

# SALIM HOSS

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## **LEBANON AGONY & PEACE**



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## INTRODUCTION

The Lebanese problem is as old as independent Lebanon. It is rooted in the confessionally charged system that Lebanon has adopted since 1943.

Over about three decades, Lebanon sailed through a state of unstable equilibrium, punctuated by frequent aberrations of various kinds and magnitudes. Eventually, the situation burst into open conflict of the wildest conceivable order in 1975.

The regional and international interest in the Lebanese crisis was at the beginning very limited, and was largely linked to its Palestinian dimension. Indeed, the direct involvement of the Palestinian armed organizations in the struggle at that stage of the crisis helped to bring to the surface the existing and potential links between the Lebanese crisis and the Middle East problem. Moreover, the diverse Arab patronage of various Palestinian organizations contributed to the exacerbation of inter-Arab tensions over Lebanese soil, thus further complicating an already complex issue. Yet, by virtue of the fact that the Palestine Liberation Organization is the sole representative of the Palestinian people and, consequently, the standard-bearer of an international cause celebre—the Palestinian question—its presence on the scene of the Lebanese crisis was a factor in inculcating further Arab and international, albeit controversial, interest in the Lebanese problem.

The international interest in Lebanon received a great boost with the Israeli invasion of South Lebanon in 1978, and escalated to a climax with the second, full-scale Israeli invasion in 1982, which brought even the capital, Beirut, under occupation for a while.

Because the Lebanese problem is rooted in a domestic struggle, there has been over the past few years—more specifically over the past few months—an increasing international interest in the domestic dimension of the problem.

My own perception of the domestic aspect of the Lebanese problem and of its regional and international ramifications is set forth in this collection of articles and lectures which, written in English, are

primarily addressed to non - Arabic speaking readers who may be interested in the lot of my small, beleaguered country, Lebanon, and who may be able to contribute, each in his own way, to my people's salvation.

**Salim Hoss**