

July 2009

It doesn't happen every day that I write a paper... I know. So there must be something special then...? Yes, there is something special indeed. I am upset – like an angry teenager. In the developed world we don't get upset, right? We always have to be polite and balanced. Always open to the other side of the story. I guess you are right. Still, I am upset.

Why?

Well, there is a problem here. You might know that we have been working for years with Refugees from Palestine, who now reside in Lebanon. You might assume that have become biased and that in making friends here we have forgotten about the other side.... Well, that might be partially true. But we often meet Israelis on our trips to the US and we have no problem talking to them. We love Jews as we love other Middle Easterners. I know God does the same...

The problem that we have here is about 400.000 refugees in Lebanon who believe that the land just to the south – Palestine – is their homeland.

So what, you might ask? The land is now Israel and that's never going to change! So they had better get over it.... you might say.

That's what they try. And try. And try. But it doesn't work. The iron fist of oppression is holding them down and even crushing them. Especially in Lebanon... No right to work. No right to own land or a house. No right to inherit. Any property that they attempt to own will likely be lost to the Lebanese government, as well as private money in the bank.

It's been called "The Silent Genocide of the Palestine Refugees" in Lebanon. Would that ever make the headlines in the west?

Did you know that:

- **Many of the young people in the Refugee Camps are hooked on drugs? Cheap drugs are provided to keep them under control and to make them dependent. The weapon has become drugs. The result is the same. Total dependency.**
- **The newest thought of escape in these Camps is that it is now possible, though difficult, to travel to China and from there, to Europe. By the dozens they sell their homes and everything to obtain a visa to China and buy a ticket. Now the first young guys are in a Sweden... Only waiting for a new life to start there without any family or support.**
- **Some estimated 80% of young children (age 7-10) drop out of the UN-sponsored schools every year? Children who fail a grade cannot repeat but have to move to the next grade because the 'system' cannot cope with the big numbers of kids who fail. After failing 3 consecutive years they have to leave the school.... You can only imagine what follows...**
- **Many of these Palestinian refugees can only keep going because they hold on to the thought of one day returning to their homeland. So they hold on to their traditional lives and become more and more alienated every day as the society around the camps is developing and changing.**
- **Many young girls are desperate to marry and to start their own families? But the guys are on drugs and don't have an income, or any thought**

of a future, so even if a marriage happens the trouble only starts when the first bay arrives. Drugs, abuse, suffering, pain, divorce....

The breakdown of this Palestinian Society happens under our watch. We are here and... we see, we wonder, we cry, we wait, we.....write.....?

It's not my goal to appoint the blame to one group or the other. It's not my intention to be the advocate for the Palestine Refugees or to condemn the Zionist movement. Although I must admit that my feelings are strong, I want to stay in a place where I can be of help in both communities.

Jesus came to bring peace not war. He came to reconcile, not to divide. Whoever ignores what is happening to the Refugees who came from Palestine might only carefully study the life of Jesus once more to find answers.

Would He bring change?

Robert Pelgrim