stretch of Southern Lebanon into a scorched-earth desert".49 Fifteen years earlier the Lebanese government had felt constrained to remove all Palestinian refugees from that same six mile strip. In May 1970 the IDF carried out a thirty-two hour armoured raid of the Arkoub in Southern Lebanon. This large-scale operation, the biggest penetration of Lebanon since the 1948 war marked the beginning of a new and far more aggressive phase in the Israeli offensive against Lebanon. The IDF occupied a number of villages compelling its residents to flee and just before withdrawing resorted to a 'scorched earth' policy. During the May

49. Sobel, n.35, p.91.
operations the commander of the Lebanese Army General Jean Nujaym instructed the units stationed near the border to return fire as a result of which the army suffered heavy casualties especially from the Israeli armoured columns. Syria also sent in some fighter bombers to strafe the Israeli columns and in the ensuing dogfights with the Israeli Air Force, three Syrian aircrafts were shot down over Lebanese territory. 50

Following the raid on Arkoub the IDF initiated a new policy of deploying permanent patrols on the Lebanese side of the border. At the same time the IDF built a network of roads on Lebanese territory connecting these with northern Israel. 51 Apart from facilitating further Israeli raids, the Israeli moves signified a step-by-step approach towards the incorporation of border areas into northern Israel. In September Israel carried out an even bigger raid than that of May. 52 It was preceeded by days of continuous bombing by the IAF, artillery barrage and smaller raids. Meanwhile reports began to appear in Israeli newspapers that the unremitting series of raids was intended to empty the Southern villages completely in order to pave the way for a possible Israeli occupation of large sectors of Southern Lebanon. 53

50. Hamizrachi, n.17, p.35.
52. See Daily Star, 6 September 1970.
(a) The Shiite Exodus from the South

Repeated Israeli incursions into Southern Lebanon led to total dislocation of normal life there. The people worst effected by the Israeli raids were the poor Shiite peasants who in order to escape the wrath of the IDF abandoned their villages and began moving to safer zones in the north, particularly Beirut. This movement of Shiite peasants towards north which began in trickles in mid-1969 became a virtual exodus as the severity of Israeli raids intensified in 1970.

As early as May 1968 political leaders from Southern Lebanon had raised demands for the distribution of arms among the villagers and fortification of border villages. In June the Lebanese government allocated LL 1.25 million for "ensuring public security" in Lebanese villages lying close to the ceasefire line. Part of the aid was intended to provide medical relief to the victims of Israeli raid. 54 In view of the Christian opposition to conscription the government decided in December 1968 to set up "partisan units" for the defence of the South. The Lebanese Army was given permission to recruit volunteers who were expected to assist the army in the South. 55 Public outcry in the wake of the airport raid compelled the government to take certain measures for the defence of the South. The Army hastily

54. Arab World, 17 June 1968.
55. Ibid., 11 December 1968.
submitted a draft law to the Cabinet for the institution of compulsory military service for all Lebanese at the age of 18. Due to Christian opposition the draft law, could not reach the statute books and remained a dead letter. But some steps were taken for the fortification of southern areas bordering Israel like the building of air shelters and trenches. Besides, the Army held meetings with the local headmen of southern villages to discuss plans for the training of inhabitants of these villages in the use of fire-arms.56 Throughout 1969 there were persistent reports of the flight of southerners. In early January 1970 the southern deputies met and urged the government to take more energetic steps for the security of the region. Government apathy led to the formation of two bodies - The Movement for Awareness in the South headed by Kamal Asad and the National Congress for the Fortification of the South (a grouping of Socialists, Baath, Communists and Nasserists) - which embarked on an agitational approach to draw the government attention to the plight of southerners.

Following the Israeli raid on Arkoub in May 1970 and additional Israeli raids thereafter a mass exodus from the south began to take place, sometimes involving entire villages. Official estimate at the end of May indicated that 30,000 residents of Southern Lebanon had become refugees.57 Unofficial estimates, however, put the number

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56. Ibid., 8 January 1969.

of refugees at more than twice the official figures.

Most of the refugees migrated to the shanty towns of West Beirut adding to the already burgeoning population of the capital. Uprooted from their land and their traditional environment and stranded in the maddening combination of abject poverty and vulgur display of wealth, these Shiite peasants became an erupting volcano of frustration. Idle, hungry, confused and not knowing where to go, they became the breeding ground for all sorts of radical ideologies.

The abject plight of these Shiites soon came to be championed by Imam Musa al-Sadr, an Iranian born Shiite cleric. In May 1970 Imam Musa called for a country-wide strike to protest the neglect of the south by the government. The nationwide strike held on 26 May was a complete success. Under intense pressure the Lebanese government proceeded to establish a "Council for the South" and allocated ten million dollars for the residents of the south. 58 The new measures taken by the government proved to be too late and too little and as there was an escalation in the level of Israeli raids in the coming months, the Shiite exodus from Southern Lebanon went up even further.

(b) PLO's Debacle in Jordan and Its Implications for Lebanon

In September 1970 the Hashemite Monarchy in Jordan finally turned against the PRM in Jordan and began to subdue them - a process which was to take over twelve months to complete. The Palestinian guerillas were reduced, step by step, in a succession of encounters until their power in the country was completely destroyed and the Palestinian popular support for them was silenced. The crushing defeat of the PLO at the hands of the Jordanian army considerably weakened the Resistance Movement both in military as well as political terms. As a result of Jordan's military campaign against the Resistance large numbers of Palestinians fled to either Syria or Lebanon. Lebanon now remained the only Arab country where the PRM could operate with some degree of autonomy.

After its debacle in Jordan the PRM had learnt one important lesson: never to isolate itself from the masses and progressive movements of the host country and not to pose as an alternative to these movements. In Jordan it had made a mistake of not winning over the Jordanian subjects of the King. The predominant line of thinking among Palestinian leaders was that the Jordanian debacle occurred "precisely because the (Palestinian) revolution had abided by constraining principles of behaviour vis-a-vis the Jordanian masses which had merely played into the hands of the Jordanian
authorities, thus facilitating the latter's liquidation.\textsuperscript{59}

In order to avoid a repetition of a Jordan-type situation in Lebanon, the Palestinian leadership particularly elements of the Palestinian left decided to forge close political and military links with the Muslims and Progressives in the country. Thus by the end of 1972 a strong alliance had been forged between the Palestinian and various local groups represented in the NM.

The growing bonds between the NM and Palestinians further heightened Israeli apprehensions of a possible Muslim/radical takeover in Lebanon in conjunction with the PLO. The result was a further escalation in Israeli raids. Israel now seized upon attacks on its property and personnel at home and abroad to launch devastating raids against alleged headquarters of Resistance Organizations in Lebanon. For instance when in May 1972 Japanese gunmen belonging to the Japanese Red Brigade in collaboration with the PFLP launched a murderous attack in a crowded custom hall in Tel Aviv's Lod International Airport, Israel immediately chose to retaliate against Lebanon. It launched a devastating air, land and naval operation against Lebanon which lasted for four days and caused incalculable damages.\textsuperscript{60}

Again in September after the slaying of eleven members of

\textsuperscript{59} Khalidi, n.33, p.81.

\textsuperscript{60} See\textit{ Arab World Weekly}, 24 June 1972, pp.1-3.
the Israeli Olympic team in Munich by the Black September Organization, Lebanon was subjected to Israeli attacks of unprecedented fury.61

In October Israel announced that it would no longer wait for commando acts or terrorist incidents before striking targets in Lebanon. Former Israeli Chief of Staff Chaim Herzog declared that the "very presence of terrorists in the area between the border and the Litani River is a provocation and Israel is free to act against them".62 In effect Israel was outlining a policy by which it could now justify attacking Lebanon on the least pretext. As attacks by Israel against Lebanon mounted in the coming months, it lead to a situation of tense insecurity throughout the country. The government's inability or failure to confront the enemy led to an erosion of whatever little legitimacy it had in the eyes of the Lebanese Muslims. On the other hand the Lebanese Christians singled out the Palestinians as the cause of all of Lebanon's woe. Throughout the first half of 1973 clashes between Palestinians and one or other Maronite militia or between Muslims and Christians kept on occurring at regular intervals further contributing to the tensions already prevailing in the country.

The Assassination of Palestinian Leaders in Beirut

In the midst of this rapidly eroding legitimacy of the state and growing polarization between Christians and Muslims, on 10 April 1973 Israel launched one of the most provocative attacks against Lebanon to-date. In the early hours of that day an Israeli assassination team landed on the Beirut beach where they were met by six Israeli agents who had entered Lebanon earlier. From here one group drove to the Sabra refugee camp located in the centre of Beirut where they shot dead three prominent PFLP leaders - Abu Youssef, one of the two PFLP representatives on the executive committee of the PLO, Kamal Adwan, an organizer of Palestinian resistance in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, and Kamal Nasser an official spokesman of the PLO. While the attack was being mounted in Beirut the other group entered the Shatila refugee camp near the city and destroyed the headquarters of the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine. In a separate operation in Sidon Israeli naval units landed commandos who destroyed a Palestinian military command and control centre.63

The raid had, as it were, an electrifying impact on the tense situation already prevailing in the country. In February an Israeli raid near Tripoli in northern Lebanon had given rise to speculations among Muslim circles that the

63. Ibid., p.128.
Lebanese authorities had tacitly agreed to the raid.\textsuperscript{64} As a result of this latest Israeli action the Palestinians and other Lebanese allies were convinced more than ever of a collusion between Israel and the Lebanese government. Declaring that there was indeed a "collusion in theory and practice between the Lebanese authorities, the Israeli government and the planners of this operation" Junblatt alleged that the security forces did not move against the Israelis "simply because the Interior Ministry did not instruct them to do so".\textsuperscript{65} As angry demonstrations flared up throughout the country, further proof of a likelihood of collusion came to light when Premier Saeb Salam declared that he had repeatedly telephoned the Army Commander Iskander Ghanem to move against the raiders but nothing had been done. Accusing Ghanem of insubordination and failure to defend the country he requested President Suleiman Franjieh to dismiss Ghanem. Franjieh turned down Salam's request whereupon Salam himself resigned accusing the President of seeking to undermine the authority of the Muslim Premiership.\textsuperscript{66}

Amidst exacerbating tensions a series of incidents led to a second major confrontation between the Palestinian

\textsuperscript{64} See \textit{Daily Star}, 23 February 1973.

\textsuperscript{65} \textit{Arab Report and Record}, no.7, 1-15 April 1973, p.158.

guerillas and the Lebanese Army. The fighting which started in Beirut soon engulfed the whole country. Progressive parties in Lebanon – principally the Communist Party of Lebanon, the Organization of Communist Action and the Murabitun, the military arm of Qulailat's Independent Nasserite Movement – played a very active role in backing the guerillas and participated militarily in the defence of the camps. The fighting caused Syrian President Hafez al-Assad to despatch Syrian controlled Palestinian forces to Lebanon in strength while his foreign minister Abd al-Halim al-Khaddam arrived in Beirut to mediate. Syria also closed its borders with Lebanon as a show of solidarity with the palestinians and Assad pressurized the Lebanese President to order an immediate halt to the use of Lebanese Air Force against Palestinian camps.67

Syrian mediation ultimately brought the conflict to a halt on 18 May when an agreement was reached between the Army Commander Ghanem and the Palestinians at the Melkart Hotel in Beirut. In essence, what became known as the Melkart Agreement reaffirmed the basis of the Cairo Agreement of 1969. An additional provision established a joint Army – Armed Struggle Command for the purpose of preventing future difficulties and misunderstandings that might arise from time to time.68


The May 1973 crisis brought the NM and Palestinians still closer. To the various Christian communities in Lebanon this growing unity between the Palestinians and their Lebanese allies raised the spectre of "coptification", that is their reduction in Lebanon to the status of a religiously tolerated but politically insignificant minority like the Coptic Christians in Egypt.69 Moved by such apprehensions they drew closer together within a loose umbrella known as the Conservative Lebanese Front (CLF) led by four formidable patriarchs of the Maronite community, Jumayil, Shamun, Franjieh and Father Sharbel Kassis, Head of the powerful Maronite Order of Monks. Besides heading his respective organization, each of the four also had his own well-armed and well-trained private militia.70 Perceiving themselves as the ultimate guardians of Lebanon's traditional order, these forces now intensified their training, recruitment and logistical preparations for what increasingly seemed like an inevitable show down. In turn the Palestinian-Progressive coalition in Lebanon also stepped up its preparation. Polarization increased and with it the likelihood of an all-out encounter.71

69. Khalidi, n.33, p.69.

70. Jumayil headed the 15000 strong Kataib the military arm of the Phalangist Party, Shamun led the 3500 strong al-Ahrar ("Tiger") militia. Franjieh (Zghorta Liberation Army) and Father Kasis each had a private army of over 1500 men. There were a number of other organizations and groups that were allied to the CLF. Among the most important group was Guardians of the Cedars. Their leader was the famous poet Said Aql. It also had a thousand-strong militia.

71. Salibi, n.4, pp.69-70.
(v) Rampant Escalation in Israeli Raids: From the Crisis of May 1973 to the Outbreak of Civil War

Following the October 1973 Arab-Israeli war there was a rapid escalation in the level of Israeli raids against Lebanon. The immediate cause behind this was, in part, related to the ongoing negotiations for peace being conducted between Israel and the frontline Arab states. The peace negotiations had been initiated by the American Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in the wake of the October 1973 war. Kissinger's diplomatic initiative better known as the step-by-step approach was based on the following guiding principles - (1) to avoid the Palestinian problem and the question of their involvement in the peace process even though it was the central problem in the Arab-Israeli conflict (2) to deal with each Arab state separately and step-by-step thus avoiding confrontation with a collective Arab position, and (3) to avoid linking initial diplomatic steps with the nature of the final peace agreement.72 From the very beginning of the peace negotiations, therefore, Kissinger assiduously side-tracked the Palestinian problem and avoided the PLO participation in the negotiation process trying instead to bring about a series of bilateral agreements between Israel and the frontline Arab states. The Egyptian-Israeli disengagement agreement (May 1974) were in keeping with this approach.

Kissinger's step-by-step diplomacy was quite an alarming development for the PLO. In order to assert their presence and to maintain their cause as the focal point of attention, the PLO launched a vigorous diplomatic campaign aimed at countering Kissinger's efforts to bypass the Palestinians. The PLO's diplomatic initiative met with resounding success when the seventh Arab Summit Conference held at Rabat in October declared the PLO to be the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. The Conference was dominated by a dispute between Jordan and the PLO as to which of them should be the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. After a protracted debate the Conference resulted in a political victory for the PLO whose right was recognized not only to be the "sole and legitimate" representative of the Palestinians but also to lead them in establishing a "national Palestinian authority" on any part of liberated Palestine. The Rabat Summit decision was a severe setback for Kissinger who was trying to restore sovereignty over the West Bank to Jordan. As the PLO was now the sole representative of West Bank Palestinians, this effectively debarred Jordan from arriving at any understanding with Israel with regard to the fate of the West Bank.

73. Keesings Contemporary Archives (Bristol), vol.20, 18-24 November 1974, p.26813 A.
The Rabat Summit was soon followed by another major Palestinian milestone with considerable international impact. In November 1974 the UN General Assembly adopted two resolutions with regard to the Palestine problem. The first one declared "the inalienable right of the Palestinians to return to their homes and property from which they had been displaced and uprooted". It further declared the Palestinian "right to self-determination without external interference" and to "national independence and sovereignty.\textsuperscript{74}

The second resolution granted the PLO a permanent observer status at the UN General Assembly and at other international conferences sponsored by the UN. These major political and public relations gains not only enhanced the prestige of the PLO but made its participation practically indispensable in any overall peace settlements.

Hand in hand with this diplomatic offensive, the PLO escalated its war against Israel for the PLO knew fully well that forcing Israel to join the international recognition could not be achieved by diplomatic means only and that the armed struggle should continue alongside the diplomatic activity. Thus as quiet began to prevail on the Egyptian and Syrian fronts the PRM began to escalate its operations against Israel. There was a new pattern in the operations, namely that they took the form of suicide missions undertaken by three or four commandos at a time. The first of

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., vol.20, 16-22 December 1974, p.26862.
these operations took place in April 1974 when a suicide squad of three guerillas from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine - General Command (PFLP-GC)\textsuperscript{75} carried out an attack on the settlement of Kiryat Shmoneh near the Lebanese border leaving behind eighteen dead. The PFLP-GC in its statement about the operation said that the purpose was to strike at the American sponsored submissive plans for a settlement.\textsuperscript{76} This was followed by an attack on the Israeli border village of Maalot on 15 May by the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP)\textsuperscript{77} on Kibbutz Shamir on 13 June by the PFLP-GC, and finally a seaborne raid on the Israeli towns of Nahariya by Fath on 24 June. in all, fifty-three Israelis were killed between 11 April and 24 June as a result of the four suicide missions into Northern Israel.\textsuperscript{78}

Meanwhile within Lebanon radical Palestinians and their Lebanese allies loudly denounced the ongoing peace

\textsuperscript{75} The PFLP-GC led by Ahmed Jibril was formed in 1968 as a result of a split in the PFLP. For details see Cobban, n.11, pp.161-63.

\textsuperscript{76} It was shortly after the raid on Kiryat Shmoneh that Israel decided to seal its border with Lebanon with a twelve-foot high security fence topped with barbed wire and equipped with electronic warning devices. A smooth dirt track was created on the Israeli side of the fence to pick up footprints and machine gun positions were established at intervals along the fence. See \textit{New York Times}, 14 July 1974.

\textsuperscript{77} The DFLP headed by Nayef Hawatmeh was formed in 1969 as as result of yet another split in the PFLP. See, Cobban, n.11, pp.152-57.

\textsuperscript{78} See \textit{Arab World Weekly}, 29 June 1974, no.298, p.4.
negotiations as a "surrender plan". They launched an intense agitation against it, branding all Arab governments who showed an inclination to accept Kissinger's initiatives as traitors. In December 1973, radical student groups in Beirut organized a strike to protest the first visit of kissinger to the region in connection with the proposed peace settlement. In February the following year there were more strikes and demonstrations in protest against the second of Kissinger's visit to the region. Soon it led to violent conflict with the security forces and large-scale rioting. 79

The diplomatic gains scored by the PLO and the voices being raised in Lebanon at the behest of radical Palestinians against the American-sponsored peace process caused considerable alarm to Israel. From the very beginning of the negotiations Israel had been adamant in its insistence that the PLO could not be a party to the negotiations. In order to defeat the Palestinian demand to be included as a party in its own right became imperative for Israel to crush the PRM in Lebanon which was its principal base of operation and silence its Lebanese allies into submission. There was thus an all-time escalation of Israeli military operations against Lebanon. Israeli violation of Lebanese territory which had occurred at the rate of 1.4 violations per day for the period 1968-74 registered a quantum jump to

79. Salibi, n.4, pp.74-74.
seven violations per day during 1974-75.\(^8\) Israel's heavy-handed raids created a state of chaos and disorganization on an unprecedented scale. In view of the acute polarization between Lebanese Christians and Muslims the new round of stepped-up Israeli raids led to a total breakdown.

(a) **Radicalization of the Shiite Peasantry**

As the Israeli raids intensified in 1974 bringing more and more areas of Southern Lebanon within its sweep the flight of Shiite peasants to the north also intensified. Village after village were totally abandoned. Some villagers who chose to remain behind were either too old or infirm to move or did so only at a great risk to their lives.

As a result, Beirut was being overloaded to explosive levels. In March 1974 Imam Musa Sadr addressed a massive armed rally of 75,000 in Baalbek where he condemned the government for failing to protect the south or to care for its displaced people. Peasants from the south and Biqa, now subsisting precariously in the slums of Beirut, village artisans and agricultural labourers were Musa Sadr's principal supporters. Sadr dismissed as bogus the argument of some that the activities of the PRM were largely to blame, nothing that the Israeli attacks continued even after the commandos suspended their operations. Sadr then offered

\(^8\) Khalidi, n.33, p.124.
to organize and protect Lebanese victims himself and declared: "We must train a new generation which carries a rifle in one hand and a sickle in the other.... I am going to train with you."

Shortly after the Baalbek rally Sadr established a new organization Harakat al-Mahrumeen (Movement of the Deprived). A little later Sadr also organized the first ever Shiite militia called Amal (hope). According to the Imam Amal was unlike the other militias. Its men were being trained to go to the south to defend the country from Israeli aggressions.

Continuous Israeli attacks throughout 1974 coupled with the state's failure to provide even a modicum of protection or medical aid for the wounded was gradually leading up to a situation of revolt. In October residents of the south laid siege of Bint Jbeil, the district centre. The angry crowd chanted slogans hostile to the Lebanese government, sacked the government house, tore down the Lebanese flag and stamped on the pictures of the Maronite President. Towards the end of the year Israeli raids became so severe that even a UN-sponsored "olive truce" (to permit the harvesting of olive crop) from 25 December to 31 January 1975 proved ephemeral. With a lull of only three

81. Arab Report and Record, no.6, 16-31 March 1974.
82. The formation of Amal and its military training programme remained a secret for many months. In July 1975 the death of a large number of Amal militia men in a mine explosion in a Fath training camp near Baalbek forced Sadr to reveal the existence of the Shiite militia. See Ajami, n.58, p.168.
days Israel resumed its bombardment and ground assault once again on 28 December. Throughout the greater part of January, Israel launched almost daily and nightly attacks against Southern Lebanon, particularly against the Arkoub region in the south east. Continuous bombardment and artillery barrage reduced the large village of Kfar Shuba, regarded as the centre of the Arkoub region to a mass of rubble. Its survivors had to take shelter in a school in nearby Marjayoun. The government's failure to come to help of the victims of Kfar Shuba incensed the Shiites still further and there were violent clashes and rioting in Marjayoun in protest against the inaction. On 20 January at a meeting attended by thousands, Musa Sadr called for the creation of a "Lebanese resistance" to fight alongside the PRM in the defence of Lebanon. On 28 January South Lebanon observed a general strike to demand that the south be defended and in Beirut thousand gathered for a National Day for Protection of the South.

(b) The Inexorable Slide Towards Civil War

While the Shiite population was getting restive in the south and Beirut, there were reports in mid-1974 that the Palestinians were acquiring large numbers of

shoulder-version SAM-7 missiles and other air-defence system for the protection of their camps going over the head of the Lebanese government. Besides villages in Southern Lebanon, Palestinian camps in Lebanon had become the most favoured target of the IAF in 1974. During that year almost all camps came under repeated attacks, and one of them - Nabatiyya - was almost totally destroyed. Following reports of acquisition of air defense systems by the Palestinians, the Maronite militias too accelerated their own weapon acquisition programme. Large shipment of arms began arriving at the port of Jounieh, north of Beirut and were taken up by the Kataib and the Tigers with full knowledge of the authorities. The Maronite militias began to recruit non-party members for the first time, opening new training camps and conducting military parades in the towns of Mount Lebanon - the Maronite heartland. The Maronite militias were liberally financed by the Maronite bourgeoisie who perceived them as the ultimate guardian of their privileges.

In a situation of heightened tension when the rival factions of a society are polarized, any incident between them is likely to erupt into collective violence. Such an

86. Arab World Weekly, no.299, 6 July 1974, pp.2-3.
87. See ibid., no.307, 31 August 1974, p.4, and no.310, 21 September 1974, p.4.
88. Petran, n.81, p.151.
incident occurred on 13 April 1975 in the Christian suburb of Ayn al-Rummana. On this day, while Pierre Jumayyil was attending the consecration of a new Maronite church in Ayn al-Rummana, a car broke through the Kataib security line, and shots were fired from the car in the direction of the church killing three. In the confusion that followed, the car managed to escape. On the same morning that this incident took place, Palestinians from various refugee camps around Beirut were attending a commando parade in one of the Muslim quarters of the city. One group of Palestinians while returning from the parade to Tall al-Zatar by bus in the afternoon, were ambushed by gunmen of the Kataib militia as they passed through Ayn al-Rummana. Twenty-two passengers were shot dead and twenty others injured. This incident triggered the civil war in Lebanon, a conflict towards which the Lebanese had been gradually inching forward since the day Israel had launched its raid on the Beirut International Airport.

Conclusion

The rise and growth of the PRM in Southern Lebanon brought in its wake Israeli raids, a phenomena from which Lebanon had been totally free till the mid-1960s. On the face of it Israeli raids were in response to commando

89. Arab World Weekly, no.370, 19 April 1975, p.5.
operations launched by the PRM from Lebanon against Israel and formed a part of its overall policy of reprisals against Arab states.

A deeper analysis of Israeli raids against Lebanon, however, suggests that in applying this policy to Lebanon, Israel had certain fundamentally different expectations. First, the Israeli intent was to liquidate all or any manifestation of Palestinian nationalism particularly its militant variant so forcefully represented by the Palestinian guerillas. Second, the Israeli strategy was intended to facilitate the attainment of certain long term aims with regard to Lebanon. Israel was aware of the deep sectarian cleavages in Lebanon and the conflicting perceptions of Christians and Muslims towards the presence of Palestinian guerillas in Lebanon. By resorting to a relentless series of raids Israel's aim in the long run was to bring about a polarization between the Lebanese Christians and Muslims over the issue of Palestinian guerillas in the country. Such a polarization, Israel calculated would undermine the uneasy national consensus, reinforce trends towards Maronite separatism as well as generate intense political strife. Domestic political strife could then lead to Lebanon's partition, a theme to which the Israeli leaders were not averse, while at the same time giving Israel the option of asserting de facto control over
Southern Lebanon. That this was indeed one of the Israeli objective, is borne out by an analysis of the nature and pattern of the Israeli raids from late sixties till the onset of the Lebanese Civil War.

From the late sixties till the mid-seventies a situation of tense insecurity prevailed throughout Lebanon as a consequence of continuous Israeli raids. The government's inability or failure to confront the enemy led to an erosion of its legitimacy in the eyes of Lebanese Muslims. Each new raid brought the NM and PRM closer to each other. To the Maronite Christians this growing unity between the Palestinians and their Lebanese allies was a potentially dangerous development. In their view if the Palestinians were not subjugated quickly they would provide the muscle which the growing Muslim protest movement against Christian hegemony lacked. The Maronite parties began to solidify their ranks and strengthen their militias in preparation for what increasingly seemed like an inevitable showdown. In turn the NM-PRM also stepped up its preparation.

Following the October 1973 Arab-Israeli war there was a rapid escalation in the level of Israeli raids. This led to a virtual depopulation of the South. The people worst affected - the poor Shiite peasants - fled north particularly to Beirut. Uprooted from their land and traditional environment these Shiite peasants became an
erupting volcano of frustration. Idle, hungry and confused they became the breeding ground for all sorts of radical ideologies.

In a situation of heightened tension when the rival factions of a society are polarized, any incident between them is likely to erupt into collective violence. Such an incident was the ambush of Palestinians by gunmen of the Kataib in April 1975 which triggered the Civil War in Lebanon.