

Justice for Lebanon Concert I
A Benefit Concert for the Lebanese Red Cross
Kresge Auditorium, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA
Sunday, August 6, 2006 at 8:00pm

Aid is Not Enough

donation pitch by Loai Naamani
President, Lebanese Club at MIT

\$34,417 dollars so far... and \$34,417 thank you's from the people of Lebanon.
[reference to audience update on live count of \$ amount collected at benefit concert]

As our program nears its end, we're happy to know that your coffers are still full and that you've been saving your most significant financial contributions till the end. The good news is that we still have a lot of space in our donation boxes too.

And, on a more unfortunate note, the people of Lebanon still have an immense, immense need for any and every contribution we can make. This is why it is extremely important that we each not only throw in another \$100 check as we leave the auditorium, but to also start thinking of and acting in ways to sustain this contribution, which I assure you will be gravely needed in Lebanon for a long, long time to come.

Our individual contribution would be exponentially multiplied if instead of just making financial donations ourselves, we also intelligently maximize the leverage of our networks and reach out to friends, friends of friends, educate them about what's happening and ask for direct contributions or that they attend many of the functions being planned on an almost weekly basis. To help achieve this and streamline your efforts, we have provided you with donation slips to take with you, with emailing lists to follow-up on future events and invite your friends to, and donation accounts and links online through which you can make your mega wire transfers. All this information can be accessed from www.justiceforlebanon.org

On a more serious note, I am certain that by now, and from the previous accounts of my colleagues, from the slides that have been flashing in front of you, and from what you've been witnessing all over the news throughout the past few weeks, you have a crisp picture of the humanitarian and economic catastrophe that has befallen Lebanon.

With a million people or one fourth of the population displaced and sent to the streets of other cities, one can only imagine what crisis awaits them when and if this is all over. If some are in schools now, where will they go when schools start? Or perhaps schools shouldn't start? How will they endure Lebanon's cold winter? Removing the rubble alone will take many, many months. With almost all bridges and highways demolished, transportation in all forms has been crippled. I mean, no words can capture the depth and darkness of the abyss that Lebanon has been thrown into.

And even if they try to turn to the sea for some hope, they will find an even darker, graver reflection of the mad savagery that has been brought upon Lebanon: A 35,000 ton crude oil spill, making it one of the worst pollution incidents ever recorded in the eastern Mediterranean, which has now reached the coastlines of Syria, Turkey, and Cyprus.

But, you know what?

The sea can and will be cleaned.

The displaced can and will return home.

The bridges can and will be rebuilt.

The Israelis can and will be kicked out of Lebanon.

And Lebanon can and will get off its knees.

But... what we cannot replace, what we will only be able to choke as we remember, and what we value infinitely much more than all the bridges and seas in the world is... the lost life of a single innocent Lebanese. All the dollars we send and all the money in the world will not dry the tears trickling down the wrinkles of our elderly nor will it remove the rubble from the tiny little eyes of our children.

This is why our humanitarian aid is at best meaningfully meaningless if it's not tightly coupled with a loud call for and firm action towards an immediate ceasefire and end to the bloodshed. We have been trying to inch towards this through our many peaceful rallies, vigils, petitions, lobbying government representatives, and ads in local newspapers.

We ask you to join us in all of those efforts and not to limit your contribution to humanitarian aid. Humanitarian aid alone without ceasefire is like replenishing the drip feed supplies of an injured without stopping the gushing of blood from his or her wound.

- The people of Lebanon sent 3 Jordanian airplanes back empty because they did not want to leave and they did not want the humanitarian aid alone.
- The people of Lebanon want your voices and not just your aid; they see only your *pity* in the money you send, but see your *love* in your comprehensive support.
- The people of Lebanon tell you it is not “politics and political analysis” to demand an immediate ceasefire; it's only human and wanting to stay human. And that no political gain whatsoever justifies a delayed ceasefire and countless more deaths.
- The people of Lebanon tell you they don't want a peace that is raped from them nor one that is imported to them. And that their road to peace begins with justice and not with death.
- The people of Lebanon tell you that for there to be a “sustainable”, “enduring peace”, it needs to begin from the sustenance and endurance of life. And that they'd love to live to see it happen, should it happen.
- And finally, the people of Lebanon now thank you and tell you that they have survived this before and will survive it again, and that they were and will always remain... "لبنان الكرامة و الشعب العنيد"

[reference to last Fairouz song performed by Al-Sharq Ensemble]

- Loai Naamani

And now, to best embody what I meant to tell you and as a segway into the Dabke act which best embodies the resilience of the people of Lebanon, I'll leave you with a very dear, few-second extract from one of Fairouz's plays (Jibal al Sawwan). Enjoy...

[played to audience from recording; transcript below for convenience]

When you bid despair farewell,
The sun's wind blew again amongst you,
And your arms resumed building the nation.
Chants from your celebrations shredded their skies,
And the happiness with which your ploughs embraced the Earth,
Prophesized to them the shattering of their towers.

But now they're back to bring you back to despair.

You hear they want to kill many of you.

Fear not. There aren't enough coffins for everyone.
They will kill many, but many will remain,
And with those who are left, we shall continue.

Floods have swept the planet,
And it was saved by those who were left.
Wars have destroyed the cities,
And they were rebuilt by those who were left.
Tyrants have enslaved the people,
And they were freed by those who were left.

We want to continue this journey with those who are left.
Few? Many? So be it. Who cares?
We shall continue with those who are left.

لَمَّا وَدَّعْتُوا الْيَأْسَ
لَفَحْتَكُن رِيحَ الشَّمْسِ
و رَجَعْتَ إِدِيكُن تَيْبِي وَ تَعَمَّرَ
صَوْت عِيَادِكُن خَزْأَ سَمَاهِن
فَرِح مَعَاوَلِكُن بِالْأَرْضِ
بَشْرَهِن بَهْدَم بَرَاكِن
حَبَّو يَرْتَوِكُن ع الْيَأْسِ

عم بولوا بدن يعتنلوا ناس كتير؟

لا تخافوا، ما في حبوس تساع كلّ الناس
يعتنلوا كتير، بيأى كتير،
و بلي بيؤوا راح منكم

غمر الطوفان الأرض،
و رجّعوها يلى بنىوا
هدمت الحروب المدن،
و عمّروها يلى بنىوا
استعبدوا الظلام الناس،
و حرّروهن يلى بنىوا

بدنا نكمّل المشوار بلى بنىوا
كتار؟ ألال؟ يكون. شو هم؟
رح من كمل بلى بنىوا