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QANA – A TOWN OF TWO TRAGEDIES

Summary. Qana is a town located in the south of Lebanon, 14 km from Tyre, inhabited mostly by Shi'ite Muslims and a small number of Christians. According to the research of Lebanese historian Dr. Youssef El Hourany, Qana is known to have been the place where Jesus turned water into wine.

However, for most Lebanese, Qana is associated with human suffering, martyrdom, and a symbol of resistance to Israel's military aggression. In 1996, 106 people were killed in the town as a result of shelling by Israeli artillery. Ten years later, Israel attacked Qana again in an airstrike that resulted in the deaths of 27 more. Sixteen years after the tragedy, it is more and more difficult to find the causes, the course of events and generally – what exactly happened in Qana. As a participant and witness of those events, it is the author's aim to revive the memory of the tragic fate of the inhabitants of that small town in southern Lebanon.

Keywords: Hezbollah, Qana, Lebanon, Grapes of Wrath, Second Lebanon War

Qana – history

Qana is a town located in southern Lebanon, on the route from Tyre to Tebnine. In Tyre, a town inscribed on the World Heritage List, there are many monuments dating back to long before the birth of Christ. In its vicinity, as well as in the vicinity of Saida (Sidon), located slightly to the north, one can find places that testify to the rich history of these lands, such as the ancient city of Sarepta. Qana, located 95 km from Beirut, as a commune (*baladijjat*) currently (according to the 2007 census) has a population of 20 000 and is a part of the administrative unit of the district (*kada*) of Tyre. Along with other municipalities, it forms the Federation of Tyre (Arabic: *Sour*) District

Municipalities. The Commune Council consists of eighteen representatives of the local community, led by the mayor.¹

In the past, due to its proximity to Tyre, Qana was within the Lebanese Phoenician Trail. Qana, sometimes called “Qana El-Jalil” (*Jalil* – Arabic term for Galilee) is primarily associated with one of the miracles performed by Jesus – turning water into wine during a wedding. This view, based on the accounts of Eusebius of Caesarea, a theologian and Christian historian, was promulgated by a researcher of the Coptic Church in Egypt, Martiniano Pellegrino Roncaglia, in his study *In the Footsteps of Jesus, the Messiah, in Phenicia/Lebanon* published by The Arab Institute for East and West Studies Beirut,² as well as by Dr. Youssef El Hourany, Lebanese historian and archaeologist, in his study *Cana of Galilee in South Lebanon*.³ According to Dr. Hourany, the evidence for the connection of this place with the biblical event are 13 statues carved in the rock (Hourany claims that they represent Christ and his twelve disciples), a cave where the first persecuted Christians are believed to have sheltered, and three stone vats discovered there in the 1960s. In 1972 Hourany collected documentation that supported his theory. However, further research became impossible due to the outbreak of civil war.⁴

After the civil war, the prominent Lebanese politician Nabih Berii (a Shi‘ite Muslim, member of Amalm and long-time chairman of the Chamber of Deputies) became involved in popularizing this place as important not only to Christians, but to the entire community of Lebanon. The results of the research of Lebanese archaeologists were also presented at the Vatican⁵ at the end of 1993. However, these activities were not accepted by the Shi‘ite majority living in Qana and its surroundings. Pope John Paul II, after taking into consideration the importance that the cities of Lebanon had in the Holy Bible (Tyre and Saida), proclaimed

¹ *Qana*, libandata, 7th December 2017, <https://www.libandata.org/en/towns/qana> (access: 10 XI 2020).

² M.P. RONCAGLIA, *In The Footsteps of Jesus, The Messiah, In Phenicia/Lebanon*, Beirut 2004.

³ Y. HOURANY, *Cana of Galilee in South Lebanon*, [http://youssefhourany.com/cana-of-galilee.html#prettyPhoto\[portfolio\]/24](http://youssefhourany.com/cana-of-galilee.html#prettyPhoto[portfolio]/24) (access: 10 XI 2020).

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ M. RASCHKA, *Postscript: Lebanese Site Claimed for Biblical Miracle: A professor disputes the traditional belief that Israel was where Jesus turned water into wine. Today, tourist dollars are at stake*, “Los Angeles Times”, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1994-02-01-wr-17668-story.html> (access: 10 XI 2020).

Lebanon “The Holy Land”⁶ as early as in May 1987. South Lebanon, therefore, is a part of “The Holy Land” – the land where Jesus lived, preached, performed miracles, and taught. The testimony of his presence in this region comes from the Gospel of Matthew (Mt 15–21)⁷ and the Gospel of Mark (Mk 7–24).⁸

The recognition of Qana as a holy place for Christians was objected to primarily by radical clergymen associated with pro-Iranian militias operating in Southern Lebanon. In South Lebanon at that time, there were already well-organized and well-functioning organizational structures of the Party of God (Hezbollah). The radical clergy associated with this organization threatened to build a mosque on this site.⁹ However, thanks to the involvement of, among others, Nabih Berri, founder of the National Heritage Council of South Lebanon, the place was saved from destruction and the idea was never implemented. Nowadays, information about Qana can be found in Lebanese tourist guides. Furthermore, the majority of the Shi‘ite community living in the area have changed their attitude towards the place and, together with the Greek Catholic minority, are working to popularize not only Qana but the entire region. An expression of this social activity was the foundation of The Cana Youth Association.¹⁰

South Lebanon

After the First Israeli-Arab War (the War of Independence 1948–1949), many Palestinians were forced to leave their land (*nakba*). Most of the Palestinian refugees took refuge in Lebanon, where the authorities helped them. Palestinians, supported by the governments of some Arab states, took advantage of the favourable political conditions in Lebanon and took military action against

⁶ M.P. RONCAGLIA, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

⁷ *Ewangelia wg św. Mateusza*, [in:] *Nowy Testament, Biblia Tysiąclecia Online*, Poznań 2003, <https://biblia.deon.pl/rozdzial.php?id=254> (access: 10 XI 2020).

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ M. RASCHKA, *Postscript: Lebanese Site Claimed for Biblical Miracle: A professor disputes the traditional belief that Israel was where Jesus turned water into wine. Today, tourist dollars are at stake*, “Los Angeles Times”, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1994-02-01-wr-17668-story.html> (access: 10 XI 2020).

¹⁰ Z. ANTONIOS, *Cana, miraculous and resistant*, “L’Orient Today”, <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1179064/cana-miraculous-and-resistant.html> (access: 10 XI 2020).

Israel. The military activity of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in the south of Lebanon led to the creation of a proverbial state within a state in this area (known as *Fatah Land*). In 1975 the situation in the entire country worsened as a result of the outbreak of civil war, which caused chaos in the state and loss of control over its territory. The problem affected the south of Lebanon too, which, dominated by Palestinian militants, became an arena of confrontation between PLO militants and the Israeli army.

On March 15, 1978, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) crossed the borders of Lebanon and took action to liquidate the bases of the Palestinian Liberation Organization.¹¹ As a part of the Operation Litani carried out by Israel, Israel's troops entered the territory of Lebanon as far as 25 km inwards, up to the Litani River. The zone occupied by Israel included Qana. Israeli authorities were forced to end the operation by the UN Security Council, which implemented Resolutions 425 and 426. In addition to calling for respecting Lebanon's territorial integrity, sovereignty, and political independence, and an immediate cessation of military operations, Israeli forces were ordered to retreat from South Lebanon and a decision was made to establish the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).¹² As part of the created forces, more than 5900 United Nations soldiers from ten countries, including Fiji, came to Lebanon. The main base of the Fijian contingent, which in September 1978 had 500 soldiers, was located in Qana.¹³ The headquarters of the UN peacekeeping forces, on the other hand, were located in Naqoura, a town near the border with Israel.¹⁴

The South Lebanon Army (SLA), formed with the support of Israel and led by major Saad Hadd, took power in the so-called "security zone" created by Israel. The borders of the "security zone" were not established and it included, among others, areas inhabited by Christians. Most of the members of the SLA

¹¹ The operation was a response to a massacre perpetrated by Palestinians in South Lebanon three days earlier. Upon reaching Israeli territory by sea, they hijacked a bus traveling along the coast near Tel Aviv. 37 people, including 17 children, were killed in the attack. *Coastal Road Massacre Takes Place*, CIE Center For Israel Education, <https://israeled.org/coastal-road-massacre> (access: 10 XI 2020).

¹² *Resolution 425 (1978) of 19 March 1978; Resolution 426 (1978) of 19 March 1978, United Nations*, [https://undocs.org/S/RES/425\(1978\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/425(1978)) (access: 10 XI 2020).

¹³ *Report of The Secretary-General on The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (for the period of 19 March to 13 September 1973)*, United Nations, <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-209970> (access: 10 XI 2020).

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

were recruited from Christians inhabiting the south of Lebanon.¹⁵ Despite that and the creation of a buffer zone, as well as the deployment of UN troops, the situation changed little. Suffering from the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, some of the Shi'ite Muslim population left the south of Lebanon *en masse* and settled on the outskirts of Beirut. These Shi'ite refugees saw Israel as responsible for such a turn of events. On June 6, 1982, Israel carried out another operation in Lebanon, called Operation Peace for Galilee. This invasion of Lebanon was a response to reoccurring terrorist attacks carried out from Lebanon's territory, as well as to the assassination carried out in Great Britain on the Israeli ambassador.¹⁶

During that period, members of the radical fraction of the Amal Movement's Shi'ite militia (*Afwaj al-Muqawamah al-Lubnaniyah*) took a series of actions aimed at both the Israeli troops stationed in South Lebanon (November 11th, 1982 – Tyre)¹⁷ and the American troops in Beirut (on 18th April 1983, 63 people died (of whom 32 were Lebanese workers of U.S. embassy; 17 were Americans – journalists or members of CIA); on October 23rd 1983, 241 American soldiers and 58 French soldiers died).¹⁸ The establishment of the Party of God (which originated from Amal) in 1985 was a result of the efforts of its radical members to create a religious state similar to Iran. Moreover, it was a response to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1978, the occupation of its southern part and the subsequent Operation Peace for Galilee. Undeniably, the support provided by Iran and Syria, which remained in conflict with Israel, were also of great importance.

In Lebanon itself, the situation led to radicalization among some of the Shi'ites. Local authorities ceased to function in the war-torn country. Qana, which had approximately 8000 inhabitants before the outbreak of the war (15% Christian and 85% Shi'ite Muslim), was deprived not only of authorities, but also of subsidies from the state. It should be emphasized that this situation continued long after the end of the war,¹⁹ which contributed to the growth of the authority of Shi'ite organizations, who organized charity collections and provided

¹⁵ M. BRYLEW, *Problemy i wyzwania współczesnego Libanu*, Toruń 2017, p. 35.

¹⁶ *Shlomo Argov, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, <https://mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFA-Archive/2003/Pages/Shlomo%20Argov.aspx> (access: 12 XI 2020).

¹⁷ The attack on the eight-story building in Tyre, which killed 91 people (soldiers and workers) on November 11th, 1982 was attributed to Shi'ite Ahmed Kasir, who was declared a martyr and was the first suicide bomber. A.S. GHORAYEB, *Hizbu'llab. Politics and Religion*, London 2002, p. 13.

¹⁸ H. JABER, *Hezbollah*, Warszawa 2001, p. 69.

¹⁹ L. VOLK, *Memorial and Martyrs in Modern Lebanon*, Bloomington 2010, p. 122.

help to residents in need. Two such organizations played a special role – Amal and the Party of God (Hezbollah), established in 1985, which treated South Lebanon as an area of struggle for influence and exempt from state control.

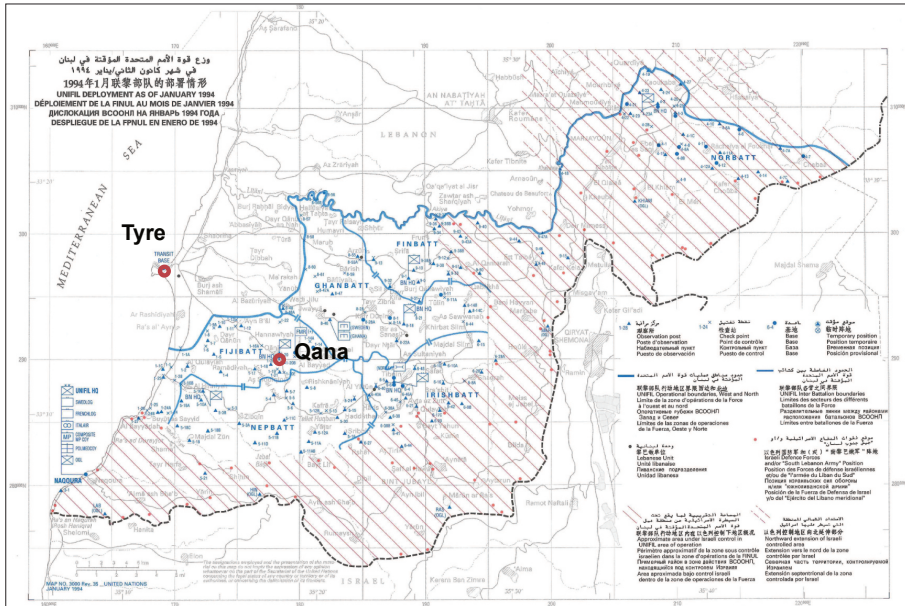


Fig. 1. Location of the United Nations Interim Forces in Lebanon and the zone controlled by the Israel Defense Forces and the South Lebanon Army (1994)

Source: Report of The Secretary-general on The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (for the period 21 July 1993 – 20 January 1994), Security Council, Distr. General, S/1994/62, 20th January 1994, <https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=en/S/1994/62> (access: 12 XI 2020)

Other conditions, including the ongoing civil war in Lebanon, were conducive to the extensive activities of Hezbollah, which, after the evacuation of members of the Palestinian Liberation Organization from Lebanon, took over its military role. In addition, those who were previously displaced to the north (of Beirut), mostly Shi'ites, began to return to South Lebanon. Initially of low intensity, the conflict between Israel and the armed wing of the Party of God grew stronger over time. The situation was worsened by the presence of Israeli soldiers who regularly patrolled the UN-controlled zone, created roadblocks, searched homes, and made arrests among the local community.

Israel maintained permanent military posts in the so-called security zone, the number of which was flexible.

The growing hostility of the southern inhabitants towards Israel and the South Lebanon Army was reported regularly by the UNIFIL peacekeeping command in reports to the UN Secretary General.²⁰ The Southerners' violent reactions of opposition to the actions of the occupant, resulted in, above all, arrests. One of the places where demonstrations took place frequently was Qana, where the headquarters of the Fijian peacekeeping battalion was located. In February 1984, during protests in Qana expressing opposition to antecedent arrests, one person was killed and two others were arrested.²¹ In June 1985, about 2000 people came to Qana in search of temporary shelter, escaping from the villages of Kafra and Jatar, which had been regularly attacked by the troops of the South Lebanese Army.²²

The reports prepared by UNIFIL on the security situation in South Lebanon indicated increased activity of armed resistance groups targeting Israeli and South Lebanese troops but rarely targeting UN soldiers. Firing and attacks were carried out with the use of small arms, grenade launchers, mortars, and Katyusha rockets. The combat strategy also included roadside improvised explosive devices and suicide bombings. In the second half of July 1986 alone, UN forces recorded about 11 such attacks in their area of responsibility; in August they recorded 20; in September, 21; and in November, 10.²³

An important topic raised in the reports on the situation in South Lebanon, a zone supervised by the United Nations Peacekeeping Forces, was the issue of shelling civilian buildings by the Israel Defence Forces and the South Lebanese Army, as well as firing at bases and facilities belonging to UNIFIL.

²⁰ *Report of The Secretary-General On The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (for period from 13 October to 9 April 1984)*, Security Council, Distr. General, S/16472, 9th April 1984, <https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=en/S/16472> (access: 13 XI 2020).

²¹ *Ibidem*.

²² *Report of The Secretary-General On The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (for period from 12 April to 10 October 1985)*, Security Council, Distr. General, S/17557, 25th October 1985, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/105850> (access: 13 XI 2020).

²³ *Report of The Secretary-General On The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (for period from 11 July 1986 to 11 January 1987)*, Security Council, Distr. General, S/1851, 12th January 1987, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/126360> (access: 13 XI 2020).

In a short period from the establishment of the United Nations Interim Forces in Lebanon until 1988, 153 people had been killed and 220 people had been injured from shelling, mines, and explosives.²⁴ In 1992 the number of casualties increased to 186 and wounded to 280.²⁵ Some of the IDF and SLA attacks on UNIFIL facilities and vehicles were provoked by armed groups attacking or firing in the immediate vicinity of UN posts. Such arguments were also used by the command of the Israel Defence Forces when explaining the armed incidents. Meanwhile, the command of the South Lebanon Army accused the UN peacekeeping forces of allowing such attacks.²⁶

It is worth noting that there was a 128-soldier unit of the Lebanese Army within the UN forces in southern Lebanon. Most of these soldiers were stationed in Tyre, Al Yatun, and Qana.²⁷ Lebanese soldiers conducted independent patrols and also accompanied the UN forces during their tasks. In the following years, the cooperation of the UN with the Lebanese Army was expanded, which resulted in the gradual transfer of control over certain sectors supervised by UNIFIL. However, this did not apply to those zones located within the so-called “Israeli-controlled zone,” which were designated by IDF posts (whose number fluctuated). This did not include Qana, which, as part of the UNIFIL operational zone, was under the protection of a Fijian battalion.²⁸ Nevertheless, close contacts were maintained with the local community and the Lebanese military police, which maintained their posts in Qana, Tebnine, and Jwaya.

²⁴ *Report of The Secretary-General On The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (for period from 23 January to 25 July 1988)*, Security Council, Distr. General, S/20053, 25th July 1988, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/42943> (access: 13 XI 2020).

²⁵ *Report of The Secretary-General On The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (for the period 22 January 1992 to 21 July 1992)*, Security Council, Distr. General, S/24341, 21st July 1992, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/147305> (access: 13 XI 2020).

²⁶ *Report of The Secretary-General On The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (for period from 11 July 1986 to 11 January 1987)*, Security Council, Distr. General, S/1851, 12th January 1987, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/126360> (access: 13 XI 2020).

²⁷ *Report of The Secretary-General On The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (for period from 23 January to 25 July 1988)*, Security Council, Distr. General, S/20053, 25th July 1988, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/42943> (access: 13 XI 2020).

²⁸ *Report of The Secretary-General On The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (for the period 22 January 1992 to 21 July 1992)*, Security Council, Distr. General, S/24341, 21st July 1992, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/147305> (access: 15 XI 2020).

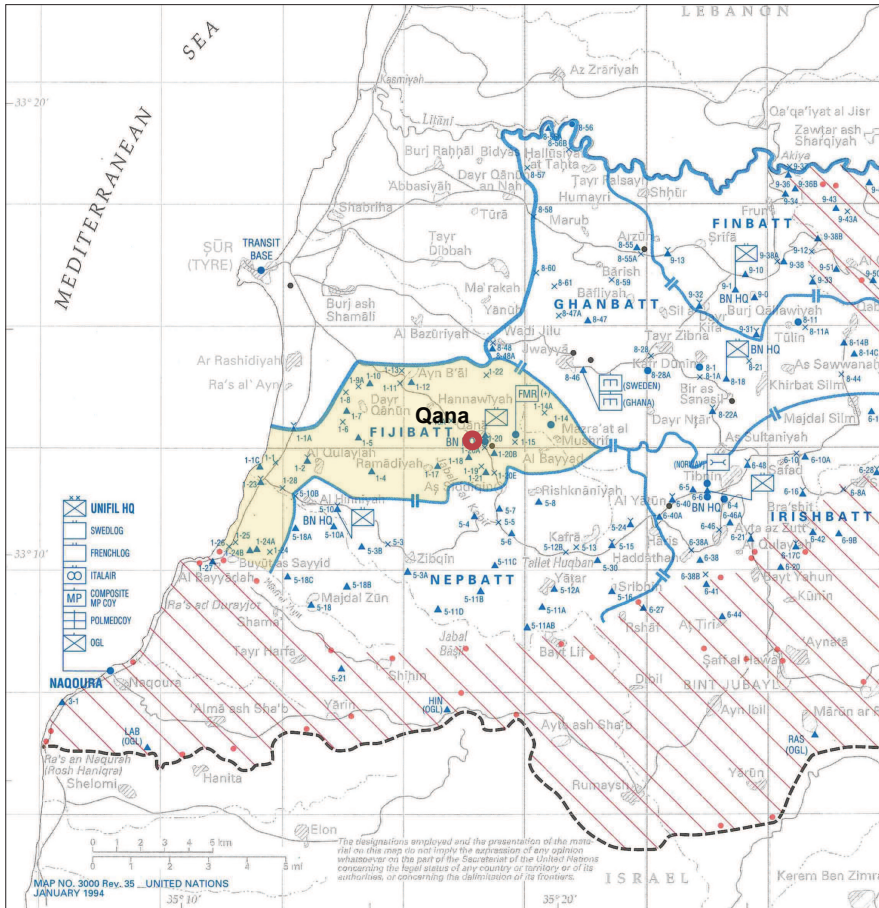


Fig. 2. Qana and its position in the area of responsibility of the Fiji Battalion in January 1994
 Source: *Report of The Secretary-general on The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (for the period 21 July 1993 – 20 January 1994)*, Security Council, Distr. General, S /1994/62, 20th January 1994, <https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=en/S/1994/62> (access: 13 XI 2020)

Tensions increased in February 1992 when the secretary general of the Party of God, Sheikh Abbas Musawi, was killed in an attack by the Israel Defence Forces. Musawi’s wife and son were also killed in the attack. This Israeli operation led to an escalation of military action on both sides. The fire exchange caused a series of devastations in Lebanese cities in both the north and south of Lebanon.²⁹ In 1993 Israel carried out another operation, codenamed

²⁹ *Ibidem.*

Responsibility, launching airstrikes and artillery fire from both land and sea. These massive attacks did not cause major losses in the ranks of Hezbollah, but caused damage to infrastructure, agriculture, and caused over 200 000 people³⁰ to flee the dangerous zone. The harm done to the people of South Lebanon significantly contributed to the increase in sympathy for Hezbollah by not only the inhabitants themselves, but also by some representatives of the authorities.

The situation in South Lebanon remained largely unchanged, even after the agreement between Hezbollah and Israel. Reports to the Secretary General highlighted that the exchange of fire in the zone controlled by the United Nations Interim Forces in Lebanon, and the so-called Israeli “safe zone” continued. In the first half of 1995, the armed forces of Hezbollah carried out about 129 operations against the Israeli occupation forces. UNIFIL observation posts reported that, in response to these attacks, Israel fired more than 16 500 rocket, artillery, mortar, air, and armoured missiles³¹ in total over the same period.

In 1992–1996, Hezbollah increased its political activity. Amal competed with the Party of God for the votes of the people of Qana, especially the Shi‘ites. However, this did not change the fact that Qana, like other towns in the south of the country, still did not have legal local authorities.³² The only working office was the private home of a member of Amal, who forwarded the citizens’ requests to the Southern Council.³³

In the Secretary General’s report on the United Nations Interim Forces in Lebanon, the beginning of 1996 was noted as a period of increased activity by resistance groups against the Israeli occupation. In February and March, the Islamic Resistance (Hezbollah) launched a series of attacks against the Israel Defence Forces. Additionally, the report indicated an increased military activity of Amal and Palestinian fighters. UNIFIL observation posts recorded 24 armed incidents in February and 18 in March. A number of military operations were also carried out north of the Litani River.³⁴ As a result of roadside explosives

³⁰ H. JABER, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

³¹ *Report of The Secretary-General On The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (for the period 21 January 1992 to 19 July 1995)*, Security Council, Distr. General, S/1995/595, 19th July 1995, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/198728> (access: 13 XI 2020).

³² L. VOLK, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

³³ *Ibidem.*

³⁴ *Report of The Secretary-General On The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (for the period from 22 January 1996 to 20 July 1996)*, Security Council, Distr. General, S/1996/575, 20th July 1996, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/218489> (access: 13 XI 2020).

and suicide attacks, the number of killed and wounded Israeli soldiers increased. Military activity escalated in late March, when two men were killed by Israeli fire in the town of Jatar, near Qana. The conflict culminated in Operation Grapes of Wrath, carried out by the Israel Defence Forces on April 11–27, 1996. The operation was primarily a response to the military actions of the Party of God in both South Lebanon and northern Israel. Two hours later, Israel informed the then-Commander of the United Nations Interim Forces in Lebanon, General Stanisław Woźniak, about the start of the operation. The UNIFIL commander strongly opposed Israel's actions and called for the protection of civilians.

Israel attacked those localities and buildings that were strongly believed to have militants from the Party of God or were suspected of collaborating with them. Sectors controlled by UN soldiers from Fiji, Ghana, Nepal, Ireland, and Norway also came under heavy artillery fire. Over 400 000 South Lebanese residents left their homes and fled north. Those who remained sought refuge in the United Nations Interim Forces bases in Lebanon, located in the so-called “demarcation zone.” This was also the case with Qana, where the base and the Headquarters of the Fiji battalion were located. On April 18th, 1996, shortly after 2 p.m., the Fijian contingent, part of the United Nations Interim Forces in Lebanon, was attacked by Israeli artillery. At that time, more than 800 residents of Qana were at the base. Nearly 13 missiles equipped with proximity fuses fell on the UN barracks at checkpoint 1–20 and the Headquarters of the 19th Fiji Battalion,³⁵ where the residents of the town took refuge. Of the 106 victims killed, most were women and children. In addition, 120 people were injured. In total, according to the report of the Human Rights Organization, 154 civilians were killed and 351 injured during Operation Grapes of Wrath.³⁶

A report on the course of events was included in an annex dated May 1st, 1996 to the Military Adviser to the UN Secretary General, which concerned the shelling of the United Nations contingent in Qana on April 18th, 1996. Major General Franklin van Kappen arrived at the scene of the tragedy. The investigation focused mainly on determining the course of events and on finding out

³⁵ *FOCUS: Grapes Of Wrath: Our Peacekeepers Story*, FijiSun, <https://fijisun.com.fj/2015/04/18/focus-grapes-of-wrath-our-peacekeepers-story/> (access: 13 XI 2020).

³⁶ Report describes eight attacks by Israel's Defense Forces in South Lebanon that resulted in the highest death toll. *Israel/Lebanon “Operation Grapes of Wrath”. The Civilian Victims*, Human Rights Watch, September 1997, Vol. 9, No. 8(E), <https://www.hrw.org/reports/1997/isrleb/Isrleb.htm> (access: 13 XI 2020).

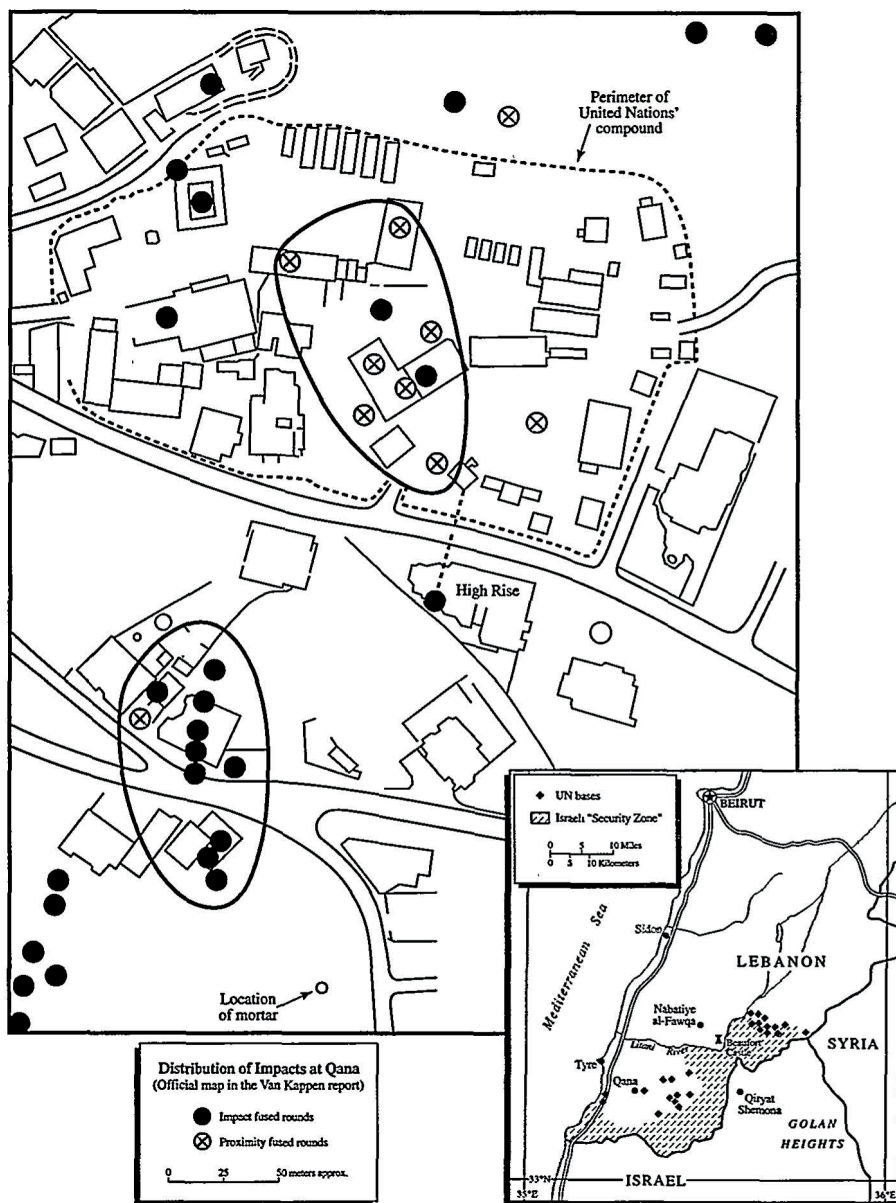


Fig. 3. Location of the UN base and the site of Israeli artillery fire
 Source: W.M. REISMAN, *The Lessons of Qana*, 22 *Yale J. Int'l L.* (1997),
<https://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/yjil/vol22/iss2/5> (access: 13 XI 2020)

who was responsible for the “Qana massacre.” According to the UN Report, between 12:00 and 14:00 on April 18th, 1996, Hezbollah fighters fired 2 or 3 rockets from a location approximately 350 meters south-east of the UN buildings. Between 12:30 and 13:00, another five rockets were launched from a location 600 meters south-east of the Fijian contingent base. The next attack came 15 minutes before the Israeli fire. About 6 mortars were fired from about 220 meters south-west of the centre of the UN base. According to the information obtained, the mortars were located in this place between 11:00 and 12:00. The UN forces did not take any steps to prevent their setting up. The failure of UNIFIL soldiers to act may have been influenced by earlier events, when one of the Fijian soldiers was shot in the chest during an attempt to stop the Party of God’s fighters from firing missiles.³⁷

The report indicated that the attack by the Israeli Defence Forces was split into two strikes, one focused on targets 100 m south of the UN base in a group of buildings where there was a mortar stand, the other focused on the middle of the United Nations’ compound. These versions were confirmed by on-site tests and the missile fragments found. In the conclusion of the report, Major General F. Van Kappen stated that it was unlikely that the firing of the Fiji battalion base in Qana was a result of technical errors and procedures (as presented by the Israeli side, which also blamed UNIFIL forces for the massacre of civilians). He did not, however, completely rule out such a possibility.³⁸

A report on the course of events, based on information collected in Lebanon and Israel between May and August, was also presented by the Human Rights Organization, which indicated that Hezbollah was also to blame for this tragedy. The Party of God’s militants had long used civil infrastructure and civilian areas as a protective shield, while failing to comply with the additional protocols of the *Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949, concerning the protection of victims of international armed conflicts (Protocol I) and protection of victims of international armed conflicts (Protocol II) (Article 51)*.³⁹ Some Qana residents

³⁷ Letter Dated 7 May 1996 From The Secretary. General Addressed to The President of The Security Council, United Nations, Distr. General, S/1996/337, 7th May 1996, <https://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/62D5AA740C14293B85256324005179BE> (access: 13 XI 2020).

³⁸ *Ibidem*.

³⁹ *Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949, relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I) and to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II), drawn in Geneva on June 8, 1977, “Journal of Laws” 1992, No. 41, item 17.*

also believed⁴⁰ that Hezbollah was partly responsible for the tragedy that took place in this small town.

The official funeral ceremony for the victims of the Israeli attack was held in Tyre in the area of the Hippodrome, due to the large number of participants – nearly 10 000 people – who attended the ceremony, conducted by Sheikh Muhammad Mahdi Shams ad-Din, chairman of the Supreme Shi'ite Council. In addition to Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and Chairman of the Chamber of Deputies Nabih Berri, there were also clergymen – representatives of all faiths and Lebanese political parties. L. Volk, in her study *Memorials and Martyrs in Modern Lebanon*, draws attention to the presence of diplomats from France, Italy, and Syria, and twelve soldiers of the United Nations representing all national contingents of UN peacekeeping forces. Addressing the gathered people, Sheikh Muhammad Mahdi Shams ad-Din spoke about the unification of all Lebanese and about the scale of the crime committed by Israel. During the ceremony, the then-Prime Minister of Lebanon, Rafik Hariri, declared the day of the tragedy in Qana, April 18th, as a National Day of Remembrance, and declared the creation of the “National Remembrance Committee on March 14th and April 18th.”⁴¹

The second part of the ceremony took place in Qana, where the bodies and remains of the dead were buried near the site of the tragedy. It was also there that the clergy representing various religions gathered and prayed with the local residents (mostly relatives of the deceased). Qana became a symbol of the martyrdom of Muslims and Christians⁴² and the centrepiece of Lebanese resistance against Israel. Banners and posters appeared at the memorial site, the content of which expressed not only the pain of the loss of loved ones, but also referred to the Holocaust or the Battle of Karbala, in which the grandson of the prophet Muhammad Hussein ibn Ali⁴³ died. Increasingly, however, the tragedy was used by Lebanese politicians to achieve their own goals.

⁴⁰ *Israel/Lebanon: “Operation Grapes of Wrath” – The Civilian Victims*, Human Rights Watch, 1st September 1997, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6a7e60.html> (access: 13 XI 2020).

⁴¹ L. VOLK, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p.128.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 137.

After the events at Qana, it was expected that sectarian and political divisions in society would begin to blur. Thousands of pilgrims⁴⁴ came every day to this small town, which before the tragedy had only 8000 inhabitants. For many of them, it was their first visit to this part of the country. Despite the fact that southern Lebanon was still controlled by Israel, Qana became a place of pilgrimage for people from all over the Middle East. The place was most likely visited by the daughter of the President of Iran, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.⁴⁵ Every year, on the day of the tragedy, ceremonies dedicated to the victims of the Israeli attack on Qana are held, with The Martyrdom Remembrance Committee in Qana in charge of their organisation. For several years the ceremony was chaired by Nabih Berri, Lebanese Parliament Speaker.

In 2000, Israel withdrew its troops from South Lebanon.⁴⁶ It was also at this time that Berri's wife, Randa Berri, was involved in organising ceremonials to commemorate the victims of the massacre. Randa Berri tried to make the ceremonials a history lesson for the younger generation. Another prominent figure committed to preserving the memory of Qana was Bahia Hariri (Rafik Hariri's sister), who wrote the slogan "We will never forget." With financial help from Syria and Qatar, the Qana Museum was built on the site where the victims of war were buried. The Museum used to be festively decorated on the occasion of various events and ceremonials.⁴⁷ According to L. Volk's description, the *al-shahid* formula was introduced before the surnames of all victims, and

⁴⁴ J. WALSH, *Qana. Anatomy of Tragedy. Did Israel Wittingly Shell A U.N. Base In Qana? A Disturbing Investigation Is Hotly Disputed*, Radio Islam, https://www.islam-radio.net/historia/zionism/qana_time.html (access: 13 XI 2020).

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*. Lebanese media reported on Faizy Rafsanjani's visit and her meetings with Prime Minister R. Hariri and Hassan Nasrallah, Secretary General of Hezbollah. *News from Beirut May 27 1997*, News@Lebanon.Com, <http://www.lebanon.com/news/local/1997/5/27.htm> (access: 13 XI 2020).

⁴⁶ On April 17th, 2000, Israel's Minister of Foreign Affairs sent a formal note to the Secretary General of the planned withdrawal of troops from Lebanon in July 2000. In fact, Israel began withdrawing its troops from May 16th, 2000. The UN Secretary General informed the Security Council that on 16th June, the verification process was completed confirming the complete withdrawal of forces in accordance with Resolution 425. *Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (for the period from 17 January to 17 July 2000)*, Security Council, Distr.: General 20th July 2000, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/419227> (access: 13 XI 2020).

⁴⁷ S. BONSEN, *Martyr Cults and Political Identities in Lebanon "Victory or Martyrdom" in the Struggle of the Amal Movement*, Wiesbaden 2020, p. 118.

the entire tombstone inscription ended with the phrase “was martyred (*istash-had*) in the Qana massacre on April 18th, 1996.”⁴⁸ The gradual politicization of the memorial site by Amal, associated with Syria, resulted in a decrease in the number of visitors and reduced interest in the tragedy of the inhabitants of Qana, who, deprived of state aid, faced a lack of money to rebuild their houses and damaged infrastructure.

After Israel left Lebanon, the situation did not improve. Hezbollah moved its operations significantly closer to the border of the country, which made it easier for the members of the organization both to perform attacks on the northern part of Israel, but also to infiltrate Israeli territory. Of course, Israel did not remain passive and responded accordingly to the threat. Although the Lebanese government had deployed a Joint Security Force to the south of the country, the actual control of the south was left to Hezbollah.⁴⁹ For a time, Hezbollah’s main activities focused on Israeli forces occupying the disputed territory of the Sheba farms. In 2005, the UN forces stationed in the south recorded an escalation of conflicts along the border (*Blue Line*). The increase in military activity resulted from – among others – the fact that Hezbollah increased the number of checkpoints at the border, taking control of the roads, including the road from Tyre to Naqoura (a town located on the border with Israel).⁵⁰

After Israel’s withdrawal from Lebanon, the zone controlled by the United Nations Transitional Armed Forces in Lebanon no longer included Qana. There was a Lebanese Army Liaison Office in Qana, which was transferred to Naqoura in 2005. The town itself was still in a difficult economic situation, as expressed by the mayor who accused the central authorities of total neglect of the town.⁵¹

2005 was a distinct year for Lebanon for two reasons: the terrorist attack on former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri on December 14th contributed to mass

⁴⁸ L. VOLK, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

⁴⁹ *Interim report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon*, Security Council, Distr.: General 31st October 2000, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/426089> (access: 13 XI 2020).

⁵⁰ *Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (for the period from 21 January 2005 to 20 July 2005)*, Security Council, Distr.: General 21st July 2005, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N05/420/36/PDF/N0542036.pdf?OpenElement> (access: 14 XI 2020).

⁵¹ L. VOLK, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

protests (the Cedar Revolution), which then resulted in the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon in April 2005.⁵² Although Lebanon became a country free from the presence of foreign troops, it was still not free from divisions, which became even more tangible after Rafik Hariri's death.

Second massacre at Qana

In January 2006, due to the prevailing situation and the ongoing tensions between Israel and Hezbollah, the Secretary General UN once again recommended extending the mandate of the UN forces in Lebanon.⁵³ The turning point was the missile strike at the position of the Israeli Defence Forces near the city of Zarit and the crossing of the *Blue Line* by Hezbollah fighters to attack an Israeli patrol, which resulted in the kidnapping of two soldiers and the death of three others.⁵⁴ On July 12th, 2006, the Israeli Defence Forces launched a massive attack on selected targets in South Lebanon and rest of the country, including Beirut.⁵⁵ The strategy used resembled that of Operation Grapes of Wrath. Most cities were cut off as roads, bridges, and the airport were bombed. All ports were blocked and petrol stations were destroyed. Israel, using publicity and dropping leaflets, warned people in South Lebanon to avoid sites that would be associated with the presence of Hezbollah. These sites were on the Israeli target list.

Qana was one of the places of possible attack, which, similarly to other places in South Lebanon, was subject to military actions. However, Qana had been outside the UN's area of responsibility since 2000, as at that time it had a population of only about 12 000 (mainly shopkeepers, farmers, and

⁵² *Situation in the Area, January–July 2005*, UNIFIL, <https://unifil.unmissions.org/unifil-background#para15> (access: 14 XI 2020).

⁵³ *Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (For the period from 21 January 2006 to 18 July 2006)*, Security Council, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/437/22/IMG/N0643722.pdf?OpenElement> (access: 14 XI 2020).

⁵⁴ *Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (For the period from 21 January 2006 to 18 July 2006)*, Security Council, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/437/22/IMG/N0643722.pdf?OpenElement> (access: 14 XI 2020).

⁵⁵ This was the beginning of the Second Lebanon War, which lasted 34 days and ended with the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1701 on August 11th, 2006.

traders). The UN's nearest post was located in al-Hiniyah, about 20 km away.⁵⁶ During the first days of the Israeli operation, all access and exit roads from this small town were destroyed. According to the Israeli army, Hezbollah's regional headquarters were located in the town and the most missile attacks were carried out from there (the IDF indicated that there had been about 150 missile attacks in total). Moreover, according to Israeli services, it was alleged that there was a regional command centre responsible for planning operations against Israel in Qana.⁵⁷

The targets of the Israeli attack on Qana were sites identified as missile sites. There is a consensus however, that residents had been called earlier to leave their homes and move away from the positions identified as fire points. The first missile attack of the town took place on July 29th, 2006, at around 18:00. On July 30th, 2006 at 1:00 in the morning, after warning residents about the planned operation, Israel launched another air attack on Qana. In one of the buildings on the target list (in the IDF's opinion there was a weapons warehouse there), the two families of Shaloub and Hashim took refuge. There were 63 people in total in the building, mostly women and children. As a result of the attack, the building was destroyed. According to a Human Rights Watch (HRW) report, 28 people died (including one in hospital), out of whom 16 were children.⁵⁸ According to HRW findings, 22 people took refuge in the basement.

The whole event was reported by one of the survivors, Muhammad Mahmud Shaloub, who said that at that time there were no Hezbollah fighters in the vicinity of the building. The lack of evidence of militant Hezbollah presence in the vicinity of the building on that day was confirmed by research conducted by Human Rights Watch representatives along with journalists and representatives of emergency services present in the city at the time. No bodies of militants from the Party of God were found. It is worth noting that evacuation from Qana before the attack was not possible, as it was cut off from other towns. In addition, some of Qana's residents were elderly, without money or means

⁵⁶ *Letter dated 7 August 2006 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council*, Security Council, Distr.: General 7th August 2006, <https://unifil.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/626.40d7de06-6317-4bd5-ade4-10505d7035b1.pdf> (access: 14 XI 2020).

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁸ *Civilian Casualties in Lebanon during the 2006 War*, Human Rights Watch, 5 September 2007, <https://www.hrw.org/node/255321/printable/print> (access: 18 XI 2020).

of transport. According to witnesses of the tragedy, Israel's strategy of cutting off cities ruled out the possibility of deploying rocket launchers in the town.⁵⁹

The first rescue teams did not arrive at the scene of the tragedy until about 7:00 in the morning on July 30th. The Lebanese Red Cross and UNIFIL's medical services were involved in the rescue operation.⁶⁰

The deaths of innocent people in Qana sparked massive demonstrations in Beirut. Many participants of the demonstrations expressed their support for Hezbollah. A mass funeral for 30 people (27 bombing victims and 3 Hezbollah fighters who died near Qana and were not linked to the death of civilians) took place on August 18th, 2006 in Qana. Became involved in the organization of funeral ceremonies. Of the 27 victims of the Israeli attack, only one was buried with the flag of Hezbollah. According to the victim's family, 17-year-old Ali Ahmad Mahmud Shaloub was a sympathizer of the Party of God. The remaining coffins were wrapped with Lebanese flags, symbolizing a death for Lebanon. Several thousand people took part in the funeral ceremonies in Qana.⁶¹

In total, according to HRW, 1109 people⁶² died during the entire conflict, mostly civilians. About 4500 were injured and a million people fled their homes. Israel fired and dropped nearly 7000 rockets and bombs in Lebanon. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimated that about one million people were displaced and seeking refuge.⁶³

After the Second Lebanon War, another monument was created in Qana to commemorate the victims of the war with Israel in 2006. This time its creators were members of the families of the dead and Hezbollah (two members of this organization were buried there), who provided financial support. On the walls surrounding the cemetery are images of people killed in the war. L. Volk draws

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁰ *Letter dated 7 August 2006 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council*, Security Council, Distr.: General 7th August 2006, <https://unifil.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/626.40d7de06-6317-4bd5-ade4-10505d7035b1.pdf> (access: 18 XI 2020).

⁶¹ L. VOLK, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

⁶² In *the Secretary General's report of September 12th, 2006*, which cited official data, 1187 people were killed and 4092 were injured. *Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006)*, Security Council, 12th September 2006, https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2006/730 (access: 18 XI 2020).

⁶³ *Civilian Casualties in Lebanon during the 2006 War*, Human Rights Watch, 5th September 2007, <https://www.hrw.org/node/255321/printable/print> (access: 18 XI 2020).

attention to the fact that while in the case of commemorating the victims of the first massacre in Qana there were references to both Islam and Christianity, in the place commemorating the second massacre in Qana, there were no references to the Christian heritage of Qana.⁶⁴

Certainly, this situation was influenced not only by Hezbollah's strong position in the town, but also by the decreasing number of the Christian community, who gradually left the town as a result of subsequent wars and tragedies affecting it. Due to the tragedy of 2006, Qana once again caught the attention of Iran, whose President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad visited this place in 2010 and paid tribute to the fallen.⁶⁵

Over the years, Qana served as a place of propaganda and politics for Lebanese politicians, where they demanded justice and the trial of those responsible for the death of innocent people. In order to commemorate the victims of Israeli aggression, the Bank of Lebanon issued a commemorative medal with the date of the tragedy in Qana and the image of a woman holding a child in her arms.⁶⁶

Residents of the town did not receive the expected help, and the benefits from tourism turned out to be symbolic. The interest in the tragedy in Qana decreased too, which had a direct impact on the number of visitors to the town and its development. In crisis-ridden Lebanon, Qana and similar towns struggle with economic difficulties. The agricultural sector of Qana (arable land covers 37% of the commune's area) employs less than 7% of the inhabitants. Some of the inhabitants who left the town (or left Lebanon altogether) continue to send funds to their relatives who still live in Qana and thus are an important source of money that supports the local economy.

⁶⁴ L. VOLK, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

⁶⁵ N. BLANFORD, *On Israel's doorstep, Ahmadinejad hurls taunts across the Lebanese border*, "The Christian Science Monitor", <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2010/1014/On-Israel-s-doorstep-Ahmadinejad-hurls-taunts-across-the-Lebanese-border> (access: 20 IX 2020).

⁶⁶ *Cana memorial medal*, Banque Du Liban, <https://www.bdl.gov.lb/pages/index/2/269/Cana-Memorial.html> (access: 20 IX 2020).

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