

Lebanon

Last update:	25 maart 2021
Population:	6,855,713 million (World Bank 2019 est.)
Prime minister:	Saad Hariri
President:	Michel Aoun
Governemental type:	Parliamentary multi-confessionalist republic
Ruling coalition:	-
Last election:	May 2018 (general elections)
Next election:	2022 (general elections)
Sister parties:	Progressive Socialist Party (PSP)

Politics in Lebanon are based on a post-civil war imposed sectarian system where power is shared over the different groups. The president has to be someone from the Christian Maronite group, the prime minister is reserved for a Sunni Muslim and the speaker of parliament has to be a Shia Muslim. However, divisions within the sectarian groups have left the country in a political deadlock, leaving Lebanon without a president for more than two years. 2016 marked a turning point in the country's political situation. The parliament elected Michel Aoun, from the Free Patriotic Movement, as president.

In June 2017, a new election law was approved which is meant to improve the representation of sectarian groups. The new law paved the way for elections in May 2018. The elections brought a surprising defeat to the party of prime minister Saad Hariri. The Hezbollah led coalition won several seats and gained a majority. In October 2019 large scale protests about the political and economic situation in Lebanon broke out. Prime-minister Hariri resigned on October 29th and a new government, led by new prime-minister Diab, was formed on the 20th of January 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.

Mustapha Adib was put forward by parliament as the new prime minister, but failed to form a government. Shia parties were unwilling to accept the proposed technocratic cabinet. Hariri was re-chosen as prime minister, also intending to form a non-partisan cabinet. So far he has failed to do so, with mainly Christian parties hindering the formation process. This has left the country with a Diab-led caretaker government, of which the competencies remain vague. Protesters have en-masse taken to the streets as the country is facing its worst economic crisis in decades. The already existing crisis has only been worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic and the Beirut explosion. Meanwhile international actors, such as France, have urged Lebanese politicians and political parties to set aside their differences and form a government as quickly as possible.

Political Situation

Lebanon has been without a government since the Diab-led cabinet resigned in August of 2020, following the disastrous Beirut explosion. Many Lebanese politicians criticized the former cabinet for being completely made of Hezbollah and its allies, excluding the mainstream Sunni bloc, which is led by former prime-minister Hariri. Hariri was appointed as the country's new prime-minister, but given the underlying political tension between the blocs, it may come as no surprise that he has not proven successful in the formation of a new cabinet. This despite the fact that he is rooting for a non-partisan government.

Meanwhile, Lebanon is facing the worst economic crisis in its modern history. The Lebanese pound lost about 85% of its value since October 2019 and has hit an all-time low. Moreover, the impact of the Covid-19 lockdown has driven half the population into poverty. The country has held several sessions of negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in hope to gain foreign aid. However, the IMF or any donor state will not provide help unless the government carries out reforms, at the forefront of them accelerating an overhaul of its loss-making electricity sector. Without a government, such reforms cannot be implemented, leaving the country in this dire situation.

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.

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.

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%. 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 new government led by Diab was also unable to solve the country's enormous problems and quickly resigned after the Beirut explosion. Since then even more and more people have taken to the streets to demand political actions to end the ongoing economic crisis. With the COVID-19 restrictions, including tight curfews, the protests have escalated in the beginning of 202.

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 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.

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.

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.

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 winners-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. The National Assembly is now elected in fifteen rather than six different constituencies.

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 authorised 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.

Increased Hezbollah influence in 2019 government formation

The last elections in May of 2018 were won by the Hezbollah bloc and the Christian Lebanese forces. The Future Movement, the party of the designated Prime Minister Hariri, lost one-third of its seats. Despite the loss, Hariri was appointed to form a government. Hariri has the task to divide the ministerial posts among six parties. Different problems occurred during the division of minister posts. One of the first problems during the summer was the dispute between the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) and Lebanese Forces (LF) about the Christian representation.

A second problem that occurred was about representation of the Druze. About 200.000 members of the Druze community are living in Lebanon and according to the constitution, the Druze are entitled to three ministerial posts. Most of the Druze are part of the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP), led by Walid Joumblatt. However, if Hariri would give the Druze of PSP this position, the Druze of the Lebanese Democratic Party (LDP) would not be represented. Joumblatt agreed to allocate only two Druze ministerial seats instead of three. LDP agreed with one minister post and put forward a 'neutral' candidate.

However, the biggest obstacle in the formation process was with Sunni representatives. It became known as the 'Sunni Knot.' Hezbollah was keen to have one of its Sunni allies as minister of health. However, the fear was that this appointment would complicate foreign (western) aid. Hezbollah insisted that their Sunni MPs should be represented in the new government, but Hariri and Aoun refused. Finally, the breakthrough came after the rival factions worked out compromises to allow the representation of Sunni lawmakers in the new formation.

Nine months after the general parliamentary elections in May a government was formed on 31 January 2019. The new 30-member cabinet finally came into being when the political blocs agreed on a new arrangement of the ministry positions. With many of the important ministry posts assigned to Hezbollah lawmakers and their Sunni allies, it seemed that their strength had grown significantly. The increased Hezbollah control of Lebanese politics suggests a growth in influence of Iran and the Assad government in the country.

Differences in 2020 government formation linger on in 2021

When prime-minister Saad Hariri resigned at the end of October 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 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.

Parliamentary Elections

Parliamentary elections of 2018

On May 6th 2018 Lebanon went to the polls for the first general election in almost a decade. After a political impasse that lasted for several years due to internal and external strife, a large overhaul of the electoral system led in summer 2017 to the prospect of elections. The new electoral law redrew the country into 15 electoral districts, further entrenching Lebanon's sectarian makeup, and introduced proportional representation. Voters cast two votes, one for a list of candidates and one for a single preferred candidate.

Results

Party	Seats	+/-
<i>Amal-Hezbollah and allies</i>	40	+9
Amal	16	+3
Hezbollah	12	+2
Independents	5	+2
Small parties	8	+3
<i>Free Patriotic Movement and allies</i>	29	+5
Free Patriotic Movement	18	+8
Independents	5	-5
ARF	3	+1
Small parties	3	+1
<i>Future Movement and allies</i>	20	-15
Future Movement	19	-7
Independents	1	-8
<i>Lebanese Forces and allies</i>	15	+7
Lebanese Forces	13	+5
Independents	2	+2
<i>Small independent parties</i>	15	-4
Progressive Socialist Party	9	-2

Only 49% of the electorate went to the polls compared to 54% during the last election. Many analysts cite the lack of trust in the government to tackle corruption and to boost the economy as reasons for the low voter turnout. The Shiite coalition of Hezbollah-Amal reaped the benefits of the newly implemented electoral law by increasing their parliamentary bloc to 40 MPs, while the Lebanese Forces (LF) pulled off an upset after securing 14 seats. The Future Movement saw its bloc almost split in half after getting only 20 seats. The Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) and their allies bolstered their position after electing 29 representatives. With the Iran-backed Shi'ite group Hezbollah and its political allies winning more than half the seats it will boost Hezbollah's influence in the country.

International reaction and observers

The international community congregated Lebanon with its first election in almost a decade. The European Union (EU) acknowledged that the electoral process was an improvement from the old system. Real innovations, like ballot secrecy, were successfully implemented. The EU, however, had to acknowledge that there is room for improvement. There are still hurdles to take such as more room for female candidates. The international observation mission of the National Democratic Institute also noted that although the vote went relatively smooth, there were still incidents. "some polling officials failed to ensure the safety of election materials during the count," as well as maintaining that "vote-buying was widely reported." Lebanon's Association For Democratic Elections (LADE) also recorded over 3000 violations from the moment the polls opened until the votes began to be tallied.

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.

Social Democratic Parties

Progressive Socialist Party (PSP)

Party Leader: Walid Jumblatt

Number of seats: 9

<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: 20

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.

Free Patriotic Movement (FPM)

Party Leader: Gebran Bassil

Number of seats: 24

<http://www.tayyar.org/tayyar/index.php>

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: 12

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: 13
<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: 16

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.

Lebanese Democratic Party (LDP)

Party Leader: Talal Arslan
Number of seats: 1

The Lebanese Democratic party was established in 2001 by Prince Talal Arslan, who is the son of Lebanese Druze leader Emir Magid Arslan. The party is officially secular but it is mostly supported by Lebanese Druze, who support the Arslan family. The party is a member of the March 8 Alliance. It currently has one seat in the parliament, which it won in the 2018 parliamentary election. The party is considered to be a centre-right conservative party, which focuses on promoting the interests of the Druze people.

Marada Movement

Party Leader: Suleiman Frangieh

Number of seats: 3

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.

Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF)

Party Leader: Hagop Pakradounian

Number of seats: 3

The Armenian Revolutionary Federation was founded in 1890 to defend the Armenian people against the Ottoman authorities. It became active in Lebanon, as it is considered the largest representative of the Lebanese people of Armenian descent. Its main rivals in the Armenian arena are the Hunchak Party and Ramgavar Party. Armenians are mainly located in Beirut, the northern Metn coast and Anjar in Bekaa. The ARF has been represented in the Lebanese Parliament since 1942. It has been a full member of the Socialist International since 2003, which it had originally joined in 1907.

In recent times the party has joined forces with other parties in the Hezbollah-led March 8 Alliance, which gained a majority of the seats in parliament after the 2018 elections. The ARF gained an extra seat and currently holds 3 seats in parliament. It is an Armenian nationalist and socialist political party and has traditionally advocated democratic socialism. It can be classified as a left-wing party. Currently the ARF in Armenia is led by Hagop Pakradounian.

AZM Movement

Party Leader: Najib Migati

Number of seats:

The Azm and Saade Association was founded in 1988. Following President Najib Miqati's participation in the political life as a minister, member of the parliament and prime minister, the former became active in its social, educational and economic services, thus becoming one of the main forces in Tripoli and the north. Currently the Azm is part of the Hezbollah-led March 8 Alliance. The party can be classified as a centre party.

Kateab Party

Party Leader: Samy Gemayel

Number of seats: 3

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.

Saad Hariri

Prime Minister

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 reinstalled as Prime Minister. He has so far not been able to form a government though as he is in conflict with President Aoun. Hariri is opting to form a non-partisan, technocratic, government. Aoun has been blocking his proposal, arguing that a cabinet needs political support for it to govern effectively.

Hassan Diab

Former Prime Minister

Hassan Diab is the current prime-minister of Lebanon who was appointed on the 19th of December 2019. 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. Prime-minister 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.

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.

Source

- [Adam Carr's election archive: Lebanon](#)
- [Al Jazeera](#)
- [Al Jazeera 2](#)
- [Al Jazeera News](#)
- [Amnesty International: Lebanon](#)
- [Aoun-Hezbollah agreement](#)
- Azar, F. and E. Mullet (2002) Muslims and Christians in Lebanon: Common Views on Political Issues. Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 39, No. 6 (Nov.,2002), 735-746
- [BBC: Who's who in Lebanon](#)
- [BBC News: 24 June 2007](#)
- [BBC News: 16 July 2007](#)
- [BBC News: 9 October](#)
- [BBC News: 19 December 2019](#)
- [Boston Globe](#)
- [Britannica: Hassan Nasrallah](#)
- [CIA: Lebanon world fact book](#)
- Dah, A., Dibeh, G. and W. Shahin (1998) The Distributional Impact of Taxes in Lebanon. Midterm Report. Beirut: Lebanese Center for Policy Studies.
- [Daily Star](#)
- [Economist](#)

- Electionguide.org
- [Epic Project: electoral law Lebanon](#)
- Escwa.org
- [European Union](#)
- European Union Election Observation Mission (2005) Parliamentary Elections 2005 Lebanon. Final Report. · Khoury, M. El and U. Panizza (2001) Poverty and Social Mobility in Lebanon. A few Wild Guesses. Beirut: Department of Economics American University
- [Foreign & Commonwealth Office](#)
- [Foreign Policy 1](#)
- [Foreign Policy 2](#)
- [Free Patriotic Movement](#)
- [Freedomhouse: Lebanon](#)
- [Hezbollah official website](#)
- [IFES](#)
- [International Herald Tribune](#)
- [International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance \(IDEA\)](#)
- [IPU](#)
- [Kamal Jumblatt Website](#)
- [Konrad Adenauer Stiftung \(2018\) Political Party Mapping in Lebanon Ahead of the 2018 Elections. Report.](#)
- [Lebanese Forces Website](#)
- [Licus](#)
- Makdisi, Ussama (1996) Reconstructing the Nation-State: The Modernity of Sectarianism in Lebanon. Middle East Report, No. 200, Minorities in the Middle East: Power and the Politics of Difference (Jul. – Sep., 1996), 23-26, 30.
- [Middle East](#)
- [Middle East Eye](#)
- [Najib Mikati](#)
- [National Democratic Institute](#)
- [Press TV](#)
- [Progressive Socialist Party](#)
- [ReliefWeb](#)
- [Reuters](#)
- [Reuters 2](#)
- [Reuters 3](#)
- [Reuters 4](#)
- [Reuters 5](#)
- [Reuters 6](#)
- [SF](#)
- [Student Pulse](#)
- [The National](#)
- [UNIFIL Lebanon](#)
- [UN: 24 August 2007](#)
- [UN: 17 August 2007](#)
- [U.S. Department of State](#)
- [USIP](#)
- [Valdai](#)
- Wenger, M. and J. Denney (1990) Lebanon's Fifteen-Year War 1975-1990. Middle East Report, No. 162, Lebanon's War (Jan. – Feb., 1990), 23-25
- [Wikipedia: Amal Movement](#)
- [Wikipedia: Gebran Bassil](#)
- [Wikipedia: Hezbollah](#)
- [Wikipedia: History of Lebanon](#)
- [Wikipedia: Lebanese Civil War](#)
- [Wikipedia: Lebanese Forces](#)
- [Wikipedia: Politics in Lebanon](#)
- [Wikipedia: Progressive Socialist Party](#)
- [Wikipedia: Sectarianism](#)