

By **Lucy Knight**. Send news and opinions to [editor@timeoutbeirut.com](mailto:editor@timeoutbeirut.com)

## Support this The disappeared



Anjad Mouallem was just five years old when her father, a policeman, was taken from his place of work. 'On the 5th October, it was 28 years to the day,' says Mouallem. 'That day, the right to say "father" was taken away from me and my sister.' Like the families of thousands of others who disappeared between 1975 and 1990, Mouallem has campaigned for answers ever since.

Human rights association Act for the Disappeared has recently launched its campaign 'Right to know', to draw fresh attention to the fact that there are still a recorded 17,000 people missing. In collaboration with associations The Committee of the Families of the Kidnapped and Disappeared and Support of Lebanese in Detention and Exile (SOLIDE), they have led workshops and education programmes with schools and university students. 'The generation that lived through the war very often don't want

to talk about it,' says president Justine Di Mayo. 'We don't want people to forget, particularly the young.'

For groups like Act for the Disappeared, the opinion is that for the last 30 years, since the first gathering of families, nothing is being done by politicians to solve the issue. 'We are often being told to look to the future and forget the past,' says Di Mayo, 'but this lack of political will is not helpful in any way.'

In 2000 the Lebanese state led a commission on the issue of the disappeared, the result of which was a published two page document, giving the location of three mass graves and the claim that they knew nothing else. For people like Mouallem this kind of response from her government is not good enough. 'I want to know either way what happened to my father,' Mouallem says. 'If the Lebanese had a conscience, they would say what had happened during the war.'

**Facebook: Act for the Disappeared**

## Talking point To smoke or not to smoke

It's now been a few months since Law 174, preventing smoking indoors, was implemented, and while all closed establishments have been adhering to the ban on smoking, huge numbers are still up in arms, particularly over the effect it is having on their business.

According to the Syndicate of Owners of Restaurants, Cafes, Night-Clubs and Pastries in Lebanon, the effect on at least 700 venues that host arguileh and cigar smoking is extremely negative, and as such they have drafted amendments. 'We're looking for exemptions with conditions,' says Ziad Kamel, a restaurant owner who happily adheres to the law, and a member of the syndicate's board. 'This is exactly what other countries do, and still manage to have very strict rules regarding smokers.'

Cities like Dubai, New York and London, to name a few, have had smoking bans in place for several years, but with exemptions. For example, when it comes to cigar lounges and arguileh cafes, a tobacco license is applied and paid for – and this is what the Syndicate is lobbying for. However, for those in favour of keeping the law as it is, this, for the time

being at least, is not an option.

The activists association IndyACT has been instrumental in bringing about the law, and they are not about to allow such changes so easily. 'Many laws have been improved with time,' says board member Wael Hmaidan. 'This has only been in place a few months, which is no time at all to see its real economic impact.' For such campaigners the rigidity must be maintained for the health of the nation, and any monetary loss now will be made up later. According to IndyACT most restaurants support the law, saying that a whole new clientele has emerged, largely families. In response to the idea that tourism has been gravely affected, they are quick to say that this is the work of tobacco company propaganda.

Something that these two sides do agree on though is the need for education about the dangers of tobacco, increasing the price of tobacco, pictorial warnings on cigarette packets and making it illegal to sell to under 18s.

With equally winning arguments it's hard to know where to lay one's cap – hopefully



the test of time will tell.

**Facebook: Law 174 - No Smoking Lebanon**  
**Facebook: Syndicate of Owners of Restaurants in Lebanon**