

Gemayel administration has extended even less effort in accounting for the slaughter and disappearance of thousands of West Beirutis.

On July 7, middle-aged and elderly women, women carrying small children, began blocking all the crossing points to East Beirut with barricades of burning tires, barbed wire and stones. The women armed themselves with sticks to prevent all vehicles and pedestrians from passing. The women expressed the general outrage felt on the mass level in all of West Beirut, and when the official date for opening all the crossing points and the airport came on July 9, the whole western sector of the city joined in solidarity with the Families of the Disappeared in a general strike. Besides blocking all the crossing points for the third straight day with greater numbers than ever, the women blocked the main road to the airport as well as all side roads leading to it. No flights were able to leave. The Lebanese cabinet was forced to place the issue of the disappeared on the top of the agenda if the new security plan was going to be implemented.

The Committee of the Families of the Disappeared issued several communiques during the three days of protests which were published in the progressive Arabic daily *Al Safir* on July 8.\* The Committee stated in part:

*Our motto is the return of all disappeared and detained immediately and unconditionally wherever they are. Because our suffering is continuous, we welcome the liberation of any of the disappeared. Because of our wounds of grief and long waiting, we are not going to stand as an obstacle to liberating the disappeared...However, we are not willing to accept even in the last moment in our lives, that hundreds of our relatives be detained in a country whose civilization and tradition is known for its freedom and democracy. Therefore, we cannot accept a piece of theater entitled «Let's End the Question of the Missing» in which the players and heroes of this play turn out to be the executioners of the largest massacre in Lebanese history. We will not let the curtain go down on the hundreds and hundreds of our relatives who are missing and detained. We will not accept...a political cover-up. We will only accept a clear answer for every single one of the disappeared...*

*Those who are able to open the airport, the port and all the crossing points should be able to liberate all those who*

*have been abducted...There will be no implementation of any security plan as long as the question of the abducted remains and as long as there is any compromise with the kidnappers...The families of those abducted declare that the Phalangist Party and the Lebanese Forces kidnapped thousands and demand that the Lebanese authorities follow up this question with those who are responsible for the abductions and in particular Elias Hobeika and Adib Anastas.*

Elias Hobeika is the chief of the Phalangist military intelligence. He is one of those who met with Ariel Sharon in the night before Phalangist militiamen entered Sabra-Shatila in cooperation with the Israeli army. In the wake of the massacre, the Phalangist Party appointed Hobeika responsible for investigating the party's role in the massacre. David Ottaway wrote in the *Washington Post* on September 30, 1982, that the «most important figures in the Lebanese Forces command are the heads of units that witnesses say were identified as being in or around Shatila and Sabra at the time of the massacres. They include Adib Anastas, the head of the military police, and Joseph Edde, the commander of the militia's special black bereted commandos of all Lebanese Forces' units south of Beirut. Anastas played a prominent role during the civil war siege by the Lebanese Forces of the Palestinian refugee camp of Tal Zaatar where several thousand civilians died in 1976.»

After the general strike in West Beirut, the Lebanese cabinet was forced to create a special commission to investigate the cases of the disappeared. But the commission was not likely to come up with any satisfactory results. It is composed of Lebanese Army officers and members of the Beirut police - two groups which participated in the abductions to begin with. The commission was given a mandate to report its findings on July 27 and to coordinate the release of those still detained. To further sabotage the work of the commission, the Phalange has hastily set up its own committee for the disappeared, demanding the return of an alleged 1,400 party members who have vanished since 1975. Anyone missing since 1975 is presumably now dead. At issue for the Families of the Disappeared in West Beirut is the fate of thousands of Lebanese and Palestinians abducted in the recent period who may still be alive. Eyewitness accounts by persons



*Demonstration for the return of the disappeared*

released within the past six months testify to the fact that large numbers of the disappeared from West Beirut are still being held at the Phalangist headquarters in the Karantina district of East Beirut and in a basement near a convent in Adonis, among other Phalangist detention centers.

Finally on August 11, the Lebanese government commission charged with investigating the disappeared released its results. The official report was a whitewash designed to cleanse the Lebanese government and its security apparatus of any responsibility for the disappeared. 761 names were released

*Families of the disappeared block the east-west crossing in Beirut.*

