

Nasser, Amjad. *Bayrūt ṣaghīrah bi-ḥajm rāḥat al-yadd : yawmiyāt min ḥiṣār 'ām 1982* [Diaries of the 1982 Siege: Beirut, Small as the Palm of a Hand]. Amman: al-Ahliyah, 2013. Translated by *The Palestinian Revolution*, 2016.¹

This calamity, now forgotten, took place 30 years ago. The second Israeli invasion of Lebanon in summer 1982 was nothing short of a blitzkrieg, forging ahead with unprecedented bombardment. The dance of blood and fire swept across Ras al-Naḡura (Rosh Hanikra) in the South, all the way to Sports City in West Beirut.

Devastating, ceaseless Israeli strikes far beyond an act of vengeance.

A ferocious, relentless storm of fire targeting our lives and wills above all else. Explosion-induced hysteria.

An epic of violence at the heart of a residential area.

You would not know how the earth can shrink, and the sky turn to scorching tin grazing your head. You wouldn't understand how life can be but a lucky coincidence. Unless you were there: in a Beirut small enough to fit in the palm of your hand.

By mid-June 1982, we had already absorbed the initial shock of Ariel Sharon's incursion as he tightened his grip on all corners of Beirut. The barrage of fire led us to believe what was as yet inconceivable: the Israelis had laid siege to an Arab capital. Many could not bring themselves to believe that, at the height of the first wave of invasion, the army of "Yusha' bin Nun" (Joshua) would be able to command a siege on the "New Jericho" and storm it from all directions while the whole world stood by in disbelief and silence. I had forgotten about the "Accordion Plan" which Abu Ammar had spoken of earlier that year. No one would remember it until after Sharon's surreal arrival at the headquarters of then Lebanese President Elias Sarkis! This was the horrific headline that June morning. A headline with an outrageous picture, disgraceful in every sense of the word: Ariel Sharon at Baabda Palace. What follows are excerpts of the diaries I penned whilst living under siege. My diaries have recently been compiled into a book and published by Al-Ahliyya in Amman.

July 5

Heavy mutual bombardment since 3 a.m. yesterday. It intensified around noon today. We received news of a successful ambush on an Israeli infantry

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battalion, and the destruction of a number of military vehicles. An assault on the airport front was thwarted and a reconnaissance aircraft operating above the Sports City was downed. We were in high spirits. Our fighters decided to launch their attacks against Israeli forces, taking advantage of the temporary ceasefire which began at 4 o'clock. All supply routes were closed, and we were suffering from a water and electricity outage. Nothing has changed on the political front, and it seemed like the Palestinian propositions to end the current situation in Beirut received no response from Philip Habib or the Israelis. We learned this from Abu Ammar upon his surprise visit to our headquarters (at the Palestinian Radio). When we asked about the negotiations, he told us that the plan submitted to Philip Habib for a peaceful resolution represented the full extent of our compromises, and that survival was most important. Through survival and resistance, we could turn the tables, he said, without elaborating on the details of the negotiations. He spoke of the radio station's role in the battle and described it as a heavy arm, saying that words were as powerful as bullets. Then Abu Ammar, who seemed somehow uneasy, sent one of his guards to summon Colonel Abu Moussa, a Fatah military leader. When he arrived, it was the first time I lay eyes on this Palestinian military figure, formerly an officer in the Jordanian army. We all knew this man by name, for he and his men had fought the Syrian forces upon their invasion of Sidon in 1976, and as one Fatah's most powerful leaders in Southern Lebanon, he was able to defeat the first wave of Syrian invaders. I had personally seen the damaged Syrian tanks near the Nijmeh Square.

Instead of sitting next to Abu Ammar, Abu Moussa sat on one of the dining table's chairs in the salon. Abu Ammar began by asking him about the situation of the Joint Forces in the areas where Israelis advanced or took over. Abu Moussa told him that they had taken a defensive position to protect these areas, with the Central Command closely monitoring the situation, and that there is no need to be concerned. Abu Moussa, dressed in olive fatigues, was addressing the old man while moving his gaze around from one person to another as if suspecting whether it was the right place to discuss military plans.

Every now and then, rumours about the arrival of Soviet warships to break the siege of Beirut would resurface. These desperate rumours were discredited by the absence of any movement in a sea blocked by Israeli warships. The sea inspired fear, and it was hard to look at. One of those scoffing at such rumours was "Michel" (al-Nimri). For him, the Soviets are driven by interests not principles. His stance toward Moscow was similar to that of the Italian Communist Party who removed the dictatorship of the

proletariat from their agenda. Sometimes I feel as if Michel liked to adopt positions that contradicted the public opinion, only for the sake of argument and dissent. A case in point was his opposition to the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, labelling it an invasion, which was naturally against our views as Palestinian leftists.

A moon the colour of faded silver painting the Beirut sky
But lovers were nowhere to be seen on the Corniche
The city's guards staking out wolves on the front lines
All great ideas now at stake
Heart and will too

July 6

Ghalib (Halsa) decided to honour an invitation to Mulukhiyah in an area neighbouring Burj al-Barajneh. The Democratic Front held a military outpost there, and Amal, the owner of a restaurant we used to frequent in Fakahani and a member of the Democratic Front, was present at the location. Ghassan (Zaqtan), Michel (al-Nimri), Ghalib and I went in Michel's car, stopping by several military bases where fighters were holed up behind sandbags. The ceasefire was followed by a relative calm. The fighters were pointing their rifles from behind the sandbags at the Israeli forces stationed on the opposite side. After spending only half an hour with these brave men, shelling suddenly erupted, breaking the ceasefire. We dispersed. We took cover next to a nearby building, but the shelling, as we have been informed, was intended to hold back Israelis who were about to take over new territory. Continuing non-stop and from every direction, the shelling forced us to take cover in the nearby building. Michel said we should leave if the situation was to persist longer, and to hell with the Mulukhiyah. While Ghassan and I were in favour, Ghalib insisted on staying. After almost an hour, the shelling receded, so we went our way and left Ghalib with the fighters. Once we arrived to Hay Abu Sahla (Abu Sahla neighbourhood) we burst out in hysterical laughter. Ghalib's promised Mulukhiyah almost got us killed. When I saw Ghalib at the radio station that evening, he told me that we left hastily since the shelling stopped right after, and that the Mulukhiyah was indeed served and was delicious.

There were reports about the arrival of an American fleet charged with evacuating the fighters. But just like any hearsay during a ceasefire and amid the following political confusion, we could not trust in it. It's only part of the psychological warfare, which is no less damaging to our morale than the direct confrontation with the invading army. That night, I left the radio station with Ghalib and Salwa and we headed to Ghalib's house nearby.

Ghalib made tea and said he had some cheese and bread, and asked me if I wanted to eat, to which I responded by saying I was not hungry. Indeed I wasn't. Ghalib did not lose hope in an Arab popular mobilization. He argued that what was happening in Beirut could expand to other Arab capitals, adding that the battle, away from the tactics of the right-wing leadership, was an example of mass insurgency to defend the people's interests against the alliance between Arab reactionaries and imperial Zionism. However, Salwa and I did not witness any significant reaction from Arab countries to what was happening in Beirut. Thus, there were no signs of an upcoming mass revolution. Arab regimes suppress their peoples under the pretext of security considerations, then have them gasp after minimum living conditions. I wish we could share Ghalib's optimism about revolution.

I returned before midnight to Ghassan's apartment at Hamra Centre. I told him that Ghalib did not leave the frontlines empty handed, as he actually got to eat his Mulukhiyeh, which, in his words, was not to be missed. We laughed. Ghassan said Ghalib was a strange man. He then asked me about the truth behind the alleged American fleet and its purported mission, to which I replied by reporting what Nabil (Amro) had said about it being a mere rumour and part of an unfounded psychological warfare.

July 7

Calm reigned in West Beirut after the mutual shelling and bombing which lasted, intermittently, until 9:30 that night. Today, thanks to interventions from Mr. Reagan, King Fahd, Philip Habib and the rest of the Lebanese national and Islamic parties, power and water, both controlled by Israel, were restored to us earlier this afternoon. The people rejoiced. We were happy too. We spent days without electricity and water. We couldn't take a shower, do the laundry, water plants, and those who pray were unable to perform the Wudu'. However, food supplies remained blocked, for Israelis did not allow their entry. Their strategy was clear: starve and deprive the city of drinking water until it raises the white flag. However, no one caved in. Very few people left their homes for Ashrafieh, and they would return every once in a while. When I woke up in the morning, I was desperate for a drop of water to wash my face and brush my teeth. Even the Sohat water bottles, which were hard to come by at stores, were empty. I found water residues in some plastic cans, I poured them together and drank them. I regretted not taking a shower when water was still available. I don't know when we would have access to it again. Many stories were told about getting water. Some were able to get hold of a pack of Sohat bottled water, some borrowed a water container from a

² Famous brand of bottled water in Lebanon

friend or a neighbour, while others went to a hotel in Hamra to shower... Some even entertained the idea of washing in the sea blockaded by warships. How we longed and valued this liquid, which availability, under normal circumstances, is taken for granted. In this regard, the luckiest people were the foreign journalists who had taken residence at the Commodore Hotel. There, one could still take a shower, wash and shave using tap water instead of Sohat bottles. The food also came in abundance. This hotel seemed to have been spared. A deal must have been made between European countries and the United States to prevent Israel from targeting it. This is why Palestinian officials stayed there too, especially those who were only good at making statements. For instance, I glanced Bassam Abu Sharif at the hotel while he was speaking to foreign press about recent developments, which he only knew about from hearsay or reading newspapers.

I have been away from home for the past 10 days. The radio station's newsroom was located in Saqiat al-Janzeer. Sometimes I would stay over at Taher's (al-Udwan), then at Ghassan's or Michel's houses... In short, I have been on the move. No place to stay at for long.

Today, I stayed up with Michel and Taher at the former's house. Michel went on about the developments in the past couple of days and the possible outcome for the Resistance. Taher was a man of few words. He embodied the saying "brevity is the soul of wit." He managed work at the radio station with calm and perseverance. I did not know him well before, but working at the station, together with the siege, really brought us closer. Taher said the political situation was getting more complicated, with the United States declaring its readiness to intervene, through Marines, to end the battle between the Resistance and the Israeli army and to protect and evacuate the fighters... However, the Palestinian leadership declined this proposal. For Michel, the negotiations served two goals at the same time. They could be used as leverage against Israel and as way to stall for time before any new changes. But, he added, only survival would give us the upper hand, and not the negotiations. I told him that these were Abu Ammar's words to us two days ago. The strategy seemed to rely on a staunch position and flexible tactics.

July 8

Today is my fourth year marriage anniversary. It is also the day Ghassan Kanafani died. Even if I forgot, the fact that my marriage anniversary coincided with Ghassan's assassination was enough to remind me. To commemorate the occasion, members of the PFLP political bureau would visit his grave at the Martyrs Cemetery. I don't know if the tradition was honoured

under the current circumstances. The cemetery was located near the frontlines. The day Hind and I got married in Baalbek, we were unaware it was the same day Ghassan passed away. The timing was somehow ironic, especially since I used to work at Al-Hadaf magazine, founded by Ghassani Kanafani, whom I had only seen in pictures hung on the magazine office walls. However, I could always feel his presence. I would feel him standing right behind me, his ghost that of a skinny man forever smoking a cigarette. Although a diabetic, he was a man of abundant creativity and liveliness. He was twelve years my senior now when he passed away. How could he write all these stories, novels and studies, design and publish newspapers and magazines, and at the same time fight for the cause and love, in only 38 years? As a product of mere coincidence, my marriage and his death fell on the same day.

Four years have passed since my wedding day. Time flew so fast. It seems like it was only yesterday that I got married, published my first poetry collection, our daughter Yara was born and again my second poetry collection. Even the siege arrived so fast, but a siege always seemed to last forever, just like pain seems to take forever to heal. Joy, however, is evanescent, vanishing too soon without a trace. When I was in Amman, I couldn't for the life of me imagine any of what is happening now. Surely, I knew Beirut was a dangerous place. I was aware of the war going on there. But a war of this kind was unbeknownst to me. Who could ever conceive of an Arab capital under Israeli siege for a whole month, showered with tons of bombs and shells? Four years ago today, my marriage was officiated by judge Rifai in Baalbek. A Sunni judge! Only when I lived in Lebanon that I grew accustomed to such things... God, that day seems like a distant memory now.

July 9

Ten hours of non-stop hysterical bombing have passed. Whoever is doing it must be holding a personal grudge against each and every one of us, a bully swollen with pride about his thuggery and large muscles, telling his victims: I own you! I will wipe you off the face of the earth! For how is one to justify this no-holds-barred brutality, with no intention to spare anything that breathes? With Israel, there were no rules. No red lines. Nabil told us that Sharon was pursuing a personal vendetta against Arabs, especially Palestinians. Some claimed that, in his adolescent years, Sharon was raped by a Palestinian shepherd. In Nabil's sarcastic words, Sharon was a white chubby boy, and when a Palestinian shepherd saw him leaving the settlement, he lured the boy and raped him! We asked Nabil whether it was a true story or an invention of his. He laughed and said that he had indeed

heard this story, and it is likely that Sharon could not get over it and is now punishing us.

After the bombing had intensified, I rushed to the lobby where I saw families gathered in a very tight space. Men, women and children in an atmosphere of fear. I couldn't stay there. I went back up to the 14th floor. From that height, I saw the sky raining phosphorous bombs. A full-on destruction frenzy. Beirut engulfed in flames and flashing lights stretching in every direction. Rescue missions were impossible while the flames of the dragon were still raging on. We had no idea about the casualty toll, but it was most probably large. As if this was not enough, contradictory rumours spread about a possible truce. Foreign media spoke lengthily about the Resistance leadership's lenient position with regard to evacuation. Nabil argued that the Resistance leadership was stalling for time in order to contain the Israeli offensive and limit its outcome on the ground. Today, Syria announced that it won't be able to shelter the leaders of the Resistance. Some considered the Syrian position to be an attempt to persuade the Americans to embark on negotiations with Damascus. We hold a bitter grudge against the Syrian regime, and in the event of evacuation, some would actually prefer post Camp David Egypt to Syria! We did not know what to write about this. Through the radio station, we would tell stories of survival, courage, ousting the forces of occupation and breaking the siege. We would describe how we had turned the earth into a living hell for invaders, recounting historical and modern-day examples such as Abu Dhar al-Ghifari, Ali Bin Abi Talib, the Trojan War, and the Battle of Leningrad. Some even went further, writing about "Beirutgrad." But in truth, we have grown frustrated with the sentimentalities of survival and heroism. Nothing inspired tedium more than repeating the same words and expressions over and over again. But there was consolation in the news about Israeli military losses. We also learned of a wide protest movement in Israel against this war.

July 11

Today, all hell broke loose. Heavy carpet bombing targeted the whole city, leaving a trail of destruction everywhere. The streets were empty except for some fighters. Non-stop thundering sounds. At night, people came out to the streets from under the rubbles. Beirut was determined to continue the fight against all odds. This city will not raise the white flag as arranged. How fascinating are those people who can tell jokes shortly after the cessation of bombing! That night, Taher and I went to his apartment in Hamra Centre. Now that water had been restored, I jumped at the opportunity of washing my dirty clothes which piled up over the past weeks. I also took a shower, cherishing every moment of it. The last time I visited our house was 10 days

ago. Tariq el Jdidah now became a frontline, forcing the residents to flee. The house, directly facing the Eastern sector, was a mess. Shattered glass and dust filled every corner. I checked on the plants and flowers, green and blooming before the siege, now utterly withered. Anyone who saw the house would think it was hit by a hurricane, turning it upside down.

Today, *Al-Ma'araka* newspaper published my poem "An Algerian from the Citadel." It's about an Algerian fighter who was among the last militants to withdraw from the fierce battle between the Resistance forces and the Israeli army at the Beaufort Castle (Arnoun) in southern Lebanon. His name is Abdul-Qader, and I happened to attend a mini-press conference he held at the headquarters of *Al-Awda*, a newspaper affiliated to the DFLP.

I had been on a visit to Ghassan when the press conference was held. According to the man, he was among the very few fighters who had been able to escape, but the Israelis also suffered heavy casualties among their elite units. I was captivated by his hand gestures while explaining.

It is now almost half past eleven at night. Taher was sound asleep. I envy him as I write these lines. I shall go to sleep shortly. Who knows what's going to happen?

July 12

Luckily I don't sweat much. Actually, I almost never do. I wonder if my svelte figure and dry Bedouin skin have something to do with it. Power and water were part of a wicked game Israel has been controlling from the Eastern sector. A punishment inflicted on the most basic human needs. West Beirut is not merely a shelter for militants to justify this punishment. It was home to a civilian majority. Water was restored again, so I took a quick shower. I made tea for Taher and me. He was listening to the station's broadcast even at home. I left him be and went to the room I was staying in at his place. I grabbed the photo album and started leafing through my past life. The still photos started rolling like a film. I was overwhelmed with emotions upon seeing Yara's pictures, some taken by Paula and others by my brother-in-law Ahmad. I remembered Yara's cry at Al-Turk hospital where she was born. Imad (al-Rahayma) and Mariam were there with me, waiting impatiently outside the birth room. At that moment, I heard the sound of life pass through the locked door I was nervously waiting behind. Then the nurse came out without telling me if it was boy or a girl, thinking I be upset if I knew Hind gave birth to a baby girl. Absolutely not! The bearer of such happy news deserved every token of celebration.

On the afternoon of that day, Hind had made us Tabbouleh while I was barbecuing meat for my guests Haidar (Haidar) and Saadi (Yousef). Suddenly, she started feeling that she was due any moment at that point. She said she was going to the grocery store. The building's lift was out of order so she took the stairs. After a while, she came back with baby necessities. Then she told me that the baby was about to come out. I left Haidar and Saadi at the house. Hind and I took a taxi to Al-Turk hospital, the one she had been visiting throughout her pregnancy. Yara was born at the night of April 20. On that clear spring night, a tiny and beautiful creature was born into this world. We had already agreed on the baby's name. It was selected from a list of boys and girls names we had prepared. "Yara" was on top of the list. The name figured in one of Said Akl's poems sung by Fairouz. But our Yara didn't have a blonde hair like the song says. Hers was dark and thick. I didn't keep photos from the Jordan days. They were all taken in Beirut after my marriage. None was even taken before the wedding. How weird. Photos are for families. Who would take a personal picture? I also didn't care about that. After Yara came, photos multiplied and filled a number of Chinese-made albums I had brought from Aden back when I was a student at the Scientific Socialism Institute.

I look at pictures from the past unaware of what is going to happen today or tomorrow, let alone the future. This is first I find myself face-to-face with fate. It's a matter of life and death.

I've always been a slim built man. But now, I'm skinnier than I looked in the pictures taken in the past few months, even last year. I now weigh less than 55kg. I noticed that I have been punching more holes in my belt to prevent it from slipping. The bombing, the siege, the heat, my lack of appetite and heavy smoking all contributed to my weight loss.

July 20

The ceasefire does not mean calm, nor should it be taken as an intermission before the battle rages on again. Instead of airstrikes, Israel carries out mock air attacks. Sometimes, these mock attacks proved scarier than actual strikes. First, because there was no way of telling whether the aircrafts were about to drop their payloads or not. Secondly, it was a scare tactic aimed at reminding us that the sky could start raining hellfire at any second. I hate planes. There's nothing I hate now more than the roaring sound that crawls inside. Nothing short of sheer hubris, `boasting undeterred power. Ground anti-aircraft batteries discharged a flaming volley directed at the flying fortresses. Man-portable SAMs were launched. But Sharon's aircrafts diverted them with heat balloons released from their backs. Although not one of the Israeli fighter jets

overflying Beirut was downed so far, ground defences remained steady in the hope of a miracle. Such was heroism. Heroism embodied in the weak against the powerful, unequivocally convinced with own strength and sky dominance, but only through armoured steel and fire.

Israeli jets carried out dozens of mock attacks today. Probably hundreds. The Beirut sky was occupied by roaming aircrafts simulating attacks before picking up altitude again. It has been reported that Israel might attempt qualitative operations, such as dispatching commando forces to specific locations in our areas of control or leaders' assassinations. I learned about this after Ghassan had asked me to accompany him to an evening meeting for *Al-Awda* newspaper in Barbir. However, the meeting could not be held due to the absence of the PLO Executive Committee. Instead, Jamal Hilal (DFLP information officer) said they had received information about Israeli attempts to infiltrate into central Beirut. Ali Khalaf was in charge of organizing sentry duty shifts around Al-Awda's headquarters. I wasn't carrying my rifle, so my DFLP comrades gave me one. Ghassan and I guarded the building for two hours. After distributing the guard duty schedule, Ali Khalaf went to sleep. Ghassan and I laughed at Ali's silly ruse and his eagerness to take charge while all he cared about was his own comfort.

While preparing to begin our shift, Ghassan told me a funny story about how our fellow Ali was secretly pissed off at him and Ghalib. Ghalib had taken them both on a visit to Maher Hamdi in Ouzai. Maher was the leader of one of the DFLP brigades there He was stationed at a house with a garden. There were mint pots in that garden, and Ghalib insisted on the visit so he can have genuine minted tea. Ali insisted on accompanying Ghalib and Ghassan. As a matter of fact, Ali wasn't that interested in going, but, in Ghassan's estimation, he went anyway because he didn't want them to think he was afraid. They drove to the outpost in one of the DFLP's military vehicles. But the driver, not knowing the exact location, skipped the outpost. After a while, they saw a fighter running on the sand and trying to catch up. The fighter was waving his hands, so they thought he was saluting them. But the man kept running and screaming, and when the driver pulled over near him, they found out that they had entered a minefield set up by the Resistance to prevent Israeli advances. They came down from the car and were luckily able to go back on foot, leaving the vehicle in the minefield. Ghalib seemed unconcerned. For a second there, he was even happy with what had just happened, which infuriated Ghassan and drove Ali mad to the point of humming. When they were back in safety, Ghalib was like: "So where's the tea?"

July 27

The Israelis, left with an open airspace, seemed to be putting on a show in the Beirut sky. But it wasn't a mere display of aircrafts of different types, as those intimidating jets were releasing their full payloads over West Beirut. Back and forth, relentless bombing. Since last night, aircrafts never left the sky and their roaring engines were constantly heard. They would disappear shortly, only to be able to fly again. Planes stirred madness. Non-stop airstrikes. Unabated warship salvos. Heavy artillery barrages. What words could describe what's happening? Are roaring and bombardment enough to paint this inferno of an earth trembling, building debris flying in the air, shattered glass, heart and viscera wrenched out, veins blown to smithereens, and souls leaving their bodies? Are words powerful enough to paint an image of actual death, or the terror preceding it? I stand modestly, for words are all I have, and words are but an illusion, a product of imagination.

Around one o'clock in the afternoon, Israeli aircrafts bombed a building in Rawsheh. The missiles passed above the building in which the radio station's headquarters were located. Walls and windows shook. We couldn't tell which building was targeted. After the airplanes went their way, I left with Salwa and Sakhr's (Abu Nizar) chauffeur – Sakhr was visiting the station – to go check the location of the airstrike. It wasn't far. The scene was indescribable. The building, which number of floors I didn't know, was flattened to the ground. Completely destroyed. A nearby building was ablaze. Dust and smoke filled the air. Ambulances had arrived before us. Reporters and photographers had gathered around the razed building. There were bodies buried beneath the rubble which was difficult to remove. There were body remains. Steel, cement, family belongings, and human flesh. The ambulances carried their capacity of injured victims while others picked up body pieces. The building was huge. We asked about the casualty toll, but we couldn't get a precise number. Later, we learned that 84 had been killed and 150 wounded. Why this building in particular? It was said that PLO Deputy Secretary General Abu al-Abbas had been residing there. But the man wasn't present in the building at the time of the airstrike. I didn't buy it. I think Israelis had chosen this building because it was scheduled to host a meeting for Palestinian senior leaders, and not because it had been home to Abu al-Abbas. After that, I went to see Zakaria (Mohammad) at Faisal's place where he has been staying temporarily. The bombing did not stop, intensifying after four in the afternoon. The Israelis have gone berserk at five. We didn't know what had happened. I believe they suffered casualties among their ranks, and they have now launched a large-scale operation in retaliation. After some time, it was reported that the Israelis had lost two majors and a number of soldiers. This must have been the reason.

Ali Khalaf then joined us at Zakaria's. We discussed the large picture and the Israeli deadly mania today. Ali spoke from his capacity as one of the intellectuals who had fled Beirut, which didn't appeal to Zakaria who reminded us that people can only endure so much. I agreed with Zakaria, secretly smiling upon remembering Ghassan's story about the minted tea. At night, I left for the station notwithstanding the ongoing bombing. All my colleagues were there. Rashad (Aby Shawar), in his engrossing manner of speaking, was telling a story. I had no idea what it was about, but I heard their loud laughter, as if nothing was happening out there. That was the beautiful atmosphere at the station, and Rashad was undoubtedly the star back then.

July 30

The Lebanese-Palestinian agreement in Saudi Arabia was thwarted by the Israeli incessant airstrikes which spared no living soul. This was obviously Israel's practical response to the agreement organizing Palestinian presence on the Lebanese territory. Israel opposes any active Palestinian presence in Lebanon. When the Israeli army invaded Lebanon, the goal was not to force an amendment of the Cairo Agreement. They wish to wipe out the Palestinians, and strip them of all hope, power and a wise leadership capable of advancing the national agenda. In other words, Israel is bent on triggering a second exodus, making the diaspora the sole refuge for the Palestinian people. Was this the essence of the Israeli ideology, itself founded upon the legendary diaspora? The diaspora, a term which had hitherto been associated with Israelis only, was the main element in the legend they weaved around themselves. A legend that served as the backbone of their usurper entity established at the expense of another people. What the Israelis put in motion this afternoon can only be described as utter crime and a show of force using iron and fire, two things they possess in abundance. Such was the subject of the article I wrote today to the station, namely the diaspora, upon which the legend of a people, unified only by religion, had been founded. What did religion have to do with Nationalism and race?

I was also surprised today by an article written by Mahmoud Darwish on poetry. What really caught my attention was Darwish's ability to capture my understanding of poetry. As a matter of fact, it reflected my personal experience, as I found it impossible to write under pressure and at the height of the event. I need space to be able to write. A barrier. Darwish was the renowned poet of the resistance and the Palestinian Revolution, recording through his poems the milestones of the Palestinian struggle, never wasting time to react to major events. Despite that, he was unable to write under siege. Such was the article's indirect message in response to those who had

criticized his current hiatus. Darwish called them “snipers”, for like snipers, they had taken aim at the poet’s lack of involvement, smearing him on every occasion. This was partially true. Ghassan also shared this view, finding that Darwish adopted an angry tone that reflected his embittered attitude toward those demanding a larger media and poetic presence.

Wars are about unsung heroes, and this one was no exception. Everyone had a role: fighters, writers, bakers, paperboys, grocers, and even those who refused to leave their homes. It’s an unbalanced war inflicted upon each and every one of us. We shall not back down. It’s a matter of dignity, patriotism and attitude. Antoun Saadeh once said: “Life is but a proud stance. My life is worth only that to me”.

If death is permanent
Then death comes second
Eternal, freedom comes first