



“The War As I See It”

Youth Perceptions and Knowledge of the
Lebanese Civil War

Acknowledgments

The International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) acknowledges the support of the Embassy of Switzerland in Lebanon, which funded this project. ICTJ also acknowledges the support of the Embassy of France in Lebanon, the French Institute in Lebanon, the French Institute for the Near-East, and the Political Science Institute at Saint Joseph University.

ICTJ also thanks the Byblos Municipality Cultural Center, the Youth and Culture Center of the Zouk Mikael Municipality, Saint Joseph University in Sidon, Cadmous College in Tyre, and Lycee Abdelkader in Beirut and the French Institute in Beirut, Deir El Qamar, Saida and Tyre for hosting the exhibition and their cooperation in organizing discussions. ICTJ also thanks the American University of Beirut and its Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Media Studies for hosting the award ceremony and launch of the photo exhibition.

ICTJ gratefully acknowledges the jurors who judged the contest entries: First Secretary at the Embassy of Switzerland in Lebanon Chasper Sarott, Cultural Attaché at the Embassy of France and the French Institute in Lebanon Eric Lebas, Anthropologist and Co-head of the Urban Observatory of the Near East and Chargé de Mission at the French Institute for the Near East Thierry Boissiere, Director of the Department for Contemporary Studies at the French Institute for the Near East Myriam Catusse, former Head of ICTJ's Office in Lebanon Carmen Abou Jaoudé, Professor at the Political Science Institute and Faculty of Engineering at Saint Joseph University Rabih Haddad, photographer Ghada Waked, photographer Gilbert Hage, and journalist Chérine Yazbeck.

ICTJ extends its special thanks to the contest entrants, the Fighters for Peace Organization, the guest speakers who gave testimonials during the discussions, and the schools that hosted the exhibit and held discussions. ICTJ also thanks the photo contest sponsors, Assafir, Al-Akhbar, L'Orient Le Jour Newspapers, and Nikon School Lebanon, for offering photography courses to the contest winners.

About ICTJ

ICTJ assists countries pursuing accountability for past mass atrocity or human rights abuse. ICTJ works in societies emerging from repressive rule or armed conflict, as well as in established democracies where historical injustices or systemic abuse remain unresolved. To learn more, visit www.ictj.org

About the Author

Nour El Bejjani Nouredine is a program associate at ICTJ and was coordinator of ICTJ's "THE WAR AS I SEE IT" photo project. She previously worked at the UN Development Programme on Governance in the Arab Region. She holds a Master's Degree in Public Law from La Sagesse University.

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Students watch the documentary *Badna Naaref* at Byblos Municipality Cultural Center, November 2016 (Nour El Bejjani/ICTJ).

Introduction

Lebanon’s civil war continues to impact the Lebanese people, both those who lived through the war and those born after it. While the widespread harms it caused are still visible today, the official denial of both the war and its lasting consequences has left a hole in Lebanon’s historical record and in many cases prevented people from fully understanding their country’s past.¹ This is particularly true for Lebanese young people.

Since the negotiated political settlement that ended the war in 1990, no serious attempt has been made to deal with the war’s legacy. Accountability for human rights violations committed during the conflict has been absent. There has been no effective truth-seeking process, formal acknowledgement of victims’ suffering, or the establishment of an accurate and objective war narrative. This has allowed political and social factions to compete for control of the historical record, with the different sides blaming each other, resulting in multiple politicized and fragmented narratives.

Because school curricula do not cover Lebanon’s war or recent history, today most accounts of the conflict are based on personal memories transmitted from generation to generation by family members and neighbors who survived the war. This has left young people without an official source of information about the war to help them to understand it and its legacy, although it often forms part of their personal history and identity. As a result, the post-war generation, and the larger public, does not know what really happened during the conflict. With waves of instability and political violence that risk spiraling out of control, recalling the prewar era for many who lived through the war, young people are left vulnerable to political manipulation.²

However, many Lebanese communities, teenagers, and young adults are asking questions about the past and their family members’ suffering.³ In response to this, in October 2015, the International Center for Transitional Justice, with the support of the Embassy of Switzerland in Lebanon, launched a photo contest for youth (aged 15–25), titled “THE WAR AS I SEE IT.” The project involved several elements: a photo contest for young people aged 15 to 25; a traveling exhibit featuring 26 photo entries, which ran from September 2016 to February 2017;⁴ and discussions held during the exhibits to generate constructive conversation about the past, particularly among experts, academics, and young people.

This publication presents the findings of that project. It showed that the generation born after 1990 lacks basic information about the war and that the young people who participated had a genuine curiosity to learn about and reflect on the war. Academics and experts who participated in the discussions expressed the

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importance of promoting knowledge and discussion of the civil war and its causes among young people, in order to build durable peace and prevent the recurrence of violence.

In general, youth participants’ knowledge about the civil war and post-war violence and the importance of clarifying what happened in the past increased as a result of the exhibit and discussion. In total, 82.9 percent of participating youth reported that the exhibit and discussion had made them reflect on how the war had affected them, their community, and Lebanese society as a whole. Of these participants, 66.4 percent reported that the exhibit and discussion showed that many different communities and groups have been affected by the war. Many participants stated that they have more empathy for different people’s experiences of the war and post-war violence after participating in discussions. At the same time, numerous participants expressed concern about the future of their country, fearing the recurrence of armed conflict and citing a lack of trust in leaders and state institutions.

Going forward, tackling the lack of knowledge about the war is essential to countering the situation of impunity for past violations and the injustice that victims face. Engaging youth and achieving change could enable young people to start elaborating a war narrative from a different perspective, one focused on victims’ rights, and foster demand for accountability. Generating experiences and best practices about truth telling at the local level could also help to build momentum for change at the national level.



Grand Prize Winner: “Dominique,” by Sibylle George, 22, of a book in her grandmother’s house pierced by a single bullet during the civil war.

1. The Photo Contest, Traveling Exhibit, and Discussions

ICTJ’s youth photo contest was intended to encourage young people in Lebanon to explore their understanding of how the civil war shapes their country’s past and present.⁵ It aimed to raise awareness of the importance of truth telling about people’s experiences of the war and post-war violence among the post-war generation.

Youth aged 15–25 were invited to submit one photo of an object, landscape, portrait, or site that represented their perception of the Lebanese civil war as part of the past and present, along with a description of their photo and a short biography. A jury of diplomats, photographers, and members of civil society selected five winning photos based on their creativity, photographic quality, and relevance to the contest theme. In total, 26 entries were received.



Second Prize Winner: “Features of the Truce,” by Christina Boutros, 22, of an elderly man and a young girl separated by a wall but united by a shared reality.

The entries were presented online and in an exhibit that travelled Lebanon from September 2016 to February 2017.⁶ Sites were selected based on their religious demography and levels of exposure to violence during and after the war.

For each exhibit, ICTJ and its partners organized a guided visit for students, followed by a structured discussion focusing on the necessity of uncovering the truth about the past, in order to understand the violence, its impact and consequences, and limit its effects on the future. In addition, the ICTJ-produced documentary film “*Badna Naaref*” (We Want to Know) was screened after each discussion,⁷ helping participants to better visualize and understand the violence during the civil war and the daily suffering of people in Lebanon.

Over the course of six months, approximately 500 young people aged 15 to 25 from different backgrounds, regions, and sects in Lebanon participated in the

discussions. The discussions focused on the importance of seeking the truth about the past and opening a space for people and victims to share their experiences as a way to break the silence, fight “collective amnesia,” and build narratives about the suffering and harms caused by the civil war. As a participant said during a discussion in Sidon, “Raising young people’s awareness about the civil war frightens political leaders.” Participants were also asked to fill out a survey, to capture their levels of knowledge about the war before and after the exhibit and discussion and what they felt had been useful and instructive and what had been less so.

The discussions gave young participants from different social and political backgrounds the opportunity to reflect and discuss with other youth and experts their own perceptions and knowledge of the war.

The main objectives of the traveling exhibit and discussions were to: 1) create a space for young people from different cultural, political, and religious backgrounds to collectively reflect on the unresolved issues of the war, its causes and consequences, and the role they can play in promoting dialogue and transitional justice processes in Lebanon; 2) encourage youth to think critically and creatively about the war and its consequences and to imagine the changes needed to secure a better future that guarantees that violence will not be repeated; 3) raise awareness among youth about the importance of truth-telling processes regarding people’s experiences of the war, with the goal of engaging youth as active citizens; and 4) analyze young people’s vision and perceptions about the role that the right to truth plays in society and the pertinence, priorities, and feasibility of truth-seeking processes in their environment.

Guest speakers who had lived through the war, including ex-fighters and humanitarian-aid workers,⁸ were also invited to give testimonials during the discussions. At the discussion in Byblos, Nayla Hachem spoke about her experience as a member of the International Committee of the Red Cross during the war.⁹ She told stories about the suffering of victims and the important humanitarian role that aid workers played. According to completed surveys, her story proved to be enlightening for many participants. One participant wrote, “I was very much touched by this testimony as I discovered that many people died during the war to save others’ lives.”

Learning about massacres that happened in different Lebanese regions, such as Sabra and Chatila, Tall el Zaatar, Damour, and Beirut, and the risks and lengths that aid workers went to, to save lives, another participant reported: “These stories made me realize that the war affected all Lebanese people, not just my family, village, and community.”

The ex-fighters, who had fought on different sides, shared what they learned during the war, their regrets, and their current role in promoting dialogue and peace. Most participants’ questions showed they were interested in these testimonies, especially stories about victims and the harm ex-fighters had caused by their actions and the regret they feel today.

As ex-fighter Assaad Chaftari said: “In a real civil war you cannot restart the game as on a PlayStation®. Once you are killed, it is done. And more, if you kill people and later have regrets, like us, you can’t bring those people back to life. And this is the



Students attend the photo exhibition at the Youth and Culture Center of the Zouk Mikael Municipality (Nour El Bejjani/ICTJ).

toughest” Some participants came to understand that the war created a great deal of destruction and sorrow, which was reported by participants in a number of surveys. “We cannot undo the past, but we can change the future,” repeated the ex-fighters.

2. Main Findings and Observations

Young People in Lebanon Have Limited Knowledge of the Civil War

The young people who participated in the exhibits and discussions displayed limited knowledge of the Lebanese civil war, including of main events, the pattern and nature of the violence, common types of human rights violations, daily life, and how different people and communities across the country were affected. Their limited knowledge was confirmed by teachers in all the discussions and by the responses they wrote in their surveys. In particular, participants knew little about how the war had ended; the Ta’if Agreement; the amnesty law passed by Parliament in 1991, which has allowed most warlords to escape prosecution and



Detail of “Untitled,” by Hassan Al-Jardali, 17, of the Arabic word for *Lebanon* written in bullets.

enabled them to hold important government positions; and the impact of ongoing impunity for serious human rights violations.

This poor understanding is consistent with the fact that the information taught about the war in classrooms is often inconsistent and biased, and young people are often actively discouraged from talking about the war in school. A participant from Tyre wrote: “I had no idea that our civil war was that terrifying, and now I am strongly convinced that we should not repeat the past.”

According to the survey results, approximately 54.7 percent of participating youth think that the sources of information they have about the civil war are insufficient. Some students’ knowledge about the war is limited to the bullet holes and scenes of destruction still visible in some parts of their hometown.

Unfortunately, with their lack of knowledge, some Lebanese youth today echo their parents in chanting political slogans for warlords, without knowing the role these

individuals played in the war. With no clear understanding of the years of violence, many youth join political parties based solely on their family or sectarian ties.¹⁰

Nevertheless, the discussions allowed many youth to understand that no part of the country was spared the violence and that, consequently, all Lebanese people and communities are victims and have suffered as a result of the war in one way or another, even today. A participant in the Keserwan discussion commented, “I thought the war did not affect my life, but now I realize it has affected it in many ways.”

Youth Want to Know More about the Past

Most of the young participants wanted to know more about the civil war, and many expressed a desire for an accurate and undeniable historical record that offers a better understanding of the war and its consequences. Some youth participants also expressed in their surveys a strong desire to understand the logic of past conflict. A participant from Keserwan wrote, “As a Lebanese, I should know the history of my country, in order to learn from what happened and from the mistakes of others.” After the discussions, 86.3 percent of participants affirmed the importance of talking about the civil war and its consequences.

Understanding of the Violence Varies, including by Region

The discussions revealed disparities among participants regarding their knowledge, views, and understanding of the civil war and its impact on them and other communities. The disparities mostly correlated with participants’ differing levels

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of exposure to the war and subsequent conflicts and the level of confessional diversity in their area. The discussions and survey results showed, perhaps unsurprisingly, that young people from regions that were directly exposed to wartime violence, like southern Lebanon, have been more aware of the consequences of violence. These participants participated more actively in discussions than their counterparts in places less affected by recent conflict.

In addition, in regions that are confessionally heterogeneous, participants showed more interest in the discussion, and their surveys showed that they had more knowledge about the war and were more aware of the suffering of people from other groups or communities than those in religiously homogenous regions. In the latter, many did not understand the consequences the war still has on their lives, with their surveys showing a tendency to feel detached from the war and some writing comments like, “I was not affected by the war.” Some preferred to distance themselves from the country’s traumatic past by looking to the future, believing the violence is over. A participant from Keserwan wrote: “What do we have to do with the war? It’s not our problem, and we weren’t even born then!” Another reported, “I think the war has no effect on me today.”

Many Families Maintain a Culture of Silence about the War

While some participants mentioned that the photo exhibit and discussion reminded them of stories they had heard from their parents, discussions and survey responses revealed that a culture of silence pervades many families and that inter-generational dialogue about the past is often lacking.



“Untitled,” by Hassan Alawad, 15, who wrote about the photo: “Despite the bombing, despite the destruction of houses, despite the oppression and aggression, you will not erase our dream.”

Many students complained that their parents were reluctant to talk about the war. Some participants mentioned that they were hesitant to ask their parents about the war for fear of triggering painful memories. A participant shared during the Byblos discussion, “I can see tears in my mother’s eyes every time we raise the subject of the civil war.” Another participant from Sidon reported, “Whenever the civil war issue is raised at home, my father immediately changes the subject.”

Some students mentioned in the surveys that watching the documentary “*Badna Naaref*” allowed them for the first time to see real images and footage of the war and to hear stories from people who had lived through the violence, which made them more understanding of their parents’ reluctance to talk about the war.



Nayla Hachem speaks about her experience as a member of the International Committee of the Red Cross during the war, at the Byblos Municipality Cultural Center (Nour El Bejjani/ICTJ).

Youth Understanding of the Past Is Often Based on Their Parents' Suffering

In general, participants' knowledge of the war was limited mainly to events and situations that had directly affected their family members, neighbors, religious community, and region. They tended to repeat stories that had been passed down to them without realizing most are politicized and built on the dichotomy of “us and them” that continues to separate groups and individuals in Lebanon.

The discussions and survey responses showed that participants could only list hardships of the war that had been experienced by their parents and that their images of the war were based largely on their parents' stories. For instance, some participants described the war only in terms of a “general loss of property” because their parents had lost property during the war. Others knew about experiences such as displacement, needing to cross checkpoints, and hiding in shelters from snipers oftentimes because it matched their family's stories. Others spoke

about a relative who had died during the war or a neighbor who had gone missing. Thus, their perspectives on the war often mirrored those of their families and neighbors.

Teachers Lack Sufficient Material and Resources to Teach the War

During discussions, most teachers agreed that although the civil war is not part of the school curricula and history books are incomplete (concluding with Lebanon's independence in 1943), the past needs to be taught. They emphasized that students usually ask questions about the war and seem eager to know more about the past, but as teachers they lack the tools, material, and forums necessary to discuss and teach the war. Therefore, they welcomed the discussions and underlined the need for more such initiatives.

Different approaches to teaching the civil war were noticed during discussions with teachers. Some teachers try to raise the subject in class as much as possible and encourage students to ask questions, with one teacher saying: “We should keep talking with the new generation about the war. It is important to seek the truth, understand the war, and even be shocked by the reality of what happened, in order to prevent recurrence and to guarantee a better future.” Others shared that they prefer to avoid such discussions in class, for fear of creating controversy and tensions and opening up old wounds. One teacher warned that “the lack of a unified history book deepens divisions within Lebanese society, because teachers in some schools might provide their own version of the civil war that might be sectarian.”

Sectarianism Persists, with Youth Believing Only Their Community Suffered

Very few participants appeared to have a balanced and broad understanding of how atrocities and traumatic events of the war have affected different communities in Lebanon. It was observed that many youth believe that their community lost more during the war than others, because they only know about the atrocities committed against their own group. A principal reason for this is that the post-war generation has grown up with competing war narratives that in most cases do not take into account different versions of events and perspectives. Supporting this, a participant in the Chouf discussion asked: “How can we know the truth when each group describes war events differently?”

During the civil war, civilians were forcibly displaced along religious lines, which weakened connections between communities and people of different faiths. The physical separation created by the war persists today, with new generations born in an environment of division and mistrust.¹¹ As a result, Lebanese young people in some regions are growing up with a limited perception of the value of diversity, a lack of tolerance for people of different faiths and viewpoints, and/or not knowing about the experiences of others or rejecting or blaming others for all past wrongs. Some participants, mainly in confessionally homogeneous regions, reported in their surveys that they had never had a friend from another faith. Such minimal interaction between faith communities can cause tensions and lead to a weakened sense of a shared national identity.

Inherited sectarian narratives of the war came through more explicitly in the surveys than in discussions. Some participants wrote strong statements about other



“Untitled,” by Sarah-Lee Accaoui, 22, is a portrait of her grandmother, who lost her husband when a missile hit their home in Beirut during the war.

religious groups that reveal persistent underlying tensions. For instance, a participant in the Chouf region wrote, “I can never forgive them after what they have done to us,” although he was born after the war. This discrepancy between what participants said in discussions and wrote in their surveys suggests that many do not feel comfortable expressing sectarian views freely in public, revealing the deep sectarianism that many Lebanese still suffer from but sometimes refuse to admit.¹²

A participant in Tyre wrote, “I do not understand how Lebanese people can still be sectarian after all that happened during the war . . . Don’t they fear another war?” However, others clearly felt more comfortable and secure when surrounded by their own community, preferring to live in neighborhoods with homogeneous confessional groups. Some mentioned that their parents are overly protective and restrictive about their visiting areas of other sects, for fear of being harassed. Some



Ex-Fighter Assaad Chaftari speaks to students about his experiences during the war, at the French Institute in Deir El Qamar, October 2016 (Nour El Bejjani/ICTJ).

reported trying to identify the confessional group of other people before engaging them in conversation.

The deep influence of sectarianism in participants' daily lives was apparent. Many young people focus on the differences between themselves and others, such as differences in culture, education, behaviors, and beliefs, rather than on commonalities. This feeling of separateness is likely due, at least in part, to a lack of communication and interaction among groups.¹³

Although not the norm, a few participants reported that the war had made some of their relatives of the war generation more open and tolerant. A participant from Chouf wrote in her survey: “The war affected my parents and made them realize the importance of living together and accepting the other, and this has made them more open to others and has been reflected in the way they raised me, to accept others.”

Youth Expressed Uncertainty about the Role They Could Play in Truth Telling

While many young Lebanese agreed on the importance of understanding the war and its consequences, the main question was “What can we do?” Many believed that they do not have the capacity to change their country or to prevent another war: “It’s not in our hands.” One participant mentioned the failure of the youth-led “You Stink” protests,¹⁴ which, to her, proved that young people are incapable of creating social change.

Nevertheless, the potential role youth see for themselves in promoting dialogue and transitional justice processes became clearer as a result of discussions. Participants reported that the discussions had made them more prepared to participate in a dialogue about the war and its ongoing consequences. A participant from Tyre wrote, “I am now convinced that war leads to nothing but destruction and pain. Through dialogue and peaceful means we can solve all problems.” Many participants reported increases in their understanding of how impunity and failing to address the past can create problems and affect the country’s future.

The data showed that as a result of participating in the exhibit and discussion, nearly 85 percent of participating youth were encouraged to think more critically and creatively about the war and were convinced about the importance of talking about the war and its consequences. Approximately 77 percent were encouraged by the discussion and exhibit to participate in more discussions about the war and truth-seeking processes. One participant from Byblos wrote, “I feel more empowered after this event and feel that we can do something to make social change.” Another

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participant from Sidon wrote, “We now understand better what our parents went through. What we learned from this event is not to repeat this painful history.”

Youth Fear a Recurrence of War

Since the civil war, waves of instability and political violence have rocked Lebanon, for many who lived through it, it recalls the war and raises fears that the violence could spiral out of control. Today, amid intense regional instability and the social and political impacts of the Syrian conflict, peace in Lebanon is increasingly under threat. In discussions in different regions, the fear of another armed conflict breaking out was repeatedly expressed. Participants also felt that Lebanon is in an internal “cold war” between different sects and political groups. A participant shared during the discussion in Tyre that his parents kept repeating that “Lebanon is in an undeclared war.” Another commented, “War is better than sudden assassinations and bombings. At least during the war we knew we needed to hide.”

Some participants mentioned in their surveys that they knew more about the violence and hardships endured by the war generation as a result of the discussions and seeing “*Badna Naaref*,” and their awareness of the risk of another war had increased.

Youth Worry about Their Future and Lebanon’s Ability to Change

Many young participants worry about their future and their country’s future, and they lack trust in political leaders and state institutions. The main reasons for this, as stated in discussions and surveys, were security threats and political instability,



Special Prize for the Youngest Participant, “Untitled,” by Hanin Aboulhosn, 15, of a boy looking hopefully through bars at a world of color, while in the darkness a gun is held to his head.

internal sectarian and political conflicts, lack of communal peaceful coexistence, high rates of unemployment, a weak economy, and corruption, in addition to intense regional conflicts that increasingly threaten to spill over into Lebanon.

Many also reported that they feel powerless to create social change and that they plan to leave the country as a last resort. Many participants expressed their frustration and pessimism about the future: “We can’t be blamed for wanting to leave the country. The government is encouraging us to leave.”

Mistrust in political leaders and state institutions was commonly cited, as was the lack of equality across religions and sects. These views are understandable, as community interests in Lebanon prevail over public interests—and clientelism, sectarianism, and corruption have affected many state institutions,¹⁵ resulting in institutional weaknesses that prevent the provision of impartial, efficient, and ef-

fective public services. Government recruitment processes are political in addition to the economic and social inequality and the lack of social justice.¹⁶

In a number of surveys youth expressed that they tend not to trust their leaders' capacity or inclination to bring about genuine positive reform. A participant from Chouf wrote, “Nothing can be achieved in Lebanon without political patronage.” Unfortunately, political and religious leaders have used sectarian divisions to maintain their privileges and hold on to power, which has resulted in an increasing loyalty to the sectarian and political over the interests of the general public and the country at large.¹⁷

3. Conclusion

Nearly 27 years have passed since the official end of the Lebanese civil war, yet the war is poorly understood by the post-war generation. Teenagers and young adults, due to the absence of objective discussions about the war in school or at home, have only limited knowledge about the war. Still, they are asking questions about their country's past and the suffering of the war generation. Young people in different regions showed interest in discussions about the war and a curiosity to know more about what happened. As a participant from Sidon wrote, “Now I feel I want to know more and more about the war.”

The discussions played an important role in educating youth by giving them a space in which to express their understanding of the conflict and its impact on them, which should prove useful in the mid- and long-term in limiting the war's effects.

Indeed, there is a need for broad-based truth-seeking processes to acknowledge the inalienable rights and needs of victims and move beyond partisan historical accounts. Youth, victims, and Lebanese society have a right to know the truth about what happened during the war, the guarantee of which is a crucial condition for sustainable peace and national reconciliation. Further, the post-war generation's scant knowledge of the country's recent history and intercommunal resentments and fears make them vulnerable to political manipulation and radicalism.

The study found widespread fear among young participants of a resurgence of war brought on by cyclical low-level violence within Lebanon's borders.¹⁸ Young people felt insecure living in a country where violence could erupt at any time. The risk of war is heightened by the country's unresolved past, prevailing sectarianism, fragile peace process, and levels of corruption, which result in weak state institutions and continued cycles of violence that threaten peaceful coexistence.

Showing participants' disconnect from the reality of regional instability, there was no mention during discussions of the Syrian conflict or the Palestinian issue and how they affect Lebanese society. If Lebanese do not understand the suffering of victims of other sectarian violence, like Syria's ongoing civil war, or learn the consequences of dehumanizing those who have endured great hardship, the large presence of refugees in the country and unfair treatment of them could endanger stability.¹⁹ In a country deeply affected by regional conflicts, it is very important for the post-war generation to learn about their own civil war's relation to regional sectarian violence in order to help prevent violence in the future.

Recommendations

- **Amend and update the national history curriculum, for both state and private schools, at all levels of education, to convey an accurate and impartial narrative of Lebanon’s recent history.** Peace education should also be integrated into the school curricula. As stipulated in the Ta’if Agreement: “The curricula shall be reviewed and developed in a manner that strengthens national belonging and fusion, spiritual and cultural openness, and that unifies textbooks on the subjects of history and national education.”²⁰
- **Train teachers in specific methodologies to effectively foster a culture of openness and understanding and to explore new methods of teaching the country’s history.** This can include highlighting the role that youth can play in their communities to promote nonviolence, cultural plurality, and greater understanding of those outside one’s perceived social groups, in addition to involving youth in communal activities that promote tolerance, patience, and respect.
- **Provide the post-war generation with accurate information about the war and the negative repercussions of political violence and its impact on the past, present, and future.** This will encourage youth to learn from what happened and prevent recurrence in the future.
- **Encourage discussion among youth about regional conflicts affecting Lebanon and the long-term suffering of victims.** Understanding political violence and others’ sufferings will help young people to look at their own

situations from a different perspective, which will foster empathy, respect, and understanding as well as recognition of and empathy with others’ pain and suffering.²¹

- **Encourage intergenerational dialogue and raise awareness among youth about the importance of truth telling about people’s experiences of the war, acknowledging the past, and recognizing victims’ rights and suffering.** This may support the healing process of individuals and society as a whole and can play a vital role in achieving reconciliation among different communities and attaining sustainable peace.
- **Initiate interconfessional discussions among Lebanese youth and encourage them to build relationships across borders and outside sectarian limits to understand the different interpretations of the war and learn to tolerate different views.** This will help youth relate to each other’s sufferings and will make them less inclined to be drawn into sectarian violence by realizing that the war is a common tragedy suffered by all Lebanese in all regions.²²



Photo contest winners, from left to right: Christina Boutros (Second Prize Winner), Tamara Saade (Special Prize Winner, “The Consequences of War on the City”), Sami Ouchane (Second Prize Winner), Sibylle George (Grand Prize Winner), Hanin Aboulhosn (Special Prize Winner, “Youngest Participant”).

Endnotes

1. ICTJ website, “Lebanon: Addressing the Legacy of Conflict in a Divided Society,” www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/subsites/lebanon-legacy-conflict/
2. Hiba Huneini, “2016: Let it be a happy New Year,” *The Daily Star*, December 31, 2015, www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2015/Dec-31/329651-2016-let-it-be-a-happy-new-year.ashx; UNDP, “Education and Citizenship,” 2008, 15, www.undp.org.lb/communication/publications/downloads/english.pdf
3. ICTJ, “Lebanon’s Legacy of Political Violence: A Mapping of Serious Human Rights Violations of International Human Rights and Humanitarian Law in Lebanon, 1975–2008,” 2013, 113, www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-Report-Lebanon-Mapping-2013-EN_0.pdf
4. ICTJ, “THE WAR AS I SEE IT” Photo Gallery, www.ictj.org/multimedia/photo/war-i-see-it-photo-contest-exhibit-lebanon
5. The contest was organized by ICTJ with the support of the Embassy of Switzerland in Lebanon, in partnership with the Embassy of France in Lebanon, the French Institute in Lebanon, the French Institute for the Near-East, and the Political Science Institute at Saint Joseph University.

6. Exhibits and discussions were held in five cities and villages across the country: Deir El Qamar (Chouf District-Mount Lebanon Governorate), Byblos (Byblos District- Mount Lebanon Governorate), Zouk Mikael (Keserwan District-Mount Lebanon Governorate), Sidon (Sidon District- South Lebanon Governorate) and Tyre (Tyre District- South Lebanon Governorate). See Annex 3 for the complete list of participating schools.
7. The documentary, directed by Carol Mansour, was produced as part of an oral history project by the same name, “Badna Naaref,” which engaged Lebanese students in recording their immediate family members and neighbors talking about their personal experiences of the war and violence. See www.badnanaaref.org
8. Ziad Saab was a commander for the Lebanese Communist Party and member of the party’s central committee during the Lebanese civil war and is currently head of Fighters for Peace Organization. Assaad Chaftari was a member of the Kataeb party and then the Lebanese Forces as vice chief of intelligence during the civil war and is currently vice president of Fighters for Peace. Haydar Ammacha was a member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine during the civil war and is currently a member of Fighters for Peace. Jocelyne Khoueiry was a member of the Kataeb Party during the civil war and is currently the director of the Jean-Paul II Centre of Social and Cultural Services.
9. Nayla Hachem published her war memorial *Beyrouth, comme si l’oublie...* in 2012, written in collaboration with Hyam Yared.
10. UNDP, “Education and Citizenship: Concepts, Attitude, Skills and Actions,” 2008, 37, www.undp.org.lb/communication/publications/downloads/english.pdf
11. ICTJ, “How People Talk About the Lebanon Wars: A Study of the Perceptions and Expectations of Residents in Greater Beirut,” 2014, 19, 20, 21 www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-Lebanon-Focus-Group-Report-2014.pdf
12. Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs and American University of Beirut, “Describing the Lebanese Youth: A National and Psycho-Social Survey,” 2010, www.aub.edu.lb/ifi/public_policy/arab_youth/Documents/working_paper_series/ifi_wps03_ay_Harb.pdf
13. Search for Common Ground, “Using Media to Engage with Lebanese Youth on Identity and Social Cohesion,” 2015, www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Using-Media-to-Engage-with-Youth-on-Identity-and-Social-Cohesion-in-Lebanon.pdf

“The War As I See It”: Youth Perceptions and Knowledge of the Lebanese Civil War

14. In 2015, the youth-led “You Stink” movement brought together young people from different religions and sects demanding politicians take action to end the garbage crisis and widespread corruption in Lebanon; however, it has since fizzled out. See Sami Nader, “Why Lebanon’s ‘You Stink’ movement lost momentum,” *Al-Monitor*, October 23, 2015, www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/10/lebanon-civil-movement-protests-violence.html
15. Transparency International, Lebanon country page, showing a Corruption Perceptions Index national ranking of 136 out of 176 countries, 2016, www.transparency.org/country/LBN
16. ICTJ, “Failing to Deal with the Past: What Cost to Lebanon?,” 2014, 29, www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-Lebanon-Impunity-Report-2014.pdf
17. ICTJ, “How People Talk About the Lebanon Wars,” 2014, 20, 21.
18. After the cessation of the armed conflict, Lebanon remained under partial Israeli military occupation until 2000 and Syrian military occupation until 2005. Since then, the country has been far from stable, with a number of targeted assassinations, three Israeli military incursions, and internal Lebanese fighting and armed conflicts between the Lebanese Army and Islamic militants.
19. Syrian refugees in Lebanon account for almost a quarter of the total population, with a little over a million Syrians registered with UNHCR (over 231,000 households): Greater Beirut area 27.7%, Bekaa 35.7%, Northern Lebanon 25%, and Southern Lebanon 11.6%. Source: UNHCR Lebanon Page, updated February 16, 2017, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122>
20. Ta’if Agreement, section 1, article III, sub-section E, paragraph 5, www.presidency.gov.lb/Arabic/LebaneseSystem/Documents/TaefAgreementEn.pdf
21. Search for Common Ground, “Better Together: A Youth-Led Approach to Peaceful Coexistence in Lebanon,” 2014, www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/SFCG_Better-Together-A-Youth-led-Approach-to-Peaceful-Coexistence-in-Lebanon.pdf
22. ICTJ Website, Christalla Yakinthou and Lynn Maalouf, “Lebanon: Education in a Context of State-Imposed Amnesia,” September 28, 2016, www.ictj.org/news/education-amnesia-lebanon



Nour El Bejjani Nouredine, the author and project coordinator, speaks about the role of truth telling and history memory to students at Cadmous College in Tyre (ICTJ).

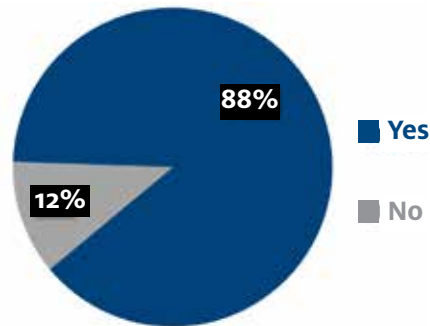
Annex 1. Traveling Exhibition and Discussions: General Information

“THE WAR AS I SEE IT” Traveling Exhibition and Discussion	Date	Total Number of Participants	Gender Breakdown		Number of Survey Respondents
			M	F	
French Institute in Deir El Qamar	October 14, 2016	139	57	82	139
Byblos Municipality Cultural Center	November 8, 2016	40	18	22	34
Youth and Culture Center of the Zouk Mikael Municipality	November 23, 2016	100	41	59	84
Saint Joseph University in Sidon	January 26, 2017	98	40	58	85
Cadmous College in Tyre	February 15, 2017	97	45	52	97

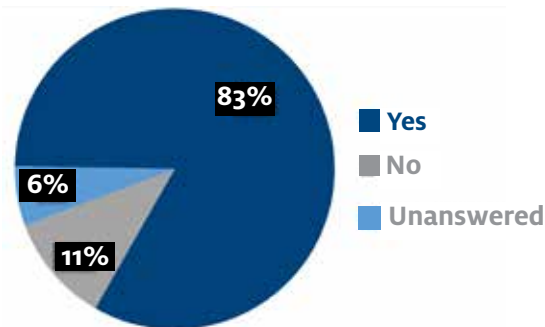
Annex 2. Youth Survey Responses, by Percentage

	Respondents Who Reported an Increased Awareness, Understanding, or Ability to Participate in Discussions Before and After the Exhibit and Discussion	Did the exhibit and discussion show the diversity of perspectives and skills of young people in Lebanon?		Did the exhibit and discussion encourage you to think critically and creatively about the war and its consequences?		Did the exhibit and discussion make you reflect on how the war has affected you, your community, and Lebanese society as a whole?		Did the exhibit and discussion show the many different communities and groups affected by the war?		Did the exhibit and discussion prove that the sources of information you have about the civil war are not enough?		Did the exhibit and discussion convince you about the importance of talking about the civil war and its consequences?		Did the exhibit and discussion encourage you to participate in discussions around the war and truth-seeking processes?	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
French Institute in Deir El Qamar	89	76.9	18.7	83.4	15.1	79.8	16.5	70.5	27.3	66.8	31.6	83.4	15.1	76.9	21.5
Byblos Municipality Cultural Center	88	79.4	8.8	88.2	2.9	88.3	2.9	64.7	20.5	51.9	29.4	85.2	2.9	79.4	8.8
Youth and Culture Center of the Zouk Mikael Municipality	87	91.6	4.7	85.7	13.3	80.9	14.2	64.2	29.7	52.9	40.4	83.3	13.1	74.2	20.2
Saint Joseph University in Sidon	89	84.1	12.2	82.2	12.9	83.8	11.7	63.7	31.3	50.4	42.7	89.5	6.3	75.0	15.3
Cadmous College in Tyre	89	87.6	10.1	83.5	11.4	81.7	9.8	68.9	26.8	51.6	39.8	90.2	3.5	81.8	9.1
AVERAGE	88	83.9	10.9	84.6	11.1	82.9	11.0	66.4	27.1	54.7	36.7	86.3	8.1	77.4	14.9

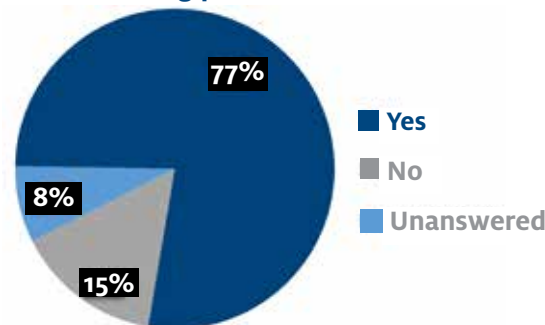
Did the exhibit and discussion increase your awareness, understanding, or ability to participate in discussions about the war?



Did the exhibit and discussion make you reflect on how the war has affected you, your community, and Lebanese society as a whole?



Did the exhibit and discussion encourage you to participate in discussions around the war and truth-seeking processes?



Annex 3. List of Participating Schools

French Institute in Deir El Qamar, Chouf District

College Mar Abda, Deir El Qamar, Chouf District
 Shouf National College, Baakline, Chouf District
 Saint Joseph de l’Apparition, Deir El Qamar, Chouf District
 Ecole La Cime 2, Khaldeh, Aley District
 College Saint Antoine, Hammana, Baabda District
 Lycee Officiel, Niha, Chouf District
 College Bon Pasteur, Hammana, Baabda District

Byblos Municipality Cultural Center, Byblos District

Byblos Public School, Byblos District

Youth & Culture Center of the Zouk Mikael Municipality, Keserwan District

Lycee Abou Chabke, Zouk Mikael, Keserwan District
 Ecole des filles de la charité, Zouk Mikael, Keserwan District
 College Central, Jounieh, Keserwan District

Saint Joseph University in Sidon, Sidon District

College Notre Dame des Soeurs Salvatoriennes (MSA), Abra, Sidon District
 Lycée Houssam Eddine Hariri, Sidon, Sidon District
 Antonines Sisters, Nabatieh, Nabatieh District

Cadmous College in Tyre, Tyre District

Cadmous College, Tyre, Tyre District

Annex 4. Contents of the Survey Distributed to Exhibit Participants

Thank you for attending the exhibit and discussion “The War As I See It.” We would like you to please take a few minutes to respond to our survey. This survey is designed to let you rate yourself on a number of items including your knowledge and your abilities, as well as your feedback and reflection on the exhibit and discussion. The survey results will contribute toward ICTJ’s understanding of Lebanese youth’s vision and perceptions of the right to truth and form the basis of analysis for an upcoming study. This survey is anonymous and confidential, so please answer as openly as possible.

Your Awareness, Understanding, or Ability

The first part of the survey will ask you to rate yourself **before** and **after** coming to the exhibit and participating in the discussion. There may or may not be any difference between the two ratings.

Please rate yourself on a scale of **1** to **5** by marking the point that best describes your knowledge, understanding, or ability. The left end of the scale (**1**) represents the lowest level of knowledge understanding, or ability (or “poor”). The right end of the scale (**5**) represents the highest level of knowledge, understanding, or ability (or “excellent”).

Complete the left-hand column first (BEFORE column). After you have responded to all the items in the left-hand column, begin marking your responses in the right-hand column (AFTER column).

Item	BEFORE coming to the exhibit and discussion	AFTER coming to the exhibit and discussion
Q1	My knowledge about the civil war and post-war violence in Lebanon 1 2 3 4 5	My knowledge about the civil war and post-war violence in Lebanon 1 2 3 4 5
Q2	My awareness about the importance and value of clarifying what happened in the past 1 2 3 4 5	My awareness about the importance and value of clarifying what happened in the past 1 2 3 4 5
Q3	My empathy for different people’s experiences of the war and post-war violence 1 2 3 4 5	My empathy for different people’s experiences of the war and post-war violence 1 2 3 4 5
Q4	The role youth can play in promoting dialogue and transitional justice processes 1 2 3 4 5	The role youth can play in promoting dialogue and transitional justice processes 1 2 3 4 5
Q5	My ability to participate in a dialogue about the war and its ongoing consequences 1 2 3 4 5	My ability to participate in a dialogue about the war and its ongoing consequences 1 2 3 4 5
Q6	My understanding of how impunity and not addressing the past can create problems and affect the country’s future 1 2 3 4 5	My understanding of how impunity and not addressing the past can create problems and affect the country’s future 1 2 3 4 5

About the Exhibition and Discussion

Item	Question	Response (mark one only)	
Q7	Did the exhibit and discussion show the diversity of perspectives and skills of young people in Lebanon?	Yes	No
Q8	Did they encourage you to think critically and creatively about the war and its consequences?	Yes	No
Q9	Did they make you reflect on how the war has affected you, your community, and Lebanese society as a whole?	Yes	No
Q10	Did they show the many different communities and groups affected by the war?	Yes	No
Q11	Did they prove that the sources of information you have around the civil war are not enough?	Yes	No
Q12	Did they convince you about the importance of talking about the civil war and its consequences?	Yes	No
Q13	Did they encourage you to participate in discussions around the war and truth-seeking processes?	Yes	No

Item	Question	Response (mark one only)				
Q17	Sex	Male	Female			
Q18	Age	15 or Younger	16–20 Years Old	21–24 Years Old	25 or Older	
Q19	Highest level of education	Elementary	High School	School/University	Post Graduate	Other:
Q20	Where do you live?	City	Country			

In Your Words

Q14	Can you describe in few words your thoughts and feelings about the exhibition? Did the photos make you recall any stories you have heard about the war? Which of the photos stood out to you?
Q15	How has the war affected your life as a young Lebanese?



Photos, top row, from left: Grand Prize, “Dominique” (Sibylle George); Second Prize, “Features of the Truce” (Christina Boutros); Second Prize, “Last Round” (Sami Ouchane); Special Prize for the Consequences of the War on the City, “Untitled” (Tamara Saade). **Middle row:** Special Prize for the Youngest Participant, “Untitled” (Hanin Aboulhosn); “Still Hopeful” (Sirine Labban); “COME TO HOTEL BEKISHI!” (Antoine Khoury); “Untitled” (Haneen Tay); “Untitled” (Lori Kharpoutlian). **Bottom row:** “Untitled” (Hassan Alawad); “I will keep checking on you, until your wounds are healed” (Rayane Cheikh); “How long will we offer sacrifices to gods? Whenever we thought they had enough, they asked for more.” (Jana Salam); “Untitled” (Petra Raad); “Untitled” (Tina Panossian).



Photos, top row, from left: "Self-portrait: Me looking at the Holiday Inn" (Maria Mouallem); "Untitled" (Sophie Nader); "Untitled" (Sarah-Lee Accaoui); "Beauty Against War" (Lina Hassoun). **Middle row:** "Untitled" (Isabelle Wakim); "Untitled" (Yara Bsaibes); "Untitled" (Stéphanie Antoun); "Untitled" (Hassan al-Jardali). **Bottom row:** "Flower in a Bomb Shell" (Wael Kaade); "Untitled" (Usra Al Madhoun); "Untitled" (Caterina Belardi); "Beirut's Nobility Is Buried in Its Slums" (Ryan Dbeissy).



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