Civil wars have left many countries devastated and scarred. Unsolved atrocities and the lack of reconciliation all add fuel to a latent fire that can easily reignite a new round of violence. In addition, hasty amnesty laws, which may be necessary to end the bloodshed, may create an environment of mistrust and hatred as past injustices are swept under the rug. Yet, “often victims can only make peace with their perpetrators if they know their own suffering and that of their loved ones is officially acknowledged” (Thiessen 2004: 2).

The Lebanese civil war is a great example of such a war-torn society. In 1991, after more than 15 years of fighting and over 144,000 casualties and 184,000 injured, an amnesty law was passed to put an end to the hostilities and achieve some type of stability.
Since then\(^1\), Lebanon has been living in a state of “negative peace”; where peace was nothing more than an *illusion*. That is, while there has been an absence of direct violence between individuals, groups, and the government, there has not been a successful national reconciliation as the root causes of the war have not been dealt with.

Drawing from existing literatures on civil war and conflict management this paper seeks to shed light on the on the situation in Lebanon since the end of the civil war. The paper is organized as following: first, I start off by summarizing some lessons from the civil war literature on settlements, with a specific focus on the consolidation of peace in the aftermath of the violence, particularly through reconciliation. I then trace the Lebanese conflict by focusing on the civil war and the post war settlement, and explore the reconciliation efforts that were taken after the civil war in an attempt to explain why 17 years after the civil war ended reconciliation has yet to occur. Finally, I identify three main issues that need to be addressed for reconciliation to occur and outline some strategies for dealing with the legacies of past abuses by focusing on the different approaches of transitional justice necessary for moving Lebanon a step closer to reconciling and putting the past behind.

**What Do We Know About Civil War Settlements?**

The report by the *APSA Task Force on Political Violence and Terrorism, Group 3* (Mason et al, 2007) finds that the majority of the civil-war nations, no matter which data set and what definition one uses, actually experience more than one strife. Thus, leading them to conclude that “for a certain subset of nations, civil war has become a chronic

\(^{1}\) Since 2005 there has been a series of assassinations which have claimed the lives of several people including the ex-Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri; Members of Parliament Bassel Fleyhan, Jubran Tueiny, Pierre Gemayel, Waleed Eido, and Antoine Ghane; journalist and activist Samir Kassir, and former Secretary General of the Lebanese Communist Party George Hawi.
condition” (Mason et al, 2007: 2). They also maintain that the way the civil war ends (i.e. whether we have a military victory by one side or a negotiated settlement) affects whether or not a state experiences another civil war. Several factors affect the way civil-war ends such as the duration of the conflict (Collier, Paul, Anke Hoeffler, and Måns Söderbom 2004), intervention by third parties (Regan 2002), and the type of conflict (Sambanis 2000), just to name a few.

An important factor that can affect the prospects for ending the war and achieving a settlement as well as preventing another civil strife from occurring is the type of power-sharing agreement that is reached. In fact, it has been found that the more extensive the forms of power-sharing incorporated into a settlement agreement, – i.e., military, political, territorial, and economic power-sharing arrangements – the more likely that settlement agreement was to last (Hartzell and Hoddie 2003; Hartzell 2006). The main aim behind such inclusive agreements is that they allow all parties to be represented in key policy-making institutions in such a way that no side would be able to monopolize control over institutions and therefore, would not be able to subordinate or annihilate the other groups. Another important factor in sustaining peace is whether third parties provide security guarantees which would protect the different groups and make sure that each side fulfills its promise (Walter 2002).

Therefore, how a civil war ends not only helps us understand why the violence stops but in many cases it also allows us to see what kind of post-civil war environment the nations are going to be left in. This in turn, can effect whether civil wars recur. Hence, it is not only important that we achieve “peace” but that we make sure it is a durable one.
In many cases war-torn nations are left devastated with high levels of poverty. Therefore, for any new regime to survive, especially a democracy, issues of poverty, the level of economic development and inflation, need to be addressed or the likelihood that the post-civil war democracies to survive will be low (Przeworski et al. 1997). So, one important duty for the new government is to provide public goods to its citizens (Levi 2006).

Mason et al (2007: 15) argue that since new democracies are generally fragile and prone to failure, “bringing civil wars to a conclusion and sustaining the peace thereafter requires a commitment of material resources and the willingness to sustain the peace-building mission until the new institutions have time to establish their effectiveness and legitimacy in the eyes of the population.”

Even if parties sign a peace agreement with extensive power-sharing elements and a guarantor is assigned to maintain the “peace,” this by no means indicates that the parties have moved towards a “positive/stable peace.” That is, if parties expect violence, even though it may be absent, or if violence is suppressed through threats or intimidation, then what we truly have is a “negative/unstable peace.” Boulding (1979: 13) argues that most stable peace is when “the probability of war is so small it does not really enter into the calculations of any of the people involved.” So the main distinction is that “stable peace” occurs when the underlying issues have been resolved and dealt with and is generally acceptable to both. Where as, “unstable peace” is when violence/war is absent mainly through suppression and threats either by one party, both parties, or even a third party.

Therefore, in order to move beyond “negative peace” states need to reconcile for otherwise the consequences can be enormous. In fact, Hauss (2003) argues that without
reconciliation the best states can hope for is the kind of armed stand off that exists in
Cyprus today. At worst, the fighting keeps breaking out again and again, as we have seen
in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Hence, until a nation resolves the underlying issues and
reconciles as a whole, then the probability of violence will always be greater than zero.
That is, it would only be a matter of time before the dissatisfied party (or parties) will
resort to using force.

In fact, the report by the APSA Task Force on Political Violence and Terrorism,
*Group 4* (Bates et al 2007:11) stated that there was modest evidence that societies that
had reconciled were less likely to experience future violence. They cite, Long and Brecke
(2003) who found that civil conflicts were “less likely to recur when reconciliation
between the parties takes place that includes acknowledgment, new identity construction,
abandonment of retribution, and a public reconciliation event involving physical contact,
a ceremony and ritual behavior ending the conflict” (Bates et al 2007: 11).

In addition to this finding, today a growing field within the conflict management
literature, transitional justice, has also identified reconciliation as an important means by
which post-conflict societies deal with their past in order to build a more peaceful future.
In fact, Lederach (1997) has argued that reconciliation is not only a tool for developing
relationships, but an essential component of peace building. Other strategies that have
been identified are prosecutions, truth-commissions, fact-finding commissions, war
memorials, reparations, as well as institutional reform (Borraine 2004).

Given the findings in both the civil war literature and the conflict management
literature on peace and reconciliation, how does this help us understand the civil war in
Lebanon and the aftermath? To answer this, I will first discuss the history of the civil war
and how it ended before I turn to look at what efforts have been undertaken to reconcile
the Lebanese people.

**Brief History of the Lebanese Civil War & the Post-War “Settlement”**

Between 1975 and 1990, more than 144,000 were killed, 184,000 injured, 13,000
kidnapped, and at least 17,000 were missing. In addition, about 174 town were partially
or completely destroyed (Adwan 2005: 4), and over 750, 000 were displaced (Zoher
2002: 572-573). As for the physical damages they were estimated at $25 billion (US
dollars). Various internal and external tensions and conflicts intertwined together led to
the breakdown of the Lebanese government and the outbreak of the civil war in 1975
(Krayem 1997; Salibi 1976; El Khazen 2000).

On the regional/external front, the Arab-Israeli conflict in general, and the Israeli-
Palestinian conflict in particular left Lebanon extremely vulnerable because of its
strategic location. After the 1969 Cairo Agreement, which while recognized Lebanese
military control over Lebanese territory also allowed for the Palestinian Liberation
Organization (PLO) to maintain a military presence in the country (Ghosn 2005: 407).
The agreement strengthened the PLO’s role in Lebanon, especially after 1970 when the
PLO leadership and fighters were thrown out of Jordan and established themselves in
Lebanon. In fact, southern Lebanon became the new battleground for the Israeli-
Palestinian conflict, which put immense strain on the Lebanese political system before its
breakdown during the civil war.
The domestic factors were directly related to the political confessional system that governed the country. The system had been in place since its independence in 1943 and was formalized through the National Pact in that same year. The National Pact of 1943 was not a signed agreement but rather a verbal one between Bshara al-Khoury (a Maronite leader) and Riyad al-Solh (a Sunni leader). While this agreement asserted that Lebanon was a sovereign, independent, and neutral country, it also distributed the power on an essentially confessional system based on the 1932 consensus, which had identified the ratio of Christians to Muslims be six to five. As a result, all the positions, be they in the legislative, executive, or judicial branch as well as the civil service, were also allocated along confessional lines, with the top three positions in the ruling “Troika” distributed as follows: the President is a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister is a Sunni Muslim and the President of the National Assembly is a Shi’a Muslim.

On the surface, this agreement seemed to create an equitable power-sharing agreement that protected all the sects from one another, however, “the dictum of sectarian balance led to the emergence of a weak state and, as a consequence, the inability to implement substantive administrative reforms. [Moreover,] the prevailing political system tended to foster corruption, nepotism, clientism, and laxity in upholding the public interest when it conflicted with private interests” (Makdisi and Sadaka 2005: 62). Also, as the demographic changes began to shift in the country so began the demands for a newer distribution that took into consideration the new realities. In fact, in the pre-1975 political environment there were several calls for more equitable sectarian political power-sharing particularly by the Muslim community that believed the formula of 6:5 in favor of the Christians was no longer applicable. Therefore, a significant portion of the
Lebanese population wanted to modify the distribution of power in the Lebanese political system. However, other groups, recognizing the flaws of a sectarian power-sharing agreement called for the abolishment of sectarianism and the creation of a new political system based on a more secular and equitable system.

As a result of the internal/domestic tensions over the political structure, issues of power sharing, exploitation of sectarian differences, economic inequalities and disparities, combined with the external/regional conflicts pertaining to the Israelis and the Palestinians, the Lebanese government was unable to prevent the outbreak of war on April 13, 1975.

As the cause of the Lebanese civil war was neither exclusively internal nor exclusively external, nor was the outcome. That is, “the civil war came to an end at a specific historical juncture when movement toward internal [agreement] coincided with favorable regional and international developments” (Krayem 1997: 412). This came about with the signing of the Ta’if Accord on October 22nd, 1989 in Ta’if, Saudi Arabia and ratified by Parliament on November 5th, 1989.

The Ta’if created a new power-sharing agreement as it gave the Muslims, especially the Sunnis, a greater role in the political process while institutionalizing the sectarian division within government. The distribution of power was, and still is, redistributed as 50-50. It transferred power from the President to the Cabinet of Ministers, with portfolios divided equally between Christians and Muslims. The National Assembly expanded and was also divided equally between the Christians and Muslims. The Ta’if also defined the Lebanese-Syrian relationship, making Syria a de facto guarantor of the agreement.
Reconciliation Efforts: A “Success”?

At face value, it would seem that the Lebanese case had two important elements for sustaining peace after a civil war. First, there was a power-sharing agreement that redistributed the power equally among the different communities preventing a single group from being able to dominate and eliminate another. Second, a third party, in this case Syria, was given the role of preserving the peace by maintaining its forces in Lebanon and providing security. However, things are not always what they seem. That is, while “stability” did reign over Lebanon and a civil war has not erupted, this “stability” came “at the expense of human rights, democracy, and national reconciliation” (Zaher 2002: 567). As a result, for the last 17 years the peace in Lebanon has been nothing more than an illusion.

Farid El Khazen (Al-Nahar 21/12/2001) argues that the civil war ended not because of internal reconciliation or agreement between the parties, nor with a political program that attained the approval of the majority of the Lebanese. In fact, what truly happened was the ending of the military war but not the political war. Since the secession of violence the situation has continued to worsen especially with respect to the integration of the Lebanese from all sects and confessions (al-tayaaesh al-mushtarak). As a matter of fact, more than a decade later “communities still live in total separation, rejecting each other, blaming each other. It is a real time bomb” (Amal Makarem, Head of the Memory for the Future Committee an NGO working for reconciliation in Lebanon, in an interview by Nayla Razzouk, on 1/16/2004).

Several factors have contributed to keeping Lebanon in a state of “negative peace.” First of all, while the Ta’if redistributed the power to be more equitable, it only
reinforced confessionalism and sectarianism in Lebanon\textsuperscript{2}. Therefore, as long as people believe that in order to reach a position in government one needs to be from a particular sect, or particular family, then loyalty will continue to be to the sect or zaaim (sectarian or political leader) and not to the country. That is, in reality one cannot run for election as an independent in Lebanon because one has to run for a specific seat (i.e. a Druze seat, a Shiite seat, a Sunni seat, a Maronite seat, etc..) and the expectation is that one will represent the constituents of that seat (i.e. the Druze, the Shiite, the Sunni, the Maronite, etc…). In a nutshell, a Lebanese candidate for parliament needs to maintain his/her sectarian identity to get a seat in parliament. This is why Hudson (1999; 98) maintains that “Lebanon has been viewed by some analysts and valued by many Lebanese as a kind of consociational confederation of sectarian communities lacking a higher national loyalty and a strong supra-confessional state.” Therefore, as the demographics keep changing in Lebanon one may expect that there will be new demands for a new power sharing agreement based on the new reality on the ground since the loyalty is to the sect and not the state.

While the Ta’if has also been referred to as the “Document of the Lebanese National Reconciliation,” “The Lebanese National Accord Document” (Hudson 1999: 102), and “Document of National Understanding” (IDMC Report 2006: 2), the only reconciliation it truly aimed at was the elites/zuama (plural of zaaim). In fact, the agreement aimed at regulating or managing the conflict to reach a settlement that would appease the elites (i.e. elite reconciliation) rather than resolving the underlying issues of the conflict (i.e. national reconciliation). To many Lebanese, “the Ta’if accord helped to

\textsuperscript{2} The Ta’if did acknowledge the need to abolish political sectarianisms, but no steps have been taken so far.
reconcile warlords, not the people. Proof is that any tiny problem stirs factional feelings” (Razzouk 1/16/04).

So while elite cooperation and elite reconciliation was necessary for ending the violence and achieving some sense of stability, this is only a short-term solution. In order to achieve peace and development we need to achieve national reconciliation which is a separate issue and till today has not been dealt with properly in Lebanon. One argument against this is that Lebanon is not a clear-cut case. That is, “those who say that they are victims were at some point torturers and vice versa” (Razzouk 1/16/04). While this is true, in order for reconciliation to occur in Lebanon the first step that must be taken is the acknowledgement that every sect has sinned and the common victim is Lebanon.

Another element that hindered reconciliation in Lebanon was the blanket amnesty that was granted after the war. In general, amnesty laws are necessary in order to get both sides in a civil war to put down their weapons. However, amnesties that grant impunity for gross human-rights without investigation are incompatible with international law (Thiessen 2004: 4-5).

On August 16, 1991, the Lebanese Parliament passed a General Amnesty Law (No. 84/91) which pardoned crimes committed during the civil war, including war crimes and crimes against humanity. This was believed to be a necessary step to provide a clean slate for everybody and for the leaders to remain in their seats (Haugbolle 2005: 193). Moreover, it has been argued that the law provided a sense of stability as it was giving everybody a second chance, and since there were no clear winners, putting a large number of people on trial would have brought the country to a stand still as there were not enough resources to carry out such prosecutions (Haugbolle 2005: 193). Others,
however, have criticized this law arguing “that instead of reconciling citizens with the principles of justice and rule of law, Lebanon’s authorities were always in favor of political leaders consolidating their position as superior to the rest of the population” (Nizar Sayeigh Lebanese Lawyer quoted in Daily Star on 12/5/2005).

What is interesting (or eye catching) about this law is that while it pardoned crimes committed against the Lebanese population (civilians) it did not pardon crimes committed against political and religious leaders (i.e. against state security) nor crimes related to fraud, bankruptcy, forgery of foreign or domestic currency and its sale, forgery of official documents and crimes related to the theft of antiques (Amnesty International Report 1997: 7). The Human Rights Committee has criticized this law arguing that such a “sweeping amnesty” prevented the appropriate investigations and punishments of perpetrators of human rights violations, as well as it undermined efforts to establish respect for human rights and to consolidate democracy (Amnesty International Report 1997: 7).

The law prevented any official acknowledgement of the war. According to Young (2000:45) the “problem with the amnesty law was not so much that it protected the war’s criminals — in the end that is what amnesty law do — but more perniciously, that it encouraged the Lebanese to forget their crimes.” As a result, the amnesty law directly or indirectly ended up playing a role in hindering the post-conflict process because there was no accountability and no reason for change in behavior.

As a result of the amnesty law and the elite reconciliation achieved through the Ta’if, the militia leaders were easily able to transition themselves into key positions in government. That is, “having become ministers, parliamentarians, and top-ranked civil
servants, they established their influence over economic matters in general and over the vast project of national reconstruction in particular. Their control over public and private foreign aid gave them exceptional leverage to broaden their clientele and thus to renew their legitimacy” (Piccard 2000: 318-319). For example, specialized agencies like the Reconstruction and Development Council, the Fund of the Displaced, and the Council of the South all provided new sources of redistribution and patronage for former militia leaders.

Another important obstacle was the presence of the Syrian forces in Lebanon. The Syrians had no interest in helping the Lebanese reconcile since if they did then their presence in Lebanon would no longer necessary. So long as the Lebanese remained fragmented, the Syrians could make the argument their presence is what is keeping the peace between the different factions.

In sum, the Ta’if agreement prioritized order and stability over reconciliation and justice. This was complicated by the amnesty law that brought many militia leaders into power which in turn facilitated their program of state-sponsored amnesia. This in turn, has prohibited any investigations into the crimes that were committed during the war and as a result, till today there is no unified history book. The history books taught in school conveniently stop with Lebanon gaining its independence in 1943. Since there is no agreed upon history book about the war for most of the Lebanese, especially the younger generation, all their information has been passed to them by their parents, grandparents, and relatives who lived through the war (or other survivors). As a result, the new generation, who is too young to remember or was not even born until after the war ended, is being raised on the anger, fear, and lack of trust that their parents and relatives still
have and that have not been dealt with since the end of the civil war. Moreover, this generation only knows what has been done to its community/sect, but is fairly ignorant of what its community/sect did to others. A study from an urban quarter in Beirut in 2005 found that people still harbored feelings of anger and mistrust against neighbors belonging to other sects, but these sentiments were closely guarded and private (Knudsen 2005: 15).

What Next?

When dealing with interstate wars while the resolution of the conflict may be difficult, one means by which we can manage the conflict is by making each state remain on its side of the border and separating them with international forces. However, when it comes to civil wars such a solution is not as easy. These communities have to live in one territory and drawing the boundaries (a line) between them may be difficult. Even if it is possible to separate them, this would be a short-term objective because in order for the country to develop and re-build both sides need to work together. In order to work together and move forward, societies coming out of civil wars need to not only to manage and resolve their conflict, but they also need to reconcile and remove the antagonistic attitude towards one another. That is, there needs to be a transformation in the relationship from being negative to becoming positive.

Surveying the literature on transitional justice one finds several cases of states using a combination of transitional justice; South Africa (truth commission, public hearing, and amnesty); Rwanda (International Criminal Tribunal); Yugoslavia (International Criminal Tribunal); Mozambique (blanket amnesty, rehabilitation rituals); Morocco (reparations, truth commission, public hearings and an official state apology);
Argentina (truth seeking commission, judicial proceedings, memorials, and reparation); Sierra Leone (conducted research, held public sessions and received testimony from victims and perpetrators. Also they published public findings in a report, which recommended financial support for victims of conflict, especially amputees, and symbolic reparations such as public memorials), and last but not least Chile (implemented a comprehensive reparation system for the relatives of those who were killed and kidnapped, and provided torture victims with health care). Hence when it comes to Lebanon we need to think of which transitional justice mechanisms would work, and also which mechanisms would apply to what issue. Too often we hear about the same solution being offered for different problems. That is, even if an international tribunal was successful in South Africa, this does not mean that it can apply in Lebanon and that it can be the solution for all three issues (which I discuss below) that need to be addressed. Hence, we need to stop and think if the solution that we are offering or suggesting is not only possible, but that it is also applicable.

In interviews conducted by El-Masri in 2003 one common response was that while “things were obviously better than during the war, since there is no killing, but everything else remained the same (i.e. inter-sectarian tensions have not become better)” (15). This only demonstrates that more than a decade later issues from the war have not been dealt with or addressed.

In order for reconciliation to occur, there needs to be a national agenda that must address three distinct issues pertaining to the war: 1) the displaced, 2) the kidnapped, and last but not least 3) the towns where massacres occurred. I will deal with each of

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3 In this paper I do not address the problems of the political system and the institutional reforms necessary. Instead I focus on the issues that are tied to the war itself.
these issues briefly, making some preliminary suggestions. I start with the issue that has received the most interest and end with the issue that has received barely any attention.

In order to help the displaced return to their homes the Lebanese government created the Ministry of Displaced in 1992. In fact, the only two sentences in the nine page Ta’if accord agreement that dealt with any issue related to the war was on the issue of the displaced. As noted earlier over 750,000 were displaced and this changed the mosaic structure of the Lebanese towns with each town becoming more or less homogeneous. Over 50% of the displaced were not able to meet their basic needs (UNDP). Therefore, the main aim of the ministry was not only to help the displaced return to their homes but also get back on their feet. The ministry did provide some economical aid to help rebuild the infrastructure and evacuate occupied homes in order to return them to their rightful owners. They also sponsored, with the help of the UN and other NGOs, youth programs that focused on educating the youth, provide skill training, and run youth camps to help people from different sects. While in principle the concept of having a ministry be in charge of the displaced was a good idea, the lack of cooperation between the different organizations and high level of corruption all hindered the return of the displaced.

Depending on which source one tends to believe the number of those that have still not returned to their homes ranges from 70,000 (Ministry of Displaced) to 500,000 (Kundsen 2005: 16).

Another problem that delayed the return of the displaced was the perceived publicized nature of the process. The choice of Walid Jumblatt, a former militia leader, as the first Minister of Displaced was highly controversial since this was the “same war

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4 Amal Khoury and I are currently working on a project focusing on these issues in particular. We have already conducted some interviews, and will be conducting more in December 2007.
leader who had played a role in the largest displacement (that from Mount Lebanon) was now given national responsibility for IDP (Internally Displaced Persons) return” (Assaf and El-Fil 2000: 32). A bit ironic as well as intimidating.

Therefore, in order for this issue to be resolved reparations need to be made to all the IDPs. They have waited far too long to return to their homes and to get compensated for being forced out of their homes. The issues of corruption and embezzlements need to be dealt with since millions of dollars have disappeared. Also, a considerable effort needs to be made to develop a broader strategy of promoting this issue and resolving it once and for all.

Ghassan Mukheiber, a Lebanese Parliament Member, has recently drafted a bill in the Lebanese Parliament for establishing a truth-commission (more of a fact-finding commission) to investigate the disappearance of over 17,000 Lebanese. The first attempt by the Lebanese government after the civil war to deal with the issue of the kidnapped/missing was in January 2000, 10 years after the civil war was over. The former Prime Minister Salim al-Hoss appointed a commission of inquiry in order to investigate the fate of the individuals who disappeared or were kidnapped between 1975 and 1990. However, the commission investigated just over 2000 cases before it announced that those individuals were probably dead (Young 2000: 42).

The kidnapped/disappeared come from all sects and all regions. Many were kidnapped and were carried off to Syria, while others were taken to Israel. However, the families of the disappeared have had to watch one Lebanese government after the other brush aside their requests and demands, mainly because some of those that ordered the kidnappings were now in government. This did not stop the families from coming
together and organizing several organizations including the "Lebanese Committee of the Families of Detainees in Syria,” SOLIDE (Support for Lebanese in Detention and Exile), and SOLIDA (Support for Lebanese Detained Arbitrarily). These groups came together on April 11, 2005 and have had an open-sit-in in front of the United Nations building in Downtown Beirut, demanding answers about their loved ones. More recently, in October 2006 SOLIDA registered the Lebanese Center for Human Rights (LCHR), which has been helping to file appeals for those that are believed to be tortured or those that were imprisoned wrongly during the war or afterwards because of the Syrian tutelage.

In addition to the emotional problem of not knowing whether a loved one is still alive, several issues are also tied up such as inheritance procedures, property transfers, as well as compensations. Also, if the lost one is a husband or a wife, then technically the spouse cannot remarry without a death certificate or a divorce.

In October 1999, the Committee of the Families made three demands from the government: first, that the government establishes a commission of inquiry that would publish its finding within a year; second, that the government establishes social programs that would assist the families of the disappeared; and third, that the government would set aside a day for the memory of the disappeared and build a monument commemorating the victims of the war (Young 2000: 44). While the commission set up in 2000 attempted to tackle the first demand. Not until this new proposed bill (2007) has any governmental official tried to address the second two requests. In an interview with Lebanese Parliament member Ghassan Mukheiber (on July 27, 2007), he stated that the Human Rights Committee in Parliament was working with the groups mentioned above to draft
the bill and attempt to pass it in parliament. He stated that he hoped that Parliament would vote to establish a Truth and Reconciliation commission that would investigate all the kidnappings and disappeared cases; be they in Lebanon, Syria, Israel, or even Libya. He argued that people needed facts about what happened and enforced disappearances are in fact a legal crime. Mr. Mukheiber is also pushing for the establishing a war memorial since he believes that this will help the Lebanese in putting the civil war behind them.

As for the last issue that needs to be addressed it is the towns where massacres occurred. Although, carried out on a smaller scale than what happened in the former Yugoslavia, sectarian cleansing did occur in Lebanon (Zahar 2002: 592). In fact, in 1975 the village of Damour, which is south of Beirut, was the site of one of the first confessionally based massacres. Since Lebanon is based on a sensitive sectarian balance, it was believed that talking about what really happened in those towns would only infuriate the different groups making it difficult to control the eruption of violence. However, what has happened is that for the last 17 years these towns have witnessed little no effort of reconciling with the sect that they believe was responsible for the massacres. Many have been compensated through reparations, but they still have not let go. Since no studies or interviews have been carried out in these towns it is really hard to know what the sticking issues are. Do they want more money? Do they not want to live with the other sects? Do they want an apology? If so, from whom? The government? Or the leaders that carried out the massacres?

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5 Since the Parliament has not been meeting because of the political deadlock in the country, the bill will not be voted on until the Speaker of the House decides to re-convene the Parliament and put the bill on the floor.
6 In an interview with Farid El Khazen, a member of the Lebanese Parliament, he mentioned the need for him as a political figure to understand what these communities want.
In May 2005, after the assassination of the ex-Prime Minister Hariri, the political leaders of the two sects that had charged each other with being responsible for the massacres forged a political alliance in order to beat the opposition. The leaders met and shook hands, gave great speeches how the war was over and asked their respective constituents to vote for the other. While many of the constituents complied, what was interesting was that two of the main towns were the most massacres occurred placed blank sheets of paper in the ballot box. That is, while they did not vote for the opposition there were not able to vote for the person who they believed was responsible for the deaths of their loved ones. So clearly these communities have not forgotten nor forgiven the other for what occurred during the civil war. Research needs to be carried out in order for us to find out what do these communities want, and whether the government can intervene and help these groups reconcile.

Conclusion

In this paper, I explored some of the main national reconciliation efforts that were taken since the end of the civil war. I argued that Lebanon was left in a state of negative peace for over 15 years as peace (here defined as the absence of violence) was preferred over reconciliation and justice. As a result of the “state-sponsored amnesia” (Young 2000: 42), the Lebanese society was unable to move forward and reconcile. However, with changes in the regional and the international environment, mainly the withdrawal of the Syrian forces from Lebanon in 2005, the buried memories and traumas of the war have resurfaced as well as the feeling of injustice and the anger of how things were dealt with at the end of the war. Also, the tense political climate that exists today has only helped to re-ignite the embers of mistrust. Therefore, while recognizing the situation may
not be “ripe” yet, however once a political settlement is reached we need to be ready to
deal with the past in order to reconcile as a nation and move forward. Lebanon cannot
afford the same mistake that was done in 1991, since as it is apparent today issues are
bound to resurface if not dealt with.