



Palestinian victims crumpled in the streets of the Sabra refugee camp: Defense Minister Sharon had some hard explaining to do

AP

## Massacre in West Beirut

On the main street of a Palestinian refugee camp in West Beirut, the body of 90-year-old Adnan Noury lay with a gaping bullet hole in the left temple. Down the way, Noury's neighbor of many years, Muhammad Diab, 70, was crumpled against a wall; he, too, had been shot cleanly through the head. The refugee camp known as Sabra was littered with corpses. Most of them were men of various ages who had been shot in the head or the back and left in neatly stacked piles. But women and children had not been spared. In the wreckage of one house, visitors discovered that an entire family of eight, including a three-year-old child, had been shot to death.

The massacre in Beirut was the work of Lebanese Christian militiamen supported and armed by Israel. The Israelis invaded Muslim West Beirut last week on the pretext of preventing bloodshed after the murder of their principal Lebanese ally, President-elect Bashir Gemayel, 34. If peacekeeping was their aim, they made a horrible mistake when they put their bloodthirsty Christian friends in charge of the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps, which housed the families of evacuated Palestinian fighting men. As the Israelis stood by, Christian gunmen rampaged through the two camps, executing hundreds of Palestinians. The exact number may never be known, but estimates ran as high as 1,000—including some who died

with their hands and feet bound. Before leaving, the killers tried to clean up their mess; witnesses saw bulldozers leaving Sabra, their scoops piled high with bodies. But they didn't erase every trace of the slaughter. When NEWSWEEK's Ray Wilkinson visited Sabra late last week, he counted 70 corpses in one small area of about 100 square yards.

Some of the dazed survivors blamed the massacre on members of Gemayel's Phalangist party. Others said, more persuasively,

*In an outburst of savagery, Israel's Christian allies slaughter hundreds of Palestinians.*

that the killers belonged to the private army of renegade Lebanese Maj. Saad Haddad, whose stronghold in southern Lebanon has been an Israeli protectorate for years. When NEWSWEEK's James Pringle attempted to get into the Sabra camp while the killing was still going on, his way was blocked by Israeli troops and members of Haddad's army. As rifle fire crackled inside the camp, Pringle asked one of Haddad's men what was going

on. "We are slaughtering them," the militiaman replied cheerfully. Nearby, an Israeli colonel who identified himself only as "Eli" said that his own troops would not interfere to "purify the area." Asked whether he was afraid that Haddad's men might commit atrocities, the colonel replied: "We hope they will not do anything like that."

**Breaking Agreements:** But they did, and Israel would have to bear a large part of the blame. When the Israelis invaded West Beirut, they charged that at least 2,000 fighters from the Palestine Liberation Organization had remained in the city in violation of the withdrawal agreement worked out by American special envoy Philip Habib. "The terrorists cheated us," claimed Prime Minister Menachem Begin. "Not all of them got out." But Israel also broke the Habib agreement, which guaranteed that the relatives of the departed PLO men would be protected. Instead, the Israelis sealed off the camps, trapping as many as 80,000 Palestinians inside, turned the area over to the Christian militiamen and even fired flares that, perhaps inadvertently, allowed the killing to go on at night. U.S. officials were furious with the Israelis. "They were sitting up there in tanks on the ridges surrounding the area and looking down," complained one U.S. diplomat. To some American officials, the killing appeared deliberate. "Nobody was crushed under falling build-





Christian mourners follow Gemayel's coffin: Real charisma, a flair for running a private army—and plenty of enemies

Shiomo Arad

ings," said one. "They were murdered." After a Saturday briefing from Secretary of State George Shultz, Ronald Reagan denounced Israel in unusually harsh terms. "All people must share our outrage and revulsion [at] the murders, which included women and children," he said. "We strongly opposed Israel's move into West Beirut . . .

both because we believed it was wrong in principle and for fear that it would provoke further fighting. Israel," said the president, "claimed that its moves would prevent the kind of tragedy which has now occurred." Reagan said that Israeli Ambassador Moshe Arens had been called in and presented with a demand for immediate Israeli withdrawal from West Beirut and talks toward the earliest possible disengagement of Israeli forces from Beirut. Reagan's tough talk may have had some effect. By Sunday the Lebanese army had taken control of the camps—welcomed by Palestinians throwing flowers—and, according to some reports, Israel had begun to withdraw from parts of West Beirut.

**'A Little Late':** The Beirut massacre left Israeli government spokesmen tongue-tied. "This is a bad way to begin a Jewish New Year," lamented one of them, who refused to say any more or be quoted by name. In Washington, Ambassador Arens told Shultz that the Israeli Government was "shocked and dismayed" by the killings. He argued that the tragedy began when the Lebanese Army

failed to take control of the refugee camps. In Jerusalem, an Israeli official said two battalions of Christians had been allowed into Sabra and Shatila to "comb the camps and collect weapons." The Israelis said that when they became aware of the killing, their troops entered the camps to put a stop to it. Arens told Shultz that there had been scat-

tered fighting between the Israelis and the Christians and that some casualties had resulted. Eventually, the Israelis pacified the camps and began to tend the wounded. "We should get some credit [for stopping the massacre]," said one Israeli official, "even if it was a little late."

Israel's client, Major Haddad, denied that his men had anything to do with the killing. "We condemn this savage action," he said. So, more convincingly, did many Israeli citizens. "These killings are the result of our involvement in West Beirut," said Yossi Sarid, a prominent opposition member of the Israeli Knesset. "A horrible responsibility falls on our shoulders." Some Israelis thought Defense Minister Ariel Sharon and his high command should have expected the Christians to commit atrocities if they were given a chance to take revenge on their Palestinian enemies. As one official in Jerusalem put it: "Sharon will have some hard explaining to do."

**Betrayal:** Trust between Israel and the United States was another casualty of the bloody events in Beirut. When Israeli troops first moved into the Muslim sector, U.S. officials thought they had an assurance from Jerusalem that the incursion was a limited peacekeeping maneuver. Soon they discovered that Israel had occupied nearly the entire Lebanese capital. The Americans felt betrayed. "We quickly found out," said a senior

An Israeli soldier moves out: A horrible mistake

Moshe Milner—Sygma







UPI via SANA

*A dead woman and child lie amid the rubble: No one was safe in the camps*

U.S. official, "that Begin had lied to us again." Some of Reagan's key advisers were convinced that the Israelis meant to sabotage the president's new peace plan for the Middle East. And when Israel ignored repeated calls for a withdrawal from West Beirut, the administration decided, for only the second time since Reagan took office, to vote against Israel in the United Nations Security Council. Israel kept saying that it would leave West Beirut when it was good and ready—which didn't mean soon—and each blast from Washington seemed to stiffen Begin's resolve to rely on force in Lebanon, rather than negotiation. "By our lights," said a top administration hand, "[the Israelis] have lied to us or misled us too many times. By their lights, they are not sure they trust us."

**'Revoluting':** Throughout the week, the Israelis lurched from one public-relations disaster to another. Jordan's King Hussein showed them up by cautiously applauding the Reagan peace plan, which Begin had rejected out of hand. Then PLO leader Yasser Arafat, freshly routed from Beirut,

turned up in Rome, where Pope John Paul II treated him like a respectable statesman, instead of a fugitive terrorist (page 31). Begin made matters worse when he called the papal audience "revoluting" and implied that John Paul was acquiescing to Arafat's "Nazi" tendencies—ignoring Israel's long support for Bashir Gemayel, whose Phalangist party had been founded, in part, on admiration for Adolf Hitler. And when Begin's troops charged into West Beirut, they seemed bent on giving offense to anyone in their path. One Israeli detachment invaded the Soviet Embassy compound and stayed there for two nights. Another Israeli soldier fired at a Marine guard atop the U.S. Embassy; Israel quickly apologized and called the "warning shot" a mistake.

Gemayel's death was a more severe setback for Begin. The young Maronite Christian leader was killed by a 200-pound bomb that blew out the ground floor of Phalangist headquarters in East Beirut. At first it was thought that Gemayel had survived. Someone who looked like him had emerged from the rubble, and Phalangist radio quoted its

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young leader as saying, "I'm all right." But hours later, an Israeli Army officer found Gemayel's body in the wreckage, identifying it by a sheaf of telegrams in one pocket congratulating the victim on his election as president of Lebanon. Gemayel had plenty of enemies—roughly half the population of Lebanon—but by late last week it still wasn't known who had killed him. Arafat and other Arab leaders blamed the Israelis, who clearly had the most to lose from Gemayel's death. Israeli officials hinted that the PLO and the Syrians were involved, but they offered no proof. U.S. officials said the PLO's second-in-command, Abu Iyad, had vowed that his own followers would kill Gemayel.

In Beirut itself, suspicion focused first on another Christian warlord, former Prime Minister Suleiman Franjeh, whose son, Tony, had been killed by Phalangist gunmen in 1978. The senior Franjeh, who relies on Syrian and PLO support for his stronghold in northern Lebanon, had predicted, the day after Gemayel's election, that his young foe would never live to take office. Planting a bomb in the heavily guarded Phalangist headquarters presumably would have been easier for fellow Christians than for Syrians or Palestinians. But Franjeh told *NEWSWEEK* that he had had nothing to do with Gemayel's death. He said the assassination was "a surprise—an agreeable surprise."

**Sphere of Influence:** It was a blow to Begin. Israel had cultivated the Phalangists for six years, secretly shipping them many of the weapons they used to kill Palestinian troops and leftist Muslim militiamen, along with a lot of innocent civilians, Christians and Muslims alike. Once the PLO was expelled from Beirut and Gemayel was elected president, the Israelis hoped for a peace treaty with Lebanon, to legitimize somehow their sphere of influence in Haddadland. Not long before his death, Gemayel passed word that he could not sign a treaty in the near future. But he was encouraging closer ties with Israel and was attempting to shed his thuggish image and make up with his leftist and Muslim enemies. A few days before the assassination, U.S. envoy Morris Draper, who had helped Habib to negotiate the PLO withdrawal from Beirut, called Gemayel "the only man who can hold Lebanon together."

Now that job will fall, most likely, to Gemayel's older brother, Amin. The Phalangists quickly nominated the 40-year-old Amin to succeed President Elias Sarkis. The election will be held in Parliament this week, and the only other candidates, so far, were former President Camille Chamoun, 82, and Raymond Eddé, 69, a former cabinet minister who now lives as an exile in Paris. In some ways, Amin Gemayel might be a better leader than his brother; a businessman and politician, he is less volatile than Bashir was, and his relatively moder-



ate political stance may be more attractive to Lebanese Muslims. But among Phalangists, Amin has a reputation as a dilettante; he has less charisma than his brother—and less flair for running a private army. “There is a world of difference between Bashir and Amin,” a disconsolate Israeli official admitted last week.

**No Timetable:** No matter who runs the government in Beirut, Israel is firmly stuck in the quagmire of Lebanese politics. Under intense pressure from Washington, the Israelis agreed to look for a way to get out of West Beirut, and transferred control of the refugee camps to the Lebanese Army. But no one, least of all the Americans, wanted Israeli forces to leave until there was some assurance that their departure would not set off another blood bath among the Lebanese and Palestinians. Israel set no timetable for its withdrawal from West Beirut. Some U.S. officials harbored lingering suspicions that the Israelis still intended to impose their own solution by remaining in West Beirut until all of the leftist militiamen and PLO stay-behinds had been rounded up or wiped out. If so, the Israelis may be sorely disappointed; military force is a basic political tool in Lebanon, but it has never yet succeeded in imposing order. In Israel, people complained that Begin was leading them “deeper and deeper into the swamp,” as Sarid put it.

When Israel invaded Lebanon last June, some American officials thought they saw a golden opportunity: once Israel eliminated the PLO military threat to its northern border, the reasoning went, Begin would feel safe enough to be generous in negotiating autonomy for the West Bank and Gaza Strip. When the Israelis lunged all the way to Beirut, the wishful thinking kept pace: once Lebanon was rid of the PLO, Begin would be even more likely to make concessions to the Palestinians. So far, it hasn't



Moshe Milner—Sygma

*Israeli armor edges though West Beirut: Trust between Israel and the U.S. was a casualty*

worked out that way. Beirut may be nearly rid of the PLO, but Begin is far from rid of Lebanon. The Israeli invasion and last week's massacre have badly damaged U.S. credibility with the Arabs. And the Israeli position on the future of the West Bank has softened not a bit.

As the Reagan administration sees it, the United States has only limited means for changing Israel's mind. Heavy pressure—tough economic and military sanctions—seems out of the question. “You don't go for sanctions and tell Begin he'll never get another bullet,” says a presidential adviser. “You do nothing but generate sympathy and support [for Begin] with that.” Besides, neither the Israeli lobby in the United States nor Reagan's own instincts will allow him to take any action that would have the effect

of severely undermining Israeli security.

That leaves Reagan with only two rather flimsy levers, one symbolic and the other practical. Symbolic action was taken in the U.N. Security Council last week when the administration voted for a resolution that condemned Israel's move into West Beirut and demanded an immediate withdrawal. The Security Council, again with U.S. backing, also voted to increase the number of U.N. observers in and around Beirut from 10 to 50. On the practical side, some U.S. arms deliveries to Israel probably will be slowed down, some weapons may be pared from Israel's shopping list and eventually economic aid may be reduced slightly. But the Reagan administration is committed to using the kind of pressure that doesn't hurt very badly.

**Complicity:** The horrifying scenes of slaughter in Beirut may yet constitute another, more effective form of pressure on Israel. Like Americans, Israelis think of themselves as guided by a higher morality. The My Lai massacre jolted many Americans out of that complacent frame of mind and forced them to question what their government was doing in Vietnam. The act of murder committed by Begin's Christian allies may have the same effect on Israelis and on Israel's supporters in the United States. Last week Dror Zeigerman, a dovish member of Begin's right-wing coalition, said Israel should leave West Beirut “because from hour to hour we are becoming more deeply implicated, politically and morally, just as the United States was in Vietnam.” Most Americans eventually managed to put Vietnam behind them. It is just possible that the ghastly massacre in West Beirut will help Israelis get over the idea that military force is the only way to satisfy their hunger for peace and security.

RUSSELL WATSON with RAY WILKINSON and JAMES PRINGLE in Beirut, JOHN WALCOTT in Washington, THEODORE STANGER in Jerusalem and bureau reports

*Haddad (center) and aides: A finger of suspicion and a quick denial from an Israeli client*

Shlomo Arad

