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Lebanon 2018

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Summary

Lebanon is at a crossroads in the Middle East, between Israel and Syria, Sunnis and Shias, close to Turkey and bordering the Mediterranean. The sudden resignation of Prime Minister Saad Hariri in November 2017 and his subsequent [withdrawal of that resignation](#) drew attention to this small country, caught up in the increasingly sharp confrontation between Sunnis and Shias, led by Saudi Arabia and Iran respectively, in the region.

The biggest reason for Lebanon's importance to that struggle is the existence of Hezbollah, the Iran-backed Shiite militia that is more powerful than the Lebanese Army. Particularly since the 2006 conflict with Israel, Hezbollah, the Party of God, has become Iran's most important partner in projecting power throughout the region. It decided in 2013 to throw its weight behind the Assad Government in Syria, along with Iran and Russia, ensuring its survival. A Sunni regime in Syria could have spelt the end for Hezbollah, as it relies on Syria for support and as a conduit for [Iranian weapons and money](#). Participation in the Syrian conflict changed Hezbollah's image from a champion of Arabs against Israel to a supporter of Iran against Sunnis, however. Hezbollah has helped the Houthi rebellion against the internationally-recognised Government of Yemen, too.

Lebanon's delicate politics rest on a power sharing deal agreed in 1989. The presidency goes to a Christian, the position of Speaker in the Parliament goes to a Shiite, and that of Prime Minister goes to a Sunni.

The election in May 2018 increased the influence of Hezbollah somewhat. The new government has not been formed yet, with negotiations still in progress over distribution of cabinet posts. The US has reportedly warned Beirut against putting a Hezbollah politician in charge of the health ministry, as it would be a significant step up from the ministerial posts it has held before. The US deems Hezbollah a [terrorist organisation](#).

Political violence has been widespread in Lebanon even after the fragile peace and [power-sharing arrangements](#) set up in 1989. Bombings and assassinations of public figures have been blamed on many different domestic groups, and Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Israel are all variously accused of being ultimately behind the violence. A United Nations [Special Tribunal](#), set up to investigate the assassination of Rafiq Hariri, a former Prime Minister

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and father of the present Prime Minister, has issued indictments against four supporters of Hezbollah; they are being tried in their absence.

Because of its location and its confessional mix, Lebanon is caught up in the Middle East's struggles. Recently, it has been the Sunni/Shia split that has come to the fore, and Lebanon has been destabilised by the Syrian civil war. Lebanon is home to about a million registered Syrian refugees and many more unregistered. Very few have gone home to Syria, and the Syrian Government is resisting taking Sunni refugees back, particularly those of fighting age. This poses a threat to Lebanon's delicate political balance. The likelihood of violence between Lebanese and Syrian refugees is increasing.

The Lebanese economy depends on services, particularly tourism and banking. It has been adversely affected by the long civil war in the 70s and 80s and the Syria conflict, and the Government is hamstrung by having to service its debt burden. Analysts warn of the possibility of a financial crisis, particularly if Gulf monarchies reduce their support.

There may be oil and gas under Lebanese territorial waters in the Mediterranean, but if there is, it will be a long time before the public feels the benefit.

The UK has [provided £466 million](#) to help Syrian refugees in Lebanon and the Lebanese host communities, and has [supported the Lebanese military](#) in the context of the Syria conflict.

Lebanese politics

Power-sharing Constitution

At the end of the Lebanese civil war, an agreement was negotiated at talks in Saudi Arabia. The Taif Accord amended the Constitution to set up a system giving equal numbers of MPs to Christians and Muslims and sharing the three main posts – Speaker of the Parliament, Prime Minister and President – between the Shias, the Sunnis and the Christians respectively.¹

The Taif agreement did not end the Syrian role in Lebanese politics – indeed it entrenched it to the extent that it guaranteed Shiite political representation. Syria continued to have a dominant military presence in Lebanon, a situation that continued until 2005, when the assassination of Rafiq Hariri was a catalyst for massive demonstrations against the Syrian presence. Syria withdrew its forces in 2005.

The Taif Accord also provided for the disarmament of all militias. Hezbollah, however, was described as a movement of resistance against Israel and continues to be armed.

While power in Lebanon is supposed to be shared more or less equally between Christians, the Shias and Sunnis, the fact that Hezbollah is more powerful than the Lebanese Army gives it the upper hand. The Christians, who hold the presidency, have increasingly sided with Hezbollah, while Saad Hariri's Sunni-centred Future Movement, despite some election success and the fact that Hariri is the Prime Minister, tends to be side-lined. Michel Aoun, a Maronite Christian, fought against Syrian domination in the 1980s as head of the Lebanese Army but, returning from exile on the Syrians' departure in 2005, formed an alliance with pro-Syrian forces to become President.

¹ [The Taif Agreement, September 1989](#)

Saad Hariri

Early in 2016 Saudi Arabia cancelled \$3 billion in military aid to the Lebanese Government, calculating that Hezbollah's place in the Government meant that the Lebanese Army could no longer be relied on to confront the militia.

In November 2017 Saad Hariri, Prime Minister of Lebanon and son of the assassinated Rafiq Hariri, announced his resignation from Saudi Arabia. Back home, many Lebanese thought he had been kidnapped and forced to resign by the Saudis, who were angry at the missile fired at Riyadh by the Houthi rebels in Yemen. Saudi Arabia blamed Hezbollah for that missile and the Shiite militia's backers, Iran. And the Saudis were angry at what they saw as collaboration between their protégé Hariri and Hezbollah.

The move looked impulsive and ineffective, however, when Saad Hariri returned to Lebanon and withdrew his resignation. Lebanon's sectarian-based politics are intractable and are certainly not getting any easier; Saudi Arabia cannot take Hezbollah on without destroying Lebanon.

Election postponed

Lebanon had been due to hold a general election in 2013. As the various political factions in the National Assembly failed to agree on the terms of a new electoral law by the deadline set out in the Constitution the poll was again postponed in 2017, with the life of the 2009 Parliament extended by another year.

The new electoral law was agreed in June 2017, providing for a hybrid proportional representation in 15 multi-member constituencies. In May 2018 976 candidates, including 111 women, competed for the 128 seats. Many of the candidates are family members of familiar politicians, but dynastic politics is nothing new in Lebanon.

Alongside the traditional parties representing the sects is a new wave of activist groups who hope to improve Lebanon's dysfunctional politics. Protests against a rubbish collection crisis in 2015 led to the formation of one of these new groups. There are also some celebrity candidates.²

While the new electoral law and the activist groups will bring some changes, the clientelist political scene still favours the existing parties.

Hezbollah will be fielding 13 candidates and is hoping that the new law will reduce the representation of Saad Hariri's Future Movement and Walid Jumblatt, Druze leader and head of the Progressive Socialist Party. Weakening the larger blocs in Parliament would increase Hezbollah's influence, but it might also foster national conciliation because it will weaken the sectarian blocs' hold on constituencies.³

In February 2018, the UK Foreign Minister said that the UK was funding some support to the electoral process in Lebanon:

² ['Lebanon elections pit old guard against new movement'](#), *Al-Monitor*, 15 March 2018

³ Michael Young, ['Lebanon's proportional representation law may suit politicians, but it may also shoot them in the foot'](#), *The National* (UAE), 1 November 2017

The UK is funding a number of programmes to support successful, free and fair Lebanese elections. This includes a project on parliamentary transparency and monitoring and projects to increase the proportion of female MPs by supporting female candidates and supporting advocacy for greater women's representation.⁴

Election May 2018

The May 2018 general election was the first since 2009. Turnout was less than 50% – a particularly low figure and a blow to Lebanon's democratic system.

The election saw the March 8 alliance gain 11 seats, although alliance is not particularly coherent. The coalition contains Shi'a and Maronite Christian groups, including Hezbollah's Loyalty to the Resistance party, steady on 13 seats.

The Sunni-dominated March 14 coalition lost 10 seats, modestly weakening their position in Parliament. (See the results in detail below.)

Asked for the UK Government's reaction to the election result, Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon said:

We were pleased to see and we welcome the fact that Lebanon's elections took place peacefully and in an orderly way on 6 May. This was an important step for democracy. We now look forward to the swift formation of a new government capable of addressing the crucial issues facing the country. The United Kingdom remains steadfast in its commitment to Lebanon's stability, security and prosperity.⁵

Government formation

Hezbollah may have emerged slightly stronger than in the previous parliament. The sectarian division of offices between the sects obliges politicians to compromise, however, and the next government is likely to be similar to the outgoing one, which has continued as caretaker administration.

The Prime Minister's office goes to a Sunni Muslim, according to the Taif settlement. Saad Hariri remains the strongest Sunni politician, so he is the Prime Minister designate and is trying to assemble a government that can win the support of the Parliament. That means sharing out ministerial posts widely.

It has been a slow process since the election. On 23 October Hariri promised to form a government in the next few days, although other commentators said that there were still problems to be resolved.⁶

The main difficulty has been satisfying competing demands from two rival Maronite Christian factions, the Free Patriotic Movement and Lebanese Forces.

⁴ [HC Written question – 125407](#), 6 February 2018

⁵ [Written question - HL7755](#), 24 May 2018

⁶ 'Hariri promises new Cabinet in coming days', *Daily Star Lebanon*, 24 October 2018

The leader of the Free Patriotic Movement, Gebran Bassil, will probably remain as the Foreign Minister, while Lebanese Forces has been offered four cabinet posts including deputy Prime Minister.

There is also an intra-Druze feud between Walid Jumblatt and Talal Arslan, respective leaders of rival largely-Druze parties.

Hezbollah in the Government

Hezbollah may be offered the health ministry and two other posts. In governments since 2005, Hezbollah has held two ministerial posts, including energy, agriculture and industry. The health post would be a step up for Hezbollah, and the US is reported to have warned the Lebanese Government against the move, saying that it would mean that Washington might no longer distinguish between the Beirut Government and Hezbollah, which the US categorises as a [foreign terrorist organisation](#).⁷

Hezbollah

Hezbollah – or the ‘Party of God’ – is a powerful political and military organisation of Shia Muslims in Lebanon. The group was formed, with backing from Iran, in response to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. The group calls for the destruction of the State of Israel, regarding the whole of Palestine as occupied Muslim land.

As well as by fighting against Israel, Hezbollah has built support by providing social services and health care, again largely funded by Iran. The group also has an influential television station, al-Manar, a radio station and is very active online. It also has 13 MPs in the Parliament.

The group is believed to have 20,000 to 30,000 full-time, highly motivated fighters. All of them are well-trained and some have been to Iran to receive their training. There is a smaller number of reservists.⁸ With training and funding from Iran probably amounting to hundreds of millions of dollars per year,⁹ the military force has grown strongly since the 2006 conflict with Israel and is very closely linked with the Iranian Revolutionary Guards (IRGC). When it comes to projecting power in the Arab world, Hezbollah has the advantage over the Persian IRGC of being an Arab force.

During the 2006 war, Hezbollah fired rockets deep into northern Israel. Since then their rocket arsenal has grown to maybe as many as 150,000 rockets with ranges up to 200km. Hezbollah also has armoured vehicles and some warplanes, adding up to a military strength that is certainly greater than the Lebanese Army’s and is comparable to many neighbouring Arab states’. There are reports that the group has Scud missiles whose range makes them capable of hitting any target in Israeli and that some of Hezbollah’s missiles have been armed with cluster munitions.¹⁰

⁷ [‘US warns Lebanon that Hezbollah Cabinet pick would cross ‘red line’](#), *Al-Monitor*, 23 October 2018

⁸ [‘Iran Out to Remake Mideast With Arab Enforcer: Hezbollah’](#), *New York Times*, 27 August 2017

⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁰ Jane’s Terrorism and Insurgency Intelligence Centre, Hizbullah

Hezbollah and Syria

The group has participated decisively in the Syrian conflict on the side of the Syrian Government; it also supports the Houthi rebels in Yemen and has sent trainers to Iraq to work with Shiite militias there, and has recruited in Afghanistan to create a militia to fight in Syria.¹¹

Combat experience in Syria and proliferating international connections have increased the group's capabilities

Israel has carried out airstrikes on military convoys and bases in Syria linked to Hezbollah, stating that it would not allow Iran to gain a military presence in Syria. Iran has responded, according to reports, by investing in military facilities in southern Lebanon,¹² intending to improve the effectiveness of Hezbollah's missile arsenal. Some analysts warn that a war between Israel and Hezbollah is highly likely.¹³

The decision in 2013 to support the Syrian Government was a risky one, however, since that threatened its perception as a resistance movement against Israel and champion of the Muslims in general, making the group look more like a Shia sectarian force and bringing it into conflict with radical Sunni groups fighting against the Syrian Government. Hezbollah support for the Assads in Syria has helped Israel improve relations with Sunni powers such as Saudi Arabia and deepened the sectarian divide across the region.

Despite the risk, the survival of the Assad government in Syria is an existential issue for Hezbollah, because the group depends on Syria acting as a conduit for aid from Iran.

Proscription of Hezbollah

Hezbollah has carried out several terrorist attacks, both in Lebanon and elsewhere. The group has been linked with attacks in the UK and as far away as Argentina, where it was accused of involvement with two deadly attacks on Jewish targets, but denied responsibility.

UN Security Council resolutions call for armed militia groups like Hezbollah to disarm, while the United States, [Canada](#) and Israel regard the whole of Hezbollah as a terrorist group, as do the [Netherlands](#). The [EU](#) and [Australia](#) have designated the military wing only.

The [UK proscribes](#) the military wing of Hezbollah as a terrorist group under the [Terrorism Act 2000](#), but not the political side of the organisation. There is a [campaign in the UK](#) to ban the whole of Hezbollah.

In a House of Commons debate in December 2017, Ben Wallace, security minister at the Home Office, reiterated the reasoning behind proscribing only the military wings of Hezbollah and Hamas, the Palestinian group:

¹¹ ['Iran Out to Remake Mideast With Arab Enforcer: Hezbollah'](#), *New York Times*, 27 August 2017

¹² ['Iran Resumes Building Missile Plants in Lebanon. Israeli Army Warns in Rare Article in Arab Media'](#), Haaretz, 30 January 2018

¹³ Mara Karlin, ['Israel's Coming War With Hezbollah'](#), *Foreign Affairs*, 21 February 2018

Those organisations are not proscribed in their entirety. Their military wings are proscribed, but as Hezbollah forms part of the Government in Lebanon and Hamas plays an active role in its part of the region as a member of a Government, the proscription applies only to the military wing. In some cases the flags [of their respective military and political wings] are identical, but that does not mean that if people participate in Hezbollah-supporting actions here that constitute terrorism or anything linked to it, our police and law enforcement agencies will not act. We have acted in respect of Hezbollah and Hamas in the past, either to disrupt activity or to bring prosecutions.¹⁴

Violence at home

Bombings and assassinations are relatively common in Lebanon; the [list of attacks](#) is long, the most recent being in January 2018, when a Hamas official was injured by a car bomb.

The number of those accused of committing the violence is also high, although many attacks are not claimed by a particular group. ISIS/Daesh is accused by the Government of several attacks. Iran claimed that Saudi Arabia ordered a bomb outside an Iranian cultural centre in southern Beirut. Hezbollah, or a related/precursor organisation called Islamic Jihad, has been associated with attacks on US targets in Lebanon.

In 2007, a UN Special Tribunal was set up to investigate the 2005 assassination of Rafiq Hariri, a former Prime Minister of Lebanon and the present Prime Minister's father. In 2011 the Tribunal served indictments against four supporters of Hezbollah, whose trial *in absentia* is continuing. Other reports have blamed the assassination on the Syrian Government, while Hezbollah has said that the Israelis or the Saudis are responsible. Several other anti-Syria public figures have been assassinated in Lebanon.

The international dimension

With its complex confessional mix and shared borders with Israel and Syria, Lebanon is at the centre of both the Arab/Israeli conflict and the Sunni/Shia struggle and has been occupied by Syria and partially by Israel. Fearing an attempt to topple the Islamic Republic by Israel, which has the strongest military in the region, Iran funds Hezbollah as a proxy against Israel. At least until the Syrian conflict, Hezbollah's military successes against Israel (particularly in 2006) gained it respect in the Muslim world.

But Hezbollah depended on a friendly regime in neighbouring Syria for support and as a conduit for Iranian money and arms. The group's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, announced his high-risk decision to enter the conflict in 2013. The group's firepower, discipline and experience made it effective in Syria, while its engagement strengthened links with Iran, making it Iran's foremost partner in the region, eclipsing the Assad Government in Syria.

¹⁴ [HC Deb 19 December 2017, c1019-21](#)

Israel has tended to keep out of the Syrian conflict but has hit arms convoys heading from Iran to Lebanon and Hezbollah-run arms depots in Syria, according to reports.¹⁵

When the militia decided to enter the Syrian conflict, its image shifted among many in the region from champion of the Arabs against Israel to champion of Iran against the Sunnis. This move mirrored the relative decline in importance of the Arab/Israeli dispute and the rise of the Sunni/Shia (Saudi Arabia/Iran) dispute in the region, accompanied by a tacit warming of ties between Saudi Arabia and Israel: "...some Israeli analysts even joke that Israel has unofficially become a moderate Sunni state."¹⁶

Israel probably calculates that there is enough instability in the region without an Israeli strike on Hezbollah.

Refugees

There were 952,562 [registered Syrian refugees](#) in Lebanon in September 2018. Many more unregistered Syrians are likely to be in Lebanon, meaning that around a quarter of the Lebanese population is made up of Syrian refugees.

The refugees and the response to them have become something of a political football between the various political factions in Lebanon, with those close to the Assad Government in Syria negative about them and those closer to the Syrian opposition (and to the Saudis) more welcoming.¹⁷

The presence of so many Syrians could destabilise Lebanon. There is growing hostility to the refugees from the Lebanese, and the massive Syrian presence is straining Lebanon's already inadequate infrastructure.

In August 2018 the UN said that there was no discernible trend towards violence against refugees, but that Syrians were increasingly afraid. Tensions rose particularly after the Lebanese Army raided refugee camps near the border in June, arresting hundreds amid suicide bomber attacks against them. Politicians were accused by one commentator of using the refugee situation to whip up populist support.¹⁸

Refugees have started to return but only very slowly, bringing the total down from its 1.17 million peak in 2015. The Syrian Government, however, has started to filter out people it views as a threat from Syrian refugees and prevent them from returning to their homes. Most refugees are Sunnis who oppose the Government, because the Government has attacked those areas, particularly the outskirts of large towns, where opposition has been concentrated.

¹⁵ ['Israel strikes Hezbollah-run arms supply hub to destroy weapons from Iran'](#), *Christian Science Monitor*, 27 April 2017

¹⁶ ['Israel Isn't Going to Fight Saudi Arabia's Wars'](#), *Foreign Policy*, 16 November 2017

¹⁷ ['The fear and loathing of Syrian refugees in Lebanon'](#), *Al-Jazeera*, 28 October 2017

¹⁸ ['Hostility grows towards Syrian refugees in Lebanon'](#), *Reuters*, 28 August 2018

In summer 2018 the Syrian authorities refused entry to men of fighting age among refugees who were due to return from Lebanon, and only 200 of a planned 3,000 refugees went home.¹⁹

If Sunni refugees stay in Lebanon, the resulting demographic shift could upset Lebanon's delicate political balance, resulting in violence between Sunnis and Shiites. Damascus could also intentionally destabilise Lebanon, aiming to create a pretext for a renewed Syrian military presence.²⁰

Palestinians

There are also many long-term Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Traditionally, the estimate was around 450,000 but a census taken in 2017 came up with a figure of 174,000.²¹

Economy

Services are important to the Lebanese economy, including banking, tourism, retail and the property market. Income per head is about \$19,000 adjusted for purchasing power, making it a middle income country.

The economy had achieved some strong growth after the 2006 conflict with Israel, but disruption caused by the Syrian civil war, including the influx of refugees, slowed growth to around 1-2% in recent years.²² Unemployment has risen. Much government spending is taken up by debt servicing (the Government borrowed heavily for reconstruction after the civil war, 1975-90) and public sector salaries, leaving a 10% budget deficit and little for investment in infrastructure and public services.

Financial crisis?

The Sunni Gulf monarchies have become less enthusiastic about supporting the government of Michel Aoun and Saad Hariri, because of Hezbollah's involvement and the perceived influence of Iran.

\$11 billion in grants and loans were pledged at a conference in April 2018 but by September the funds were still to be released, raising fears of a financial crisis.²³ Lebanon depends heavily on inflows of capital from abroad and remittances from the Lebanese diaspora.

The Lebanese pound remained stable at the time of writing, pegged at about 1,500 to the US dollar, but analysts warn that a drop in support from the Gulf monarchies could push Lebanon into bankruptcy.²⁴

¹⁹ David Gardner, '[Russia launches a diplomatic offensive on rebuilding Syria](#)', *Financial Times*, 21 August 2018

²⁰ '[The New Reality in Syria Constitutes an Existential Threat to Lebanon](#)', *Washington Institute*, 27 July 2018

²¹ '[Census puts Palestinian refugees at third of estimates](#)', *Daily Star (Lebanon)*, 22 December 2017

²² CIAA Word Fact Book, [Lebanon](#)

²³ '[Lebanon's central bank chief calls for political haste as country approaches an economic crisis](#)', *CNBC*, 10 September 2018

²⁴ '[Lebanon's Perfect Financial Storm](#)', *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 17 October 2017

Hydrocarbons

Lebanon announced its first licensing round for offshore oil and gas reserves in December 2017. The country's parliament is scrutinising bills on a sovereign wealth fund and a national oil company, but though the process has officially begun, exploration will not start until 2019 and, if commercially-viable reserves are found, the people would not start to feel any benefit for several years after that.

UK relations

The UK has supported the Lebanese military in the context of the Syria conflict, as set out in answer to a Parliamentary Question in January 2016:

The UK is committed to the security of Lebanon, including helping the Lebanese state secure its borders. From 2012-2015 we used over £30 million to help the Lebanese army raise and equip three Land Border Regiments (LBRs) deployed along the border with Syria. The project provides the LBRs with border towers, non-lethal equipment, mentoring and training. This has had a direct effect in mitigating contagion from the war in Syria. The border regiments successfully repel frequent attacks by Daesh on Lebanese territory. 75% of the Syria-Lebanon border will be under state control by March 2016, and the rest will be further secured with the establishment of a fourth LBR in financial year 2016-17.²⁵

Middle East Minister Alistair Burt discussed the importance of UK support for the Lebanese armed forces in a debate in June 2018:

Lebanon's security services have a vital role to play in ensuring the country's stability, security and sovereignty. That is why we promote their role as Lebanon's sole guarantors of security. Power must be in the hands of the state, not the hands of non-state actors beholden to external forces. With an accountable and professional military in place, the Lebanese people would have less cause to turn to others for their security. That is why we have been working with the Lebanese armed forces since 2012 on a £61 million project to help secure the Lebanon-Syria border. Once complete, the Lebanese armed forces will have secured the entire Lebanon-Syria border for the first time in Lebanese history.

With our support, and the support of other key donors, the Lebanese armed forces have developed and modernised over the past 10 years, to become a respected, professional army capable of protecting Lebanon. I was pleased to meet them and see some of our work there last autumn when I went to Lebanon. The Lebanese forces demonstrated that progress in August last year by defeating Daesh on the Lebanon-Syria border in an operation involving UK-trained troops and border positions constructed with UK assistance. We want to help maintain that success. That is why, at the Rome II conference, I announced an additional £10 million of security support for Lebanon.²⁶

The UK provides humanitarian aid to help Lebanon deal with refugees from the Syria conflict, amounting to £426 million since 2012, as set out in a recent PQ answer:

We are at the forefront of the humanitarian response to the Syria crisis, providing life-saving support to millions of Syrians,

²⁵ [HC Written question – 23071, 26 January 2016](#)

²⁶ HC Deb 6 June 2018, cc177-8WH

supporting refugees to remain in countries in the region, and enabling their host communities to accommodate them. Since 2012, across Syria and the region, UK support has delivered over 27 million food rations, 12 million medical consultations, 10 million relief packages, and 10 million vaccines. Since 2012 we have spent £426 million in Lebanon; £399 million in Jordan and £246 million in Turkey providing humanitarian assistance, basic services in areas housing Syrian refugees and improving education provision for children.²⁷

Rebecca Dykes

Rebecca Dykes, a Briton who worked for DFID at the British Embassy in Beirut was sexually assaulted and killed in December 2017. An Uber driver was arrested in connection with the murder.

Election results in detail

Lebanese National Assembly 2018

Political Party/Coalition	Primary Sectarian Affiliation	Outgoing Parliament	Loss/Gain	2018 Election seats won
"March 8" Coalition				
Free Patriotic Movement (FPM)	Maronite Christian			19
pro-FPM Christians		19	3	3
Amal Movement	Shi'a Muslim	13	2	15
Hezbollah	Shi'a Muslim	13	-	13
Marada	Maronite Christian	3	-	3
Tashnaq (ARF)	Ethnic Armenian	2	1	3
Ba'th Party	Secular/Arab nationalist	2	-1	1
Syrian Social Nationalist Party	Secular/Syrian nationalist	2	-	2
Lebanese Democratic Party	Secular/Druze	2	-1	1
Al Ahabash	Sunni Muslim	0	1	1
Tadamun Party	Maronite Christian	1	-1	0
	Sunni Muslim	0	4	4
pro-March 8 Christians	Christian	0	2	2
pro-March 8 Shi'a	Shi'a Muslim	0	1	1
TOTAL		57		68

²⁷ [HC Written question – 161993](#), 12 July 2018

"March 14" Coalition

Future Movement	Sunni Muslim			19
pro-Future Christian		33	-12	1
pro-Future Sunni				1
Lebanese Forces (LF)	Christian			13
pro-LF Christians		8	6	1
Phalange (Kataeb)	Christian	5	-2	3
Hanshaq Party	ethnic Armenian	2	-2	0
Ramgavar Party	ethnic Armenian	1	-1	0
Democratic Left Movement	Secular	1	-1	0
Jama'a Islamiya	Sunni Muslim	1	-1	0
National Liberation Party	Christian	1	-1	0
pro-March 14 Christians	Christian		3	3
pro-March 14 Shi'a	Shi'a Muslim		1	1
TOTAL		52		42

Other

Progressive Socialist Party	Druze	11	-2	9
Sabaa/Kilna Watani	civil society coalition	0	1	1
Azm Movement	Sunni Muslim	1	3	4
Glory Movement	Sunni Muslim	2	-2	0
Independent Sunnis	Sunni Muslim	0	1	1
Independent Christians	Christian	0	3	3
Vacant		3		
Unknown affiliation		2		
TOTAL		19		18

Note: Results are organized by affiliation to the March 8 or March 14 political coalitions to facilitate comparison with the 2009 legislative elections. Coalition totals are based on *Daily Star* vote tallies (see source note). The affiliation of some deputies with March 8 or March 14 may be disputed, which could result in variances in coalition totals. Some deputies' affiliation with a particular bloc or coalition has changed since the 2009 legislative elections. Some analysts contend that March 8 and March 14 are no longer the primary political divisions inside Lebanon.²⁸

Basics

History: Lebanon's location gives it a trading tradition, while its mountains sheltered a diversity of faiths. The area was part of the Ottoman Empire until the end of WW1, when it became a French protectorate. The area was demarcated as a small separate country partly because of its Christians, who were then in a majority. A

²⁸ [Lebanon's 2018 Elections](#), Congressional Research Service (Daily Star Lebanon), 11 May 2018

constitution was first drafted in 1926 and independence from France came in 1943.

Population: estimated to be some 6.2 million (no census has been conducted recently, largely because of the sensitivity of demographic information). The Lebanese diaspora is very large (partly as a consequence of the civil war) and spreads to Africa and South America.

Ethnicity: 95% Arab, 4% Armenian.²⁹

Religious groups: Muslim 54% (27% Sunni, 27% Shia), Christian 40.5% (includes 21% Maronite Catholic, 8% Greek Orthodox, 5% Greek Catholic, 6.5% other Christian), Druze 5.6%.

Political leadership

- Parliament Speaker: Nabih Berri. Leader of the Amal movement, Shia Muslim. In office since 1992.
- President Michel Aoun, Free Patriotic Movement, Maronite Christian. In office since 31 October 2016.
- Prime Minister designate Saad Hariri, Future Movement, Sunni Muslim. In office since 18 December 2016.
- Seats in parliament are equally divided between Muslims and Christians. The three main offices, above, must go to a Shia Muslim, a Christian and a Sunni Muslim, respectively.

²⁹ CIA Word Fact Book, [Lebanon](#)

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