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Still on hold: Administrative reform

Lebanon's public administration has been subject to many attempts at reform and development, but political and sectarian interference has left most administrations idle and corrupt.

There are 25,328 positions in the various public administrations. Out of those, 10,522 (not including an additional 30 employees of the General Directorate of Housing) have been filled, compared with 14,776 that are still available. There are also 6,259 workers under various non-permanent employment arrangements, varying from contractual workers, daily workers and associates. If those workers are taken into consideration, public administration employees total 16,811, leaving the number of vacant positions at 8,517. If the necessary restructuring takes place, those positions may not have to be filled.

End of Service

In 2003, 604 employees were made redundant, as follows:

- Grade One civil servants: 6
- Grade Two: 20
- Grade Three: 36
- Grade Four: 171
- Grade Five: 86
- Grade Three Secondary School Teachers: 57
- Grade Three Arts Professors: 3
- Grade Four Teachers: 217
- Grade Four Vocational Education Assistant Professors: 8

Prohibiting further employment

A 23 December 1997 Council of Ministers decision prohibited further employment in any public administration. Furthermore, a 22 February 2001 decision imposed a ban on hiring new employees for municipalities or municipal councils, unless the position could not be filled by available surplus employees (numbering around 6,500). In that case,

the approval of the Council of Civil Service is required.

Six rounds of tests were conducted in 2003 to fill such vacancies, as shown in **Table 1** on the following page. There were 3,025 registered candidates, out of which 2,967 were eligible. Those who actually took the exam numbered 2,133 and only 411 passed, or a 19.26% success rate. Analysts note that this poor performance is an indicator of the weak educational background of graduates.

Disagreements with the Council of Ministers

Although the government claims it is committed to eliminating corruption, the Council of Ministers has been at odds with a number of decisions issued by the Council of Civil Service, which has the effect of weakening the Council's authority. Some of the differences in 2003 were related to the following:

- Decision No. 18 (10 April 2003): Ministry of Labor contract with a social expert.
- Decision No. 29 (24 July 2003): Change in the status of an employee of the Ministry of Energy and Water to a position as the director of the Department of Water for Jabal Aamel.
- Decision No. 15 (14 August 2003): Renewal of contract with nine engineers at the Ministry of Displaced.
- Decision No. 25 (7 August 2003): Renewal of one employee's contract at the Ministry of Economy and Trade, assigning a new job description and defining compensation.
- Decision No. 75 (12 December 2003): Granting compensation for managers of public schools.

Disciplinary action

Despite the bleak state of Lebanon's public administrations, only four employees were referred to the disciplinary commit-

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