

Civil Society: Changing Concept in Times of Transformation

Raed H. Charafeddine, First Vice-Governor, Banque du Liban

Tyr First Public Intermediate School
March 4th, 2017 | Tyr

Table of Contents

I. Introduction.....	2
II. Civil society: Indicators and Jurisprudence.....	2
III. Contemporary Issues and the Civil Society.....	5
IV. The Arab Kinesis and Its Impact on the Evolution of Civil Thought.....	8
V. Peace-Building through Investment in Children Education	10
VI. Conclusion.....	14

I. Introduction

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the administration, teachers and students of Tyr First Public Intermediate School for the invitation, and for giving me the opportunity to communicate with your esteemed community in an institution that doubles as a cradle and a fortress. These corners, alleys, landmarks and sands embody the garden of my childhood, the playground of youth, and the launch pad in life.

Besides the symbolism of the place and its centrality in memory, I pause at the importance of the subject at hand. It's a subject that has always opened doors and windows on a variety of interpretations that will not fade away as long as our societies are in a state of turmoil, and in an era of search of an identity, a role, indeed of a destiny.

The proposed title of this symposium compels the researcher to be drawn into a kind of theoretical arms-wrestling. I will try not to be too swept away by this current so as not to exacerbate the existing "ambiguity". I'll rather move the subject to the realm of palpable reality by linking it to education. In this, I would be more in harmony with the place where we are; that is, in tune with the concerns and issues of the attending audience. Then I'll conclude by borrowing from a very close experience, close in geography as well as in the nature of its mission, and close to the heart. By that I mean the experience of the Imam Sadr Foundation in educating on the culture of peace, dialogue and civil society building.

The subject is timely and persistent, as what's taking place in Arab, Islamic, as well as in Western cities and countrysides even, is but a manifestation, one way or the other, of the labor pains or the fragmentation associated with the search for an identity and a role. The Arab societies which failed to exploit the turmoil and turn it into abundance are societies marred with the failure to regulate the relationship of the citizen with the authority, as well as with the law and how to regard it. The same goes for the citizen's respect for the public sphere, its belonging to the absolute public domain, its self-esteem, and its valuation of its group, country, and universal society. This spiraling turbulence in the areas of belonging is what I call Loss of Hope, for not calling it Utter Despair. Despair manifests itself as a crisis in rejecting life, denouncing achievement, and denying the others their right to joy, in addition to depriving oneself of the virtue of listening and the right to calm expression.

The mad violence we are witnessing is the complete opposite of civil society, as the latter manifests itself in the ideals of dialogue, cultural exchange, cooperation, negotiation, justice, influence, and altruism, thus effectively being the spiraling movement towards the Republic of Plato .

II. Civil society: Indicators and Jurisprudence

The concept of civil society is almost universal in all contemporary reviews of literature, including the United Nations' development reports and terminology. It is always present in the media, and in the latter's reports and panels; politicians cite it in their speeches and statements, and academics strive to define it in a clear and agreed way. It comprises indicators as multiple

as schools of thought; further it is not perceived so much of a reassuring and robust analytical tool of a society's reality check as political parties, trade unions, charities and development organizations are. However, it is particularly popular, because it invites associated concepts that have appeal, such as freedom, democracy, social contract, citizenship, and others.

We understand "civil society" through its links to what is actually happening in our real life. Which is not exactly what the Arab elites want, or what they express in their reviews of literature, as they borrow a lot of civil society content from what had emerged and evolved in Western societies since the industrial revolution to our day and age.

In an article published on his website in 2004, Dr. Aljabri said (Aljabri), "What the modern elite means by 'civil society' is rather itself, thus excluding the rest from its realm, although this 'rest' may be produced by civil society's mechanisms proper." He proceeds by saying that the content of civil society is mentally associated today with the aspiration to liquidate the "military society" or the "tribal society" or the "sole-party society" which would give way to the emergence of a society of institutions based on free democratic expression. If we assume that fair democratic processes are conducted in most Arab countries, the powers that are likely to win are those non-modernistic, non-renewal forces which effectively lie outside the "civil society" of the modern elite.

Perhaps the basic make of civil society is this very disparity in its components, which cannot be dispelled by the reduction or exclusion of this or that category, whether it's civil, i.e. related to modern structures such as parties, unions and voluntary organizations, or it's spiritual or traditional such as religion, ethnicity, tribe, clan and family. If the separation is possible in European societies where the industrial revolution and the subsequent technological revolution have emerged and developed, accompanied by social and civil formations, it is absolutely impossible in our Arab societies where old and new formations and structures interact at the same time by means of dialogue or conflict. In the Lebanese case, "coexistence" appears to be more present for reasons stemming from country make-up (Sects), geography (Point of contact and interface between cultures) and realism (The Lebanese Diaspora and its interaction with the residents of its country of origin).

Some researchers believe that the state can control traditional structures under the slogan of national unity. According to the definition of the United Nations Development Program (al-Masri, 2004), religious groups and civil grassroots movements dovetail with civil society organizations. However, the term excludes political parties and trade unions in keeping with its reduction of the role of the state in development. There is, therefore, disagreement over the boundaries of civil society in the liberal, traditional, and Islamic literature, and disagreement about its functions as well. Controversial content can be summarized as follows:

- The clan and family groupings (Although they are an effective safety net from the oppression of the state and the harshness of the market);

- Political parties, because they seek power (Although they offer social and economic programs);
- Unions and federations whose membership is governed by certain conditions;
- Formations set on religion or ethnicity for contradicting the principle of citizenship which is not based on religion, sex or race (Although they seek change, as well as defend the rights of large segments of society with remarkable effectiveness).

Those who are keen on discarding such formations are usually attached to Secularism and are advocates of all what's Civil, along with what Rousseau proponent. In line with the requirements of the social contract, as stated by John Locke, the state works to protect the interests of its citizens, that is the components of civil society which forms the buffer zone between the family/citizen (i.e. the private sphere) and the state (i.e. the public sphere). Spinoza believes that citizenship is the social contract that protects the rights of each individual and sets out one's duties. Moreover, there are pressing givens that present themselves now-a-days, some of which relate to the market (Which is a public domain, but controlled by the public sector) while others relate to the universal contract that transcends the boundaries of societies and nations, as represented by international treaties, human rights principles, and environmental requirements, etc. (Halabi, 2007)

Our concept of Civil Society

Civil society is the sphere where citizens express their rights and responsibilities and transform their dialogue into formulating the social contract they convene upon. This definition reflects the close interrelationship that exists not only between civil society and the social contract, but also between the act of citizenship (Rights and responsibilities) and democracy (The dialogue mechanisms that lead to the formulation of the contract, and to monitoring its application and evolution).

With its being a site of "intellectual construction" (Hilal), civil society is a pot of very different components; it's also representative of the social, intellectual, and political visions which compete and coexist in it. These components are the civil society organizations where it suffices that they express a little civility towards the different other that they would qualify to be a member of civil society, irrespective of the extent of their "traditionalism", "liberalism", "spirituality" or "secularism". The values of tolerance and participation are their common denominator. They are, therefore, the voluntary intermediate social frameworks between the state and society's basic components (Individuals, family) which express the values and interests of their members, and are concerned with public affairs.

Thus we find that civil society is a tool of reflection (Hilal) and communication that refers to the moving area that exists between the individual, together with its private family space, and the public sphere. It also refers to civil society organizations as conceptually meaning all frameworks with minimal organization, whether they seek social change in favor of freedom and social justice, or they endeavor to reproduce existing systems with what that entails as the emptying of the act of citizenship of its core values under the labels of

preserving heritage and privacy, and dealing with citizens as subjects or followers of a clan, sect or class.

What distinguishes civil society organizations from each other is the form and content of their relationship with their audience (Aljabri). If the state deals with the public according to set rules and procedures, and if the market deals with the public as customers according to the possibility of exchanging a commodity or service (A commercial-economic relationship), civil society organizations are distinctly different so long as their relations with their audience are characterized by interaction axed on conviction, i.e. from how keen they are to involve their audience in organizing itself, defending its rights, and securing its needs. It is quite natural - as the case is - that civil society organizations enter into coordination, competition, and conflict relations with one another. Society is essentially not a unified body, nor is the state a homogenous body. Rather, the characteristics of the political system are not determined by the number of civil organizations or their functions, but by the relationship between the centers of power in society and their balances. In the case of Lebanon, the economic forces (Modernism in the liberal sense) coexist with the ideological forces, be they religious or secular. Let alone that "patriotism", in so much as it is a sense of identity and belonging, is not immune to sliding into the trap of protectionism, thus turning into a doctrine that impedes progress towards the realization of rights and the establishment of justice.

III. Contemporary Issues and the Civil Society

This region of the world is characterized by the growth of cultural diversity, and by particularities and multiculturalism, whereas the role of the state and the concept of inclusive citizenship are weakening. The voices calling for the preservation of cultural particularities are feared to lead to the pulling of society towards pre-state affiliations (Family, tribe, and sect) instead of upgrading it to post-state structures (Civil society organizations such as political parties, trade unions, and human rights organizations).

The follower of developments in the Arab (and Islamic) countries observes growing concerns on more than one level, either in terms of the repercussions of the era of violence, or in terms of concern for vulnerable parties, such as women and religious and ethnic minorities. In the eyes of others, the worst case scenario consists of two dangers: The first is the impact of the mass exodus of minorities, in view of the presence of those groups in the region having being a component of its civilization, serving as a guide or salvation to humanity versus the ominous "clash of civilizations"; the second danger is Islamic-Islamic strife, and what it invokes as literal nightmares that have deep roots in culture and memory, with potential destructive repercussions on the Islamic societies and peoples, as well as on their relations with what and who neighbors them.

In the broader global context, minority issues and cultural rights have never been hot issues as they are now. In its first article, the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) affirmed that such protection was an integral part of human rights, requiring international cooperation. It is

true that the current events in the region have an important impact, but the heat is intensifying and spreading throughout the planet as well, owing to the influx of displaced persons and the problem of integration of migratory groups in host countries. This reality necessitates the acceptance of diversity and legitimizing it as well. Indeed, ensuring international peace is directly related to the world order under formation having a diversity of components, not vice versa. It is a diversity based on distinction, differentiation, and integration. Further, communication technology is the supposed lever of this diversity, allowing for its promotion, growth and integration. But the protection of diversity is not free of caveats and minefields. For there is a political and intellectual current that points to the dangers of what it sees as a delinquency in protecting diversity, in the sense that it leads to the minorities tending to rebel and the societies and nations thus disintegrating into their primary sectarian, tribal, and ethnic entities. Accordingly, civil society comes across as if it's the issue, the answer, and the sanctuary.

New World Order

The so-called new world order is a system that changes its features through time. But it has unique characteristics; we'll tackle some of them, those which have a close relevance to the topic of this intervention. So, of these characteristics we list:

- The collapse of borders in front of goods, ideas, and funds, with the emergence of huge economic and media groups that transcend nationalities and borders, and which control many of the means and tools that, by nature, change and move in rapid speed. This feature's most prominent products are communication and informatics. The audiovisual machine works on 'momentizing' the impact of its content, in such a way that each recipient feels that they are the subject of concern (Which is the phenomenon of singleness, and the abolition of the role of the social mediator). However, no one will hold it accountable for the consequences of entering the game. Especially that it is an emotion that does not give room for thinking things over, and is exploited in the promotion of this or that commodity, with a play on the consumer's inadvertence. Media and globalization are twins (as George Ghanem has put it), and to enter their game is a matter of fate, not choice. What is a unique notion here is that globalization is neither a system of power, nor a campaign to control this or that land, and it doesn't aim to subjugate this or that society (Remember, sovereignty, land, and people form a nation). It is simply a movement for market control, resulting in the transformation of the state from a political society to a consumer market (Khoury, 2000)
- If the communication tools have transformed the world into a consumer village, consumption patterns are destroying the ecological components of the village (In terms of overcrowding, water scarcity, the ozone layer, toxic waste, biodiversity, etc.). We are not here to discuss what this represents as a threat to man's right to life and existence. The reference to environmental risks is made to show their impact on the concepts of sovereignty, national borders, and human

migrations. It is well known that desertification, deforestation, pollution, etc. are closely related to human movements, either as displacement (degradation of the rural environment) or congestion (urban noise and air pollution). Human society is not unaware of such risks, regardless of the effectiveness of its awakening. The international organizations call out for action, and for convening on what would avert reaching a worse situation. The observer can monitor dozens, even hundreds, of conventions and protocols dealing with migration, communications and the environment. It is noted that the train of globalization has lost its brakes, and that man is engaged in confiscating the rights of future generations in resources at an accelerated pace, while the conventions, and the mechanisms of implementing and monitoring them are moving so slowly that when they reach the application field, a new reality would have set in, and new types of treatments would be then required.

- The most prominent effects of the current state of affairs are the existence of giant blocs that weigh heavily on countries, with the latter's authority over their local communities disintegrating, and their sovereignty in the classical sense vanishing. But those are conglomerates with jellylike features, almost without a name or a face, and there exists no evidence for taking them to task or subjecting them to monitoring. Thus, the last resort is a global sovereignty based on international law, whose institutional framework would be embodied in the United Nations and its organizations and agencies. It is noted that human rights are moving towards universalism, and that the source and legitimacy of rights are gradually and progressively transcending the national level to the global level. As voices grow louder here and there, appealing not only to universal principles of human rights, but also to their mechanisms and institutions, the same voices call for the strengthening of national identity and independence (The particularity factor). Since the concept of citizenship (Charaffedine, 2014) in its abstract sense is based on two basic pillars, Identity and rights, these two components are increasingly diverging, as contemporary realities prove. While the identity factor tends towards differentiation and particularity (Exclusivity), the rights factor tends towards generalization and universalism, i.e. comprehensiveness and embracement (inclusiveness).

Mark Zuckerberg, founder of Facebook (Mark-zuckerberg, 2017) believes that he is contributing to the creation of the social infrastructure necessary to give people the power to build a global community that works for us all: A supportive, secure, informed society that promotes civil participation, and a comprehensive society that reflects the universal and cross-cultural values of cultures, nations and peoples. He acknowledges the decline in social infrastructure in local communities, as he does the decline at the level of hope. Further, he believes that the communities that have emerged on the Internet represent a bright spot, especially the influence groups that count membership in the millions of people. They are groups that have begun to help people solve their problems, including confronting disasters, and

reducing suicide and isolation as well. One of the structures that Zuckerberg sees as potentially developable concerns enhancing citizens' political participation in election processes, and involving more people in decision-making processes through keeping them connected on issues of local, national and global concerns (Societal Governance), and through a mechanism that transcends primary and cultural affiliations. "There are a lot of difficulties facing us at this moment, and we must rise up to their level. And since our situation is new, we must think in a new mentality and do new things".

By virtue of touching on the dimension of globalization and technology, economic and social structures are shaped by the power of reality not just anywhere, but almost everywhere. The response to the challenges of the transforming global system varies; it can be an outright positive acceptance, or a relentless search for a role and a place, or a complete rejection and self-confinement either in time (And time is moving forward), or in a distant place (And places are fading away). In parallel, and due to all this, civil society organizations are struggling to reach the rule of partnership, i.e. to democracy, to confront powerful forces that have no nationality or address. Is civil society the nucleus of a modernistic society, and the guarantee against extreme choices? Is Interdependence, and are transnational networks, the right response? What is the role of human migrations, and what are their resulting pressures and opportunities?

These are questions which we will not satisfy all answers to in this intervention. But we nevertheless point them out, as they come to the researcher's mind when pondering upon the problematic of civil society. These questions will remain open to debate as long as societies are open to mobility and to the quest for systems, structures, and mechanisms that meet the challenges of the times.

IV. The Arab Kinesis and Its Impact on the Evolution of Civil Thought

The history of the Arab region throughout the 20th century was characterized by successive cycles of violence that would, time and again, restore citizens to their primary affiliations to this or that religious, political or local community, thus forcing them to follow their leader's directives or to retreat into their local group by an instinct of survival against the opposite group. On the one hand, this resulted in the collapse of the bridges of trust and the channels of communication that existed in the situation ante, as well as in the deterioration of the economic situation, thus increasing the numbers of the poor and the destitute, and sustaining their dependence on the influential person who is no other than a perpetuator of their poverty, leading to their clinging to that lord for life. Thus, to the continuation of the old authoritarian relations (Tribal and sectarian) was added a backwardness in social relations which emerged from the market economy and globalization, such as family disintegration, women exploitation, and the prevalence of vertical social divides on the basis of religion, sect and clan, with all this leading to the obliteration of the actual features of the struggle between the two classes of exploiters and exploited. The vicious cycle of civil wars and sheer absurdity, and the clash of sects and tribes, continues. As for the advocates of peace and

progress, they remain powerless and self-absorbed, hoping for renewed dates with salvation. This salvation has often been embodied in silence as a secure political position, on the assumption that staying away from conflict keeps conflict away. It is a hypothesis that regularly fails, because those who fall are in general the innocent and the poor, while the powerful and those who control decisions and the affairs of the people gain more strength.

That cultural, political, and social dressing went on for long decades, only to be perturbed by a coup d'état here, a civil war there, and the invasion of one country by another, let alone the abandonment of the essential national cause and the partitioning of a number of countries. A trusted social change didn't happen. Years ago, Arab streets and squares swelled with waves of disgruntled and rebellious people. The terms "Arab Revolutions" and "Arab Spring" went into effervescence in view of the images they conjured in terms of triumph of hope and a promising future. I retrieve here some of the observations I have made on more than one occasion about this "tsunami of optimism" (Abdel-Fattah, 2011) and the enormous risk it involved. For the outcome actually led to discrediting the credibility of those who coined that glossary, and pushed many recipients to absolute frustration or to falling in the lap of the supernatural and the metaphysical. At that time, it was just a shout of alert, or a whisper of apprehension that the networks of corruption and repression were not only still at work, but also growing in those very squares and at the articulations of wealth and revolutions, while the mental and conceptual content was still drawing from the same source, despite the intentions and the will of those young women and men who held the first torch, and despite their resorting to modern communication and promotion techniques.

From the observations which came through as common across the many articles and writings that were produced in the early years of the Arab Kinesis, we note the following:

- The Arab Kinesis broke the stalemate that prevailed, and moved its societies to new situations which were not easy to predict in terms of nature, depth, space, and time range;
- Irrespective of the absence of leadership- and what this entails as fluctuation in positions and difficulty in negotiations- and the absence of ideology, and despite the early stage of generalities having extended in time and geography, it is certain that the people took a liking to listening to their voice. In addition, awareness of human rights, citizenship, and a free and dignified life, witnessed a rise;
- The criminalization of political action over decades led to greater religiosity as compensation and sanctuary. The religious doctrine quickly inflamed the feelings of the discontent, so they confronted the authorities with courage and determination. The point here is that some pious people have turned from their preoccupation with 'Halal' (Lawful) and 'Haraam' (Unlawful), therefore with Shari'a, to pondering the scales of justice and injustice, as you would have in politics (al-Ghabra, 2011);

- The common denominator in the Arab Kinesis is the unbridled discontent over the persisting failures and the false promises made by the self-cloned Arab system. This includes national aspirations and the central issue of Palestine, as well as the people's need for economic growth, improvement of their living conditions, and a socio-economic safety net;
- The change movements lacked vision, clarity of objectives, and an alternative program; they also lacked the will and the courage to take control, and they missed making coordination and alliance-building a priority. They quickly disintegrated upon the nucleus that bound them together—resentment of the ruler-- going into oblivion;
- They were also besmirched by the resort to foreign powers to gain strength (the perennial Lebanese defect), and the shift or transfer of responsibility, regardless of the suffering of the people due to blockade cases, or the severity of the losses caused by foreign intervention, let alone not taking external agendas and greed into consideration;

I will close by presenting a nearby experience. By “nearby” I mean and emphasize proximity to you in geography-- thus providing an opportunity to anyone to partake in--, proximity in terms of mission, as it is about an institution of education and empowerment, and proximity to the topic at hand, from being one of the institutions immersed in building the crossing bridge to a better future. In addition, it's also close to your speaker, as I have had the honor of being a modest contributor to its journey since over two decades, which gave me the privilege to be privy to its experience.

So from a real-life experience, I present the Imam Sadr Foundation, and its work with children of Southern Lebanon.

After all that has happened, and is happening, in our troubled lands, and with a little bit of reflection, we realize the great importance of the tasks awaiting Arab civil society institutions which are to address the deep wounds in the nation's body and memory, build civil peace among the conflicting groups, and enable the citizens to exercise democracy and accountability. What social change can we expect from civil society's struggle? How can it be done?

There is no ready recipe for all time and place, but there are experiments that can be relied upon, or lessons drawn from. The experience of the Imam Sadr Foundation is one of them.

V. Peace-Building through Investment in Children Education

There is a widespread belief that quality in education is the key to progress. Despite rising enrollment rates, the vast majority of the population still suffers from conflict, poverty, unemployment and emigration, while knowledge production and investment in research and development remain at very low levels. Most Arab societies have made significant progress at several levels, the most evident being that the gender gap is shrinking, while talent and business incubators are growing in many places. But there is still a long way to go before these societies can steadily move towards abundance and

progress, and before they can provide education to all its members. In fact, the progress that has been quantifiably significant has not been kind to those societies, and it didn't shield them from the calamities of rivalry and from the squandering of social, economic and knowledge output by raging fires. Accordingly, there is an urgent need to review the entire educational vision.

Quality has become an unquestionable demand, and the most important challenge is how to provide it to everyone instead of remaining exclusive to the elite. Failure to do so means the widening of the gap not only between North and South, but within the community itself, thus contributing to the exacerbation of tensions locally, and globally by extension. Because education is a complex process that works in different social, cultural and political circles, it is impossible to agree on a uniform definition of its quality. Some define it as differentiation, value, suitability, meeting or even going beyond client expectations, etc. What most of those involved in the issue of the quality of education agree on is the inclusion of two important dimensions in educational goals where most of the different philosophies and curricula intersect, namely:

- Improving the cognitive skills of learners;
- Reinforcing the attitudes and values necessary to build a good citizen, one who is reconciled with one's society and environment;
- If these two dimensions represent the delicate scales that measure the quality of education, the element of equilibrium is embodied in the principle of equality, or inclusion. That is, in the need to provide educational opportunities for all people, regardless of their race, color, sex or social and ideological backgrounds. Any exclusion or bias is intrinsically incompatible with the essence of quality, because it undermines the fundamental principles of human rights in terms of providing man with opportunities for development and upward mobility, and it threatens social stability and world peace, as will be clarified later.

There is a clear focus on the deliverables of the learning process and their impact on the preparation of capable citizens with potential for continuing education, which empower them to rely on themselves first, and on mutual exchange with others second. By this we mean positive interaction with today's world, which is a rapidly changing and demanding world that is sharply different from yesterday's requirements. It is known that the focus of the educational process is the learner, so the subject here is the human being.

Accordingly, we are dealing with a sensitive subject that deals with variables, and which moves on a very broad ladder of characteristics and differences. The challenge is not to educate a bigger number of students, but to educate all students. The challenge is not to devote attention and focus to some gifted students, but to provide equal opportunities for all students and enable each of them to unleash their talents and fulfill themselves.

More than 75 years after the United Nations was founded, it put forth the slogan "Leaving no one behind, and reaching the furthest first" at its World Summit on Human Rights held last year in Istanbul. Our religious, cultural and literary heritage is rich in this sense, and the case study we are about to

present envisages itself to be "the place for those who have no other place", as drawn from its mission to combat deprivation. In its quest to embrace the most vulnerable, the Imam Sadr Foundation set focus on the two dimensions of inclusion and quality. The adopted approach is to ensure that education is provided to specific groups whose main characteristics are marginalization, deprivation, exposure, and the additional needs that come along. In the second dimension, the Foundation's purpose is to ensure the provision of quality education that helps these groups to rely on themselves, and to integrate into their social milieu. To complete the picture, the population and the social environment in which these approaches operate, that is, Southern Lebanon, reveal a temporal and spatial peculiarity that complicates the scene. The prevalence of psychological disorders as a result of wars and destitution, resulting in turn in disparities and social exclusion, has been observed. The following indicators can be monitored:

- A spirit of reliance on the part of parents, and their tendency to abandon their commitment toward their children;
- Limited skills of parents, including illiteracy, and a sense of inferiority towards those providing assistance or education;
- High proportion of disintegrated families due to separation, divorce, or domestic violence;
- Severe financial problems compounded by the scarcity of jobs.

This complex reality calls for devising an integrated approach capable of breaking the vicious circle, and addressing the multiple needs of children and their families. Achieving the best learning outcomes is the result of a delicate equation that reconciles between the aspirations of the Foundation as an educational institution that seeks positive and meaningful change, and the requirements of the local and external environments and what characterizes them as transformation and change dynamics in which there are many harsh moments and uncertainties. The tasks are aggravated when the local environment throws in a number of care and education seekers while being unable to share the burden and the consequences. Consequently, the school becomes required to play complex and overlapping roles to achieve the desired results.

The Foundation's central activity has been to shelter, care for, and educate orphan girls. Those who are received are from the age of five, and the Foundation provides complete fulfillment of their food, health, educational and social requirements, all the way through university stage in case they were ready for, and needed, higher education. The scope of care extends to providing them with a marriage ceremony and vocational training, as well as securing them employment. In order to meet these needs, it was imperative for the Foundation to establish a number of facilities such as transportation, commissary, clinic, vocational training programs and others. To those interested in more information about these facilities, please visit the website www.imamsadrfoundation.org.

With the decline of military conflicts and the proliferation of charities, the number of orphan girls in need of this service has dwindled. On the other hand, and as a result of the deterioration of the living conditions of the entire

population, and the subsequent need of parents for an alleviation of the burdens of care, education and other responsibilities, the urgency of parents to enroll their daughters (therefore, not orphans) at the philanthropic Foundation has increased. Thus, the proportion of those classified as social cases (i.e. non-orphans) reached 66% of the total number of beneficiaries of the Foundation's care program, as opposed to only 2% in 1977.

On the one hand, the orphan girl feels, or somehow understands, that her presence in a foster institution is a reality and an inevitable situation, given the absence of alternatives once parents have been lost. This reality is capable of helping her to accept her situation and to integrate socially with a reasonable sense of deprivation. On the other hand, the girl coming from a severely impoverished or a disjointed family, or a girl victim of an accident or assault, is always aware that her family is in a place not far from her location, but rather far from her reality and present experience. Therefore, we find her difficult to adapt, accept reality, and prepare for learning and integration.

In view of this, the Foundation's service has evolved towards providing care for the girl while keeping her within her family whenever possible. The basic idea is to return the girl to her parents' home by the end of each school day without giving up any of the services and other benefits she gets. The program also expands to providing the father and the mother with specific services, most notably the extension of social assistance to the families by reinforcing the system that provides psychological and social counseling to parents at the beneficiaries' homes. Thus, the door was flung open to another challenge: The need to empower the parents, especially the illiterate, and the women-headed families.

I conclude by addressing the specificity of dealing with children exposed to a form of violence. Some may even be exposed to all its forms, such as domestic, media, school, and street violence, in addition to violence from bombing, killing and displacement. This is where we find ourselves confronting compound examples of violence victims.

The willingness of most people exposed to violence to do a compromise is very difficult. They did not commit an offense or a mistake so that they do a trade-off with what was committed against them. Their willingness to forgive seems to be an unjust matter, knowing that their "torturers" are truly or passively unknown.

Depending on the case, the strategies of preparation can be divided into two main categories: The first is to immunize the adults with economic and psychological strength that helps to protect them from the ambitions of others, and which enables them to raise their children properly. This is manifested in training and employment programs, or job finding assistance, as well as in empowerment programs, capacity building, and awareness of women's rights and other issues, or in launching development projects of a direct economic nature. The second relates to a series of psychological and specialized interventions and interventions that aim to reconcile the individual with one-self and prepare them to enter into a safe dialogue with the other, which leads them into peaceful relationships. This effort begins with actions to help the person recognize the trauma, acknowledge pain and grief, and reach self-identify and self-esteem. Here, moral and religious

education play an active role because of the calmness and tranquility that they inject into the soul, and the willingness to be tolerant and compassionate that they instill, leading to full recovery through confrontation and recognition of both Self and Other. In other words, a process of recognition of self-mistakes, and forgiveness of the mistakes of the other, in the sense of accepting to do a healthy compromise that restores relations and establishes a culture of peace.

In addition to caring for the girl within her family, the Foundation adopted the integration strategy to confront a number of challenges. This policy was manifested in opening the Foundation's classes to students from the better-off social groups, in exchange for flexible tuition fees that are function of the capabilities of parents. This policy has succeeded in making several achievements, most notably the launch of social dialogue since the early age of pupils, thus contributing to narrowing the psychological gap between the better-off and the disadvantaged. The other achievement was to expand the circle of participants in the financing of education, which enabled the provision of better equipment and higher competencies, all in all reflecting positively on the quality of both the process and deliverables.

VI. Conclusion

A distinction can be made between three stages that civil society went through. The first was the opening up of political parties to civil society organizations with the aim of gaining popularity, and the second was the stage of dealing with these organizations as independent entities parallel to the state where the latter tried to alleviate itself of its responsibilities by placing the burdens of citizens and their needs on the shoulders of civil society. The third, and current, stage was the transformation of civil society (Especially at the global level) into a stand-alone pole (With its own forums, platforms, umbrellas and alliances) in the face of the pole which is the state. The change of stages entailed a change in function and role. Many non-governmental organizations have gradually moved from a service provider or a conduit role, and from the role of rescuer or incubator, to actual political roles by mobilizing society and activating it towards issues of justice, freedom and democracy.

Arab societies face challenging tasks. In parallel with overcoming structural, social and organizational constraints, these societies must effectively address the issues of illiteracy, poverty, unemployment, and environmental degradation. The revolutions that took place would be meaningless if their purpose wasn't meant to confront those issues. Lebanon is part of this reality, but the foggiest of the Lebanese scene is due to the overlap of roles, functions and societal components. The Lebanese Mosaic is not only a mosaic of sects and directions; it is indeed a mental, institutional, and civil mosaic. In it the finest hospitals, universities, and innovation centers coexist with the most miserable areas, let alone corrupt and sinful practices. The academic researcher finds him- or herself- facing a real dilemma if they try to describe the Lebanese civil society scene and the mosaic of non-governmental organizations, where blood relations and tribal formations coexist with relief

and developmental organizations, and with platforms of change and political influence.

With this congregation of the Lebanese tantamount to them being on a boat in the choppy waters of a deep sea, and given what is going on around the country, there is still hope that Lebanon will be a beacon of light amid the darkness of Takfiri fundamentalism that has been wreaking havoc and crime in the Middle East and the world. The restoration of human value and dignity, and the rights of man are issues worth struggling for in the societies of our East, the place of revelation of humanity's celestial messages, and the land of prophets and heavenly messengers. It is also the case in the West which built democratic countries and institutions, witnessed a scientific renaissance which culminated in a technology and information revolution, held the label of human rights high everywhere, and sanctified freedom in all aspects of life.

The exclusion of people from public affairs is at the root of the disease; and it's people's positive interaction with their own affairs and those of society, the world and the environment which brings remedy. The adoption of the Lebanese model of civilization, based on the principle that all its diverse citizens are partners, is a model for the desired solution. The phenomenon of Takfiri terrorism, which is hostile to humanity and destructive to human civilization, has committed its brutal crimes in the name of religion, thus distorting its image, altering its concepts, and usurping its values. Confronting effectively the Takfiri pollution requires a wise methodology based on an integrated and holistic approach, and on the terminology of intellectual and social renaissance.

I firmly believe that salvation lies in civil thought. What I mean by civil thought is to drop the idea of resignation from public affairs, and to adopt the principle of empowerment. The principle of empowerment rests on self-confidence, trust in the other, belief in the ability of working together, and on the systematic and cumulative struggle for inducing change and institutionalizing it.

This paper has canvassed through the Universal and the Local, and has raised many issues and problems in order to launch a serious dialogue that would lead to the fulfillment of the dual task of dismantling and reconstruction, because the topic presented is of a wide capacity and an immense flexibility. No matter! We are obligated to think comprehensively or globally, and act locally. The world issues are intertwined, and the Arab world is at a crossroads of history, geography, and heritage-- both religious and cultural. Our country, Lebanon, is a model for the desired solution, and our dear South is boiling with suffering, yet bubbling with energy and importance.

Lebanon did extract a whiff of pride from the dragon of oppression, and a joyful ray of hope from the bitterness of marginalization.

It is worth pondering upon, and drawing from its lessons.

Thank you.

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