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RAILWAYS & PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION IN LEBANON

Lebanon's Public Sector Spends More
**On Retirees than on Current
Employees**

Lebanon's Imports Rose by USD 5.5 billion
**Ahead of Increase
in Customs Dollar Rate**

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The publication of this issue was delayed to February 2023 to provide a more complete description of important material

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The Secret

By Jawad N. Adra

This article was first written and published in The Monthly- issue No. 115 of February 2012, and we are republishing it today for the reality it portrays has hardly changed.

The Lebanese behavior had been a riddle that had puzzled anthropologists, economists and politicians until the day when, out of the blue, someone discovered the reasons behind what his colleagues deemed a peculiar demeanor vacillating between joy and anxiety: a joy resulting from the gains achieved and an anxiety of losing them. After lying deep and sound in slumber, the dormant Lebanese people(s) finally woke up to a new reality: electricity being supplied uninterrupted with very affordable bills, roads being maintained, traffic controlled, parking lots available, public transportation organized, drinkable water provided, contaminated water purified and waste recycled.

It is true that since 1993 over USD 11 billion has been spent on electric power in addition to USD 2 billion on garbage collection, USD 615 million on water purification, and USD 1.8 billion in road rehabilitation, but the money has eventually yielded undisputed fruitful results.

The USD 940 million paid out for rehabilitating and establishing schools and universities and the USD 1 billion granted for teachers and scholarships did not go down the drain after all as the Lebanese University and the public education are upgrading their academic level and scoring epic results. As for the public health care expenses borne by the government, they are being shouldered thanks to real-estate interests and taxes. Accommodation is now affordable for everyone, immigration rates are sliding down and politicians are disclosing their bank accounts to restore credibility with their voters. They even abstained from running “private affairs” while in office, which curbed corruption in public administration and made Lebanon the fiercest rival of Sweden in terms of transparency and efficiency.

Our fellow expatriates are returning home and our green policies have paid off, for the air is fresh, the sea clean and the mountains lush. No more quarries and no more heavy tolls on our rivers, mountains and beloved Mother Nature.

The number of cancer patients and drug addicts is decreasing and even the pubs and nightclubs in Beirut

are starting to play “ear friendly” music. The Lebanese have learned to address each other with the utmost respect and everybody’s wearing a big smile and savoring happiness and tranquility. People have finally realized that there’s more to life than smoking “Nargile” or spending a day at the over-crowded ABC mall and instead, most families are now opting for the public parks dispersed throughout the city. Villages are reviving their old glories and looking after their squares, woods and brooklets, and libraries are packed with avid readers eager to quench their insatiable thirst for knowledge. As for the TV channels, they have adopted a new policy preventing the airing of vicious political talk shows or degrading music videos and instead, have committed themselves to broadcast social comedies and tragedies and historical documentaries that stirred the envy of both Al-Jazira and the BBC.

Furthermore, the number of candidates running for elections headed downwards, and many seats fell vacant, for people chose to distance themselves from shouldering big responsibilities. As if Lebanon has become Heaven on earth!

Although these “achievements” delighted the Lebanese, something seemed to disturb their happiness and prevent them from relishing this bliss. Scientists struggled to explore the roots of this anxiety until finally their colleague shouted: “Eureka!” The reasons for anxiety lie in the much-desired remaining wishes the politicians have failed to fulfill. These are:

- Special Tribunal for Lebanon protocol
- Disarmament of Hezbollah
- Settlement of the false witnesses’ file
- Toppling of the Syrian regime

At this moment, the strange enigma was unfolded and people realized the roots of this anxiety and shouted all together: “Now we got it!”

Leader



RAILWAYS & PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION IN LEBANON

In 1919, in the wake of World War I, the Ottoman military authorities decided to stop monitoring the railroads in Sham, Hama, Baghdad, and their extensions. This prompted the French High Commissioner in Syria and Lebanon, General Gouraud, to issue Resolution No.1461/1922, which provided for the control of railways in Syria and Lebanon through the Directorate of Public Works of the French High Commission, under the authority of the High Commissioner as of July 1, 1922.

Subsequently, the legal and regulatory stages of railways were as follows:

1- Railway stations are public property, investment in public transport, 1925:

Resolution No. 144/1925 defines public property and classifies railways, trams and related accessories as such, granting them legal protection.

In 1931, an agreement was reached between the Lebanese government, the Iraqi Petrol Company (IPC), and the Government of Latakia to impose a tax on the use of the aforementioned railway systems by the IPC. Article 8 of this agreement stipulated that: “To implement its projects and carry out its investments, the Company may utilize the railway stretching from Trablous to Homos and the eastern extensions in accordance with a tariff agreed upon with the Railway Administration. The Lebanese government shall obligate the Railway Administration to reach an agreement with the aforementioned Company on a reduced tariff given the abundance of goods and people transported on these railway systems. This agreement shall be reached in accordance with international covenants.”

The Lebanese government granted the Company the right to construct any railway track deemed necessary for the project’s implementation, whenever such a track did not exist or did not meet the Company’s needs. This clause was included in the agreement signed on August 10, 1946, to regulate the passage of mineral oils through Lebanon via the Trans-Arabian Pipeline Company’s Tapline pipelines, highlighting the importance of the railway system and the flexibility of public transportation services in increasing and diversifying investment opportunities.

In 1932, President Charles Debbas promulgated a decree concerning advertising fees, posters, and billboards placed along highways and railways.

2- The Electricity and Public Transportation Authority, 1954:

The Electricity and Public Transportation Authority was established in 1954 to manage and invest the projects that the Lebanese state retrieved from the joint-stock company, “Beirut Electricity”, by virtue of the Protocol of March 26, 1954. This was in addition to other projects related to public transportation or to the production, transmission, or distribution of electric power. The Authority is a public institution with headquarters in Beirut, operating under the supervision of the Ministry of Public Works (Directorate-General for Monitoring Companies, Water and Electrical Affairs). This authority has legal personality and financial and administrative autonomy and enjoys the rights and obligations transferred to the state. The Authority’s employees and workers are governed and protected by the Labor Law, which was amended by Decree No. 34/1959.

3- Creating the position of a government delegate to the Railway Administration to monitor the concessions and supervision of investment authorities, 1960:

On May 3, 1960, the Parliament passed a law providing for the assignment of the position of a government delegate to the Railway Administration at the Ministry of Public Works and Transport-Directorate-General for Monitoring Concessions and Supervision of Investment Authorities. This position must be occupied by a Grade-1 employee who is a civil or mechanical engineer.

A special committee was established by virtue of Decree No. 4909 (July 30, 1960) to ensure the implementation of laws, regulations and agreements related to Lebanon’s railways, particularly those related to the agency contract dated May 18, 1957. The Committee’s head has the authority to oversee and supervise the affairs of the Railway Administration, which at that time was called “the Agency.”

4- Creating the Lebanese State Railway and Public Transportation Authority for Beirut and its Suburbs and separating the public transportation department from the Electricity and Public Transportation Authority, 1961:

On April 14, 1961, Decree No. 6479 was issued establishing the Lebanese State Railway and Public Transportation Authority for Beirut and its Suburbs and separating the public transportation department from the Electricity and Public Transportation Authority.

Pursuant to the recovery contract ratified by the Law of August 5, 1959 the Railway and Public Transportation Authority was mandated to:

1- Manage and invest in following rail lines:

- Beirut-Serghaya.
- Rayak-Al-Qusayr
- Trablous-Kozlakhir railway with Al-Mawa'in port in Trablous
- Naqoura-Beirut-Trablous
- Additional railway lines approved by the relevant authorities.

This mandate included all related funds, warehouses and outbuildings. It also included all what belongs to the Lebanese state, with all rights and obligations accruing thereto, provided that this mandate does not contradict agreements between both the Lebanese and the Syrian railway administrations.

2- Manage and invest in the public transportation project of Beirut and its suburbs, which was retrieved from the joint-stock company "Beirut Electricity" pursuant to the protocol dated March 26, 1954.

All of the rights and obligations of the previous Electricity and Public Transportation Authority, namely those related to public transportation, are transferred to the new authority.

Decree No, 11696 issued on December 31, 1962 lays the foundations for building railway corridors.

Decree No. 10121 of July 20, 1962 on the delineation of areas and licensing conditions requires creating the construction of a seawall or a revetment that would keep sand and pebbles from maritime public properties 15m away from the railways in an effort to protect the railways.

Similarly, Article 12 of the Building Code issued in 1983 and amended in 2004 stipulates that buildings shall be distanced at least three meters away from the railway tracks.

5- The Higher Council for Terrestrial Transport, 1966:

A Higher Council for Terrestrial Transport was established by virtue of Decree No. 5540 of September 17, 1966, tasked with:

-Studying the economic basis for developing the terrestrial transportation industry, the developing railway transport & managing investments in terrestrial transport. Additionally, the higher council is charged with monitoring aspects of terrestrial transport such as the flow of traffic and goods.

The Higher Council for Terrestrial transportation, as amended by Decree No. 4775/1994, consists of:

- Minister of Transport as President,
- Director General of Land and Maritime Transport as Vice-President,
- Director General of the Railway and Public Transport Authority as a member.
- Director General of Roads and Buildings at the Ministry of Public Works as a member.
- Director General of the Ministry of Interior as a member.
- Director General of General Security as a member
- Director General of the Internal Security Forces as a member.
- Director General of State Security as a member.
- Director General of Customs as a member.
- Director General of Economy and Trade as a member.
- An army officer delegated by the Minister of National Defense as a member.
- Head of the Vehicle Registration Department as a member.
- Director General of the Ministry of Tourism as a member.

6- Hiring temporary workers and employees before granting them permanent status, 1967:

Law No. 21 dated March 30, 1967 authorized the government to appoint employees for the Lebanese State Railway and Public Transportation Authority for Beirut and its suburbs, who work in various public departments of ministries, through secondment.

Temporary staff were employed by the authority until 1970 when, pursuant to Decree No. 13792, the authority regularized all temporary employees who worked at the railway department for more than one year.

7- Liquidating the pecuniary relation between Electricité du Liban (EDL) and the Railway and Public Transportation Authority, LBP 1.7 million in 1971:

Decree No. 2376 was issued on December 15, 1971 to liquidate the pecuniary relation between EDL and the Lebanese State Railway and Public Transportation Authority. The Decree stipulates that Electricité du Liban shall pay the Lebanese State Railway and Public Transportation Authority an offset amount of LBP 1.729.544 even though the Public Transportation workers of EDL were transferred to the Railway Authority.

That same year, the General Directorate of Transportation was mandated to handle all maritime and terrestrial transportation affairs, supervise the Lebanese State Railway and Public Transportation Authority and control ports, harbors and maritime public properties.

Additionally, the Terrestrial Transportation Department was monitoring the progress of rail transport and its economic impact. This encompassed gathering data on railway traffic between Lebanon and other countries and promoting its development. The 2018 amendment to the Decree expanded the department's duties.

8- Public Transportation Department, 1973:

As per decree No. 5180/1973, the department was to have 354 drivers and 329 conductors.

9- “Railway and Public Transportation Authority” for all Lebanon and not just for Beirut and its suburbs, 1988:

Under Law No. 4 of January 20, 1988, “The Lebanese State Railway and Public Transportation Authority for Beirut and its Suburbs” was renamed “the Railway and Public Transportation Authority” and was tasked with administering public transportation services throughout the country of Lebanon.



10- Creating and abolishing the Ministry of Transportation, 1993:

The Ministry of Transport, established under Law No. on April 2, 1993 to include the Railway and Public Transportation Authority, was abolished in 2000 by Law No. 247/2000. Subsequently, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation, Directorate General of Land and Maritime Transport, Public Transportation Authority of the abolished ministry, and all related departments and staff were transferred to the Ministry of Public Works. This ministry was renamed the “Ministry of Public Works and Transport” by virtue of Article 1 of this Law. However, Law No. 481 dated December 12, 2002, reallocated the Railway and Public Transportation Authority to the Ministry of Public Works and Transport.

11- Dismissal of staff employees, 2000:

Decree No. 2447 was promulgated on February 11, 2000 stipulating severance pay Railway and Public Transportation’s employees to be calculated based on the following:

- A - A one-month salary for each year of active service up to 10 years.
- B - A two-month salary for each year of active service from 10 through 30 years.
- C - A three-month salary for each year of active service in excess of 30 years.
- D - Each employee shall receive from the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) a severance pay that complies with the provisions of social security law. The difference between the due severance pay and the one issued by the NSSF shall be paid by the Authority’s budget.

The severance pay was adjusted without introducing new staff members and with some surplus employees of the Railway and Public Transportation Authority being transferred to another authority or department.

12- The railway project of Trablous-Syrian borders and Rayak-Serghaya, 2001-2005:

According to Law No. 236/2001, the 2001 budget allocated an appropriation of LBP 30 billion for building a railway between Trablous-Syrian borders and Rayak-Serghaya. It was agreed to fully enforce the credit contract and to start implementing the project before securing the following credit payments:

Credit payments (LBP billion)/year				Credit contract
2001	2002	2003	2004	
6	9	9	6	30

Truly, LBP 9 billion were allocated from the 2002 budget to complete the project and LBP 4 billion from the 2003 state budget and supplementary budgets. However, the 2004 budget allocated funds to construct the deportation centre in Trablous. The allocations were broken down as follows:

LBP billion				
Works	Credit payments			Credit contract
	2004	2005	2006	
Other constructions	0.050	2.770	2.820	5.640
Studies, consultations and control fees	0.050	0.155	0.155	0.360

The funds allocated in the 2005 budget for the construction of deportation station in Trablous were as follows:

Item	Heading	Estimated expenses in 2005 (LBP thousand)
	Constructions in progress	1.770.000
	Other expenses related to tangible fixed assets	155.000
Total		1.925.000

No budget allocation was made at the time. The table below shows the funding committed by the government in recent years, 2016 to 2022:

Year	Contribution to remunerations and operating expenses of the Railway Administration (LBP)
2016	13.000.000.000
2017	13.000.000.000
2018	12.985.896.000
2019	16.216.855.000
2020	16.206.065.000
2021	16.206.065.000
2022	13.000.000.000

Source: *Information International* based on the yearly budgets (2016-2022).

13- A Euro-Mediterranean agreement to establish a partnership between the Lebanese Republic and the European Community - Cooperation in the field of railways and transportation, 2002:

In 2002, Lebanon concluded a Euro-Mediterranean agreement to establish a partnership between the Lebanese Republic and the European member states, pursuant to Article 52 of Law No. 474 dated December 12th 2002, which states that a cooperation is required in the field of transportation in order to:

- Restructure and modernize the infrastructure of roads, railways, Ports of Entry (POE) linked to the main trans-European transportation network of common interest,
- Improve terrestrial and maritime transportation, multi-form transit, POE management, air, sea and railway traffic control, and maritime navigation aids.
- Reorganize and restructure the Mass transportation including public transport.

14- International Railways Agreement in the Levant, 2003:

On April 14th 2003, the Lebanese government, represented by the Minister of Public Works and Transport in Beirut, signed the International Railways Agreement in the Levant.

In 2004, Lebanon promulgated a law to join the International Railways Agreement in the Levant. The government stated that the reason for this stems from “the necessity of establishing a railway linkage between the countries of the region”. This was based on a plan to establish and develop an international railway network that meets future transportation needs whilst considering environmental issues. The government also stated that the law was executed to facilitate the transportation of goods and passengers, which would increase trade and tourism exchange in the Levant, the greatest impact on achieving Arab regional integration.

As the railways discussed in Appendix I of this agreement are of international significance for the Mashreq, involved parties were to adopt the international railway network described in that appendix. As a result, those railway network saw their development prioritized in national plans.



All the existing railways described in the Appendix I shall be subject to the technical specifications specified in Appendix II of the agreement. However, railways be built after the agreement comes into effect will follow technical regulations in accordance with those of new lines as specified in the Appendix II to the agreement.

15- Benefiting from the Microsoft programs, 2005-2007:

In 2007, the Council of Ministers issued Resolution No. 6 dated May 21, 2007, authorizing the Minister to sign, on behalf of the Lebanese state, a new agreement with Microsoft Lebanon S.A.R.L and its local agent Middleware Data Systems. The purpose of this agreement was to renew and improve the conditions agreement No. 319 dated April 2, 2002, which had expired on April 2, 2005. The agreement aimed to benefit public administrations and institutions from the Microsoft programs, services, and their advanced operating systems. Among these institutions was the Railway and Public Transportation Authority in accordance with Resolution No. 75, Minutes No. 91, dated October 27, 2007.

16- Railway Security, 2010:

In 2010, Lebanon and France concluded a cooperation agreement on internal security, civil security and administration. Countries that sign such agreements are expected to have functional railways and as such, the signed agreement also addressed the security of sea, air and railway transport for both countries.

17- Establishing the Terrestrial transport Authority, 2018:

In 2018, a new regulation was issued by the General Directorate of Land and Maritime Transportation of the Ministry of Public Works and Transport pursuant to Decree No. 2382 of February 19, 2018. This regulation established a Terrestrial Transportation Authority which was tasked with drafting policy for the terrestrial transportation sector and supervising the Railway and Public Transportation Authority. The Department of Homeland Security was also given the responsibility of studying applications submitted to occupy and invest in public properties belonging to the Railway and Public Transportation Authority.

18- Strengthening the capabilities of the Railway and Public Transportation Authority, International Bank loan, 2019:

By virtue of Law No. 135/2019, the Parliament approved the conclusion of a loan agreement and an executive agreement between the Lebanese Republic and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, under the name of "Public Transportation Project for the Greater Beirut Region". One of the project objectives was to build capacities and strengthen the capabilities of the agency responsible for executing the project, enabling it to implement, supervise, and manage the project (including monitoring and evaluation). Additionally, the project aims to strengthen the capabilities of the Railway and Public Transportation Authority and other agencies that supervise the work of rapid transit buses, feeder buses, and shuttles. During the project's duration, Lebanon, as the borrower, has committed to designating the Railway and Public Transportation Authority to supervise private sector operators and take all necessary measures, including the provision of financing, staff and other resources for carrying out the project. The loan amount was USD 295 million, but as of February 2023, the project still hadn't launch.

Public Sector

GRADE-1 POSTS 41% OR 73 POSTS TO BE VACANT BY END OF 2023

There are 179 Grade-1 posts and their equivalents in the Lebanese public administrations, institutions and enterprises. In 2023, 73 posts will be vacated, translating into a vacancy rate of 40.8%. Table one shows how these posts are distributed by sect. This study excludes Grade-1 posts at public hospitals.



Table 1: Grade-1 posts by sect.

Sect	Number of posts	Number of vacant posts	Vacancy rate (%)
Maronite	50	18	36
Greek Orthodox	13	8	61.5
Greek Catholic	18	5	27.8
Armenian Orthodox	5	1	20
Minorities	3	1	33.4
Total Christians	89	33	37
Sunni	39	15	38.5
Shi'a	35	18	51.4
Druze	14	7	50
Alawite	2	0	0
Total Muslims	90	40	44.5
Grand total	179	73	40.8

Tables 2 through 7 detail the vacant posts by sects, sourced from Information International

Table 2: 18 Current and projected vacancies for the Maronites.

#	Post	Date of Vacancy
1	Chairman & Director General of the Center of National Archives- Presidency of Council of Ministers	April 21, 2010
2	Vice President of the Council for Development and Reconstruction- Presidency of Council of Ministers	January 2011
3	Chairman of the Management Committee for the implementation of the Green Project- Ministry of Agriculture	2015
4	Director General & Head of Ministerial Affairs Division- Presidency of Council of Ministers	2015
5	Chairman & General Manager of EDL (Électricité du Liban)- Ministry of Energy and Water	Tenure expired in 2017, he continues to assume the position
6	Chairman of ENA (École Nationale D'Administration)- Presidency of Council of Ministers	Tenure expired in 2017, he continues to assume the position
7	President & General Manager of ELYSSAR- Presidency of Council of Ministers	Tenure expired in 2017, he continues to assume the position
8	Director General of NEO (National Employment Office)- Ministry of Labor	May 2019
9-10	Two members of the National Council for Audiovisual Media- Ministry of Information	Tenure expired in 2008, he continues to assume the position
11	Director General of Ministry of Finance	August 29, 2020
12	Director General of Lebanese Customs	August 7, 2020 upon the arrest of Director General Badri Daher
13	Director General of Water and Electricity Supply- Ministry of Energy and Water	July 20,2021

#	Post	Date of Vacancy
14	Chairman & General Director of Public Corporation for Housing (PCH)	June 29, 2022
15	Director General of Education- Ministry of Education and Higher Education	He requested a temporary suspension of his duties for a period of one year subject to renewal
16	Director General of Oil Facilities- Ministry of Energy and Water	December 18, 2022 upon the retirement of Director General Aurore Feghali
17	BDL Governor	August 1, 2023
18	Gendarmerie Commander	September 4, 2023

Number of Grade 1 Posts in the Lebanese public administrations, institutions and enterprises

179 Posts

106
filled posts



68
vacant posts



5
will be vacant

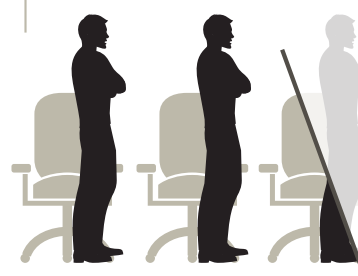


Table 3: Eight current and projected vacancies for the Greek Orthodox sect.

#	Post	Date of Vacancy
1	Secretary General of the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR)- Presidency of Council of Ministers	2009
2	President of the Center for Educational Research and Development (CRDP)- Ministry of Education and Higher Education	2014
3	Head of the Central Fund for the Displaced (CFD)- Presidency of Council of Ministers	Tenure expired in 2017 he continues to hold this position
4	Director General of the Ministry of Labor-Ministry of Labor	October 29, 2019
5	Chairman & Director General of the Lebanese National Higher Conservatory of Music (LNHCM)	December 4, 2020
6-7	Two members of the National Council for Audiovisual Media- Ministry of Information	Tenure expired in 2008, they continue to assume their functions
8	Inspector General at LAF (Lebanese Armed Forces)	December 24, 2022

Table 4: Five vacant posts for the Greek Catholics.

#	Post	Date of Vacancy
1	Director General of Roads and Buildings- Ministry of Public Works and Transport	November 2010
2	Director General & Head of Technical Division- Presidency of the Republic	2014
3	Director General & Head of General Secretariat Division- Presidency of the Republic	February 14, 2019
4	Chairman & Director General of Télé Liban- Ministry of Information	December 2022
5	A member of the National Council for Audiovisual Media- Ministry of Information	Tenure expired in 2008, he continues with his functions

Table 5: Two vacant posts for the Armenians and other minorities.

#	Post	Date of Vacancy
1	Head of Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (Minorities)	2010
2	Director General of Central Administration of Statistics (Armenian Orthodox)	June 19, 2022

Table 6: Fifteen current posts and projected vacancies for the Sunnis.

#	Post	Date of Vacancy
1	Director General & Head of the Legal and Administrative Affairs- Presidency of the Republic	September 2006
2	President of the Council for Development and Reconstruction- Presidency of Council of Ministers	Tenure expired in 2009, he continues to hold his position
3	Director General of Civil Aviation- Ministry of Public Works and Transport	December 2010
4	Director General of Local Administrations and Councils- Ministry of Interior and Municipalities	2017
5	Director General of ENA (École Nationale D'Administration)- Presidency of Council of Ministers	Tenure expired in 2017, he continues to hold his position
6	Director General of Ministry of Tourism- Ministry of Tourism	June 2019

#	Post	Date of Vacancy
7	Director General of Higher Education- Ministry of Education and Higher Education	October 1, 2019
8	Chairman of Tripoli Special Economic Zone- Presidency of Council of Ministers	February 2019
9	Director General & Head of Technical Affairs Division- Presidency of Council of Ministers	2019
10	Director General of Land and Sea Transport- Ministry of Public Works and Transport	February 10, 2021
11	Head of Beirut's Governmental Hospital	September 11, 2021 upon the appointment of Firas Abiad as Minister of Public Health
12	Head of the Judicial Inspection Authority	July 1, 2022
13- 14	Two members of the National Council for Audiovisual Media- Ministry of Information	Tenure expired in 2008; still assume their functions
15	Chairman of the Public Organization for Sports, Youth and Scouts	December 1, 2023

Table 7: Eighteen current and projected vacancies for the Shi'a in Lebanon.

#	Post	Date of Vacancy
1	Secretary General of Parliament	Tenure expired in 2005, he continues to assume his functions
2	Director General & Head of Legal Affairs Division- Presidency of Council of Ministers	2007
3	Vice President of the Council for Development and Reconstruction- Presidency of Council of Ministers	He still holds his position
4	Director General of Vocational and Technical Education- Ministry of Education and Higher Education	2017
5	Director General of Emigrants- Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants	2017
6	Director General of the Régie Libanaise des Tabacs et Tombacs (RLTT)- Ministry of Finance	2017
7	Chairman & General Manager of Finance Bank- Ministry of Finance	April 2018
8	Director General of Ministry of Social Affairs	October 20, 2022
9	Chairman of the Council of the South	November 18, 2021
10	Nabatieh Governor- Ministry of Interior and Municipalities	July 1, 2020
11	Chairman of Intra Investment Company S.A.L.- Banque du Liban (BDL)	Still holding position
12- 13	Chairman and Member of the National Council for Audiovisual Media- Ministry of Information	Tenure expired in 2008; still assumes the position
14	Director General of Youth and Sports	December 25, 2022
15	Director of Administration- Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF)	February 3, 2023
16	Director General of General Security	March 2, 2023
17	Director General of the Council of the South	March 24, 2023
18	Head of the Higher Council for Customs	July 31, 2023

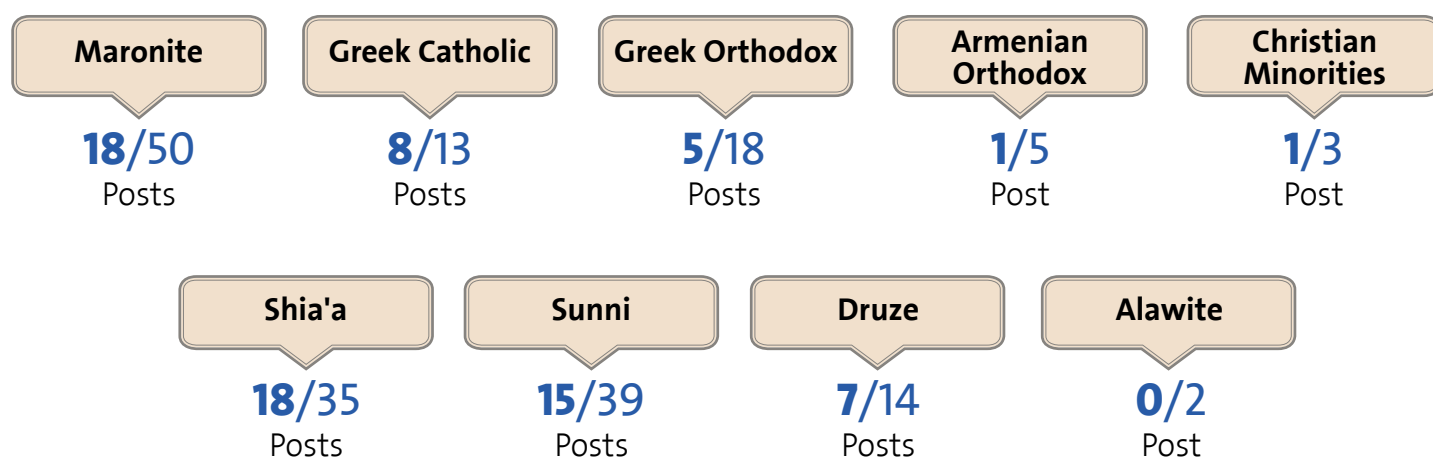
Table 8: Seven current posts and projected vacancies for the Lebanese Druze.

#	Post	Date of Vacancy
1	Director General of Ministry of the Displaced- Ministry of the Displaced	Vacant since 2002 but it was assigned to another Sunni officer, who is close to the Progressive Socialist Party
2	Member of the National Council for Audiovisual Media	Although his tenure expired in 2008, he continues to assume his functions
3	Director General of the Committees and Sessions' Affairs in Parliament	2013
4	Director General of Ministry of Public Health	May 27, 2020
5	Government Commissioner at the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR)	December 30, 2022
6	Chief of the Judicial Police	November 18, 2022
7	LAF Commander in Chief	December 24, 2022

Source: *Information International* based on the decrees of administrative appointments.



Current and Projected Vacancies by Sect



A LBP 12 MILLION INCREASE IN THE ‘SALARIES’ OF PRESIDENTS AND MPS

State employees such as presidents and ministers have not seen an increase in their allowances and compensation since 1998.



The following table breaks down the compensations state officials receive as per Law No. 717 of November 5, 1998, and their total amount after counting the increase introduced by the 2022 Budget Law:

	Allowances	Representation compensation	Car compensation	Car & phone compensation	Driver & secretary compensation	Protocol compensation	Total as per Law No. 717	Total as per Article 111 of 2022 Budget Law
President	4.5	4.5	-	-	-	3.5	12.5	24.5
Speaker of Parliament	3.5	3.4	1.125	-	1.8	2	11.825	23.825
Prime Minister	3.5	3.4	1.125	1.8	-	2	11.825	23.825
Minister	3	1.5	1.125	1.5	-	1.5	8.625	20.625
MP	3	1.5	-	1.5	1.5	1	8.5 + (LBP 2.5 million as social assistance)	23

Source: Law No. 717 of November 5, 1998, Official Gazette No. 51 of 1998 (all the amounts listed are in LBP million).

Current Presidents, Ministers and MPs

President	Speaker of Parliament	Prime Minister	Minister	MP
+12 LBP million	+12 LBP million	+12 LBP million	+12 LBP million	+12 LBP million

Former Presidents, Ministers, MPs and the families of the deceased

+12 LBP million/Month for those served 3 terms or more	+11.050 LBP million/Month for those served 2 terms	+9.350 LBP million/Month for those served 1 term
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Amount of Increase

The 2022 Budget Law's Article No. 111 authorizes a two-fold increase in pay for all public sector employees, including retirees and those who receive compensation from public funds for services rendered. This raise is applicable provided that an employee's total pay, including basic salary, falls between LBP 5 million and LBP 12 million. As a result, all presidents, ministers, and MPs are eligible for the maximum monthly increase of LBP 12 million. In addition, former presidents and MPs, as well as the families of deceased ones, are entitled to this increase, with a monthly average of LBP 12 million for those who served three terms or more, LBP 11.050 million for those who served two terms, and LBP 9.350 million for one-term presidents and MPs. Former ministers do not receive any allowances or compensation once their term in office ends.

LEBANON'S PUBLIC SECTOR SPENDS MORE ON RETIREES THAN ON CURRENT EMPLOYEES

It is estimated that Lebanon has 300,000 current employees and 130,000 retirees in the public sector spread out among public institutions, military and security forces and teaching institutions.



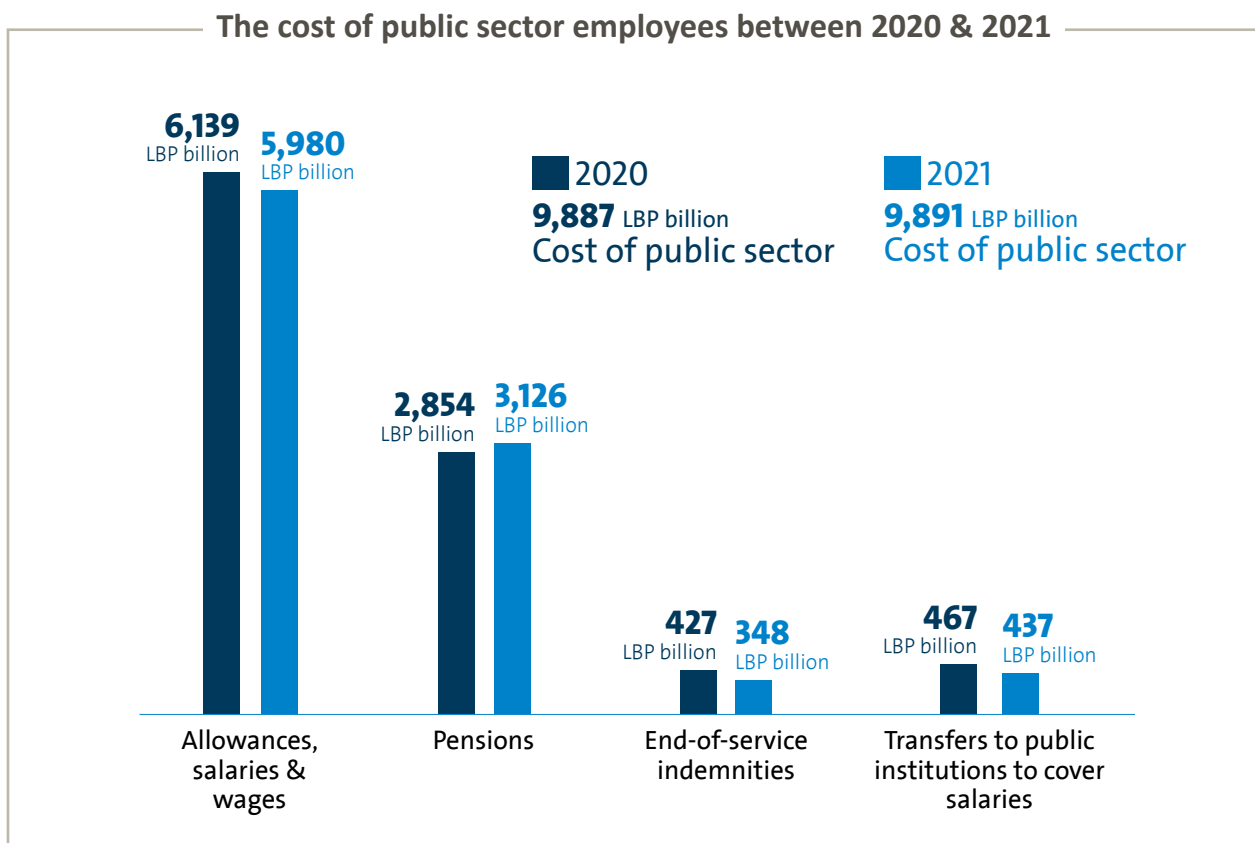
In 2021, the salaries, wages, pensions and end-of-service indemnities for public sector employees, excluding that of municipality, state, and independent entities, totaled LBP9.981 trillion. Of this amount, LBP 3.816 trillion goes to the military forces, LBP 1.172 trillion to educational personnel and LBP 612 billion to a portion of civil servants.

Much of the public sector's work force has opted to retire from government service on account of the low salary offerings. As a result, the government spends far more on compensating retirees than it does on the wages and salary of current, working employees. As the table below describes, the amount spent on current employees has decreased by LBP 159 billion while the amount spent compensating retirees has increased by LBP 272 billion. With a large portion of retirees preferring pensions over indemnities, the cost of end-of-service indemnities has also decreased.

A table showing the cost of public sector employees between 2020 and 2021.

	2020 (LBP billion)	2021 (LBP billion)	Difference (LBP billion)
Allowances, salaries and wages	6,139	5,980	- 159
Pensions	2,854	3,126	+ 272
End-of-service indemnities	427	348	- 79
Transfers to public institutions to cover salaries	467	437	- 30
Total	9,887	9,891	+ 4

Source: Ministry of Finance.





DECREES FOR MINIMUM WAGE & COST OF LIVING BETWEEN 1995 AND 2022

In 1967, the Lebanese Parliament delegated the Government to issue a decree on minimum wage and a decree addressing the average cost of living in compliance with Article 6 of Law No. 36 dated May 16, 1967, which covers all employees and workers subject to Labor Law. The Article stipulates the following:

“The Government has the authority, through a decree issued by the Council of Ministers, to establish the official minimum wage and cost-of-living allowance as necessary, taking into account the cost-of-living studies and price indices prepared by the Ministry of General Planning. These studies and indices are conducted at least once every two years, and the scope of application for these wages and allowances is determined accordingly”.

In 1981, the Government appointed a Cost-of-Living Index Committee to monitor price changes, develop a price index, and make recommendations on wage policy pursuant to Decree No. 4206 of August 8, 1981 as follows:

- Study the changes in the cost of living and determine the cause.
- Develop an index for price fluctuations and periodically amend the index according to the results obtained from studying the change in the cost of living.
- Monitor and utilize the Central Administration of Statistics' (CAS) cost- of- living indexes.
- Examine the wage policy and provide suggestions and recommendations to curb rising prices and combat high living costs.

The Committee consists of the following:

- Chairman: Minister of Labor and Social Affairs.
- Vice-Chairman: Director General of Ministry of Labor.
- Two state representatives, one of whom is from the Central Administration of Statistics (CAS).
- Members: Two representatives of the economic bodies and two representatives of the General Labor Union.
- Rapporteur: An employee at the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs.

In order to accomplish its tasks, the Committee may, at the request of the Minister of Labor, seek the help of CAS or any of the experts and specialists holding public office.

The following table shows that, over the past 28 years (1995-2022), six decrees were issued to adjust the minimum wage.

A table documenting the decrees amending the minimum wage (1995-2022).

Year	Minimum wage	Decree No.	Date of issuance
1995	250,000	6263	18-1-1995
1996	300,000	8733	8-7-1996
2008	500,000	500	14-10-2008
2012	675,000	7426	26-1-2012
2022	2,000,000	9129	12-05-2022
2022	2,600,000	10598	20-10-2022

Source: *Information International* based on the decrees of cost-of living allowance.

LEBANON'S IMPORTS ROSE BY USD 5.5 BILLION AHEAD OF INCREASE IN CUSTOMS DOLLAR RATE

Lebanon's economic crisis, that has been ongoing since October 2019 is characterized mainly by the increased exchange rate of the United States Dollar and other foreign currencies against the Lebanese pound. This has led to a dramatic decrease in the number of imports.

Table 1 demonstrates a decrease in import monetary value from approximately USD 20 billion in 2018 to USD 11.3 billion in 2020, followed by a slight rise to USD 13.6 billion in 2021. However, there was a significant 44% YoY increase in imports for the first 11 months of 2022, totaling an additional USD 5.5 billion. This substantial rise in imports to Lebanon, may be attributed to traders increasing their imports prior to the December 1, 2022 implementation of a bill that raised customs duty charges from LBP1,500/1USD to LBP15,000/1USD.

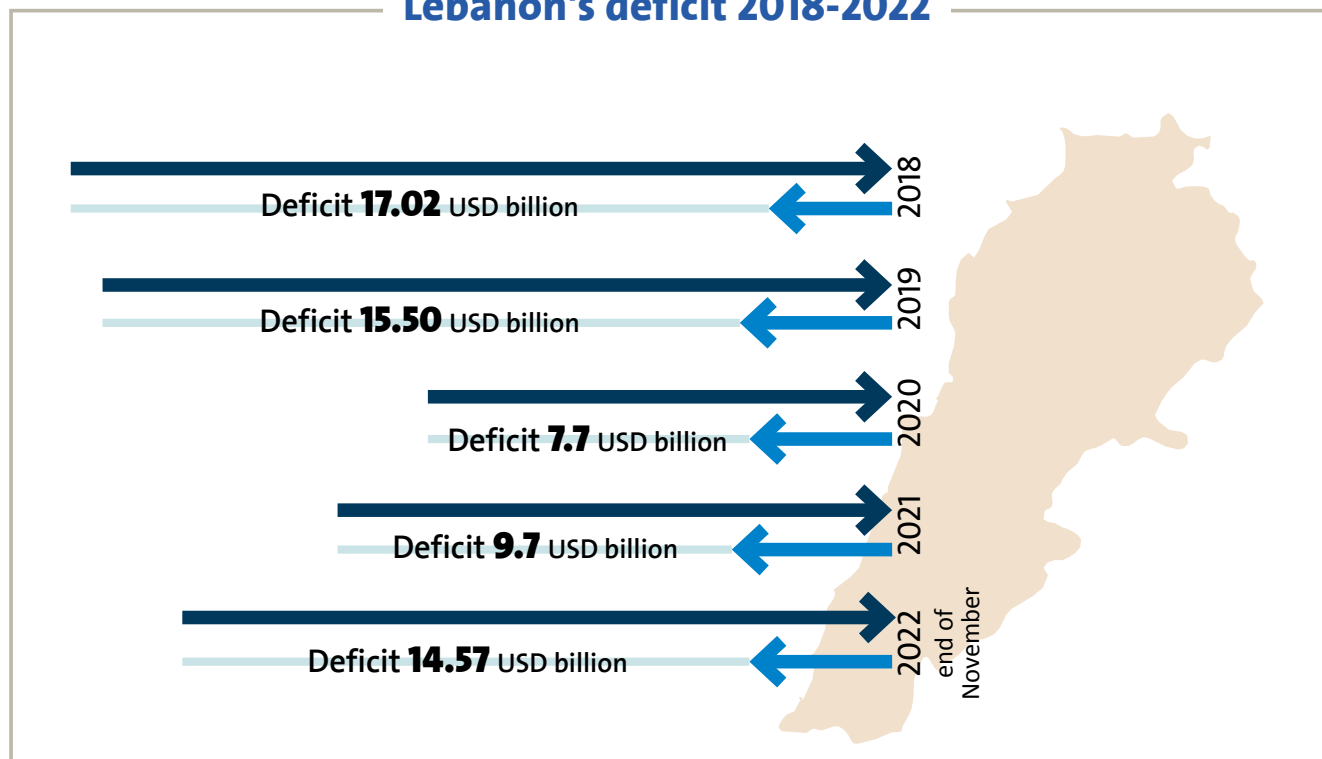
Imports & Exports

The Table shows Lebanon's imports and exports between the year 2018 and 2022.

Year	Imports (USD million)	Exports (USD million)	Deficit (USD million)
2018	19,980	2,952	- 17,028
2019	19,240	3,731	- 15,509
2020	11,310	3,545	- 7,765
2021	13,641	3,886	- 9,755
2022 (end of July)	10,500	2,094	- 8,406
2022 (end of November)	17,799	3,220	- 14,579
2021 (end of November)	12,372	3,271	- 9,101
First 11 months of 2021/2022	+ 5,427 Rate of increase: 44%	- 51 Rate of decline: 1.5%	5,478 Rate of deficit increase: 60.2%

Source: *Information International* based on the Lebanese Customs data.

Lebanon's deficit 2018-2022



Public Sector

“MEDICAL CARE & HOSPITALIZATION FOR ALL”

IN ORDER NOT TO DIE AT THE HOSPITAL THRESHOLD

Lebanon’s medical sector has been in shambles ever since the Lebanese Republic was created. No one has been successful in offering a solution that would solve the problem that has caused many citizens to die at the hospital door or at home because they were not able to afford medical treatment.



The financial and economic crisis has exacerbated the people's access to hospitalization, drugs, and proper medical care.

It is imperative to discuss providing universal health coverage and primary healthcare to every Lebanese citizen to reduce out of pocket health expenses whilst improving access to health services including vaccinations and medications for chronic and intractable conditions.

Drugs imports into Lebanon were to the tune of USD551 million and medical supplies imports were valued at USD326 million in 2022. The following table the value of medicines and medical supplies imported to Lebanon during the past eight years:

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Medicines	1,125.0	1,213.9	1,287.9	1,329.3	1,242.5	1,184.3	900.2	551.8
Medical supplies	377.7	388.4	420.2	432.3	391.4	283.9	270.6	326.7
Total	1,502.7	1,602.3	1,708.2	1,761.6	1,633.9	1,468.2	1,170.8	878.5

Source: *Information International* based on the Lebanese Customs' statistics (amount in USD million).

Universal Health Coverage for all Lebanese People

Information International conducted a study on the "universal health coverage for all Lebanese people" under the banner of "medical care and hospitalization for all" and discussed it at its conference room (Al-Muntada) with a group of MPs, chief officers and stakeholders over two sessions.

Here is a report on this study.

All the international treaties, agreements and recommendations that Lebanon is committed to affirm the right of Lebanese citizens to medical care and hospitalization.

All official guarantors in Lebanon, such as the Ministry of Health, the State Employees' Cooperative and the National Social Security Fund (NSSF), are responsible for providing medical care and hospitalization.

As Law No. 248/2000, issued 23 years ago, provides for optional insurance coverage as such, a law that entitles the elderly to be covered by the NSSF is not needed, but rather, a method of securing the necessary funding will be needed.

Current Coverage and Prospects

The study conducted by *Information International* involved the current health coverage of the following persons:

- Private-sector employees
- Lebanese elderly
- Private-sector retirees
- Lebanese University (LU) employees
- Military forces

- Public-sector employees
- Central government employees
- Municipal workers
- Judges
- Informal private-sector employees
- Private mutual fund affiliates
- Self-employed such as: lawyers, engineers, physicians, dentists, laboratory personnel, etc.

After presenting the financial allocations that the Lebanese government provides for the current coverage, many proposals were put forward to unify the official guarantor funds, namely:

- Full coordination among the guarantors along with the development of a unified strategy
- The unification of benefits,
- The consolidation of guarantors and merging them with the Social Security Department or the establishment of a new institution consolidates the guarantors and the NSSF.
- The standardization and preservation of affiliate benefits,
- The establishment of a new system that includes only those who do not benefit from social security services or compulsory health coverage, or who are not affiliated with professional unions,
- Provision of a minimum level of benefits called “the basic package” to be offered by all the guarantors.



Fairness and Equity is a Condition

Will the health care reforms be implemented in stages or all at once?

The main condition is to ensure that the three main principles of this coverage are available: equity, flexibility and sustainability.

“Equity” means to fairly and equitably guarantee health coverage to all citizens, whereas “flexibility” means that the health system is able to adapt to new realities and disasters, whether they are economic, natural or epidemic.

The system is considered "sustainable" if it meets the needs of beneficiaries in all circumstances. This is ensured by having the system funded according to financial, statistical and actuarial studies that determine the value of contributions and other taxes allocated to social security. An independent body must audit the implementation of the initial basic package once this package has been deemed an adequate service offering.

Benefits of the Proposed System

The proposed system shall provide maternity and medical leave benefits in cases of non-work-related illnesses or injuries, including hospitalization, medical treatment, etc... Such benefits shall not be less than those guaranteed by the NSSF and shall cover at a minimum: medical examinations, x-rays, laboratory tests and analyses, doctor and specialist visits and hospitalization.

As for the expected cost?

It is expected to cost up to USD1.7 billion to cover five million people.

Funder

The “basic package” must be financed through compulsory taxes/ contributions (about USD80 from each individual). Whilst the contributions would amount to USD 300 million, the remaining USD1.3 billion will need to be generated from taxes, a costly effort.

A proposed tax scheme would be to deduct up to 20% of the Independent Municipal Fund revenues and impose a value-added tax of up to 2%.

Non-the-Less The proposed program will only work if:

- Reforming the healthcare sector including health services, medicines and medical supplies,
- Reforming public hospitals,
- Auditing, monitoring and controlling the program
- Implementing the law of the National Agency for Medicine and Medical Devices (NAMMD) to regulate the prices of drugs and medical equipment and services.
- Applying the provisions of the procurement law and activating the coordination and cooperation committee between all the guarantors.
- Implanting the duties of the coordination and cooperation committee which liaises between all the guarantors and enforce the stipulations of the procurement law.

THE ELDERLY SPENDS LBP 2 MILLION PER MONTH ON MEDICINES

WHILE GUARANTORS PAY ONLY LBP 57,000

According to Information International (Lebanese Parliamentary Elections 2022- Zeina Akar), the number of elderly people above 70 years of age is 597,173, about 10.44% of the total Lebanese population, with most of them being prone to hypertension, cholesterol, diabetes, thyroid diseases and other chronic conditions. The majority of this geriatric population regularly medicates for those chronic conditions.

The Ministry of Public Health lifted subsidies on drugs, except those used to treat cancers and a few other diseases. This has led to the cost of medication in Lebanon increasing at a rate reflecting, to some extent, the devaluation of the Lebanese pound against the United States Dollar.

Per month, each elderly patient may need to spend 74% of the minimum wage¹ (LBP 1.9 million) on medicating chronic diseases. While the guarantors (the National Social Security Fund, for example) pay no more than 3% of the original drug price, most of the guarantors still reimburse citizens based on the rates approved prior to the subsidy removal.

In order to assess the lowest monthly average out-of-pocket expenses incurred by elderly patients, This study considers the cheapest medications available² for the various types of diseases, noting that:

- Some elderly people take more than one medication to treat the same chronic illnesses (such as heart disease).
- According to the report published by the International Diabetes Federation (IDF), 396.1 per thousand Lebanese aged between 20 and 79 years old have been diagnosed with diabetes in 2022.

A table showing the average cost of cheapest medicines.

Disease	Average price of the cheapest drug (LBP)	Average amount paid by the guarantor (LBP)
Diabetes	334,226	7,414
Cholesterol	795,405	15,093
Blood pressure	436,422	32,558
Thyroid	340,991	10,989
Monthly total	1,907,043	66,054

Source: *Information International* based on the drug index published by the Ministry of Health on January 04, 2023.

1 The minimum wage, at the time this study was conducted (January 2023) was LBP 2.6 million.

2 The cheapest medications considered also include available alternatives and available locally produced medications.

EVOLUTION OF NSSF FAMILY ALLOWANCE BENEFITS (1995-2022)

The monthly family allowances provided for in Articles 46 to 48 of the Social Security Law is determined by a decree issued by the Council of Ministers as proposed by the Minister of Labor and the NSSF Board of Directors, pursuant to paragraph 1 of Article 48 thereof.



- Accordingly, Decree No. 2950, issued on October 20, 1965, stipulates that “the monthly family allowance as per Articles 46 to 48 of the Social Security Law is as follows:
 - A- For the spouse: 14% of the official minimum wage.
 - B- For the children: 4% of the official minimum wage for every child cared for by the beneficiary and only up to five children”.
- Decree No. 1348 issued on June 13, 1991 determines the amount of family allowance as follows:
 - 1- For the spouse: 20% of the official minimum wage.
 - 2- For the children: 11% of the official minimum wage for every child cared for by the beneficiary and only up to five children.

By virtue of this Decree, which was abrogated as described later, the Council of Ministers had linked family allowances to minimum wage, thus offering a fair allowance rate that varies depending on the minimum wage. Via this degree, the Council of Ministers tied a family’s allowances to the minimum wage.

On March 24, 2001, however, the Council of Ministers promulgated Decree No. 5103, opting for a lump sum, instead of having the family allowance linked to the legal minimum wage. This decreased the value of the benefits and family allowances had since then become worthless due to inflation. Note that the current minimum wage is at LBP2,600,00 (LBP520,000 for the spouse and LBP 286,000 for each child).

Based to Article 1 of Decree No. 5103 of March 24, 2001, the amount of family allowance is determined as follows:

Article 1

The monthly family allowance provided for in Articles 46 to 48 of the Social Security Law is capped at LBP 225,000 with the following distribution:

- LBP 60,000 for the spouse
- LBP 33,000 for each child, up to five children.

Article 2

- Any provision that contradicts this Decree shall be repealed.

Amending the minimum wage decrees will not change the value of family allowance benefits. The amount can only be amended by virtue of a decree of the Council of Ministers upon the proposal of the Minister of Labor and the NSSF Board of Directors.

A table showing the evolution of family allowances in Lebanon (1995-2022).

Year	Spouse (LBP)	For each child, up to five children (LBP)
1995	50,000 (20% of the minimum wage, amounting to LBP 250,000)	27,500 (11% of the minimum wage)
1996	60,000 (20% of the minimum wage, amounting to LBP 300,000)	33,000 (11% of the minimum wage)
2008-2022	60,000 (lump sum)	33,000 (lump sum)

Source: Decrees amending family allowance benefits.

TRANSPORTATION ALLOWANCE DECREES IN LEBANON (1995-2022)

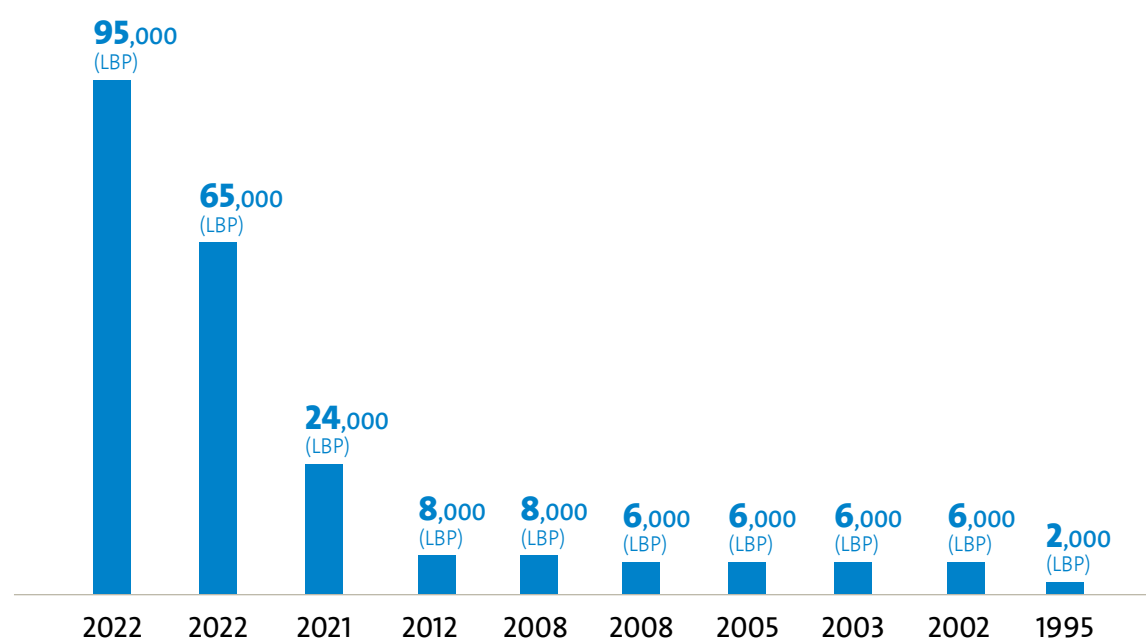
The concept of a “daily transportation allowance” for workers and employees governed by the Labor Law was initially introduced in Decree No. 6263 on January 18, 1995, with a value of LBP 2,000 per day for actual attendance. Subsequently, the allowance was modified five times until it reached a maximum of LBP 95,000 in 2022.



These transportation allowance decrees were issued on an annual basis and included a provision stating that they would be effective for one year, or until public transportation became available. However, there was no law stipulating whether the transportation allowance should be considered part of the total monthly income or basic salary.

Law No. 217 of March 30, 2012, pertaining to “granting employees an additional compensation”, explicitly states that the transportation allowance is not subject to National Social Security Fund (NSSF) contributions. This law also grants the government, with the approval of the Minister of Labor and a decree from the Council of Ministers, the authority to determine and adjust the daily transportation allowance as needed. Each decree remains in effect until a new one is issued to amend it. It is worth noting that although ten transportation allowance decrees have been issued since 1995, only five have modified its value. As a result, the transportation allowance has undergone the following changes:

Year	Transportation allowance (LBP)	Decree No.	Date of issuance
1995	2,000	6263	18-1-1995
2002	6,000	7724	5-4-2002
2003	6,000	9903	4-4-2003
2005	6,000	14196	22-2-2005
2008	6,000	766	3-1-2008
2008	8,000	501	14-10-2008
2012	8,000	8819	4-9-2012
2021	24,000	8318	8-9-2021
2022	65,000	8740	28-1-2022
2022	95,000	9849	12-8-2022



LEBANON'S COOPERATION WITH FOREIGN COURTS UNDER UNCAC

In accordance with law No. 33/2008, the Lebanese Parliament authorized Lebanon's accession into the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC). Article 3 of the convention states.

- The prevention, investigation and prosecution of corruption, as well as the freezing, seizure, confiscation and return of the proceeds of offences established in accordance with this Convention.



International Cooperation under UNCAC

Article 43 of the Convention provides for international cooperation between the signatories. It stipulates the following:

“States Parties shall cooperate in criminal matters in accordance with articles 44 to 50 of this Convention. Where appropriate and consistent with their domestic legal system, States Parties shall consider assisting each other in investigations of and proceedings in civil and administrative matters relating to corruption”.

Subsequent articles deal with extradition (Article 44), Transfer of sentenced persons (Article 45) and Mutual legal assistance (Article 46).

Right of Lebanese Judiciary to Deputize Foreign Judiciary

Foreign courts may delegate Lebanese courts to conduct any investigative or judicial act. The Lebanese judiciary may, in turn, delegate a foreign court to execute investigative proceedings. A foreign court may also be delegated to interrogate a person outside Lebanon pursuant to the convention and Article 140 of the Lebanese Code of Criminal Procedure (LCCP).

Mutual legal assistance may be requested for any of the following purposes:

- 1- Taking evidence or statements from persons;
- 2- Effecting service of judicial documents;
- 3- Executing searches seizures, and freezing;
- 4- Examining objects and sites;
- 5- Providing information, evidentiary items and expert evaluations;
- 6- Providing original or certified copies of relevant documents and records, including government, bank, financial, corporate or business records;
- 7- Identifying or tracing proceeds of crime, property, instrumentalities or other things for evidentiary purposes;
- 8- Facilitating the voluntary appearance of persons in the requesting State Party;
- 9- Any other type of assistance that is not contrary to the domestic law of the requested State Party;
- 10- Identifying, freezing and tracing proceeds of crime;
- 11- Recovering assets.

Hearing Witnesses

Article 46 of the Convention stipulates the method in which the witnesses in one State Party shall be heard by another State Party:

“Wherever possible and consistent with fundamental principles of domestic law, when an individual is in the territory of a State Party and has to be heard as a witness or expert by the judicial authorities of another State Party, the first State Party may, at the request of the other, permit the hearing to take place by video conference if it is not possible or desirable for the individual in question to appear in person in the territory of the requesting State Party. States Parties may agree that the hearing shall be conducted by a judicial authority of the requesting State Party and attended by a judicial authority of the requested State Party”.

Bank Secrecy under UNCAC

Article 40 of the convention addresses bank secrecy:

“Each State Party shall ensure that, in the case of domestic criminal investigations of offences established in accordance with this Convention, there are appropriate mechanisms available within its domestic legal system to overcome obstacles that may arise out of the application of bank secrecy laws”.

Paragraph 8 of that same article states that “States Parties shall not decline to render mutual legal assistance pursuant to this article on the ground of bank secrecy”.

Ironically, in the same session where the UNCAC was accepted, the Lebanese Parliament passed Law No. 32/2008, which conferred the “Special Investigation Commission” the sole authority to freeze and lift banking confidentiality on accounts, aligning with prevailing anti-corruption agreements and laws, most notably the UNCAC.

The following table lists examples of judicial cooperation conventions between Lebanon and other countries:

Year	Country	Convention/Agreement
1937	Turkey	Agreement between the Mandate states and Turkey on the exchange of judicial documents.
1951	Syria	Ratification of the judicial cooperation convention between Syria and Lebanon.
1954	Jordan	Authorizing the Lebanese government to ratify the judicial agreement concluded between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and Lebanon.
1968	Kuwait	Giving effect to the expedited bill on the conclusion of agreement on judicial notices and letters rogatory between Lebanon and Kuwait, referred to Parliament by Decree No. 14680 of December 6, 1963.
1972	Italy	Giving effect to the expedited bill on the conclusion of judicial agreement between Lebanon and Italy signed in Beirut on July 10, 1970, referred to Parliament by Decree No. 453 of January 22, 1971.
1985	Greece	Authorizing the government to conclude the judicial cooperation agreement between Lebanon and Greece, signed in Beirut on April 5, 1975.
1996	League of Arab States (LAS)	Authorizing the government to conclude the agreement between LAS and the Lebanese Republic on the headquarters of the Arab Center for Legal and Judicial Research
1997	Syria	Authorizing the government to conclude an additional convention to the judicial agreement entered into on February 25, 1951 between the Lebanese Republic and the Syrian Arab Republic.
1998	Egypt	Authorizing the government to conclude the judicial agreement between Lebanon and Egypt.
1999	France	Authorizing the Minister of Justice to conclude a judicial convention between Lebanon and France.
2002	Bulgaria	Authorizing the government to conclude an agreement on judicial cooperation in criminal matters between Lebanon and Bulgaria.

Year	Country	Convention/Agreement
2002	Bulgaria	Authorizing the government to conclude an agreement on judicial cooperation in criminal matters between Lebanon and Bulgaria.
2006	United Nations (UN)	Authorizing the government to conclude the United Nations Convention on Jurisdictional Immunities of States and their Property.
2011	Brazil	Authorizing the government to conclude an agreement on mutual legal assistance in civil affairs between Lebanon and Brazil.
2022	The Arab Convention on the Transfer of Inmates of Penal and Reform Institutions	Concluding the accession of Lebanon to the Arab Convention on the Transfer of Inmates of Panel and Reform Institutions.
2022	Algeria	Concluding an agreement relating to judicial cooperation in criminal matters between Lebanon and Algeria.

Source: *Information International* based on laws and decrees issued in this respect.



LEBANON'S DEVELOPMENT LOANS (1992-2022)

Over the past three decades, the Lebanese government has signed 154 external loan agreements with other countries and international organizations to support the development of several sectors, namely: water, electricity, wastewater, telecommunications, education, agriculture, environment as public transportation, public administration, public hospitals, roads, points of entry and housing construction. Although those loans amounted to USD 7.782 billion by the end of 2022, public sector services in all these industries is abysmal.



Thirty-seven of those loans, valued at USD2.6 billion were granted by The World Bank; twenty-seven loans valued at USD1.8 billion were obtained from the Arab Fund for Economic Development. Kuwait issued 25 loans valued at USD 1.5 billion, France issued nine loans, three loans were issued by Saudi Arabia whilst China issued one loan valued at CNY 50 million.

The last loan agreement with the World Bank was to secure USD 150 million for wheat supplies and USD 25 million for Lebanon's COVID19 response. The remaining loans were provided by other countries and regional and international organizations.

Whilst the Lebanese government did expend most of these loans, a portion remains unused. Note that these loans exclude the donations, manufacturing finance agreements, treasury bond loans and the refinancing loans.

A table showing Lebanon's development loans (1992-2022).

External development loan agreements (1992-2022)		
Creditor	No. of loans	Loan value in USD
World Bank	37	2,670,980,000
Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD)	27	1,877,310,000
Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED)-Kuwait	25	1,072,103,000
Islamic Development Bank (IsDB)	16	606,250,000
European Investment Bank (EIB)	12	593,050,000
French Development Agency (AFD)-France	9	324,590,560
OPEC Fund for International Development	8	67,400,000
Abu Dhabi Fund for Development (ADFD)	4	37,500,150
International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)	3	83,833,689
Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) - Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	3	201,625,000
Belgium	2	1,412,982
United States of America	2	21,000,000
Arab Monetary Fund (AMF)	2	47,000,000
Italy	1	65,687,152
KfW Development Bank – Germany	1	7,350,000
People's Republic of China (PRC)	1	7,500,000
Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF) – Japan	1	98,198,094
Total	154	7,782,790,627

Source: *Information International*.

MERGER OR ABOLITION OF LEBANON'S STATE INSTITUTIONS

Lebanon has about 130 state institutions, government bodies and councils, some of which are ineffective because they are legally established but have no budget allocations. The breakdown of these institutions is as follows: 36 public hospitals, 43 government bodies and councils and 51 different state institutions (operating in the fields of investment, administration, etc.)



The Lebanese government decided to dissolve several state institutions under Article 43 of the 2018 Public Budget Law (Law No. 79/2018), which stipulates the following:

Article 43

"The Council of Ministers shall, no later than December 31, 2020, abolish the economically unfeasible state institutions and merge those performing similar functions and services. The council shall also ensure that employees of abolished institutions receive their final entitlements in accordance with the governing laws or get transferred to another position within the still-standing institutions under the established conditions and wage payment requirements.

A committee chaired by the Minister of Administrative Development and consisting of the head of The Central Inspection Bureau and the head of the Civil Service Council shall, no later than December 31, 2018, draft a list of state institutions proposed for abolition or merger and with justification. The ministers involved shall submit their proposals to the Council of Ministers by June 30, 2019, justifying any merger, continuation or abolition along with termination requirements.

The Council of Ministers shall, in turn, submit to the Parliament an annual report on the progress made in the implementation of this provision."

However, following the appeal submitted by MPs Samy Gemayel, Nadim Gemayel, Samer Saadeh, Fadi El-Haber, Elie Marouni, Serge Torsarkissian, Elie Aoun, Gilbert Zouein, Youssef Khalil and Dory Chamoun, the Constitutional Council repealed Article 43 by virtue of the Resolution No. 2/2018 issued on May 14, 2018, considering that it is not relevant to the Budget Law.

Despite this, the National Institution for Investment Guarantee (NIGC) established by Legislative Decree No. 3 of January 15, 1977 which provides for establishing a national corporation for investment guarantee, was abolished under Article 29 of the 2020 Budget Law (Law No. 6 dated March 05, 2020), the scope of of which is determined by decrees issued by the Council of Ministers upon the proposal of the Minister of Finance.

The Government was Expected to Consider Options Such as:

- Abolishing 11 state institutions
- Merging three state institutions
- Developing the role of five state institutions
- Seeking views on seven state institutions
- Discussing the fate of three state institutions

Among the state institutions proposed for abolition are the following:

- 1- The Central Fund for the Displaced, established by Law No. 193/1993,
- 2- The Public Authority for Consumer Markets (PACM), established by Decree No. 5735/1994,
- 3- The General Institute for Olives and Olive Oil, established by Decree No. 4146/2016,
- 4- The Lebanese Association for Alternative Agriculture, established by Decree No. 8666/1996,
- 5- The Public Institution for Investment Projects within Beirut-Rafic Hariri International Airport, established by Decree No. 6814/1995,
- 6- The Authority for the Establishment and Management of Industrial Clusters, established under the law implemented by Decree No. 1660/1979 and Law No. 246/1997,
- 7- The National Employment Office (NEO), established by Legislative Decree No. 80/1977,
- 8- The Lebanese National Library, established by Law No. 36/2008,
- 9- The National Office for Drugs, established by Law No. 5/1983,
- 10- The National Institution for Investment Guarantee (NIGC), established by Legislative Decrees No. 3/1977 and 122/1983,
- 11- OGERO (Organisme de Gestion et d'Exploitation de l'ex-Radio Orient), established by Law No. 21/1972 and Decree No. 5613/1994, in conjunction with the operationalization of Lebanon's telecom company (Liban Telecom) and the establishment of the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA).
- 12- The Ministry of Information in order to activate the role of the National Audiovisual Media Council.

The state institutions proposed for merger:

- The "Institut des Finances Basil Fuleihan" established by Law No. 497/2003, with the National Institute of Administration,
- The National Council for the Development of Tourism in Lebanon,
- The National Council for Tourism Promotion, established by Decree No. 9169/2012.

Developing the role of:

- The Green Plan,
- The National Authority of the Litani River,
- The Public Agency for the Planning and Development of Beirut South-Western Suburbs (ELYSSAR),
- The Investment Development Authority of Lebanon (IDAL)
- The National Council for Scientific Research.

Discussing the fate of/ seeking views on:

- The Syrian Lebanese Higher Council (SLHC),
- The Council for the South,
- The National Council for the Environment (NCE), after consulting the Minister of Environment,
- The Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR),
- The Railway and Public Transport Authority (RPTA), after consulting the Minister of Public Works and Transport,
- The Tripoli Port Exploitation Authority, after consulting the Minister of Public Works and Transport,
- The Saida Port Investment Authority, after consulting the Minister of Public Works and Transport,
- The Sour Port Investment Authority, after consulting the Minister of Public Works and Transport,
- The Lebanese Council for Accreditation, after consulting the Minister of Industry,
- The Lebanese Standards Institution (LIBNOR), after consulting the Minister of Industry,
- The National Authority for Domain Management in Lebanon (established by Law No. 81/2018), after consulting the Minister of Telecommunications, in addition to adjusting the legal regime of the Temporary Committee for Management and Investment of the Port of Beirut (established by Decree No. 7505/2002).

Public Sector

ELECTRICITY REGULATORY AUTHORITY

A SOLUTION TO LEBANON'S ELECTRICITY CRISIS?!

For the past decade, many Lebanese MPs, officials and media professionals have called for the establishment of an “Electricity Regulatory Authority” as a solution, with some arguing that it is the only solution that would address the country’s electricity crisis. The establishment of the “Electricity regulatory authority” is also a prerequisite condition to the World bank’s authorizing Lebanon to import electricity from Egypt and Jordan.

Electricité Du Liban

What is the Electricity Regulatory Authority and what does it do?

Establishment

Article 7 (“Regulation of the Electricity Sector”) of Law No. 462 dated September 02, 2002, provides for the establishment of an authority called “The Electricity Regulatory Authority”. It stipulates the following: “The Authority shall have juridical personality as well as technical, administrative and financial autonomy and shall be based in Beirut”.

Board of Directors

The minister of energy and water decrees that the Authority consists of a chairman and four Lebanese full-time members, appointed for a non-renewable five-year term.

Functions

By law, this authority shall exercise functions including:

- Study the energy sector’s general master plan in the production, transmission and distribution of energy, submit those studies to the Minister of Energy and Water for assessment before receiving the final approval from the Council of Ministers;
- Encourage and promote investments into the electricity sector;
- Determine and classify the various categories of production, transmission and distribution services;
- Categorize different forms of production, electrical power transmission and distribution;
- Setting Price Cap Regulation on costs of services provided by the electricity sector;
- Determine regulations and standards for licenses and authorizations and conduct audits accordingly.

Law Amendment

Law No. 181 of October 05, 2011 (an emergency program of LBP 1,772 billion to produce, transmit and distribute 700 Megawatts of power) was issued nine years after the promulgation of Law No. 462. Law 181 stipulates the establishment of a ministerial committee headed by the Prime Minister to evaluate amendments to Law No. 462/2002 within a three-month deadline, and establish the “Electricity Regulatory Authority” based on the Minister’s proposal.

Board Member Recruitment Steps

Positions for the members of the Electricity Regulatory Authority remained vacant well past the deadline set by law no. 181. This has become a matter of political tension in the media until the Ministry of Energy and Water announced on December 09, 2022 the initiation of recruitment procedures necessary to establish the authority.

According to the Ministry, the reason for non-appointment was “...the non-adherence to the remaining requirement of the World Bank and the international community to finance the gas and electricity agreements concluded with Egypt, Jordan and Syria”. What is noteworthy, however, is that six members were appointed (and not 5 as stipulated by law), “in line” with the requirements of the Charter and the Constitution, which provide for equality in Grade-1 posts or their equivalents.

If this authority actually sees the light of day, and is allowed to execute its duties to the full extent of the Lebanese law, will it really solve Lebanon’s decades old electricity crisis? What caused the electricity crisis in Lebanon is not the absence of an administration or authority regulating the sector, but rather, 30 years of no decision. These ‘non-decisions’ pertain to raising the tariff according to the cost price, reducing electricity subsidies, the irregular collection of bills and the inability to prevent electricity theft.

BEIRUT AIRPORT WITNESSES 46.5% TRAFFIC HIKE IN 2022

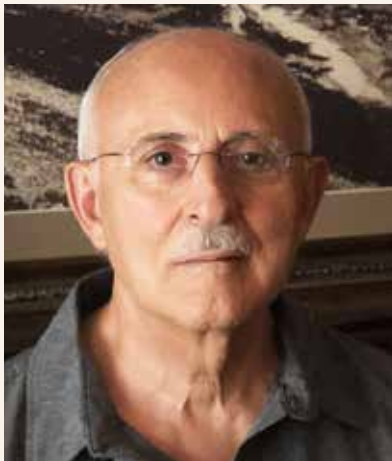
Passenger traffic (arrivals-departures-transits) at Beirut Rafic Hariri International Airport recorded an increase of 46.5% in 2022 year over year. Records show that 1,118,940 passengers travelled to Lebanon by air between June and August, 530,000-600,000 of whom came for tourism and pleasure. By comparison, Lebanon welcomed 302,979 passengers during the December- January holiday season; unexpectedly, only a third of those arrived for tourist purposes.

Of note, 76% of all passengers through Beirut Rafic Hariri International Airport were Lebanese. Additionally, total departures outnumbered total arrivals by 80,334- a massive brain drain as many people have left Lebanon in 2022.

A table showing the number of arriving, departing and transit passengers in 2022.

Month	Arriving passengers	Departing passengers	Transit passengers	Total	No. of arrivals and departures
January	153,230	208,594	2,062	363,886	3,671
February	159,970	165,664	1,759	327,393	3,072
March	201,536	208,532	2,581	412,649	3,518
April	215,229	180,829	2,143	398,201	3,609
May	234,263	260,290	2,374	496,987	4,102
June	340,317	227,064	2,726	570,107	4,559
July	460,018	358,988	2,747	821,753	6,058
August	318,605	471,185	3,497	793,287	5,921
September	278,943	366,811	1,773	647,527	5,078
October	244,864	272,948	2,345	520,157	4,307
November	209,450	234,108	2,892	446,450	3,995
December	302,979	244,735	3,918	551,632	4,605
Total of 2022	3,119,404	3,199,748	30,817	6,349,969	52,795

Source: Information International based on Beirut Airport statistics.



A WEDDING AT ISHTAR (5)

By Dr. Hanna Saadah

Trying to absorb the concept of wild horses, Judy sighed and pensively gazed at the darkness shadowing the vast olive plain, at the little lit towns hanging like chandeliers around that lurking shadow, and at the star-lit heaven, shimmering and unaware. Holding our breath, Father and I exchanged knowing glances as the quietude became awkward. We watched Judy's fingers crawl into clenched fists—as if she were thinking with her knuckles, as if she were holding the reins of an unruly brain, as if she were training a wild horse that is trying to topple her. Then, as though her reverie were jolted by an epiphany, she glared at us and declared, "Indeed, we are our brains. And we believe whatever our crazy brains believe. And we do whatever our crazy brains tell us to do. Oh, how catastrophic."

"Unless we train and gain control of our group brains, our brains will continue to control us," affirmed Father Ignatius.

"And how do we train and gain control, Father?" asked Judy with quivering voice.

"By depersonalizing our brains and viewing them as young, impressionable students. By re-training our brains with ethical enlightenment. By doubting what our brains think until we can verify it by scrutinizing the facts. And by forbidding group forces from programming our brains with unkind, selfish group ethos."

"And how do we do all that, Father?"

"We do it by denying unlawful entries into our brains—unlawful entry of judgements and opinions elaborated by the media, political preachers, public speakers, and electronic screens—and by disobeying our brains when they condone unkind, aggressive, hateful, violent, ugly, or selfish solutions."

After Judy listened, pondered, and assimilated what Father had said, she declared, "To become enlightened, we need to become brain skeptics then. We need to

become brain adversaries when our brains elaborate unkind thoughts or ugly opinions about others. Elaborating unkind sentiments and ideas about our less fortunate fellow humans should be the clue that we are elaborating false judgement. Isn't that what you're saying, Father?"

"We not only need to feel empathy for others who are blindly obeying their unenlightened, negatively programmed brains, and others who sincerely think that their unkind opinions and actions are indeed correct. We also need to feel deep gratitude for not having been saddled with such unkind, intolerant brains," replied Father with a flush. Then, noticing Judy's overwhelmed aspect, he added, "Perhaps we should finish this conversation tomorrow?"

"I don't think this conversation has a finish, Father," sighed Judy. "But could you conclude this brain-searching evening with a clear and simple capsule? I feel that a peaceful *coup d'état* has overthrown my mind, and I need help to come to terms with my new world view."

"A clear and simple capsule," hummed Father, as if vespering. "That's a most difficult task."

We waited in silence and exchanged muffled glances as we watched Father peruse the profound recesses of his brain. Then, his face relaxed in a eureka smile and he said, "I'm a religious man who trusts science and believes in God but keeps the two separate. My science-trusting mind tells me that we are our brains, that our brains are programmed by nature, nurture, culture, and experience—the four forces of our time-place cocoons that are purely set by coincidence and are not under our control. Knowing that, how can we blame those who are unkind for being what they are? Do we blame the insect-laden tree for bearing blighted fruits?"

Father asked this rhetorical question, gave us time to absorb its meanings, and then continued.

“When we cease to blame fellow humans for the ‘insects’ that infest their brains, only then can we replace blame with understanding, compassion, and kindness. Conjuring compassion for those whose brains have been programmed with negative traits and treating them with kindness is the essence of enlightenment.»

“Isn’t that also the essence of Christianity?” asked Judy.

“It is, my dear, but Christianity conjures this compassion by asking us to love one another, including our enemies. Enlightenment, on the other hand, conjures this compassion by asking us to be kind to one another, especially those less-fortunate, undeserving others who have been saddled with unkind, negatively-programmed brains.”

“Is that where enlightenment and Christianity meet?” asked Judy with searching gaze.

“Indeed, my dear. Enlightenment arrives at universal love through kindness, whereas Christianity arrives at it through faith. Universal love is the offspring of kindness, the essence of life, and the magnanimous force that binds earth to all its inhabitants.”

“Is universal love your clear and simple capsule, Father?”

“Universal love is the sun whose smile brightens the tenebrous alleys of humanity. But love is a very complex capsule.”

“So, what then is your simple capsule, Father?”

“Kindness is the measure of enlightenment. You can measure one’s enlightenment by measuring one’s kindness, or one’s lack of it. That, my dear, is my simple capsule, the capsule you can take back with you to America.”

Judy, feeling confounded by Father’s simple capsule, scratched her head and asked, “How about education. Doesn’t it also lead to enlightenment?”

“Only the education that teaches kindness leads to enlightenment. The rest of education is irrelevant. Being educated does not equal being enlightened. A great scientist or professor, or professional, or technician does not have to be enlightened to be great. However, great enlightenment can only come through great kindness because, as I said, kindness is the measure of enlightenment.”

Judy paused in thought for a long while and gazed at sky with abstract-seeing eyes. Father Ignatius, thinking that she was finished with her questions, stood up and prepared to leave.

“And how about freedom, Father?” asked Judy as if she had found this last question in the stars.

“How about it?”

“Since Christianity does not address freedom, what does enlightenment have to say about it?”

“Enlightenment censors freedom.”

“Censors freedom?” Gaspd Judy with gaping eyes.

“Indeed,” affirmed Father without hesitation. “Freedom is like food,” he simplified. “If we do not have enough to eat, we starve. If we have enough to eat, we prosper. If we have too much to eat, we become morbidly obese and pay a hefty price with the adverse effects of morbid obesity. Being morbidly free through the abuse of freedom is as dangerous as being morbidly obese through the abuse of food, and both abuses stand to become tempered by the censorship that enlightenment brings.”

* * * *

Our two weeks in Lebanon exposed Judy to an ancient, time-tested culture, bursting with miracles, superstitions, and traditions—and her exposure to Father Ignatius exposed her to a new world view, a new way of thinking graced with kindness and enlightenment.

On our way to the Beirut Airport, she gazed at the war-torn devastation that had seemed strikingly different when we first arrived and said, “Nothing seems different anymore.”

“Would you come back,” I challenged, “even though *‘the Lebanese, are something else’*?”

“Your country is my country, and my country is your country,” she smiled, “and like you, I now have the advantage of two brains.”

“Kipling was right, then,” I quipped.

“Kipling? What do you mean by that?”

“Rudyard Kipling in his 1889 poem, *The Ballad of East and West*, opens with this stanza:

*Oh, East is East, and West is West,
and never the twain shall meet,
Till Earth and Sky stand presently
at God’s great Judgment Seat;
But there is neither East nor West,
Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,
When two strong men stand face to face,
though they come from the ends of the earth.*



CHAMAA IN SOUR: HALF ITS POPULATION ARE EXPATS

Chamaa is a village in the south of Lebanon that is famous for having massive portions of its population emigrate, namely to Brazil.

Etymology

The village was home to the Prophet Chamaa (born in 10BC) for quite some time and now is a location for one of his shrines; that is how the village got its name. But yet, another story says that the village derives its name from Shimon Safa, one of Christ's disciples who is buried there. Still another story relays that the Prophet Chamaa is Shimon Safa himself, a highly controversial the birthdays of the two are different.

Location

Situated in the Qada' of Sour at an altitude of 380 m, Chamaa is 100 km from Beirut and stretches across an area of 410 hectares. It is bordered to the north by Mansouri and Majdal Zoun, to the south by the occupied Palestinian territories, to the east by Tayr Harfa, Jibbain and Chihine, and to the west by the Mediterranean Sea.

The village is accessible via the following route: Beirut-Saida-Sour-Biyyadah.

Population and Houses

Chamaa has an estimated population of 1,300 inhabitants belonging to the Shi'a sect. It has about 110 houses as most of its people live abroad.

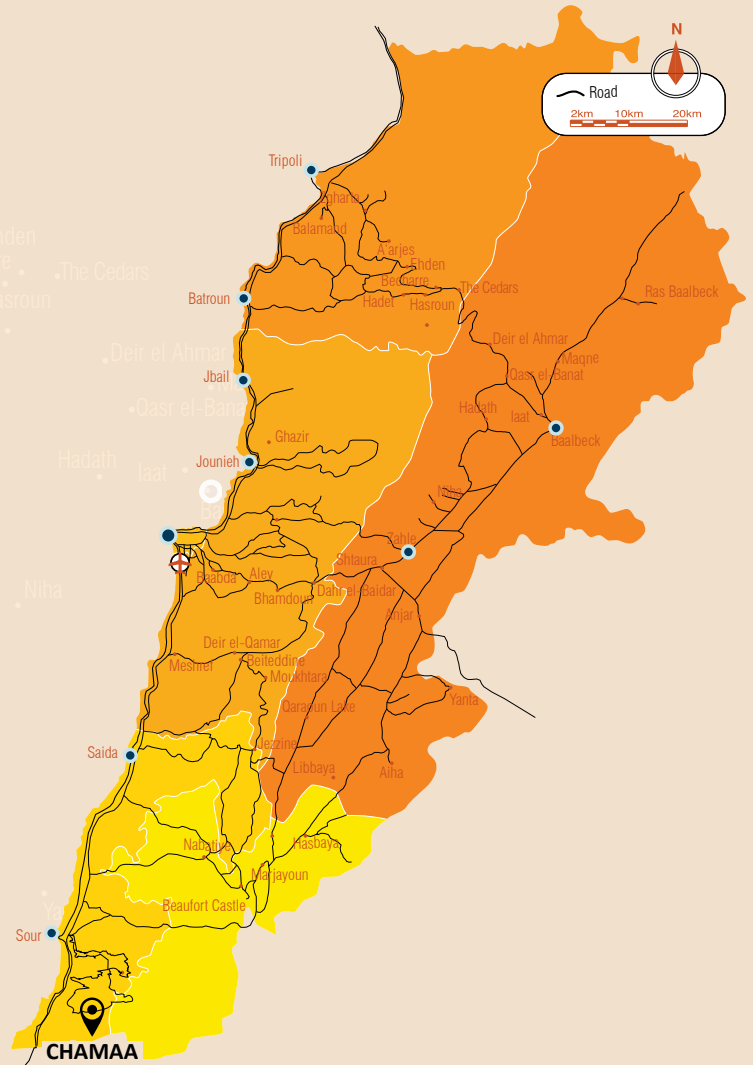
Voters

Among the families that reside in this town are the Rida, Srour, Alayan, Jaber, Diab, Durr, Darwich, Al-Riz, Al-Ali, Bayad, Harb, Haidar, Zabad, Chehab, Mohsen and Merhi families. About a third of the population belongs to the "Safiedin" family.

In 2000, only 342 out of 811 registered voters exercised their right to vote. The number rose to 965 in 2009, but only 460 voters actually cast their ballots. Similarly, in 2018, the number of registered voters who went to the polls increased to 1,149, but only 474 of them voted. However, in the 2022 parliamentary elections, only 539 out of 1,200 registered voters participated in the voting process.

Chamaa Castle and Shimon the Prophet Shrine

Chamaa is known for housing a Crusader rock-built castle that dates back to the year 1116 AD, located next to Prophet Shimon's shrine. The castle overlooks the city of Sour and



the coast of Haifa in Occupied Palestine. The castle's towers have been devastated during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in July 2006.

Local Authorities

Nine members sit on Chamaa's municipal council, which was established pursuant to Resolution No. 184 of February 23, 2004, a mukhtar and an ikhtiyari council.

Economic Life

Agriculture, expat remittances and the UNIFIL drive the village's economy.

KONBOR FAMILIES

A Shi'a Majority in South Lebanon

The Konbor family are among the smallest Lebanese families, with only 537 members. They are mainly located in Beirut, South Lebanon and the Beqa' Valley.

Etymology

Al-Konbora (the Lark) is a small, oblong-winged singing bird that feeds on insects and seeds.

Al-Konbor was the name given to the servant of Commander Ali Ibn Abi Taleb. Most of the Konbor family members are Shi'a and it may be that they hold that name because they are disciples of AL-Konbor

Family Members

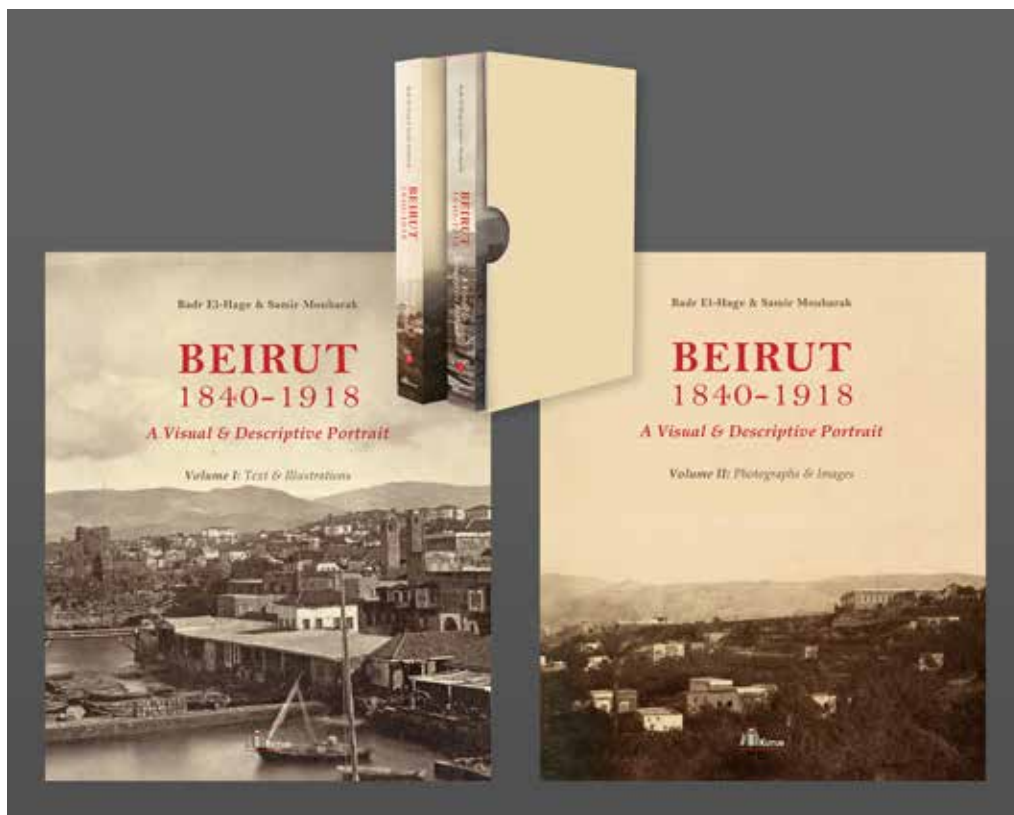
Konbor family members total 573. Although most of them are south Lebanese Shi'a, variation exists in the family:

- Beirut (Ashrafieh): Greek Orthodox (23)
- Beirut (Bashoura): Shi'a (12)
- Beirut (Mazraa): Sunni (52)
- Beirut (Ras Beirut): Shi'a (26)
- Beirut (Zuqaq al-Blat): Shi'a (25)
- Hajjeh (Qada' of Zahrani): Maronite (15)
- Ain Qana (Qada' of Nabatieh): Shi'a (122)
- Kfar Remen (Qada' of Nabatieh): Shi'a (165)
- Zahle (Maalaqah): Shi'a (22)
- Zahle (Karak Nouh): Shi'a (103)
- Trablous (Tabbaneh): Sunni (8)

BEIRUT 1840-1918

A VISUAL & DESCRIPTIVE PORTRAIT

"KUTUB Ltd." has recently published a two-volume English book by the scholar Badr El-Hage and former diplomat Samir Moubarak entitled "*Beirut 1840-1918, A Visual & Descriptive Portrait*". The publication outlines the history of Beirut through research on the history and evolution of photography and photo development, thus providing, in addition to the photos captured by professional photographers such as Louis Vignes, photos of amateur photographers that complement the city's image. The book contains, in its first volume, chapters on the primary landmarks of the city of Beirut, corroborated by old photographs. The second volume is a catalog full of photos, split into titles (port, coast, interior design, architecture, famine, professions, streets, etc.).



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