International Center for Transitional Justice

How People Talk About the Lebanon Wars

A Study of the Perceptions and Expectations of Residents in Greater Beirut

October 2014

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LEBANON

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About ICTJ

The International Center for Transitional Justice assists societies confronting massive human rights abuses to promote accountability, pursue truth, provide reparations, and build trustworthy institutions. Committed to the vindication of victims' rights and the promotion of gender justice, it provides expert technical advice, policy analysis, and comparative research on transitional justice approaches, including criminal prosecutions, reparations initiatives, truth seeking and memory, and institutional reform. For more information, visit **www.ictj.org**

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Don't blame me if I don't discuss my country, don't say I have become mute. My tears are choking me, locking my screams in my tattered chest.

The land of the light, the master of the alphabet, the nation of the coast, the generous sun and golden sands. All of this was Lebanon but now it's in the past.

My nation, my sweet, has divorced my distant past and built a new glory. All that is of thought and letter has been destroyed and between us a present more anchored and great that emptied the streets of its people in fear and replaced them with guns instead.

    - Poem by Sharif Al-Akhawi, quoted by a participant in a focus group

Executive Summary

This report examines variations in wartime experiences and the attitudes and expectations of residents in Greater Beirut regarding measures to confront Lebanon's legacy of political violence. It documents how members of different segments of Lebanese society perceive and talk about issues relating to truth and memory, justice and accountability, reconciliation, and social repair. It is intended for transitional justice researchers, policymakers, and community members working in these areas. The study is based on 15 focus group discussions held in different neighborhoods in Greater Beirut in 2013.

While there was much variation across focus group discussions, some points of general consensus emerged. One dominant, yet unsurprising, finding was the general perception that the "war is not over" and that the country has entered a new phase of conflict. While the civil war (1975–1990) was characterized by armed violence, in more recent years violence has increasingly affected the population not only on a physical and security level, but also the economic and social level. This posed challenges for participants to engage in discussions and questions about transitional justice.

Participants communicated a sense that Lebanon is far from being in a meaningful transition from political violence to sustainable peace, given the ongoing political instability in the region and the lack of institutional reforms in recent years. They also expressed that justice appears unlikely, because official initiatives have advanced wholesale amnesia about past political violence, reconciliation efforts have not involved people outside of political elites, and reparations processes have been designed and implemented with little connection to the actual needs of the people and communities who were most affected. Thus, participants generally believed that a meaningful and sustainable transition away from endemic violence is difficult, particularly when compared with recent conflicts in other countries.

Despite participants' shared experiences of sectarian violence and frustration with the status quo, they differed in how they talked about their war-related experience, how they connect it to the present, and how it affected their thinking and expectations about dealing with the past. Such variation was observed not only across different neighborhoods, but also across gender, generations, and different levels of exposure to war-related violence.

A generational divide was observed among focus group participants. People born after 1990 (aged 27 and younger) were most supportive of an unfettered truth-telling process, which envisages a broad approach that cuts across familial, community, and national spheres. They articulated a need for greater clarity in the explanations and justifications given for past violence in their homes and schools. In particular, younger participants expressed a desire to confront "collective amnesia" directly in order to understand the logic of past conflict and the nature of contemporary sectarian tensions, and thus move past Lebanon's cycles of violence.

By contrast, older generations (particularly women), while somewhat supportive of historical clarification, articulated a vision for truth and memory based primarily on individualized memorialization at the family and community level. They conveyed a vision for an approach involving limited remembering and partial forgetting that emphasizes the futility of violence. Many older participants expressed concern that broad-based clarification processes might ce-

ment or deepen divisions along sectarian lines. Thus they regarded the family as the instrumental unit to advance civic education about Lebanon's war-related past. This variation poses a challenge for transitional justice policy makers in advancing initiatives that younger and older generations will see as constructive to peace, historical clarification, and accountability.

Interestingly, the most common notion of justice that participants raised on their own was not about criminal accountability, but the notion of legal equality across religions and sects in Lebanese society as well as the truth about past violence and acknowledging the resulting injustice. All participants—young and old, victims of direct and indirect violence, Muslim and Christian, and those from different neighborhoods—bemoaned the structural injustices and sectarian-based discrimination that current political, economic, and social institutions facilitate. They agreed that continuing sectarian tensions have been fueled by political arrangements based on clientelism, where "money, goods or services are provided in return for political loyalty."[1]

In addition to structural notions of justice, participants who lived through the civil war (aged 28 to 60) and victims of direct lethal violence[2] also emphasized the importance of learning the truth about the path and acknowledging wrongs. As Sara, a middle-aged woman from Hamra whose brother was killed in shelling during the war, said, "Justice is to know the truth of who killed your brother, father, or husband." Direct victims articulated a notion of justice directly linked to the violence they had experienced during the war as well as to a broader, systemic notion of justice that involves nondiscrimination and equality before the law—now and in the future.

When specifically asked about accountability for past violence, participants uniformly expressed pessimism and despair about the possibility of meaningful accountability in the foreseeable future. They questioned "who is going to do it." When pressed further on what meaningful accountability would look like, visions of its form and its target varied notably. While a few participants advocated for either wholesale amnesty or wholesale prosecutions, the overwhelming majority of participants articulated a pragmatic interim vision for evidence-based lustration in which those most responsible for war-related violence should not be allowed to hold elected office. Older participants generally advocated for accountability measures focused exclusively on political and community leaders. Younger participants, by contrast, advocated for a broader form of accountability to include both leaders and combatants. However, there was a general consensus that the motivation behind accountability efforts needed to reaffirm the rule of law and strengthen equality before the law, rather than to exact retribution between sectarian communities.

Participants' notions of social repair and healing varied widely from highly individualized conceptions of reconciliation to broad community-level action. This included victims of direct violence who rejected the possibility of repairing and healing and indirect victims who advocated for an intergenerational approach to social repair. The latter envisaged the use of affirmative action for descendants of those who missed out on opportunities for education, employment, and other socioeconomic opportunities due to violence. Only those focus groups that exclusively comprised older participants advanced notions of healing and social repair that relied on forgetting the past by erasing it from collective memory and social discourse. By contrast, focus groups with either mixed ages or exclusively younger participants advanced notions of healing that relied on closure for direct victims (by clarifying what had happened to loved ones or by acknowledging past wrongs) or a forward-looking focus on strengthening the rule of law (to overcome sectarian-based distrust and discrimination).

The most consistent sentiment from all focus group discussions was the lack of trust in current political leadership or existing government structures to advance transitional justice processes that are nonpartisan and geared toward institutional reform. Participants across many focus groups voiced palpable mistrust in the motivation and ability of international governmental actors to play constructive roles in advancing transitional justice initiatives that would be meaningful and constructive. Despite their widely held mistrust of domestic political leaders and foreign governments, participants who supported confronting the past identi-

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1 Sami Atallah, "Reconstruction and peace in Lebanon: Post-war economic policy," *Accord*, 24 (2012): 53.
2 This refers to individuals who had immediate family members who were killed as a direct result of the war.

fied nonpartisan community groups and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) as viable channels to advance historical clarification and intercommunity discussions about justice, accountability, and institutional reform.

While not a representative study, these focus group discussions offer insights into a number of challenges of addressing political violence and its consequences in Lebanon that would be useful for researchers, transitional justice policy makers, and practitioners. Perhaps, most importantly, the findings suggest that for transitional justice initiatives to be effective, they need to consider the experiences and culture of the local population. In particular, this involves recognizing how the nature of current institutions and practices (such as clientelist-based employment practices in the public and private sector) advance war-related injustices. Failing to consider the experiences and perceptions of the local population can further alienate a society that is already deeply divided.

1. Introduction

Despite the long history of political violence in Lebanon, only a few studies have attempted to systematically examine the perceptions of the Lebanese population about past violence and attitudes to confronting the turbulent past. To date, the limited debates and initiatives about the legacy of Lebanon's civil war and mechanisms for transitional justice have been confined largely to political elites, people in positions of power, foreign actors, and human rights advocates.

Several survey studies conducted by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) polled the general Lebanese population about their experience of the civil war and the way people perceive war-related violence relative to international humanitarian norms.[3] They estimated that more than 75 percent of people in Lebanon have been affected by the war. Existing studies have focused mostly on subpopulations or specific groups of victims and perpetrators within Lebanese society.[4]

This study aims to fill a gap in the existing literature by presenting qualitative data about how communities talk about the past and differing attitudes about confronting the legacy of the war. It seeks to push beyond the limited framing of victims and perpetrators to better understand how diverse communities within Lebanon have been affected by the civil war, and how these experiences, along with the consequences of violence and official and unofficial responses to it, have shaped people's attitudes and expectations about attempts to deal with the past.

The study was motivated by the desire to:

- Spur and inform debates on transitional justice and other discourse that attempts to address the range of experiences in Lebanon;

- Guide the policy, programming, and advocacy work of civil society organizations seeking to address issues related to Lebanon, its war-related past, and post-conflict reconciliation;

- Bring a range of local voices to inform existing debates about transitional justice, such as discussions of Lebanese history curricula, prosecutions, memorials, truth-seeking mechanisms, reparations, and institutional reform, etc.;

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3 A 1999 survey identified a widespread willingness among Lebanese residents to tolerate actions against civilians as part of war. See ICRC, "The People on War Report: ICRC worldwide consultation on the rules of war," 1999, xvii, 23, and 63–65. A 2009 study noted that the most common fears people held during times of armed conflict were losing a loved one, property loss, and physical injury. See ICRC, "Lebanon: Opinion Survey and In-Depth Research, 2009," 2009, 23–24. A 2013 survey studied the expectations and needs of family members of those who were forcibly disappeared during the war. This study randomly sampled 324 of the known families of the disappeared and also supplemented this data with three focus groups. See ICRC, "The Families of People Missing in Connection with the Armed Conflicts that Have Occurred in Lebanon Since 1975: An Assessment of Their Needs," 2013, 7.
4 See, for example, UMAM Documentation and Research Center, "To the Death: A Survey of the Continuing Experiences Among Fighters' from Lebanon's Civil Wars," 2011, xv-xx, focusing on the experiences and perceptions of ex-combatants. By directly interviewing ex-combatants, this survey examined some of the notable variations in motivating factors for different combatants to engage in the armed conflict. These survey findings uncovered how those motivations may vary with the types of violence individual combatants were involved in (or at least the types of violence they were involved in and were willing to report in the UMAM survey). This study suggests that the war was not simply war "against others who occupied Lebanese territory." Rather, members of Lebanese society took on active, varied roles throughout the conflict and exercised in positioning themselves and selecting tools and methods to advance their political, sectarian, and social agendas. The study concluded that motivations of ex-combatants to resort to armed violence were multifaceted and involved a complex mixture of motivations: material considerations, ideological leanings, fear and self-defense, peer pressure, and kin/neighborhood factors.

- • Enhance the knowledge of the Lebanese population on transitional justice to inform relevant future surveys.

Human rights practitioners and scholars have long argued that societies emerging from periods of conflict must account for the legacy of political violence. The framework used in this study is that of transitional justice, which attempts to build and sustain peace after conflict, mass violence, or systemic human rights violations. The objective of contemporary transitional justice is to prevent the recurrence of violent conflict and foster lasting peace by establishing a historical record to counter denial, ensure accountability, acknowledge victims, end impunity, and foster reconciliation and sociopolitical reconstruction.[5] Transitional justice initiatives include criminal prosecutions, truth commissions, reparation programs, institutional reforms, and memorialization initiatives.

As has been shown in other contexts, the failure to confront the past is ultimately short-sighted and counterproductive, leading to cycles of renewed violence and persistent social divisions and instability.[6]

In Lebanon, efforts to confront the legacy of past violence have included official domestic initiatives, such as the Ta'if Agreement, the general amnesty law, and compensation processes through the Ministry of the Displaced; and local unofficial processes, such as the documentation work of the Umam Documentation and Research Center and its community-based project "What Is to Be Done? Lebanon's War-Loaded Memory."[7] The Sustainable Democracy Center has also attempted to engage youth with civil society through local programs dedicated to creating a dialogue for better coexistence.[8] International measures have included the International Commission to enquire into reported violations of International Law by Israel during its invasion of the Lebanon (MacBride Commission) and the Special Tribunal for Lebanon.

However, measures implemented so far have been inadequate in addressing the legacy of past conflict, and some, like the amnesty law, have arguably even had a detrimental impact.

Recent scholarly writing has emphasized cultural specificity and its significance when dealing with the legacy of war, emphasizing that it is risky to ignore people's actual experiences of conflict and what they imagine their future to be.[9] There is a need to develop a clearer picture of the reasons why people remember the war differently and thus understand why they continue to bear grudges against other individuals and groups.[10] Empirical studies, such as population-based surveys and focus group studies, have been a critically important tool for better understanding variations in personal experiences, attitudes, and expectations.[11] They have been used increasingly by transitional justice practitioners to better understand local perceptions of past conflict as well as expectations, fears, and hopes for a more just, peaceful future.[12]

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5 United Nations. *United Nations Approach to Transitional Justice. Guidance note of the secretary-general*, 2010, 3.

6 José Zalaquett, "Confronting Human Rights Violations Committed by Former Governments: Principles Applicable and Political Constraints," in Kritz, Neil J., editor, *Transitional Justice* (United States Institute of Peace Press, 1995), 31.

7 UMAM, "Memory at Work, A Guide for Lebanese on Peace & War," 2013, www.memoryatwork.org; Liliane Kfoury, "Documenting Memories of War: UMAM & The Hanger," *Accord*, 24 (2012): 18.

8 For example, Sustainable Democracy Center, "Coexistence and Cohabitation in Lebanon: A Choice or a Destiny" (2002/3), www.sdclebanon.org

9 Barbara Oomen, "Examining the Implications of Global Justice." Working paper based on presentation at the Re-Imagining Peace International Seminar, Charlottesville, 2004, 6; Sune Haugbolle, *War and Memory in Lebanon* (Cambridge University Press, London, 2010), 231.

10 Sune Haugbolle, *War and Memory in Lebanon* (Cambridge University Press, London, 2010), 8. In this book, the author discusses the concept of "memory culture" and how it feeds sectarianism in Lebanon. Due to the lack of information and consensus about what happened during the wars, there is no uniform Lebanese historical memory. The persistence of memory cultures, or groups in Lebanon with differing memories of shared historical events, feeds into persistent grudges and conflicts with other groups.

11 Richard A. Krueger and Mary Anne Casey, *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*, 4th ed. (Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, 2009), 2 and 8.

12 See, generally, Oskar N. T. Thoms et al., Center for International Policy Studies, "The effects of transitional justice mechanisms. A summary of empirical research findings and implications for analysts and practitioners," 2008. In Iraq, ICTJ and the Human Rights Center at the University of California, Berkeley, studied Iraqi citizens in regards to: who they would hold accountable; attitudes toward international participation; and their views of truth-seeking and memory preservation, amnesties, vetting, reparations, reconciliation, and social reconstruction. In Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, Pham et al. gathered population-level evidence "to examine how the will of local actors and affected populations can inform the design of transitional justice mechanisms." In their conclusions they called for the integration of transitional justice measures within broader social, political, and economic transitions to respond to the basic needs of society, contribute to the overall efficiency of transitional justice efforts, and help maintain peace and stability in post-conflict societies. See, generally, Phuong Pham et al., "Human rights, transitional justice, public health and social reconstruction," *Social Science and Medicine*, 70:1 (2010): 98–105. Thus, it is possible for empirical social scientific research to guide how transitional justice mechanisms can contribute to social reconstruction processes and inform the specific design of

In this study, 15 focus group discussions were conducted with residents from five neighborhoods in Greater Beirut from July 17 to August 14, 2013. The composition of focus groups was designed to capture variations in war-related experiences and opinions across generations, gender, and levels of exposure to war-related violence. The discussions sought to establish an empirical foundation for how dialogue in Lebanese society is conducted in regards to dealing with past violence and its consequences.

Because the different names for Lebanon's civil war imply strikingly different conceptualizations and understandings of the causes, dynamics, and consequences of the associated violence, for this study moderators of focus group discussions avoided any explicit characterization of violence as war related. The presentation of the findings also uses the more neutral term of "the wars of Lebanon" in reference to violence that has occurred since 1975, recognizing the role of both internal and external actors in violence and the multiplicity of conflicts.[13]

In the case study, data collected in the focus group findings is compared and contrasted with findings of a secondary school-based oral history project carried out by ICTJ (called Badna Naaref). The nature of the Badna Naaref project was unique, with high school students collecting oral history testimonies about the civil war to document open-ended war narratives. These testimonies provide additional insights to understanding how experiences and knowledge of war-related violence are shared with teenagers today. This is especially important given that school-aged children have few, if any, direct experiences of civil war-related violence and many Lebanese schoolbooks are silent about this important chapter of the country's history. It was observed that the style and content of these narrative accounts are consistent with a memory-making process in older and younger generations that favors remembering so as not to repeat. While such an approach emphasizes the futility of war, it does little to advance a broad-based understanding of the war's causes and consequences.

This report intends to inform future studies, policy initiatives, and any current and future efforts to address the legacy of the civil war in Lebanon. It may also provide valuable lessons for related studies on other post-conflict societies. The intended audience is the community of researchers, policy makers, civil society actors, and donors engaged in transitional justice measures in Lebanon and beyond.

The study identifies inconsistencies and contradictions in individual and community sentiments about the past. Overall, the findings confirm that there is no easy approach to advancing transitional justice in Lebanon. They also identify important roles for nongovernmental, nonpartisan community-based organizations to advance public debate, community dialogue, and cross-community learning about past violence, and to develop effective ways to address its multifaceted legacy. The findings underscore the importance that different generations and communities in Greater Beirut attach to equality before the law and the broad institutional reform challenges that transitional justice policy makers need to confront when addressing the legacy of clientelist relations, in both the private and public spheres.

For researchers, the findings may shed additional light on the challenges of conducting population-based assessments of war-related experiences and perceptions of transitional justice in Lebanon. A principal difficulty is how to create a space for people to talk about dealing with past violence when there is a general perception that recurring cycles of violence have not ended. The study highlights the need for customized approaches to examining how people talk about past violence and think about dealing with its legacy. In particular, the findings highlight the

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transitional justice initiatives. See, generally, Oskar Thoms et al., "State-Level Effects of Transitional Justice: What Do We Know?," *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 4 (2010), 329–354; and, generally, Oskar N. T. Thoms and James Ron, "Public Health, Conflict and Human Rights: Toward a Collaborative Research Agenda," *Conflict and Health*, 1:11 (2007).

13 The terminology used to describe the conflicts that took place is complicated. The use of the term "civil war" would ordinarily suggest that the conflict was limited to Lebanese internal actors, rather than international actors. See Melhem Chaoul, "La guerre sur les noms de la guerre," *L'Orient le Jour*, April 2008, noting how the word civil in "civil war" glosses over the complex nature of violence in Lebanon. See also Ahmad Beydoun, *Le Liban: Itinéraires dans une guerre incivile* (Karthala-CERMOC, Paris, 1993), who adopts the term "uncivil war" to emphasize that the nature of the war-related violence was indiscriminate violence against the civil population. Ghassan Tuéni, *Une Guerre Pour les Autres* (Lattès, Paris, 1985) adopts the term *la guerre pour les autres* ("the war for the others"). In doing so, he implies that, while many factors played pivotal roles during the war, the chief role was played by external and regional factors. This term is considered by many to be the quasi-official term to describe the war, as adopted under the mandate of President Elias Hrawi. This definition assumes that Lebanese rival groups were passively engaging in a war for outside parties and that the violence happened to take place in Lebanon. This description of the war, Chaoul asserts, is embraced by some political milieus and Christian journalists.

importance of understanding variation in people's experiences and perceptions about the war's causes and consequences based on their age, denomination, and exposure to violence.

For policy makers and practitioners, the findings point to an unmet need to encourage broad community-based debate, avoiding narrow approaches that deal only with specific episodes or forms of violence. Such debates must critique violence and past official efforts to address questions of memory, accountability, and institutional reform. This study identifies openings at the community level to build a more open, inclusive community dialogue about the challenges of dealing with Lebanon's past, thereby bridging divisions across geographic space, political identities, generations, and variations in war-related experiences.

This study was conducted as part of an ICTJ project titled "Addressing the Legacy of Conflict in a Divided Society," which aims to inform policy makers about victims' needs and expectations relating to successive conflicts in Lebanon since 1975, particularly in terms of justice and accountability, in order to develop new approaches to confronting the past. This project also produced a mapping of violations of international human rights and humanitarian law in Lebanon from 1975 to 2008;[14] a study of impunity in Lebanon since the civil war that highlights the cost to society of the failure of Lebanese authorities to address the legacy of past conflict;[15] and a set of recommendations to the government of Lebanon from civil society on measures to address the legacy of the past.[16]

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14 ICTJ, "Lebanon's Legacy of Political Violence: A Mapping of Serious Violations of International Human Rights and Humanitarian Law in Lebanon, 1975–2008," 2013.
15 ICTJ, "Failing to Deal with the Past: What Cost to Lebanon?," 2014.
16 ICTJ, "Confronting the Legacy of Political Violence in Lebanon: An Agenda for Change" 2014.

2. Historical Context

Between 1975 and 1990, daily life in Lebanon was shaped and punctuated by armed conflict and widespread political violence that impacted people and communities across the entire country. Car bombings, air bombardment, tank battles, urban street fighting, targeted assassinations, enforced disappearances, and sniper attacks were commonplace, carried out by internal armed actors and foreign powers. As outlined in ICTJ's 2013 report "Lebanon's Legacy of Political Violence,"[17] during this period class-based insurrections and intersectarian fighting resulted in massive population displacements, killings, enforced disappearances, and civilian injuries.

One of the main legacies of the conflict has been the widespread impunity afforded to those most responsible for the violence and its effect on society.[18] The modest efforts taken by successive government to deal with past violence have lacked credibility in terms of mandate and process and have only further marginalized victims.[19]

For decades, the Lebanese government has operated on a formula that allocates political and administrative functions to major religious sects. This system has deep historical roots, formalized in the National Pact of 1943, which positioned Lebanon as a neutral, independent, and sovereign entity with an "Arab character."[20] The pact proclaimed that Lebanon would not seek unity with Syria or the Arab World or seek special ties with France or the west. Additionally, it established a confessional formula that was based largely on Lebanon's 1932 census and distributed governmental representation to Christians and Muslims in a six-to-five ratio.

Historically, Lebanon had been a safe haven for minorities. It is known for receiving dissidents, displaced persons, renegades, and those who are ideologically at odds with neighboring regimes. These have included Armenians, Assyrians, and Kurds in 1914; Palestinians after 1948; and dissidents following the Suez Crisis in 1956.[21] The influx of minorities added to Lebanon's already diverse communities of 18 confessional groups in a population of 4 million. The largest sects are Christian, Muslim (Sunnis and Shiites), and Druze. Palestinians comprise approximately 10 percent of the total population. Significantly, all parties participated in the civil war, blurring the lines between victims and perpetrators.

Internal political struggles and regional instability in the early 1970s led to the onset of the civil war in 1975.[22] Muslim representatives pushing for reform of the earlier power-sharing agreement with Christians claimed that the agreement did not reflect the country's new demographic majority. The growing Palestinian presence in Lebanon, and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in particular, placed Lebanon at the crux of regional tensions

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17 ICTJ, "Lebanon's Legacy of Political Violence: A Mapping of Serious Violations of International Human Rights and Humanitarian Law in Lebanon, 1975–2008," 2013, ix.
18 Habib Nassar, "Too little justice in Lebanon," *Now*, March, 2011.
19 ICTJ, "Failing to Deal with the Past: What Cost to Lebanon?," 2014, v, 5.
20 Muhammad A. Faour, "Religion, Demography, and Politics in Lebanon," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 43:6 (2007), 910.
21 Samir Khalaf, "Beirut Reclaimed: Reflections on Urban Design and the Restoration of Civility" (Dar An-Nahar, Beirut, 1993), 84.
22 Walid Khalidi, *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon: Confrontation in the Middle East* (Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, Cambridge, 1979).

with Israel.[23] Further, local political organizations and unions became more militaristic, with many sympathetic to the Palestinians and the larger Arab cause. Tensions rose within the Lebanese government regarding the Palestinian presence, which was seen by some as giving Israel a pretext to enter Lebanon. The strengthening of the PLO, both in size and military might, increased fears, as did the PLO's expanding internal and external influence. Attacks by Christian militiamen and the PLO helped to ignite the conflict, which gradually spread through the country and turned Beirut into a frontline battleground. These clashes also extended to other local political organizations.

Sectarian conflict manifested itself in different forms during the distinct chapters of the 15-year civil war. The dynamics depended on the role played by various actors, including the different major Lebanese sects, Palestinians, Syria (due to its prolonged intervention), and Israel. As the conflict progressed, violence was carried out on both the inter- and intra-sectarian level.

From 1975 to 1990, an estimated 700,000 people were displaced. In many cases, people were forcibly moved for confessional or political reasons, with militias systematically dividing the country into confessional zones.[24] Massacres were committed by and against all factions, including the 1976 Karantina massacre, which purged the Christian area of Palestinians, Muslims, and Kurds; the massacre of Christians in Damour; and the targeting of Palestinians in the Tell el-Zaatar refugee camp. Often, the perpetrators and victims lived in the same village. Property damage was common: many houses were destroyed, burned, and plundered; places of religious worship were destroyed; and cemeteries were desecrated.[25]

Resulting demographic shifts reflected the intent behind the fighting. In 1975 Christians made up 55 percent of West Beirut; by 1980 only 5 percent remained. Similarly, the number of Muslims residing in East Beirut decreased from 40 percent in 1975 to less than 5 percent in 1980.[26] Lebanese identity fragmented as a result of this massive displacement, forcing the population to redefine their territorial identities along confessional lines.[27]

Internal reconciliation between domestic political adversaries and positive regional developments facilitated a cessation of the armed conflict by 1990.[28] The Ta'if Agreement of late 1989 established political reforms, outlined the negotiated conclusion to the Lebanese civil war, established special relations between Lebanon and Syria, and outlined a framework for the eventual withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon.

The division of political power among the three main sects according to population demographics has created a perpetual problem of political imbalance.[29] Because the size of a sect determines its political power, any demographical change will necessitate the need for a political reconfiguration of powers, "upset[ting] the delicate and precarious confessional

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23 The Cairo Agreement, signed in 1969, established principles on which the Palestinian armed struggle against Israeli occupation from within Lebanon was legitimized.

24 See, for example, Steven Seidman, "The Politics of Cosmopolitan Beirut: From the Stranger to the Other," *Theory, Culture & Society*, 29:2 (2012), 11: "the power of the sect is woven into nearly every tissue of personal and social life, the sectarian community serves as a homeland. The main sects (Maronite, Greek Catholic, Orthodox, Druze, Sunni, and Shia) have their own political organizations, allotment of civil service positions to dispense, militias, flags, originary myths and narratives of villains and heroes. Sects are virtual mini-states. They provide safety, security, jobs, and offer a rich, lived sense of identity and social belonging. Sectarian personal status laws regulate birth, marriage, divorce, and inheritance; its charities and social service organizations provide healthcare and social welfare; each sect has its own schools and media—from television channels to newspapers. In short, the sect offers security and solidarity for a war weary, traumatized citizenry."

25 Aïda Kanafani-Zahar, "Displacement, Return and Reconciliation in Mount Lebanon," *Accord*, 24 (2012): 46.

26 Samir Khalaf, "Beirut Reclaimed: Reflections on Urban Design and the Restoration of Civility" (Dar An-Nahar, 1993).

27 Ibid, at 93, 102, and 107, the author discusses the sociopsychological consequences of these territorial shifts. He argues, based on the Foucauldian notion that space develops its own logic and propels its own iconography, that the war produced a new iconography of places, delineating sectarian boundaries and resulting in "retribalization." He also identifies the primary fears that both unite and divide the Lebanese people, namely the fear of exile, marginalization, and assimilation. Khalaf stresses that, during civil war, violence becomes not only a norm, but also necessary for survival. The implications of this are that communal or sectarian ties become the most viable means for self-assertion, presence, security, and the preservation of vital needs. This situation has persisted after the official end of the war. See also Beatrice Pouligny, "The Forgotten Dimensions of Transitional Justice Mechanism: Cultural Meanings and Imperatives for Survivors of Violent Conflicts," Paper presented at the Global Justice, Local Legitimacy International Conference, University of Amsterdam, 2005, 6. See also Dima de Clerck, "Ex-Military Fighters in Post-War Lebanon," *Accord* 24 (2012): 24, where she maintains that the mindset of minorities under siege, who are anxious about their future as well as conflict with rivals within and enemies without, perpetuates the militarization of Lebanese society. This ultimately blurs the lines between victim and perpetrator.

28 Kamal Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1990), 36.

29 See, for example, Muhammad A. Faour, "Religion, Demography, and Politics in Lebanon," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 43:6 (2007), 910.

balance that governs the political system."[30] Some argue that this is the reason why no official population census has been conducted in Lebanon since 1932.

Despite the focus of this study on the civil war, political violence in Lebanon did not end with the formal cessation of the war. Since 1975, "violence for survival" has become commonplace in Lebanese society, used as a way for groups—driven by fears of exile, marginalization, or forced assimilation—to justify attacking or defending their ground against other groups. Within this formulation, communal and sectarian ties become a means for self-assertion, security, and self-preservation, with the effect of further fracturing Lebanese society.

The Lebanese parliament enacted an Amnesty Law in August 1991. It largely ignored the rights and needs of victims and shielded political elites from public debates that could have implicated them in previous acts of violence.[31] Subsequent official initiatives included establishing a government ministry to address the consequences of conflict-related displacement and two commissions of inquiry into enforced disappearances. However, these initiatives produced little by way of tangible outcomes or an increase in public confidence.

The country remained under partial Israeli military occupation until 2000 and Syrian military occupation until 2005. Since then, there have been targeted assassinations, three Israeli military incursions, a three-month armed conflict between the Lebanese Army and the Islamic militant group Fath al-Islam, and intense periods of internal fighting reminiscent of the civil war violence.

Notably, this study was conducted during a period of growing instability in Syria, with large-scale civilian displacement into Lebanon and seemingly associated violent attacks in some northern Lebanese cities and southern suburbs of Beirut. Thus, the findings of this study have been shaped by growing instability in the region and intervening periods of violence and insecurity.

Many scholars have concluded that state-sponsored impunity has fuelled further cycles of violence[32] and that "reforms that have been initiated by Lebanese ruling elites under Syrian tutelage between 1990 and 2005 have in fact exacerbated confessional tension and competition, and have generated new imbalances in the post-war political system."[33] Hence, there is a demonstrated need for "the Lebanese to invent new ways of reaching out to each other in order to lay to rest the ghosts of the past."[34]

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30 Ibid.
31 Omar Nashabe, "Lebanon: A Failed Version of Justice," *Al-Akhbar,* 2012.
32 Youssef Choueiri, *Breaking the Cycle: Civil Wars in Lebanon* (Stacey International, London, 2007).
33 Karam Karam, "The Taif Agreement: New Order, Old Framework," *Accord,* 24 (2012): 37.
34 Youssef M Choueiri, "Introduction" in *Breaking the Cycle: Civil Wars in Lebanon* (Stacey International, London, 2007), xvii. .

3. Methodology

The central hypothesis of this study was that variations exist among Lebanese perceptions of the past and attitudes toward transitional justice initiatives. Its goal was to capture those differences and use them to establish a more informed platform for transitional justice research, debates, and policy development. For practical reasons, data collection was limited to Greater Beirut.

Key research questions were:

1. What different types of experiences do current residents of Greater Beirut reflect on in relation to the war in Lebanon? What are the different consequences of those experiences for participants in the study? (These may include direct and indirect experiences, violence, economic impacts, migration, education, health, and fear.) In simpler terms, how were individuals and their communities affected by the conflict or whatever linguistic term may be used to describe the political violence that occurred from 1975 to 1990?

2. What are the attitudes of the population of Greater Beirut about the transitional justice notions of transition, truth, justice, accountability, reparations, acknowledgment, memory, and apologies? What are the similarities and differences?

    a. What do individuals and communities suggest are the urgent needs that must be addressed to achieve closure? How do individuals and groups broadly view reconciliation and peace, more specifically in relation to the current Lebanese context?

    b. Do people know about past transitional justice initiatives? Do they make assessments of these initiatives? If so, what are those assessments?

    c. Have individual and collective perceptions and expectations of transitional justice in Greater Beirut been influenced by mainstream political rhetoric regarding collective amnesia, "forgive and forget," criminal justice, and the right to the truth? If so, how are these concepts used?

Fifteen focus groups were conducted, involving a total of 113 participants in a five different neighborhoods. Each focus group comprised 6-8 participants (not including the moderators). The groups met for approximately 90 minutes in the neighborhoods where the participants were then living. Two principal factors were used to determine the profile of participants for each focus group:

1. Dimensions of the variation to be analyzed

2. Sufficient internal similarity on particular characteristics to enable an open, comfortable, and frank discussion

For each neighborhood, recruiters were expected to seek participants using a combination of three methods: street-based recruitment, use of residential lists maintained by the survey

participant recruitment firm (Miners Inc.), and referrals from a mukthar[35] and other neighborhood leaders. The recruitment firm, however, was unable to implement this strategy entirely, in part due to security challenges in two neighborhoods (Burj al-Brajneh Camp and Chiyah-Haret Hreik).

All focus groups were co-moderated by the same male and female researchers. To ensure moderator neutrality, the co-moderators were professional researchers who disclosed their role to the participants at the start of each focus group. After each focus group session, Miners Inc. provided a small gift to participants as an expression of gratitude for their participation.[36]

The study used a qualitative method to answer a set of research questions, rather than attempting to conduct a representative population-based survey. This decision was guided by four principal considerations:

1. The intention of the early research phase was to determine key issues, nuances, variations, range of individual views, and group dynamics. The intention was not to infer and generalize about Lebanon's highly fragmented population as a whole.

2. Particular care was taken not to prematurely impose language into a structured questionnaire that could be perceived as foreign or fail to resonate with people or subgroups in Lebanon. As is common in early survey research, it was decided to first explore how people in Lebanon speak about these issues in their own terms.

3. Conducting a qualitative study allowed individual and group experiences, opinions, and dynamics to be explored organically.

4. A lack of basic current population data posed notable technical, operational, and financial challenges in attempting to sample the population in a representative manner, either at the national or subnational level.[37]

Three key objectives of the data collection were to:

1. Study inter-group dynamics that would otherwise be difficult to observe and study through aggregation of individual interviews;

2. Facilitate an organic process of sharing experiences, conceptions, and needs in a way that is not usually possible through highly structured survey questionnaires;[38] and

3. Make broad comparisons and observations across focus groups, and subsequently, across key dimensions of Lebanese society.

3.1 Block Variables

Individual experiences and perspectives of the war varied most based on neighborhood, age (pre/post-war generation), exposure to war, and gender. Limiting the focus to five neighborhoods in Greater Beirut allowed for more targeted recruiting. Selecting participants who lived in the same neighborhood enabled greater control over homogeneity, including membership of the same sect or religion. Similarly, sometimes having the same gender or age group within focus groups enabled greater clarity in the interpretation of discussions.

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35 Mukhtars act as mediators between people whose personal status is registered in the neighborhood and state institutions that are based in the center of every district. They provide basic administrative services, such as proof of address, birth certificate, and ID renewal. They rely on their knowledge of the neighborhood and its residents to determine their work process, and it is this quality of being well-known by the people from the neighborhood that determines the success or the failure of the holder of this position. They usually have a small office in the neighborhood, but sometimes they have an office in the neighborhoods where the people they represent were displaced during the war.

36 See Appendix B: Description of Data Collection Process.

37 Lebanon lacks comprehensive vital registration systems. As noted earlier, its last population census was conducted in 1932.

38 See Richard A. Krueger and Mary Anne Casey, *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research,* 4th ed. (Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, 2009), 36.

Table 1: Variable Composition of the 15 Focus Groups

	NEIGHBOR-HOOD	PRIMARY CONFESSION	NATIONALITY	GENDER	AGE	EXPOSURE TO WAR
1	Chiyah/Haret Hreik	Shia	Lebanese	Mixed	18-27 (youth)*	Direct and indirect
2	Chiyah/Haret Hreik	Shia	Lebanese	Mixed	18-60 (mixed)	Only direct*
3	Chiyah/Haret Hreik	Shia	Lebanese	Women*	18-60 (mixed)	Direct and indirect
4	Ashrafieh/Sin al-Fil	Christian	Lebanese	Mixed	18-60 (mixed)	Only indirect*
5	Ashrafieh/Sin al-Fil	Christian	Lebanese	Mixed	18-60 (mixed)	Only direct*
6	Ashrafieh/Sin al-Fil	Christian	Lebanese	Women*	18-60 (mixed)	Direct and indirect
7	Tarik al-Jdideh/Mazraa	Sunni	Lebanese	Mixed	35-60 (older)*	Direct and indirect
8	Tarik al-Jdideh/Mazraa	Sunni	Lebanese	Mixed	18-60 (mixed)	Only direct*
9	Tarik al-Jdideh/Mazraa	Sunni	Lebanese	Women*	18-60 (mixed)	Direct and indirect
10	Burj al-Barajneh Camp	Sunni	Palestinian	Mixed	18-60 (mixed)	Only indirect*
11	Burj al-Barajneh Camp	Sunni	Palestinian	Mixed	18-60 (mixed)	Only direct
12	Burj al-Barajneh Camp	Sunni	Palestinian	Women*	18-60 (mixed)	Direct and indirect
13	Hamra/Ras Beirut	Mixed	Lebanese	Mixed	18-27 (youth)*	Direct and indirect
14	Hamra/Ras Beirut	Mixed	Lebanese	Mixed	35-60 (older)*	Direct and indirect
15	Hamra/Ras Beirut	Mixed	Lebanese	Mixed	18-60 (mixed)	Only indirect*

* Indicates "blocked variable"

Neighborhoods

Geography was used as the principal organizing group or "block." To be eligible to participate, research subjects had to be residents of a selected neighborhood for at least the previous two years (rather than necessarily being a resident during the civil war).[39]

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39 There is a close connection between neighborhood and an individual's personal status and the preservation of the confessional political structure in Lebanon. If someone is born in Lebanon to a Lebanese father, his or her personal status is registered in the district where the father's family name was registered historically, rather than being registered in his or her place of birth. Election laws give voters the right to vote for parliament and municipality members only in the district where their personal status is registered. Thus voters have the right to vote only for candidates who belong to the district of their family's origins. For example, individuals who have been living in Beirut for the past 30 years but their family name is originally registered in some of the districts in Bekaa (a governorate

The five neighborhoods studied were:

1. Chiyah/Haret Hreik (primarily Shia)

2. Ashrafieh/Sin-el-Fil (primarily Christian)

3. Tarik al-Jdideh/Mazraa (primarily Sunni)

4. Burj al-Brajneh Camp (primarily Sunni Palestinians)

5. Hamra/Ras Beirut (mixed from all main sects and all other minority groups)

Greater Beirut is the capital city and the largest metropolitan area in Lebanon.[40] It is a relatively small coastal city, with an area of approximately 37 square miles. It comprises five main neighborhoods: Mazraa, Musaytbeh, and Ras Beirut in the northwest and midwest; Ashrafieh and the port area in the northeast and mideast; Chiyah and Haret Hreik in the southwest; and Sin-el-Fil in the southeast.

The five neighborhoods were chosen for this study because they provide a broad cross-section of society in Greater Beirut and because they reflect core elements, including neighborhoods that have become increasingly homogenous in terms of confessional composition (Burj al-Brajneh Camp and Chiyah/Haret Hreik) as well as relatively heterogeneous ones (Hamra/Ras Beirut).[41]

Although these neighborhoods have many socioeconomic differences, they also have many commonalities. Ashrafieh, Hamra, and Ras Beirut, in the city center, are inhabited by businessmen, professors, successful merchants, and others who belong to a relatively higher socioeconomic group than those who live in the suburbs (such as Chiyah, Haret Hreik, Mazraa, Sin-el-Fil, and Tarik al-Jdideh).

Hamra/Ras Beirut is one of the largest mixed neighborhoods in Lebanon. It is distinct in terms of its educational, governmental, and commercial profile, with government ministries, universities (such as the American University of Beirut, the Lebanese American University, and Hagazian University), research centers, theaters, and shops that attract minorities and foreigners.

Ashrafieh/Sin-el-Fil, Haret Hreik/Chiyah, and Mazraa/Tarik al-Jdideh were selected because they are some of the largest neighborhoods. They have relatively high population densities, share a busy commercial life, and, important for this study, are distinct in their sectarian composition. Most Christians in East Beirut live in Ashrafieh and Sin-el-Fil; Sunnis live in some West Beirut neighborhoods, mainly Mazraa, Musaytbeh, and Tarik al-Jdideh; and Shiites are concentrated in the southern suburbs of Beirut, mainly Chiyah and Haret Hreik.

Burj al-Brajneh Camp in the southern suburbs is the largest Palestinian camp in Beirut, one of twelve in Lebanon. Tens of thousands of Palestinians live in these camps under unfavorable conditions. It was the site of a major conflict during the war.

Age: Pre/Post War Generations

The protracted and varied nature of political violence in Lebanon required sensitivity to intergenerational experiences. Generations were defined as follows:

• Younger generation, aged 18 to 27, who did not live through the civil war

• Older generation, aged 28 to 60, who were born before or during the war

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that is 31 miles from Beirut) have the right only to elect parliamentary candidates who are running in their district in Beqaa. They have no right to elect any candidate in Beirut, even though they have lived there for their entire lives and even paid taxes there.

40 Lebanon is divided into six governorates: the city of Beirut, Beqaa, Mount Lebanon, Nabatiyeh, North, and South. Every governorate is divided into districts, with each usually comprising a certain number of neighborhoods. A municipality member and a certain number of mukhtars (usually one to three, depending on its size and population) are elected in each neighborhood. Voting eligibility is reserved for those whose personal status is registered in that neighborhood, and not merely for those who currently reside there.

41 There has been a dramatic population redistribution by sect in Greater Beirut. See Salim Nasr, "New Social Realities and Post-War Lebanon: Issues for Reconstruction," in S. Khalaf and P. Khoury, editors, *Recovering Beirut: Urban Design and Post-War Reconstruction* (Brill, Leiden, 1993), 68–69.

Figure 1: Generational Experiences Relative to the Civil War
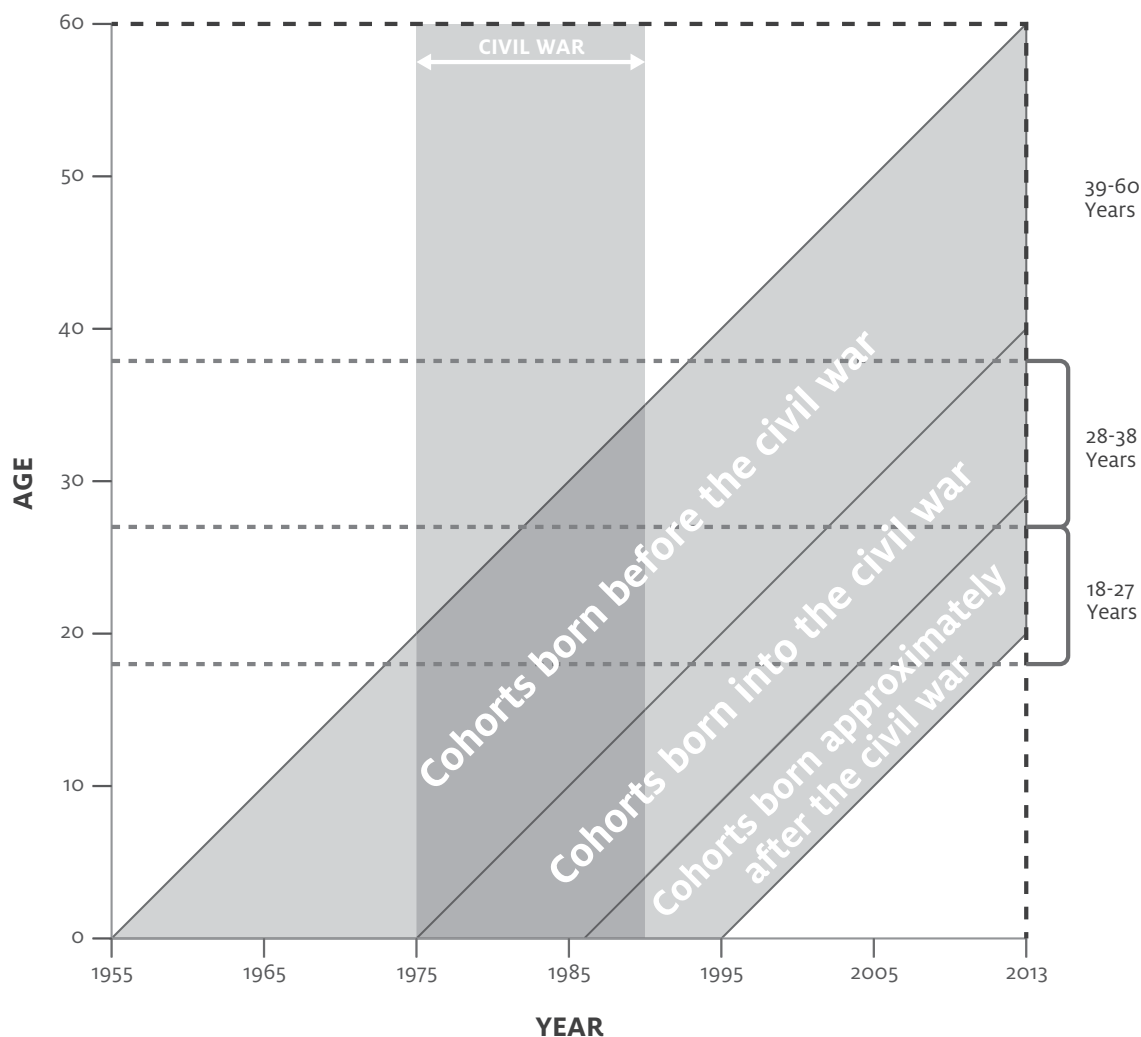
Level of Exposure to the War

Participants' level of exposure to the war was determined by whether an individual had directly been exposed to war-related violence. Individuals categorized as having direct exposure were those who had suffered violence themselves or had direct family members (spouse, children, siblings, parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, and first cousins) who were killed or subjected to serious violence (such as enforced disappearance, destruction of their home, or subject to sniper attacks) as a result of the war. This categorization did not include conflict-related displacement. Consequently, those who were displaced (and/or their families) but who did not directly experience physical violence were defined as being indirectly exposed to violence.

The hypothesis was that the experience of those who were exposed directly to violence would be different from those who were not directly exposed, and opinions and expectations about dealing with the past would be shaped by the level of exposure to such violence.

Gender

The importance of extended kinship ties and the patriarchal nature of social life in Lebanon are significant factors that affect the role of gender in war-related experiences and approaches to dealing with the past. The hypothesis was that women might express themselves differently in a mixed gender setting than in an all-female setting;[42] therefore, some focus groups only comprised women.

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42 Theoretical literature on focus groups cautions against mixing people of highly uneven power dynamics in one group. Stewart et al., *Focus Groups: Theory and Practice,* 2nd ed. (Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, 2007), 27–28.

3.2 Focus Group Discussions

Due to time and resource constraints, only a selection of focus group types was conducted. A randomization mechanism was used to select three focus groups per neighborhood. This scheme provided considerable structure to the data collection and enabled systematic analysis along some key dimensions.

Attributes of the 15 focus groups are listed in Table 2 below. Appendix A contains the focus group discussion interview guide, and Appendix B offers a more detailed description of how data was collected.

Table 2: Description of Randomized Assignment of 15 Focus Groups

	Chiyah/ Haret Hreik	Ashrafieh/ Sin al-Fil	Tarik al-Jdideh/ Mazraa	Burj al-Barajneh Camp	Hamra/ Ras Beirut	TOTAL
Generation: Old		X	X	X	X	4
Generation: Young	X				X	2
Violence: Direct	X	X	X	X	X	5
Women Only	X	X	X	X		4

3.3 Limitations of the Data and Study Design

There were several limitations in the design of this study and the resulting data.

1. Because the study focused exclusively on five neighborhoods in Greater Beirut, it omits the experiences of Lebanese residents from other areas and the Lebanese diaspora. Therefore, the findings do not necessarily reflect the broader Lebanese population.

2. Due to time and resource constraints, all permutations and combinations of primary and secondary variables in each neighborhood were not explored.

3. The study did not take explicit steps to include neighborhood minorities, although religious or confessional minorities were eligible to participate in mixed neighborhood focus groups (like those held in Hamra/Ras Beirut). This lack of outreach was especially notable in Druze-only neighborhoods.

4. Recruitment and selection was not implemented systematically and consistently across neighborhoods.

5. Language was one of the main challenges when developing the methodology instruments. The study was conducted in Arabic, yet the analysis relied on transcripts that were translated into English. For instance, it was difficult to translate the word *community*, as it can be confused with the word society in Arabic. Consequently, the word mohit (محيط) was used,[43] which in Lebanese Arabic roughly means "a population in a small, well-defined geographic locale or neighborhood."

Translating transitional justice terminology was challenging due to the unfamiliarity of terms in Arabic. The term "transitional justice" itself was used in focus groups only to describe the sponsor of the study, the "International Center for Transitional Justice" (which was loosely translated as (المركز الدولي للعدالة الانتقالية).

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43 The literal translation is closest to the English word '"surroundings," the context of an environment, or in sociological terms, milieu. However, in Lebanese rhetoric, mohit or mohitak refers to the places and social groups one navigates and identifies with, such as one's family, community, sect, or neighborhood. This word has a neutral tone and is more precise for informal use and conventional rhetoric. In contrast, the literal Arabic translation of "community," mojtamaa, means a larger group or society as a whole. We used mohit in the focus group discussions to avoid alienating participants through the use of unconventional or official language.

4. How People Talk About the War

One of the primary objectives of focus groups discussions was to learn how a group of people from a similar community remember and talk together about the civil war and violence in Lebanon. General questions were posed about people's experiences and perceptions of war-related violence so as to observe the different entry points of participants into the discussion and the major variations in how they talked about the past. Across the five neighborhoods, the study examined how different generations talk about the past; how war-related experiences affect the nature of such conversations; and how current community perceptions about the present affect the intensity of participation in discussions about the past.

4.1 The War Is Not Over

The first commonality observed in all focus groups was a shared feeling that "the war is not over." This was exemplified in an exchange between adult residents of Chiyah/Haret Hreik:

> Mohammed: I feel that the war hasn't yet ended. People who have seen the first war also know that the environment today is similar to 1974 to 1975; the same tension and the same struggle. Car bombs every now and then, sometimes clashes in some areas, armed people barricading.

> Zein: History is repeating itself.

Others reinforced this observation, saying that for them, the war is not really over but instead has entered a new phase. As Samer described, "It is the same thing but without the guns yet."[44] In particular, participants from Ashrafieh and Hamra emphasized that war-related violence has now shifted from physical violence to structural forms of violence that are now embedded in the country's institutions and social fabric. In the Chiyah youth focus group, Manar explained that the conflict "used to be only sectarian. Now it is much more than that. It is an economic and psychological war, and they are inciting young men against each other."

Another participant from the Chiyah youth focus group said, "We are anxious most of the time. I don't feel safe." People related the source of these tensions directly to the continuation of a "war that is not over." Younger participants explained how media reports on current acts of violence are often the entry point for the older generation to talk about the past. As Farah, a young woman from Hamra, explained, "When any violence happens today, we remember the wars from the past. So violence today triggers memories of past violence gone by."

Thus the most striking observation from focus group discussions on past war violence was the widespread consensus on the persistence of the war. This raises challenges for transitional justice policy makers and practitioners, as the general impression that the war is ongoing leads to the belief that it is premature to talk about a transition away from political violence.

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44 Focus Group 1, see Table 1.

4.2 Intergenerational Differences

As discussed earlier, focus groups were divided into two generations: those who lived during the war, and those who were born near the end or after the war. How people discussed the war broke down along generational lines.

Participants who lived through the war as adults noted that the war still feels very alive for them, and sounds and images of current violence often trigger flashbacks to war-related memories of suffering and violence. Thus their discussions about the past were characterized by narratives of "coping" and how feelings of fear and uncertainty have stayed with them. This was noted during focus group discussions with residents of Hamra who had been directly affected by war-related violence:

> Manal: We are still living in fear.
>
> Michelle: We lived through the entire war.
>
> Rania: Sometimes we would go out and not know if we would be returning to our home. We never knew when a problem would occur and whether there would be an incident. Things would just escalate, and you would not know when or how. Sometimes fathers would get kidnapped, and you would not know whether you would see them again. We always used to worry, we were never stable.
>
> Nader: It's a provocative experience. It is true we used to feel a lot of fear. We used to be really afraid. Imagine a father of a family humiliated or embarrassed in the streets. And we suffered a lot of fear. Regardless of whether you were directly affected or not, the threat stayed with you every minute.

Some older participants discussed how the war has created divides across generations, and that the older generations are perceived as overly protective or paranoid by younger generations who have little or no recollection of the war. Layla, an older woman living in Tarik al-Jdideh, said, "I've damaged my children because of how fearful I am."

4.3 War Experienced by the Young

Participants who were born during the civil war period discussed their formative years as being dominated by confusion, instability, and insecurity. Rabab, a young woman living in Chiyah, explained: "Instead of having a real childhood, we spent it in the shelter, waiting for a truce so that we could go out and play. Your parents keep running around with you from one place to another. We grew up in war." They described how their fear and confusion was caused by a childhood when violence was the norm; instability was created by constant upheaval during periods of displacement; and insecurity was fuelled by the death and wounding of relatives and neighbors.

As Nahla, a young woman from Chiyah, noted: "The idea of war when you're young is difficult to comprehend. We didn't know what war was. All we knew was that they loaded us into the car and drove us down south. We did not understand. When we got a bit older, we started to understand a bit."

Those born during the war described how they became more conscious of war-related violence as they grew up. Now they are concerned that their own children's formative years will be dominated by violence and fear. Grace, a woman from Ashrafieh/Sin-el-Fil who was born during the civil war, explained:

> When you're young, you suffer from violence, but you don't really understand it. It sort of settles somewhere in your subconscious and comes out in your dreams. There are certain dreams that children of war always suffer from, like walking down the street and feeling like you're being attacked but that your legs are too heavy to move. You feel like you can't run, like you're paralyzed. As we got older we started to talk about it and I realized that many people shared the same dreams. So as you get older, the fear that you witnessed as a child becomes more apparent. Now, I'm very conscious of my fears. And I fear that my children might suffer through the same sort of fear and maybe worse!

The generation born after 1990 mostly noted how their memories of the civil war have been inherited primarily from parents, other family members, and neighbors. These stories, passed down from older generations, emphasized the predominant feelings of destruction, regret, and futility. Destruction referred to both property destruction and destroyed lives and missed opportunities. Futility was expressed in regards to the perceived senselessness of the war, which was seen as having no benefit for ordinary Lebanese people socially, economically, or politically.

Participants explained that war-related memories are often framed by their parents to advance the popular proverb "Remember so as not to repeat" (تتذكر وما تنعاد) and to encourage the next generation to reject violence. However, a few participants born after 1990 described how they knew very little about Lebanese war-related violence because their families avoid speaking about this era.

4.4 Varying Levels of Engagement in Multigenerational Focus Groups

Varying levels of participant engagement were noted in focus groups that included young people born after the war. When participants of all ages discussed Lebanon's war-affected past, younger participants tended to allow older participants to lead the discussion. When younger participants did discuss war-related experiences, they spoke about the past from the perspectives of their family members or immediate neighbors. Those born after 1990 tended to rely on stories that had been passed down to them (in the kin-based oral history tradition) and accounts of the war in popular culture. This is consistent with the fact that the civil war is not documented in school history books, and young people are often actively discouraged from discussing it in school. For example:

> In two high schools in central Beirut and Luwayzeh, notice boards not only informed students of upcoming events but also warned them that *siyaʾsa mamnuʾa*–, or politics is forbidden on school grounds . . . Contentious topics such as local politics, religious diversity, and the civil war are therefore excluded from teaching syllabi and classroom discussions.[45]

This poses a challenge for transitional justice practitioners who seek to engage in inclusive inter-generational dialogues about the past.

4.5 Exposure to Violence and Variation in Conversational Focus and Dynamics

The nature of discussions about people's experience of past violence differed notably depending on whether individuals who were directly affected by war-related violence were part of the focus group. Discussions that included participants with direct exposure explicitly recognized the ongoing consequences of direct violence. Consequently, participants with family members who were victims of enforced disappearance focused on the lack of closure (by way of receiving the truth and some official acknowledgment) as the most pressing consequence of the war on their daily lives. Participants with relatives who were injured or killed, or who had lost homes, also framed discussions around the deep impact those losses still have on their lives. Thus, in focus groups that involved direct victims discussions of present-day challenges tended to revolve around the ongoing challenges they faced.

By contrast, focus group discussions that involved participants indirectly exposed to war-related violence were framed around the general narrative that "we have all suffered due to the war." Participants tended to emphasize the opportunities that they or their family members missed out on because of the war, including loss of access to educational, employment, and social opportunities. For example, Ehsan, an older woman from Ashrafieh/Sin-el-Fil, said:

> You know how the war affected me? I have children, and instead of letting my daughter go and study in university and get a job, I wouldn't let her, because most universities are in West Beirut, particularly the public universities. How am I supposed to let her cross from one side to another without knowing whether or not

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45 Craig Larkin, "Beyond the War? The Lebanese Postmemory Experience," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 42:4 (2010), 620.

she'll return safely? I didn't really let her pursue her education because of that . . . I
would always worry over whether someone would kidnap her or sexually assault her.

The experiences of participants who were directly affected by war-related violence were
recognized explicitly by the group as requiring special recognition. Group discussions
without direct victims tended to focus on population-level experiences of the war, such
as displacement and sectarian discrimination in education, employment, and the public
service. This dynamic suggests that transitional justice approaches should be victim-centric
and focus initiatives around the experiences of victims who suffered internationally defined
human rights violations. It also emphasizes the need for transitional approaches to discuss
and account for systemic forms of violence, such as institutionalized discrimination along
sectarian lines.

5. Confronting the Past Versus Coping with the Present

Discussions highlighted how different members of Lebanese society view endemic sect-based clientelism as a cause and consequence of war-related violence—and as a barrier to moving beyond sectarian violence in Lebanon. Similarly, discussions explored how the evolution of war-related violence has eroded public trust, stymied inter-sectarian civic interaction, and created additional challenges for dealing with the past.

In several focus groups, participants spoke of an ongoing tension between confronting the legacy of past violence and coping with current-day realities. On a number of occasions, participants were hesitant to engage in discussions about dealing with past violence and even voiced their frustration that any such exercise was unrealistic given current circumstances in Lebanon. In Burj al-Brajneh Camp, Mahmoud, an older Palestinian resident, responded to an invitation to think broadly about approaches to address past violence with: "Are you seriously talking about a remedy? They [the government] hate us." Such sentiment suggests the lack of a safe, respectful environment for civic debate across sectarian lines.

Saad suggested, however, that such a debate is, in fact, ongoing, but the problem is one of framing:

> Our discussions here are the same as five years ago. This is the conversation and debate going on in the country. In my opinion this is not what we need to discuss. Instead, we should discuss how the Lebanese war must end. We all feel we are victims of the sectarian conflict, victims of the economic situation, victims of the security situation and political concerns, and victims of the educational problems.[46]

This type of statement suggests that what may be needed is a pragmatic approach to transitional justice that focuses more on ending the war and less on victim-centric framings that focus on the past. Further, in reply to "What does justice after the war mean to you," some participants said they felt that the question itself was removed from the reality of present-day Lebanon. During this part of the discussion in a focus group of older adults in Tarik al-Jdideh, the following interaction occurred:

> Nawal: Justice! Where do you find these things? [general laughter]

> Amal: Where is justice? Where do you live?

> Faten: [There is] no justice in Lebanon. [nods of approval around the room]

In some sense, this underscores a phenomenon characterized as "Lebanese obliterating the ability of thinking about 'what if.'"[47] These sentiments reflect an unfulfilled need in diverse communities in Greater Beirut for initiatives that deal with the past but also recognize the realities of the present.

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46 Focus Group 14, see Table 1.
47 Interview with Lebanese sociologist Melhem Chaoul, Beirut, August 19, 2013.

5.1 Consequences of Violence Across Generations

A common sentiment expressed by participants about their current lives is the ongoing threat and fear of continued violence. However, the entry points for discussing these feelings varied across the three generational lines.

Older generations spoke about how their lives had been shaped continuously by violence and the threat of it. Roula, a woman from Ashrafieh/Sin-el-Fil, for example, explained, "When we were kids we couldn't play, when we were newlyweds we couldn't go out, when we had children all we did was worry about them." This generation noted how their entry points into discussions about dealing with the past are influenced by a mixture of wartime experiences that span their adolescent, young-adult, and middle-aged years.

The middle generation, which experienced the war as children and adolescents, expressed that what they previously had regarded as an environment of armed physical violence manifests today itself as institutionalized forms of war. Present leaders and figures of authority are seen to be inciting inter-sectarian tensions through manipulation of educational and economic systems and the labor market. They expressed these sentiments in age-specific focus groups as well as mixed-age ones. Manar, a woman from Chiyah/Haret Hreik, lamented: "They are inciting young men against each other. I started to stop myself from expressing my views in other regions to avoid troubles. Everyone is hanging on to the idea that this sect wants to control the whole country and eliminate others." Such tension is accompanied by the fear that "everyone is trying to establish personal security by arming to protect themselves. They all have their own fears from any reaction."[48] The generation who grew up during the war emphasized that increasing militarization of Lebanese society has stimulated fear and closed down spaces where they formerly felt comfortable to express themselves freely.

By contrast, the younger generation, born in the later stages of the civil war or after it, explained how they had inherited a general sense of fear and mistrust. Joelle, a young participant from Ashrafieh/Sin-el-Fil who was directly affected by violence, described the experience of being born into a war-torn environment without having actually lived during the civil war: "I felt like I was born into something that I shouldn't have been born into. Something *they* went through and that we should not have to inherit. But we can't. We keep getting dragged into it." The frustration of this post-war generation was sometimes characterized as resentment against those most responsible for the violence, resulting for some in xenophobic feelings. Nader from Hamra confided in a focus group of direct victims:

> I feel vengeful towards the people who got us to this point. Sometimes I dream of revenge, even though I don't know these people. Because of the war we have reached a bad situation socially. You feel like everyone is your enemy. This has affected how we deal with foreign people.

Some younger participants explained how this sense of fear shapes their social interactions with other Lebanese people, as articulated by a young woman from Ashrafieh: "You never know what sect the person next to you might be or what his intentions are. There's a lot of fear."[49] Thus, these younger participants described how being born into a war-torn society has hampered their ability to freely express themselves in inter-sectarian settings and share their opinions about dealing with the past.

5.2 Geographies of Fear

The massive displacement that occurred during the conflict forced the Lebanese population to redefine their territorial identities along confessional lines.[50] As a woman named Lara noted during a youth focus group in Tarik al-Jdideh:[51]

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48 Focus Group 3, see Table 1.
49 Focus Group 6, see Table 1.
50 Samir Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon* (Columbia University Press, New York, 2002), 27.
51 Focus Group 8, see Table 1.

The effect of the legacy of the war at the community level is the kind of sectarianism
it reinforced. People are ready to be mobilized along sectarian lines at any instant. It's
a constant tension, like they want to return to the past, but they also don't want to
relive it. They are definitely still affected. And the threat of it is cyclical in nature.

Participants from different neighborhoods explained how this has evolved into a new
geography of fear—in which the fear of war-related violence now guides their everyday
movements. As one participant said, "Almost unconsciously, you feel uncomfortable
in certain areas that impose a certain character."[52] This massive displacement, coupled
with the transformation of public spaces into spaces of contention, has caused people
to retreat from these spaces into what have been called "seclusive" and "exclusive"
enclaves.[53]

Protracted hostility has also caused sociopsychological symptoms of fear that include a sense
of despair and hopelessness. As Rabia, a young man from Ashrafieh whose family experienced
extreme violence, explained, "There are some neighborhoods that just remind us of the war.
So, as a person who lives in East Beirut, I feel very uncomfortable going to West Beirut."

Even for participants who live in mixed-sect neighborhoods, war-related experiences have
been transformed into a new geography of fear that penetrates their daily lives. A discussion
among residents of Chiyah/Haret Hreik demonstrated how the legacy of past violence
manifests itself into fears about personal safety.

> Bilal: If you want to go from one neighborhood to another, you hold your breath.
> You just want to go from work straight back home safely. Everyone feels this way,
> regardless of their sect.

> Ahmad: No one is comfortable with the other. This is what the war did.

> Ibrahim: Yes, one of the consequences of the war was the demographic compartmen-
> talization of certain sects within certain neighborhoods. Almost unconsciously, you
> feel uncomfortable in certain areas that impose a certain character.

> Nahla: Yes, you don't feel safe, as safe as you'd feel in your neighborhood.[54]

Participants explained how easily identifiable lines of control, bombardment, and violence
changed the geography of the country during the war. The legacy of fear and mistrust and
the physical reorganization of Lebanese society have divided people along sectarian lines as a
defensive coping mechanism. As Nahla explained:

> If my daughter were to marry someone from a different sect today I would worry.
> I wouldn't have before or during the war. I feel like I'm forced to be afraid. What if
> something happens between her and her in-laws? You don't want to be sectarian, but
> you feel like you're forced to be, in order to avoid conflict, to protect yourself.[55]

This new geographically defined fear has eroded inter-sectarian trust and heightened a sense
of vulnerability when venturing outside one's own neighborhood. With increased sectarian
compartmentalization, participants generally felt that there was both a real and imagined
barrier to discussing Lebanon's legacy of violence across divides.

5.3 Clientelism as a Cause and Consequence of Conflict

The violence associated with the wars of Lebanon and the persistence of community
fear and insecurity have facilitated a system of sectarian-based clientelism in Lebanon,[56]
with public officials and civil servants providing loyalty to politicians, rather than to the
state and ultimately the citizenry. It thus requires individuals to subscribe to a system of
patronage based on political connections to obtain basic public services. In several focus

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52 Focus Group 2, see Table 1.
53 Samir Khalaf, "Beirut Reclaimed: Reflections on Urban Design and the Restoration of Civility" (*Dar An-Nahar*, Beirut, 1993), 19.
54 Focus Group 2, see Table 1.
55 Ibid.
56 Samir Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon* (Columbia University Press, New York, 2002), 130.

group discussions, participants described how this clientelism forms a major impediment to addressing the legacy of past violence. Saad, a middle-aged resident from Hamra, explained:

> We do not have a purely civil society. If there is a problem, we go to a religious or confessional leader instead of going to the judicial system or the state. I am secular, and I have no state to go to. I feel like a stranger.

Layal, in a focus-group discussion with women residents in Ashrafieh, said, "I think in Lebanon we depend on clientelism. We all depend on it."

Many participants regarded clientelism as deeply entrenched and difficult to challenge on an individual level. Alaa, from Tarik al-Jdideh, saw clientelism as more of a top-down problem: "The problem comes from above, not below."[57] Most participants tended to see it as mutually reinforced by political elites from above and by individuals from below. Ehsan, from the Ashrafieh/Sin-el-Fil group, outlined a vision for a meritocratic society:

> Religion and politics need to be separated so you can put an end to clientelism. There shouldn't be any inheritance of political power either. Why should Jamyyil's son govern if a poor kid was smarter than him and more patriotic? We need a new generation, educated and knowledgeable to partake in politics.[58]

Despite the complex nature of clientelism and its deep entrenchment in the social fabric of Lebanon, participants agreed that it was a consequence of war violence that continued to cause fear and violence throughout society. There was general consensus that meaningfully dealing with the legacy of past violence ultimately would require addressing the inherent injustice of the clientelist system:

> Saad: We need to move from "sectarian identity" to "national identity" and citizenship. The beginning of the solution is to be affiliated to a country. So we need to work on citizenship. My real affiliation should be to the country, and it should be based on the civil laws of a secular country.

> Mohamad: We need a civil state, which will lead to the abolition of sectarianism in politics. We cannot eliminate sectarianism overnight. The initiative of civil marriage, for example, goes against religious groups and confessions, and it will be difficult to challenge sectarianism. In my opinion, you have to practice your own religion at home. But at the national level this should be different, and there should be only national affiliation. In parliament we shouldn't be hearing anyone preaching for half an hour about Imam Ali, for instance. I could be Christian, and I might not believe in what he believes in! We should be talking about civil issues and laws. And we cannot use religious sentiments to incite uptight feelings of our supporters. This is wrong.[59]

Nadia, an older woman from Burj al-Brajneh Camp, summed up the lack of trust and the harsh daily realities fuelled by the current system:

> We want to feel we are alive, because honestly we don't feel that way. When our kids graduate, where are they going to work? There are no jobs. It is all about connections, clientelism, and racism. Unqualified people. We just want to make a living and feel secure.

Her sentiments represent the general sense observed across all focus group discussions that the entrenched nature of sectarian clientelism has fuelled a social, economic, and political system that has heightened communal tensions.

Across focus group discussions, there was general consensus that the sectarian compartmentalization of neighborhoods in Greater Beirut and the clientelist system pose major structural challenges and are a core barrier to addressing the past across sects. Foremost among these challenges is how to transition from a climate of fear and mistrust toward an

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57 Focus Group 8, see Table 1.
58 Focus Group 14, see Table 1.
59 Ibid.

atmosphere in which Lebanese people can start to engage with each other on how to deal
with the past across sectarian, generational, and geographic lines.

5.4 Displacement and Disruption

Displacement and its lingering effects were common to participants from the five neighborhoods
of Greater Beirut. It has been noted that the magnitude of displacement in many recent conflicts
has been massive and often affects more people than any other type of violation.[60] It is certainly
central to the conflict logic in Lebanon and is in itself a direct violation of the human rights of
the Lebanese people.

Many participants described the disruption, instability, and insecurity of conflict-related
displacement as their most difficult war-related experience. Mohammad, a middle-aged man
from Chiyah/Haret Hreik whose family was exposed directly to the war, explained:

> Displacement was the most difficult experience. Our house was right at the bor-
> derline, Saida old road. We couldn't live there for more than 15 years. The feeling
> that you can't go back to your own house. We spent some time at my sister's house.
> Displacement is a big thing. Other than the economic and security issues, there was
> the psychological implications of the war and the way it ended.[61]

Participants highlighted the short-term disruption caused by war-related displacement and the
long-term, ongoing instability that it produced. In particular, participants noted the economic
and social hardships of displacement on themselves and their family. As with the geographies
of fear, participants indirectly described how this displacement had reorganized the spatial
distribution of the Lebanese populace into "safe spaces" and spaces where "you don't feel safe."

Noting the deep individual, familial, and community-level effects of displacement, some
younger participants described these experiences as unacceptable. During a focus group with
women from Hamra, Pati explained:

> [My family] was displaced, they moved to East Beirut, and then they moved here.
> They got displaced a lot. You feel like it affected everyone, not just my family. There
> are so many people like them.

Given the centrality of displacement, transitional justice mechanisms that ignore its effects
risk producing a decontextualized history that obscures key components of past violence.

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60 Romesh Silva et al., "Challenges and Opportunities of Incorporating Demographic Analyses of Displacement into Transitional
Justice Processes," Paper presented at International Population Conference, Busan, South Korea, 2012, http://iussp.org/sites/
default/files/event_call_for_papers/silva-et-al-Working-Paper-2012.pdf
61 Focus Group 3, see Table 1.

6. Looking to the Future

In each focus group session, the first half of the discussion was dedicated to exploring war-related experiences and memories, and the second half turned to questions about dealing with the legacy of past violence. This second section was prefaced with a focused discussion of the core transitional justice approaches of truth and memory, criminal accountability, reparations, and institutional reform. After this, participants were asked to explain which of the two statements more accurately represented their thinking:

1. There is no point in bringing back all of these bad memories. People are trying to forget all of this. Let us forgive and forget, and time will fix everything.

2. There should be something done about this. We cannot continue our lives as if nothing happened. We have to face our past, whatever it takes.

There was no clear, consistent pattern in attitudes about dealing with the past when viewed according to the neighborhood, sectarian make-up, generation, or gender composition of the focus group. However, the group discussions that comprised only participants with direct exposure to war-related violence overwhelmingly supported the "face our past" option, and were very skeptical about the alternative "forgive and forget" approach. This was apparent, for example, in discussions among Christian residents of Sin-el-Fil who had been exposed directly to extreme violence in the war:

> Yolla: Yes, for our children, we need to deal with the past. We can't stay silent.
>
> Edmon: You have to write history.
>
> Nadia: If you don't, then people will become more separated.[62]

Thus, it appears that direct victims of violence emphasize the importance of confronting the past to bring closure to the pain and suffering experienced, and to help unite Lebanese society through creating a shared understanding of the past.

Figure 2 shows the variation in attitudes expressed by the participants in the 15 focus group discussions.

In focus group discussions that combined participants who were directly exposed to violence with those who were indirectly exposed, a wider variation in attitudes was observed.

Most younger participants engaged in lively debates about the motivation for addressing the past, though a few questioned the utility of dredging up the past. In these debates, there
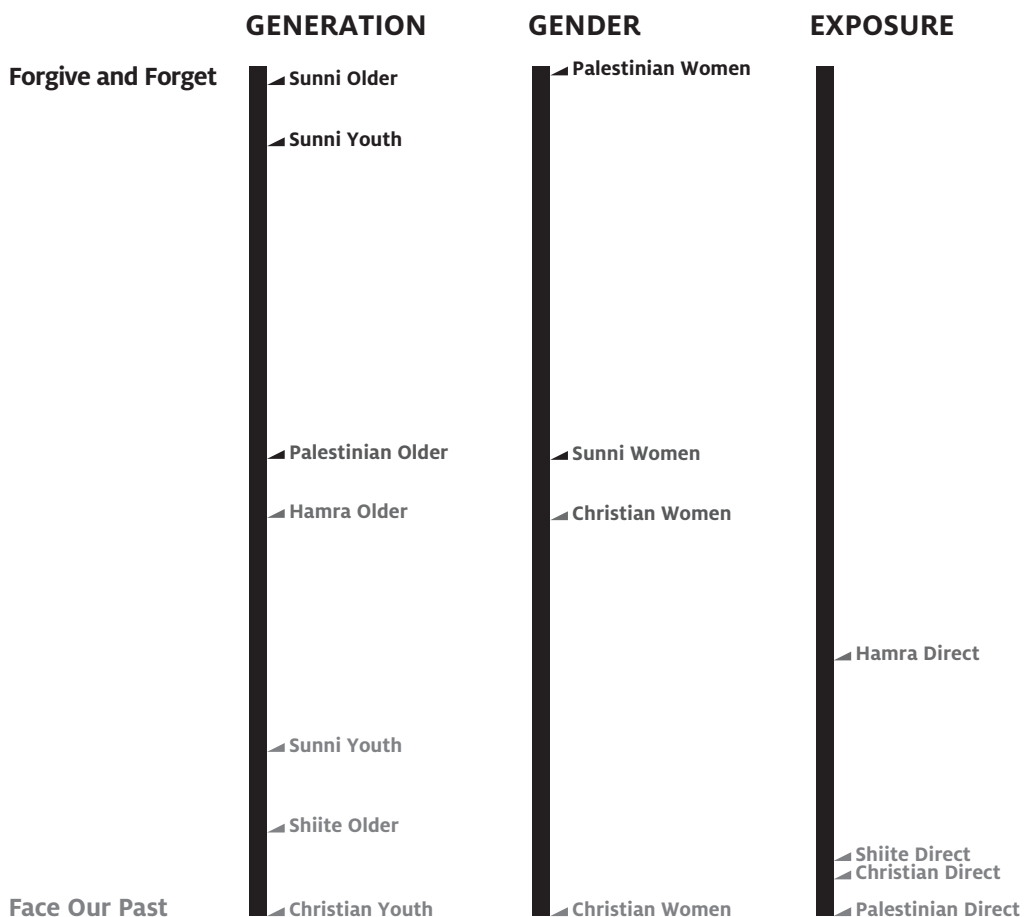
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62 Focus Group 15, see Table 1.

was a division about the primary motivation behind such efforts: between those who saw it as advancing an accountability-and-responsibility agenda and those with a narrower view of promoting non-recurrence. For some participants, implicit in this discussion was the belief that meaningful historical clarification involves raising questions of accountability and responsibility. By contrast, other participants expressed the fear that too much focus on the past would instead lead to renewed violence. This tension was exemplified in one particular discussion between two Sunni youths from Tarik al-Jdideh:

Ahmad: Yeah, you want to hold people responsible.

Alaa: No, it's not about that. We need to remember so that we don't repeat the same mistakes.

Ahmad: Three-quarters of them are dead anyway. There's no point in bringing it up because people will be more likely to fight again.

Figure 2: Sentiments in Relation to "Forgive and Forget" and "Face Our Past," by Age, Gender, and Exposure to Violence

	GENERATION	GENDER	EXPOSURE
Forgive and Forget	Sunni Older	Palestinian Women	
	Sunni Youth		
	Palestinian Older	Sunni Women	
	Hamra Older	Christian Women	
			Hamra Direct
	Sunni Youth		
	Shiite Older		Shiite Direct
			Christian Direct
Face Our Past	Christian Youth	Christian Women	Palestinian Direct

This tension between confronting the past and the threat of renewed violence also was present in focus group discussions with older participants; however, it was instead grounded in a longer-term view of history. An exchange between Sunni women from Tarik al-Jdideh explored this tension, discussing if it was possible to explicitly "forget our past" and whether such attempts would instead project the legacy of past violence upon future generations:

Dalal: You need to forgive and forget.

Layla: If you keep bringing up the past, then you will only reopen old wounds.

Abeer: But the past is part of our present. You can't erase it.

Layla: You can erase it with your mind.

Abeer: It's still there on the ground. And we see it in our children.

This particular framing speaks to the potential cumulative effect of successive generations seeking to "forget our past." The Lebanese scholar Elias Khoury identified this risk:

> I discovered that this society had erased its history, as if it carried along with it a big fat eraser with which it blotted out its own history. So we have a situation where there is no written text about the war of 1860 and nothing about the revolution of 1920 or the revolution of 1958. What terrified me was that I was living a war (1975-) whose fate might well be similar to the fate of the wars that preceded it, and so I had to write it myself.[63]

Direct victims of violence consistently supported confronting the legacy of the past through historical clarification. Other focus groups presented a range of sentiments, from strong support for confronting the past to a palpable fear of such endeavors. The core tension was between those who feared a continued cycle of violence stemming from the failure to confront the underlying causes and consequences of past violence, and those who feared that confronting the past would undermine fragile social and political relations and lead to renewed violence. This tension underlines the challenge faced by transitional justice policy makers and practitioners to ensure that past wrongs are acknowledged in a respectful way for those most affected, while also strengthening social, political, and economic institutions and relations.

6.1 The Need to Recognize Past Wrongs

Despite the variation in support for "facing the past" and "forgive and forget" approaches, most participants supported the more focused question of "Do you feel some sort of recognition is needed." This question was asked after participants had just discussed war-related experiences, but before they had discussed post-war responses to the wars. Participants invariably noted that any type of recognition would need to overcome sectarian divisions. Edmon, a middle-aged resident of Sin-el-Fil, explained, "There has to be recognition, but I think that's very difficult because people today are governed through sectarianism. If people don't unite, then there is no way you can remedy the past."

The three focus groups in Tarik al-Jdideh agreed that although recognition is needed, it is impossible in practical terms. This pessimism was evident in a discussion among Sunni youths in the neighborhood:

Ahmad: Of course, but we have no idea how.

Mahmoud: There's no way.

Ahmad: Even time won't heal. If time made a difference, it would have made a difference a long time ago. It's been too long.

Mahmoud: If there were a solution anyway, it would have been solved.

In focus groups in other neighborhoods, discussions centered on whether the main responsibility to advance recognition for past wrongs lies with the state or local communities. Rania, a middle-aged woman from Hamra whose family directly experienced war-related violence, implied that recognition should come from a community, but relations were too difficult to make it happen: "Maybe we cannot address the past. It's too painful. Maybe in a country that doesn't have so many different sects it would be possible, but we are too divided." By contrast, Nadia, a woman from Ashrafieh, regarded recognition as "the responsibility of the state. I think there has to be civic institutions and civil marriage."

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63 Elias Khoury, translated by Paula Haydar, *The Kingdom of Strangers* (University of Arkansas Board of Trustees, 1996), v.

The main point of variation, outside the focus group discussions in Tarik al-Jdideh, was not about whether recognition is needed for past wrongs, but rather about who should lead such a process. Young people regarded it as a shared responsibility between the people and the state, as demonstrated by this exchange between young adults from Chiyah/Haret Hreik:

> Mohammad: The Lebanese lost their belief and conviction in a state that protects and supports them. We no longer have a conception of a state.

> Sanaa: We don't trust the government.

> Mohammad: On the one hand, because the state is the collective of thieves, murderers, and warlords, and they are the ones who made this state. On the other hand, we, the Lebanese people, are not doing anything, because we're devastated, anxious, and we have no self-confidence. We are also responsible for this. They are the rulers and leaders, that is true. But we helped them stay in position, we couldn't remove them, and we don't want to.

There was subsequent broad consensus among neighborhoods, sects, generations, and exposure levels that recognition was indeed necessary. This preliminary finding suggests that the framing matters.

These mixed results require further investigation by researchers and transitional justice practitioners. For researchers, it potentially indicates a variation in the level of support for recognition. For transitional justice practitioners, more work may be necessary to understand how the framing of transitional justice initiatives affects individual and group attitudes. The analysis of these focus group discussions raises the prospect of potential tradeoffs when engaging in a wide-ranging debate about different approaches to dealing with the past.

6.2 Truth and Memory: Differences in the Envisioned Form and Objective

Transitional justice scholars and practitioners have long emphasized the importance of both establishing widespread knowledge that human rights abuses have occurred and having governments, perpetrators, and citizens acknowledge the wrongfulness of those abuses. This study sought to better understand how different segments of Lebanese society think and talk about historical clarification and memory. As already discussed, observations were made as to the underlying tension between the need to forget and the need to remember. Beyond this, there was variation across generational lines about the different motivations behind advancing truth seeking and memory initiatives, and variation between levels of violence exposure groups regarding the types of memory initiatives that should be undertaken. Because the "work of memory will not be complete without taking into account all narratives and confronting them with one another,"[64] it is essential to consider these variations.

Participants born after the civil war expressed the need to remember and understand the geography of fear into which they have been born. They discussed how the wars of Lebanon are poorly understood by their generation, even though they have lived through the reality of the war's aftermath. These younger participants regarded broad-based historical clarification as fundamental to moving beyond partisan historical accounts. Rachelle, a young woman from Ashrafieh, emphasized the importance of evidence-based history over documented political propaganda:

> We need to have records and evidence of past events. Otherwise what will convince you of what happened? I could talk to you for hours, and it wouldn't mean anything because there's no proof.

Younger participants outlined their desire for a historical record that is undeniable and creates a better understanding about the antecedents, nature, and consequences of war-related violence. This is in stark contrast to the often-inconsistent, biased information about the war that is provided to Lebanese school students:

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64 Ahmad Beydoun, "War, Peace and History in lebanon: A Conversation with Ahmad Beydoun," *Accord* 24 (2012), 19.

> Social studies textbooks var[y] in content depending on the religious affiliation of the school administration. Biased material and indoctrination mark the textbooks. For example books taught in Islamic schools refers to the Arabs as "our brothers" and emphasize the role of Muslim heroes in history. In contrast Christian schools highlight the Phoenician origin of Lebanon and praise Phoenician historical figures like Hannibal. Furthermore, the time allocated to each topic within the social studies subject varies from one school to another. For example, one school may allocate three periods to discuss Arab nationalism while another may just mention it in passing.

Older participants were also broadly supportive of historical clarification. However, in contrast with younger participants, older participants, especially women born before the war, presented a vision based primarily on individualized memorialization at the family and community levels. They framed focused memorialization as an important strategy to remember what happened so that younger generations do not repeat the same mistakes. One participant, Dalal, expressed this sentiment as follows: "The youth need to know what happened during the war and that no one benefited from it. They shouldn't think that war is a game. That needs to be very clear."[65] Thus older participants advocated memorialization for emphasizing the futility of violence and the immense suffering that is caused as a result. In this way, they advocated for a narrower form of truth with a more limited objective when compared with the "forensic truth"[66] sought by the younger participants. The logic of this narrower truth was explained in a discussion between older residents of Hamra:

> Rania: It is important to teach young people. That will result in positive outcomes. We should communicate to them objective facts.

> Nader: People used to kill each other in the past. This is what we should tell them. We should not tell them that the Sunni or the Shia used to kill each other, etc. We have to tell them at a general level without arousing tensions and without instigating new fighting.

> Manal: Yes, this would prevent rancor in their hearts.[67]

This more focused narrative was evident in some comments made by younger participants. For example, one said, "Everyone who participated in the war regrets it. That's what the older generation tells me. They say they wished they'd never participated. It was so destructive and now full of regret."[68]

There were notable differences in the style of historical accounts and personal narratives shared depending on whether a participant had directly experienced violence or not. Participants with direct experience told personal narratives that were tied to particular events of extreme violence. Yasmin, for example, an older woman from Tarik al-Jdideh/Mazraa, said:

> It was very difficult for me. I used to live near the Ras el Nabaa/Sodeco green line. It was horrifying. I was displaced when my daughter was only a week old. My entire house was destroyed. If we hadn't left when we did, everyone in the building would have died. It was tragic. This was in 1980.

Participants who were not directly exposed to violence, by contrast, focused their accounts of the past more at the systemic and societal levels. Charbel from Ashrafieh/Sin-el-Fil explained:

> It affected the situation of the country in general. It affects the cost of living, un-employment, the deterioration of public services. These are all consequences of the war. If you think about any problem that you have, you will realize that it goes back to the war. Lebanon was known for its large middle class. After the war, we lost our middle class.[69]

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65 Focus Group 9, see Table 1.
66 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, Final Report, 1998, Vol. 1, 111–112, 135, referring to "factual" or "forensic truth," which encompasses: (1) truth about individual events, cases, and people; and (2) truth about the "nature, causes, and extent of gross violations of human rights, including the antecedents, circumstances, factors, context, motives, and perspectives which led to such violations."
67 Focus Group 15, see Table 1.
68 Focus Group 8, see Table 1.
69 Focus Group 4, see Table 1.

6.3 Perspectives on Justice and Accountability

The most common comments from participants about justice advanced the notion of legal equality and challenging sectarian-based discrimination. All participants—young and old, with direct and indirect experience of violence, and from different sects and neighborhoods—bemoaned the structural injustices facilitated by current political, economic, and social institutions. They agreed that clientelist sectarian-based political arrangements continue to fuel tensions. As Zeina, an older female from Hamra, explained, "Justice is being treated like you're Lebanese, irrespective of your sect. If you're referred to as Christian or Muslim or Shiite, you'll continue to feel like you're being discriminated against."[70]

In addition, older participants and those who had experienced direct violence emphasized the importance of acknowledging past wrongs. A participant from Chiyah/Haret Hreik, who had direct experience of violence, said, "Justice is to know the truth about who killed your brother, father, or husband."

Some direct victims of violence also added the importance of criminal accountability for war crimes and other forms of violence:

> Rasmiye: It means having an opportunity to build a future.

> Hanan: Justice means accountability. People who committed war crimes need to be prosecuted . . . Now the politicians have reconciled, but we haven't. I will never forget my family members who died. Entire homes were destroyed.[71]

For older participants with direct experience of violence justice was directly linked to how that violence that was experienced as well as to a broader, systemic notion involving nondiscrimination and equality before the law.

When asked about accountability for past violence, participants uniformly expressed pessimism and despair about the possibility of any meaningful accountability in the foreseeable future. They commonly asked, "Who is going to do it?" There was a general sense that current political leaders and structures are part of the clientelist system and are thus not legitimate sponsors of justice or accountability initiatives.

When pressed further on the dimensions of meaningful accountability, opinions as to form and targets varied. A few participants advocated for either wholesale amnesty or wholesale prosecutions. The overwhelming majority, however, took a pragmatic, interim approach of implementing evidence-based lustration, with those most responsible for war-related violence being prohibited from holding elected office.

> Abla: The way you hold them accountable should be by replacing them.

> Joelle: If you remove him from his position, then he will be just like anyone else without any privileges.

> Dania: That will never happen.

> Roula: The people have to be aware in order to be able to hold them responsible.

> Dania: Not all people are aware, though. There are many people who will support their leaders, no matter what.[72]

Younger participants advocated for broad accountability measures that targeted both leaders and combatants, while older participants generally advocated for narrower measures that focused exclusively on political and community leaders. However, there was general agreement that the motivation behind accountability needed to reaffirm the rule of law and not be used to carry out retributive justice against other sectarian communities.

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70 Focus Group 13, see Table 1.
71 Focus Group 12, see Table 1.
72 Focus Group 6, see Table 1.

Older participants talked about distinct chapters of the war differently, namely, conflicts between internal Lebanese groups versus conflicts between Lebanese internal actors ("taboo violence") and foreign aggressors ("expected violence"). It was clear that they assigned a much higher level of seriousness and responsibility to the war's "internal conflicts," most notably, the sectarian fighting. Maha, an elderly woman from Burj al-Brajneh Camp, explained how, for her, internal conflict and the associated violence was much worse than violence instigated by foreign aggressors:

> The War of the Camps was the worst of them all . . . We know that Israel is our enemy, and it is not surprising if they kill us. However, the camp war affected us because Muslims were killing each other. We used to wonder, these people are Muslims, why are they doing this to us? Before this, we didn't know what Shiite and Sunni were.

Further, as captured in the following discussion between two residents from Ashrafieh, this internal violence created deep divisions within families and households:

> Rose: The war between the Lebanese Forces and the army was the worst. Many families were torn apart because of it.

> Ehsan: I think the tension between Muslims and Christians is less potent than the tension between Christians and other Christians, or Muslims and other Muslims. There are political conflicts in every household.[73]

For these older participants, perceptions about the severity of violations and consequent individual responsibility depended on the type of violence committed: whether it was committed by foreign aggressors or internal actors. Many preferred not to talk about the second form, and thus, it is less understood by the public. This dichotomy advances a notion that severity is based on perpetrator affiliation. However, transitional justice instead seeks to frame severity and responsibility in terms of international human rights norms and law.

6.4 Reparations and Social Repair: Questions of Form and Function

There was considerable variation in attitudes toward social repair and healing, from highly individualized conceptions of reconciliation to broad, community-level action. Victims of direct violence rejected outright the possibility of repairing and healing their losses; indirect victims instead advocated for an intergenerational approach to social repair. The latter approach envisaged using affirmative action to advantage the descendants of those who had missed out on chances for education, employment, or other socioeconomic opportunities. Hanan, an older female resident of Burj al-Brajneh Camp, explained:

> They need to compensate us for what we lost. We lost our childhood and our youth. I don't mean materially. I mean our children should have employment opportunities; their lives shouldn't be wasted.

Only older generations advanced notions of healing and social repair that relied on forgetting the past. Groups that included mixed ages or only young participants instead advocated healing approaches that relied on closure for direct victims through acknowledgment of past wrongs or were more forward-looking with a focus on strengthening the rule of law to overcome sectarian-based distrust and discrimination. As Yasmin, an older woman from Tarik al-Jdideh, explained, "The only thing that can heal you is to see your children living a better life than you did." Thus some participants, particularly those from Burj al-Brajneh Camp, Chiyah/Haret Hreik, and Tarik al-Jdideh explicitly referred to reparations processes that would confront war-related structural injustices in practical ways to signal a break from the sectarian-based system of patron-client politics.

Participants in all focus groups said they saw little value in symbolic reparations. They instead emphasized reparation initiatives that would directly address discriminatory regimes, such as sectarian-based discrimination in the education and employment systems. Inherent in this

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73 Focus Group 6, see Table 1.

sentiment is recognition that there is a strong connection between the exceptional violence of past armed conflicts and everyday violence in Lebanon that encompasses social exclusion, discrimination, and disempowerment based on identity politics. Here, the vision of dealing with the past advocated by participants involves not merely addressing the exceptional violence of past armed conflict, but also addressing the long-term consequences of the violence and understanding how it has shaped core structures of the governance system and social relations in Lebanon.

A consistent sentiment expressed in discussions was the lack of trust in current political leadership and government structures to implement transitional justice processes that are nonpartisan and geared toward institutional reform. Many participants also expressed mistrust about the motives and ability of international actors to play a constructive role in advancing meaningful, constructive transitional justice initiatives that would assist Lebanon's diverse population. In particular, participants were skeptical of international courts, as demonstrated in a discussion between older residents of Tarik al-Jdideh:

> Amal: We don't trust international courts.
>
> Faten: They are ridiculous.
>
> Nawal: It has nothing to do with us.
>
> Amal: The international courts cannot realize justice for Arabs, because they want our spirits to be broken.

Given this mistrust, those participants who supported "facing our past" instead identified nonpartisan community groups and NGOs as credible vehicles to advance historical clarification and intercommunity dialogue about justice, accountability, and institutional reform. Hossam, a young man from Chiyah/Haret Hreik, explained his vision:

> I don't know if it will ever happen in Lebanon, but . . . why don't we support non-sectarian political parties and civil society organizations? These are the organizations who are really working for our benefit, be it human rights organizations or organizations that aid war victims. People who really want to work for the benefit of the country.

Thus, from these focus group discussions, participants identified NGOs and community groups as potential vehicles for bridging sectarian divisions in Lebanese society. However, given the lack of importance assigned to symbolic reparations, the challenge remains to find an integrated approach that acknowledges past wrongs yet also confronts the social and economic consequences of Lebanon's wars.

7. Case Study: Badna Naaref Oral History Project

The Badna Naaref Project was an oral history collection exercise conducted by ICTJ in 2011 in high schools in Beirut.[74] It encouraged discussion across generations about the war, focusing on the impact of violence on the daily lives of current residents of Greater Beirut. Essentially, high school students asked older members of their family to discuss their wartime experiences, focusing on issues such as securing basic needs; crossing checkpoints; dealing with fear, terror, and loss of loved ones; and rituals and celebrations. The intention of this project was to respond to dominant contemporary social narratives in which war is glorified and life during the civil war is normalized.

Its objectives were to:

1. Increase the understanding of youth about political violence and its consequences during a civil war, and the effect it has on people in the long term.

2. Raise awareness among youth about the impact of war upon their parents' generation;

3. Facilitate discussion between two generations in a well-framed, secure environment;

4. Train high school students about using oral history and storytelling as a vehicle to learn lessons from to past to prepare themselves for a volatile present and future; and

5. Create an archive of stories focused on the human experiences of the conflict. This archive, which was to be placed at the disposal of the wider public, would also be available for schools to use within their own curricula.

It is useful in the present context to compare and contrast some of its findings with those of the focus group project.

The nature of these two projects was notably different. The focus group discussions were framed around group dialogue within and between generations. The Badna Naaref testimonies recorded the open-ended narratives of adults, exploring whether the nature and style of oral histories transmitted across generations varies according to the demographic profile of the family and examining how people's experiences during the civil war are communicated to teenagers. Thus it documented unidirectional narrative accounts about war-related violence, while the focus group study documented the nature and dynamics of multimodal conversations about war-related violence and dealing with its legacy.

During the Badna Naaref project, 129 testimonies were collected by 40 students from 12 schools.[75] The participating schools had the support of administrative and teaching staff, and

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74 ICTJ, "Lebanon's Legacy of Political Violence: A Mapping of Serious Violations of International Human Rights and Humanitarian Law in Lebanon, 1975–2008," 2013, 1.
75 Participating schools were Achrafieh Second Secondary Official School for Girls, Amilieh Islamic Charity Association Schools (Amilieh High School), Armenian Catholic Mesrobian High School, Bzommar High School (Kevork Harboyan High School), Choueifat

they provided time and resources to support student participation in the project. In these testimonies, deponents referred to 197 violent events they had experienced: killings, enforced disappearances, casualty-related deaths, nonlethal injuries, and property destruction.

Table 3: Reported Forms of Violence in Badna Naaref Testimonies

Form of Violence	Count	Percent
Killing	53	26.9
Injury	43	21.8
Casualty-related death	43	21.8
Property destruction	30	15.2
Enforced Disappearance	28	14.2
TOTAL	197	100

While anchored in experiences of extreme violence, the oral histories focused mainly on the difficulty of daily life during the civil war. Deponents explained the disruption to home life caused by war-related violence: "We used to escape our homes when shelling started. We either spent our nights on the streets or sought shelter in buildings under constructions or garages or shops."

Participants who grew up during the war also recounted how such violence punctuated their formative years with the sights and sounds of armed violence, instilling in them a sense of fear and instability from a very young age:

> We used to go to school, but all of a sudden the bell would ring. We would all run, not knowing what was going on. Our teachers used to try not to frighten us and say we are all just going to the playground. We were clueless, we had no idea why classes were interrupted. We would suddenly hear gunshots outside; that would be the indicator that something was wrong, that there was a war outside. Our parents would rush to school, so they could collect us, help us to escape. The war influenced me personally. I lost a year of my education. For six or eight months straight, the country was at war, and I couldn't go to school.

Other deponents focused on how the war threatened basic human needs, such as the provision of food, shelter, and basic health care:

> All we could eat was stale bread. There was no food available. All the stores were closed, the fighting was very severe.

> We experienced days of electricity shortage to the extent that we forgot that electricity even existed. We adapted by using gas lamps and candles.

> There was difficulty with everything. Medication was unavailable, water was unavailable, bread was unavailable. Sometimes getting individuals who were injured or sick to hospital would be tremendously difficult due to roadblocks and shelling. Even hospitals were being heavily shelled during the war. We were even incapable of reaching a pharmacy, and pharmacies would be closed down. Sometimes we would have to break a pharmacy's back wall in order to get medications and give them to people.

These personal histories provide an important counterpoint to challenge the valorization of war-related violence. They predominantly chronicle the difficulty of daily life, providing those born after the war with an insight into the lost opportunity, fear, and instability that accompanied the violence. Thus, in some sense, these testimonies are similar in form and content to some of the focus groups in which those who had lived through the civil war period shared their experiences with younger participants.

Official Secondary School, College of Our Lady of Jamhour, Daughters of Charity High School (Azarieh), French Protestant College, Furn-el-Chebbak Public High School for Girls, Ras El Nabeh Public School for Boys, and Sacred Heart School–Gemmayzeh (Frères Gemmayzeh).

In a few cases, oral history testimonies also addressed the motives and logic of participation in the war, such as this quote from an ex-combatant who was formerly a member of the Lebanese Front:

> My motives for participating in the war were the same premises the war was based on: the oppression of Christians, trying to rip them out of Lebanon, exporting them out of their own land and putting an end to Christians in Lebanon.

The style and content of these testimonies are largely consistent with memory-making strategies in which older generations are motivated by the logic of "remember so as not to repeat."

The Badna Naaref project shows how experiences and knowledge of war-related violence can be shared with younger generations, given the lack of official written records on the Lebanon wars. It also provides insight into the oral history tradition of Lebanese families and neighborhoods.

These testimonies facilitated an intergenerational dialogue about the past and created a highly individualized set of war experiences. Although those personal experiences are useful, they do not shed much light on the broader historical and political context for the civil war. Nor do they examine how civil war violence has transformed contemporary Lebanese society by stratifying communities along sectarian lines and compartmentalizing communities within local neighborhoods. This limitation underlines the importance of engaging multiple documentation processes and dialogue initiatives, including oral histories and focus group discussions, and other endeavors, such as archival projects, multimedia pieces, and in-depth interviews.

8. Conclusion

Despite its relatively small size, the Lebanese population is characterized by considerable heterogeneity within its population along confessional and demographic lines. This population diversity has contributed to a varied set of war experiences and narratives built about the past, differing across sectarian, gender, and generational lines. However, despite these varied war-related experiences, there was consensus among participants in all 15 focus groups that political violence in Lebanon is ongoing and the resulting instability and insecurity makes participants speculate that it is premature to discuss a transition away from political violence. This creates a challenge for researchers and policymakers who are determined to incorporate public opinion into transitional justice initiatives.

This study described how different segments of society within five neighborhoods of Greater Beirut talk about Lebanon's war-affected past and outlined the different approaches offered for dealing with its aftermath. The findings suggest that there is a wide variation in how different segments of Lebanese society talk about this past.

Notable variation was observed between how different generations talk about the war. In particular, a generational divide was observed between focus group participants regarding truth and memory initiatives. People born after 1990 were most supportive of an unfettered large-scale truth-telling process. Older generations, particularly women, instead articulated a vision for truth and memory based primarily on individualized memorialization at the family and community levels. This generational divide again challenges transitional justice policymakers to advance initiatives that both younger and older generations will see as constructive for advancing peace-building, historical clarification, and accountability.

The most common notion of justice that participants raised without prompting did not involve criminal accountability. Instead, they focused on the notion of legal equality across religions and sects, along with truth-telling about past violence and acknowledging resulting injustices. Participants criticized the structural injustices and sectarian-based discrimination facilitate by current political, economic, and social institutions and agreed that patron-client sectarian political arrangements fuel continued sectarian tensions.

When specifically asked about accountability for past violence, participants uniformly expressed pessimism and despair about the possibility of meaningful accountability in the foreseeable future. There was variation in the vision of participants about what meaningful accountability would involve. The overwhelming majority outlined evidence-based lustration, whereby those most responsible for war-related violence would be prevented from holding elected office. Older participants generally advocated focusing accountability measures exclusively on political and community leaders, whereas younger participants advocated for a broader form of accountability that included both leaders and combatants.

There was variation, too, in describing preferred notions of social repair and healing. Some opted for highly individualized notions of reconciliation, while others were drawn toward broader community-level action. Victims of direct violence rejected the possibility of repairing and healing their losses, while indirect victims advocated for an intergenerational approach to social repair.

The most uniform sentiment expressed throughout all focus group discussions was the lack of trust in current political leadership and existing government structures to advance nonpartisan transitional justice initiatives that will lead to institutional reform. Across many focus groups, participants also voiced mistrust in the motives and ability of international governmental actors to play a constructive role in advancing transitional justice initiatives. Participants who supported "facing our past" identified nonpartisan community groups and NGOs as the most viable actors for enabling historical clarification and intercommunity dialogue about justice, accountability, and institutional reform.

The findings suggest that for transitional justice initiatives to be effective, they must consider the experiences and cultural characteristics of the local population, and make it a priority. This involves recognizing how the nature of current institutions and practices, such as clientelist-based employment practices in both the public and private sector, advances war-related injustice. Failing to consider the local population's experiences and perceptions can lead to further alienating a society that is already deeply divided.

This study has noted the difficulty in creating a space for people to talk about dealing with past violence, especially given the general consensus that there has yet to be a clear break from past cycles of violence. It also highlighted the need for customized approaches to examine how people talk about past violence and think about dealing with its legacy. The study identifies opportunities at the community level for building a more open, inclusive dialogue about the past and bridging divisions across geographic, gender, generational, political identity, and war-related experiences. However, it also identifies inconsistencies and contradictions in individual and community sentiments about the past. Overall, the study confirms that there is no simple approach for advancing transitional justice in Lebanon. At the same time, however, the findings identify important roles for NGOs and nonpartisan community-based organizations to advance public debate, community dialogues, and cross-community learning about past violence and effective ways to address its multifaceted legacy.

This study may provide researchers with initial insights into understanding the variation across the different generations, war-related experiences, and neighborhoods of Greater Beirut. As policymakers endeavor to develop initiatives that address the legacies of protracted violence and advance principles of human rights, justice, and accountability, a nuanced appreciation of these variations is crucial. Policy initiatives that gloss over or ignore the variation in experience and expectations are unlikely to engage a broad section of Lebanese society, thus resulting in wasted opportunities for having an impact.

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Appendix A: Focus Group Discussion Guide

1a.   In a couple of sentences, what do you know about the civil war in Lebanon? [*for youth groups*]

1b.   Where were you during the Lebanese war? [*For older groups, query where they were at the beginning of the war, in 1975.*] How did you feel at that time?

2.   How did the war of 1975–1990 impact/change/affect your life/your parent's life in general? [*for both age groups*]

  • What about your family?

  • And your community?

  • What about your country?

3a.   What war experiences are most important to you (or your family)? Why? Discuss in detail. [*for older groups*]

3b.   What do your parents tell you about the war? [*for youth groups*]

3c.   How do you see your experience of the war as a woman? Is there any difference between the experience of women and that of men? How? Why? [*for women-only groups*]

4.   In what contexts, if any, do you talk about wartime experience? Why? Discuss. [*for all age groups*]

5.   From your perspective, what should be done with these experiences? Why? How? Please explain. [*for all age groups*]

6.   Do you feel there is some sort of recognition needed? If yes, why and by whom? If not, why not? [*for all age groups*]

7.   From your perspective, what is the best approach to recognition? Why? [*for all age groups*]

8a.   Does it matter to you to know about what happened to people during the war? [*for all age groups*]

  • To families?

  • To certain communities?

  • To the country?

8b.   If so, who do you feel should provide answers? [for both age groups] [*Probe if necessary about government, local communities, schools, families, other institutions.*]

9.   Have you ever heard about or followed the ongoing issues of war victims who are still suffering (kidnapped, detained, displaced)? What do you think about this?

10. I am going to say two words, and I would like you to tell me what first comes to your mind and why? [*for all age groups*]

    Reconciliation

    Memory

11. What does justice after the war mean to you? And to your community? [*for all age groups*]

    • Try to give us an example. [*Try to get at contextualized interpretations of justice.*]

12. What would the following words mean to you? [*for all age groups*]

    Held responsible

    Justice

13. Do you think any people or groups should somehow be held responsible? [*for all age groups*]

14. How would this harm or benefit the country? Discuss. [*for all age groups*]

15. What does the process of healing mean to you? [*for all age groups*]

16. What kind of reparations should be given? Material, symbolic? For who and by whom? [*for all age groups*]

17. Since the end of the wartime period (1975-1990), have you ever heard that the Lebanese government did anything regarding the consequences of the war? If yes, what were they? What do you think about these attempts? If no, what can the government do in this regard? [for both age groups]

18. I am going to read two statements now. Please tell me which one best describes your feelings. [*for all age groups*] Please discuss.

    • There is no point in bringing back all of these bad memories. People are trying to forget all of this. Let us forgive and forget, and time will fix everything.

    • There should be something done about this. We cannot continue our lives as if nothing happened. We have to face our past, whatever it takes.

19a. In your opinion, what do you think youth in the country should learn about the war? [*for older groups*]

19b. In your opinion, what do you think you should learn about the war? [for youth groups]

20. Finally, imagine an idealized situation where you have the opportunity to change the way Lebanese society deals with its war-affected past. What would you focus on?

Appendix B: Description of Data Collection Process

The recruitment of the project participants and the running of the focus group meetings occurred over a five-week period from July 17 to August 15, 2013. ICTJ outsourced the recruitment of participants to a specialist team at Miners Inc. Most of the team members were middle-aged women from each selected neighborhood.

In more accessible neighborhoods, such as Ashrafieh and Hamra, recruiters approached people on the street, briefly introduced the project, and conducted short interviews to collect specific data, such as their gender, age, address, whether they were directly or indirectly affected by the war, and whether they would participate in a two-hour session to discuss their experiences and perceptions about the future of Lebanon. This data was then used to select participants, based on their eligibility and willingness to participate.

Elsewhere, recruiters approached known contacts in the five neighborhoods, briefed them about the study objectives, and obtained referrals to neighborhood residents who fit the focus group profile. Referral-based methods were used generally to recruit participants. However, representatives from Miners Inc. could not provide additional information on the precise details of the recruitment process.

A customized discussion guide, developed in collaboration with the project's academic advisors and the advisory committee,[76]was used to ensure that the same general themes were covered in all of the groups. It was designed to ensure sufficient flexibility and to allow for open conversation.[77] The discussion guide was tested in three neighborhoods, and the framing, language, and sequencing of the questions was adjusted subsequently in response to feedback received.

The Lebanese researchers moderated and guided discussions in each focus group so as to ensure consistent application of the methodology and enable meaningful comparison in all 15 focus groups. An informed consent protocol was used at the start of each focus group to inform all participants of their right to refuse to participate in the study and to withdraw at any time. The researchers gently encouraged participation when necessary and probed for depth and nuance as required. The researchers contributed to the coding and analysis of the data.

The researchers observed the general atmosphere of each focus group. This included noting the conversational and inter-group dynamics, the way people talked about the war, and the different themes that were raised about present-day life in relation to the past and other issues related to the legacy of violence. Each discussion was recorded, and the moderators transcribed each session from those voice recordings. The transcripts were then translated into English. These were then imported into Dedoose, a software tool designed specifically to enable qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods research analysis of interview transcripts. A customized codebook was developed to identify the more salient aspects of the transcripts. This codebook was then programmed into Dedoose, which then applied it to all 15 transcripts. Three analysts conducted a blocking analysis on the primary and secondary dimensions. Three other analysts used Dedoose to evaluate the reliability of the coding process.

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76 The committee was established to advise the project. It comprised nine Lebanese academics and representatives from civil society organizations, including victims' groups.
77 See Appendix A, "Focus Group Discussion Guide."