

Lebanon

Last update:	19 mei 2022
Population:	6,769,151 (World Bank 2021)
Prime minister:	Najib Mikati
President:	Michel Aoun
Governemental type:	Parliamentary multi-confessionalist republic
Ruling coalition:	-
Last election:	May 2018 (general elections)
Next election:	Fall 2022 (indirect presidential election)
Sister parties:	Progressive Socialist Party (PSP)

In the 2010s, Lebanon has spiraled into a 'deliberate economic depression', as infamously dubbed by the World Bank. Politicians and other power-holding actors in the countries are said to be responsible for the complete impoverishment of Lebanese society. Currently, more than seventy percent of Lebanese live under the poverty line.

On top of the economic crisis, an enormous explosion devastated the Beirut port in August 2020 – this explosion has also been tied to patterns of governmental corruption in the country. In October 2019, enormous anti-government protests erupted, shaking incumbent Lebanese political leadership. Since then, many hope that the incumbent Lebanese politicians are toppled. These have been in power for decades, since a post-civil war peace deal in 1989 created an ineffective sectarian power-sharing system.

Lebanon has been in a political deadlock ever since the Beirut Blast in August 2020. Less than a week after the massive explosion in Lebanon's capital Beirut displaced over 300,000 people and left the city devastated, the new government under Diab resigned, on the 10th of August 2020. After the resignation of Diab, Mustapha Adib was put forward by parliament as the new Prime Minister in September of 2020. However, he failed to form a government since Shia parties were unwilling to accept the proposed technocratic cabinet. This led to the Adib resigning only a month later in September of 2020. Following the resignation of Adib, former Prime Minister Saad al-Hariri was re-chosen as Prime Minister. Hariri tried to form a non-partisan cabinet, but failed to do so due to other parties hindering the formation process. After months of failed attempts to form a government, Hariri resigned in July of 2021.

Hariri was succeeded by Najib Mikati, who managed to form a government on the 10th of September 2020, after months of political stalemate. However, while Mikati managed to form a government, the political deadlock continues. The investigation into the Beirut Blast is causing a rift within the government, with some parties such as Hezbollah claiming the investigation is biased and that the lead investigator should be removed.

Throughout 2021, protests against the government continued in Lebanon. While the government fails to resume meeting, Lebanon keeps sinking further into economic and social crisis. The already existing economic crisis has only been worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic and the Beirut explosion. The hyperinflation has led to the Lebanese lira losing up to 90 percent of its value, and prices of food, medicine and gas have skyrocketed while more and more Lebanese are living in poverty. Emergency funds have been promised by foreign donors, on the condition that a reform plan is agreed upon. However, due to the political stalemate the government continues to fail to agree on reforms.

On May 15, 2022, Lebanon organized long-anticipated elections. Hezbollah and its allies Amal and FPM (the "March 8" bloc) lost its majority in parliament. The hardline Christian party "Lebanese Forces" won, just as independent candidates related to the 2019 protest movement.

Political Situation

On the 4th of August 2020, corruption and government mismanagement resulted in the largest non-nuclear explosion in history at the port of Beirut. The explosion killed 218 people, wounded 7000 and displaced over 300,000 people. Shortly after the explosion, on the 10th of August, Prime Minister Hassan Diab resigned. Ever since then, Lebanon has been in a political deadlock that left the

country without a government for over a year.

After the resignation of Diab, Mustapha Adib was put forward by parliament as the new Prime Minister in September of 2020. However, he failed to form a government as Shia parties, particularly Amal and Hezbollah, were blocking the formation by demanding to name Shia ministers in the cabinet. Shia leaders feared being sidelined by Adib who wanted to shake up the appointments to specific ministries. The blockade is a result of Lebanon's sectarian political system, where some sectarian sections have had control over certain ministries for years. The deadlock led to Adib resigning later in September of 2020. Following the resignation of Adib, former Prime Minister Saad al-Hariri was re-chosen as Prime Minister. Hariri tried to form a non-partisan cabinet, but similar to Adib he failed to do so due to other parties hindering the formation process. After months of failed attempts to form a government, Hariri resigned in July of 2021.

Hariri was succeeded by Prime Minister Najib Mikati. After being without a government for over a year, Mikati finally managed to form a government in September of 2021. However, the formation did not end the political crisis in Lebanon. The investigation into the Beirut explosion has led to a political rift within Lebanese politics. Several high ranking politicians, including former Prime Minister Hassan Diab, have been subpoenaed by investigative judge Tarek Bitar. This has led to tensions within Lebanon's political establishment, that has been ruling with impunity for years. Certain parties, specifically Hezbollah and Amal, have argued that the lead investigator Tarek Bitar is biased and want him removed. Politicians investigated in relation to the blast have tried to have judge Bitar removed from office and have the investigation shut down. Other political parties, such as the Christian Lebanese Forces, support the investigation. The political disagreements have led to increased sectarian tensions within Lebanon. In October of 2021, the tensions reached a peak when a protest staged by Hezbollah and Amal resulted in an armed clash with members of the Christian Lebanese Forces party in Beirut. The violence left 7 people dead and more than 30 injured.

In the lead-up to long-anticipated May 15, 2022 elections, Sunni leader Saad al-Hariri stepped down, saying he will boycott the upcoming elections. Hariri has been the leader of the Future Movement, the biggest representative of the Sunni community in Lebanon. The resignation of Hariri leaves the Sunni block without a leader. Hariri also called on his party to not have any candidates run in the upcoming general elections in May.

Ongoing protests since October of 2019

The impact of the war in Syria, as well as years of corruption and inefficiency, have caused Lebanon's GDP growth to fall from 8%-9% in 2011 to 0% in 2019. In 2019 Lebanon had a national debt of around 150% and unemployment among under 35s is as high as 37%. A government-led 'Ponzi scheme' led to enormous debt as the economic position of Lebanon fell after the Syrian civil war. This caused the Lebanese currency to inflate tremendously against the dollar, causing basic commodities to become very expensive for Lebanon's population.

Although Lebanon's governments have been warned about the possible consequences for years, they have failed to take action and implement the necessary reforms. The Beirut explosion in August of 2020 and the COVID-19 restrictions have only worsened the already critical state of the economy.

In 2019 the population already was increasingly fed up with the blatant corruption and nepotism among politicians. When the new government announced in October 2019 that they were going to implement a tax on internet-based calling services such as WhatsApp, the population had had enough. The combination of growing economic and political grievances sparked the start of what is called the Lebanese "October Revolution" on October 17th 2019. The protests started small but in a short time grew to a movement made up of hundreds of thousands of people protesting all over the country. The protests paralyzed Lebanon's banking and transportation system and caused prime-minister Saad Hariri to hand in his resignation on October 29th 2019.

Even though the protest group managed to accomplish this, in reality, they are very decentralized and lack a leader. Often the different fractions of protesters have contradictory positions but they all tend to agree on a couple of things. The first is that the vast corruption among businessmen and politicians needs to end and the second is that they demand better governance. The anti-government protest continued throughout 2020 and 2021 as the social and economic situation in Lebanon also keeps deteriorating. About three quarters of the population is estimated to live in poverty due to the financial crisis that had led to the devaluation of the Lebanese lira. According to the UN, starvation has become a growing reality for thousands of Lebanese. It is estimated that more than one million Lebanese are in need of assistance to cover their basic needs. A lack of government funds to buy fuel has led to a fuel crisis that causes large-scale power outages which also effects hospitals. Prices of food continue to rise and life-saving medication is not available do to the medicine crisis. At the same time the government has been lifting subsidies on gas and medicine, causing prices to skyrocket even more. Meanwhile, the government continues to fail to implement the swift reforms needed to receive a IMF bailout programme.

Lebanese-Israeli relations

Lebanon is also facing several challenges in its foreign policymaking. In 2009 the Leviathan field was discovered and found to hold about natural gas reserves of 600 billion cubic meters. The Leviathan falls in 860 square kilometers of disputed oceanic territory between Israel and Lebanon. This has raised tensions with Israel over the last few years, only negatively affecting the already strained relationship between the neighbours. In October of 2020 the countries launched talks to address the long-running dispute. The conflict has prevented the development of the offshore resources. The delegates of the countries were clear to state that they are seeking a technical solution and are not there to negotiate peace and normalisation of relations.

Formally Lebanon and Israel remain at war. Since the 2006 Lebanon War there have only been some minor border incidents, but the country's have not signed an official peace treaty. Especially the relations between Hezbollah and Israel are strenuous, as a consequence of fighting during the 2006 war. Israeli law regards Lebanon as an enemy state and the border between the countries remains closed. A 2008 poll stated that 97% of Lebanese hold a negative view of Jews, illustrating why little has changed. After the Beirut explosion in August of 2020 Tel Aviv sought to show sympathy by raising a Lebanese flag though, also proving the country with support via a third way. Tensions between the two countries rose again during the Israel-Gaza war in 2021. After years of relative stability at the Israeli-Lebanese border, rockets were fired towards Israel from Lebanese territory in May of 2021. The Israeli's responded with firing artillery at targets in Lebanon. In August of 2021 rockets were again launched from Lebanon and responded to with artillery fire from Israel. However, the tensions did not escalate into further conflict and the border has been stable since August. In 2022, tensions were rising again over a disputed maritime area, where Israel seeks gas production. Hezbollah leader Nasrallah reacted the party is willing to 'strike' the gas rig.

Lebanese-Syrian relations

Relations between Lebanon and its neighbour Syria have been fragmented since the Syrian conflict broke out. Tensions increased during the war in Syria when around 1 million refugees came to Lebanon. This has put immense pressure on the country of not even 7 million people. The war also negatively impacted Lebanon's economy, which has been in a bad state for years now. In most recent times the Assad government and elements of Lebanon's government, notably Hezbollah, have grown closer again. Both the Assad regime and Hezbollah are highly influenced by Iran, which further complicates Lebanon's internal politics. With Saudi Arabia also wielding much influence in Lebanon, the country has become more polarized in recent times. Therefore it is no surprise that government formation has proven so difficult.

Women's rights

In January of 2020 the newly installed Diab-led cabinet included six women, out of a total of 30 ministers. Up until then there had only been two female ministers. To the outside world this might seem like Lebanon is making progress with regards to women's rights, but women continue to be discriminated against in many ways. There is no quota for women in elected bodies and as a result Lebanon has one of the lowest percentages of women in politics in the MENA region.

Lebanese women cannot pass on their Lebanese nationality to their children. So if they marry a non-Lebanese man, their children are denied citizenship. This negatively affects their legal residency, access to work, education, social services and health care, while also putting them at risk of becoming stateless. In 2019 a proposed law which would help such children with job permits was returned by the President for "further review". Other proposed laws against discrimination in the workplace are also bound to fail.

Currently there is also no minimum age for marriage, which allows for religious courts to approve marriages of girls aged beneath 15 years old. Marital rape also remains uncriminalized. Just like in many other MENA countries Lebanon repealed article 522 in 2017, which had previously allowed rapists to escape prosecution if they married the victim. This sounded like an important step, but it not for the loopholes related to sex with girls between 15 and 17 and virgin girls. These are just several of the most severe ways in which women are discriminated against. During the COVID-19 pandemic and periods of lockdown a worrying trend of increased domestic violence against women has been reported too.

LGBTI rights

LGBTI people in Lebanon face considerable difficulties in their daily lives, which non-LGBTI people do not have to face. However, in comparison to other Arab countries though, the LGBTI community is considerably more free. Article 534 of the Lebanese Penal Code still prohibits having sexual relations that "contradict the laws of nature". The official punishment stands at one year in jail, but judges more regularly just charge a fine. Article 534 is often used to justify harassment and persecution of LGBTI people by the police. There are some positive signs though, as in 2017 a fourth judge went against Article 534. In a court order issued then stated that "homosexuality is a personal choice, and not a punishable offense".

With the support of NGOs such as Amnesty International, UNHCR Lebanon and Human Rights Watch the situation for LGBTI

people in Lebanon shows progress. Positive events include the 2013 declaration that homosexuality is not an illness, the 2016 recognition of a transgender man and that organizations such as Helem and Proud, who do many things with regards to LGBTI rights, were allowed to register in the country and participate in civil society. The 2017 organisation of Pride week in Lebanon and the widespread participation of the LGBTI community in the nationwide 2019 protests are also promising signs.

There are still many things to improve for the LGBTI community in Lebanon, who often remain excluded from society. To illustrate, in 2020 85% percent of the respondents of a survey still believe that society should not accept homosexuality. The LGBTI community remains negatively targeted by politicians and LGBTI individuals are regularly mocked on TV. The police frequently raid nightclubs which are known to be visited by gay men and arrest people on the suspicion of homosexual acts. The current economic crisis, in combination with the COVID-19 lockdown measures, have affected the LGBTI community more negatively than the rest of society.

Elections

Lebanon is a republic. The National Assembly indirectly elects the president as head of state for a six years term. The president, upon a binding consultation with the National Assembly, appoints the prime minister. The prime minister chooses the cabinet, after consultation of the president and the National Assembly.

Election law

Sectarian divisions in the country have plagued every post-civil war government. Increasing pressure from outside actors during the Syrian Civil War (2011-) complicated domestic politics. The stand-off between the Hezbollah led March 8 Alliance and Future movement led March 14 Alliance paralyzed both parliament and government for almost a decade. The parliament was under pressure to reform itself, but the sectarian division complicated negotiations. After years of negotiations, in June 2017 a new electoral law was passed replacing the "1960 law".

Under this system, parties gained votes based on their religious sect. In this system, eighteen different confessional groups share power, with parliamentary seats being reserved for different groups. Each sect was granted a certain number of seats based on a quota, this quota was however seen as unfair and unrepresentative due to the country's demographic shift. The new system is still based on the confessional power distribution, but instead of the 26 constituencies, people now vote in 15 new constituencies. This creates a proportional representation system.

While confessionally distributed, MPs are elected by universal suffrage. The National Assembly is elected via a system of multi-member constituencies with each voter having two votes, one for a party and one for a specific candidate. The winner-take-all system, where the party winning most votes wins all the seats in the district, has been abolished as a result of the new election law.

Lebanon has no legal electoral threshold, for now, and no compulsory voting. Lebanon has universal suffrage for all men, with a minimum age of 21. Women should have elementary education and the minimum age of 21 to be authorized to vote. Remarkably, voters do not vote according to their place of residence, but according to their "civil record", usually the residence of their forefathers.

Lebanon's electoral system is very complicated, as it merges proportional representation with quotas to maintain the sectarian equilibrium in the country. It is exactly this equilibrium that has enabled the country's elite (most of above mentioned parties) to capture Lebanon's institutions, leading to enormous corruption and waste of public resources. Moreover, incumbent parties have redrawn electoral districts in their favour, 'gerrymandering', making it very difficult for new actors to enter the political arena. Moreover, the president must always be a Maronite Christian, the prime minister a Sunni and the speaker of parliament a Shia. All powerful positions in Lebanon can be traced back to a sectarian powerplay, leading to a peculiar system in which all parties are trying to hold on to their 'pillar' of power.

The National Assembly

The unicameral National Assembly of Lebanon is elected for four years. The 128 seats in the National Assembly are equally divided among Muslims and Christians. Each of the eleven confessional subgroups occupies a fixed number of seats in the National Assembly. Due to this unusual division of seats in the National Assembly, the role of political parties in Lebanese politics is different from the role of political parties in normal parliamentary democracies. Many of the political parties are lists of candidates, supported by an important local figure. Political coalitions are therefore only formed because of electoral reasons, and easily fall apart once the

seats in parliament are secured.

In this sectarian power-sharing system, two main alliances compete for power. The 'March 8' and 'March 14' alliances refer to dates during 2005 the Cedar revolution and in short were pro- and anti-Syrian blocs. 'March 8' consists mainly of the Maronite Christian Free Patriotic Movement (FPM), and the Shia Al-Amal and Hezbollah parties. They have had power since 2018 elections, having a 71 seat majority in the 128-seat parliament – and are blamed for the dysfunctionality of Lebanese political institutions. "March 14" refers to the anti-Syrian bloc and is led by the Sunni Future Movement, it also include hardline Christian groups such as the Lebanese Forces and Kataeb.

This form of parliamentary politics sustains a form of politics, based on satisfying instantly the grassroots support, rather than that it supports politics based on ideology and long-term objectives. Analysts say that Lebanese politics is both complicated and confusing. The combination of the fixed division of seats among the various religious groups, together with the many local candidates of different religions, makes it hard to get a clear view of the relative strength of political parties in the National Assembly.

Differences in 2020 government formation linger on in 2021

When prime-minister Saad Hariri resigned at the end of October 2019 he left a political vacuum that has been affecting all Lebanese citizens. The country requires urgent action to solve the economic crisis, but it has no leader to steer in the right direction. One of the main demands of the protesters was that a new government was to be chosen fast and that it would be made up of technocrats, instead of the sectarian politicians previously in power. Technocrats would be capable of carrying out effective economic reforms, which the country needs to qualify for economic support from the IMF.

Protesters' demands for a cabinet of independent specialists were shared by the Christian Lebanese Forces (LF), which is a leading Christian grouping, as well as former prime-minister Hariri who is aligned with Gulf Arab and the western states. However, President Aoun and his Hezbollah allies believe the government should not be made up of just technocrats, but should include politicians as well. The Free Patriotic Movement (FPM), which was founded by president Aoun, stated that they too would not agree to a government which is only made up of technocrats. Lebanon's foreign allies have urged them to form a credible government, meaning with limited influence of Hezbollah who is regarded by the U.S. as a terrorist organization, if it wants to receive international support to solve Lebanon's problems.

When on the 19th of December 2019 former education minister Hassan Diab was chosen as the new prime minister of Lebanon, it was perceived by many as a victory for Hezbollah and its allies. The protesters rejected Diab as prime-minister because of his close ties with some of the ruling political parties. Even though Diab presented himself as independent, he had clear ties to the former ruling class. Hence, protesters continued to demand an independent prime-minister. In January of 2020 Diab announced the formation of his new cabinet. From the outside, the cabinet could be perceived as being made up of independents and technocrats, but upon taking a closer look this did not seem to be the case. Adding to the appeal of the international community was the fact that it was Lebanon's first cabinet with six women in it.

After the Diab government fell in August of 2020, the conflict between Hezbollah-led forces and the opposition emerged again. Appointed prime minister Hariri has been proposing the instalment of a technocratic government, to get the country back on its feet. However, President Aoun has been blocking his proposed cabinets for months now, arguing in favour of a partisan government. He argues that without the support of political parties the cabinet is bound to fall in the near future. The difference of opinion has led to a political deadlock while the country is in dire need of political stability.

Saad al-Hariri came back, and was given the chance to form a government. However, as expected, he was not able to form a coalition of unity with opposing parties such as the FPM-led March 8 block. Hariri resigned as designate-PM and a coalition of national unity, led by Prime Minister Najib Mikati (Azm movement) then formed a coalition to govern Lebanon until the May 2022 elections. Mikati did not run in these elections. He is a Sunni Muslim, just like Saad al-Hariri, meaning that a seat vacuum looms in Sunni-allocated seats after Hariri boycotted the vote. Therefore, many new candidates have the opportunity to be elected in these seats.

Parliamentary Elections

On May 15, 2022, citizens in Lebanon went to the polls for parliamentary elections. Turnout during the elections was low – 41 percent. The main takeaway of the election is a loss for Hezbollah’s alliance – they lose their parliamentary majority. Independent candidates did well – they took thirteen seats.

Results

Final results of the May 15 polls show that ‘March 8’ lost their majority in parliament. They took 58 seats in parliament. Hezbollah and Amal together kept their 27 seats in parliament, but FPM and Hezbollah-affiliated independents did not win as much seats as in 2018. Among the high-profile losers was deputy parliament speaker Elie Ferzli, a long-time Hezbollah ally, who was ousted by a candidate backed by the Progressive Socialist Party. Hezbollah-allied Druze politician Talal Arslan also conceded his seat in parliament.

FPM has been overtaken by Lebanese Forces as the largest Christian party and overall bloc in parliament with 21 seats. Its leader Samir Geagea is a former warlord, heavily opposes Hezbollah and is affiliated with Saudi Arabia.

The main surprise at the polls were the achievements of independent opposition candidates, related to the 2019 protest movement. These went into the elections fragmented and were intimidated by incumbent political parties. Moreover, the current set-up of Lebanon’s election districts causes many difficulties for newcomer parties against existing political parties, that have entrenched political power. Together opposition took thirteen seats – a big win, taking a way of many household names in the Lebanese Parliament.

Sunni candidates related to Saad al-Hariri, the leader of the Future Movement, took seven seats. Al-Hariri boycotted the elections and called upon his followers not to vote or register as candidate.

See the provisional results below:

Lebanese Forces + allies	21	+6
Free Patriotic Movement + allies	18	-11
Amal	15	-2
Independents	15	+9
New Opposition Candidates	13	+12
Hezbollah + allies	21	-
Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) + allies	8	-1
ex-Future Movement	7	-13
Kataeb + ally	5	+2
Tachnag	3	+3
Marada	2	-4
TOTAL	128	

Expectations after elections

In the fall of this year, a new President must be elected. According to the country’s political sectarian distribution, this must be a Maronite Christian – currently Michel Aoun (FPM). Nabih Berri (Amal) is already re-chosen as Speaker of Parliament for a seventh term.

It will be very difficult to gain a majority in the current Lebanese parliament, as Lebanese Forces and ‘March 8’ are completely opposed. In order to prevent a complete paralysation of Lebanese political rule, it will be key that these parties find some sort of ‘modus vivendi’ on passing legislature. This is crucial as Lebanon has reached a staff-level agreement with the IMF on much-needed financial reform in the country.

Potential parliamentary blocs are the traditional ‘March 8’: FPM, Hezbollah, Amal and allies are now provisionally on 58 seats.

'March 14' – Lebanese Forces, Progressive Socialist Party, former Future Movement, Jama'a Islamiya and Rifi are on 43 seats. The stance of the new oppositional figures could thus become decisive to find majorities in parliament. Bottomline - the Lebanese parliament is perhaps even more polarized than after 2018 elections.

Election monitoring

The Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE) deployed various independent observers across the country. It documented more than 3,500 violations – mostly vote rigging, vote buying and voter intimidation. Its monitors were threatened by members of Amal, Hezbollah and Lebanese Forces.

EU election monitors were equally worried, saying that the elections were “overshadowed by widespread practices of vote buying and clientelism, which distorted the level playing field and seriously affected the voters’ choice.” Lebanon's Interior Minister Bassam Mawlawi dismissed the allegations as minimal.

Presidential Elections

On 31 October 2016, the Lebanese parliament gathered together for the 46th time to vote on a new president. Finally, Michel Aoun (Free Patriotic Movement) won with a majority of 83 out of 128 votes. Before these elections, Lebanon had been without a president for 2.5 years, and it was the first time that the entire parliament gathered since April 2014. Aoun's election is a victory for his Lebanese Shiite ally Hezbollah, which is heavily influenced by Iran and Syria. It was said that Aoun mainly got elected because of a deal he struck with the head of the Sunni movement, Saad Hariri. The deal involved that Hariri would become prime minister if he would support the election.

There were three rounds of voting. In the first round, Aoun did not secure a two-thirds majority among the 128 MPs present. The second round of voting only required a simple majority to win, though there were 128 ballots cast making the round invalid. In the third round, he received the winning 83 votes.

In the fall of 2022, a new President will be elected.

Social Democratic Parties

Progressive Socialist Party (PSP)

Party Leader: Walid Jumblatt

Number of seats: 8

<http://www.psp.org.lb>

The Progressive Socialist Party was founded on 5 January 1949. The founders comprised six individuals, all with a different background. Among the founders was Kamal Jumblatt. He was the most prominent of the founders and was party leader until 1977, when he was assassinated. His son Walid is the present-day leader of the PSP.

Willing to construct a new order, based on secularism, socialism, Arabism and the abolishment of the sectarian system, the PSP began an opposition movement in the fifties, together with other dissatisfied groups: the Lebanese National Movement (LNM). The PSP (as part of the LNM) and Jumblatt supported the Palestinians for religious reasons, but strived against the Arab nationalists slogans of the Palestine movement. After the restoration of the constitutional rule in 1989, the PSP participated in a number of governments. Later, the PSP joined the opposition to rebel against the Syrian occupation of Lebanon.

After the fall of the government in January 2011, the party moved from the mainly pro-western March 14 Alliance towards the Syrian

and Iran-orientated March 8 Alliance. It presumably did so in return for a governmental post, to be able to pursue its policy goals. A secular state is nowadays a top-priority of the PSP. Another important issue for the PSP is the reorganisation of the administrative districts in Lebanon. According to the PSP, more autonomy should be given to regional councils to increase their level of independence. Other important issues are the introduction of a progressive tax principle, the assurance of the separation of powers and enhancing the right to public liberties.

Other Parties

Future Movement (FM)

Party Leader: Sa'ad al Hariri

Number of seats: 7

<https://www.facebook.com/almustaqbal.org/>

After the assassination of his father, current proposed Prime Minister Sa'ad Hariri took over the leadership of the Future Movement. Initially the Future Movement was just a movement, but before the 2005 elections, Sa'ad Hariri vowed to turn the movement into a political party. At the 2005 elections, the party was the most important faction of the Rafik Hariri Martyr list, a coalition of anti-Syrian parties like the PSP and the Lebanese Forces. The party can be classified as centre-right, opting for classic liberal economic policies.

In recent times the Future Movement has remained the largest party in the March 14 Alliance, as a Sunni affiliated party allying itself with, amongst many groups, the Maronite Christians of the Lebanese Forces and Kataeb Party. However, in the 2018 election the March 14 Alliance lost its majority in parliament. This has been a significant loss for the Future Movement and is part of the reasons for the current political deadlock. Hariri has been appointed as prime minister again, but is struggling to form a government.

In January 2022, Hariri said he would boycott the upcoming elections. As a consequence, Future Movement did not run in the polls. However, various FM-affiliated persons run, they took 7 seats.

Free Patriotic Movement (FPM)

Party Leader: Gebran Bassil

Number of seats: 18

<https://www.tayyar.org/FPM/ParlimentBloc>

For a long period of time, former prime minister and current President Michel Aoun (1988-1990) lived in exile while leading the FPM. He returned to Lebanon in 2005 and contested in the 2005 elections, winning 21 seats in the National Assembly together with his allies in the Aoun Bloc. The FPM claims to be the only party that isn't based on religion. For this reason, the party does not only have Maronite-members, but also many members with a Muslim background.

The most important issue for the FPM is reforming the Lebanese economy. In the past, disarming Hezbollah was another important issue, but this changed after signing the "memorandum of understanding" with Hezbollah in February 2006.

Hezbollah

Party Leader: Hassan Nasrallah

Number of seats: 21 (with independent allies)

<https://www.moqawama.org/>

It is important to note that Hezbollah consists of two parts. The militant part of Hezbollah was founded in 1982, as a combination of several small militant groups. During the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990), Hezbollah fought for the Shiite community. Their main objective was expelling Israeli and Western Forces from Lebanon. Parts of Hezbollah were involved in kidnapping, torture and detention of Western forces in Lebanon. After the Civil War, Hezbollah has often been accused of acts of terrorism and of bombings

of Israeli forces in South Lebanon. The European Parliament entitled Hezbollah as a terrorist organisation on 8 March 2005.

Since 1992, the political part of Hezbollah has taken part in the Lebanese general elections. The results of previous elections always comprised around 11 seats. In 2009, the party gained 13 seats. Hezbollah says to strive for the introduction of an Islamic government by peaceful means. On the contrary, US sources say that Hezbollah's goal is to introduce a fundamentalist, Iranian-like state, with no secular influences at all. It is widely assumed that the Syrian government and Hezbollah are closely linked. For this reason, Hezbollah was the driving force behind the pro-Syria rallies during the Cedar Revolution.

In February 2006, Hezbollah leader Nasrallah and current President Michel Aoun of the Free Patriotic Movement signed a "memorandum of understanding". In this agreement, Hezbollah and Aoun agreed to cooperate on a great number of topics, like the reform of the electoral law, security, human rights and foreign relations. This agreement is unique and can be a breakthrough in the relationship between pro-Syrian (Hezbollah) and anti-Syrian (Aoun bloc and governmental parties) politicians. Their cooperation has proven successful in recent times. In the 2018 election the Hezbollah led coalition gained a majority in parliament, beating the Future Movement coalition of Prime Minister Hariri.

Lebanese Forces (LF)

Party Leader: Samir Geagea
Number of seats: 21
<http://www.lebanese-forces.org>

The founder of the Lebanese Forces, Bashir Gemayel, started his military organisation in 1976. On 10 September 1992, the Lebanese Forces Party was officially formed. The party members are mainly Christian Maronites, although the party claims to be secular. The party is based on three principles: safeguarding Lebanese independence and sovereignty, founding the Lebanese government on the basis of human rights, and establishing a democratic system with respect to human rights. Furthermore, the LF party embraced a hard-line, anti-Syrian opposition and revived ties with Israel.

In 1994, the party leader Geagea was arrested and accused of undermining government authority during and after the Civil War. Geagea was released in 2005. For the 2005 elections, the LF was part of the Rafik Hariri Martyr list, which won the elections. The LF is still considered a very well organised party with its own magazine and TV-station. The party can be classified as Christian nationalist party and right-wing on the political spectrum. In recent times it has been part of the March 14 Alliance, which is led by Prime Minister Hariri's Future Movement.

Amal Movement

Party Leader: Nabih Berri
Number of seats: 15
<https://amal-movement.com/>

The Amal Movement was established by Imam Moussa Al Sadr in 1974 to gather Shiite forces under the banner of lifting the deprivation of the deprived areas in Lebanon and resist the Israeli aggressions. While acknowledging its support base to be the "traditionally under-represented politically and economically disadvantaged Shia community, it aimed to seek social justice for all deprived Lebanese. After the abduction of Imam Moussa Al Sadr, the Lawyer Nabih Berri became the leader of the movement, Amal had numerous confrontations with the Israeli occupation as well as the authority in the era of President Amin Gemayel. Amal also fought a fierce war in the Palestinian camps in the 1980s and then with Hezbollah.

After the Taif Agreement, Amal strongly participated in the parliamentary elections, putting its leader to the second presidency and forming a basic political force in Lebanon. In recent times it has been part of the Hezbollah-led March 8 Alliance, which gained a majority in parliament in the 2018 elections. It is the largest Shia party in parliament, even beating Hezbollah by 3 seats in the 2018 election. The party can be classified as nationalist and centre-right on the political spectrum. Since 1980 the party has continuously been led by Nabih Berri.

Marada Movement

Party Leader: Suleiman Frangieh
Number of seats: 2

<https://elmarada.org/>

The Marada movement is a political party established from the former Marada militia, who fought in the Lebanese civil war of the 80s. It started as the Marada Brigade which acted as the personal militia of Suleiman Frangieh, then president of Lebanon. The fighters of this brigade were named after the legendary Marada, who were warriors of the early Middle Ages, fighting along the external edge of the Byzantine Empire. The militia group was founded in 1976, but the political party was only established in 1992.

After the 2005 legislative elections, the Marada became a member of the March 8 Alliance, which is led by Hezbollah. Only in June 2006 the party was officially launched. After the 2018 election, in which the March 8 Alliance gained a majority in parliament, the party gained 3 seats. Marada is a right-wing party which is based on Christian democratic values. The party's current leader is Suleiman Frangieh Junior, the grandson of Suleiman Frangieh, Lebanon's president from 1970 to 1976.

Kateab Party

Party Leader: Samy Gemayel

Number of seats: 5

<https://kataeb.org/>

The Kateab party was formed in 1936 as a national youth movement by Pierre Gemayel. It then turned into a political party in 1952. The party supported President Camille Chamoun during the events of 1958. The party was the most important right-wing faction during the early Lebanese civil war. The Lebanese Forces emerged from the Kataeb. The party's role and influence gradually declined after the death of its founder in 1984 and following the clashes between forces in the Christian arena. The Kataeb also witnessed several divisions in its ranks.

After the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon, the party retrieved its historical role with Amin Gemayel as president. Pierre Gemayel, Amin's son, also played a significant role before his assassination on November 21, 2006. The party is an active member of the March 14 Alliance, which is led by the Future Movement of Prime Minister Hariri. Historically the party could be classified as far-right, but currently it is a centre-right party, promoting Christian democracy.

Biographies

Michel Aoun

President

Michel Aoun, leader of the Free Patriotic Movement, was elected as President of Lebanon on 31 October 2016. Aoun is a Maronite Christian, making him eligible for the presidency according to the sectarian system. Previously, in 1988 President Amin Gemayel appointed Aoun as prime minister of one of the two rival governments at that time. In that period his government fought two wars; one against Syrian forces in Lebanon and the other against the Lebanese Forces.

In 1990 he was driven away from the presidential palace by the Syrian army, going into exile in France. Aoun was against the 1989 peace deal which reduced the political powers of the Maronite Christians and increased the powers of the Sunni Muslim prime minister. During his exile, Aoun lobbied against Syrian domination of Lebanon as Damascus kept troops stationed throughout the country. He also supported Western moves to end Syria's dominance.

In 2005 he returned to Lebanon because Syrian armed forces withdrew due to the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Al-Hariri. Eventually, Aoun declared an alliance between his party and the Shi'ite movement, which is led by Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah. This was regarded as an historic move and the cooperation goes under the name of the March 8 Alliance. Hezbollah's support in the parliament has enabled Aoun to get sufficient votes to be elected as president in 2016. Since the fall of the Diab-led government in August of 2020, Aoun has been in conflict with appointed Prime Minister Hariri, the leader of the rivalling March 14 Alliance, over the formation of a government.

Hassan Diab

Hassan Diab is a former Prime Minister of Lebanon. He was elected in December of 2019, but had to resign after the Beirut Blast which occurred in August of 2021. Prime-minister Diab has a PhD in computer engineering from the University of Bath in the United Kingdom and has taught the subject since 1985 at the American University in Beirut. In 2006, Diab was appointed as the vice-president of Regional External Programs (REP) at the American University of Beirut. The REP is the university's consulting and professional development arm. Between 2011 and 2014 Diab served as education minister under then prime-minister Najib Mikati. After leaving the post he returned to the American University in Beirut and continued teaching and his administrative role at the REP. Diab is an independent and is not a vocal supporter of any political group. He is a Sunni Muslim, a prerequisite for becoming prime minister in Lebanon.

Saad Hariri

Prime Minister-designate

Saad Hariri is the son of former President of Lebanon Rafik Hariri, who was killed in 2005. He is a well-known businessman and politician. In 2016 he was elected by President Michel Aoun as prime minister. Before becoming a politician he studied business administration at Georgetown University in the United States. Later on he was director of a Saudi company established by his father. Following his father's death he became a politician.

He is a Sunni Muslim and was able to create a coalition that represented many parties and ethnical groups in Lebanon. With this coalition he won the elections in 2005. Eventually, he was elected as prime minister at the election on 7 June 2009. The term of this parliament officially ended in 2011, after the resignation of mainly Hezbollah and its allies because of political tensions caused by investigations into the assassination of Rafik Hariri. It is said that Aoun was elected as President because he was able to strike a deal with Hariri. This deal involved Hariri supporting Aoun and in exchange becoming the prime minister.

On October 29th 2019 Hariri resigned amid large scale protests about the political and economic situation in the country. After Mustapha Adib was not able to form a government, on October 22th of 2020, Hariri was reinstated as Prime Minister. However, he was not able to form a government as he was in conflict with President Aoun. Hariri opted to form a non-partisan, technocratic, government. Aoun blocked his proposal, arguing that a cabinet needs political support for it to govern effectively. On the 15th of July, 2021, Hariri stepped down as Prime Minister-designate following a meeting with President Aoun. According to Hariri, the government formation was blocked by Aoun due to disagreements over the size and sectarian distribution of a new government.

In January 2022, Hariri decided to boycott the May 2022 elections, citing election meddling by foreign powers as his main reason to do so. His decision severely weakened the Sunni "Future Movement" in parliament - only several parliamentarians were elected on May 15, outside official party cadres.

Walid Jumblatt

Leader of the Progressive Socialist Party

Walid Jumblatt is the current leader of the Progressive Socialist party. He succeeded his father Kamal Jumblatt, who had been assassinated in 1977. The Jumblatt family founded the PSP and has been leading the party from its establishment. The family has always been very prominent in the Druze community.

Hassan Nasrallah

Secretary-general of Hezbollah

Hassan Nasrallah is the third and current Secretary General of the Lebanese political and paramilitary party Hezbollah since his predecessor, Abbas al-Musawi, was assassinated by the Israel Defense Forces in February 1992. Nasrallah joined Hezbollah after the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon. In 1989, Hassan Nasrallah traveled to Qom, Iran, where he furthered his religious studies. He believes that Islam holds the solution to the problems of any society.

Nasrallah's leadership of Hezbollah is characterized by his populism. Nasrallah also steered the organization beyond its roots as an

Islamist militia and into the realm of national politics, establishing himself as a political leader without holding public office. Nasrallah is credited in Lebanon and the Arab world for ending the Israeli occupation of the South of Lebanon, something which has greatly bolstered the party's political standing within Lebanon.

Gebran Bassil

Party Leader of the Free Patriotic Movement

Gebran Gerge Bassil is a Lebanese politician, leader of the Free Patriotic Movement, a Lebanese political party whose support base is overwhelmingly from Lebanon's Christian community. Bassil was an activist for the Free Patriotic Movement from 1989 to 2005. In 2009, he served as the Minister of Telecommunications, then as the Minister of Water and Energy in 2011 and the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants from 2014 to 2020. In September 2015, he became by designation the leader of the Free Patriotic Movement taking over the position that was occupied by the founder of the FPM and Lebanese President, Michel Aoun. What is important to note, is that he is the son-in-law of President Aoun. He remains a controversial figure in Lebanon, accused of corruption, but nonetheless is considered a potential candidate for the presidency.

Nabih Berri

President of Amal Movement

Nabih Berri, born on 28 January 1938 in Sierra Leone to Lebanese Shia parents, has been the president of the Amal Movement since he took over that position from Hussein el-Husseini in 1980. He studied law at the Lebanese University and graduated in 1963. In his early years he was the president of the National Union of Lebanese Students and worked as a lawyer for several companies. He was a key player in the process towards ending the Civil War. After serving as minister in several different cabinets from 1984 to 1992 he was appointed as Speaker of the Parliament of Lebanon. Berri has held that position since 1992, which is almost 30 years now. He has decisively won six elections to maintain that position.

Samir Geagea

Executive Chairman of Lebanese Forces

Samir Geagea has been the Executive Chairman of Lebanese Forces (LF) since he overthrew Elie Hobeika in 1986. Geagea was born in Beirut on 25 October 1952 in a modest Maronite family. He studied medicine at the American University of Beirut and Saint Joseph University. His studies were interrupted by the Lebanese civil war, in which he developed himself into an important figure. He was involved in two coups before consolidating himself as the undisputed leader of the LF. He was convicted of ordering four political assassinations during the civil war though in 1992, but he was granted amnesty by parliament in 2005. He has remained an important political figure and with the LF is considered to be the main Christian component in the March 14 Alliance. Geagea was in the run for the presidency in 2014, being backed by the March 14 Alliance. After the presidential deadlock of two years, Geagea backed his longtime rival Michel Aoun as president in 2016.

Najib Mikati

Prime Minister

Najib Mikati is the current Prime Minister of Lebanon. He succeeded Saad al-Hariri who resigned in July of 2021. It is the third time that Mikati is elected as the Prime Minister. He first held the position in 2005 when he headed an interim government that supervised the general elections following the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon. He again served between president between 2011 and 2014. Before becoming Prime Minister for the first time in 2005, he served as Minister of Public Works and Transport from December 1998 to 2003.

Mikati was Born in 1955 in Tripoli. He graduated from the American University of Beirut with an MBA. He is one of the founders of the M1 Group, a family-owned holding with interests in various sectors such as telecom, real estate, aircraft financing, fashion and energy. His businesses made him one of the richest men of Lebanon, having an estimated net worth of 2.5 billion dollar.

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