A COLLAPSING LEXICON

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This lexicon exists because of friendships, conversations, and solidarities forged with and through language, images and words. These connections predate Lebanon's deepening state of collapse. It is our conviction that they will outlive it too. We are grateful to all people who have contributed to the making of this lexicon in different ways. Our thanks go to everyone who helped us gather and draw a list of relevant terms. You are many. We are grateful to the generative discussions that we have had with you all –both online and offline. To the lexicon's contributors, translators, researchers, and proofreaders: thank you for your time, insights, and reflections. Your role was more than central in the completion of this lexicon. Our gratitude also goes to Bard College for their financial support. Finally, this lexicon carries the weight of Lebanon's present that is riddled with harmful speech. Those terms –but more importantly the violence that underpins them– speak to the way the lives of most people who live in Lebanon have been altered forever. This lexicon is for them.

NOTE ON TRANSLATION AND TRANSLITERATION

This lexicon is published in two versions: English and Arabic. All but three texts were originally written in Arabic and then translated to English. The lexicon's introduction, "Haircut", and "Silos" were originally written in English and then translated to Arabic. Translation has raised important questions on how to retain the broader or nuanced meanings expressed in the original language. To convey the singular significance of certain terms and carry the world that contains them, we have chosen to retain Arabic or English transliterations. To that end, three entries to the lexicon have been transliterated: "'Arsat", "Haircut", and "NGOs". "'Arsat" had no direct equivalent in English while "Haircut" and "NGOs" circulated in the English language in Arabic popular discourses and debates. Whenever applicable, transliterations have been simplified and usually follow common and popular spellings.

FOREWORD

Omar El-Ghazzi

Lebanon is a country in collapse, undergoing an unprecedented economic, political, and social crisis.

This sentence may appear basic and self-evident, but if we take a closer look at its words, we will notice a contradiction in them, which might not necessarily express what is happening in the country.

While the word "collapse" suggests a fall and a state of dissolution, the word "crisis" evokes a limited period of time that brings up the image of a tunnel at the end of which there is inevitably a light. Can we really consider this crisis unprecedented? Is such a consideration possible in a country whose history can't be worked out on the basis of crises, while its whole history is nothing but a crisis?

This book, and this foreword, attempt to address these questions.

Many social and cultural theorists have advocated the study of language, not only in terms of grammar but also as a tool of power and control. French thinker Michel Foucault argued that the way knowledge is produced–and language in general–indicates that centers of power are dispersed in society. Marxists, on the other hand, considered language a fundamental tool within the class struggle. From that standpoint, British Marxist theorist and writer Raymond Williams introduced the concept of "keywords." Williams considered language as a live entity that should be examined and understood within the context of social and class relations. If the meaning of words are the result of social struggles, then they must be changing and transforming. The language we speak and write has a dou-

ble power: On one hand, it reflects the reality of society, but on the other, it also impacts it by proposing an alphabet of daily life.

These keywords, therefore, have the power to open ideological locks. That's why I think studying them is an important task, in the current political stage, for reasons that are both international and Lebanese.

First, the current global stage is characterized by a decline in the popularity of political affiliation to declared beliefs and ideologies. Politicians and analysts cling to words, as if their use of certain terms can dispense them from thinking about and tackling the structural relations that prevail in society. Words attract the masses, without necessarily translating into a clear political program. With words of such polarizing power, ruling authorities in several countries have started relying on language that includes the concepts of victimhood and marginalization. The right has adopted the vocabulary of the left to attract the working class, in a seemingly systematic process to empty words, which are not favored by those in power, of their meaning.

Second, there is the issue of the spread of digital culture on the Internet and social media. In an era of abundant media, we cannot limit analysis to the production of language, we must also pay attention to the spread and flow of language through visual, audio, and digital media. As an audience, we receive and understand words based on our knowledge of who is reading them to us, on which television station, and in the introduction of which news bulletin. We also use and participate in the production of media, by transforming the meanings of certain words and placing them within the contexts that we create for them. For example, on Twitter, a word becomes a "hashtag" that is constantly copied, moved, and modified. We may include an image or a "meme" with the hashtag. We may change its meaning several times, as we move across platforms and from one account to another.

In Lebanon, the meaning of language is scattered due to the absence of the state, educational institutions, and unified academic curricula, including a consolidated history curriculum. Meanwhile, the power of sect leaders to define new borders for words within their criteria and according to their own vision and agenda is bolstered. We know, almost instinctively, the difference in the meaning of the word "resistance," if it is used by Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea, or Hezbollah's secretary-general Hassan Nasrallah. And one can measure accordingly many words that are widely used in the political sphere, such as martyr, nation, sovereignty, and independence.

There are other words, attached to a bygone political project or past political period; for example, the word "future" and how it relates to the project of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. In the 1990s, the word "future" was inextricably linked to Hariri, as if there were no future without him.

After Hariri's assassination in 2005, the word "truth" dominated the political scene. Despite its intensive political exploitation at the time–exclusively linking the discovery of the truth of who assassinated Hariri with the international investigation and using it as a demand and a symbol to changing the regime of Syrian hegemony over Lebanon–the word's momentum faded over time, with the weakness and weakening of Hariri's project.
We should also not forget, in this context, words that we use and consider normal, although they sound strange to non-Lebanese ears. Words that constantly occupy the foreground or background of political conversations in Lebanon: presidential vacuum, dialogue table, the three heads of state, (religious) coexistence, civil peace, goblin's palm, and others...

In regular times, the meanings of words change gradually and over the years. But in exceptional times, such as uprisings and revolutions, the pace of change speeds up. That's what happened when

the revolution broke out in the streets of Lebanese cities and towns in 2019. When people gathered in the streets and occupied the squares, the context of words changed. Exchanges took place between large groups of people who would have never met had the revolution not broken out. The impact of words in street protests differed greatly from their previous impact. On the street, our words fuse with the interactions of bodies, adrenaline levels, a sense of belonging to the group, and fluctuating feelings of love, fear, and enthusiasm.

The revolution introduced new words to the Lebanese political lexicon. Some were feminist terms, such as “sexist.” Others were street words, such as “square” and “tent.” Even others were improper, like the chant “hela hela ho.” In return, some more obsolete words were revived, such as “revolution.” Indeed, many of the “revolutionaries” insisted on its use, chanting “our revolution is not a movement,” thus expressing their conviction that the protests were part of a historical event that represented a clear break from what was before and what was to come, and therefore was not fleeting. When “revolution” is chanted in the street, it is mixed with cries, sweat , the smell of tear gas, and shortness of breath. The compound meaning of this word, however, has a limited time scope. Accelerated events quickly referred the word “revolution” to the past. The word was a harsh reminder for those who believed in it of a time whose every second and minute was filled with life, and carried a vision for the future, but today is gone.

When it broke out, the revolution coexisted with the idea of a looming collapse, but when the economic and political collapse, with its severe manifestations, finally arrived in Lebanon in 2020, the word revolution itself collapsed and gave way to the emergence of different words and conversations.

In an attempt to understand the word “collapse,” we will start by deconstructing modern everyday language, which is accompany-

ing the deterioration of the economy and the infrastructure.

First, it is impossible to overlook the painful vocabulary linked to the explosion that destroyed large swathes of the capital Beirut in the summer of 2020, including: silos, ammonium nitrate, and martyrs' families. These were also linked to psychological terms such as trauma, panic attacks, insomnia, and shock. People rejected slogans that always lurk from one crisis to another, such as the phoenix that emerges from the ruins, or statements that celebrate reconstruction as if it were an integral part of Lebanese life and identity.

General conversations, especially when checking up on family and friends, now begin with: How is the electricity? How is the water? How much do things cost? These questions precede: How are you? Or how's the weather?

Daily life eats away at Lebanese residents until it dominates their ability to complain or express themselves. The collapsing lira occupies people's lives, and the inevitable daily question becomes: How much is the dollar today? Every day, people track the currency exchange rate, whether or not they own "dollars." It's as if the answer to this perpetual question can quantify the crisis, and every drop in the currency rate reflects the gravity of the situation, whether material or moral.

The dollar has different temporal and physical types: "fresh," "lollar" (originating from a Dan Azzi article originally published in An-Nahar on December 31, 2019, where he talks about dollars locked in banks as Lebanese Dollars, i.e. Lollars) and the "1,500," i.e. the pegged exchange rate since the 1990s. The 1,500 now evokes nostalgia for a past currency and bygone days.

There is a broader vocabulary stemming from the banking system, which describes the consequences of banks looting the money of the Lebanese. Demands for due rights come from the standpoint

of defending "small depositors," i.e. people with smaller deposits in banks who lost their money because of the state's monetary policies, as if this word replaces the word "society" or the term "social classes."

There is a renewed language describing how one deals with the collapse of the infrastructure inside the home, which builds on a long history. Here, we note that the daily conversations taking place within homes reflect the family's political and income sphere par excellence. For example, the daily question in the homes of what remains of the middle class: Is this state or subscription electricity? There are also things that take on starring roles in the stories of Lebanese households and impose themselves on daily conversations: The overly sensitive electrical circuit breaker that cuts the current if we overload the circuit it, the empty water tank, and the heavy gas canister. In financially comfortable homes, there is a new character, the battery, which extends the life of electricity by minutes or hours, according to one's financial means. This failing infrastructure creates conversations, for example, about coordinating bathroom use among family members: When are you going to take a shower? Conversations between neighbors also changed the more they coordinated to address the lack, scarcity, and high cost of everything that the state cannot secure, including electricity, diesel, and water.

This is our collapsed lexicon. Residents in Lebanon find themselves picking up words to express a daily life whose harshness transcends even the most pessimistic visions. Patriotic words are losing their meaning day after day, as the vocabulary of collapse expands. Part of this collapsing language was directed, like arrows, at the most marginalized communities in Lebanon, including foreign workers, and Syrian and Palestinian refugees. However, despite the collapse in the infrastructure and language, analysis should not be limited to the words that dominate daily life and the collective imaginary. Rather, one must also critically examine the relation-

ship of words to the instruments and centers of power in society, including how this relates to class struggle. Which words are imposed on us? Which of them can confront power? Which of them express the middle class exclusively? Which of them can attract a wider segment of society? Which of them reinforce the sectarian system of the ruling class? And which of them disrupts it?

Perhaps this lexicon of the collapse will draw the reader to think of words not as received language, but as part of a strategy of political and social conflict, that we must master and control. Interpreting and thinking about words is an endless project. British thinker Raymond Williams deliberately left blank pages in his book on keywords, implying that it is impossible to complete any analysis of terms and languages that emulate life and the ever-changing struggles of society.

References: Williams, R. (1975/2014). *Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society.* Oxford University Press.

INTRODUCTION

Cynthia Kreichati

Language gestures towards all that is humanly possible. Words and images draw the contours of the evolving world in which we live. In turn, the world structures, shapes, and reshapes speech as well as the fragmented, oft-inarticulate, imagistic expressions of what we feel and think about ourselves and our relations to others. The occasional failure of our forms of knowledge to apprehend a reality that is far too great, catastrophic, or banal to be named is likewise revelatory. If it is symptomatic of a breakdown in meaning, such failure also speaks to the ways in which language, human creativity and finitude are tethered together on personal and collective levels.

Our interest in this lexicon project stems from a shared curiosity for the potential of images and words to address Lebanon's devastating societal transformations starting 2019. We resorted to a collaborative and participatory approach to source the words and entries featured here. Using various communication tools, from face-to-face conversations to social media posts, we asked people to contribute with words –in either Arabic, English, or French– that have lost, shifted, or acquired new meanings since the Lebanese economic collapse. We compiled the terms we received and shared them with a list of potential contributors and invited them to select one keyword entry they would like to write about. Contributors who responded then wrote reflection essays which reflected on the terms they had respectively chosen, not in the form of a definition from the dictionary, but rather in such a way that, in their view, captured or illuminated the contested meanings of contemporary lived experience in Lebanon as well as the social, political, and economic factors that have shaped it. The

omissions, repetitions, emphases, and perspectives presented in this lexicon are thus tightly linked to this methodological process.

Signaling the beginnings of a deepening multidimensional crisis, 2019 might at first seem like an arbitrary cut-off date for such an undertaking. On the one hand, Lebanon's recent history has been rife with social, economic, and political disasters with countless citizens and non-citizens living in increasing pauperization, disenfranchisement, and marginalization. On the other hand, there's a tacit yet shared recognition that the active use of words and images is always already in constant change, both modulating and modulated by the ways in which we make sense of our lives and the world that contains them. But 2019 has also come to be widely recognized as a watershed and emblematic year –of uprisings and downfalls– whose felt effects would be exacerbated by other subsequent events and their repercussions, namely the COVID-19 pandemic, the Beirut port explosion, and the unfettered and ongoing devaluation of the Lebanese currency.

A Collapsing Lexicon interrogates the political character of words and images by exploring language's entwinement with Lebanon's ruination, whose falling point of inflection is commonly attributed to the eventful month of October 2019. This work then is premised on questioning the fraught relations between language and collapse in the specific context of Lebanon. Collapse is taken here to be both material and discursive, empirical and methodological, literal and figurative. It is intimately tied to a "politics of value" whose most definitive stakes, as the anthropologist David Graeber asserts, are not "the struggle to appropriate value" but rather "the struggle to establish what value is." One way to think of value under capitalism is to understand it as something that is realized primarily in the form of money. Amal Taleb's entry "1500," the equivalent in Lebanese liras of one US dollar prior to the crisis, is a harangue that deplores this loss of, and in, value. Taleb sees something else and something more in the "1500," a manner of being in the world perhaps. On the curren-

cy devaluation and the losses it entails, she writes: 'Soon, 1,500 will be nothing more than a bad joke that makes no one laugh, a story which –if told to future generations– will be considered a lie or a fabrication.' The link between money and value thus brings Lebanon's currency devaluation under a different light: as a structure that has also produced a crisis in our ability to actively use language to define what matters and highlight what is important. This breakdown in meaning meant that we needed terms and images with which to properly account for our dilapidating situation: from the difficulty of constituting a coherent political and politicized discourse during the protests that began in October of that year to the impossibility of ascribing a name to the crime of the port explosion in August 2020 or the continued, deepening, problem of social inequality.

A breakdown in meaning might often sever the connections between utterances and their purported connotations, between forms of representation and the meanings they carry. Many words might become hollow containers, what semioticians call empty signifiers devoid of specific meaning. Who or what is meant by "the people" الشعب؟ Other terms might transform into mere placemats failing to point to specific objects, like "كلن يعني كلن" (all means all) the protests' most popular slogan or "الطبقة السياسية" (the political class) which references the alleged, yet vaguely identifiable, culprits of the country's ailments. Depositors" is another term gesturing towards a vague meaning. While it usually refers to people who are banked (meaning who own a bank account), it took on more ample meaning as the social and economic crisis deepened. In her entry on "Depositors," Viviane Akiki resituates the term in relation to Lebanon's economic structures and relations and shows how its widespread use has had the effect of reducing the crisis to one primarily affecting banks and their depositors. Akiki contends that the country's state of collapse has affected broader segments of society – the unbanked who account for more than half the people living in Lebanon, as well as the younger, future generations.

In places and times where reality was far too abject to comprehend, images forcefully replaced words. In her entry "Silos," Sara Mourad references the slogan graffitied on the cement roadside divider, separating the highway from the Beirut port. "My government did this," she writes as a "kind of caption to the apocalyptic scene of devastation in its background." Read together with the devastated landscape that offered itself behind the roadside barrier, the caption established the conditions of possibility for certain meanings to emerge even if "this" remained difficult to capture. Alaa Mansour's provocative contribution to this lexicon operates on a similar register. Her work –a carefully curated selection of visuals, screenshots, and photographs– responds to the keywords of this lexicon. They do not serve to illustrate contributors' different texts but are rather an intervention mediated through the work that images can and must do in the production of meaning. From photographs illustrating the interwar devaluation of the German currency to social media captions, Mansour's work draws attention to the way images displace, transform, condense, and represent the manifold meanings that might elude words. In his written commentary on the brokenness of reality, Hassan AlSahily also enlists images to illustrate how futurity in Lebanon becomes foreclosed. His imagistic writing on "Future" counterposes the utopian temporalities of the October 2019 protests – where for a fleeting moment everything seemed possible– with the dystopia of the crumbling months that followed. "People today think of the future as individuals, whereas they only think of the past as a group," he concedes. But AlSahily's most poignant image is found in the paradoxical future anterior portrait he draws of his mother, who traveled to the Soviet Union as part of a scholarship program led by Soviet astronaut and first woman in space, Valentina Tereshkova. Though she excelled in her work, AlSahily's mother would eventually abandon her studies and return to Lebanon to fight alongside her comrades in the struggle for a more secular, socialist future – a choice which, as AlSahily explains, she now condemns. Similarly, Hashem Adnan's written discussion of "Arsat" (pimps) offers us a sound image. The repetition of the term "Arsat" throughout Adnan's

text propels its meaning onward like an obsessional force. On one hand, it emphasizes the political connotation of cursing as a transgressive act and as a willful refusal of polite conversation. On the other hand, it embodies the political predispositions of the October 2019 protests that reduce contentious political practice to the rejection or endorsement of specific ethical and moral positionings.

Beyond the breakdown of meaning, the country's societal transformations prompted the circulation of words like crisis, collapse, corruption, or embargo (حصار) which offered a particular conceptual frame through which to make sense of reality. The meanings carried by these terms are learned connotations inscribed in specific ideological discourses hinging on ethical and political perspectives. While these terms circulated in various popular discourses as unproblematic empirical observations, what they denoted were diagnostic and political claims. Illustrative of that is the popular chant "ثورتنا مش حراك" (our revolution is not an uprising or movement), a dichotomous view which Omar Al-Ghazzi briefly addresses in the foreword to this lexicon. In her entry "Collapse," Sahar Mandour walks us through the temporalities of collapse. Hers is a tapered portrait of the recursive dynamics of ruin. Mandour's concluding remarks are an arresting indictment of this diagnosis of the present: "We lived and are living the collapse while its engineers are experiencing another word (…) organized robbery; re-allocation; or modernization to keep up with the times; or perhaps the phoenix." Though it expounds on collapse, Mandour's entry also questions the very notion of crisis as diagnosis. While crisis implies a malfunctioning or a departure from norms, the structural dynamics that engineered Lebanon's collapse suggests that the country's current predicament is the result of everything working as it should. Likewise, Fawzi Zabyan's entry "Victory," explores the term's relation to a contemporary state of humiliation and defeat. In Zabyan's view, the word "victory" has become an almost nonsensical noise. While he situates "victory as an echo of defeat" within the political register of Hezbollah, his resounding analysis demonstrates another meaning of collapse–one that illustrates the

ultimate stakes of politics. This antithetical sense (of words that also encapsulate their antonyms) is indicative of a political discourse and practice where partisans become mere customers in what Zabyan describes as "a huge supermarket of resonant words".

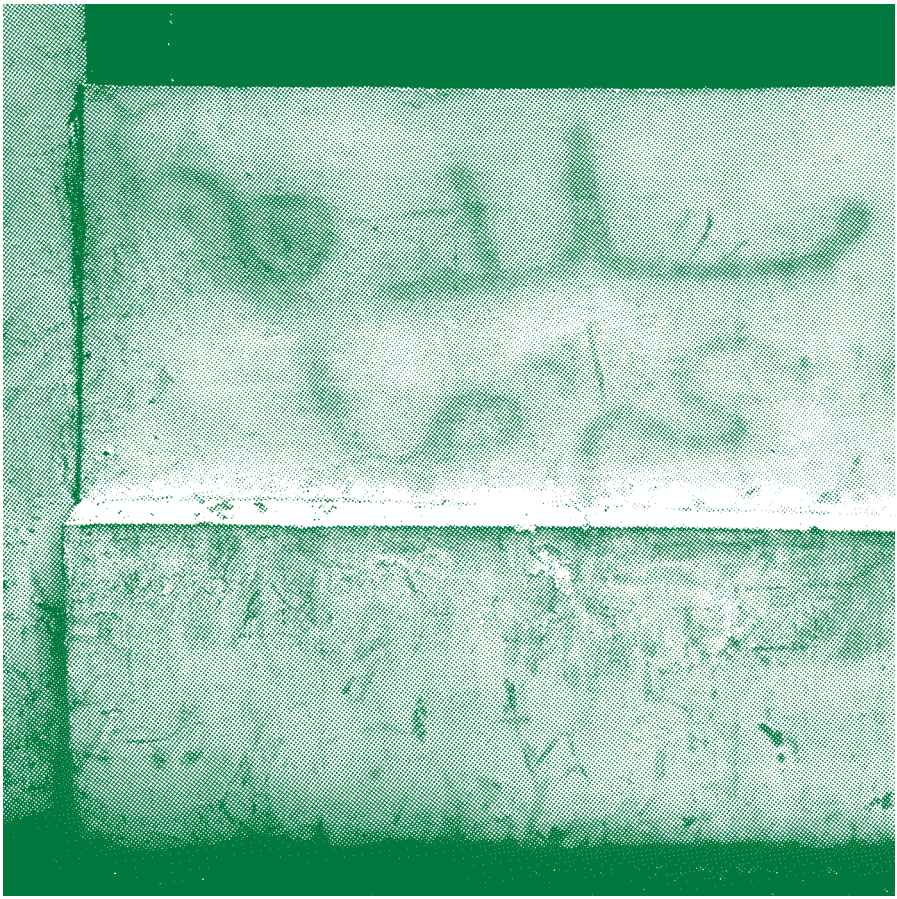
Language's entanglement with Lebanon's collapse also manifested itself materially, in how the country's broader infrastructural fallout has inscribed itself onto language and vice-versa. As private generators replaced an already unreliable public provision of electricity, the term "subscription" became ubiquitously used to refer to electric energy. In her entry "subscription," Chrystèle Khodr uses the equation "State electricity ≠ Subscription electricity" to account for the ways in which the very availability of electric energy has become dependent on the negation of the state itself. Sarah Kaddoura's entry on "NGOs" is likewise evocative. Kaddoura demonstrates how what counts as politics or as political work is transformed through NGOs which have become the providers of jobs, goods, and services that no longer fall within the purview of the state itself. In the same vein, Serge Harfouche's expressive three-step manifesto on "Subsidies" is at once: an interplay of the etymological senses of the word which signifies both subsidy and support in Arabic; a commentary on the state's pursuit of absurd policies that prioritize the subsidy of items such as imported cashew nuts over period pads and tampons; and a call to turn towards the building of a broader movement of solidarity. Reflecting on the term "Subsidies" as both state subsidy and mutual aid and support, Harfouch poignantly reclaims "Love, food, water, justice for all. Land for those who till it" as the only way to confront this "time of monsters".

A Collapsing Lexicon is thus a collective exercise in political imagination, an effort to fix that which seems unfixable. It is a reflection on how both roles –to establish meaning; to repair– are played by different terms in the construction of certain narratives, and on the kinds of work underlying the construction of the terms themselves. Conceived of as an intervention in the problem of meaning, it prompts us

to take neither words nor their meanings for granted and to think of the terminologies we use as non-neutral descriptors of reality. Vacuous words, for example, are open to different interpretations. They form an invitation to play what the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein has called "language games" and to embed words in actions which then endows them with meaning. Writing about "Panic" but also its corollary, fear, Masad Asaad constructs different tableaux in which these terms become significant. From watching Michael Haneke's film *Caché* (Hidden) at the French Cultural Center in Damascus, to the Lebanese Minister of Health's statements on the coronavirus pandemic and the port explosion, Asaad shows how the meanings of those words are interwoven with their opposites. "For every moment of panic in Beirut, there is a moment of intimacy created by loved ones, friends, and kind passers-by, and they are so many!" he concludes. Rima Rantisi's entry "Haircut" builds on the dual meaning that the term acquired as the liquidity crisis began to materialize and commercial banks restricted depositors' access to the money in their accounts. Rantisi's interplay on the word haircut and its embeddedness in various social acts of everyday life (such as getting a literal haircut) is evocative. Rantisi shows that if getting a reduction on the value of your assets and getting your luscious locks cut bear a certain overlapping similarity, the meanings inferred could not be more divergent. Instead of painless haircuts, Rantisi suggests that "everyone else had their limbs amputated".

Together, the entries in this lexicon explore how neologisms, images and existing words condense the policies, practices, and politics that have become part of the warp and weft of everyday life in Lebanon since 2019. More broadly, the different entries illustrate how an atmosphere of crisis might structure the development of critical or non-critical thought and how it might shape subsequent intellectual, cultural, economic, social, spiritual, and ideological activities. Naim Halawi's entry "Son-in-Law," for example, speaks to a concern with the ways in which Gebran Bassil, son-in-law of former president of the republic Michel Aoun, former minister, current member of par-

liament, and leader of the Free Patriotic Movement, became the emblematic easy mark and chopping block figure of the uprising. As a practice, the extensive naming of the "Son-in-Law" condenses popular conceptions of the relationships between kinship and political power. As language is always an incomplete process, we also conceive of this lexicon, and of language's relation to practice, as a method that fosters further research. If Halawi's comprehensive overview of the list of epithets attributed to Gebran Bassil shows how the "Son-in-Law" became one of the most hated figures of October 2019, it also obliquely invites us to broaden the scope of inquiry to explore how such meaning is produced. This necessarily incomplete lexicon is but an esquisse, a trial, and an attempt at documenting the residual and emergent words and images of the past few years' monumental transformations. Its primary aim: to interrogate the structures of power implicated in the production of myriad forms of violent inequality and that are also mediated through the terms and terminologies of a new language.



‘ARSAT*

Hashem Adnan

An introduction entitled #‘arsat (courtesy of Twitter)

You think it too much to give a sergeant of the Republican Guard a kilo of tea, ‘arsat

What revolutionaries, ‘arsat, hosted by bootlickers who stole people’s deposits? NGO revolutionaries, it’s time to stop your nonsense and your clowning around By God, they made us doubt ourselves at the end, the ‘arsat

But no one talks about who nominated them, gave them the vote of confidenceand secured diesel to light up the UNESCO Palace for parliament’s confidence session, ‘arsat

Threats, pressure, American filthiness, and Lebanese ass lickers, ‘arsat

We should not only insult you and spit on you… We should trample your hearts as well, ‘arsat

Today, you want to convince us that capital controls benefit the depositors, ‘arsat

He celebrates his son Rasheed’s birthday, and the cake is a jar full of dollars, ‘arsat

‘Arsat of my country

You consider stones more dangerous than militia arms, ‘arsat

A nation of ‘arsat

A nation where people hate each other, ‘arsat

Fuck them and whoever still defends them, ‘arsat

Where’s the electricity, ‘arsat?

Where are the food stamps, ‘arsat?

Where did the money disappear to, ‘arsat?

‘Arsat, the beginning

‘Arsat, plural of ‘ars (pimp). The word is characterized by the letter s in the middle, like the middle finger on the hand. Take that you ‘ars! Take that, ‘arsat!

It was used as a term of endearment before the crisis: Where are you, ‘arsat? I’ve been waiting for a whole hour! Or for example: My friends are a bunch of smart ass ‘arsat! etc…

The word had a special presence in the world of ears and hearing, eyes and sight,

* ‘Arsat: Bloody pimps

before the "upcrising"[1] and after it.

The NGOs / hold the country's money / the NGOs / what they give they take away / the organizations / 'arsat of the nation / man, the people are dying... That's how in 2009 Katiba 5, a rap band from Burj al-Barajneh camp in Beirut, first made 'arsat legendary while criticized "NGOs" at the same time.

As political opposition gained strength in Lebanon, in the period between 2011 and 2015, amid the murky rejection and/or exaltation of insulting the regime and its symbols, the word 'arsat gained a firm footing against the attempts to discipline and tame the uprising.

The uprising had many beginnings before its popularly acknowledged start on October 17, 2019, but we won't get into these beginnings, to avoid going off on tangents that could distract us from some 'arsat and highlight others.

After the crisis, the word 'arsat was exclusively used to defame and discredit the ruling oligarchy.

Here we recall the chant: *Parliament of 'arsat / Yu ya yu ya yu ya yuuuu / Yu ya yu ya yu ya yuuuu / Salameh's a 'arsa / Yu ya yu ya yu ya yuuuu*

'Arsat is also characterized by its first two letters.

'Ar. Like in 'ard (honor). Damn your honor, 'ars.

'Ar. Like in 'arsh (throne). High and mighty on a throne of water and sand.

'Ar, like in 'Arab. Arabs are raving about the World Cup.

'Ar, like in 'armout (fish filet). Fried fish is tastier than raw or grilled fish! Turns out you care for your tummies, 'arsat, and have specific tastes as well, even during an upcrising!

Who else can be on this list?

Economic organizations

The mob of bank owners

Leaders, officials, commanders and thugs of the Lebanese system's ruling parties

1 Upcrising: uprising + crisis that came to the surface in Lebanon in 2019.

Hezbollah officials
Exclusive agents
Migrant worker recruitment agencies
Commanders and directors of security apparatuses
Successive ministers of energy
Successive ministers of finance
How could this list of 'arsat end?
Human trafficking networks
Every Lebanese who employs a Syrian refugee for peanuts, and demands every day that refugees be deported
The nation's members of parliament
The parliament speaker
The nation
The richest of the rich of Lebanon, the region, and the world

Who else is on this list?
Fuel distribution companies
Monopolists and stockpilers of fuel, starting with that Lebanese Forces Sakr (hawk of hawks) and others

How could this list end?
An outburst of anger, indignation, insults, passion, emotions, hatred, and the desire for quick revenge. 'Arsat is the official colloquial insult of the October 17 uprising. It ushered in the age of insults, with insults as the only solution in the face of impossibility. It is the conclusive evidence of the limited use of swearing. 'Arsat. We keep saying it, repeating it, but the economy does not change, the regime does not fall, and thuggery and systemic killings do not stop.
'Arsat, 'arsat, 'arsat, fuck you, 'arsat. I say and repeat it, and repeat and say it, feeling both anger and pleasure. The ultimate objective of insulting is feeling the emotion. The emotion that it brings in that moment. Anything else you bet on would be an illusion. Repeating 'arsat millions of times will not prevent the 'arsat from conducting their business as usual. Does it tarnish their aura? Undoubtedly. But does their aura collapse? No.

The 'arsat club of Lebanon has room enough for all, and every now and then, new notables and people of stature join its ranks.

ʿArsaaaaaat, the voice

ʿArsaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaat

ʿArsaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaat

ʿArsaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaat

The voice said, then ran towards the wall. A wall of people. A human barricade. A fence of dollars. A class of diverse specializations and religious, ethnic, affiliations. Men to whom are attached a community of women, children, young women and men, artists and charitable associations. A symphony of notable people with stature, and yachts, skyscrapers, five-star spending, wages for labor that wasn't laborious, tourist resorts built on rocks of the coasts of Lebanon, and the diaspora. A wall of people closely stacked together, as our grandparents stacked stones when building terraces for grapes and fig trees. A wall waiting to witness the end of life.

We presented to you:

Lebanon's great ʿarsat club

You were watching: The greatest of Lebanon's ʿarsat

The ʿarsat leader presents: The leader's ʿarsat are screamers

The Sheikh of the young ʿarsat presents: without delay

The ʿarsat gathering in Rabieh presents: The greatest ʿarsat of the regime, and the ʿarsat union of the Litani river

The regime of great ʿarsat presents: the lawyer of ʿarsat, the accountant of ʿarsat, and the ʿars of law and accounting

It is the age of ʿarsat, and the lowest of the low has hung himself!

The end.

I am trying to remember when I first came across this word. When its letters gathered in my ear for the first time. The absence of a memory necessitates the fabrication of a story. Setting the scene. Writing up the insult.

I was 11 years old. We were five kids, going with my uncle and his wife to the movies. There was no movie theater in our village, so we had to drive down to Beirut. We got there in my uncle's Dodge, and parked the car by the sidewalk of Piccadilly Theater. We went down and looked at the posters.

What were we going to watch? We had three choices: ‘Arsat and Rabbits, ‘Arsat at the End of Time, and the last movie, Get Up Already You ‘Arsat.
What do you want to watch? my uncle asked.
We answered unanimously without hesitation or prior agreement: ‘Arsat at the End of Time.
We bought the tickets and the popcorn, and we went in.

The correct linguistic breakdown of the word ‘arsat

The a: like albacore
The r: like ride
The s: like soil
The at: like attitudes, attendants

Conclusion

To end the text on a good note we say: The word ‘arsat, then, is part and parcel of our oral knowledge inventory in Lebanon. It's a word that summarizes a nation. A word that is the size of a man, a man the size of a nation, a nation the size of planet Earth and the seven seas, a planet the size of a galaxy wandering in the universe of seven stones.

الصفحة الرسمية لحملة

انتخبوا العرص

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اطبع - فرغ - رش

‘ARSAT

انتخبوا

العرص

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enhiyar

COLLAPSE

Sahar Mandour

To talk about this word, I first need to understand it, and understand my/our position vis-a-vis it. But to do that, I must distance myself first. I should disconnect from the reality it denotes, and it should disconnect from me. We are still tied to the collapse, although we're far enough to look at it without the mad impulse of action and reaction. So let's get to know what we have experienced and come to know as "the collapse."

I'll let the free flow and sequence of ideas lead me through the waves of the collapse to the shore. I'll begin with myself.

Every time that a product disappears off the market, that prices go up, and that the lira "collapses," I remember the 1980s. I was a child then, but I was fully aware.

In the 1980s, people experienced the news at the same heady pace they experience it today. Back then they said, "the dollar plays around." The currency collapsed, depleting purchasing power, and all our powers along with it. Meats became cherished guests at the table, food cans that entered homes grew in size, local, artisanal cheeses were replaced by huge chunks of available, cheap, processed cheese that "doesn't require refrigeration," mortadella came in tin cylinders longer than a child's arm, clothes came from the most local of markets, under our house, while Arab and foreign food aid packages proliferated in every household.

However in the 1980s, we experienced it all in isolation, without social media, live streaming, smartphones, and even without landlines. Our interaction with the calamity, when it was embodied, took the shape of a heart attack at the bank. Heart attacks at banks. He lost his life's earnings, she lost all her retirement money, they lost today and tomorrow, as if they hadn't all worked so hard yesterday to secure their today and tomorrow.

The 1980s came at the heels of a long civil war during which heroic headlines flourished, before ending up in the sewer of days and dumps on the road. People were exhausted and slogans had faded, when the 1980s came along. Back then, every failure and devastation was ascribed to the war without anyone taking accountability. Silent deaths at banks were reported on the radio, and might be reported on television, whose broadcast in homes started at six in the evening (provided there was electricity or its primitive alternatives). Otherwise, nights would be spent amid the compulsory romanticism of candlelight. The candle was the light at the end of the tunnel of the 1980s.

Amid such conditions, the "collapse" struck like beating a dead horse. It impoverished many and enriched a select few, as usual. Economic classes collapsed in the blink of an eye, while people were too busy worrying about their lives and the lives of others, from the danger of a stray bullet or a car bomb. Okay... I think the picture of the 1980s is clear now, I will stop here to avoid drowning in unhappy memories.

Fast-forward to the past few years:

In 2019, when we took to the streets, we were not emerging from a 10 year-war but from the peace of 1,500 (exchange rate) that was interspersed with military or quasi-military unrest, such as Israeli attacks, street clashes, and the glorious May 7 battles. Though the situation remained tense, and bloody, of course, there was at least hope that life would continue the way we know it. It was not all destruction, bombing, sniping, and continuous indiscriminate shelling. Roads were (relatively) open and lit, there was buying and selling, planned get-togethers, work, sports, nightlife, meetings, conferences, natural deaths, demands, classes, graduation ceremonies, birthdays, weddings...

When we took to the streets in 2019, we suffered from mismanagement and fear of the unknown. When the decision came to tax the free WhatsApp, as part of an additional tax package that was the only official initiative in paving the way towards the unknown, we took to the streets, shouting at the top of our lungs, our fists raised, angry. We did not run back home every day out of fear of militias lurking in the dark and roads were not riddled with shells or fenced up with garbage.

In short, we had the power to rebel and confront, pick up a tear gas canister and throw it back at those who lobbed it at us.

The first signs of the second collapse appeared when banks stopped converting Lebanese pounds into dollars. That happened at the end of 2019, before the authorities' thugs came down to beat us and the gang leaders continued to ignore us, before the Covid pandemic spread and connected us almost exclusively virtually, and before the Beirut port explosion. The culmination of those events felt like another great catastrophe. The exchange rate of the dollar became the clearest indicator of the collapse of the situation, of people's lives, of purchasing power. Eventually, processed cheeses made their way back into our fridges.

Now that some time has passed, we can try to distinguish the three stages of collapse.

First, there was surprise, wonder, expectation, and then confirmation. We went from "no need to panic," "the lira is good shape," or worse even, "the lira is in very good shape[1]" to "Mom, we're heading towards a collapse. We still had a sense of humor, albeit a dark one, because if we didn't know what awaited us, we knew that it contradicted everything that the

1 Comments repeatedly issued by Lebanese Central Bank governor.

gang ruling us said. We were still in the middle of the confrontation, confident of our credibility, and certain they were besieged internally and internationally.

The second stage saw us lose that lightness. The collapse had become a fact and weighed us down, a reality to which the pandemic added a suffocating note. Fortunately for us and by the kindness of fate, our collapse coincided with the spread of a global pandemic. We were not "isolated" in our tragedy, the whole world was quarantining at home. Who (other than Michel Hayek[2]) could have imagined that a pandemic would strike the planet and stop it in its course, and that the inhabitants of the "goat pallet"[3] would be able to connect to the world thanks to it?

Consequently, during this phase of the past few years' Iliad, we did not live the collapse in isolation, but in harmony with the catastrophe that struck the world. It was a stage of incredulity about how deep the collapse was, what a bad state the lira was in, how long electricity could be out, how fragile everything we experienced was, as it eroded daily before our eyes until it disappeared. It was the stage of collapse with the feeling of free fall.

Since a large segment of the current population experienced the 1980s and is still alive today, the fall was accompanied by an acquired expertise in survival. And because we were not coming out of a war, we had more stamina and open minds to march through. As such, quick initiatives to form safety nets were activated, localized fits of fury and rebellion in banks, media efforts to name things, document corruption, and report the situation 24/7... In this phase, black comedy died down, whereas the levels of anger, frustration and helplessness rose. It

2 Famed Lebanese astrologer and media personality.

3 Lebanon, as described in a noted Lebanese saying, "Lucky is he who has so much as a goat pallet in Mount Lebanon."

was also a stage that witnessed our first steps toward technical modernity and ecological awareness. While the rest of the planet was adopting solar power to keep up with modernity and progress, we introduced solar power to the countryside, even before the city, to keep up with the collapse. After we developed our knowledge of viruses and bacteria during the Covid pandemic, we became experts on solar power and the UPS battery that extends its life and ours, before walking into the third stage of the collapse.

The third stage of the collapse is where we're at now. Here, things look a bit clearer. We now have figures and budgets, we have news of gains, exchange rates and transfers that go into the pockets of those who manage them. We have the ability to see what we have been through for the past two years as context, not as random bombardment. On the one hand, there is a hidden and yet organized context of those in power. On the other hand, there are the people whose strikes and demands to adjust wages are spreading and becoming more organized. Today the collapse appears to be preconceived. The balance of profits and losses in banks is accurately reflected. The unofficial haircut on bank accounts is now law after lining up the pockets of capitalists from the pockets of depositors. The Central Bank governor's performance no longer looks random, we can now read between the lines of his decisions and circulars. We now have context.

The streets went dark suddenly, but we were not at war, they went dark after the hustle and bustle of life. But here they are, getting lit up again. We even see commercial projects and restaurants getting ready to open, although we don't understand why and how. Some people get crushed while others live extravagantly, each of these groups at a polar extreme–which again brings to mind what happened in the 1980s, when processed cheese first made an appearance on our tables while the

most glamorous evenings took place at the Casino du Liban.

What is happening now evokes what happened in the past, and the anticipated "birth" reminds us of the speeches of the 1990s. One can't help but link this to that, especially when life goes on with almost all the same people: Berri, Jumblatt, Aoun, Geagea... Since they are almost all the same, how can we ignore the fact that they lived through this experience in the 1980s, that they saw the dollar jump from three Lebanese pounds to three thousand, before being pegged at LBP 1,500? They saw the dollar multiply a hundred-fold, so why wouldn't they also engineer its/their reality when it is multiplied by fifty? They smuggled approximately USD 8 billion abroad right before the collapse was declared, thus accelerating its occurrence. We, in return, withdrew our dollars at the rate of LBP 8,000, while the dollar's black market rate laughed with them at us. Of course, prices go up at the pace of black market dollars, not at the pace of bank rates. They all live in the parallel market and thrive, except for us with our dollars, processed cheese, and milk. How could we not see a "tango" in this restructuring of accounts?

As such, it's inevitable to draw comparisons with the 1980s, and ask: is this gang having mercy on us this time, when it is subjecting us to a restructuring of accounts and quotas, without gunfire, smoke, indiscriminate bullets, or car bombs? Did it content itself with painful, hurtful blows that weaken us from time to time? Or did it not find money to finance the war and kept it "clean" instead?

Also, what is going on now? Are we still experiencing a collapse? Or are we moving towards a new reality with the same old people? (protected by their Lord for all time[4])...

4 A line from the Lebanese national anthem.

I can't help but feel that what we went through was planned. The collapse was implicitly planned, while it appeared to us like a freak of fate. The Central Bank kept printing bank notes, which required the approval of the three heads of state, and the three heads of state signed off on it–including one head of state who was actively bewailing the Central Bank and protesting against it, and the ally of another head of state who kept summoning angels, demons, and flocks of birds against it.

What happened was organized, and we felt its organization. We got glimpses of it, when explanations proliferated, of the type: "Banks are reducing the number of depositors," and "the bank is trying to take dollars out of homes"... it was the plan of a gang, not the plan of major administrations or great conspiracies. The word "collapse" suggests a certain randomness. It presupposes that there was a structure, which suddenly crumbled. Or that there was a port, which suddenly exploded. But the political and financial collapse came about very gradually, it was rationed to us even before 2019. We lived on its edge for years, until expressions like "[the country] is in a goblin's palm"[5] just made us laugh. Today, we have a date for the last stage of the collapse, and it's the end of 2019, or even March 2020, when they defaulted on the payment of international debt. Will we get a similar date that declares the end of the collapse? Or will it keep on growing lighter and lighter, with prices rising higher and higher, until we get an illusion of prosperity as we did in the 2000s, before a return to tension, agitation, and a new cycle of collapse, and a new date to default on payments?

What is happening now is neither random, nor emotional, nor spontaneous. So what is it?

The Lebanese pound is still crumbling, like our nerves, and likely to deteriorate fur-

5 A Lebanese expression meaning balanced on a razor's edge.

ther, like our nerves. It has yet to "rest on a "stake[6]" just like us. However, there is talk of correcting salaries and minimum wages, there are strikes in different sectors... News of this no longer hits us like a slap in the face. The surprise/shock happens when the Lebanese pound reaches a new "decimal": The dollar is now forty thousand, now seventy thousand... As I write these lines, three new decimals shined in the lira firmament: The dollar is eighty thousand, now up to ninety, now back down to seventy thousand... Of course, the collapse of the lira goes on, often strange and inexplicable: The lira depreciates on holidays and Sundays, it depreciates over political news, or over no news at all. It collapses on Tuesday morning, and Thursday past midnight, without providing us with any justification or logic that we can follow. Our collapse has trained us to think beyond the mechanisms of causality, and has launched us into the world of the unseen, where cause and effect must not be connected.

While the collapse of the lira has severed its connection to logic, it has maintained its most painful tie to prices. Every day, everything becomes more expensive. Even "fresh dollars" imported from abroad can't secure basic household goods. If the rate of the lira is a farce, its repercussion on the prices of everything is a tragedy. Prices go up when the dollar goes up, but do not decrease when it goes down. They just keep rising higher and higher, like an inverted logic of the collapse. We fall down while prices soar. We grow poorer while others grow richer. Perhaps the decision of our exceptional Minister of the Economy, Mr. Amin Salam, whom fate bestowed upon us after seven lean years, best encapsulates the tango between poverty and riches, when he explains that our current collapse has achieved what the 1980s couldn't: Pricing food and consumer goods in dollars.

6 A Lebanese expression getting screwed over (literally impaled).

After the collapse of the lira, let's contemplate the collapse of electricity.

In January 2023, there was an official life buzzing around electricity supply, although there was no electricity to speak of. Like a mirage in a desert, a crisis broke out when the Prime Minister called for a meeting about electricity. And like a mirage in the desert, the fee collector appeared at our door, although electricity itself had not appeared. They issued many statements about electricity, about tariffs, and about consumption, on the basis of eight to ten hours of power supply daily. It was as if the routine came back, but without its content. But lo-and-behold, in mid-February 2023, electricity started making a comeback. Four hours per day, half of what they promised or less, but it was a start! It was more than we deserve, to be honest. Did the electricity come without a catch, and did people celebrate its arrival as they did in the 1980s? No. People bemoaned their luck. Because we still relied on private generators, and their fees. Now, we also had to pay tremendous sums for four hours of electricity, which will not stop us from going hungry. The price of electricity was multiplied by one thousand!

What happened to electricity, also happened to medicine. Shortages, then outcries, then finding individual importers, then the suitcases of traders, then the lifting of subsidies, then the intermittent availability of everything... We couldn't curse the prices of medicines, fearing it would threaten their availability on the market. And so, medicines appeared, but at one thousand times their price. Just like electricity. And just like when our money appeared in the banks, one thousand times less than its real value.

The collapse of public administration is the closest, in shape and content, to our collapse as people. We, in theory, resemble the state, i.e. the public sector, i.e. parties who are not profiting from the collapse, whose assets are at risk, and whose losses (and not gains)

have been multiplied by one thousand. In practice, however, the gang is smiling at every crossroad. The ruling gang has planted a "black market" in every sector, to dominate it and profit from it –it's a gang that prospers with every crisis. Tools that guarantee control and the maintenance of "power." Thus: no passports (but an appointment is possible if you know so-and-so or pay in dollars), no civil registry documents (unless you pay ten times the price and get them outside the official building), no gasoline in employees' cars (but at least one sectarian party secures several gallons of fuel per month for its followers). As is the case with the rest of society, the "black market" is not "everyone" and does not serve "everyone." It will not act as a state even if it controls it. Ergo no heating in schools, no teachers in public schools, no gasoline for students' buses. There are no solutions for all that. How did people like us in the public sector adapt to all this? With shock, then stillness, then with demand strikes, and rationing: You get a passport appointment albeit after a year, public departments work one day a week, and the civil registry has a god who protects it.

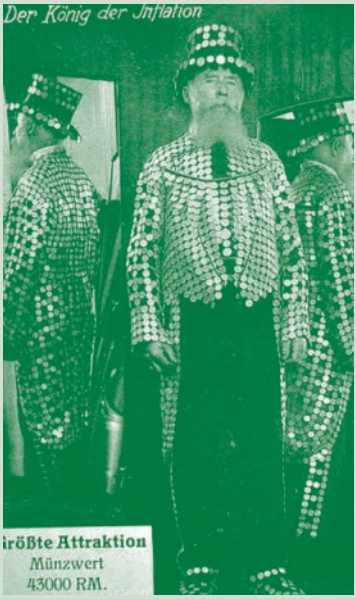
The engineers of the collapse, i.e. those who wield power, capital, and decisions, i.e. the members of the ruling gang since the 1980s collapse, did not experience the previous years as a collapse, but as a restructuring and redistribution of quotas, the reallocation of private money in public spaces, and the repricing of everything without the subsidies that the state provides to protect the purchasing power of people to access everything... Additional financial engineering, not funded by Paris I, II, II and IV[7]... but by the earnings of people during the "paradise of the LBP 1,500 exchange rate," when the gang took advantage of popular obedience to reap the money from donor summits.
We are still in the midst of the collapse,

7 Paris I-IV, summits held in Paris to secure international aid for Lebanon.

of course, adapting to its developments more and more, while hoping for change less and less... This current reality is not temporary, but consecutive steps in the path of collapse. We follow the path but have no say in it. We fall apart economically, administratively, and psychologically, while the engineers of the collapse do not crumble, neither psychologically, nor partisanly, nor economically.

To summarize this unhappy sequence of thoughts, which has caused its writer even more ache, we can propose a definition of the word "collapse", that is double-faced just like a theater mask, offering a tragic face to its recipients and another smiling one to its engineers. We lived and are living the "collapse," while its engineers are experiencing another word, which could be "organized robbery,", or "reallocation," or "modernization to keep up with the times," or perhaps the "phoenix"... that bird that burns and then rises brilliantly from its ashes.

Sad how this bird has been humiliated. It is the child of a legend that talks about the hope of a beautiful rebirth, amid tremendous difficulty, tragedy, and self-sacrifice. Our ruling gang, however, has turned it into a dish on its dining room table, the "grilled phoenix," a "combo" with fries and a coke. As soon as it rises from its ashes, it is surprised by the mouth of a ruler getting ready to bite its head off.


Der König der Inflation
größte Attraktion
Münzwert
43000 RM.

COLLAPSE


SINCERE BANKING

DEPOSITORS

Viviane Akiki

Basics

We must start off with basic principles:

First, capitalism in theory, is based on the principle of non-intervention in order to preserve "fair competition." In other words, if an investment fails, it drops out of the market and the state does not intervene to bail it out.

Second, society is composed of different classes and categories that are inevitably unequal. Therefore, each class or category will have interests that may conflict with the interests of one group and coincide with the interests of another.

Third, policies adopted during moments of crisis cannot serve the interests of society as a whole. Determining policies is subject to a balance of power. The more unbalanced policies are, the more violent they are toward weaker groups; and the more balanced, the more moderate the policies.

Fourth, public interest conflicts with unconditional interest. Public interest is the interest of the majority, and yet cannot satisfy everyone or secure their unconditional interests.

Community of depositors

"Depositor(s)" has perhaps been the term most often used since the start of the crisis in Lebanon until now. This is understandable, seeing that the banking sector was four times larger than the size of the economy before it went bankrupt, and the nature of the local economy made it so that the largest percentage of investments in banks came in the form of deposits.

Nevertheless, one should not reduce the crisis to banks and their depositors, particularly since the repercussions of the collapse affected several different segments of society. The hardest hit are people who never had bank accounts in the first place, more than half

of the Lebanese population, as well as future generations who will pay now and for years to come for choices they did not make.

In fact, according to 2018 World Bank figures, only 45% of adults in Lebanon have bank accounts; 62% of which are accounts for domiciled salaries with a value of no more than $3,000, according to early 2020 Banking Control Commission figures. Moreover only 1% of accounts exceed $1 million, 37% of of which have deposits ranging between $3,000 and $1 million. If we exclude domiciliation accounts, which constitute 28% of adults, depositors (i.e. those with $3,000 or more) make up 17.5% of all adults–while those who have $1 million or more do not exceed 0.5% of all adults. Therefore, when we talk about depositors, we are in fact discussing a small percentage of society, and when we limit the crisis and its solution to the banking sector, we are effectively ignoring 83% of society.

Application of basic principles

A populist narrative prevails over popular discourse that absolves banks of their responsibility towards their customers, and calls for society as a whole to pay the price.

All that is being said is that banks squandered depositors' money and depositors should claim their rights from bank owners and directors, from bank owners' and directors' personal accounts and properties, and from banks' assets. In response, people accuse the banks of lending the money to the State and to the Central Bank, therefore it is up to the state to pay it back. However, if we apply the basic principles mentioned at the beginning, these claims can easily be refuted.

First, if someone decides to invest their money in a project that ends up failing, according to capitalist logic, they exit the market and the state does not intervene at all to bail them out. In this context,

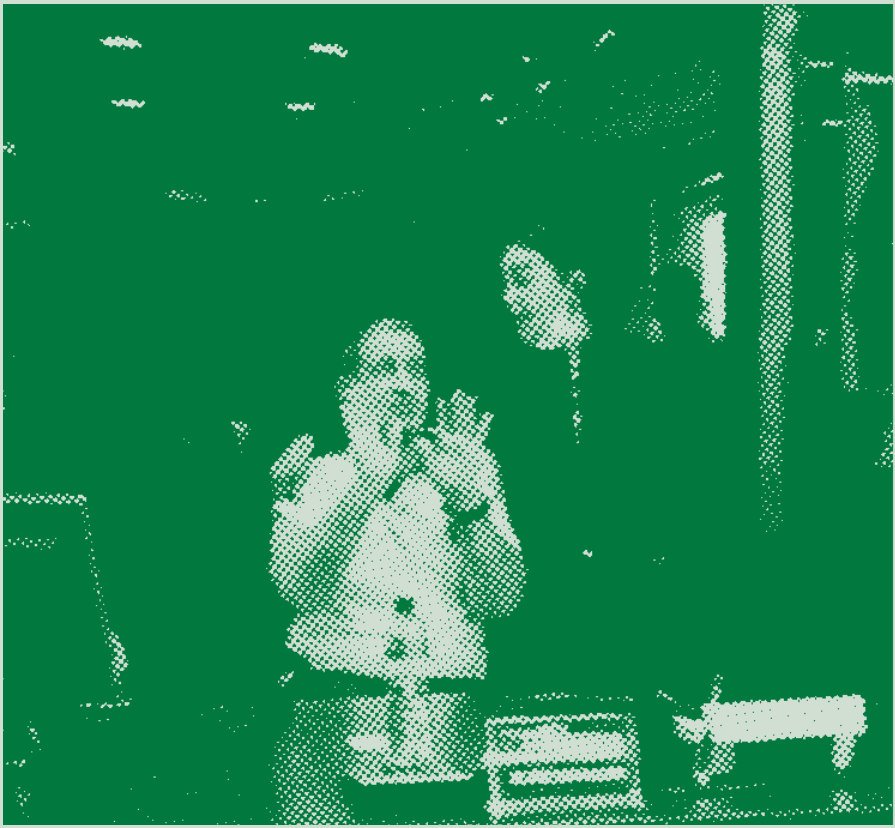
Lebanese banks are no exception. They decided to lend money to the state and the Central Bank, and they risked their investments hoping for high-interest returns, at the expense of the depositors' money, which they squandered.

Second, the state is a cumulation of its taxpayers, the rich and the poor, the old and the young, men and women, citizens of the country and foreign residents. Therefore, policies adopted in the pursuit of "public interest" should not burden all segments of society and absolve banks of obligation. Furthermore, since 1993, the state, i.e. taxpayers, have paid approximately $82 billion in interest to banks and their major depositors in return for public debts borrowed by the government. They paid this price in return for the right to access and benefit from public services such as electricity, free medical care and others, which the state was unable to secure, because the interest of public debt accounted for approximately half of state revenues.

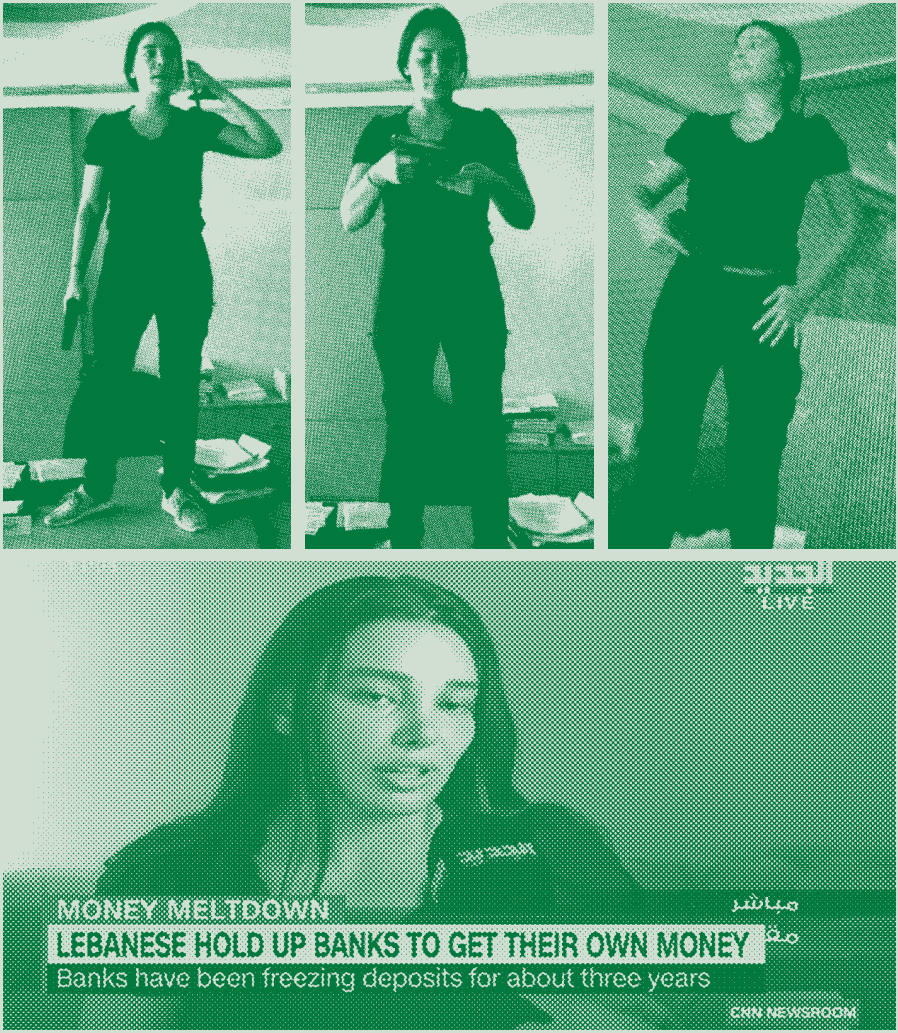
Third, significant sums of money were extracted from society as a whole and transferred to banks and their large depositors through a debt mechanism, some of which were government officials, prominent sectarian leaders or capitalists associated with these entities. Of course, not all depositors benefited equally, some had no choice but to place their money in banks. But in all cases, depositors have the right to demand their money back from banks, which have been trying to evade their responsibility towards them. Indeed, society cannot compensate depositors for the money that banks transferred to their owners, directors, and large depositors through the debt mechanism, instead of compensating depositors from their own properties and assets, as stipulated by existing laws.

Fourth, there is evidently no public interest in making all of society and future generations pay for choices they did not make and did not benefit from.

There is no public interest in nationalizing banks or having the state bear the cost of accumulated losses from public funds. There are those who have benefited by stripping society of its wealth and resources. If the depositor community does not join forces with the rest of society to recover this wealth from those who stole it, the result will be more haircuts on smaller depositors, and more misery, poverty, and emigration for society as a whole.



DEPOSITORS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LIVE
MONEY MELTDOWN
مباشر
LEBANESE HOLD UP BANKS TO GET THEIR OWN MONEY
Banks have been freezing deposits for about three years
CNN NEWSROOM


الأمل ومستقبلنا
ما إلهم أحزاب

FUTURE

Hassan AlSahily

Everything was possible. What was impossible weeks ago had become evidently possible. And our distant salvation was now clearly visible on the horizon.

We used to feel like we were a group like any other. We had an active will and a capacity to provide security for each other, whether in public squares, tents, on Facebook, or WhatsApp groups.

I know people who took days off from work, and who flew in from abroad to take part in the uprising. They felt that the city that had kicked them out years ago was welcoming them back.

A friend of mine, who had planned to move to Germany to pursue her studies, for example, decided, to cancel her trip and stay in Lebanon when the protests started.

It was possible to ignore one dream for the sake of another. Even though they were different. The uprising is a collective utopian dream, while emigration is an individual pursuit. Lebanese people today think of the future as individuals and of the past as a group.

Except, perhaps, for March 14, 2005, when the whole population, with all its sects and parties, dreamed of an independent country, the day the Syrian army withdrew to the sound of protests. However, it soon became clear that the dream was also synonymous with civil war, that there were other Lebanese in opposing squares who had their own definition of independence.

In the end, the future dream turned into an endless series of assassinations and explosions that concluded with the semi-coup of May 7, 2008 which wiped out the last trace of independence.

At some point, during the October 17 uprisings, we had to step back and ask ourselves: Which group are we? What kind of future do we dream of?

It was not easy to answer these questions. Whereas some people had a clear vision, others were more muddled. Within weeks, however, the squares that welcomed us were slowly emptied of protestors. Then came the panic of the collapse/pandemic, which was the only possible answer.

Later, with the August 4 explosion, the catastrophic future completed its rebirth, getting rid of any trace of the sin/hope it had produced a year earlier. Dystopia, which we had only come to know in sci-fi movies had become our inescapable reality.

Before the collapse, we kept saying that we lived on borrowed time, because catastrophe was always looming large, and everything could change at any moment. These same words were repeated over the period of a decade and a half of sharp polarization between the nihilistic future promoted by Hezbollah and its allies, and the sectarian neoliberal future endorsed by such parties as the Lebanese Forces and the Future movement.

Following October 17, when catastrophe was once again the only horizon, we spoke again of living on borrowed time.
The future we had weaved for ourselves was nothing but an optical illusion, and the utopia, which we glimpsed fleetingly on the horizon, was in reality a dystopia.

The Arab Spring was another illusion. The revolution in Syria turned into mass scale war, similar to Libya and Yemen. As for Egypt, it morphed into an even more brutal dictatorship than the past.

Older generations had lived through the same thing, big dreams that turned out to be nightmares. But would it have changed anything had they warned us?

In 1973, my mother went to Moscow to study nursing on a scholarship from the Committee of Soviet Women, headed at the time by Valentina Tereshkova,

the first woman in space.

The program ended a few months after the start of the civil war in Lebanon, which many considered an armed revolution. My mother spent two years studying nursing and reading about Karl Marx and Lenin. Then, instead of taking advantage of another scholarship to finish her medical studies, she decided to return to Lebanon. She was overly excited about what was going on in the country, despite the pessimistic outlook. In her view, it was still revolutionary violence and a struggle for change.

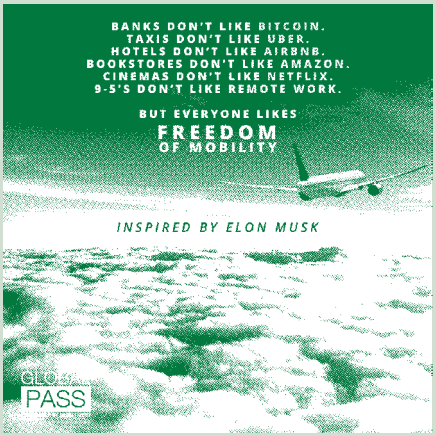
The dream was to build a secular, socialist system that was fairer to the lower classes, and a Palestinian resistance that was capable of confrontation and liberation.

Upon her return, however, she realized that there were no more roles for women to play and had to content herself with being a nurse in first aid centers near the Green Line.

A student who was with her on the course later told her that Valentina Tereshkova inquired why she didn't stay. We don't know what the student answered, but my mother would bring up that detail in the story time and again. The famous cosmonaut must've known her if she asked about her. My mum was one of the distinguished students of her class.

One year after returning to Lebanon, she moved to the village with my father, fleeing the war. There, they opened a pharmacy, where she worked for several years, before closing shop to become a full-time housewife.

Today, my mother never tires of recounting the same story of Tereshkova, who asked why she never completed her education. She then curses the foolishness of dreams, which materialized into misery. Sometimes, I try to imagine what could have happened if she had stayed there and not rushed back. How can dreams cost so much?


BANKS DON'T LIKE BITCOIN.
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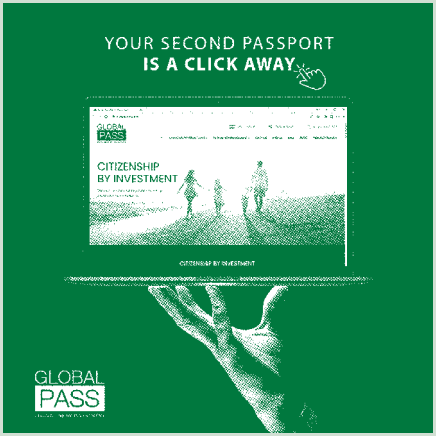
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HAIRCUT=HEADCUT
HAIR CUT = HEAD CUT
HAIR CUT = HEAD CUT

HAIRCUT

Rima Rantisi

On the morning of October 17, 2019, my then three-year-old son Leo and I got haircuts. He had a break from school. It's a ritual we have: Every few months, we head to the narrow streets of Burj Hammoud and take turns in Rino's chair. On that day, my hair was chopped into short layers with a funky fringe of bangs. Rino and I were spitting nails about the absurdity of Lebanon's politicians in between decisions of bang length and blow-dry. We talked about the impending doom of the economy, but that hair stylists wouldn't be hit as hard because people always need a haircut. Leo got a clean fade and asked that his bangs not fall too low on his forehead anymore. After his haircut, he helped sweep away the layers of our mixed hair off the floor. Before the economic collapse, top Lebanese hairstylists would take around $80 or $100 per cut whereas Rino would charge $33 for me and $20 for Leo, and his cuts were perfection. As haircuts do, they left us feeling new that day. On our way out, Rino held out a bejeweled hand full of colorful candies for Leo.

My mom is a hairdresser, and she's been cutting my hair since I was eleven, which means two things: I've paid for very few haircuts in my lifetime, and I've had plenty of experimentation done on me. She started working when my little sister was finally in school. Having raised my two siblings and me, it was time for her to get out of the house, to start a career for the first time since she moved from Lebanon to Illinois in 1978. She started working in the early 90s, when the Civil War in Lebanon came to an end. I was one of her first guinea pigs. I've had red, orange, and blond-streaked hair. Short hair, bobs, shaves, and asymmetrical 'dos. There was even one early unfortunate mushroom cut that evoked regular dreams of my past long hair. But inevitably, haircuts grow out, and I would start over again with a new one. I distinctly remember life becoming better after

my mom started cutting hair and making her own money. She seemed happier – more talkative, more open. As for us kids, we too were happier with our mom's new attitude – and we reaped the bounty of the extra income.

The economic term "haircut" entered our collective consciousness in Lebanon early into the October 17 Lebanese Revolution. I had never heard of it in an economic context before, but suddenly the word was popping up in interviews with economists, analysts, revolutionaries, and in casual conversation during a time where our collective future hung on every word, every act.

We began listening to trustworthy economists who explained the different mechanics of "debt haircuts," which basically meant someone had to pay for all the mismanagement of people's cash deposits, and that someone would be the depositors who'd kept their dollars in the banks. Being a primarily importing country with very little local industry, Lebanon needs dollars to pay for everything from fuel to medicine to toothpaste. At first, the talk was all about how haircuts would be given to million-dollar accounts, which would have been relatively painless for the wider economy. Then they said they'd skim some cash off deposits over $100,000. I didn't have that kind of money in the bank, but my mom did. She had savings from the many haircuts she had given over the last thirty years. She'd been keeping that money in Lebanon for the future she imagined she'd have when she'd return part-time, to live out some of her retirement here and make up for all those lost years.

While debates abounded about how the haircuts would be undertaken and who would get them, they began to shape our lives. Soon, our dollars in the bank – kids' college funds, savings, life insurance plans – were converted into lira

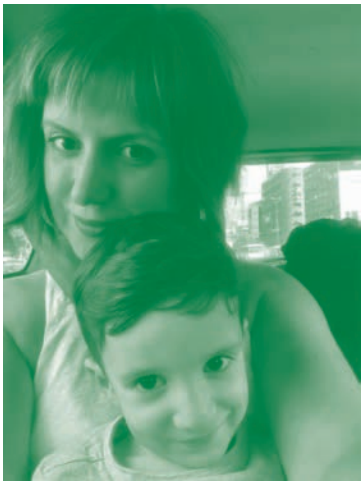
(under the codename "lollars") while outside the bank, the money exchangers were controlling the value of the currency and hyperinflation had taken hold of the economy. We bought meat and cheese less often; we drove less, dreamt less; family and friends left, unable to handle the stress, their years of labor down the drain; we sat in the dark and the heat more often. Needless to say, these haircuts did not make us feel new. Instead, they felt like a series of hideous haircuts that ended with a shave after having painstakingly grown out your hair for years.

The irony is that banks are usually the ones who take haircuts, not depositors. If they feel they may not get the full amount from the creditor or borrower, they take a percentage of the original full value and cut their losses. We slowly understood, as we emerged from the solitude of the coronavirus lockdown, and the lira lost more of its value, that the implementation of the Lebanese haircut would be multi-pronged and insidious. We soon could not withdraw any dollars from the banks. Chop. Then when we could only withdraw lira, it was at a fraction of the market lira to dollar rate. Chop. Then our credit cards stopped working. Chop. Checks were no longer accepted for deposit. Chop. The unofficial exchange rate climbed and in tandem our deposited bank/fake dollars were spit out only in lira, costing us double, then triple the official amount as the central bank failed to change its rate for months. Chop. Then the central bank created its own parallel exchange rate called sayrafa to buy our real dollars from the banks, which was "based on the [black] market rate" and to help importers; by this time, our money in the bank had devalued by 75%. Chop. Devaluation has now surpassed 95% since the beginning of the collapse. Chop.

So, the conclusion of infamous, endless haircut debates – who would pay the

price? – was to make all the depositors and lira-earning non-depositors pay, with the heavier burden on small and mid-sized depositors. Since those with the multi-million-dollar accounts were the members and cronies of the ruling elite who were making the decisions, everyone would have to pay, not just them. So rather than relatively painless haircuts for the 6%, everyone else had their limbs amputated. Between multiple exchange rates and the central bank's "creativity," the strands of losses are impossible to ac/count. People like my mom and Rino would never recuperate all those haircuts.

I took a selfie of Leo and me on the way home from Rino's that fateful day. I took another selfie five months later, our hair having grown out over our ears and eyes. So much had irrevocably changed in the spaces between revolution and corona and collapse. We wouldn't know much about what the future held, not even how long it would be before we would get another haircut, or when we would feel new again.

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يسقط
proposal

NGOs

Sarah Kaddoura

There are over ten thousand non-governmental organizations (NGOs) registered in Lebanon. Relative to the small size of the country, the concentration of these organizations is among the highest in the world. NGOs abound in countries where the state and the government do not provide adequate services and a decent life for citizens and residents. The prevailing model of a functioning state, notably welfare states, depends on residents paying their taxes. In return the state provides basic services such as health, education, transportation, and investment in infrastructure, i.e. the basic requirements of a decent life.

In Lebanon's case, taxes are paid in a way that punishes the poor and promotes rentierism and exploitation. In return, inefficient services (if any) are provided through a network of corrupt relations, while remaining services are privatized. In theory, NGOs fill the role of the absent state, and draw their funds from donations of individuals and institutions within Lebanon and abroad.

NGOs first emerged in the United States of America; they were active in Lebanon during the Civil War. Their role centered on the distribution of aid and relief, to alleviate poverty and the effects of the war. Since then, NGOs have proliferated, with multiple characteristics: Some are religious and linked to sectarian institutions, while others are established by capitalists, companies, and banks to whitewash their image (and perhaps launder their money). Among them also are "civil" organizations that focus on various human rights issues, services, or knowledge. There are several reasons for the multitude of NGOs in Lebanon, one of which is how easy it is to register a non-governmental organization, thanks to an Ottoman law that only requires the submission of a "declaration" to relevant authorities.

In Lebanon, "NGO" means different things, depending on the speaker. If we look at articles and investigative reports of platforms such as al-Manar, al-Mayadeen, and al-Akhbar, we encounter a negative

characterization of NGOs where they are pictured as the arm of U.S.-Zionist imperialism (some of them actually are). According to critics, the hidden agenda of NGOs ranges from dismantling the family to normalizing "normalization" with the occupying state of Israel. At the same time, several Christian and Muslim religious parties believe that NGOs propagate morals that are foreign to our societies, such as gay rights, sexual liberation for women, and basic labor rights for migrant workers. For politicians and political parties, particularly those that incite against Syrian refugees, NGOs are a cover for geopolitical elements that want Lebanon to fail, by flooding the country with refugees and giving them enough aid to keep them from returning to Syria. However, for a large segment of the Lebanese and non-Lebanese society, and amid the scarcity of job opportunities, NGOs are the only spaces in which many can find work, even if it's in fields that radically differ from their educational backgrounds.

Recently, the word "NGO" has become tied to "fresh dollar" salaries. The economic collapse has affected all sectors except NGOs, which receive their funding from abroad. NGOs concluded various agreements with banks allowing them to receive their funding in dollars, and a large percentage of them was therefore able to provide their employees with salaries that allowed them to maintain their lifestyles during the crisis– or even accumulate some wealth at the beginning of it. On the one hand, NGO workers were saviors for their families, especially those who lost their savings or whose pensions lost their value. On the other hand, the class rift increased between many NGO employees and the rest of society. They were the ones who could afford to pay unreasonable housing rents, and keep up with the rising prices of goods, generator subscriptions, medicines, and others. While some anger was directed at NGO employees, it was directed, in larger part, at the beneficiaries of NGO services (notably refugees, amid

alarmism as to the extent they were benefitting from those services).

Today, many young men and women dream of working in NGOs and earning decent salaries. This same privilege has exacerbated exploitation within NGOs. A manager can coerce his/her employees earning their salary in dollars, demanding that they work for extended, unacceptable hours and fulfill tasks that are beyond their job descriptions. Many managers, benefitting from the absence of state oversight, use illegal employment contracts that they do not disclose, avoid paying proper taxes or force employees to pay them out of their paychecks, resort to arbitrary dismissal policies or labor violations, and pay foreigners higher salaries than locals. Despite several attempts, over the years, to unite the ranks of NGO workers into syndicates, the crisis has strengthened the grip of managers over their employees. Some managers reduced salaries, citing the exchange rate of the dollar, while others embezzled dollars and disbursed salaries in Lebanese liras. Even others took advantage of the ambiguous exchange rate in the black market to rake up profits and strike corrupt deals.

Not only do NGOs violate workers' rights, but they also absorb and reorient the revolutionary energy of young men and women. Much of the criticism leveled at NGOs, mostly from the left, focuses on the danger of transforming revolutionary and political issues into mere jobs, and civil society in Lebanon is an example of that. The absence of job opportunities, the deterioration of union work, and the bad experience with traditional and alternative parties have made working in NGOs the best option for politically and socially active people in Lebanon–an option that keeps them away from the profit-driven private sector on the one hand, and from clientelistic networks on the other. After years in these organizations, the issues and the energy needed to tackle them turn into a career path, often in "unreal" work, that does not build professional

experience. As a result, people remain stuck in the cycle of working for NGOs, despite the absence of legal protection, stability, and opportunities for development and retirement, as most of these benefits depend on the priorities of the funders. Furthermore, this same funding tends to bring certain issues to the fore at the expense of others, and to promote an "activism" approach that mainly relies on advocacy and awareness campaigns.

There are several reasons why civil society and alternative platforms are not overtly critical of NGOs. First, traditional parties and religious actors are so focused on demonizing NGOs, that many of us become reluctant to criticize their role –although some organizations funded by embassies and different countries do indeed treat people as sources of intelligence or as revolutionary energy that can be absorbed. Second, *wasta* (connections) and clientelism extend to NGOs and the network of relationships within them. Activity circles are very tight, which makes it difficult to criticize organizations without the criticism becoming personal. Third, the complete failure of the Lebanese state makes everyone worry about the possible loss of the few services provided by NGOs. Fourth, the NGO sector currently offers the biggest number of job opportunities, not only for the Lebanese youth, but also for refugees who are excluded from the labor market.

In short, the spread of NGOs is a symptom of the failure of free markets and the state to shield society from poverty, and their failure to secure job opportunities and basic requirements for a decent life. It is not a space suited for political struggle, and exploitative practices within it must be confronted, not normalized. NGO employees do not represent one solid social class, despite the "fresh" dollars, because the high cost of living still impacts them and their families, and their fragile temporary work contracts leave them open to the winds of change.

Crisis Response
Registered Local Org

ACHRAFIEH 2020 is an apolitical long-term (8 years) environmental driven initiative by MP Nadim Gemayel. It's objective is to reinvent Achrafieh as a livable, breathable, welcoming and friendly neighborhood. Initiatives of this kind were courageously taken in many cities in the world, such as Seville, Rio, Milano and most of North European cities.
+9613700070

Beirut Emergency Relief
Diaspora Initiative

We take evaluating NGOs very seriously, and are exploring all options to ensure that they deploy funds as effectively and prudently as possible to those in need. All funds will be distributed to verified & vetted NGOs that directly assist with the impact of the explosion that occurred in the port area of Beirut on 4 August 2020.

Jeyetik
Initiative (not registered)

PERIODS DON'T STOP AFTER EXPLOSIONS & HYPERINFLATION We help women in need not worry about their periods by collecting & distributing pads.
+96170415473

Beirut Sweepers - International Logistics Services
Initiative (not registered)

We introduce ourselves as Specialized LOGISTICAL suppliers of EMERGENCY AID RELIEF ITEMS to various destinations worldwide by providing deliveries to almost every part of the globe.
+9613727646

NGOs

We Are Maze
Initiative (not registered)

Digital support for impacted businesses in downtown. 1. We will turn your destroyed physical store into an online one 2. We will photograph your products 3. Upload them on your site 4. Teach you how to promote them on Social Media 5. Support you for your 1 year

Beirut Hope
Initiative (not registered)

An instagram initiative where people can buy food and furniture from instashops to be delivered to the Beirut Hope team and distributed to the victims of the Beirut Blast
+96170108900, +96171469995, +96170941535

Saint Paul Charity Mission
Registered Local Org

Saint Paul Charity Mission is a youth movement that exerts itself in championing Christ's cause of love and brotherhood in the world. Beirut, our beloved capital is under ruins. Words cannot express the sorrow and damage this blast has caused in our hearts. We pray for God to strengthen our brothers and sisters affected by this atrocious event. Saint Paul Movement - Charity Mission went to the damaged area, helped the locals to evacuate their houses, offered shelter in its premises in Ferzol, donated food and landed a hand where there was a need. Today, the work continues to rise Beirut from the ashes.
+96176656438

PANIC

Masad Asaad

Around 2010, I was watching Michael Haneke's film *Caché* (Hidden) at the French Cultural Center in Damascus. In one scene, Majeed, the son of Algerians killed in the 1961 Seine massacre in Paris, stands before George, the son of bourgeois PaArisian parents, who prevented his family from adopting Majeed when they were younger. In a sudden shocking move, typical of Haneke, Majeed takes a knife out of his pocket, raises it to his neck, and slits his throat in front of George. His blood forms a trickle of blood on the wall, an image which Haneke uses for the movie poster.

What mattered most back then was the reaction in the small theater room that had no more than fifty people in attendance. I remember a woman sitting in front of me in the theater standing up and screaming, and I remember feeling more empathetic to her reaction than shocked by the violent scene. She eventually calmed down after a young man sitting next to her consoled her by patting her shoulder.

Panic did not have the general social meaning back then that it has today. I remember that same year, returning home from a late-night screening at the Canadian Cinema, I was walking down one of the old Damascus alleys I knew by heart when a security officer in civilian attire stopped me and asked me where I was headed and where I had come from. I simply answered, "I was at the cinema." He surprised me with a strange laugh and asked, "Who goes to the cinema at this time of night?" and he let me carry on on my way.

Fear had no place in my heart in those days. There was only empathy for the terrified girl and the security officer standing outside in the cold dark night on the look out for some invisible threat. But things changed after the 2011 events in Syria, and I no longer know if the fear barrier was broken –as they say– or cemented in our hearts forever!

In early March 2020, the trustworthy Lebanese Minister of Health came out

and told us: "There is no need to panic." His words circulated on the streets of Beirut following the first recorded Coronavirus cases in Lebanon at the time. Perhaps the collapse of the Lebanese economy, as well as the absence of functional state structures capable of keeping up with the world, and the lack of understanding Lebanese society (which led to the October 17 uprising) were greater reasons for the needless panic–according to the brilliant minister–, or perhaps it was a myriad of other reasons that lead the Lebanese to repeat this word more than anyone else.

I have been suffering from chronic panic attacks for years, especially in my voluntary/enforced prison that was Beirut. However, when I heard people talking about panic, I went down into the empty streets at night and walked through them panic-free for the first time in ages. I felt that the whole city was panicking with me, like me, and that inspired tremendous empathy in me.

Panic is not new to Lebanon and is not a result of the collapse. Rather, it was always present, but not defined in the same way. It was "hidden" and perhaps a cause for mockery among some. "I am panicking" or "I am having a 'panic attack'" were not phrases that resonated until His Excellency graced us with his now-immortal words.

I was depressed before the revolutions and wars failed. I lived in quarantine before Coronavirus. News of wars do not cause my panic as much as an unexpected doorbell or a call from an unknown number. I do not fear famine or poverty as much as I fear the loss of my Beirut friends and its many passers-by.

The collapse is when panic attacks turn into an addiction as time goes by. When sweating, sudden shivers, and palpitations get worse by the day. So much so that we now feel alienated without them in this city that resembles no other –this bright capital of the glorious East that has be-

come a large village left without a heart, without a soul, without light, and without heritage, with nothing but some well-deserved and yet unsolicited sympathy,.

Is it hard to write about panic while one is in its grips? Perhaps. But it's even harder to write about panic when one is calm. Words seem more sincere and more poignant when written with trembling hands and a pounding heart. Therefore, if we were to define "panic disorder" as it is scientifically known, then perhaps we ought to define empathy. The most beautiful thing about Beirut, despite its cruelty, is its abundance of empathy. It is the city of absolute extremes.

I was about 500 meters away from the August 4 explosion, in a building overlooking the port on the fifth floor. I was thrown five meters back and sustained light injuries to my face and back. I immediately left the destroyed house with a friend who had suffered serious head wounds. I took off my bloodstained shirt, tied it around her head, and walked bare-chested to al-Roum Hospital. There was blood everywhere. Cars were lining up to treat the injured. More blood, among amputated organs scattered around. There was one lone and confused municipal police officer, standing in the middle of an unruly and raging crowd who were screaming at him. It was complete chaos. No one understood anyone. In that moment, I felt a sense of belonging to and familiarity with Beirut. There it was, unfortunately, in its true form as I had imagined it: Blood everywhere, chaos and confusion.

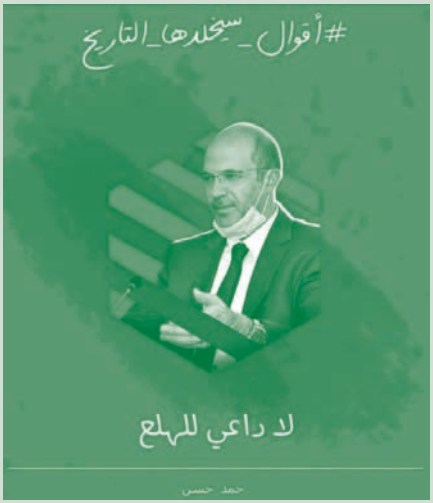
This state of affairs is perhaps defined in terms of contrast: For every moment of panic in Beirut, there is a moment of intimacy created by loved ones, friends, and the kindness of strangers, and they are many! And how great is our panic and sadness for a future that simple health symptoms of regular "panic disorder" cannot absorb or contain.


الليرة
بخير

PANIC


لا داعي للهلع...


#أقوال_سيخلدها_التاريخ
الليرة بخير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لا داعي للهلع


GOVERNMENT

SILOS

Sara Mourad

I had never noticed the 50-year-old tall, white grain silos that stood by the sea before August 4, 2020, that is, before their partial destruction in a massive explosion at the Beirut port. What this means is that I had probably seen them so many times that they gradually receded from view, becoming a nondescript part of a mundane seaside landscape of warehouses, cranes, and colorful metallic cargo containers.

The silos stood 85 meters away from the epicenter of the blast that killed more than 200 people, injured over 6,000 others, and devastated entire neighborhoods. Today, their remaining, half-standing parts are the only thing I see, having trained my eye to look for them whenever I cross the coastal highway overlooking the port. The silos, we were told, had absorbed much of the explosion's impact, sparing the western part of the city significant damage. I have no way of telling if they spared me any wounds or cuts on that day.

In the months that followed I binge-watched videos of the explosion, obsessively studying the shape, color, movement, and sequence of the fire and the clouds of smoke on my phone screen. Then, and for a long time, I was unable to look at the footage. The explosion and its moving image have a visceral effect. I turn my head, scroll down, and look away.

The gutted silos are a different story. I look at them as one looks at a work of art, a still life painting. Depending on your vantage point, the cement may contrast with the blueness of the sky and sea or else it blends into the urban background of concrete. Under a certain light, the columns remind me of the Roman temple of Baalbek. They look like ruins not of an ancient past but of a disappearing present. I can't zoom in on their details through the window screen of a fast moving car, yet my gaze remains fixed on them until they fade from view.

Catastrophic events create new lines of sight. They transform our field of vision. Invisible objects suddenly appear, as window panes now do whenever I become conscious of standing near them, their sight summoning bloody images of skin shredded by shards of exploding glass. Or else they appear as silos do, as makeshift monuments for the undead.

Standing in for what remains, they are the plainly visible evidence of the explosion's effect on the city. Their photographed portraits are the latest addition to our national iconography of survival, to the visual archive of disaster kitsch. In their present, ghostly form, the port silos – much like the Holiday Inn, Burj al-Murr, and the Egg – appear as photogenic corpses, materializing the city's hauntings and fulfilling our voyeuristic attachment to tragedy.

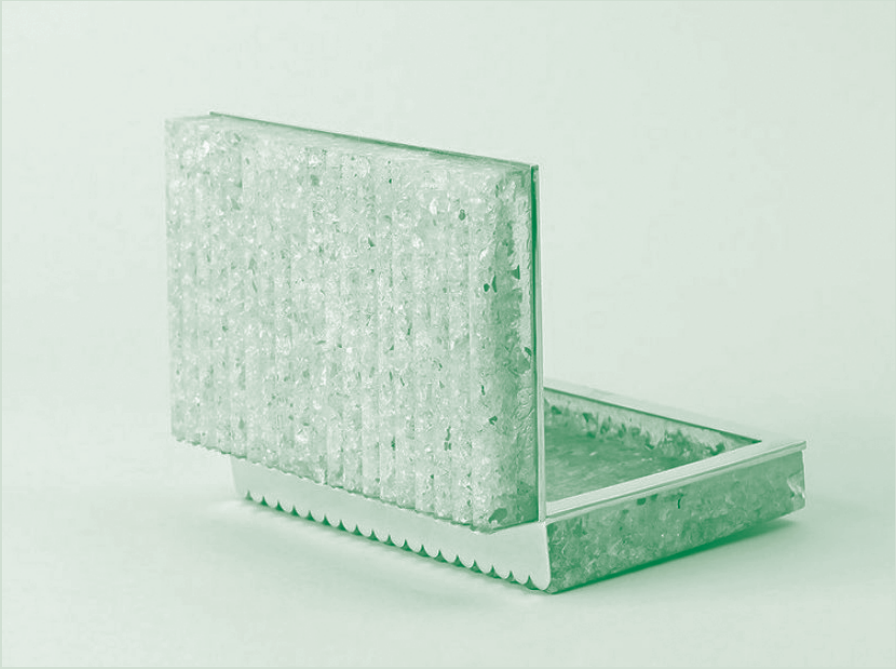
But the silos are also the public evidence of a crime that everyone in power wants buried. They are a reminder of a before and after, the colossal proof that something – one of the biggest non-nuclear explosions in history – has indeed happened here. Someone spray painted "MY GOVERNMENT DID THIS" in large block letters on a roadside cement barrier facing the port, creating a kind of caption to the apocalyptic scene of devastation in its background. THIS designates a flat landscape of scorched metallic ruins where the silos immediately stand out as a tall mass of destroyed concrete, indexing the magnitude of what happened.

With time, what happened was no longer news. Economic talk replaced explosion talk, and people got too busy calculating prices, costs, and exchange rates. Nothing remained fixed; everything was in flux. The silos too were no longer still, becoming an almost living creature whose tilts signaled imminent collapse. The damaged columns had long been tipping, their frail structure further compromised by fire. Left untended and

exposed, their grain stocks had become flammable in the summer heat. If the silos became the image of disaster, the fumes of burning fermenting grains became the stench of its aftermath.

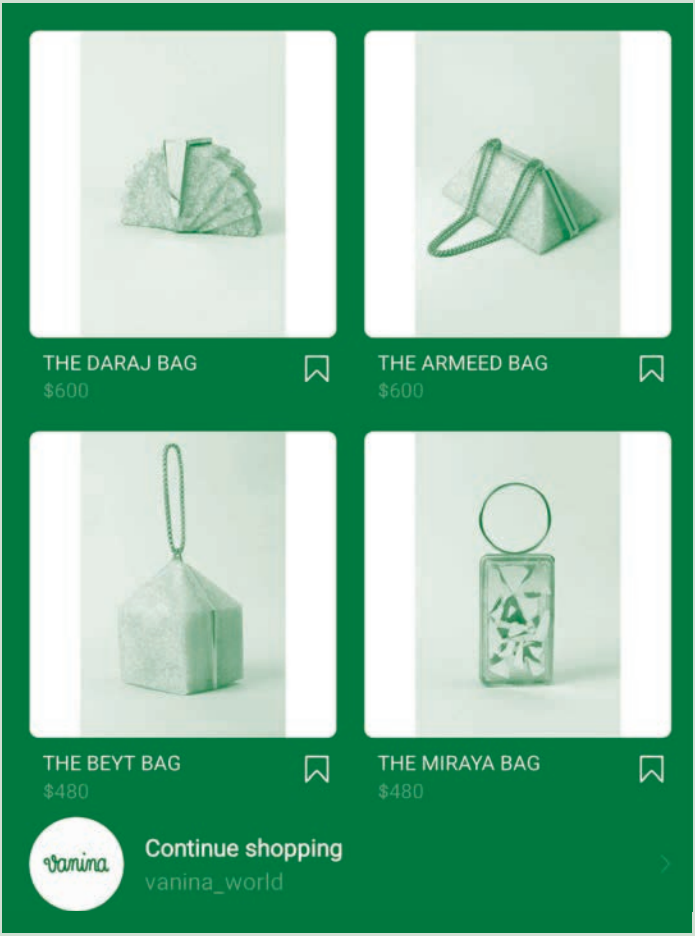
On the second anniversary of the blast, the collapse of a section of columns into particles of dust signaled the inevitable erasure that follows in the wake of each calamity. For the families of those who perish, to forget is to betray. And so they hold on to the silos, calling them "The Silent Witness," and they campaign for their preservation as a memorial site. If they survive at all in our world of continuous political and ecological upheaval, the silos will do so with great difficulty. Of the original 48, only 12 remain standing today.

I don't know whose lives and homes were saved by the mass of concrete that was built to contain our grain reserves. The grains, now forming golden dunes at the feet of the silos' skeletal remains, have perished. The carcasses of pigeons and rats lie among the debris at the devastated pier. For the naked eye, such sublime and gruesome details are indiscernible. I find them through Google searches that yield texts and images to feed my visual fixation, my craving for graphic descriptions of ground zero. To witness catastrophe is to experience the thrill and anguish of survival. Time chews on memory, so we look for matter to remember what we have lived through. In staring at the silos, I am reminded of my own mortality and of my desire to live.




THE SILO BAG $550 >

SILOS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الرجل

SON-IN-LAW

Naim Halawi

The son-in-law is a backrest*

Once again, political conditions in Lebanon, notably the developments of recent years, led to the emergence of a new linguistic term, which joins the many coined words and phrases that spread widely.

We could probably group these words into a list we call "our modern popular linguistic heritage" because of its richness, diversity, and abundance. It is a thriving list that never ceases to grow in our country. Sometimes, it even witnesses increased prosperity, like it did during the 2019 popular revolution in Lebanon. The list will most likely stand the test of time, and we will always resort to the terms, words, ammunition, and gems it carries. It will be passed down through time to future generations.

This time, the new term added to the list was a "nickname." A very specific title, originally referring to a relative of the family known as the "son-in-law."

This nickname has been politically linked to one of Lebanon's most controversial and popular personalities –at least since 2005 –a man who has so deservedly, strongly, uniquely, and exclusively earned it, so much so that it has been affixed to him alone. We are talking about none other than Mr. Gebran Bassil, who preoccupies the world and everyone in Lebanon, the Levant, the diaspora, and the four corners of the globe.

Mr. Bassil had multiple nicknames to begin with. These included complimentary titles given to him by his advocates and supporters, as well as other spiteful nicknames bestowed upon him in popular circles or by his political opponents as well as his rivals in other fields.

Amongst Bassil's supporters, favorite nicknames include "the troublemaker" or "the headache" or "the coy one." Some call him "president," since he is the president of the Free Patriotic Movement,

* Lebanese proverb

and heads the largest parliamentary bloc in the Chamber of Deputies, as well as the largest of the allied blocs, and the biggest MP cocktail. For his supporters, he is also the "president-to-be", eternally suitable for the country, whether now or later. Of course we should not forget his more natural title of "former minister" since he ran three ministries in ten years. By the way, he is an expert at everything!

Mr. Bassil's political opponents and large segments of the population who do not support him have come up with creative nicknames and epithets of different calibers for him. These mainly centered around accusations of corruption, and his lack of knowledge and skill in running the country. Some went as far as personally slandering him.

Some of the tamer nicknames we can mention here: He is "internationally sanctioned," "corrupt," "the minister of darkness," "the minister of power barges," "the minister of promises," "they didn't let us," and "Therese" (from the song Go Kiss Therese, which Samir Geagea, head of the Lebanese Forces, aimed at Bassil in a televised interview). He is also the "hela ho," a nickname derived from a lewd chant that protestors sang in the first days of the revolution. The chant was so often repeated that the nickname spread like wildfire across different media and circles.

Bassil considered these rash attacks a deliberate attempt to tarnish his image and reputation, often repeating that they were "attempts at character assassination."

What's the story behind the son-in-law nickname?

The son-in-law remains the most moderate of Mr. Bassil's nicknames. It originally consisted of two words, to distinguish his honorable person from the two other sons-in-law in the family. He was the "pampered son-in-law," in other words, the favorite son-in-law of the General,

the head of the family and the father of the three brides.

It is said that when former President General Michel Aoun married Bassil to his daughter Chantal (Aoun at the time was heading the Free Patriotic Movement), he discovered his new son-in-law's talents in politics and in the partisan and national struggle, respectively. He began to see in Bassil the son-in-law who deserved to be the real "backrest." Perhaps the image of the popular proverb "one son-in-law supports your back, and one son-in-law brings a shovel to the grave" applied to him. Who knows?

Later days revealed how Bassil indeed acquired the traits of a brilliant, skillful leader. His star rose in politics and in the party, and more light shined on him than the other two sons-in-law, leading him to where he is now.

Bassil was the general's son-in-law who gradually took over the reins from his father-in-law, and triumphantly entered the Lebanese political arena by assuming various ministerial and parliamentary positions. As a result, the "general's son-in-law "nickname became widely used on a popular level, when discussing Bassil, his actions, and his achievements, whether in salons, on social media, or in the writings of analysts and observers, and even by his fellow politicians, especially when they were being critical of both the general and his son-in-law. In this way, they were killing two birds with one stone, as if someone were saying: The apple doesn't fall far from the tree.

In short, with time, the General ascended to the presidency, distancing himself, at least in theory, from the daily running of the Free Patriotic Movement and its affairs. At that stage, when Gebran was left alone to deal with party matters, and when he was accused of being the shadow president and the ultimate authority in Baabda Palace, the nicknames "pam-

pered son-in-law" or "the general's son-in-law" where shortened to one single epithet: the son-in-law.

This nickname had multiple uses, especially when critiques were harsh. It was an easy way to denote Mr. Bassil, for example, without running the risk of legal prosecution for defamation, libel, or slander. So they would write that the son-in-law stole this, the son-in-law squandered that, or the faulty dam is due to the son-in-law, etc... The same applied to people tweeting and posting on social media.

In conclusion, this nickname will stick, and will never leave the son-in-law, the backrest, the source of aggravation, unless another higher caliber nickname comes along to displace it, such as "the first Lebanese" or more, only God knows.

JANUARY 27, 2020

TIME

THE FAMILY BUSINESS

THE UNUSUAL POWER OF JARED KUSHNER

by BRIAN BENNETT

time.com

SON-IN-LAW


08:17
LTE
vox.com
Vox
Trump's and Kushner's companies are doing business together. That's alarming.
Their enterprises are creating new avenues for corruption at the White House.
By Zeeshan Aleem on March 15, 2018 9:10 am
AA
google.fr


08:11
LTE
TIME
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Files in Kushner's office represent the broad set of issues he works on. Christopher Lee for TIME
His first few months after Trump won the White House were littered with mistakes that showcased naiveté. His meeting with a Russian banker linked to the Kremlin stoked speculation about collusion. His support for Trump's decision to fire FBI Director James Comey helped trigger the appointment of special counsel Robert Mueller. His spotty top-security clearance application and ties his family's real estate business has had to foreign
time.com


SMALL
MOTOR
دولة

SUBSCRIPTION

Chrystèle Khodr

I am trying to recall the first time I heard the word "subscription" but I can't. All I remember is that I grew up with the word "electrical knife switch" and the expression "the circuit-breaker cut." I also remember months of electrical outages, and the adults around me devising various tricks to watch television, to chase away mosquitoes, and to keep the fridge cold. I remember that sfouf dipped in molasses were our favorite pastries, and I just recently realized why: They lacked any fresh ingredients that required refrigeration, or in modern parlance, they were vegan and eco-friendly.

A more vivid memory though, is the first time electricity resumed after a long outage. I was seven years old, in the dark fall of 1990, and I was on a swing, on the roof of my grandfather's house, which overlooked one of the old neighborhoods of Antelias. Suddenly, without warning, the lights came on and lit up the great shrine to the Virgin which occupied–and still does–the center of the roof. Everyone inside cheered. Their shouts mixed with the happy cries of the neighbors. Outside, the Virgin did not cry out, did not rejoice, did not triumph. She stood still, arms wide open as if to say "it is out of our hands." Indeed, the light that came on was not powered by state electricity but by a generator subscription.

According to the dictionary, a subscription is a specific amount of money paid at agreed intervals, for a certain period of time, to get something in a regular or periodic manner. The dictionary offers the following example: "Newspaper subscription: Subscribing to a newspaper, paying in advance to ensure its regular delivery."

In this definition, "a certain period of time" caught my attention. Did the dictionary mean that this period could exceed thirty years? Perhaps, since the example given after the definition is that of a newspaper. And in our surroundings there are undoubtedly those who have been reading the same newspaper for over thirty years –hoping for good news– and who have paid in advance to receive it regularly.

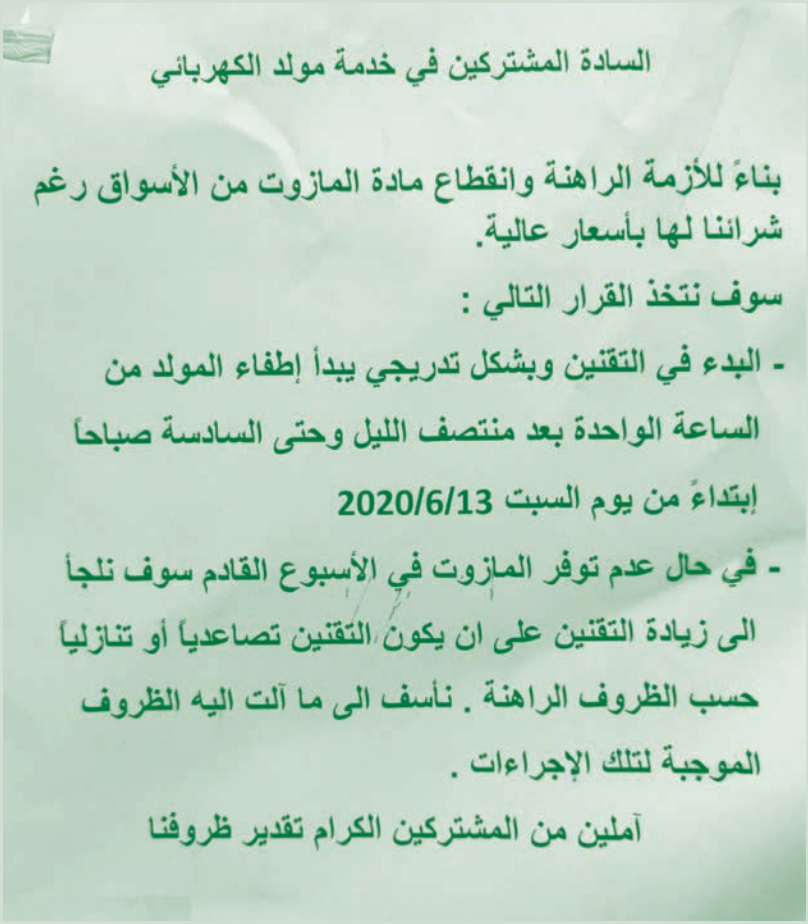
Here, I can only congratulate the owners of the generators, and particularly those who categorically refuse to install electrical meters for their esteemed subscribers. I congratulate them because they have restored the true meaning of the word subscription, i.e. "pay in advance to receive regularly."

We should also congratulate ourselves, we, for whom the word "subscription" has become, in our collective consciousness and our popular language, an antonym of the word "state," after we deleted the word "electricity":

State electricity ≠ Subscription electricity

For what is a revolution, if not recapturing the meaning of words?

Cheers to us!


السادة المشتركين في خدمة مولد الكهربائي

بناءً للأزمة الراهنة وانقطاع مادة المازوت من الأسواق رغم شرائنا لها بأسعار عالية.

سوف نتخذ القرار التالي :

- البدء في التقنين وبشكل تدريجي يبدأ إطفاء المولد من الساعة الواحدة بعد منتصف الليل وحتى السادسة صباحاً إبتداءً من يوم السبت 2020/6/13
- في حال عدم توفر المازوت في الأسبوع القادم سوف نلجأ الى زيادة التقنين على ان يكون التقنين تصاعدياً أو تنازلياً حسب الظروف الراهنة . نأسف الى ما آلت اليه الظروف الموجبة لتلك الإجراءات .

آملين من المشتركين الكرام تقدير ظروفنا

Dear Generator Service Subscribers

On light of the current crisis and shortage of fuel in the market despite our purchasing it at high prices.
We will take the following decision:

- **Beginning with gradual rationing which will begin by turning off the generator from 1 am until 6 am as of Saturday 13/6/2020**
- **In case of the unavailability of fuel in the coming week we will have to resort to further rationing which will either increase or decrease depending on the situation. We are sorry for the circumstances that have led to these measures.**

In hopes that the esteemed subscribers will appreciate our difficult situation

SUBSCRIPTION


بلدك إلك
ليرتك إلك
الدولار مش إلك
تعاملوا بالعملة اللبنانية فقط

SUBSIDIES / SUPPORT

Serge Harfouche

Important warning and disclaimer:
Everything I am about to say stems from my own recollections.
This means it will be full of faults, confusion, metaphors, projections, emotional transfers, and anything else that results from rewriting history from a very personal lens...
However, to show my good intentions, I suggest that the readers and I agree on the following:
I pledge not to lie even if all that follows derives from a personal perspective, and as such, is not completely identical to what we know as the truth. I promise to be honest. Honesty in itself is a good intention and is based on what I know so far, i.e. my account could also be subject to correction, modification, and development. Truth will never be absolute, and reality will always reflect different points of view. But presenting reality clearly, without a stiff language, may help us reach a balance between what exists and what we hope may exist...
In exchange, as readers, you undertake the responsibility of verifying information, numbers and facts, should they pop up. In other words, what follows is an emotional/research product that requires a collective, collaborative effort, if I may say so myself...

Step one, word inventory:
Subsidy/Support/Backing[1]
Backed
Subsidized
Did you get any support?
Are you getting support?
Back-up required on the Ring!
Support no longer needed at Palma!
Subsidizing basic goods
Subsidizing fuel
Economic subsidies
Supporting low-income families
He has backing and is thriving
A *kafta* sandwich with extra toppings
A jumbo falafel sandwich
In Tebbaneh, the building structures are crumbling
OK, let's support each other

1 *Daam* in Arabic can be used as a synonym of all these words

Step two, details and specifics:
Economic collapse and what not –turns out the country is bankrupt.
The lifting of subsidies on commodities is necessary, and a commodity is an item that is bought and/or sold. It's a term often linked to royalty and ownership, to one of its components, and linked to production and consequently with tools of production (wink wink).
There was a big fuss about what should still be subsidized at the time, and what should be "liberated" from subsidies. Two commodities were an important topic of discussion: Gasoline and sanitary pads.

Of course, authorities did not give the two issues the same attention, which is expected because they prioritize their own interests. Those interests are then ideologized and sectarianized to build an identity, which in turn is created to secure those same interests. The interest is to take advantage of any circumstance, whatever it may be, to make (a lot of) money, always.

Authorities will subsidize the import of cashew nuts and leave us sick with worry about gasoline, but forget that half the country is bleeding, literally, once a month, with blood up to their knees... They forget or they ignore, whatever it is, it's not a priority. Let women figure it out. If she has money, it won't affect her much. After all these are goods, and goods are bought with money.

But in Lebanon, many people have no money, many women have no money. There are foreign migrant worker women who don't have money and don't have their passports, there are refugees who don't have money and don't have a passport, or a house. The list keeps growing, branches out and gets more complicated the further we move down the food chain, and submerge ourselves in the reality of marginalized groups. We discover it's all a question of subsidies!

People pay taxes, the state subsidizes goods, prices are reduced, and people

don't get fucked over, right? Isn't this the contract between the state and us? How come the state's priorities –no, the priorities of the authorities controlling the state, are so different from the priorities of its people, who are in principle the responsibility of the state that these authorities run?

This is why we need statistics, numbers, figures, to identify the extent of the damage and to find a way of containing it.

What is important:
Supporting public interest
To protect public commons
Subsidizing food, not just the shit of importers and monopolists who either fuck the market and make gigantic profits, or benefit from subsidies, and make gigantic sums of money, and in either case, people get fucked.
Subsidizing food production
Create small support networks that are collective, lightweight and composed of dynamic people, girls and boys in their twenties, who are angry and reject humiliation, emigration, and refuse equating the struggle with either travel or gunpowder (as El Rass[2] says).

Step three, manifesto:
The world we knew is gone. Over. Done with. Dead.
We have entered the time of monsters, as Gramsci says.
We have one of two solutions: Either we all die, by drowning and/or by burning and/or of thirst and/or of hunger (and leave Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk to die alone in space), or we take the brave conscious decision to change everything!

Starting with our own internal space, starting with our personal relationships. Let all our relationships become personal and all our spaces safe, so that the *daam* (support) recovers throughcollective effort its original meanings, empowerment, protecting

2 *El Rass* is a Lebanese Rapper

victims, protecting the environment, protecting diversity, access to land, knowledge and love. Cultivating the ways in which we defend ourselves and our environment. Getting rid of the commodification of food and housing.

Love, food, water, justice for all.

Land for those who till it.

SUBSIDIES / SUPPORT


النصر حليف الناس
صنعوا
القوة للناس

VICTORY

Fawzi Zabyan

Victory as an Echo of Defeat

Despite gelatinous and ambiguous origins, words have a lineage. It is insulting, to an extent, to turn a word into mere speechifying, the way the word "victory," for example, is used by Hezbollah and its Secretary General in particular... Perhaps it's the predicament of heroism. "Victory" in this case ceases to be a mere word and becomes the glue that holds the speech together every time. In this context, "victory" often takes on the features of the person saying it, who, in turn, shapes other people's whims and the vocabulary of their worldly and post-worldly lives. We are therefore confronted with another type of lexicon, in which features, tone of voice, and virile performance are a prominent part of the vocabulary.

Because of their long history, words often do not respond to our expectations. Our relationship with texts is fraught with confusion, obscurity, and ambiguity, and this leads the text to generate a vast field of semantics. However, this semantic diversity is completely negated when a word is seized or even assassinated, as with the word "victory" in the reality of Lebanon's "resistance." Everything in Lebanon resembles defeat, humiliation, and fracture. Despite this, the word "victory" keeps circulating among Hezbollah's people, like an echo of defeat.

Someone once said that poems do not charm those who write them but those who need them. In this context, what applies to poems applies to oratory speeches as well.

Oratory discourse does not draw its strength merely from the lexical semantics of the word, nor from the word's historical meaning, rather it derives its strength, to a great extent, from the orator's performance. As Saint Augustine says: 'Some words have one task, and that is to address sight and nothing but sight!'

The word "victory" in Hezbollah's lexicon is a visual occurrence par excellence, and perhaps this visual dimension was most prominently manifested in the sermon glorifying the aftermath of the events of May 7, 2008.

The word, any word, may surprise a person receiving it with a meaning that is not completely consistent with its historical narrative. It may also be combined with a semantic field that does not conform to its lexical signifier. But to contradict, in all aspects, everything that relates to the word's truth is treason, betrayal and humiliation even.

Words are very arrogant, because they are aware we can not operate in the world without them. Sometimes you see them hiding what they want to say, and at other times, they are so frank and clear that they are crude. But often, you find words in shades of grey. Words are like birds soaring confidently, but this confidence soon disappears as this word or that turns into prey and falls into a vicious trap, so that uttering it evokes all that contradicts its accumulated meaning. And using a word in a way that is at odds with its meaning transforms that word into a mere sound, a sound that springs from lips, a sound that is more akin to a mutter, a stammer, or a snarl. That is the case of "victory," which is orphaned from any lexical root in Hezbollah's usage of it, if you consider the miserable reality of Lebanon since these "victories" began accumulating in our daily lives.

Yes, the word "victory" here has been degraded to just a sound, a noise, an absurdity like the sound of wind howling over a dark forest... It is Lebanon, in the age of victories! This is not very surprising. History often provides us with pulpits, where the farce of tampering with words plays out, instead of bowing humbly to their greatness.

I doubt that the word "victory" would smile upon all the forms of poverty and

destitution that plague the daily lives of the "victorious" in Lebanon. I do not believe that this time-honored word has anything to do with the absence of social safety in any society. Needless to say, this indecisive word does not care for a geography troubled by the collapse of the educational, judicial, health, and administrative institutions on top of our heads, just as "victory" does not bloom on a soil fed with wastewater, stagnant sewage channels, and polluted rivers.

The French philosopher Roland Barthes advises us to imagine a linguistic science whose task is not limited to studying the origin of words and their derivations, or how they spread and their different signifiers through historical periods, rather focusing on their radical usages with a strict ideological bent, leading to their coagulation. It's as if Barthes invites us to retrace the word "victory" in Lebanon, where its use not only tricks the ears but the eyes and sight as well. Hezbollah's use of this poor word is tantamount to structuring the entire Lebanese scene to suit the party's creed. Its use aims to rearrange reality by effectively obscuring it, as contrasted with the meatiness of the word "victory" when it springs from the lips of the "sayyed of the resistance."

Voltaire argued that it is necessary to prefer the reality of things over the pointless eloquence of language, while Greek sages warned rhetoricians against foolishly obscuring real facts under Hermes's cap, because that would be an insult to the Logos... As for Hermes's cap, it granted its wearer invisibility (pardon this digression to Greece that could not be avoided).

There is a group in Lebanon who wants to put Hermes's cap over reality, while they bask in the shade of the continuously repeated word "victory," and then amid an imaginary reality buttressed by a set of words, topped by the one that is the subject of this text. However, as history shows us, reality is always more

abundant than clamorous speeches. Lebanon is a defeated country, and this defeat has even affected the word "victory," which drags its tail in shame, because of the disrespect and humiliation these speeches inflict on it.

This hollow intertextuality between desire and imagined reality only insults words, via the arbitrary references that tighten the structure of partisan ideology, where the recipient is but a mere customer in a huge supermarket of resonant words. Back to Roland Barthes: the pleasure of the body cannot be reduced to pure physiology, since the urgency of words over minds and feelings also generates pleasure–and here we recall the ecstatic features and raised fists every time the word "victory" reverberates at pulpits or on television screens.

Who said that the truth of a speech lies only in the words of that speech? The speech often echoes the whims and desires of a way of existing in the world... But the fact remains that the world is not replete with the illusion of victories, but with the reality of defeat, which reinforces the defeat of the word "victory" in the discourse of the so-called resistance.

The victory that is the subject of Hezbollah's pulpits and its Secretary General has led the Lebanese people to raise a white flag in surrender even over cemeteries. This surrender reached its apogee, as we submitted to the motorcades bellowing "Shia... Shia," which saw in the constellation of Lebanese people, at least in the early beginnings of October 17, enemies of the "resistance."

The party's record of "victories" attests to the fact that it serves a criminal regime. And the viciousness with which it faced down the Lebanese people's desire for change is nothing but further proof that that regime's rightful place is within the pages of Hezbollah's register. Out of sympathy for the humiliations and

deprivations suffered by the Lebanese people, it must be said that the Lebanese are subject to a different kind of occupation, in the form of not only the regime's total control over the administration of their lives, but the destruction of their lives, and all of this with full support–in act and speech–from the party of all these "victories."

Yes, they have defeated us, and our lives today spent monitoring news of the exchange rate, panting after the currency of Hezbollah's "enemies," and then tracking down medicines, the school year, postage stamps, a drop of fuel, and a trickle of water, are nothing but the embodiment of the word "victory" as it is literally deployed in the party's lexicon. The word "victory" feeds here on all forms of humiliation and indignity, and how could it not, since this word in the party's limited lexicon never ceases to tickle the nostalgia of all the Lebanese for all sorts of defeat.


ما فينا إلّا ما نشكركن


الشعب قرّر. التغيير بلّش.
نحو الوطن


بفضلكن
صار من حقّنا نصدّق
شو فينا نحقّق

VICTORY

أيّام و دولارات

ays & Dollar

1500

Amal Taleb

One thousand five hundred...

What is one thousand five hundred? For many, it is just another number, like six hundred and fifty, or thirty-three...

But no... Because, in Lebanon, everything is different, strange, and unlike anything else, one thousand five hundred is not a mere number. It's a phrase that is specific to the Lebanese people.

Just like coffee is more than a morning drink, it sets the mood of the day to come; and just like humor is not a point of view, but something that you either have or you don't.

So let's cut to the chase, and zoom in on one thousand five hundred.

First of all, it's not a thousand and five, it's one thousand five hundred. Of course, there's a big difference between five and five hundred in principle... That's if we're talking in pure mathematical terms, not in a poverty-stricken country undergoing an economic collapse.

Speaking of numbers, a number alone is only a unit of measurement. By itself, it defines nothing and requires an additional descriptor...

In other words, seven apples are nutritional, "seven stones" is a childhood game, and both differ from "seven major sins and then some", an Arabic idiom that I never understood.

In any case, seven remained seven, but the word following it changed.

Would you be surprised if I told you that one thousand five hundred is followed by "Lebanese pounds"?

Would you be even more surprised if I told you that our tendency to abbreviate, whether out of habit or to save time, turning one thousand five hundred into a thousand and five, is not so important a reduction, or so big a loss?

Simply said, in Lebanon the difference between five Lebanese pounds, five hundred Lebanese pounds, five thousand Lebanese pounds or even five hundred thousand Lebanese pounds is not so great.

And now, we move to a Lebanese word that is very popular these days: Collapse. Let me take you back to the origin of the number one hundred and five.
Before 2018, from the moment I opened my eyes to the world, one US dollar was equal to one thousand five hundred Lebanese pounds, according to the official exchange rate.
Imagine what bliss we lived in.

A country that does not manufacture and does not grow crops, a country that functions –if it ever was truly functional– on tourism –security conditions allowing–, and on banks that provided secrecy, interest, and more offers than shops and restaurants.

In other words, what was offered for $1, we bought for LBP 1,500. We calculated the price by multiplying by 1.5...A vacation priced in dollars, would cost us one and a half times in Lebanese pounds.

We lived well, in all honesty, we lived well.

Of course, some people lived longer and better than others... but all of us survived. Before 2019, bank slogans were a source of security, the good life, like a treasure chest of promises and beautiful futures.

Banks told us, with us you have peace of mind, and how can we help you? Banking without borders, we are your bank for life... People didn't invest their money, and why should they?
Money kept in banks yielded high interest at low risk.
So people put their money in banks, lived at the 1,500 rate, and went to sleep, confident their funds were in good hands.

And on one fateful October day in the year two thousand and nineteen, October 17 to be exact, an alarm sounded that warned people to shake off their blind confidence and wake up. The Lebanese pound is not fine, as you were led to believe.

Things deteriorated so quickly that no one could comprehend it. No one understood

what happened. The US dollar climbed from one thousand five hundred to two thousand, then three, then ten thousand, then twenty, and to forty-one thousand at the time of writing... and it's still going up.

Your money in the bank is no longer yours, you need an appointment to withdraw cash, you need permission, and you have to declare what you need your money for. You also have to accept the circulars issued by the Central Bank and its governor, who deserves an award for "least popular person in Lebanon."

"The Grinch" of the holidays, the banks, and this phase.

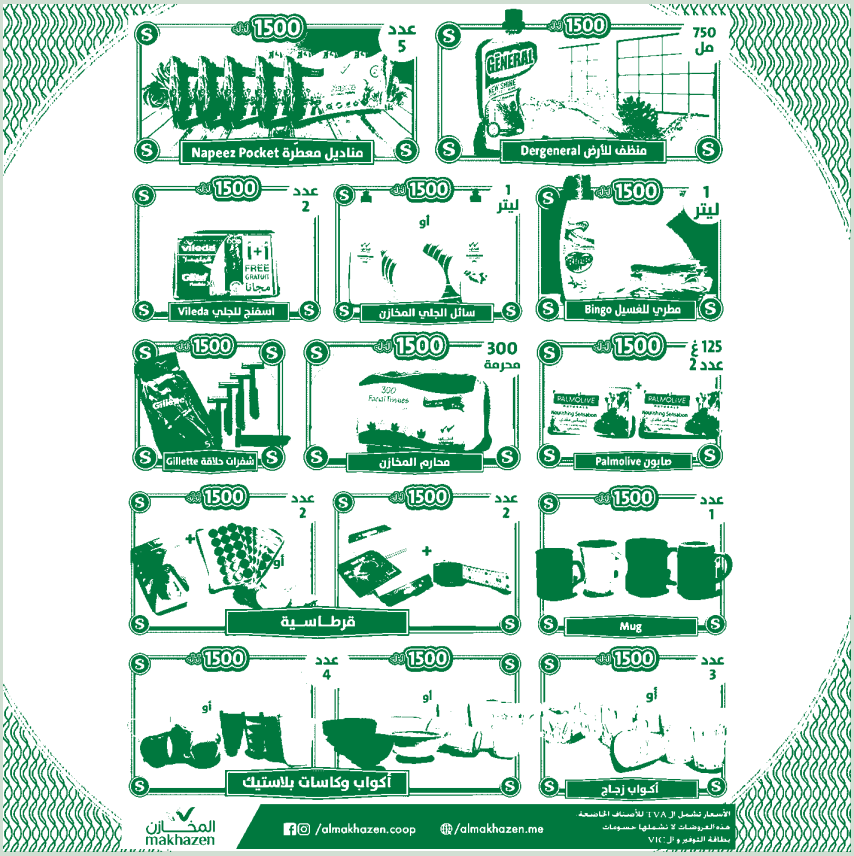
Any study on Lebanon and its current financial system will show that promises have evaporated, deposits have disappeared, that peace of mind is lost, and "for life" ended in 2019.

1,500 is nothing but a memory, talked about by those who experienced it.

We remember it, we bemoan it. We think that nothing is still priced at LBP 1,500 except for the salaries of a few Lebanese employees, whose bosses are either living in a state of denial or a state of greed.
Soon, 1,500 will be nothing more than a bad joke that makes no one laugh, a story–if told to future generations–will be considered a lie or a fabrication.
They kept telling us that the Lebanese pound was fine, until it reached LBP 41,000... how could any good come of this?

They also kept repeating that the Lebanese pound has a lot to say... To be honest, the Lebanese pound has shut up and not uttered a peep... What could it say anyway, if it can't even lift its head and buy or offer anything.
Should the Lebanese pound ever speak, however, I think it would only utter one sentence, a question that every Lebanese man and woman asks at least four times a day:

How much is the dollar today?


1500 ل.ل
عدد 5
مناديل معطرة Napeez Pocket
750 مل
منظف للأرض Dergeneral
عدد 2
اسفنج للجلي Vileda
1 ليتر
أو
سائل الجلي المخازن
1 ليتر
مطري للغسيل Bingo
شفرات حلاقة Gillette
300 محرمة
محارم المخازن
125 غ عدد 2
صابون Palmolive
عدد 2
قرطاسية
عدد 2
عدد 1
Mug
عدد 4
أكواب وكاسات بلاستيك
عدد 3
أكواب زجاج
الأسعار تشمل الـ TVA للأسباب التالية
هذه العروضات لا تشملها حسومات
بطاقة التوفير و الـ VIC
/almakhazen.coop
/almakhazen.me
المخازن
makhazen


Rasha stores
بس عنّا $ = 1500
عباية على الراس حرير
100$
150,000 L.L
(الكميّة محدودة)
النبطية _ السّاحة العامّة _ مقابل حلويات السّلطان
03895911


Rasha Stores
$=1500
عباءة كتف حرير
80$
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عباءة كتف كيزو
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عباءة رأس كيزو
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80$
120,000
03895911

1500


1500
عدد 9
خبز بالشوكولا Al Forno
125 غ عدد 2
كريمة بعدة نكهات Lactel
1 كلغ
لبن Dairy Farms
200 غ
جبنة إدام المخازن
100 غ
قشقوان Bihar
250 غ
مرتديلا بقر تنمية
200 غ
عكاوي للمناقيش Freshway
FROZEN FOODS
400 غ
ملوخية مفرومة شتورة
250 غ
تندر Kwik
250 غ
ناجتس Kwik
660 غ
معجون طماطم المخازن
400 غ
فطر كامل المخازن

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Alaa Mansour carefully curated the visual entries, featured on double page spreads, and responding to the lexicon's terms themselves. Jana Traboulsi attentively curated the interstitial images accompanying contributors' texts (many of which she had photographed herself). In line with the spirit of this collapsing lexicon to document an emergent language, many of the selected images have also massively circulated on social media (posts, screenshots, WhatsApp messages, and others). Friends and interlocutors have either sent these images to us directly or have granted us access to online repositories in which thousands of these images were stored. In the process, we learned that many people had in fact created these online repositories not only to document the everydayness of the uprisings but also to capture their affective intensities. Other images have been carefully selected from various archival collections. We have made every effort to trace the authorship of the images reproduced in this lexicon and we invite any parties who believe they have not been credited or who can claim specific rights to contact us.

LIST OF SOURCED WORDS

العرصات
مضروب
البديل
نيترات الامونيم
امبير
البنك
مصرف لبنان
التغيير
المجتمع مدني
الانهيار
الفساد
الأزمة
المودعون
الدولار
الكهربا
الطاقة
البيئة
الصرف
الانفجار
المستقبل
الاوادم
الحوكمة
حرس
بيشبهنا
مندس
القضاء

الليرة
المنقوشة
التعميم
الوزارة
الموطسيكل
الجنسية
الاوليغارشية
منا
برّا
الهلع
شرطة المجلس
الحزب
الناس
الصنوبر
المنصة
العهد
الطابور
النظام
المناطق
الثورة
رياض سلامة
الرينغ
الحضيض
السرفيس
الاهراءات
الوضع

العدالة الجتماعية
الحراك
الصهر
الدولة
موظف دولة
الاشتراك
الدعم
السلطة
السوري
هنّي
الانتفاضة
نحن
الضحايا
مقطوع
١٥٠٠
٥١٪
Bira
Delivery
Fresh
The Government
Haircut
Lollar
NGOs
Passport
Sulta

'Arsat (pimps), Adulterated, The Alternative, Amonium Nitrate, Ampere, Bank, Central Bank, Change, Civil Society, Collapse, Corruption, Crisis, Delivery, Depositors, Dollars, Electricity, Energy, Environment, Exchange, Explosion, The Future, the Gentlemen, Governance, Guards, Byeshbahna (an expression which translates to he is like us or he resembles us and used to designate individuals with whom certain cultural, religious, and social patterns, expressions and habits are shared), Infiltrator, Judiciary, Lira, Man'ousheh, Memorandum, Ministry, Motorcycle, Jinsiyyah (nationality or citizenship, used to designate people who hold a foreign -European or North American- citizenship which grants them rights and privileges denied to holders of Lebanese passports), Oligarchy, One of us, Barra (the literal translation is outside though the term is often used to refer to a state of being abroad, outside of Lebanon), Panic, The Parliamentary Police, The Party, People, Pine nuts, Platform, The Presidential Term, Queue, The Regime, The Regions, Revolution, Riad Salemeh, The Ring (name given to the Fouad Chehab bridge in Beirut), Rock-Bottom, Service (collective taxi), Silos, The Situation, Social Justice, Social Movement, The Son-in-law, The State, State employee, Subscription, Support/Subsidies, Sulta (a term which signifies power and is used to refer to structures of ruling power in Lebanon), The Syrian, Them, Uprising, Us, Victims, Out of Stock, 1500, 51%.

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Hashem Adnan

Hashem is a theater director, writer, actor and organizer based in Beirut. He acquired his BA in Acting and Directing from the Lebanese University in 2006.

From 2009 to 2018, working with Zoukak Theater Company, he took part in staging over 15 performances, alternating roles between performer, writer and director, that toured locally and internationally, at the International Festival of Kerala, the Kunsthall Stavanger in Norway, or the Biennale Arcipelago Mediterraneo (BAM) in Palermo amongst others.

His solo works take the form of site-specific performances such as *Erase This Face Off You* (2008), *The Voicer* (2017) and *It's a Public Invitation* (2022) using the public space to experiment with engaging forms of performance.

His other works as director or dramaturge include: *Colette Never Showed Up* (2018), *Oh to End* (2019); *The Black Hole* (2019) and *Hayat* (2022). In 2022, Hashem initiated and cofounded BAHH, a non-official cooperative for theatre and performance practitioners in Lebanon.

Viviane Akiki

Viviane Akiki is an economics journalist, translator, and researcher. She holds a degree in Media Studies and a master's degree in Political Science from the Lebanese University. She worked in a number of Lebanese and Arab media organizations, most recently the Al-Akhbar newspaper, where she participated in the preparation of the *Das Capital* annex from the annex's inception until her resignation in November 2019. Viviane recently co-founded the Sifr website, which specializes in economics and political economy; Sifr had a soft launch in November 2022. She published a number of research papers, the most recent of which is entitled *What Funding for What Kind of Economy* with the Arab Non-Governmental Organizations Network for Development.

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Dr. Omar Al-Ghazzi is an Associate Professor in the Department of Media and Communications at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). His research focuses on the relationship between collective memory, history, and media. He also focuses on the intersection of politics and international media, with a particular focus on digital journalism. Omar has a PhD in Communication from the University of Pennsylvania in the United States.

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An independent journalist and photographer who works with a number of media institutions in Lebanon and in the Arab region. Since 2015, he has been writing about the cultural scene in Beirut with a focus on audio and visual arts. He is a member of the Digital Fountain platform specializing in

photography. In 2021, he published a book in collaboration with Umam for Documentation and Research entitled *Returning to My Mother's Tribe*. He holds a degree in Cinema and Television from the Lebanese University.

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Masad is a writer and editor specialized in drama and theater. He studied at Damascus Higher Institute for Theater and Arts. He worked in managing cultural events. He has numerous contributions, whether they're cultural publications, editorial, research, and books. He participated in setting up Cinema clubs, in addition to partaking in plays and movies.

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Halawi is a Lebanese comedian, TV host, and political critic who has worked in various media fields including radio, television, cinema, and theater. His radio career began in the early 1980s on Radio Mount Lebanon, and he later continued on television, where he was part of a promising comedy team that starred in the *SLChi* program on the Lebanese MTV channel in 1994. In 2004, he took part in acting and writing for the *La Youmal* program that aired on the Al-Mustaqbal (Future TV) TV channel. He then returned to MTV in 2011 as part of the team of the satirical comedy program *Mafi Metlo* which kept running until 2018. Today, Halawi is considered as a social media influencer, and he writes satirical political articles for the online Al-Sahm newspaper. He also runs an online radio station under his name, which features a variety of Lebanese music.

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Serge Harfoush is a farmer and member of the NGO Buzuruna Juzuruna, an organization for the support of sustainable agriculture in Lebanon.

Sarah Kaddoura

Sarah Kaddoura is a Palestinian feminist activist, trainer and researcher based in Lebanon. She studied Social Work and graduated with an MA in Gender Studies. Sarah writes on gender, sexuality, and social and reproductive justice. She also creates and presents videos in Arabic on feminist movement and theory on *Haki Nasawi*.

Chrystèle Khodr

Chrystèle Khodr is a theater performer, writer and director based in Beirut. Her work springs from the emergency to reconstitute the collective memory from personal stories. In her most recent projects, Chrystèle is increasingly concerned with the movement of History and its impact on time and narrativity as a basic formal dimension of theater. Between 2009 and 2012 she has created small format plays and solos: *Bayt Byout*, *2007 or how I smashed my bubble envelopes* and *Beirut Sepia.*

Her latest theater production *Augurs* premiered in May 2021 in Beirut and is touring across Europe. As part of her research cycle around the economical speculation and its impact on theatrical narratives, she created the interactive installation *Who killed Youssef Beidas?* that opened in June 2022 in Beirut. The cycle includes her listening piece *Rise & Fall of Orient Swiss | Bedtime stories*. Chrystèle was awarded the Ibsen

Scope to create an adaptation of the playwright's text *The Pretenders*, *Ordalie* is to premiere in October 2023.

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Cynthia Kreichati is a PhD candidate in the Department of Anthropology at McGill University. Her work explores the relationships between politics, archives, and the environment. Trained as a pharmacist in Lebanon, Cynthia also holds a Masters in Sociology from the American University in Beirut. She is both a practitioner and a student of global health, development, and humanitarianism. She is currently completing her doctoral dissertation project, an ethnography of the Litani river and its people.

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Lina Mounzer is a Lebanese writer and translator. She contributes regularly to The New York Times and her work has appeared in The Paris Review, The Economist Magazine, and The Baffler, as well as in the anthologies *Hikayat: Short Stories by Lebanese Women* (Telegram Books: 2007) and *Tales of Two Planets* (Penguin: 2020). During 2021, she wrote a monthly column for the Lebanese daily L'Orient Today, chronicling social changes in the wake of the country's economic collapse. More recently her essay *The Gamble* was chosen for and appears in *Best American Essays 2022*.

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She is a Lebanese-Egyptian writer and novelist who was born and currently resides in Beirut. She has published four novels with Dar Al-Adab and her fifth novel is set to be released soon. She worked as a journalist at Al-Safir newspaper from 1998 until 2017, during which she held various positions, including Youth Editor, Local News Editor, and Palestine Affairs Editor. She is currently working as a specialist researcher in Lebanese affairs at Amnesty International.

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Alaa Mansour is an artist, filmmaker, and archivist based between Beirut and Marseille. Her work examines the histories of violence and explores the power of images in the age of necropolitics. Using a multidisciplinary approach she explores concepts of the sacred and the sublime and their potential of horror. She graduated from Université Paris 8 with a Masters in Arts & Creation – Filmmaking (2013). Her films *Aïnata* (2018) and *The Mad Man's Laughter* (2021) have been screened internationally (Visions du Réel, Transmediale, European Media Art Festival, Impakt). She was shortlisted for the Han Nefkens Foundation – Fundació Antoni Tàpies Video Art Production Award 2020.

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Rami Rajeh works in publishing, specifically in academic publishing. He has been working for more than 20 years in developing and marketing academic books that are based on concepts of citizenship and developing communication skills.
He is also an avid follower of issues related to social justice, economic, and developmental policies. He holds a Master's degree in Nationalism Studies from the University of Edinburgh in Scotland.

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Rima Rantisi teaches in the Department of English at the American University of Beirut and is the founding editor of Rusted Radishes: Beirut Literary and Art Journal. Her essays can be found in the New England Review, Literary Hub, Assay: A Journal of Nonfiction Studies, Sweet: A Literary Confection, Past Ten, and Slag Glass City. She holds an MFA in Creative Nonfiction from the Vermont College of Fine Arts.

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Joumana Seikaly is a translator and media consultant. After earning a bachelor degree in Graphic Design, she worked in advertising for ten years, in Lebanon and Tunisia. She then obtained a master's degree in Media and Politics and her work now focuses on art, culture, and media, as they intersect with social conflict, war, and political discourse. She lives in Beirut, and is a big fan of science-fiction, anime, and dogs.

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Amal is a stand-up comedian and is one of the most renowned stand-ups in the region. With more than half a million social media followers across various platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram, Amal managed to climb the ladder in the media scene rising to the top. Amal also started the luxury fashion brand Spottchi.

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Jana Traboulsi is an artist, designer and educator. She teaches in the Department of Graphic Design at the American University of Beirut. She is the co-founder of Bidayat pan-arab quarterly, and the art director of Snoubar Bayrout publishing house. In 2014, she co-founded the art collective Sigil. Her artist book *The Book of Margins*, shortlisted for the Jameel Prize 2021, has been exhibited at the Victoria & Albert museum, London.

Fawzi Zabyan

Fawzi Zebian is a Lebanese novelist who holds a diploma in Philosophy. Since 2005, he has published the following novels: *Akameel, The Last Terrorist, Ranks of the Dead, Orwell in the Southern Suburbs, Youssef's Disappointment, Beirut from Below*. Recently, he has also published, in French, a collaborative work titled *Me, My Grandmother, and a White Rose* (a collaborative work) with Inculte Publications, Paris.

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