

# An Arafat appeals for peace

**Y**asser Arafat's brother leaned across my desk, opened up his jacket wide, and said, laughing, "Look, no guns!"

True. Dr. Fathi Arafat was unarmed — unlike PLO leader Yasser Arafat who always sports a revolver. Dr. Arafat, the director of the Palestinian Red Crescent — the Moslem arm of the Red Cross — was visiting Canada on behalf of Medical Aid for Palestine to garner support for his organization's work in health and education.

I did a double-take when Dr. Arafat first walked into my office. He is the spitting image of his famous brother. He has the same infectious Levantine charm, the same rumpled, overworked look and the same vivid, wily eyes as Yasser.

I asked Dr. Arafat if he wasn't worried about assassination or kidnapping. Not at all, he replied. But, like his brother, he keeps constantly on the move.

According to Dr. Arafat, there have been 50,000 recorded Palestinian casualties in the West Bank and Gaza over the past two years of the intifada uprising. Another 50,000, he estimates, have also been injured but have not gone to any hospital for fear of arrest by Israeli authorities. The types of wounds suffered by injured Palestinian demonstrators, about 20% of them youngsters, closely resemble those from combat, Dr. Arafat claims.

There are also 400,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Their plight in the midst of that nation's barbaric, 14-year old civil war, has so far received little attention — except for the grisly massacres in 1982 at the Shatilla and Sabra camps. Arafat estimates that about 10,000-15,000 Palestinians have been killed and 100,000 wounded in Lebanon since 1975.

More Lebanese and Palestinian blood can be expected to flow after the assassination last week of Lebanon's



new president of only 17 days, Rene Moawad. A 400-pound bomb was remotely detonated as the president's armored limousine drove through West Beirut, crushing the car and dismembering Moawad.

Who, everyone is now asking, mounted this highly professional assassination? The finger of suspicion points at Lebanon's Maronite Christians.

Moawad, who was also a Maronite, had just come into office after a major peace conference in Saudi Arabia brokered by the Arab League that was designed to end Lebanon's civil war. Members of the Lebanese Parliament had finally agreed to end the Maronites' political domination of Lebanon and give majority Moslems and Druze equal rights.

But this sensible pact was bitterly opposed by Maronite warlord, Gen. Michael Aoun who has fought since this past summer against Syrian occupation troops and their Lebanese Moslem allies.

Aoun's backers threatened Moawad and any legislator who voted for the peace pact with death.

If anyone in the Aoun camp was responsible for the murder, it likely was Samir Geagea, a fascist Maronite militia leader who led the slaughter of Palestinians at Shatilla and Sabra. Geagea is closely linked to Israeli intelligence which arms and finances both his thugs and Gen. Aoun's troops.

A Lebanese peace pact that leaves Syrian troops in Lebanon is not to Israel's interest. Continuing bloodshed in Lebanon takes pressure off Israel to make peace with its revolting Palestinians. Precision remote-control bombing is also a speciality of Israeli hit teams, who could well have taught it to their Maronite pupils.

Iraq, a bitter foe of Syria and a backer of Aoun, is another suspect, although the clear beneficiaries of Moawad's death are the Maronites and Israel.

A new president may shortly be elected, provided a brave volunteer can be found. He will have to live in a bunker. So far, two Lebanese presidents, two prime ministers and a dozen religious and tribal leaders have been assassinated.

The bomb that blew up Rene Moawad clearly demolished chances for an end to Lebanon's civil war and any hopes of forming a viable national government.

Too many people want to keep Lebanon's pot boiling. Short of a miracle, Lebanon will likely sink back into murderous anarchy. Without a real government in Beirut, the nation will remain partitioned de facto into little statelets run by Maronite, Druze, Sunni, Orthodox Christian, Armenian, Palestinian and Shia fanatics. Syria will garrison the north of Lebanon while Israel holds a chunk of the south. At some point, Israel and Syria may even secretly agree to partition Lebanon between them — as the Iraqis and PLO charge.

Dr. Arafat and his fellow Moslem, Jewish and Christian physicians are going to be very busy trying to repair the damage caused by the Mideast's bloodthirsty politicians. As this column has been long saying, it's time for a foreign peacekeeping army to occupy Lebanon, knock heads, and end that wretched nation's pointless, maniacal civil war.