

With War, How?

CAWTAR realised that Arab adolescents are against war in its very notion. Yet, views on war vary. In fact, most of the adolescents consider it as necessary to retain the Palestinian occupied territories. Nadia, 16, from Egypt said: "No war is good... but sometimes war is necessary. For instance, can the Palestinians retain their lands without war?" she wondered from a moral point of view. That is solidarity with the victim and condemnation of the aggressor to morally justify the Palestinian resistance. For this reason, Achraf (18 years/Lebanon) said, "the issue with Israel is no longer a matter of war because it is an occupying state. I am with the resistance and with the recovery of all lands."

Mustapha (17 years/ Lebanon) who experienced the Israel occupation and was witness to the Qana massacre in 1996, agrees with him, pointing out that wars take place because of a country's oppression on another...any occupied nation should refuse occupation and revolt against it." Despite the oppression suffered from the Palestinian people, adolescents do not change their opinion in refusing wars. They rather make a distinction between war and resistance to defend the homeland. This opinion is not arbitrary as adolescents are strongly convinced from listening to adults and

watching the satellite channels but still searching for the logical reasons for the aggression as such. For this reason, each adolescent is trying to do anything and give assistance. In this respect, Nermine (18 years/Egypt) said, "what is happening in Palestine drives everybody crazy. You watch television and wish to smash it because we are not able to do any thing. We donated only food and clothes. They distributed manifestos among us, which we put up in the school. What can we do? I do not know. I think people should give assistance to them, yet, this is also difficult." Dana (17 years/ Lebanon) said "I am deeply affected by the situation in Palestine, I cry a lot when I see the massacres and cannot watch the television. Had I had the possibility to carry out a suicide attack I would not have hesitated? Yet, I feel I am very far from Palestine." Fadwa (16 years/ Tunisia) goes further than that hoping to offer an army to the Palestinian people to defend themselves...a very deep concern among adolescents which turned into a deep anger which was translated by Chaddad (16 years/ Yemen) saying: "I wish I could join Hamas movement and fight in Palestine because who dies there is a martyr as he is fighting against infidels." As for Oussama (18 years/Yemen), he said: "seeing that The United States had declared war on Afghanistan, we should be involved in an Islamic war against crusaders..."

Always for peace

Be they against war or with resistance and the self-defence, Arab adolescents yearn for peace, and dream of peace. They want to contribute to restoring peace in different parts of the world. For this reason, Yasmine (15 years/ Bahrain) said I wish I would have a superpower to stop wars because their reasons are meaningless and they destroy and kill." Ibtissam (18 years/Morocco) said "I dream of peace and I hope to see humans living without lies nor hypocrisy and that people would seek the good for their Muslim, Christian and Jewish brothers as all are equal."

Farouk (16 years/Yemen) agrees with that saying "I hope that peace would prevail in the world and that every body would be happy and all enemies keep distant, I mean Israelis keep distant from the Palestinians and vice versa and everybody live in peace."

Due to the great aspiration of adolescents to peace and their fear of the difficulty of its restoration, Warda (16 years/ Egypt) draws the attention to the danger of becoming used to seeing the daily media images of killing, saying "After a while we will feel that what is happening is normal. I think the most horrible thing is to consider killing people a normal act..."



The Adolescents of Cawtar's Report Some against the war... others with the resistance... all for peace

Generations of adolescents and youth in the Arab world witnessed wars and conflicts, some of them participated and the others were among the victims. From occupation and victories to defeats and setbacks, the triggering of war and its imposition on the region differs but its impact remains great on Arab societies and especially among children, adolescents and youth.

The new generation of Arab adolescents and youth is surrounded by wars in different parts of the region. Wars are broadcasted by satellite channels and the continuously talked about in the Arab street, at homes and schools and even in leisure and sports areas... Yet, we as adults speak on behalf of children and youth and adolescents, discussing the effects of war on them and forgetting that they are the present and the future of the region.

Aware of that, the Center of Arab Women for Training and Research "Cawtar" initiated to create a forum for Arab adolescents to express their views and even if they keep silent it would be at least a different expression of their opinions and ideas... The second Arab Women Development Report entitled "Arab Adolescent Girl: Realities and Prospects" was the base which spurred an electronic bulletin "Ado On Line".

When offered the opportunity, adolescents spoke about both expected and unexpected issues. They talked about their families, schools, puberty, love, sex, identity and self-image, politics, war and peace...

About war, they said we refuse it, but in other cases they accepted and wished to participate in it... they yearned for peace and expressed hopes which might not come true unless all weapons will be wiped out and peace is restored... To avoid repeating the same mistake, CAWTAR published the testimonies of Arab adolescents from seven Arab countries: Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Lebanon, Egypt, Bahrain and Yemen.



Against the War... Why?

It is worth noting that the field study, which was part of the Report on Arab adolescent, was conducted in a period, which coincided the attacks on New York, and Washington, the Palestinian Intifadha, the war in Afghanistan and the threat of war in Iraq. For this reason, this field study revealed a lot of feelings and

ideas of adolescents which should be taken into consideration in the context of these political transitions experienced by the world, and which indicate the importance of mapping out the existing political orientations and crystallizing an objective cultural discourse which would protect adolescents and the society from the recurrence of the vicious circle of violence which the region experiences over 18 years.

adolescents said:

"War is a destructive act and should not be a means used by humans to reach their targets. No one benefit from war."

"War is synonymous of irrationality and should never take place"

"Wars are bad and destroy societies and generations and affect the future generations."

"War is a horrible thing..."

"War is the worst human act as it leaves poverty and destruction"

"I hate wars because they are human tragedies"...

"I so much hate war that when I saw what happened in the United States I was deeply affected though I do not like America..."

These were the spontaneous responses of adolescents. All of them hate war from Morocco to Yemen, from Tunisia to Bahrain via Egypt and Lebanon.

They describe war as an evil and an inhuman and irrational action and insist that no one will benefit from war and that no body should use it as a means to reach self-interests. This is a decisive opinion and there is no difference here between east and west, poor and rich and girls and boys and even between Muslims and Christians.

Seeing that Arab adolescents are not living away from what is happening in the region and the international scene and because the impact of the war on society with all its effects on the media do not exclude children and adolescents, the latter backed wars in exceptional cases.