

# Israeli sympathizer says America gets untrue picture

By Shirlee Iden  
staff writer

Labeling the recent Israeli-PLO Syria conflict a "war against civilians" is as far from the truth as you can get. So said David B. Holtzman after returning from a 96-hour fact finding mission to Lebanon and Israel.

"Approximately 20,000 people were left homeless. Not 600,000 as some sources are saying. Israel now controls about one-third of Lebanon and 300,000 is the total population." Holtzman, a resident of Birmingham, is a real estate investor and president is National Chairman for Regions for state of Israel Bonds.

At a luncheon in Southfield, he relayed his impressions to a small group less than 24 hours after his return from the Mideast. Holtzman says that since the PLO fled, tens of thousands of Lebanese Christians and Muslims are coming back to homes in the border towns. "They had fled to Beirut for safety,

some as long ago as 1975, but now they are returning. Driving south, you encounter heavy traffic, many Mercedes and such, piled high with household goods. "You can say these are refugees in reverse."

**CIVILIAN CASUALTIES** include 365 killed in Sidon, 86 in Tyre, and 30 in Nabatieh, he said. "That's less than 1,000, and these are figures now verified by the municipalities and the Red Cross."

He said 1,900 PLO terrorists were killed and 5,709 confirmed PLO members are being held in detention camps. "The Israelis hold 149 Syrian prisoners, six of them pilots," he said. Holtzman described the amounts of arms still being found by the Israelis as "staggering."

"It may take weeks to move this material to Israel. Every day they're finding mosques, churches, hospitals and schools all piled high with munitions," he said.

Holtzman contends the American public is being fed the true picture of what is happening in Lebanon. "I have

no more doubts, having seen it." Traveling as a guest of the Israeli government, Holtzman and 27 others, were taken from Lod Airport in Tel Aviv directly to Lebanon by helicopter.

"We flew to Beaufort Castle, which overlooks the Galilee. It's above Metula, the northernmost point in Israel," he said. "Many rockets were launched from there. It's very strategic."

"**BEAUFORT CASTLE** today is being held by eight soldiers. Four were Phalangist Christian and four Israeli. One of the Lebanese was only 16 years old and has been in the militia since age 11."

When the Sikorsky helicopter in which they were flying lost one of its two hydraulic systems, the chopper landed in an agricultural valley in the middle of a wheat field.

"There were tanks all around, Syrian T-34s, made by the Soviets," Holtzman said. "We sat and ate box lunches but when we walked over to talk to soldiers they warned us of land mines and told us to walk only in tank tracks."

He said there was a lot of live ammunition lying around as well.

"We spoke to Lebanese, both Christian and Muslim, and when we asked them what happened, they said, 'We've been liberated.'" Holtzman said Lebanon is lush and green, much like the Riviera. "In Damur, a lovely seaside town, only the first tier built up from the beaches is damaged. Two-thirds of it is intact. What you see on television is often old damage with the new. Most towns were already blown up by the PLO in the last few years."

**IN JERUSALEM** the group met with Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir.

"We were told the cost of the war is going to amount to 10-15 percent of Israel's gross national product," Holtzman said. "That adds up to \$2.2 billion or more."

"Israeli casualties were about 270 killed, 1,200 injured and one pilot captured. We visited a military cemetery and saw the graves, some quite fresh. Each was marked with the names of young men, most just 18 and 19 years old."

"The real cost is in those lives."

## But Lebanese have different story to tell about the war

By Karen Hermes Smith  
staff writer

The figures David B. Holtzman gave for civilian casualties in war-torn Lebanon are outrageously low, according to two area women with Lebanese and Palestinian ties.

"I wish these figures (Holtzman's) were true," said Farida Khoury of Beverly Hills. "These (the ones Khoury claims as correct) are merciless."

"The situation is so bad, it hurts when someone gives false information," said Wafa Salah of Bloomfield Hills.

The two women are responding to a speech Holtzman gave at a Southfield luncheon in which he said only 20,000 people had been left homeless, not 600,000 as some sources were claiming.

HE ALSO reported that 361 civilian casualties had occurred in Sidon, Tyre and Nabatieh, and that the figure was verified by the municipalities and the International Red Cross.

Holtzman had returned less than a day before the luncheon from a 96-hour fact-finding mission in Lebanon and Israel. He is a Birmingham resident, real estate investor and national chairman for regions for State of Israel Bonds.

Khoury's husband, Elie, who is a medical doctor, left for Beirut after the outbreak to give help to and treat the wounded. He was denied entry into the city, Khoury said, and is now working in areas not occupied by Israel. She is getting regular reports from her husband, she said.

**KHOURY AND SALAH** said the other sources were correct in claiming 600,000 as the number of homeless. The city of Sidon was almost completely demolished, Salah said, and it had 100,000 residents. "I'm only talking

about one city," she said.

Civilian casualties easily number 14,000 dead and 26,000 wounded, Khoury said. Holtzman failed to give the casualties for Beirut in his total, a much larger city than the other three, Salah said.

Khoury was born in Syria to a Lebanese woman.

Khoury said two of her first cousins were killed in Beirut and seven members of one of her friend's family were killed after fleeing from Beirut to the mountains for safety.

Salah is Palestinian. Both women belong to the Arab American University Graduates and the Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee. Khoury is also on the executive committee of the Arab Women's Union of Detroit; Salah is active with the United Holy Land Fund.

Khoury maintains Holtzman was subjected on his trip to "Israeli propaganda."

**NOTING THAT** he traveled as a guest of the Israeli government, Khoury said, "They're not going to show him the real destruction."

Khoury believes that the Lebanese who told Holtzman, "We've been liberated," were "pushed" into saying that.

"Who in the world would like a military force killing half their people?" she asked.

Salah believes the response could have come from a faction of Maronite Christians who represent only 4 percent of the Lebanese population. "The rest of Lebanon, I don't think, would feel that way," she said.

**BOTH WOMEN** are hoping for an Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon.

"The invasion didn't do any good," Khoury said. "Violence breeds violence."

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