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SCLC Fact-Finding Mission to Lebanon

[EDITOR'S NOTE: The *Journal* reprints below the report made to the US House of Representatives by Walter E. Fauntroy, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) on its fact-finding mission to Lebanon in September 1979, and the statement of the SCLC following its Middle East peace initiative (distributed to the House as Appendix E). Both the report and the statement have been extracted from the Congressional Record (House) of October 11, 1979.]

REPORT OF HONOURABLE WALTER E. FAUNTROY, CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF DIRECTORS, SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE, ON THE SCLC FACT-FINDING MISSION TO LEBANON, SEPTEMBER 17-21, 1979.

Mr. FAUNTROY: Mr. Speaker, a little more than two weeks ago, it was my privilege to travel to Lebanon in the Middle East as part of a 10-member delegation on a fact-finding mission headed by Dr. Joseph Lowery, President of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and myself. Each member of the delegation travelled at his own expense in the hope, however, the SCLC would reimburse him if the organization at some time in the future is able to do so. I went in my capacity as Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and I am pleased to have this opportunity to report to the

House of Representatives and the American people our findings.

Before outlining our findings and noting some recommendations, let me refresh your memory about the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. The SCLC, you will recall, is the organization founded by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., 22 years ago now to carry out his crusade for non-violent change in our country. It is the organization which he led as president through successful campaigns of non-violent direct action in Birmingham and Selma, Alabama, which culminated in the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

That law struck down racial segregation in places of public accommodation. Further, the companion Voting Rights Act of 1965, which resulted from the Selma movement, opened to Black Americans long-denied access to the ballot boxes of the South. It is the organization

through which Martin Luther King, Jr., sought to apply the teachings of Christian non-violence to our quest for peace in Southeast Asia, and the organization which he headed at the time of his tragic assassination in April of 1968.

It is the organization which our now former Ambassador to the United Nations, Mr. Andrew Young, served as executive director before becoming a colleague of ours in the 93rd and 94th Congresses. It is also the organization through which — for 11 years prior to my coming to Congress — I, as a Christian minister, was made a witness for equality and justice as director of the SCLC Washington bureau.

.....

WHY SCLC WENT TO LEBANON

Mr. Speaker, as you know, this trip was sponsored by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, at the invitation of the Palestine Liberation Organization, in response to a series of events surrounding the resignation of Mr. Young as US Ambassador to the United Nations. The resignation came at a time when the SCLC was in its annual convention, and on the day that we were awaiting an address by Ambassador Young on the efficacy of non-violent approaches in US foreign policy. It caused us to resolve in convention to assert our right as citizens of this country to support the initiatives of Ambassador Young. But more fundamentally, we resolved to exert some moral leadership — with the strong support of a unified Black leadership — in opposing what we consider to be an ill-conceived policy of our government with respect to the Middle East. That policy presently prohibits any contact with one of the key parties to the conflict in the region. Thus, our fundamental purpose in going to Lebanon was to launch a ministry of reconciliation which proceeded from our initial contacts with UN PLO Observer, Mr. Zahdi Labib Terzi

and UN Representative of the government of Israel, Mr. Yehuda Blum.

I went to Lebanon, therefore, not in my capacity as a Member of Congress nor as a professional diplomat, but as a minister of the gospel, as an ambassador of goodwill committed to a ministry of reconciliation. We went to express our heartfelt and overriding concern for the human suffering and misery of our brothers and sisters on all sides of the Middle East conflict who are caught up in the injustice which comes from a reliance upon violent strategies for change. As a minister of the Gospel, I cannot preach on Sunday that God is the Father of us all; that, therefore, every man is my brother, and then in everyday practice refuse to acknowledge the humanity of all men, whether they be Palestinians or Jews, or Vietnamese boat people or Haitian refugees, or Christians or Muslims or Hindus or atheists. I cannot pray with St. Francis of Assisi: "Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is darkness, light; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope."

I cannot pray that on Sunday and then during the week walk away from an opportunity to be that instrument. That is why we went to Lebanon to carry a message of reconciliation and peace through non-violence, to initiate a dialogue which we hope will lead to a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

WHAT WE TOOK WITH US

In addition to this moral commitment to the efficacy of peace through non-violence, we went to Lebanon armed with the essential facts which told us of the cycle of violence and counterviolence between the PLO and Israel, and other combatants in the region. We knew of the long history of events which had pushed Palestinians out of that land and made them refugees all over the Middle East,

and of the struggle of our Jewish brothers to create a homeland, particularly after the atrocities of Hitler in Nazi Germany and throughout Europe. We knew of the wars between Israel and Egypt in 1967 and 1973 which had resulted in the United Nations resolutions which provided the basis for the legitimacy of international recognition of the integrity of Israel as a state and of separate resolutions by that body which provided hope for the aspirations of the Palestinians.

We also knew of the series of violent actions launched by various wings of the Palestinian nationalist movement which have brought fear and terror to the people of Israel. We knew, too, of the massive counter military actions launched against the Palestinians and Lebanese in southern Lebanon, including Beirut itself. We understood the terrible disruptions caused by the northern movement of Palestinian refugees and Lebanese, many of whom were Muslim, which upset the delicate balance between Christians and Muslims in Lebanon — a balance which they [the Lebanese] attempted to create by their National Pact of 1943. We knew of the civil war... that ensued.

We were also aware of the attempt of the Arab League to intervene on the side of stability by the interposition of Syrian troops and of the added difficulties caused by the presence of another armed element in that conflict. The new army brought pressures to bear upon the Christian forces, and [this] in turn resulted in an even stronger alliance between them and the Israelis. Further, we knew of the efforts of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. It tried to bring about some measure of security to the beleaguered populations of southern Lebanon and did so by occupying positions vacated by the withdrawing Israeli army under its mandate of UN Security Council Resolution 425 of March 19, 1978.

Moreover, we went with a reasonable

understanding of the importance of peace and stability in the Middle East to the vital interests of our Nation and to all of Western Europe. We further understood the high cost and negative impact that violent strategies are having upon the economies of both the United States and Israel. I shall touch upon these later in this report.

Finally, we went to Lebanon with a healthy respect and appreciation for the peace process begun with the Camp David accords sponsored by the United States, but with a clear recognition that, until the legitimate representatives of the Palestinian people and other parties to the conflict are present at the conference table, there will be no just and lasting peace in the Middle East. Accordingly, we went with an appeal to all parties in the conflict — particularly to the PLO and the Israeli government. We asked them to do two things as steps towards meaningful negotiations leading to peace with justice for all.

First, that each declare a moratorium on acts of violence.

And second, that the PLO become a part of the Camp David peace process, with both Israel and the PLO prepared to recognize mutually the rights of Israel and the Palestinians to peace within the secure and recognized borders of a homeland.

WHAT WE FOUND

I. A Vicious Cycle of Fear, Violence and Hate

While in Lebanon, we met with the President, Premier, Foreign Minister, and Deputy Speaker of the House of the government of Lebanon, and parties on virtually all sides of the dispute, including the PLO, the [largely] Christian Phalangist Party, the Lebanese Islamic Council, the Lebanese National Movement, and the Middle East Council of Churches. We

came away with a picture of human beings all of whom are our brothers under the skin, caught up in a vicious cycle of fear, violence, and hate which only a compassionate, understanding, and reasonably detached world community can assist in breaking.

The Israelis fear annihilation by the overwhelming number of Arabs and Arab nations surrounding them. That fear spawns a preoccupation with massive preparation for violent conflict and periodic acts of violence that they call "pre-emptive strikes" that generate intense hatred of the Israelis by the victims of that violence.

The Palestinians fear that Israel's intention is to exterminate those Palestinians who steadfastly hold to the goal of self-determination and a Palestinian homeland. That fear gives rise to acts of violence in what Palestinians call "occupied Palestine" designed to remind Israelis that there will be no peace until there is justice and a homeland for the Palestinians. That violence generates a hatred among the Israelis that feeds their cycle of fear, violence and hatred even as their violence feeds the same cycle among the Palestinians.

The Phalangist Christians fear being engulfed by a sea of Muslims. That fear feeds the violence and counter-violence that generates an intense hatred among and between the PLO and the Phalangists.

Lebanese government officials fear that it is the Israeli intention to balkanize Lebanon and, indeed, the entire Middle East into warring camps among Christians and Muslims to assure Israeli military dominance of the region. The violence visited upon Lebanese villages, Lebanese citizens and Palestinians in Lebanon by the Israelis, a violence which the Lebanese government has no capacity to return, gives rise to an intense hatred among Lebanese of what they call the "racist, Zionist expansionists" in Israel.

We found that this cycle of violence,

this continuing state of war, has not been altered by limited air, land and sea operations in Lebanon and in Israel by both sides, nor by the unilateral actions of the combatants, nor by the Camp David accords, sponsored by the United States. We have reasoned, therefore, that the cycle of violence that has produced an attendant cycle of fear, hate and distrust might be amenable to the intervention of the weight of national and international public opinion, assisted by a moral force dedicated to achieve the cessation of the violence and killing, and the beginning of a dialogue among the parties that would ultimately lead to a just and lasting peace.

II. Lebanon, a Casualty of the 30-Year State of War

In our discussions with the official leaders of the country such as President Elias Sarkis, Premier Salim al-Hoss, and Foreign Minister Fuad Boutros, as well as Deputy Speaker of the House, Munir Abu Fadel, we learned of the tremendous impact that the cycle of violence and fear had visited upon Lebanon. They told us that they still held out the hand of hospitality to the Palestinians because they understood the depth of their joint suffering and condition, but at the same time, they expressed exasperation that the 600,000 Palestinian refugees and the nearly equal number of Lebanese refugees — in their own country — had brought great strains upon their government to deal with the problems of internal peace and security, as well as the maintenance of a viable atmosphere of growth and development.

We saw for ourselves the balkanization of the city of Beirut and areas of the country out of a distrust which establishes geographical checkpoints controlled by the Palestinians, the Christian militia, the Syrians, the Lebanese National Army and the United Nations. We witnessed the violation of the sovereign air space of Lebanon by Israeli aircraft with the

distrustful objective of carrying out surveillance over the whole of the country. Such flights, a few days after we left, resulted in an airfight between them and the Syrians, and the destruction of some Syrian planes within sight of Beirut. But we also visited the Palestinians' military outposts and refugee camps in southern Lebanon where their desperate masses had been forced to flee and protect themselves with the most miserable of resources.

To our outrage, we saw unmistakable evidence of the use of American weapons on non-military targets. I have returned with shrapnel, parts of exploded shells and cluster bombs which I lifted from the ruins of bombed-out Palestinian and Lebanese villages in Lebanon. Let me show them to you.

At the same time that we were viewing the bombed-out ruins of South Lebanon villages, a bomb exploded in a shopping centre in Israel killing one and wounding 18 Israeli men, women, and children. We roundly condemned that act of violence then and there to our PLO hosts. Had we been allowed to go to Israel, we would have brought back to this floor today evidence of that cruel act as well. For both are clear indications of the need for someone to have the moral courage to go face to face and faith to faith to both the PLO and the Israelis to ask for a moratorium on violence, and that they go to the peace table prepared to accept the right of one another to peace within the secure borders of a homeland. The time has come for this Nation to stand in the shoes of Pope John Paul II to proclaim to both the sacredness of all human life.

III. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)

In visiting the hospitals, schools, social and economic institutions of the Palestinians, we understood that the cycle of fear had been embedded in the very fabric of the lives of the people as a part

of their daily reminders of martyrs, their dead parents, their dispossession of the land, their struggle to document their birth and marriages and to beg for plots of land when their people die. This tortured political socialization may best be expressed in a toy machine-gun made by a proud child in one Palestinian enterprise, and in the real gun strapped in the belt of a 7-year-old in a refugee camp, and in the generation of teenagers carrying real machine-guns in the fortified Palestinian gun emplacements in southern Lebanon.

The counter-violence of Israel we now know will result in no quick victory or easy solution to the violence, because our visit to these facilities also gave striking evidence that the PLO is not the one-dimensional "terrorist organization" we have been led to believe that it is, but contains all the infrastructure of a nation in exile. Besides the strong support of the Lebanese national movement and other organizations which complement its position in Lebanon, the PLO is quickly gaining the support and legitimacy of nations in the West to augment the fact that it is recognized by 20 Arab governments and many other Third World nations as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

IV. Implications for Blacks and US Foreign Policy

We saw our mission not only in the light of the opportunity to contribute to the peace process as representatives of the SCLC, but believed that we were also working to further the interest of the broader Black community. It is, of course, a fact that the Black casualties in the Vietnam war were disproportionate to our presence in the population, and that the current complexion of the military services are likewise over-represented by Blacks, an indication of the growing lack of opportunity in the private job market.

We are also critically aware of the

pattern that finds Blacks taking advantage of military service in times either of war or in times of severe economic circumstances in the country. These circumstances of economic deprivation are exacerbated by the impact of the spiralling energy costs upon the poor, and Blacks are again disproportionately represented in the ranks of the poor. While 30 percent of the Black population is officially under the poverty income level set by our government, the average income of Black families is only about one half that of Whites. Further, the coming national recession — on top of the recession which already exists among our poor — will rob us additionally of the ability to meet rising costs from an income ravaged by inflation and unemployment. Thus, we are extremely sensitive to the linkage between international problems which, in the Middle East, have cost the American taxpayer \$26 billion since 1946, the foreign policy decisions of our government in this region, and the consequent impact such decisions have upon our domestic life chances.

Also, we believe with others, that at the time of Ambassador Young's resignation, he was exercising his best judgement in carrying out the wishes of his government in getting a postponement of an issue coming up before the UN Security Council that could have forced the United States into an embarrassing stance. It is to his inestimable credit that he chose to take the weight of responsibility for this action. Second, it did not escape our notice that upon the return of our delegation to the United States, our government called for a cease-fire in Lebanon which goes beyond that monitored by the United Nations Forces. We believe that now is the time for the US government to use its influence with the government of Israel to stop the military operations in southern Lebanon. For if the cycle of violence spreads to the Straits of Hormuz through which pass 19

million gallons of oil per day, the vital interests of both the United States and much of the Western world will surely be affected.

Our national stake in an urgent and genuine move towards peace by both Israel and the PLO, therefore, cannot abide the slow pace for the inclusion of the Palestinians in the peace talks envisioned now by Israel and Egypt. In this regard, I recently communicated with Senator Mark Hatfield, who has proposed a 10 percent cut in the US support of the foreign military sales programme to Israel in the foreign assistance bill, and said in part:

"Our will has been called into question by the August 6 letter of Secretary of State Cyrus Vance to Clement Zablocki, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House, citing the fact that in accordance with the provisions of the Arms Export Control Act, Israel may have violated the July 23, 1952 Agreement with the US in the furnishing of defence articles, by the unauthorized use of those articles in Lebanon. Also, I have been and I am yet a firm supporter of the security of the State of Israel. But at this moment in history, there must be a realization by all concerned that Israel is the strongest military power in the Middle East. I am sure you know that between fiscal year 1946 and fiscal year 1979, the US has spent over \$25 billion in economic and military assistance to 10 countries in the Middle East and that Israel alone has received 58 percent of this total. At the same time, over 60 percent of our assistance to Israel has been military aid, and current appropriations for this purpose are running [at] \$1 billion annually, with the most liberal repayment terms accorded any country to date. In addition, as my Delegation was leaving for Lebanon, Israeli Defence Minister, Mr. Weizman was arriving in the US with a request for a \$600 million increase for fiscal year 1981 over the current level of appropriation."

OUR PROPOSALS

In the knowledge of the stakes in the Middle East from the perspective of our subnational, the national and the international interests, we went to Lebanon, as I said earlier, not as diplomatic negotiators but as moral ambassadors seeking a dialogue with all who would listen. In this regard, we demanded the right to talk with a wide range of leaders representing such organizations as the Lebanese National Movement, the Christian Phalangists, the Islamic Council, and the Middle East Council of Churches, in addition to the PLO. We were determined to be evenhanded in our approach both in our recognition of the culpability of both Israel and the PLO in the cycle of violence, and in the need for both to stop the violence and come to the peace table.

Thus, our proposals, the sense of which engendered wide support from all those with whom we met, were directed at both parties and contained the message that:

First, we respectfully urge the PLO to recognize the sovereignty of the State of Israel. Without addressing the issue of the boundaries or borders at this point, we suggest that Israel's existence as a nation has broad and deep support in the world community. Therefore, the failure to recognize or the rejection of its existence constitutes futile defiance of world opinion and presents a formidable barrier to universal recognition of the role of the PLO in putting forth the legitimate claims of the Palestinian peoples.

Second, we respectfully urge the PLO again, to agree to a moratorium on violence. Even with an understanding of the causes, we do not believe that the PLO can achieve its objectives through continued violence. Moreover, we believe that a moratorium on violence is a powerful initiative with the potential for dramatically shifting the moral advantage to its side in the eyes of the world, and makes possible some relief for those Palestinians

now suffering from the violence of Israel.

We were successful in having a meeting with Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the PLO, and in putting these proposals before him for consideration by the Palestinian National Council.

Mr. Arafat promised a response to our appeal for a moratorium on violence within a week. On Monday, October 1, 1979, Dr. Lowery received a wire from Mr. Arafat indicating that, pursuant to our request, he had declared a cease-fire in South Lebanon at 2300 hours [on] Friday, September 21, shortly after our departure. We did not publish this response at that time because we had heard no public notice of such a cease-fire and did not understand the significance of the reference in the wire to the Israeli-Syrian airfight as it related to his announced cease-fire. We spent the rest of the week seeking clarification and a specific response to our appeal for a moratorium on violence. Dr. Lowery, President of the SCLC has authorized me to announce that we have now received a specific response. That response is simply this: the PLO has declared a cease-fire in South Lebanon which it intends to observe, but that its violent resistance in Israel and in the territories occupied by Israel in 1967 will cease when Israel withdraws from the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem.

While we are pleased with the PLO-announced cease-fire in Lebanon, we are disappointed that they are not disposed at this time to declare a comprehensive moratorium on violence in Israel, as well as the occupied territories, as a first step towards meaningful negotiations at the peace table. We are disappointed, but not deterred from our goal. Accordingly, I have been asked by Dr. Lowery to announce that while we will go ahead with our plans to conduct dialogues in several cities in the Nation, we have deferred for the present any plans to invite Mr. Arafat to the United States to participate in those dialogues. We are looking for

greater evidence of a willingness to respond positively to our appeal for a comprehensive moratorium.

Further, I will say that regardless of the response to our proposals from the PLO, our government should continue to attempt to develop a legitimate, open, and substantive dialogue with the PLO. It was our experience that far from being the "bloodthirsty killer" and "wild-eyed terrorist" the Western press has made of him, Mr. Arafat appears reasonable and open to dialogue within the framework of the interest of his own people.

On the other hand, we have been seriously concerned about the Israeli government's attitude toward all peace initiatives as reflected in its rejection of our request for a hearing on the peace proposals. We believe that the cycle of fear has so affected the leadership of the Israeli government that they may be in the dangerous position of being unable to recognize a sincere momentum toward a comprehensive peace settlement in the region that is to their eventual benefit. We find such evidence not only in their attitude toward our proposals, but in recent actions taken with regard to the seizure of land on the West Bank for new settlements. We are afraid that part of past US appropriations, as well as the fiscal year 1980 appropriation of \$785 million for economic assistance, may be implicated in providing the resources for such a settlement policy. We have no hard evidence of this, however, since our fact-finding mission to Israel was aborted.

I would stress that our objectives in initiating a peace dialogue would appear to be in the direct interest of the economic viability of the State of Israel. For, recent indications are that Israel's annual oil bill is at \$1.5 billion and growing, that its economy is wracked by triple-digit inflation, that military expenditures take up one-third of its annual budget, that its balance of payments deficit is at a record \$4.5 billion for 1979, and that the in-

terest on its loans, now at \$2.2 billion will climb to \$2.6 billion by 1982 (*Business Week*, October 8, 1979, p. 46). There is a serious question at stake of how long the Israeli government can go without some normalization with its neighbours. A settlement of the Palestinian question and how long the United States may essentially be counted on to provide the buffer to this growing problem of Israel's economic health are key issues pursuant to a settlement.

Finally, we believe, quite apart from the specific response by both sides to our proposals, that our mission was successful in sowing the seeds of peace among parties which are at war, by bridging the chasm of violence with an earnest and sincere appeal to end the violence on behalf of the real victims of warfare. But we were also successful in dramatizing the evils of a backward foreign policy and the need to move beyond worn-out formulations and promises which are blocking a solution. And, last but not least, we were successful in illustrating by our mission, that we take seriously the material costs to us as Black Americans in any area of the world where the United States has a vital stake and that we will not be silenced or excluded from participation in those decisions which affect our lives and the well-being of this country.

CONCLUDING STATEMENT

The initiatives taken by Dr. Joseph E. Lowery, and me, to achieve peace through non-violence in the Middle East, have become the source of great controversy here in the United States. This, of course, is not the first time that we, in the SCLC, have run into controversy over the assertion of our right to speak out on questions of our Nation's foreign policy. On April 4, 1967, our president, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., took a stand on the Vietnam war. He said the time had come for us to abandon violent strategies

for achieving peace in Southeast Asia. The bombs dropped in Vietnam would explode in our own economy, he warned. The time has come, he said, for us to recognize Red China with her 700 million people and negotiate with her as the key to fashioning a just and lasting peace in Southeast Asia.

For having the audacity to speak out on his religious, moral, political, and economic convictions, Dr. King was denounced with the same criticisms that have been directed at Dr. Lowery and myself today: "You have no right to interfere with US foreign policy. You are incompetent to address the subject. You are dividing our Nation. You must have ulterior motives that are related to money. You're trying to grab headlines."

We have heard them all before. Martin did not live to see the impeccable logic and the profound wisdom of his position vindicated. One year to the day later, on April 4, 1968, he was killed by an assassin's bullet in Memphis, Tennessee. Four years later, President Richard M. Nixon affirmed the wisdom of recognizing and communicating with Red China, but only after we had lost the lives of 50,000 of our precious American youth and wasted hundreds of millions of our taxpayers' money that built no homes, provided no health care, educated none of our young and cared for none of our elderly on limited incomes; and only after we had set in motion a spiralling stagflation, the effects of which we are still feeling today.

When Dr. King was troubled by the storm of reaction to his peace initiative of 1967, I shared with him the words of a Methodist minister who said: "On some issues, cowardice asks the question: is it safe? And vanity asks the question: is it popular? Expediency asks the question: is it politic? But conscience asks the question: is it right? "

Dr. Martin Luther King then and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference now takes its stand for peace

through non-violence, not because it is safe or popular or politic, but because conscience tells us that it is right. We call upon men and women of goodwill of every faith to take up the challenge of Pope John Paul II by making direct appeals, as we have, to the PLO and to Israel to end the violence and go to the peace table prepared to recognize the right of the other to peace within secure borders of a homeland. We call upon Catholics, Protestants, Muslims, Jews, and humanists alike to take such a moral initiative not because it is safe, or popular or politic, but because conscience tells you it is right.

APPENDIX E

STATEMENT OF THE SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE FOLLOWING ITS MIDDLE EAST PEACE INITIATIVE, DR. JOSEPH E. LOWERY, PRESIDENT, HONOURABLE WALTER E. FAUNTROY, CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF DIRECTORS, SEPTEMBER 21, 1979.

This mission to Lebanon began in the crisis of August 15, as a consequence of the resignation of UN Ambassador Andrew Young. The SCLC meeting at its Annual Convention in Norfolk, Virginia, resolved to support the courageous stand taken by Ambassador Young.

This resulted in a meeting on August 20th, with the UN Observer for the PLO, Mr. Zahdi Labib Terzi, and an invitation by Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the PLO to meet with him in Lebanon. We accepted his invitation in the SCLC tradition of non-violence and brotherhood. We accepted it out of an understanding of the plight of oppressed people everywhere, and we dedicated ourselves to contributing to the peace process in the Middle East by attempting a ministry of reconciliation.

To this end, an SCLC delegation composed of the following persons went to

Lebanon for the period of September 17 through September 21, 1979.

Dr. Joseph E. Lowery, President, Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

The Honourable Walter E. Fauntroy (D., D.C.) Chairman of the SCLC Board.

Mrs. Evelyn Lowery.

Mr. C.T. Vivian, Acting Executive Director.

Mr. Albert Sampson, SCLC Programme Director.

Mr. Clifton B. Smith, Administrative Assistant, Rep. Fauntroy.

Mr. Harry T. Gibson, Board of Global Ministers, United Methodist Church.

Dr. Ronald Walters, Professor of Political Science, Howard University.

Mr. Samuel Yette, Professor of Communications, Howard University.

Ms. Elaine Tomlin, SCLC Staff Photographer.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

We believe that our mission has been successful because we went as Children of God, carrying a message of peace through non-violence which was heard by many of the parties to the conflict. This seed of peace through non-violence which we were able to plant through face to face and faith to faith dialogue is, we believe, the only means by which we can arrive at a just and lasting peace in Lebanon and the rest of the Middle East.

We had the opportunity to meet with leaders of the Lebanese government including President Elias Sarkis, Premier Salim al-Hoss, Foreign Minister Fuad Boutros, and Deputy Speaker of the House Munir Abu Fadel. In our discussions with each of them, three themes were evident: first, there was enthusiastic acceptance of our proposed process for the achievement of peace through non-violence; second, there was a revealing picture of the little recognized impact of the war on Lebanon itself and the misery it has brought to her suffering people;

third, there was strong support for the human rights of the Palestinians to self-determination and a homeland, and recognition of the responsibility of other Arab States, the great powers and the international community.

FACT-FINDING

In order to accomplish our mission, we engaged ourselves — with the hospitality of our host, the PLO — in an effort to discover the factual situation as it affects the status of the Palestinians in Lebanon, and the impact of the Palestinian problem upon the Lebanese people. We begin, of course, with the fact that Palestinians are stateless refugees in Lebanon, reaching an estimated 600,000 because of their forcible expulsion from their original homeland in what is now Israel.

THE STATUS OF PALESTINIANS IN LEBANON

We learned, first, that Palestinians have no homeland and, therefore, are citizens of no country, having no national identity and no rights in the host country wherein they reside. In Lebanon, because of this, they are not able to prove their parentage when they are born, for their births are not recorded. Their marriages are not documented nor can they be buried in their own plots when they die.

The violence, which continues this condition, was clearly visible on our visit to Damour where savage and destructive bombing had turned principal villages into a refugee camp, and where because of continued bombing, the camp became a ghost town. We also visited refugee camps in South Lebanon, such as at Nabatiyeh where Palestinians continue to live in fear and poverty. We witnessed the urban despair of refugees in and around Beirut itself, Palestinian and Lebanese as well; for there are an estimated 250,000 Lebanese citizens who have been made refugees by the bombing in the South.

And to our outrage, we saw unmistakable evidence of the use of American weapons on non-military targets.

MEETING WITH YASSER ARAFAT

Our special host was, of course, Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the PLO, with whom we met to discuss the SCLC peace proposal for a moratorium on violence. In this historic meeting, Mr. Arafat shared several things with us:

(1) The historic causes of the conflict had turned the Palestinian people into refugees throughout the Middle East, including Lebanon.

(2) His desire for a just peace; but the need to defend his people against the forcible occupation of Palestinian land and the bombing and other military operations in South Lebanon.

(3) His disappointment at the degree of military and economic support provided by the United States to Israel, and the use of US weapons by Israel on the Palestinian people.

(4) His opposition to the Camp David formula, which excludes self-determination for the Palestinian people, and his support for UN resolution 3236 which recognizes the Palestinian right as well as that of the Israelis to a sovereign state. Mr. Arafat supports that resolution.

(5) His previous declaration of a cease-fire in March, 1978 at the urging of UN Secretary-General Waldheim, and Israel's violation of it shortly thereafter.

We are proud to announce that despite his strong reservations to again declare a cease-fire, Mr. Arafat has agreed to give our proposal serious consideration, take it up at the next meeting of the PLO Council and get back to us with a response within a week. SCLC is highly gratified by this initial response of Mr. Arafat and looks forward with prayerful anticipation to receiving his response to our proposal.

FULL PERSPECTIVE

In attempting to apply its proposals

for a moratorium on violence to all parties to the conflict, the SCLC met with other elements and individuals such as Phalangist Party President Pierre Gemayel, the Lebanese Islamic Council, the Lebanese National Movement, and Mr. Gabriel Hadeed of the Middle East Council of Churches. Our approach has always called for an even-handed emphasis on non-violence as a proven approach to peace, and in this regard, we learned from these meetings the complexity of the problem, but also the great hope for a comprehensive peace settlement if all sides will genuinely try our non-violent approach.

In light of this, we are sorely disappointed at the negative response to our request for dialogue with the Israeli government. However, if the Israeli government does not wish to hear our proposals for a moratorium on violence, and to discuss our moral initiative for peace, then the responsibility for the deficit is theirs. It shall in no way, however, deter us from the aggressive pursuit of peace with justice for all persons in the Middle East.

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

The SCLC recognizes a profound and continuing responsibility to attempt to contribute to a just peace in the Middle East, and in that respect, we shall initiate the following course of action:

(1) We shall be holding a series of educational forums in at least ten cities across the country on World Peace, Middle East problems and their relationship to the Black community, and our continuing struggle for human rights. We have invited Mr. Yasser Arafat to speak at the first of these meetings and he has indicated a willingness to do so.

(2) We shall call upon the entire religious community to observe a Worldwide Day of Prayer in order that seeds of peace through non-violence that have now been planted may take root and grow in the

hearts of all who are concerned about human suffering and the achievement of peace with justice.

(3) We have asked the Chairman of our national board, the Reverend Congressman Walter E. Fauntroy to make full report of our fact-finding mission of reconciliation to the Congress. Moreover, we will seek meetings with the President, the Secretary of State, the Congressional Black Caucus, relevant Members of the US House and Senate and UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim.

The SCLC strongly believes in the integrity of this mission, in the degree to

which it has broadened and deepened our knowledge of Middle East problems, and in the extent to which it has confirmed the relevance and viability of the peace process we originally espoused. We shall, therefore, reaffirm our commitment and redouble our efforts to seek peace through non-violence in the Middle East.

Finally, we express again our deep and heartfelt appreciation to our brothers and sisters, the Palestinian and Lebanese people and their leaders, for their understanding of our mission and for the human bonds we have forged in our common struggle for peace with justice.