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DR. FRANK FERRIS AND DR. HIBAH OSMAN

LEBANESE PARLIAMENT

2014 | **48 LAWS IN 6 DAYS**

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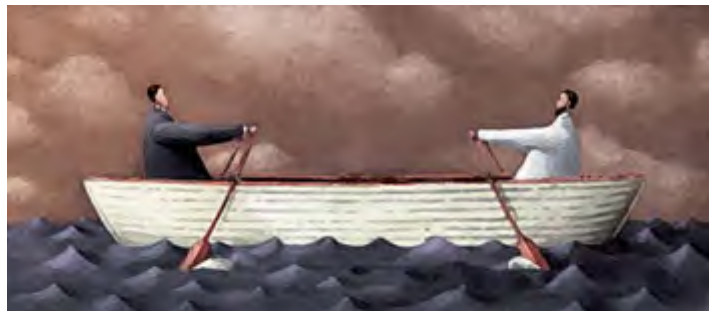
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OUR NEXT PRESIDENT: KING CARL GUSTAV

“Syria had established a monarchy under King Faisal Bin Hussein and the proclamation of a kingdom or an emirate in Lebanon was not greeted with any opposition from residents. Yet, the French wanted us to be republicans, so we became republicans...”

“Mount Lebanon lived in the Mutasarriyah era for seventy years under a system pretty close to the monarchist regime. Why don’t we go back to those days and establish a long-term small-sized administrative council with advisory and legislative powers, and the state will be headed by what we call Emir or King rather than Mutasarrif?”

Iskandar Riachi

‘Who will be the next President of the Republic of Lebanon?’ A question frequently raised by the media, the politicians and the public as if anyone knows the answer. As if we lived under a parliamentary democracy in the first place to speculate who the next President will be. Is the current Parliament, whose mandate has been extended, even qualified to elect a new legitimate Head of State? Is it normal for the Speaker of Parliament to be Shia’a, the Prime Minister Sunni and the President of the Republic Maronite? Is it normal to distribute posts based on sectarian quotas? Is it normal for a Za’im (depending on the circumstances that dictate who that Za’im will be) to have the final say on whom to hire and promote to public posts from his sectarian community? Does it really matter whether we have a President of the Republic if there is no Republic to begin with?

Why were the major leaders of Lebanon reluctant to take on key ministerial portfolios as if public service did not befit them?

Did Kamal Jumblat not demand control over the Ministry of Interior portfolio, Rashid Karami the Ministry of Finance and Majid Erislan over the Ministry of Defense? When did being a Minister and leadership become two different things?

Since Lebanon achieved independence, ‘our’ Presidents have been appointed by external, not internal consensus. Today isn’t any different from yesterday. What is the solution? Rather who is the solution?

The answer resides in the hands of Gabriel Puaux whom we affectionately nicknamed “Higher Commissioner” (October 1938-November 1940) because “Colonizing Commissioner” sounded a little too heavy.

“...The Mutasarrifayah system is worthier of the Lebanese and it has brought them stability after

wars” says Gabriel Puaux in his memoir *Deux années au Levant: Souvenirs de Syrie et du Liban*, urging the declaration of Lebanon as an Emirate or a Kingdom ruled by an Emir or a King who would pass on the throne to his offspring. But who should that King be? Only Mr. Puaux has the answer.

In his book *Before and After*, Iskandar Riachi says “Mr. Piaux used to say that the Emir or King should be a Christian so that Lebanon does not lose the sectarian stamp that has distinguished and separated it from the rest of the neighboring regions. He should also be a Protestant because a Protestant King can reconcile the major sects.”

Problem solved. Let us then assign Emirs or agents to the regions and you will come to see that each of them is already in control of his sphere of influence. Then, we can form a Council of Emirs that reports to a King of absolute power.

If we wish to apply modernism or secularism, we can even resort to rotating the Emirate, appointing the Emir of the North to the Beqa’a and vice versa. A century or two after introducing this new system, we shall finally come to know its merits and demerits.

Thus, the Zu’ama may rule based on their influence in the regions with their powers prescribed by the Constitution, rather than being seized forcibly as is the case today.

A Protestant King ruling the Kingdom of Lebanon? “Yes”, says Puaux, provided that he be a foreigner, precisely from Sweden, because, in his opinion, the Zu’ama of Lebanon are unlikely to agree on a Lebanese candidate in a final, definitive and absolute manner. So let the King of Sweden, Carl Gustav, act as King of Lebanon.

Jawad N. Adra

LEBANON'S PARLIAMENT

2014: 48 LAWS IN 6 DAYS

2013: 2 LAWS IN THE ENTIRE YEAR

In light of the scarcity of laws approved during the Lebanese legislature's tenure, ongoing since June 2009, there have been frequent talks about the productivity of Parliament - or rather the lack thereof. In 2013, only two laws were approved: Law no. 245 dated April 12, 2013, which suspended the deadlines set under the electoral law until May 19, 2013 and Law no. 246 dated May 31, 2013, which extended the legislature's term of office until November 20, 2014.

Since the end of May 2013, Parliament has stopped its legislative activity due to a lack of quorum in all ten sessions called for by Speaker Nabih Berri. Yet, in the wake of the formation of the Tamam Salam government on February 15, 2014, it seems that the legislature has finally recovered and law makers have resumed legislating.

Parliament has convened 6 sessions spanning 18 hours and 48 minutes and witnessed the approval of 48 laws.

Sessions of Parliament

Sessions of Parliament 2014			Table 1
Session	Duration	No. of Laws	
Tuesday, April 1, 2014	10:45 am → 14:00 pm (3:15 hours)	13	
	17:15 pm → 20:30 pm (3:15 hours)	8	
Wednesday, April 2, 2014	10:40 am → 14:45 pm (3:55 hours)	12	
Thursday, April 3, 2014	10:47 am → 14:05 pm (3:18 hours)	6	
Wednesday, April 9, 2014	10:45 am → 14:00 pm (3:15 hours)	7	
Thursday, April 10, 2014	10:55 am → 12:45 pm (1:50 hours)	2	

Approved Laws

- **Law no. 247** entitled the government to the right of legislation in the field of customs for five years, starting from December 14, 2011, the date of expiry of the previous law issued in 2009 and granting the government the same right. Parliament has been accustomed to issuing such laws since 1992, which means that the law has nothing new and is only an extension of preceding legislation.
- **Law no. 248** exempted the profits of industrial exports of Lebanese origin from 50% of the tax due, in a bid to support and subsidize Lebanese industrial exports and to promote Lebanon's industry as a whole.
- **Law no. 249** set up a syndicate for midwives. The law stipulated the formation of a mandatory syndicate that consists of the midwives licensed by the Ministry



of Public Health to practice midwifery in Lebanese territories. The law specified the role of the syndicate as having a scientific, health and administrative role aiming to bring together all licensed midwives and to protect their legitimate interests and moral and material rights as well as enhancing the profession and ensuring its ethics and dignity towards the provision of the best services possible to pregnant women. Membership of the syndicate is compulsory in the sense that no midwife will be able to practice her profession in Lebanese territories unless her name is registered on the syndicate's roll. In terms of mandatory membership, the syndicate thus resembles Lebanon's large syndicates such as the Order of Engineers, the Bar Association and the Order of Physicians.

- **Law no. 250-** Amendment of Law no. 479/2002 concerned with the establishment of a mandatory syndicate for registered male and female nurses in Lebanon. The Law amended a number of the articles stipulated under the syndicate formation law, particularly those related to the dates of the General Assembly meetings and the mechanism of electing the members.
- **Law no. 251** assigned full-time attorneys-general and investigating judges to attend to environment affairs. This law aims to protect the environment

and to enforce the laws against violators. A full-time environmental attorney-general – or many – will be appointed and entrusted by the public prosecutor to pursue environmental crimes, file charges and identify the offenders by name. The Law has also determined the offences that would be classified as environmental crimes (the violation of the rules and regulations related to quarries and to the protection of forest wealth and natural reserves as well as the violation of the laws concerned with the disposal of all kinds of waste and the laws on the preservation of antiquities and of the cultural and historical heritage) and stipulated the establishment of an environmental police force in each Mohafaza having the same capacity as the justice police as far as environmental crimes are concerned. The environmental police shall fall under the supervision of the environmental attorney-general.

- **Law no. 252** authorized the government to sign a loan agreement between the Republic of Lebanon and the Kuwaiti Fund for Arab Economic Development in order to carry out sanitation projects in Marjeyoun, Al Khiyam and Chaqra. The loan, which amounts to KWD 13.5 million (roughly USD 48 million) with an annual interest rate of 2.5% on all unpaid withdrawals, will be repaid over 40 semi-annual installments, after a five-year grace period from the date of the first withdrawal.

The loan aims to finance the installation of two sewerage networks in the towns of Marjeyoun, Al Khiyam and Chaqra. The first will be 140 kilometers long and five stations will be constructed to collect sewage and waste water from seven towns (Marjeyoun, Al Khiyam, Blat, Ebl As-Saqi, Al-Qlaya'a, Debbine and Burj Al-Moulouk) and connect them to a treatment plant with a capacity of nearly 2500 m³ per day. The second network will be 110 kilometers long and will discharge the waste water collected and transferred from six towns (Chaqra, Hawla, Kounine, Al Tayri, Beit Bahoun and part of Braashite) into a treatment plant with a daily capacity of 4500 m³.

- **Law no. 253** authorized the Lebanese government to approve the funding of the Mediterranean Cross-Border Cooperation Programme with the European Union, across several sectors. The budget ranges between 2 million and 5 million Euros (and the text of this protocol stretches to 104 pages).
- **Law no. 254** approved accession to the protocol concerning cooperation in preventing pollution from ships and, in cases of emergency, combating pollution of the Mediterranean Sea. Thirteen Mediterranean countries have approved this protocol.
- **Law no. 255** approved the signing of an additional financing agreement for the Cultural Heritage and Urban Development Project between the Lebanese Republic and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. This agreement was first signed on August 9, 2012 to provide extra funds worth USD 27 million. Lebanon pays costs and interest rates amounting to 3% and should have repaid the entire loan, the interest excluded, by July 15, 2023. The project aims at helping Lebanon find the convenient conditions to enhance local economic development and quality of life in the historic city centers of Baalbeck, Byblos, Saida, Tripoli and Tyre.
- **Law no. 256** subjected full-time employees at the Civil Servants Cooperative to the pension system like their counterparts in other public administrations. The CSC is a public institution that cares for employees of public administrations and it seemed only logical to treat its employees as equals to the rest of the employees they serve. The approval of this law has been a long-standing demand by the cooperative's full-time staff.
- **Law no 257** approved the establishment of the Cedars of Jaj Reserve, which comes as a sequel to a slew of previous laws that stipulated the establishment of nature reserves in a number of Lebanese regions.
- **Law no.258** approved an agreement between the Lebanese government (Council for Development and Reconstruction) and the Islamic Development Bank to finance the second phase of the Western Beqa'a sanitation project. The agreement is worth USD 26.840 million and is a continuation of the first phase, which was also funded by the Islamic Development Bank. The project involves the construction of sewage lines of 70,027 meters in length, using different pipes, installations and pumping stations.
- **Law no.259** approved an agreement between the Lebanese government (Council for Development and Reconstruction) and the Islamic Development Bank to finance the second phase of the Western Beqa'a sanitation project at USD 26.840 million.
- **Law no. 260** approved a loan agreement between the Republic of Lebanon and the French Agency for Development (AFD) to carry out the project of collecting and treating wastewater in the Qada'a of Kessrouan. The loan value is 150 million Euros (roughly USD 207 million) with a six month Euribor interest rate (interest rate at which banks lend one another funds denominated in Euros) not exceeding 6.34% per year in addition to a commission of 0.5%. The loan is to be repaid in installments, the last of which should be on July 31, 2032.
- **Law no. 261** amended Article 99 of Law no. 75/99 on the Protection of Literary and Artistic Property. The new provisions require the owner, producer or publisher of any book or publication to send six free copies of the piece in question to the Ministry of Culture. The Ministry shall deposit one copy at the Library of Parliament.
- **Law no. 262** amended the prerequisites for appointment to a number of posts at the VAT directorate issued in 2005. To qualify for the position of Head of the Department of Legislation and Tax Policies, the applicant must, according to the new law, be a holder of a university degree in either law or economics or

accounting or business or finance with no less than six years of experience and proven proficiency in Arabic as well as in English or French.

- **Law no. 263** approved the reconstruction of the buildings destroyed during the 2006 Israeli invasion of Lebanon. The law authorized the reconstruction of the buildings affected partially or wholly, with the exception of the parts targeted in demarcation or those encroaching upon private or public property. If the violation had occurred prior to 1994, the structures violating the law may be reconstructed only after payment of all the incurred fees and fines. The reconstruction process will be exempt from all the fees, fines and stamp duties dictated by the law, including construction fees and the fees of both Orders of Engineers.

- **Law no. 264** extended the provisions of Law no. 402/95 related to excluding hotels from certain provisions under the Construction Code issued in 2004. The amendment prescribed that the construction works should be initiated within one year maximum from the date of issuance of the construction permit. It added that the works should be completed and the Housing Institute permit obtained within six years maximum from the same date.

- **Law no. 265** amended some provisions of the Consumer Protection Law no. 59/2005. The objective of the amendment was to promote food safety and to impose conditions on the methods and techniques of advertising and promotion in order to ensure further protection of consumers. It also proposed tightening the sanctions against fraudulent operations. For example, if the fraud resulted in the spread of an epidemic or the death of a person, the person committing the fraud shall be sentenced to temporary hard-labor from 5 to 15 years and fined an amount ranging between LBP 500 million and LBP 1 billion.

- **Law no. 266** amended Article 38 of the Staff Regulations issued in 1959 extending the maternity leave to 10 weeks fully paid with immediate effect.

- **Law no. 267** amended Articles 28 and 29 of the Labor Law dated September 13, 1946 and its amendments, raising the maternity leave to 10 weeks.

- **Law no. 268** amended the agreement signed in 2001 with the Islamic Development Bank regarding the Reconstruction of South Lebanon and Other Regions Affected by the Israeli Occupation, raising its value from USD 100 million to USD 108.3 million. The increase is assigned to the construction of sewerage networks and wastewater treatment plants in the Western Beqa'a.

- **Law no. 269** amended some provisions under the Social Security Law, granting exemption from the penalties incurred due to delays or violations and allowing the payment of debts to the order of the National Social Security Fund by installments. According to the law, the NSSF shall accept, within 12 months from the entry of this law into effect, the payment of the outstanding subscription dues owed by the state and other subscribers to the Fund up till December 31, 2013 by installments, provided that a down payment equal to 5% of the debt is paid up front. An annual interest of 5% shall also be imposed on the installment payments and the installment period shall differ depending on the size of the debt, fluctuating between 36 months (if the debt is below LBP 60 million) and 120 months (if the debt totals LBP 1.2 billion and above).

- **Law no. 270** amended Article 3 of Law no. 273/2001 (Mukhtar's stamp duty), assigning the Cooperative Fund for Mukhtars new revenues yielded from a revenue stamp of LBP 1000 to be impressed by the Mukhtars upon all the transactions, attestations and documents they authenticate. Among other revenues are the contributions of the state through the Ministry of the Interior and Municipalities and the grants and donations channeled to the Fund.

- **Law no. 271** amended Article 3 of Law no. 313/2001, which is concerned with the establishment of two Orders of Physicians in Lebanon, prescribing a medical specialty degree obtained in no fewer than three years and membership in one of the two Orders of Physicians as requirements for the practice of medicine. Those licensed to practice medicine who do not have a medical specialty degree shall practice medicine in the capacity of non-specialized practitioners.

- **Law no. 272** stipulated the establishment of a Council for Notaries Public in Lebanon. The law aims to set up a council comprising all active notaries public.

Those who wish to join the council from among the retired notaries may also join the council, which shall work on regulating the affairs of Lebanon's notaries public and improving the prospects of the profession.

- **Law no. 273** added a paragraph to the Income Tax Law issued in 1959 whereby it allowed, exceptionally, the companies and organizations damaged during Israel's attacks on Lebanon between July 12 and August 14, 2006 to defer the losses they incurred in each of 2003 and 2004 for an additional year and those sustained in 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008 for seven years.
- **Law no. 274** amended some of the provisions under the Pharmacy Practice Act dated 1994. The law provided that the committee responsible for approving medications must decide on every submitted application within three months or else it must justify the rejection. It also allowed hospitals classified as 'university hospitals' pursuant to decisions issued by the Minister of Public Health, to import the medications unavailable in the local market and which they need for the purposes of research and education.
- **Law no. 275** added a new paragraph to the fees for transferring movable and immovable rights and property. The new paragraph exempted the rights and property devolved from the Lebanese Army and the Security Forces martyrs from charges, had the charges not been already fulfilled by the time this law entered into force.
- **Law no. 276** reduced the penalties incurred as a result of unpaid construction violation arrears by 90%, provided that the defaulters pay their dues prior to September 30, 2014.
- **Law no. 277** reduced the penalties incurred as a result of unpaid municipal fee arrears by 90%, provided that the defaulters pay their dues prior to September 30, 2014.
- **Law no. 278** amended a number of provisions under the new Traffic Act issued in 2012. The amendments were made in light of the remarks noted in the wake of the Traffic Act.
- **Law no. 279** reduced the penalties imposed on the persons liable for fees by 90%. Pursuant to this law, the penalties incurred as a result of unpaid car inspection fees, traffic fees and collection orders issued by public administrations and institutions were cut down by 90%, provided that the defaulters pay their dues prior to September 30, 2014.
- **Law no. 280** granted financial incentives to the municipalities surrounding the Naameh (Abay- Ain Drafeel) landfill and exempted them from certain dues and financial cuts. Pursuant to this law, every municipality/town that observes, within its boundaries, the construction of a sanitary landfill or a waste treatment plan, as well as every affected neighboring municipality, shall benefit from a larger share of the Independent Municipal Fund. The 13 municipalities surrounding the Abay – Ain Drafeel landfill (13 municipalities) shall be accorded financial incentives worth USD 5 million.
- **Law 281** amended Article 20 of Law no. 515 issued on June 6, 1996 and aimed to regulate school budgets and lay down the basics for charging tuition fees in private schools and other miscellaneous provisions and extended it starting from the academic year 2011-2012.
- **Law no. 282** authorized the government to sign a loan agreement worth 21 million Euros (roughly USD 29 million) with the French Agency for Development to carry out the Cultural Heritage and Urban Development Programme in Tyre and Tripoli, provided that the interest rate does not exceed 5.98% annually.
- **Law no. 283** approved a USD 16 million agreement between the Lebanese government and the Islamic Development Bank to finance the expansion and rehabilitation of the road linking between Hadath Jebbeh and Bqerqasha in the Qada'a of Bsharri. The road to be expanded is 10.2 km long.
- **Law no. 284** approved a USD 16 million agreement between the Lebanese government and the Islamic Development Bank to finance the expansion and rehabilitation of the road linking Hadath Jebbeh and Bqerqasha in the Qada'a of Bsharri.

- **Law no. 285** on the general provisions of higher education and the regulation of private higher education as well as the determination of degrees and curricula and the establishment and functions of the bodies responsible for ensuring higher education, particularly the Higher Education Council. The Law also covers the requirements for employment on a full-time or contract basis, the basics of managing higher education institutions and student rights.
- **Law no. 286** amended the first item of Article 186 under the Penal Code issued pursuant to Legislative Decree no. 340 dated March 1, 1943. It identified the types of non-violent discipline practiced by fathers and mothers on their children and approved this kind of discipline provided that it does not cause any harm to the physical or mental health of the child.
- **Law no. 287** authorized Electricité Du Liban, within one year from the entry of this law into effect, to fill its personnel vacancies for technical and administrative posts needed in all directorates based on an examination performed by the Civil Service Council. Participation shall be limited to on-demand workers and collectors and applicants shall be under 56 years of age at the time of the examination. Those over the age of 56 shall be given a remuneration equivalent to a two-month salary for each year of service.
- **Law no. 288** added a paragraph to the seventh article of Law no. 462 dated September 2, 2002 (Regulation of the Electricity Sector) authorizing the Cabinet, upon the proposition of the Minister of energy and Water and the Minister of Finance, to grant electricity production permits on a two-year temporary basis until the formation of the Committee's Council.
- **Law no. 289** amended articles of Legislative Decree no. 50/67 dated August 5, 1967 (Civil Defense Regulation), approving the reorganization of the Civil Defense and the determination of staff.
- Law issued on May 8, 2014 (Rent Act) remained un-numbered because it lacked the signature of the President of the Republic. According to Article 56 of the Constitution, the President of the Republic shall sign

the laws that have received definitive approval within one month of their referral to the Cabinet. Pursuant to Article 57, if the one-month period has expired without issuing the law or sending it back to Parliament, it shall be considered effective. The new Rent Act has triggered and might continue to trigger several crises and lawsuits, for it stipulates a gradual major increase in the rent agreements signed prior to July 23, 1992 in preparation for the liberation of all contracts after 9 years, without compensating the tenants.

- **Law no. 290** stipulated full-time employment of notaries public based on the results of a restricted examination.
- **Law no. 291** authorized the Lebanese University to hold a restricted examination to fill the vacancies within its staff.
- **Law no. 292** appointed the successful candidates in the Civil Service Council examination to the posts of Chief Tax Controller, Verification Controller and Chief Accountant at the Directorate General of the Ministry of Finance
- **Law no. 293** on the Protection of Women and All Family Members from Domestic Violence. The law had drawn dissenting opinions from the public and civil society and the amendments introduced to it were rejected by woman associations on the grounds that the state yielded to the will of religious authorities.

**No. of laws ratified by Parliament
(June 2009- May 2014)**

Table 2

Year	No. of laws
2009 (as of June)	-
2010	57
2011	69
2012	42
2013	2
2014 (until May 2014)	48
Total	218

RENT OF GOVERNMENT PREMISES

LBP 113 BILLION ANNUALLY

The state pays exorbitant rental amounts soaring to roughly LBP 113 billion annually for the use of the offices and headquarters of the ministries, public administrations and institutions, the Lebanese University, public schools and municipalities. Every year, the cost increases due to the expansion or ramification of public administrations, the establishment of new ones and the periodic rental increases introduced as a result of the Rent Act. It is likely that these rents will hit unprecedented highs in the coming years after the approval of the new Rent Act in April 2014.

Rents on the rise

The foregoing factors have resulted in pushing the annual rent of public premises from roughly LBP 6.8 billion in 1992 to roughly LBP 73 billion in 2002 and further to LBP 80 billion in 2005. In 2009, the annual rental expenses stood at LBP 84 billion and jumped to LBP 113 billion in 2012. Hence, the rental increase between 1992 and 2012 would then be LBP 106.2 billion, equivalent to 1562%, a percentage that could rise even higher in the future.

Changes in the rents of public premises between 1992 and 2012 (Amounts in LBP)			Table 1
Administration	Rent in 1992	Rent in 2012	
Audit Court	800,000	1.083 billion	
Civil Service Council	735,000	485,000,000	
Central Inspection	9,115,000	1.089 billion	
Iftaa Bureaus	1,887,000	90,000,000	
Sunni Religious Courts	3,000,000	510,000,000	
Higher Islamic Shia'a Council	1,000,000	110,000,000	
Jaafarite Iftaa	700,000	47,000,000	
Jaafarite Religious Courts	520,000	598,000,000	
Mashyakhat Al-Aql of the Druze Sect	200,000	8,000,000	
Druze Religious Courts	120,000	142,000,000	
Public Disciplinary Council	1,100,000	21,000,000	
Central Administration of Statistics	500,000	525,000,000	
General Directorate of State Security	75,000,000	550,000,000	
Ministry of Justice- Civil Courts	293,750,000	608,000,000	
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants	4.053.565 billion	37.747 billion	
Ministry of Interior and Municipalities – Administrative Bureaus	250,000	52,000,000	
Internal Security Forces	450,000	1.305 billion	

Changes in the rents of public premises between 1992 and 2012 (Amounts in LBP)

Table 1

Administration	Rent in 1992	Rent in 2012
General Security	75,000,000	955,000,000
Directorate General for Personal Affairs	5,000,000	60,000,000
Directorate General for Palestinian Refugee Affairs and other departments under the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities	185,000	807,000,000
Ministry of Finance	50,000,000	2.927 billion
Lebanese Customs	25,000,000	1.3 billion
General Directorate for Real Estate Affairs	1,500,000	1.502 billion
Cadastral Department	2,300,000	-
Ministry of Housing and Cooperatives	6,000,000	20,000,000
Ministry of National Defense	11,200,000	1.8 billion
Ministry of Education and Higher Education	50,000,000	25.4 billion
Ministry of Youth and Sports	1,000,000	265,000,000
Ministry of Social Affairs	350,000	220,000,000
Ministry of Public Health	9,600,000	1.112 billion
Ministry of Labor	7,000,000	758,000,000
Ministry of Public Works and Transport	8,500,000	1.780 billion
Ministry of Agriculture	127,000	1.5 billion
Ministry of Economy and Trade	5,000,000	703,000,000
Ministry of Telecommunications	25,000,000	290,000,000
Ministry of Water and Electric Resources	5,000,000	340,000,000
Ministry of Tourism	50,000	19,000,000
Ministry of Industry and Oil	5,000,000	330,000,000
Prime Ministerial Bureaux	-	450,000,000
Alawite Islamic Council	Established after 1992	45,000,000
Directorate General of the Druze Religious Council	-	247,100,000
Ministry of State for Administrative Reform	Established after 1992	1.088 billion
Constitutional Council	Established after 1992	335,000,000
Ministry of Information	-	50,000,000
Ministry of Culture	Established after 1992	600,000,000
Ministry of Environment	Established after 1992	670,000,000
Ministry of the Displaced	Established after 1992	730,000,000
Miscellaneous rents	1.6 billion	22.8 billion
Total	6.8 billion	113 billion

Source: Public Budget Law in 1992 and Public Budget Draft Law in 2012

TAX-RIDDEN CITIZENS VS. TAX-EXEMPT RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES

While the Lebanese continue to shoulder the burden of ever higher and more diversified annual taxation, new laws are being approved to grant religious sects tax-exempt status. Voices are even being raised to enact new laws aimed at expanding the circle of exemptions.

Exemption Law

On May 26, 2000, Law no. 210 was issued stipulating that “each recognized sect in Lebanon and each legal person affiliated thereto prior to the issuance of this law shall be exempt from direct and indirect taxes as well as fees from which public institutions are exempt.”

These exemptions were prescribed by Decision no. 1/1719 issued by the Minister of Finance in 2013 as follows:

- Taxes on profits yielded from industrial, commercial and non-commercial activities (Income Tax – Part I), provided that they do not compete with private entities.
- Taxes on built property provided that the property is not rented or intended for rental purposes.
- Customs and financial duties (including domestic consumption fees and Value Added Tax) as well as port and municipal charges on aid and donations.
- Stamp duties on the contracts and agreements signed with other parties, provided that these parties be charged for their own copies.
- Construction fees as stipulated in Item 12 of the amended Table 2 of Legislative Decree no. 148 dated June 12, 1959
- Judicial fees as stipulated by Article 81 of the Judicial Fees Act.
- Rental value tax as stipulated by Article 13 of Law no. 60/88 dated August 12, 1988 and its amendments (Municipal Fees) until 2010.
- Pursuant to the provisions of this decision, donations that benefit from customs duty exemptions shall be treated like donations granted to public institutions in terms of exclusion from the minimal customs duty prescribed by the Customs Code.

Claiming Further Exemptions

Most religious sects branded the exemptions bestowed on them by the previous law as insufficient because they did not include the transfer fees imposed on donations and bequests conveyed to religious authorities, since public institutions do not benefit from this exclusion.

Whereas entitlement to exemptions is limited to religious authorities and legal persons affiliated to them, prior to the issuance of the law as clearly stated in the above text, and whereas this constitutes a flagrant discrimination among sects, there were also demands to eliminate the phrase “prior to the issuance of this law” so that everyone would benefit from the exemptions equally without tying them to a specific time frame. These demands came under the pretext that religious authorities seek to achieve social and humanitarian objectives that should be an ongoing endeavor unrestricted by a certain period of time. ●

LEBANON'S FEES AND TAXES

1992: LBP 644 BILLION

2012: LBP 11.6 THOUSAND BILLION

Since 1992, the taxation strain has been growing in a manner that exhausted the resources of the Lebanese and transformed Lebanon into a taxation inferno. The need to address the deficit in the public budget has dictated an increase in old tax rates and the introduction of new taxes, yet without a proper financial assessment as to the impact of these taxes on economic growth. Perhaps, it would have been better to motivate the economy by cutting out superfluous budgetary expenses, which would have bridged the deficit and allowed for the reduction or elimination of certain taxes or at least the introduction of taxation that does not affect economic growth. Unfortunately, none of the above materialized and the size of direct taxation grew from LBP 664 billion in 1992 to roughly LBP 11.6 thousand billion in 2012, meaning up by LBP 11 thousand billion or 1645%. Part of these tax increases is attributed to the population growth and the booming of businesses while the other is owed to levying new taxes, in the forefront of which was the Value Added Tax (VAT), which was imposed pursuant to law no. 379 dated 14-12-2001, or to increasing the rates in parallel with the inflation and the price increases. Table 1 illustrates the evolution of taxes between 1992 and 2012. The figures we ought to stop at are the following:

VAT was introduced in late 2001 and became effective in the beginning of February 2002. It accounted for 23.3% of all tax revenues in 2002, a percentage that rose to 34.2% in 2012 thus becoming the largest source of state income.

The tax on business profits stood in 2003 at LBP 625 billion, forming 13.3% of the total tax revenues. It rose to LBP 1160 billion in 2012 accounting for only 10% of revenues. A corrective measure must be taken to hike the business profits' tax rates to become the primary source of funds, given that this type of taxation targets the highest-earning class, not all the Lebanese.

The new tax imposed pursuant to Article 51 of the 2003 draft budget law on interest-generating bank deposits is now responsible for 10% of tax revenues. Its rates can also be pushed from 5% to 7% for further contribution to tax income.

Despite the backlash against the encroachments on coastal property and the talks about the substantial income that the state may generate by settling these encroachments and collecting annual occupation fees, the estimated revenues did not exceed LBP 30 billion annually, while talks suggest more than LBP 300 billion in revenue if the law is to be enforced strictly.

“VAT accounted for 23.3% of all tax revenues in 2002, a percentage that rose to 34.2% in 2012 thus becoming the largest source of state income”

In 1992, imports duties stood at 45.2% and rose to LBP 61.3% in 1999. These rates plummeted again with the introduction of VAT, reaching 7.5% in 2012, which can jeopardize the present and the future of the Lebanese industry.

Evolution of taxes between 1992 and 2012 (Amounts in billions of Lebanese Pounds)

Table 1

Year	1992	1994	1999	2000	2003	2004	2005	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Capital gains tax	200	200	455	683	1,000	1,045	1,027	1,492	1,894	2,214	2,679	3,399
Income tax on business profits	-	-	340	498	625	680	415	496	678	792	878	1,160
Tax on salaries and wages	-	-	85	120	175	230	195	226	306	379	384	470
Tax on the income generated from movable capital	-	-	30	55	125	115	85	129	278	194	338	611
Tax on the income generated from real estate sales at the rate of 1%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100	-
Tax on deposit interest revenues at the rate of 5%	-	-	-	-	-	-	315	625	619	826	957	1,126
Penalties on income tax	-	-	-	10	15	15	14	15	12	22	21	30
Other income taxes	-	-	-	-	60	5	3	1	1	1	1	2
Property tax	24	315	422	425	400	350	411	535	672	947	1,248	1,088
Built-up property tax	9	60	45	80	105	87	93	162	131	152	218	137
Transfer tax	15	45	47	60	35	38	38	54	72	85	104	110
Real estate taxes	50	210	330	285	225	225	280	319	469	710	896	841
Coastal property taxes	-	-	-	-	35	-	-	-	30	30	30	-
Local consumption duty	74	270	312	1,091	2,296	2,499	2,775	3,579	4,561	5,494	6,034	5,746

Evolution of taxes between 1992 and 2012 (Amounts in billions of Lebanese Pounds)

Table 1

Year	1992	1994	1999	2000	2003	2004	2005	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Fuel taxes	40	125	-	540	676	779	470	506	854	1,034	1,003	482
Liquor taxes	5	40	15	25	5	5	5	7	8	8	7	7
Tobacco taxes	9	10	-	110	160	175	190	223	260	300	353	452
Car consumption taxes	-	-	-	190	180	175	235	280	361	620	643	485
Penalties	-	-	-	“40 (Cement fee)”	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tax on the profits of the Regie Libanaise des Tabacs et Tombacs	-	-	60	-	-	-	35	-	-	-	-	-
Value Added Tax and penalties	-	-	-	-	1,100	1,200	1,650	2,340	2,758	3,141	3,563	3,959
Car fees	15	55	100	100	95	95	105	129	220	258	288	228
Departure fees	15	40	55	45	80	70	77	94	100	133	177	133
Imports duties	300	825	2,286	1,250	780	550	510	540	714	839	936	873
Financial stamp duty	20	90	230	212	250	201	238	288	368	429	572	477
Total tax revenues	664	1,700	3,725	3,731	4,726	4,645	4,961	6,434	8,239	9,953	11,469	11,583

Source: Budget laws and draft budget laws in the respective years. These are the tax revenue estimates but the actual figures might be either higher or lower

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX IN LEBANON

42% INCREASE IN 10 YEARS

How much has Lebanon's consumer price index risen in the past few months or years is a question greeted with multiple answers that vary depending on the public or private-sector bodies calculating the index. The official index issued by the Central Administration of Statistics has often been criticized for its archaic criteria in identifying consumer price indicators. Recently the administration has initiated amendments to its outdated mechanisms, particularly those related to expenditure weightings on consumer goods, hoping to assign to each type of product its actual and accurate weight in the light of the latest price developments and the changing consumption patterns, since the previous weightings no longer match today's reality.

New consumer weightings

In order to revise and modernize the consumer basket comprising goods and services, the Central Administration of Statistics relied on the results of the 2011-2012 family budget study. The sample including points of sale from which prices are collected on a monthly basis has also been expanded to include 2000 points of sale. These steps have helped the Central Administration of Statistics to correct expenditure weightings, which represent the average expenditure on goods and services irrespective of the family's income, size and geography.

The consumer basket was divided into 12 items as illustrated in Table 1. Upon examination of the table, researchers are likely to be struck by the figures listed. The expenditure weighting of education has dropped from 13.4% to 5.9%, although the actual estimates might be even higher than the former, while the share of transportation stood at 4.6%, which could also be an underestimation. Food, non-alcoholic beverages, accommodation, water, gas, power and fuel accounted for roughly half the expenditure at 49.1%.

Expenditure weightings (1997-2012)			Table 1
Item	1997 expenditure weighting (%)	2004 expenditure weighting (%)	2012 expenditure weighting (%)
Food products and non alcoholic beverages	32.2	19.9	20.6
Alcoholic beverages and tobacco	2.3	2.1	1.6
Clothing and footwear	6.3	6.2	5.4
Accommodation, water, gas, power and fuel	8.8	25.7	28.5
Furniture, household items and maintenance	7.9	3.9	3.7
Health	8.8	6.8	7.8
Transportation	9.8	12.3	13.1
Telecommunications	1.5	4.8	4.6
Recreation, entertainment and cultural activities	2.0	3.7	2.3

Expenditure weightings (1997-2012)

Table 1

Item	1997 expenditure weighting (%)	2004 expenditure weighting (%)	2012 expenditure weighting (%)
Education	13.4	7.7	5.9
Restaurants and hotels	3.4	2.7	2.6
Miscellaneous goods and services	3.5	4.2	4.0
Total	100	100	100

Source: Central Administration of Statistics

Consumer price index increase

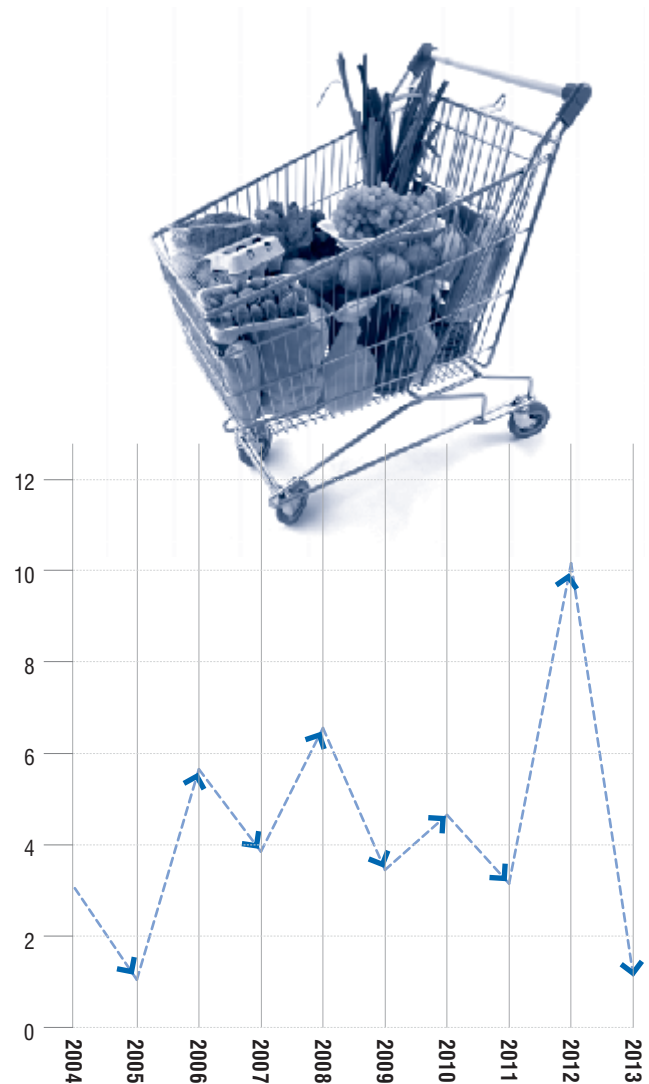
According to the results issued by the Central Administration of Statistics, Lebanon's consumer price index increased in January 2014 by 0.9% compared to December 2013. In February, the index registered a decrease of 0.7% compared to January.

In comparison with the past years, the index has increased at the rates illustrated in Table 2. All combined, the consumer price index has increased by 42.2% in the 10 years (2004-2013).

Increase of Lebanon's consumer price index over 10 years (2004-2013) Table 2

Year	Rate of Increase (%)
2013	1.1
2012	10.1
2011	3.1
2010	4.6
2009	3.4
2008	6.5
2007	3.8
2006	5.6
2005	1
2004	3

Source: Central Administration of Statistics



INFORMATION INTERNATIONAL'S ROUND-TABLE DISCUSSION

LEBANON'S SALARY SCALE BETWEEN RIGHTS, COST AND CONSEQUENCES

As part of the periodic round-table discussions organized by Information International on a monthly basis, the company hosted its May session under the title “Lebanon’s Salary Scale between Rights, Cost and Consequences” in the presence of syndicate members and workers from both private and public sectors.



Information International’s Founder and Managing Partner, Jawad Adra, opened the session by raising the following remarks:

In Lebanon, there does not seem to be a logical relationship between causes and effects. For instance, those who are challenging the salary scale today did not object to the increase in school tuition fees or to the high cost of living. Besides, one cannot speak of public education subsidies as long as scholarships are being paid to public school teachers to enroll their children in private schools and universities.

Mr. Adra explained that emigration is the result of a certain social and economic system and emphasized that the staunchest opponents of taxation are

unfortunately the people who already have money, for they view taxes as an absolute evil.

Mr. Amin Saleh, former President of the Lebanese Association of Certified Accountants and former head of the Office of the Accountant-General at the Ministry of Finance depicted the reality of public salaries, which, in his view, have been accorded little, if any government attention since the end of the Civil War (See pages 20 and 21). Saleh added that state spending between 1993 and 2010 stood at LBP 154,533 billion of which 32% or LBP 49,645 billion was assigned to salaries and pensions. In 2010, the salary scale accounted for 25.3% of budgetary spending down from 46% in 1993, which warrants the eligibility of the calls for the salary scale approval.

Saleh believed that the salary scale can be approved without the need for additional taxes, suggesting strict collection of the state's funds and neglected rights, particularly those derived from public coastal properties and from the Casino, the Lottery the airport and the maritime port. He also called for reforms in the tax system noting that withholding taxes accounted for 10% of Lebanon's GDP compared to 43% in France.

Noteworthy was the oral intervention of Mr. Adnan Bourji, head of the Basic Education Association and member of the Union Coordination Committee who stated that the activism on May 14, 2014 has paved the way for a large-scale popular movement that transcended sectarian and regional boundaries and unveiled the profound financial needs of employees and the country's need for reforms at all levels.

Bourji highlighted that salaries evolved at a normal pace from 1960 to 1983, pointing out that the chaos began in 1983. Later from 1997 until the present day, salaries have been frozen. He talked about the approval of Law no. 709 in 1998, which calculated pensions on the basis of 85% rather than 100% of the salary thus violating the contract terms pursuant to which employees entered into state jobs. For example, retirement deductions paid by employees on the basis of an LBP 500,000 salary, entitle them to receive an amount of LBP 398 million after 40 years in service, but this is not being applied and it constitutes a violation of the rights of retirees. Furthermore, the family allowance has been fixated since 1997 on the basis of LBP 300,000 (including LBP 60,000 per wife and LBP 33,000 per child) while we should pay all minimum wage taxes on the basis of LBP 675,000.

“Regarding the State Employees Cooperative, everybody knows that we cannot be admitted to any hospital as was previously the case, let alone that we have to wait 6 months to receive only 50% of our medication's bill. If our doctor's bill amounted to LBP 150,000, we would be entitled to no more than LBP 25,000” added Bourji

These factors, among others, have led to the explosion, not to mention the inflation that erupted in 1996 and has been on the rise since. By the end of 2011, inflation rates amounted to 121%, leading judges and university professors to claim and receive a 121% wage hike. This has widened the gap between the salaries of secondary teachers and those of university professors, noting that the discrepancy did not exceed 3 to 4 years previously. Today, the difference has grown to 52 grades, which is tantamount to 104 years in service.

Bourji attributed the problem to the philosophy that has been adopted since 1993 wondering whether anything will be left from Lebanon's welfare and fearing that the future trends will be focused on harnessing the state institutions for the benefit of the vicious capital, which has pushed public debt up to USD 65 billion and the ensuing interest to LBP 6.5 billion annually. The governments that succeeded to power have all denied and overlooked the provision dictating an annual wage increase in Law no. 717.

Actuary Ibrahim Mhanna who championed the cause of employees viewed that the problem resides in surplus labor especially among teachers and in the military.

In his speech, former Minister of Labor Charbel Nahhas lashed out at the political class and the former Prime Minister accusing them of manipulating the rights of employees.

Head of the Consultative Council for Studies and Documentation, Abdul Halim Fadlallah, underlined the role of the Union Coordination Committee in advocating the rights of employees, while 18 propositions were submitted by Dr. Mohammad Saleh for the funding of the salary scale after the elimination or reduction of a number of indemnities and prerogatives.

The success of the discussion was also fueled by insightful input from Dr. Mohammad Moghrabi and lawyer Bouchra Khalil. ●●

SALARY SCALE:

FUNDING AVAILABLE WITHOUT THE NEED FOR FURTHER TAXATION

AMINE SALEH

In the context of the country's crises, which appear to be a lifelong struggle, the salary scale controversy has emerged as an acute economic and social crisis that should be addressed through the general government objectives that all governments, whatever their political and economic philosophies, strive to realize in order to ensure their survival and earn trust at both national and global levels.

Since the end of the Civil War, more precisely since 1993, public salaries and wages have not been accorded even the slightest government attention.

It has become established that the public expenditure has ceased to be a type of consumption and to have a negative impact on economic life but it has rather assumed the nature of production that clearly affects the national income and activates the distribution of wealth and the realization of social and economic projects aimed at developing the national economy.

However, none of the Lebanese governments since 1993 has abided by the public spending rules or served its purposes, a fact best evidenced in the state budgets and its declared accounts, which are yet to be ratified.

Spending

According to the State's financial accounts, which remain unapproved to date, the public spending has reached LBP 168589 billion between 1993 and 2011. Of this amount, 92.1%, equivalent to LBP 155411 billion, was assigned to consumer spending (ongoing), while infrastructure spending stood at LBP 13178 billion, i.e. only 7.8%, which justifies the decline in public utilities services, including electricity, water, health, education and road maintenance.

Public Debt Interests

Public loans (public debt) rank highest among the State's sources of extraordinary funds (exceptional revenue). Nevertheless, the Lebanese governments in office since 1993 have both poorly chosen and misused these loans. Worse still, the public borrowing policy has resulted in catastrophic economic and social consequences including:

- Increase in Lebanon's public debt, which has so far reached close to USD 64.8 billion, equivalent to 150% of national production.
- Increase in public debt interest rates, with the interest increasing to nearly LBP 69,578 between 1993

and 2010, accounting for 45% of total budgetary spending which stood at LBP 154,533 billion by 2010 and 70% of the state revenue which amounted to LBP 100,870 billion during the same period. It is noteworthy that this percentage has hit a high of 99% in certain years (1997, 2000, 2001).

Decrease in Social Spending

Successive Lebanese governments have neglected spending on social and welfare issues. As a matter of fact, the available data reveals that the State's expenditure on education, healthcare, social affairs, housing, culture, sports and media did not exceed 15% of the total public spending. Social spending from 2001 to 2005 inclusive stood at only LBP 6,944 billion out of LBP 44,749 billion. These low levels of social spending best attest that the governments are accountable for the failure of the adopted social policies.

Spending on Electricity

Up until 2010, Treasury transfers to Electricité du Liban reached roughly USD 12,503 million. A further USD 8,500 million is added in interest, thus pushing the total amount to USD 21,008 million (USD 21 billion).

While Lebanon's wage bill and pensions are growing at a snail's pace, by a percentage that sometimes hardly exceeds 1%, their share of public spending has been steadily declining, reaching 33% in contrast to 46% in 1993.

Between 1993 and 2010, LBP 49,645 billion was spent on public salaries and pensions, amounting to roughly 33% of budgetary spending, which totaled LBP 154,533 billion.

The salaries of both full-timers and temporary employees in the public sector amounted to LBP 2,439 billion in 2010, making up 17.5% of the total spending. Pensions stood at LBP 1,092 billion or roughly 7.8%, meaning that the actual pay and pensions, which constitute the real purchasing power, account for some 25.3% of the total budgetary spending.

The decline in the purchasing power of public salaries translates into decreases in the aggregate consumer demand and therefore curbs economic growth and can even lead to an economic downturn.

Taxation is levied on the gross pay of an employee while the net profit reaped by traders, industrialists or the self-employed is taxed based on real profit or lump sum profit (for example, 50% of a physician's revenue is taxed). Real estate income is subject to a tax of only 12%.

Traders, industrialists and the self-employed are taxed on a sliding scale from 4% to 21% while financial companies shoulder a tax of 15% on average.

The pay of public sector employees is subject to the following deductions:

- Income tax fluctuating between 2% and 20% of gross receipts.
- Pension deductions fluctuating between 6% and 20% of gross receipts.
- NSSF contributions fluctuating between 3% and 20% of gross receipts.

In view of that reality, we suggest a number of reformative measures to address the problem:

- Tax System Reform

The financial situation in Lebanon requires the correction of all three components of the tax system: tax policy, tax legislation and tax management. Tax deductions stood at roughly 16% of Lebanon's GDP in 2010 while in France, they accounted for 43% of GDP in 1992.

- Adoption of General Income Tax

Recent taxation trends suggest levying progressive tax on the gross income generated by individuals from economic activities.

- Correction of Value Added Tax (VAT)

Increasing Value Added Tax on luxury goods to 15%

- Correction of tax on income generated from movable capital

- Increasing the tax rate on the interest bracket not exceeding LBP 20 million annually from 5% to 15%.
- Eliminating tax exemptions on transferable shares and securities and subjecting the profits yielded from the cession to a 15% tax.

- Real Estate Sales

- Real Estate Improvement Tax

- Decreasing penalties

- Activating the Ministry of Finance's tax collection system

- Tax legislation

Given that most of Lebanon's tax laws date back to 1944 and 1959, it is only reasonable to recast these archaic laws in order to wipe away any ambiguity.

- Fighting tax evasion

- Fighting wasteful spending

Devising a new model for works and services concessions in order to prevent monopoly, increase prices and allow fair competition for everyone.

Abolishing all posts introduced in an illicit manner such as employment on a daily basis or on the basis of an invoice.

Address overstaffing by sacking surplus employees or reassigning them to the vacant posts according to the general employment rules.

- Abolishing public councils and funds

- Funding public and private institutions and municipalities

- Managing the State's public and private property

With regard to public coastal property subject to investment, the annual occupation fee should be set at no less than 5% of the property's sale value from the beginning of such occupation to date. Arrears can be paid in installments and the estimated permanent annual income shall be in no case below USD 1 billion and may rise at the same rate as price increases.

With regard to private property, particularly the Dbayeh project where the state owns 667,000 square meters, each at USD 5,000 to say the least, and which is worth roughly USD 3.5 billion in frozen assets, the state should invest in these assets either through sale or rent.

Income from Public Administrations and Institutions

The amounts transferred from Casino du Liban, the Lotto Libanais, Banque du Liban, the airport and the maritime port to the state treasury do not exceed LBP 422 billion and account for 3% of Lebanon's budgetary revenues. This imperceptible number necessitates further examination of the budgets of these facilities to verify their income, expenditure and the share owed to the treasury. To the best of our knowledge, the treasury's share of the Beirut Port revenues for the past few years amounts to no less than LBP 400 billion that are yet to be collected.

When enforced, these measures will bring in no less than USD 2 billion in revenue annually, an amount that can finance the salary scale without having to impose any new taxes. ●

WILL THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC BECOME SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF LA FRANCOPHONIE?

Political and media spheres have recently abounded with talks suggesting that the President of the Lebanese Republic Michel Suleiman is staunchly objecting to the extension or renewal of his presidential term, which expires on May 25, 2014 because he has received international, more precisely French, support promising him an esteemed international post: Secretary General of the International Organization of La Francophonie. So are the rumors circulating in the public domain true or are they mere hearsay and unrealistic leaks?

The International Organization of La Francophonie

The first appearance of the word 'Francophonie' was in 1880 when the French Geographer Onésime Reclus coined the word with reference to the community of people and countries that speak the French language. The term was next used in 1926 when a number of writers founded the Francophone Association of Writers and later in 1955 when journalists followed suit and founded the International Francophone Press Union.

On March 20, 1970, the Agency of Cultural and Technical Cooperation was established in the presence of representatives of 21 countries and was the precursor to what is now known as the International Organization of La Francophonie.

Objectives

The International Organization of La Francophonie was created with the following objectives:

- to establish and to develop democracy;
- to respect human rights;
- to prevent, manage and regulate conflicts;
- to promote dialogue among cultures and civilizations;
- to bring people together through mutual understanding;
- to promote education and training.

In order to serve these objectives, the International Organization of La Francophonie works towards:

- Promoting the French language and cultural and linguistic diversity;



Michel Suleiman

- Promoting peace, democracy and human rights;
- Expanding cooperation for sustainable development.

Member States

The International Organization of La Francophonie currently consists of 77 member states, 57 with a permanent status and 20 with an observer status. It is to be noted that the majority of the member states are poor countries that suffer from dreadful political and economic crises.

Member States

France , Canada , Cyprus , Kingdom of Belgium , Romania , Switzerland , Senegal , Tunisia , Morocco , Lebanon , Egypt , Greece , Chad , Albania , Principality of Andorra , Armenia ,

Benin, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Ghana, Gabon, Qatar, Niger, Moldova, Monaco, Mauritius, Mauritania, Mali, Luxembourg, Laos, Haiti, Rwanda, Seychelles, Comoros, Congo, Ivory Coast, Djibouti, Dominica, Republic of Macedonia, Saint Lucia, São Tomé, Vietnam, Vanuatu, Canada-New-Brunswick, Québec.

Observers

Austria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, UAE, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Lithuania, Montenegro, Mozambique, Poland, Dominican Republic, Czech Republic, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Thailand, Ukraine, Uruguay, Latvia.

IOF Operating Agencies

The agencies associated with the International Organization of La Francophonie are:

- The Association of Francophone Universities founded in Canada in 1967 and currently including 739 research and university institutions;
- The International Association of French-Speaking Mayors;
- Senghor University of Alexandria founded in 1989 to train high-ranking cadres within the Francophone countries;
- TV5Monde, the French-speaking global television network headquartered in France;
- The Assemblée Parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF) headquartered in France and having a consultative role;
- The Permanent Council of La Francophonie chaired by the Secretary General and gathering ambassadors of the member states. It is tasked with monitoring the execution of the resolutions of Francophone Summits.

General Secretariat

The IOF's General Secretariat and Secretary General are in charge of managing the Francophone agencies mentioned above. The Secretary General is elected by representatives of the Member States for a renewable four-year term of office. This post was introduced

during the Summit meeting of La Francophonie held in Vietnam in 1997. Because the IOF's General Secretariat is located in France, that country has a decisive role in choosing the Secretary General.

Boutros Boutros Ghali, former Secretary General of the United Nations (1992-1996), was the first Secretary General of La Francophonie, serving from 1998 to 2002. Since 2003, the IOF has been under the leadership of Secretary General Abdou Diouf, former President of Senegal. Both Boutros-Ghali and Diouf are prominent international figures most known for their political, intellectual and administrative contributions at both local and global levels.

Budget

In 2012, the IOF's budget stood at 81 million Euros, two thirds of which were allocated for the implementation of the agenda. The budget is amassed through contributions from the member states and corporate donations from both public and private sectors.

Summit Meetings

The IOF convenes biennial summit meetings with the participation of Heads of State and Premiers or their representatives. 14 Summits have been held so far, the first of which was in Versailles, France, in 1986, followed by Canada in 1987. Lebanon hosted the Summit of La Francophonie between October 18 and 20, 2002 and the most recent Summit took place in Kinshasa, in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The next Summit is scheduled for the end of November, 2014 in Senegal.

At the ministerial level, the IOF organizes two permanent ministerial conferences: one for the Ministers of Education and one for the Ministers of Youth and Sports. It also holds an annual conference attended by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs or the Ministers of La Francophonie.

The Capital and largest city of Senegal, Dakar, will host the 15th Summit of La Francophonie at the end of November this year, and it remains to be seen whether the gossip will end up materializing and whether or not President Michel Suleiman will be elected Secretary General and moving from Amshit to Paris six months after his departure from his presidential office. ●

ANTOUN SAAD

THE RULE OF THE MUKHABARAT

Having chaired Lebanon's Deuxième Bureau, present-day Army Intelligence, for over 12 years (March 1952- August 1964), the name of Antoun Saad has always had room on the political, security, military and even economic and social scenes. Saad died 37 years ago on June 26, 1977 but the distinctive mark he left on the Deuxième Bureau has never been erased.

Birth and Marriage

Antoun Saad was born in Toula el-Jebbi, a small town in the Qada'a of Zgharta, in 1910. He grew up in a middle-class family and married Barsita Mikhael Saad (born 1926). They had 4 children: Bassam, a retired Brigadier General, Elias, Noha and Fouad.

Education

Saad attended school in the neighboring towns and decided to become a monk at the age of 18. To this end, he moved into a monastery in the town of Shebbanieh in Mount Lebanon but fell out with the Abbot soon after his arrival and returned to Tripoli where he enrolled at the Collège des Frères.

Army

In 1930, he enlisted himself in the Lebanese Army and was stationed at the military barracks of Andaket in Akkar. He was promoted to the rank of 'surgeon' in 1934 when he enrolled in Aleppo's Military Academy. Two years later, he graduated as a warrant officer and was raised to the rank of 'lieutenant' in 1937. During his military service, Saad moved across different sectors. From the First Sniper Regiment, he was shuffled to the Levantine Regiment – nucleus of the Lebanese Army. Between 1948 and 1950, he was appointed Commander of the Second Sniper Regiment.

Relationship with President Chehab

His encounter and friendship with Fouad Chehab was the portal that ushered Antoun Saad to a commanding role at the Deuxième Bureau. The two met for the first time in 1936 at Aleppo's Military Academy when Saad passed a shooting test before a military panel of which the then Captain Fouad Chehab was a member. It is reported that Saad's hometown, Toula, was too



Antoun Saad

small and unheard of that he was embarrassed to mention it during the test.

Their second encounter occurred at the Marjeyoun barracks in South Lebanon following a clash between a Lebanese and a French soldier. Saad, who was in charge, settled the dispute by sending the former to prison and the latter to hospital. His discriminatory behavior infuriated Chehab who requested him to treat the two fairly and to put them both in the same facility so he responded by admitting both of them to the hospital.

The al-Malikiyah battle between the Lebanese and Israeli armies in 1948 provided a third opportunity for their meeting.

The Deuxième Bureau

Having known and befriended Saad, Chehab, who had become an Army Commander, decided to appoint him as head of the Deuxième Bureau by the end of February 1952.

During his tenure at the Deuxième Bureau, Saad was an active player in shaping or engaging in major events that were unfolding in the country. From 1954, he set out to devise a plan aimed at organizing Lebanon's military intelligence service, seeking the opinion of learned French intelligence officers. To this end, he expanded his sources of information, which were no longer limited to input from his monthly paid personal informers but extended to include vital stakeholders operating in the country. Gradually, he built a large network of connections with prominent Lebanese politicians, high fliers, traders, industrialists, bankers and businessmen. His crucial position in power helped him attract such individuals who would disclose information to him in exchange for services and protection, particularly after he became known as the closest statesman to President Fouad Chehab. It was under Antoun Saad that the Deuxième Bureau started to assume its influential role.

Initially, the military intelligence personnel consisted of no more than 15 non-commissioned officers, some of whom would monitor the Palestinians camps while others would probe Israeli-sponsored espionage attempts. Administrative activity was limited to a number of operations supporting pro-Chehab politicians and working to increase their popularity.

But starting in 1959, Saad began to enlarge the intelligence personnel. He introduced new Deuxième Bureau branches in all five Mohafazas to gather information, a mission that was formerly delegated to the leaderships of the military regions, in collaboration with an officer stationed at the Deuxième Bureau and responsible for maintaining security. Soon afterwards, the branches were given vast prerogatives and they drew greater support from the social segments and the dignitaries, for they provided assistance and were flexible in granting licenses to carry weapons. Saad hired highly qualified officers at the intelligence bureau and entrusted them to run the branches of the Mohafazas.

After the failure of the coup d'état attempted by the Syrian Social Nationalist Party on the night of 30/31 December 1961, Antoun Saad plotted another coup.

The Head of the Deuxième Bureau decided to start a new chapter in its intelligence activity by tightening the army's grip on public life and restructuring its apparatus to ensure higher levels of safety and internal stability, with greater access to financial resources.

His method was to bridge all the gaps marring the military and political classes and to empower military intelligence to stay abreast of the latest political news and the developments unfolding on Lebanese territory.

Hence, he created a transforming transition for the intelligence work, which until that time, had still been focusing on small and futile street news such as revealing who cursed the President of the Republic or criticized the Deuxième Bureau or complained about the ruling class. Saad altered the Bureau's function into one concerned with investigation and collection of information. Nor was its mission limited solely to that: the Deuxième Bureau also became involved in analyzing the information, assessing its dimensions and anticipating developments in order to avoid potential implications. "Absolute security" was a central component of the slogan instigated by Antoun Saad. To him, this signified submitting all that was associated with the absolute character of security to close supervision, a generalization that could be interpreted in a manner that placed politics, economy, sociology and culture at the heart of the concept, requirements and terms of security. In this way intelligence tightened its grip on the state and the community, which in turn had major implications and caused adverse effects that were later translated into the prosecution of intelligence officers following the 1970 parliamentary elections, a measure that was slammed by many for exposing Lebanon to threats and contributing to the Lebanese Civil War.

Retirement

Antoun Saad remained at the head of the Deuxième Bureau until the expiry of President Chehab's term of office. On August 27, 1964 he was appointed commander of the Mount Lebanon military region and his military service was extended by another year before his retirement on July 1, 1971.

Saad kept numerous secrets to himself after retirement. However, as the Civil War broke out and as his pneumonia deteriorated, he resorted to burning all the classified documents before his death on June 26, 1977 at the age of 67. ●

THE EDUSKUNTA OF FINLAND

Finland is one of the rare countries in the world that entitles foreign residents to most of the rights that natives enjoy and subjects them to the same duties. Foreigners in Finland have the right to run for municipal office and to cast their votes and nationals of the European Union are even permitted to take part in parliamentary elections if their names have been registered in the lists of eligible voters. A number of 50,000 voters can petition Parliament to vote for a bill they suggest. This democratic experience also applies to the law of parliamentary elections, which is at the forefront of the laws ensuring the representation of the Finnish people.



Voting Age

The law establishes a voting age of 18 in Finland.

Parliament's Term of Office

The Finnish legislature is elected for four years.

Number of MPs

The Finnish legislature consists of 200 MPs elected by direct vote.

Candidacy

Parties that have been entered into the Finnish register of parties may run for parliamentary elections in Finland. Constituency associations may also nominate candidates, provided that each association has no fewer than one hundred members.

Voting System

Finland adopts a party-list proportional representation system according to the d'Hondt method. It is divided into 14 electoral constituencies each having 6 to 35 seats depending on their population of Finnish citizens. The Finnish voters may cast preference votes for their candidate of choice and the seats are then distributed to those deputies with the largest number of votes within the winning lists.

Structure of Parliament

Of the 4,164,512 registered voters in the Finnish parliamentary elections of April 17, 2011, 2,931,817 people exercised their voting rights, a voter turnout of 70.4%. The National Coalition Party won a majority of 44 seats and was thus entitled to nominate the Prime Minister.

The following Table 1 below illustrates the distribution of seats and votes by political party.

Distribution of seats and votes by political party in the 2011 Finnish parliamentary elections				Table 1
Party	No. of seats	No. of votes	%	
National Coalition Party	44	599138	20.4	
Social Democratic Party of Finland	42	561558	19.1	
The True Finns Party	39	560075	19.1	
Centre Party	35	463266	15.8	
Left Alliance	14	239039	8.1	
Green League	10	213172	7.2	
Swedish People's Party of Finland	9	125785	4.3	
Christian Democrats of Finland	6	118453	4	
Independents	1	11763	0.4	
Total	200	2,892,249	100	

Source: Results of Finnish parliamentary elections in 2011

Functions of Parliament

The Eduskunta is considered the main decision-maker in Finland. It is responsible for:

- Legislation
- Monitoring Cabinet work
- Approving the public budget

D'Hondt Method

According to this method, also known as the highest average method, seats are allocated by dividing the total number of votes cast according to the number of seats (1-2-3-4...) and the highest ensuing averages.

Finland

Finland is a member of the European Union located in the north of Europe and bordered by Russia to the east, Sweden to the west, Norway to the north, and Estonia to the South. It stretches across a large area of 338,432 m² and has a population of 5.5 million. ●





Dr. Hanna Saadah

ANTIBIOTIC COLITIS

Over the past one hundred years, certain diseases have emerged because of increasing antibiotic use and abuse. Historical examples abound and include the penicillin-resistant-staphylococci, which emerged after penicillin became widely available. Another consequence of the rising antibiotic use and abuse is the alteration of the bacterial flora of our intestines, which, after our stomach acid, provides the second line of defense against orally ingested infectious organisms.

Antibiotics, which are commonly added to animal foods, alter our gut flora when we consume animal products. Moreover, antibiotics, which treat our numerous infections, reach our gut flora in much higher concentrations and exert a more profound effect. Antibiotics, given inappropriately for viral respiratory infections, or given in unnecessarily prolonged courses for urine and other types of infections, increase the already burdensome antibiotic adverse effects on our gut flora. The increasing use and abuse of antibiotics during the last one hundred years has weakened our gut defenses, leading to more frequent gut infections.

One of these serious gut infections is caused by a poisonous, spore-forming, bacterium called *Clostridium difficile*, better known as *C. diff*. This bacterium, which is a close cousin of the gas gangrene bacterium of First World War fame, has become a frequent agent of antibiotic colitis, especially in elderly, hospitalized and nursing-home patients, and is also wielding increasing morbidity and mortality worldwide. The two toxins (A & B) elaborated by the bacterium are its main virulence factors. They enter and kill the intestinal cells, which line the gut walls, causing purulent scabs, ulcers, and necrosis.

In 1935, Hall and O'Toole first isolated *C. diff* from the stools of healthy neonates. The first clinical reports of devastating antibiotic colitis appeared in the late 1970s. Since then, the incidence has steadily increased, the infection has spread beyond institutions into communities, and is now also attacking the young and healthy.

The diagnosis by colonoscopy is easy when the infection is severe because of the visible devastation and the severe symptoms of fever, low blood pressure, and multi organ failure. However, when the infection is mild or moderate, in a healthy host, it may only cause protracted diarrhea and nonspecific symptoms. In such cases, testing for toxins A & B in the stools may help when these tests are positive. However, these tests are often negative, and the diagnosis will have to be made clinically.

To further complicate matters, the *C. diff* bacterium may colonize the colon without causing symptoms. In such cases, the stool tests for toxins A & B may remain positive for prolonged periods, with no clinical symptoms that require treatment.

The first goal of treatment is to stop the offending antibiotics, which allows the normal fecal flora to recover. In most situations, this causes the diarrhea to resolve without further interventions. When it does not, therapeutic

trials with Metronidazole, Vancomycin, or Rifaximin are helpful, but the disease recurs in 20% after the first treatment, in 40% after the second treatment, in 60% after three or more treatments. In such cases, prolonged suppression with small doses of Vancomycin etc. or treatments with fecal transplants may become necessary. When the disease leads to toxic megacolon, a rare and deadly complication of total colon necrosis, surgically removing the entire colon may be the only remaining life saving option. In the USA alone, *C. diff* colitis kills about 14,000 persons per year.

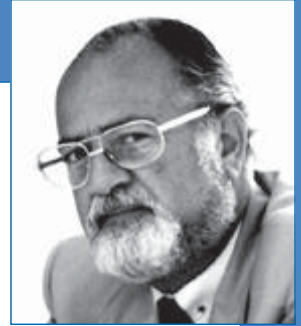
The spores of *C. diff*, which resemble dry seeds, are hard to kill with cleansing products and survive on dry surfaces for prolonged periods. In medical settings, and now in many community settings, they can be cultured from most surfaces. When these surfaces are touched by innocent hands, the bacteria are unwittingly carried to the mouth where they are ingested. They reach the intestines because spores can resist stomach acid. Once in the intestines, they germinate, compete with the normal bacterial flora, and establish a state of colonization or active infection. Medicines that suppress stomach acid increase the incidence of *C. diff* infections because more spores survive the tempered acidic environment of the stomach and reach the intestines.

Many antibiotic diarrheas are not caused by *C. diff* infection, and these respond well to stopping the antibiotics. Currently, 50% of all antibiotics prescribed are considered inappropriate and harmful. Nevertheless, such over prescribing continues to fuel the global epidemic of antibiotic, *C. diff* colitis. Prescribing antibiotics sparingly and for as short a period as possible are the current strategies for halting the *C. diff* epidemic. Although public acceptance of these strategies is on the rise, many patients continue to demand antibiotics when they have a chest cold or sinus drainage, and many providers still nonchalantly prescribe them.

Whereas it takes animals thousands of years to evolve in accordance with environmental demands, it takes bacteria only a few weeks to evolve defenses against environmental challenges. Consequently, bacteria are becoming increasingly resistant to the antibiotics we have, and it is becoming harder to develop antibiotics to which bacteria are sensitive. Responsible antibiotic prescribing may be the only remaining strategy to halt this dangerous trend of growing antibiotic resistance and spreading *C. diff* colitis. ●

FRACTAL MATHEMATICS (2)

Antoine Boutros



This logic is the analytical geometry which was conceptualized by the French philosopher and mathematician René Descartes in the nineteenth century.

According to this geometry, determining the position of any point on a surface requires two pairs of numbers or coordinates. These coordinates are specified by measuring the distance from two reference perpendicular lines to a certain point. The horizontal line is known as the X-axis and the vertical line as the Y-axis. The point at which the two axes intersect is called the origin or the zero point, whose coordinates are (0,0). According to this rule, any two-dimensional figure may be transformed into a series of the coordinate points that form it. Conversely, if we do own the coordinates, we can turn them into a figure in the sense that the computer can start with a simple fraction pattern to build a larger one until a big figure is developed. By controlling the pattern, one may control the general form of the figure. In addition, the analytical geometry allows for the formulation of equations that represent the lines and curves reflected in X and Y then instructs the computer to convert them into a figure. For instance, $X-Y=4$ yields a straight line while $X^2-4Y=5$ yields a parabola.

However complex, the figure may be represented on a screen with a series of equations, no matter how long or complex the series is. This, of course, requires some software to execute the figure in its full details. Any figure of a three-dimensional solid starts usually with an external contouring line called the spine and establishing the external dimension of the object. The contour line is then redrawn through 360 degrees and transforms into a solid shape made up of several polygons connected to one another at the edges. By defining the type of the motion requested on the two axes, the figure would move as required and one may look at it from above and fill it with colors and shades by using a special program.

The technique developed by the computer graphics researcher and the Utah University doctoral graduate Bui Tuong Phong may finally be applied to refine and soften the edges. For the images to appear on a screen, the figure should be broken down into small squares called pixels, which, in total, constitute the elements of the image. The computer produces a multi-digit number for each pixel, defining its color and density. In order to calculate this value, the computer assorts all the numbers describing the model intended for display as well as its related instructions, then decides which optics principles to adopt before specifying what each point will contain. If one item is embedded within another, it should specify which of the two will stand in the front. For example, if the object was a mirror, the computer should find the object that the mirror is reflecting. Likewise, if a pixel was supposed to be part of a cup of tea, the computer should determine what should be displayed through the glass. Optics are therefore utilized to color the image just enough to reveal its components. The computer should perform this task one after the other, assorting and scrutinizing all these details and others with regard to every pixel, noting that there could be millions of those.

The regular TV screen consists of 525 lines, each having 525 pixels, which total up to 2755625 pixels. The more superior and realistic the image is requested to be, the more pixels we will need, which is what we call high resolution and which is highly similar to the 35 mm film gauge used in a camera, i.e. 3000 lines with 3000 pixels each totaling in 9 million pixels. Today, there are computer monitors that possess such a high resolution and can generate similar and sometimes even better outcomes. 🍀



THE MONTHLY INTERVIEWS

DR. FRANK FERRIS AND DR. HIBAH OSMAN

On the sidelines of the Middle East Medical Assembly for 2014, *The Monthly* had the opportunity to meet Dr. Frank Ferris, a renowned American physician with more than 27 years of expertise in palliative medicine and an impressive track record in promoting palliative care at a global level as well as educating healthcare providers about the possibilities that this medical discipline can open up for patients and their families.

Upon the invitation of Balsam, a non-governmental organization concerned with providing free palliative care and training nurses and physicians in this relatively new discipline, Dr. Ferris paid his second visit to Beirut, the first being in 2001, to raise awareness of palliative care, introduce new training programs, advise on the expansion of AUBMC's burgeoning palliative care program and lobby for the integration of palliative care into clinical practice.

With Dr. Ferris and Dr. Osman, founder of Balsam and the first licensed palliative care doctor in Lebanon, we conducted the following interview on the evolution, reality and horizons of palliative care.



Frank Ferris

Palliative care has been gaining growing attention in Lebanon recently. Can you introduce uninformed readers to this medical specialty?

From my perspective, palliative care is an approach to caring for patients and families that is very complimentary to disease management. Our focus is to help people deal with the distress of an advancing illness as well as to control complex presenting symptoms such as nausea and breathlessness and to relieve patients from their pain. Sometimes when the illness advances and people become physically debilitated and bed-ridden, they change and prefer to die rather than to go through terrible suffering. How can we improve that? Our role is to help patients understand that there never needs to be abandonment and there are always things we can do. We also facilitate communication and decision-making in the face of illness and we can help with all sorts of situations right up to the end.

In our initial interview with Dr. Osman two years ago, palliative care was still an unrecognized discipline that was excluded from Lebanon's national healthcare policy. Today, can you report any change in the attitude of government officials toward this new medical approach?

It is coming. We have met Dr. Walid Ammar, the Director General at the Ministry of Health, and we were dealing with the next draft of the national policy for the development of palliative care in Lebanon. Dr. Ammar is a really big champion and part of what we have been doing. The discussions have not only been focused on 'should we do this?' but rather on when and how, particularly financially. What is to be the structure and what the models. Also, several people have suggested that I come back and help over the next several months to provide the financial model that would work for both the Ministry of Health and insurance companies.

"We are working actively to integrate into the national policy. They are extremely supportive and they believe in this as much as we do. We all want this to happen and we are already looking at ways of making changes to the healthcare system," added Dr. Osman.

In principle, all physicians are expected to relieve pain and suffering. What is it that distinguishes palliative care doctors from others?

We are always dealing with these symptoms, it's true. Physicians can manage straightforward pain and other symptoms such as nausea and breathlessness. But when it gets complex, they don't know what to do. They are out of their depth. They are unfamiliar. We are totally focused on the unfamiliar, the unusual and the complex and we know how to solve it.

What are the tangible measures that can be taken to integrate palliative care into clinical practice from the very beginning?

Increasing awareness and helping people understand why it is valuable and why it adds quality and enhances the safety of the organization by giving people the data. We need to understand what the people of Lebanon really want. We have a task of

educating health care workers and speaking to them about new opportunities and possibilities. There is also a need for some policy change, which is why we've been talking with the Ministry. In Lebanon, some creative approaches to financing healthcare may also be needed. So there are several parallel activities that we need to perform.

Breakthroughs in modern medicine have contributed to a drastic increase in life expectancy, which means that people are more likely to live longer with chronic diseases. This is why we recommend access to palliative care right from diagnosis. I think we need to grow the capacity within the medical system. Even the people in the medical system are really unaware of what we can provide. Those are our goals and now we need to bring everybody with us.

Most people, even physicians, have the misconception that palliative care becomes important only at the brink of death and when people have intolerable suffering. That is the old model. We now have good data that shows that palliative care early in the course of a serious illness improves quality of life, relieves suffering and even prolongs survival. We need to explain the data and that's what we have been doing. Many medical societies are now publishing new protocols and guidelines that encourage referral to palliative care early in the disease process. They are becoming our advocates. The first step is to engage with physicians and that's why I just gave the MEMA lecture here for an hour with a hundred people in the audience.

When asked where she sees palliative care in Lebanon five years from now, Dr. Osman said 'I am extremely optimistic. I was optimistic right from the beginning but this week with Frank has been amazing. We've seen that people are very open, receptive and encouraging on the national front from the Ministry of Health, and on the institutional front from AUBMC. People are very interested and excited about this. In five years I believe that we will be looking back and seeing a major improvement in services and awareness. ●

ANTA AKHI

FRATERNITY AND COEXISTENCE



Establishment and Objective

‘Anta Akhi’, Arabic equivalent for ‘You Are My Brother’, was the name accorded to the non-profit organization founded in the early nineties by Yvonne Chami, a social worker, midwife and nurse, as a safe haven for the youth whose autonomy, potential and capabilities were undermined due to degenerative diseases and to mental and physical disabilities. The association has since been caring for young men and women and accompanying them through the multifaceted aspects of their everyday life by attending to their basic, medical, human and spiritual needs. Anta Akhi came into being in 1992 and was officially recognized pursuant to the Notification of Association No. 152/AD.

In addition to providing social and health care to patients suffering from disabilities and to striving to ensure all that is necessary to ensure them a life of dignity, Anta Akhi hopes to popularize the worldview that prioritizes the essence of a human being over his appearance and to promote the principles of fraternity and cooperation in a barrier-free environment that rejects all the stigmas and misconceptions still surrounding disabilities and the disabled.

Conditions and Limitations

Being a complementary association to SESOBEL, the Social Service for the Welfare of Disabled Children concerned with caring for disabled children under the age of 18, Anta Akhi welcomes the special cases referred from SESOBEL – 18 year olds and above whose parents are diseased or too old to care for them – and can accommodate 60 persons.

The patients transferred to be cared for by Anta Akhi fall into four categories:

- Patients with permanent resident status for whom Anta Akhi becomes a second family
- Patients who visit the center within the framework of a day program from Monday to Friday, in order to get accustomed to live with one another and to give their families time to rest and recharge.
- Patients who are still under the SESOBEL service but who drop by the center during the weekdays or at the weekend to socialize and build friendships.
- Patients who benefit from Anta Akhi’s care under urgent circumstances such as illness, death, family difficulties, etc.

Bearing in mind the importance of family bonding and the need for the disabled to live for the longest period possible in a normal family context, maintaining contact between the disabled and their families is a prerequisite for Anta Akhi to accept taking in patients. However, if a family were incapable of providing for their disabled child, they should invite him to spend the weekend at home once or twice a month at least. If this were not possible, the family should show up at the Anta Akhi center twice a month to spend time with their child.

Those granted permanent resident status at Anta Akhi are also expected to abide by certain rules and conditions or expose themselves to the risk of dismissal from the facility. Highest among these conditions are: the respect for the life of the community, the pursuit of a life of happiness and hope despite all the difficulties, positivity and openness to self improvement and development, compliance with the daily program in terms of punctuality and attendance and good conduct and respect both for authority and all care providers.

Programs

Apart from its various cultural, educational and social programs and its determination to engage the disabled in the decision making process, what most distinguishes Anta Akhi is its existential training program, which rests on the concept of humanizing

humans, i.e. allowing healthy persons to acknowledge and understand the value of their lives through the difficulties crippling the lives of the disabled. School and university students in Lebanon and abroad enroll in this program in which around 3000 members take part on an annual basis.

In the future, Anta Akhi aspires to expand its premises or to construct another building to be able to grow its capacity and accommodate the largest possible number of patients.

Challenges

Caring for the disabled and for people with special needs is a Herculean task that no association, however resourceful, can handle on its own. The job requires massive support from the state and the relevant authorities and this is why the challenges facing Anta Akhi revolve mostly around funding. The association survives on cash and in-kind donations from friends and advocates but still suffers from deficits in its budget. There are around 70 full-timers and 11 part-timers to remunerate every month let alone overhead expenses and the cost of heating and transportation.

Another challenge is to find the human resource cadre that would accept and be suited to shoulder such a responsibility amidst the new generation's reluctance to take up the job. ●



CLASSICAL MUSIC MAKES BABIES SMARTER

Myth:

We have all heard, and maybe even come to believe, that making babies listen to classical music early on in their life will help with the development of their cognitive skills in the long run. It has almost become mandatory among new mothers to expose their toddlers to this genre of music, with something even starting as early as when the babies are in their wombs.

Fact:

In reality, there has been no evidence of an improvement in cognitive abilities among children who had listened to classical music as babies. Initial research that shed light on music's impact on the brain was conducted on a group of university students. Students who listened to a short clip of classical music were able to perform better on tasks that involved spatial geometry, like determining the shapes that would result from cutting a piece of paper folded on itself. The control groups were listening to meditative music or nothing at all. This effect however only lasted about 15 minutes and did not induce any long term effects. The music then only helps by providing some cognitive stimulus that energizes the brain. In which case, any other stimulus, such as exercise maybe could have the same effect.

Later studies have found that it is not just classical music that can enhance people's ability to predict paper shapes, but any kind of music. A 2006 study revealed that children who listened to pop music performed these tricks better than those who listened to classical music. But again, this experiment was conducted on participants aged 10 or 11 years old and not on babies. This also shows that any stimulus and not just classical music can contribute to the brain's short term abilities.

The research then on which this assumption has been based had no relation to babies. It improved students' abilities to perform a paper folding task, but this does not allow us to make any conclusions about what effects it would have on their intelligence in general. The only way that music can actually enhance intelligence is if one learns to play it. Studies have shown that students who were trained in and played instruments showed better results in standardized academic tests.

Maintaining this myth appears to be of benefit to those companies producing and marketing products targeted at children. Moreover, it takes away from other functions that parents need to be undertaking towards their children's development such as interacting with them and involving them in social situations. ●

PSALMS OF A LIFETIME

MONA BAROUDI AL-DAMLOUJI

At the beginning of her book published by Dar Nelson in 2013, Mona Baroudi Al-Damlouji goes back to chronicle her early childhood days in Ras Beirut huddled between her mother and father, grandparents and uncles and aunts. Even the neighbors, the people next door and the street vendors have their share in her lucidly-written memoir. As for her uncle, Bahij Al-Maqdissi, Baroudi portrays him as a highly patriotic engineer who was credited with designing and sketching the 'whirlwind' symbol which became the official emblem of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party's flag after he had joined the party's ranks prior to traveling to Michigan where he continued his engineering studies.

"We lived our childhood in the gardens of our hospitable homes; on the Rue Jeanne D'Arc and the renowned Hamra Street, which was still at the time an orchard of radish, lettuce and parsley enclosed within a hedge of prickly pears. Hamra Street was a desolate land with a few heaps of sand surrounded by green orchards."

Baroudi recounts her life story right down to the last detail, underlining both its bright and gloomy aspects. "Our life was what we call Ras Beirutian Protestant ... In those times, the Protestants used to dine early and call it a night," she writes.

From the Elementary School of Miss Amina, "the Protestant from head to toe", Baroudi moved to the Ahliyyah School for Girls in Wadi Bou Jmeel where she had the opportunity to meddle with a rich and diversified mosaic of different sectarian, political and family affiliations in a secular atmosphere far from extremism and to encounter the upper crust of the literary intelligentsia such as May Ziadeh and Toufic Awad to name but two.

Baroudi dedicates a chapter of her book to expressing regrets over the adverse outcomes of stark religious disparities, recounting the wedding story of her Protestant cousin Alice who was prohibited from marrying Jerji Khoury in a Catholic church before undergoing a Catholic baptism on the grounds that Protestant baptism was branded by Catholic clerics as useless to Christianity. In another chapter, the author depicts the marriage of her aunt Wadad to the esteemed industrialist Emile Qortass who belonged to the Quaker religious movement reporting that the two took it upon themselves to announce their intention to be united by sacred matrimony in front of a small audience without the need for an ecclesiastical authority.

She then recalls the period of the declaration of the Second World War when she enrolled as a freshman student at the Junior College of the Protestant mission and befriended girls

from different regions across Lebanon. She later graduated in a ceremony that was kept on a small-scale due to the precarious security situation that prevailed in Lebanon on account of the Rashid Ali Kilani Revolution unfolding in Iraq, then joined the American University of Beirut in 1941 to pursue her higher education in economy.

"University days were truly the best in terms of knowledge, vigor and energy," says author Baroudi with a touch of sentimentality and bitter-sweet nostalgia for the good old days of the AUB gardens and the ever-buzzing Faisal coffee shop, which has given way to a MacDonald's restaurant.

A room is assigned in her memoir to remembering Ali Al-Wardi, an older Iraqi school colleague who used to express himself in a lousy English that could hardly serve the meaning he intended to impart but grew later into an outspoken social critic and an author of several books.

To satisfy her curiosity about Jerusalem's landmarks and to explore the city with the naked eye, Baroudi embarked with her colleague Nada Maqdissi on a trip to Jerusalem – travel at the time was seemingly far safer and less arduous than it is today – then to Homs, invited by a female friend there, before returning to Beirut in 1943 as a secretary, initially to the News Division Director at the US Office of War Information. Later in 1944, she became Secretary to the Junior College, today the Lebanese American University, before transitioning to teach economy to sophomore students.

Baroudi pours out her love story on paper, recounting the days she spent in Iraq from the times of King Faisal to the US invasion of the country and stops at the difficulties she faced on her quest to build a family and settle down in a region that has for years fallen victim to wars and conflicts from Iraq to Lebanon to Palestine and many other Arab countries.

Throughout her memoir, which flows as smoothly as a lovely leisurely walk free of regrets and lamentation, Baroudi takes us back to the good old days down to the very last bit and detail with a kind and loving heart, reconciled with itself and open to others, and a soul fully surrendered to the judgment of Allah and embracing all of life's ups and downs. ●●



THE STORY OF ZEINA

THE DIVORCE

“Divorce!? She uttered that word and reinforced my certainty at a time when all I wished was to escape reality... But escape to where? My father and mother had decided to divorce.... This is the reality that manifested itself before me as a living moving and breathing creature, leaving me no other choice but to accept and cope with it.”

Written by Dr. Sanaa Ali Haraki and illustrated by Fouad Mezher, *The Story of Zeina* was published by Dar Annahda Al-Arabiyya with the clear aim of depicting a reality that has become widely observed nowadays, namely, divorce. The story simulates the mind of Zeina who is struggling with so many questions to which she finds no answers amid the bitter reality that her parents are parting.

“Rarely does my dad get angry. But when he does, he rages against Mother Nature’s fury. That’s what mom used to say and I could not understand why my mom, dad or even Mother Nature would get angry. Is it possible that my dad’s image had been broken in my mom’s eyes and shattered into pieces due to his violence which I have often heard her deplore, sometimes with a low voice and oftentimes out loud? Why does dad require mom to be calmer in order to live with her although he once told me that we should accept our loved ones as they are in order to live happily?”

As the story unfolds, the author exposes the impact of divorce on Zeina and the state of worry and confusion that dominates her throughout this distressing experience, until she finally meets her friend Hiba, who having suffered the same agony, advises her to examine the picture from all angles and try to move beyond pain and derive meaning from this life transition.

“Maybe this divorce is the beginning of a new life for all of us; my dad needs some space away from mom and I need some space away from their fights to go back to my books and life. It is enough for me to see them happy and to feel their love towards me and towards the life they have decided to continue apart.” ●



AL-SOUS FAMILIES

MARONITES, SUNNI, ORTHODOX AND ISRAELIS IN ZGHARTA, SAIDA, AL-QEBBEH AND MINA EL-HOSN

Al-Sous families are among those small Lebanese families whose main presence is restricted to Saida, Zgharta and Beirut. Their inclusion of members who belong to the Israeli community is one of their most distinctive features.

Origin

Researchers speculate that this family originated from occupied Palestine and Jordan. After Israel's occupation of Palestine, a part of these families moved to Lebanon and settled in the country. Others believe that these families are of Lebanese origins arguing that they were Sunni living in Saida before they moved to Beirut and other regions and professed the predominant religion in the towns where they settled. Therefore, they became distributed across Maronite, Greek Orthodox and Israeli communities.

There are close to 750 Al-Sous members across the following regions and sects. The Sunni members make up a majority and are present in Saida.

Sunni: 471 members

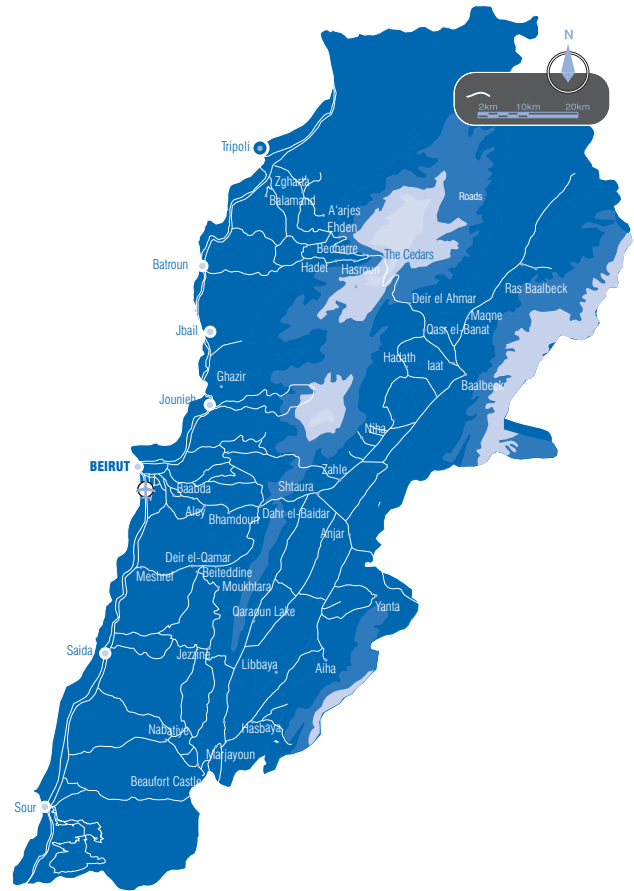
- Saida's neighborhoods: Dakrman (206), Kinan (45), Wostani (43) and Mar Nkoula (15)
- Kamed Al-Lawz in Western Beqa'a: 41
- Zqaq El-Blat in Beirut: 83
- Mina el-Hosn in Beirut: 38

Maronite: 135 members

- Ayto in Zgharta: 103
- Zgharta: 32

Greek Orthodox: 111 members

- Qebbeh in Tripoli: 90
- Abba in Koura: 21



Israelis: 13 members

- Mina El-Hosn in Beirut: 13

While the Al-Sous families include Maronite, Greek Orthodox and Israeli members as well as a number of Sunni, the Sous families (without the Arabic definite article Al-) are entirely Sunni present in Saida and Zqaq el-Blat and totaling roughly 100 members. 🇅🇸

MECHANE

NUMEROUS WELLS AND SECTARIAN FUSION

Of the central towns of the Qada'a of Byblos most known for their natural beauty and sectarian diversity of both Christians and Shia'a is the town of Mechane.

Etymology

The name of the town is derived from a Syriac root meaning 'whetstone', the English equivalent of 'al-hajar al-mousann', which was altered into 'mechane'.

Rumor has it that Mechane was a large city spreading across Byblos, Nahr Ibrahim, Afqa, Baalbeck and Damascus. The city was home to two markets for the exchange and sale of commodities. Known initially as 'al-sham', the town was later renamed 'mechame' or 'mechane'.

Location

Mechane is located in the Qada'a of Byblos at an altitude of 950 meters above the sea level. It stretches across 200 hectares and is 45 km away from Beirut. It may be reached through the following the route: Beirut-Nahr Ibrahim-Mechane.

Population and Residences

The population registered in the Mechane personal status records is estimated at 1500. Shia'a account for a majority of 75% of the population while Maronites make up the remaining 25%. The town has nearly 100 houses.

Voters

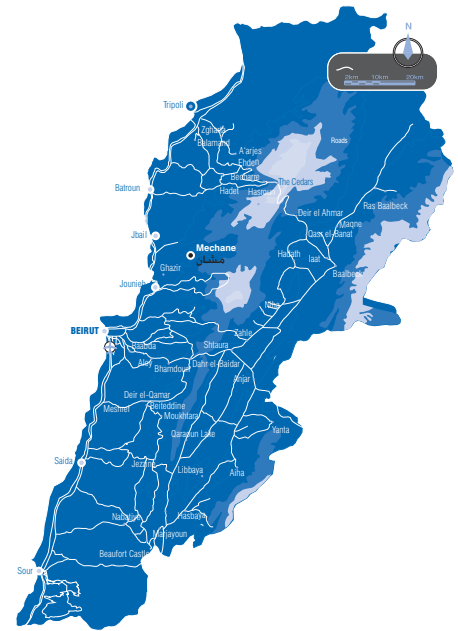
In 2000 there were 807 eligible voters in Mechane, 447 of whom cast a ballot. This number increased to 896 in 2009 with 638 exercising their voting right. In 2013, eligible voters stood at 950.

The voters of the town of Mechane are distributed over the following families:

Shia'a

Chamas (one of the largest families with several sub-families with a number of different names): 300

- Hamza: 166
- Hassan: 100
- Hussein: 85
- Hammoud: 30
- Fayyad: 26
- Ahmad: 25
- Qassem: 20
- Deeb: 15



- Akil: 12
- Zein Al-abidin: 8
- Daher: 14

Maronite

- Said: 120
- Daou: 14

Local Authorities

The 9-member Mechane municipal council was established pursuant to Decision 140 dated February 16, 2004. The town's share from the Independent Municipal Fund revenues stood at LBP 52.7 million in 2008 and LBP 70.1 million in 2009. This share rose to LBP 82.7 million in 2010 then dropped back to LBP 74.1 million in 2011.

The town also has a 3-member *ikhtiyariyah* body.

Educational Institutions

The Mechane Public Kindergarten (Antoine Said) contains 25 students and 3 teachers.

Economic Life

In addition to public sector jobs, agriculture is another source of livelihood for Mechane's inhabitants. Given that the elderly make up a majority in Mechane, most of the residents suffer generally from dire economic conditions.

Mechane is famed for its abundant wells and fresh water which flows into the Nahr Ibrahim River. Coexistence between Shia'a and Maronites is another feature that characterizes the town and members of the two sectarian communities join efforts in constructing both Muslim and Christian places of worship. ●

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

ABUNDANT OIL AND GAS RESOURCES

Most known for its major oil and gas reserves, the twin-island state, Trinidad and Tobago, ranks among the wealthiest countries in the Caribbean. Trinidad was first sighted by Columbus in 1498 and was settled by the Spanish before being ceded to Britain in 1802. Tobago was ultimately given to the British in 1814 and the two became a single colony in 1889. Trinidad and Tobago gained independence on August, 31 1962. On August 1, 1976, the twin islands became a republic, remaining within the Commonwealth.

Location and Area

Trinidad and Tobago lie in the Caribbean Sea off the northeast coast of Venezuela. Trinidad, the larger of the two, stretches across of 4,828 sq km while Tobago covers an area of 300 sq km.

Population

The twin-island state has an estimated population of 1.3 million (UN, 2013).

Religion

Christians make up 63.4% of the population, while Hindus account for 18.1% and Muslims 5%.

Major Language

Because of its British colonial past, English is the official language in Trinidad and Tobago.

Economy

Trinidad and Tobago's economy has traditionally been agriculturally based, but a shift to petrochemical, liquefied natural gas, and steel production has fueled economic growth and made it one of the most developed nations in the Caribbean, with its GDP standing at USD 26.7 billion. Oil and gas account for about 40% of GDP and 80% of exports. Natural gas - much of it exported to the US - is expected to overtake oil as its main source of revenue. However, declining reserves, lack of government investment in the sector, and the changing global gas market raises concern for the long-term growth of the country's energy sector. Crime, corruption and bureaucratic hurdles deter the attraction of more foreign direct investment.



The twin-island state enjoys a per capita income (USD 20,000) well above the average for Latin America.

Political System

Trinidad and Tobago is a parliamentary democracy with a bicameral national Parliament consisting of a Senate and a House of Representatives. General elections are held every five years. Legislative power lies with the House of Representatives with 41 elected members, and the Senate with 31 members appointed by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition; nine of these members are independents. The head of state is the President, currently Anthony Carmona. The head of Government is the Prime Minister, currently Kamla Persad-Bissessar, who became the country's first female prime minister in 2010. ●

APRIL 2014 HIGHLIGHTS

April 1

- Parliament convenes a legislative session that may span three days and approves a number of laws in the forefront of which the Rent Act and the Domestic Violence Law. The session is the first since the end of May 2013.

- The execution of Tripoli's security plan kicks off and the Lebanese Army raids the house of Refaat Eid and cracks down on a number of residences in Bab El-Tebbaneh.

- Bourj Hammoud's Armenian residents express solidarity with the Armenian town of Kasab in Syria in the face of Turkey's support of the militants in Syria.

April 2

- The Lebanese Army and the security forces continue the implementation of Tripoli's security plan, removing earth mounds and roadblocks and arresting a number of wanted men.

- The Cabinet convenes at the Baabda Palace and approves 10 administrative appointments including two appointments to the posts of ISF Director General and Public Prosecutor.

- "If Samir Geagea ran for President, I would not be a nominee against him. I don't intend to run against anyone," says General Michel Aoun in an interview with Al-Mayadeen TV.

- President of the Republic Michel Suleiman launches the administrative decentralization project from the Baabda Palace and renews his support for electing a strong president.

- Minister of Justice, Major General Ashraf Rifi, announces that his political camp is inclined to reopen the channels of communication with Hezbollah and the pro-Hezbollah Minister of Industry, Hussein El-Haj Hassan reiterates that the party is always ready to communicate with everybody.

- Following their meeting in Bkerki, the Maronite bishops issue their monthly statement, calling for the enforcement of Tripoli's security plan in other hotspots and urging the election of a strong president within the constitutional deadlines.

- Public schools and a number of public institutions hold a strike protesting at the delay in the approval of the pay scale.

April 3

- Parliament wraps up its three-day plenary session amid a verbal spat between MP Sami Gemayel and MP Assem Qaso over the draft law proposed by Michel Aoun and requesting compensations to those army officers who were laid off following the October operation of 1990. Speaker Nabih Berri calls on Parliament to meet again next Wednesday and Thursday.

- The Lebanese Army continues its deployment in Tripoli despite threats from the Ahrar Al-Sunna Brigade.

- The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees announces that the number of registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon has reached 1 million.

- A fisherman in Karantina succeeds in catching the crocodile which has been the talk of the town since it was first spotted in the Beirut River.

April 4

- Lebanese Forces Vice President MP Georges Adwan announces that the party's executive committee has decided to nominate the LF leader Samir Geagea for the presidency of the Lebanese Republic.

- "On this black day, the killer of Rashid Karami entered the presidential race", responds former Minister Faisal Karami to Geagea's nomination.

- During a celebration for the Azm and Saade Association in Tripoli, former PM Najib Mikati delivers a speech criticizing Minister of Justice Asraf Rifi and the Future Movement for agreeing to cooperate with Hezbollah after having denied him similar cooperation in the past.

- The joint parliamentary committees meet in Parliament to look at ways to finance the new salary scale.

April 5

- A celebratory fire at a wedding claims the life of a 19-year-old female in Saida.

- Speaker Nabih Berri's presidential elections committee concludes its meetings with political parties and passes on the outcome of its consultations to Speaker Nabih Berri.

April 6

- An electoral alliance brokered between the Future Movement, Lebanese Forces, the Amal Movement, Hezbollah and the Free Patriotic Movement results in the election of the Future Movement candidate Khaled Shehab as head of the Order of Engineers in Beirut with 5281 votes against 1002 votes for his rival Issam Bekdash. Marios Beaini from the Lebanese Forces wins the elections for the Tripoli Order of Engineers,

- A delegation of those released Lebanese nationals who were abducted in Azaz arrives in Qatar and meets Qatari Prince Sheikh Tami Bin Hamad Al-Thani.

- Civil Defense volunteers stage several protests demanding permanent employment.

April 7

- In a talk with the As-Safir newspaper, Hezbollah's Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah says "we retaliated against the Israeli raid on the town of Jenta by detonating a roadside bomb in the Sheba'a Farms in mid-March last year", ruling out the possibility of a new Israeli war on Lebanon and noting that the risk of terrorist bombings has receded.

- First Investigative Judge Ghassan Oueidat issues an arrest warrant against businessman Bahij Abou Hamzeh on charges of embezzlement from the Al-Safa football team. Final rulings regarding the lawsuits filed by MP Walid Jumblat against Abou Hamzeh are to be delivered later.

- 8 dead and 11 injured in clashes among Palestinian organizations at the Miyeh w Miyeh camp.

- Joint parliamentary committees postpone the final decision on whether or not to increase value-added tax until today and the Union Coordination Committee warns of escalatory measures if the pay scale does not get approved before next Wednesday.

April 8

- The Cabinet convenes at the Baabda Palace to discuss the Syrian refugee crisis without deciding on administrative appointments.

- Ali Taleb, nephew of the mayor of Fnaideq, attacks a Lebanese Army checkpoint in the town of Qamoua'a on the outskirts of Akkar shooting an officer dead and injuring another soldier.

- The joint parliamentary committees fail to agree on ways to finance the salary scale.

- Former Minister of Information Walid Al-Daouk holds a banquet in honor of former PM Najib Mikati at the Marina Beirut in the presence of a number of ministers, MPs and ambassadors. Mikati wishes the new government well and pinpoints the fact that his government has kept the country safe in the most precarious situations.

- A Lebanese Army checkpoint arrests two bodyguards of the Salafist cleric Dai al-Islam al-Shahhal for transferring unlicensed weapons, which triggers a number of protests.

April 9

- The Parliament's legislative session concludes by approving a law granting Civil Defense volunteers full-time employment while the Union Coordination Committee stages protests at Riad Solh Square demanding approval of the salary scale and setting Sunday as the final deadline for its completion. Simultaneously, old tenants take to the streets to protest at the new Rent Act.

- Sheikh Orsan Suleiman, a high-ranking official at the Association of the Islamic Charitable Projects, is critically injured in the wake of an attempt to assassinate him.

- Maronite Patriarch Mar Bechara Boutros Al-Rai urges Speaker Nabih Berri to accelerate his call for a parliamentary session to elect a new President of the Republic, underscoring that the president should not belong either to the March 8 Forces or to those of March 14.

April 10

- The Lebanese Army begins to enforce its security plan in Northern Beka'a and deploys its members in the towns of Brital and Haour Taala, carrying out crackdowns to arrest wanted men, the majority of whom turn out to have already fled the area a few days ago.

- Parliament continues its legislative session for the second consecutive day approving a law that grants power production permits to private firms and levying fines on those encroaching on coastal property with a five-year retroactive

effect. Joint parliamentary committees meet to discuss the salary scale funding.

- The banking sector calls a strike tomorrow in protest at Parliament's intention to raise bank interest from 5% to 7% in order to finance the proposed salary scale.

- Small-scale clashes erupt between the Lebanese Army and a number of wanted gunmen in Tripoli.

- The military judiciary issues an arrest warrant against Refaat Eid, a top official at the Lebanese Arab Democratic Party, on charges of affiliation to a terrorist organization.

- Army Commander Jean Qahwaji reiterates the army's ongoing efforts to hunt down terrorists during the conference held by the Lebanese Army to tackle regional developments.

April 11

- The joint parliamentary committees finalize deliberations over the salary scale draft law and refer it to the General Assembly to resolve the conflicting opinions inside the committees particularly over the VAT increase.

- Speaker Nabih Berri refuses to receive a delegation from the Association of Banks in Lebanon on the grounds that the Association's head, François Bassil, had accused MPs of theft. The delegation instead meets the Minister of Finance Ali Hassan Khalil to discuss the salary scale funding issue and MP Hani Qoubeissy drops the lawsuit he had filed against Bassil for slandering lawmakers.

- Upon his return from Switzerland, Patriarch Al-Rai announces that he is neither for nor against any presidential nominee, asserting that he would accept any candidate that draws consensus from Parliament.

- MP and Minister Jean Obeid announces that he has not yet presented his candidacy for the presidential elections.

- During a lecture at the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Germany, former PM Najib Mikati doubts that the parliamentary and presidential elections will be held on time, underlining that the Lebanese are not yet qualified to amend the Taef Accord.

April 12

- A delegation of the Association of Banks in Lebanon visits President Michel Suleiman and briefs him on the banking sector's stance regarding the salary scale approval and the hazards of increasing taxes on the interest earned on bank deposits.

- LF leader Sami Geagea announces that the March 14 Forces are inching closer towards supporting his nomination for the presidency of the republic.

April 13

- Catholic schools reiterate their opposition to the salary scale as it would lead to a decline in the student population in private schools.

- A number of Lebanese regions mark the civil war anniversary with a series of meetings and gatherings.

- The Christians of Lebanon celebrate Palm Sunday.

- Fire ravages an agricultural farm in Halba, leaving 3 children dead.

April 14

- Three crew members from Al-Manar TV die in the Syrian town of Maaloula while covering the entry of the Syrian Army into the town.

- The Baalbek-based Ahrar Al-Sunna Brigade claims responsibility for the 3 rockets that landed in the town of Al-Labwi in a retaliatory response to Hezbollah's actions in Qalamoun. The Lebanese Army asserts that the rockets were fired from Syria.

- Saudi Deputy Crown Prince, Prince Muqrin Bin Abdul Azizi receives former PM Saad Hariri who congratulated him on his appointment to his new post.

- The parliamentary Future Bloc refuses the financing of the salary scale before providing the necessary revenues and stopping the drain on public funds.

- Accompanied by Nader Hariri, former PM Fouad Seniora visits the former President of the Republic Amine Gemayel and both parties issue a joint statement assuring full agreement over the holding of presidential elections on time.

- Hackers penetrate the Maronite Patriarchate website and post a photo of the Holy Quran with Muslim prayers appearing on the home page.

- The National Struggle Front warns that the current salary scale would lead to inflation followed by collapse.

April 15

- Parliament fails to approve the salary scale and a committee is formed to re-examine the scale within 15 days upon the proposition of former PM Fouad Seniora, which gained 65 ayes. The Amal Movement and Hezbollah apologize for not participating in the committee.

- The Union Coordination Committee calls for a general strike to protest at the delay in approving the salary scale.

- The State Shura Council dismisses the appeal filed by Grand Mufti Mohamad Rashid Qabbani against the latest extension of the Council headed by Meskawi.

- Pope Francis appoints Maronite Patriarch Mar Bechara Boutros al-Rai as a member of the Pontifical Council for Culture.

- The Military Court of Cassation releases Sheikh Hassan Mshaymesh who was charged with ties to Mossad on bail of LBP 5 million.

April 16

- The Cabinet convenes a session at the Baabda Palace to study economic and living conditions and appoints Fatima Sayegh Oueidat as head of the Civil Service Board for six years. It also grants the Rafik Hariri University Hospital in Beirut an advance payment of LBP 20 billion.

- Speaker Nabih Berri schedules the session to elect a President of the Republic for April 23, asserting that convening this session does not prevent the holding of other legislative sessions.

- LF leader Samir Geagea announces his presidential program entitled "The Strong Republic" in the presence of media crowds and politicians. Among the attendees is the representative of Speaker Nabih Berri, MP Michel Moussa.

- Head of the criminal Court, Judge Abdul Rahim Hammoud agrees to release businessman Salah Ezzedine on bail of LBP 5 million. Ezzedine has been detained for four and a half years for embezzling funds worth USD 400 million.

April 17

- Maronite Patriarch Al-Rai holds mass for Holy Thursday at the Roumieh prison and washes the feet of a number of inmates following the example of Jesus Christ.

- President of the Republic Michel Suleiman chairs a security meeting at the Baabda Palace to discuss the security situation and the security plans enforced in Tripoli and Beqa'a.

April 18

- Christians of Lebanon celebrate Good Friday and President Suleiman attends mass at the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik stressing during his speech that he will leave the presidency on May 24.

- Head of the Loyalty to the Resistance Bloc, Mohammad Raad, reports that Hezbollah wants a president who would advocate the choice of resistance, urging rationality and the avoidance of miscalculated escapades.

- Former Minister Wiam Wahhab indicates that the March 8 Forces are likely to support the nomination of Emile Rahmi for President of the Republic against Samir Geagea.

April 19

- A Lebanese Forces delegation headed by Strida Geagea visits General Michel Aoun and hands him Samir Geagea's presidential program.

- Nouhad Al-Mashnouq heads a security meeting at the Ministry of the Interior and Municipalities in the presence of Hezbollah's representative Wafiq Safa. The meeting concludes with agreement to evacuate the injured from the remote border village of al-Tufail and to send humanitarian aid to the residents.

- A stick of dynamite explodes in the hands of a number of children in the Akkar town of Qoulayat causing the death of 2 people and the injury of another 4.

April 20

- A Lebanese Forces delegation headed by Strida Geagea pays visits to each of the former Presidents, Amine Gemayel and MP Walid Jumblat and hands them the presidential program of LF leader Samir Geagea. Other LF delegations visit MP Dory Chamoun, the Future Movement and the Islamic Jama'a for the same purpose.

- MP Walid Jumblat receives a Free Patriotic Movement delegation chaired by Minister Gebran Bassil.

- Former PM Saad Hariri reiterates his support of Geagea's nomination during a phone conversation between the two.

April 21

- The UNHCR periodic report puts the number of the registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon at 1,024,263.

- On the 20th anniversary of his detention, LF leader Samir Geagea inaugurates at his residence in Meerab a replica of the prison cells where he was detained.

April 22

- MP Walid Jumblat declares the Democratic Gathering's nomination of MP Henry Helou for the presidency. Helou reports that he is not running for maneuvering purposes.

- Following the Change and Reform Bloc meeting, MP Emile Rahmeh announces that the bloc members will attend the session scheduled to elect a president of the republic and will cast blank ballots.

- The development and Liberation Bloc declares its intention to attend the parliamentary session to elect a president of the republic.

- The Phalanges Party, following its meeting, confirms its support of Geagea's nomination for the presidency of the republic.

- The Lebanese Forces delegation headed by Strida Geagea continues its tour and hands Speaker Nabih Berri and MP Michel El-Murr Geagea's presidential program.

- Former PM Najib Mikati and MP Ahmad Karami support MP Henry Helou in the presidential race, in accord with the proclivities of Tripoli.

- Protests staged in Tripoli and banners raised in condemnation of Geagea's nomination for presidency.

- A relief security plan kicks off to deliver humanitarian aid to the residents of al-Tufail.

April 23

- In the presence of 124 MPs and with the absence of former PM Saad Hariri, Okab Sakr, Elie Aoun (due to illness) and Khaled Daher (for no given reason), Lebanon's Parliament convenes and fails to elect a president of the republic with a two-thirds majority. When the votes were counted, the tally stood at Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea 48 votes, the Progressive Socialist Party deputy Henry Helou 16 votes, Phalanges Party Chief and former president of the republic Amine Gemayel 1 vote, while 52 parliamentarians cast blank ballots. Six votes were considered void for containing the names of Rashid Karami, Dany Chamoun, Tarek Dany Chamoun (2), Elias Yazbek and Jihane Tony

Frnagieh and a seventh envelope did not contain a ballot paper. Speaker Nabih Berri adjourns the session until next Wednesday for a second voting round.

- MP Ziad Aswad reveals that he was the one who voted for Jihane Frangieh and Tripoli's MP Mohammad Abdul Latif Kabbara announces that he refused to grant Gegaea amnesty in the past and he would not vote in his favor today, for he is accused of killing PM Rashid Karami.

- MP Strida Geagea reports that the seven spoilt votes exemplify political bankruptcy and General Michel Aoun views that the withdrawal of his bloc from the session is aimed at reaching consensus.

April 24

- Patriarch al-Rai visits Speaker Nabih Berri to deliberate about the presidential elections and reiterates before his departure for Rome that repeating the election session scenario is an insult to the people and to Parliament.

- Minister of Foreign Affairs Gebran Bassil meets his Russian counterpart in Moscow.

- LF leader Samir Geagea assures the LBC that he will run in the presidential race till the very end, adding that Michel Aoun's decision to be or not be a candidate for President is entirely up to him.

- Army Commander Jean Qahwaji checks on the Lebanese Army's checkpoints in Tripoli and reaffirms ongoing efforts to enforce the devised security plan.

- The Lebanese Army arrests a wanted Lebanese national in Tripoli and a Syrian with an explosive belt in Aarsal.

April 25

- PM Tamam Salam chairs a Cabinet session that concludes with the referral of the bombings that ravaged the Southern Suburb of Beirut, Tripoli and Hermel as well as the assassination of former Minister Mohamad Chatah to the Justice Council.

- President Suleiman receives Patriarch al-Rai at his residence in Rome and the meeting tackles the presidential elections.

- Patriarch al-Rai calls former PM Saad Hariri from Rome to discuss the presidential elections.

- The Special Tribunal for Lebanon

summons Ibrahim al-Amine, editor-in-chief of Al-Akhbar newspaper and Karma Al-Khayat, deputy director of Al-Jadeed TV on charges of alleged contempt and disruption of justice and schedules hearings on May 13. The news triggers a wave of protests and condemnation and Minister of Information Ramzi Jreij states that the decisions of the Tribunal must be respected and legally enforced.

April 26

- US Ambassador David Hale visits LF leader Samir Geagea to discuss the presidential elections.

- Speaker Nabih Berri reveals that Lebanon and Libya have signed a memorandum of understanding regarding the Imam Mussa As-Sadr case.

- Fadi Gemayel who headed over a 24-member list wins the chairmanship of the Association of Lebanese Industrialists over his rival Ramez Abou Nader. Of the 18 candidates on Abou Nader's list, 10 were running simultaneously with the Gemayel's list.

April 27

- Syrian President Bashar Assad receives retired Major General Jamil Sayyed.

- Syrian National Coalition leader Ahmad Jarba contacts LF leader Samir Geagea and wishes him success in the presidential elections.

- Director General of General Security Abbas Ibrahim announces that the risk of bombings has dropped by 90% after the crack down on militant strongholds in Syria.

- President Suleiman attends the mass marking Saint Maroun's jubilee held at the Church of St Maroun in Rome, under the Maronite Patriarch al-Rai who urges the election of a President who could pick up from where his predecessor left off and continue to improve the profile of Lebanon at Arab and International levels.

April 28

- PM Tamam Salam states that the government is not aspiring to fill the presidential void and that he is seeking to undertake a tour beginning in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

- Journalists gather at the Press Syndicate in solidarity with Al-Akhbar newspaper and Al-Jadeed TV and denounce the STL charges against

Al-Amine and Al-Khayat. Minister of Information, Ramzi Jreij, calls on journalists to appear in court.

- LF leader Samir Geagea states during a press conference that a great danger looms over the presidential elections and that we might end up with a presidential vacuum.

- The Lebanese Army arrests Abdul Rahim Al-Araj, the commander of the military council in Qalamoun and Al-Qusayr, on suspicion of illegal firearms trafficking.

April 29

- Former PM Saad Hariri, Minister of Foreign Affairs Gebran Bassil and Minister of Education Elias Bou Saab meet in Paris to discuss the presidential elections and the need to avoid a stalemate.

- Following its regular meeting, the Future Bloc reiterates its support for Samir Geagea as a presidential nominee.

- The Union Coordination Committee takes to the streets and kicks off its protest march at the Banque du Liban, before going on to the Chamber of Industry and the Association of Banks then straight to the Riad As-solh Square, demanding the approval of the salary scale.

- Riots break out at the Roumieh prison.

April 30

- Speaker Nabih Berri adjoins the parliamentary session scheduled to elect a President of the Republic until May 7 citing the lack of a quorum. Present were 75 MPs, with the session requiring at least 86 out of 128. Strida Geagea was among the absentees due to travel.

- Maronite Patriarch Al-Rai meets former PM Saad Hariri in Paris and stresses the need to hold presidential elections on time.

- In his phone conversation with MP Walid Jumblat, French President François Hollande emphasizes Jumblat's role in raising the likelihood of holding the presidential elections in Lebanon.

- Members of the Lebanese Democratic Party, headed by Talal Arslan dismiss the pro-Jumblat director of Hasbaya's government hospital.

- Five soldiers wounded in armed clashes between the Lebanese Army and gunmen in the outskirts of Aarsal. ●

THIS MONTH IN HISTORY- LEBANON

ABDUCTION AND ASSASSINATION OF US AMBASSADOR IN LEBANON

WADEEH HADDAD OR MOSSAD?

During the Lebanese Civil War, hundreds of Lebanese as well as Arabs and foreigners residing in Lebanon were either abducted or killed. One of the most conspicuous instances was the abduction and assassination of US Ambassador to Lebanon Francis E Meloy along with the US Economic Counselor Robert O Waring and the Lebanese driver Zuhair Moughrabi in Beirut on June 16, 1976. Today, 38 years later, we present a factual account of the ominous incident, recalling the relevant investigations and responsibilities.

The Facts

In his Chevrolet car driven by the Lebanese driver Zuhair Moughrabi, US Ambassador Francis E Meloy, who had assumed his diplomatic position in Lebanon on May 12, 1976, accompanied by the US Economic Counselor Robert O Waring, was headed from Ain El-Mreisseh to Hazmieh to meet the new Lebanese President Elias Sarkis without the knowledge of the US; it was Wednesday, June 16, 1976.

An escort vehicle ensured the security of the Ambassador's Chevrolet, which carried a diplomatic plate numbered 104, from Ain El-Mreisseh as far as the Corniche al-Mazra'a and Barbir. However, for security reasons, the escort vehicle had to return to the embassy leaving the ambassador's Chevrolet unguarded as it continued its route towards the Mathaf area.

Having grown concerned about the ambassador's failure to show up on time, President Elias Sarkis instructed his assistants to contact the leaderships of the militant organizations operating in the areas where the ambassador may have passed, i.e. the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and its allies on the one hand and the Phalanges Party on the other. Neither party claimed to have any clue about the ambassador's disappearance and each expressed its concern over the incident. Soon after the investigation into the abduction began, the bullet-ridden bodies of the men were found around 4:00 on a beach in Ramlet



Francis E Meloy

el-Baida. They were transferred to a nearby hospital first then to the American University Hospital a short time later. The Phalangist radio reported that an organization calling itself the "Socialist Labor Organization" had claimed responsibility for the attack.

Positions and Communication

A series of movements and positions arose in the wake of this ominous incident.

Immediately upon hearing the news, US President Gerald Ford called a meeting to discuss the issue with Vice President Nelson Rockefeller, Director

of Central Intelligence George Bush and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and the US administration contacted a number of regional governments as well as the political organizations operating in Beirut to obtain full details of the incident and arrange the repatriation of the ambassador and his two companions, even before learning that their death was confirmed.

Without naming America, the USSR warned the US, through a statement in a Russian daily, against using the assassination as a pretext for military intervention in Lebanon.

Following phone calls from the US embassy, Raymond Eddeh contacted the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine to attend to the matter.

The parties of the Lebanese National Movement allying with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine deplored the assassination and warned against the exploitation of the crime to further complicate the Lebanese crisis.

The Head of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Yasser Arafat, branded the assassination as a 'hideous crime' and extended his sincere condolences to the families of the victims. He also requested the Palestinian ambassador to the US to inform the Secretary General that the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine is by no means involved in this brutal attack.

Information about the Crime

Investigations into the crime were immediately directed towards Palestinian organizations, for they were in charge of field operations in Beirut, more precisely in the area between Barbir and Mathaf where the abduction occurred. Fingers were particularly pointed at the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine under George Hobeish and Wadeh Haddad who had amicable ties with Moscow and were linked to the Soviet-American conflict in the region. However, inquiries failed to identify the exact Palestinian leaderships implicated in the operation and charges were pressed against two Palestinians, Nayef Kamel and Bassam al-Farkh.



Wadeeh Haddad

In his book entitled *Wadeeh Haddad: Rebel or Terrorist?*, published by Riad Al-Rayyes Publishing House in January 2014, the Palestinian leader Bassam Abou Shareef uncovers the particulars of the murder, recounting that the US ambassador and his companions were abducted by members affiliated to the Popular Front under the command of Ahmad Youness, a security official who used to take orders from Wadeh Haddad and who was later executed on suspicion over his role in the security matters that the Popular Front used to assign him. Abou Shareef accused Abou Ahmad Youness of serving as an agent for the Israeli Mossad, which utilized the murder at that stage to affront the Popular Front and hold it responsible.

Abou Shareef reports that Abou Ahmad Youness and his men disguised as Phalangists who wanted to salute the ambassador and his companions, thus tricked the driver into rolling down the window of the car, something which, under usual circumstances, was strictly prohibited for security reasons. As soon as he did, the driver was shot dead and the perpetrators hopped into the car and drove towards one of their strongholds where they finished off the two Americans. Wadeh Haddad opined that the diplomats should not be killed so as to unveil another facet of the Palestinian revolution but the rapidity with which Ahmad Youness killed them served to reinforce that he had separate links and objectives hidden from his Palestinian leadership. ●

THIS MONTH IN HISTORY – IRAQ

THE 1920 IRAQI REVOLUTION

The 1920 Revolution which broke out on June 30, 1920 and lasted six months was not a transient event in the context of the Iraqi history of confronting British occupation. The Revolution left a tangible mark on political and intellectual life in Iraq and in large measure contributed to the formation of the modern state of Iraq.

Throughout the period of Ottoman rule, the Iraqis were accustomed to a lifestyle characterized by the lack of Ottoman intervention in their daily affairs, except in matters related to taxation. Government officials were also lenient when enforcing rules and regulations, which made the Iraqi people feel more at ease in the existing environment. With the British centralization of power in Iraq, people were introduced to a new much stricter system than the one they had experienced for centuries under the Ottomans. The British used to select one Sheikh from each Iraqi region and provide him with funds, weapons and all necessary assistance so that he would report to them. This measure infuriated the tribal leaders who were forced to succumb to the will of a chieftain imposed on them by the British forces. At the political level, pro-British politicians were assigned high-ranking posts while others lost the titles – such as Effendy – they had once enjoyed under Ottoman rule, and found themselves stripped of their sources of livelihood. This, coupled with arbitrary detentions, suppressions of personal freedom, military persecution and illicit taxes imposed on farmers, led to a growing Iraqi resentment towards the British that culminated in the June revolt.

Sheikh Shaalan Aboul Joud, the leader of the Zawalime tribe, having incited the population against the British occupation, was summoned for interrogation to the government Serail in the town of Roumaytha, in the south of Iraq. Upon his arrival, Aboul Joud was greeted with demeaning insults inappropriate to his standing as a leader of the Zawalime tribe, which provoked him into cursing British policy. The prompt British decision to arrest him at the Serail then send him to al-Diwaniyah enraged his loyal tribal warriors who stormed the prison, killed two British soldiers and set their chieftain free, thus signaling the outbreak of the revolt. The revolt soon gained momentum and the hail of rebel gunfire resulted in 20 casualties – injuries and fatalities – among the British

forces. A heavy exchange of gun fire erupted between the rivals during the rebels' attempt to take over a British ship, protected by a Fire Fly warship, carrying troops and supplies; this resulted in 48 deaths and 167 injuries among the British troops. By contrast, rebel casualties were negligible.

Battles were not confined to the town of Roumaytha but extended across several Iraqi regions. The lengthy months of fighting with limited capacities on the Iraqi front tipped the balance in favor of the occupation forces, which were capable of extinguishing the fire of revolution out in the towns of Diala and Fallujah. British airstrikes wreaked havoc on the mid-Euphrates regions forcing the interim government of Karbala into surrender particularly after their water supply had been cut off, in order to avoid the invasion of the city. The occupation forces advanced toward the Hindiya Barrage and conquered the town despite the strong resistance they encountered; they then progressed toward Al-Kafal and reached the periphery of Kufa, dropping a hail of bombs on the city. On October 20, 1920, a delegation from Najaf held negotiations with the British forces to hand over the detained rebels. The latter accepted but later marched toward the city and besieged it, making entry or exit to or from Najaf subject to British permission. This remained the case for months during which 60,000 inhabitants suffered from thirst, famine and illness.

Militarily speaking, it can be said that the British troops won the battle, despite the massive losses they sustained in the face of irregular tribal forces who ran low on weapons and supplies. However, it is also clear that the 1920 Revolution was a triumph because it coerced the British into abandoning their scheduled plans to divide the Iraqi territory and yielded the formation of an Arab government, scrapping the original mandate plan in favor of a British administered semi-independent kingdom. ●

ON THE BELIEFS AND PLOTS OF AL-QAEDA (3)

STANCE TOWARDS CHRISTIANS AND SECULARISTS

Al-Qaeda and its affiliates germinated in Afghanistan and Pakistan then expanded to the Gulf region where Muslims make up the majority of the population with hardly any presence of Christians or secular parties. The invasion of Iraq and the entry of Al-Qaeda to fight US troops there provided the opportunity for Al-Qaeda's first actual encounter with Christians and secular parties. The Syrian war provided another stage for friction between the two. In both cases, Christians were targeted as individuals and suffered several attacks that forced many of them to flee Iraq and Syria where hostilities are still unfolding. Like other Syrians, the Christians were subjected to several abuses, foremost among which was the abduction of the two prominent bishops, Boulos Al-Yaziji and Youhanna Ibrahim, near Aleppo and of 12 nuns in Maaloula in December 2013.

In what follows we shed light on how Al-Qaeda perceives matters related to Christians. Are they People of the Book who need to be protected or apostates who need to be combated? Further insight into the Al-Qaeda mindset will be offered in future issues, as reported to us from informed sources.

“All the slaughters committed throughout human history combined are no match for what the Christians and the Jews have inflicted on themselves and on Muslims in the twentieth century alone. Even the people most notorious for their brutality, such as the Tartars, did not cause as much bloodshed as the Christians and the Jews did. They squandered their own funds and those of the Muslims – which in fact belong to God, on promoting blasphemy and debauchery while millions of people died of famine at alarming rates that would be beyond belief if they were to be recorded in a single book.

As for the nationalists, Baathists and Democrats, the decline in faith and the loss of life that they have wreaked on the nation were so tragic to the extent that one's hair would stand on end. Saddam, Assad, Mubarak, Fahd and the Yemeni Socialist Party have claimed more lives than all those lost in the jihadist wars of this century. The only difference is that the former killed people for the sake of the devil whereas jihadists killed for the sake of justice and the religion of Allah. You should pay heed to the fact that if there were no jihad in a certain country, God would have inflicted upon it so great an anguish and so much



Boulos Al-Yaziji



Youhanna Ibrahim

blasphemy that all the alleged evils derived from jihad would have paled in comparison.

The abandonment of jihad on the part of the peace movements and their call on the nation to follow suit are among the major reasons that lead Allah to pour his wrath upon the nation, either by pitting subjects against each other or by emboldening the enemies of Allah against us or by other means such as sending killers, natural disasters such as earthquakes and the like.

If a member of the original infidels or apostates happened to fall into our hands and we found no harm in pardoning them especially if it turned out that the pardon would mend their hearts then prompt them to join and follow the believers or at least ward off the evil of their subjects, noting that no apostate can be pardoned unless he/she professes Islam, it is up to us to either spare his life or kill him if his repentance came only after we had become more powerful; I repeat, if that was clear to us and if the benefits of killing the

infidels did not exceed those of pardoning them, then that could be an effective means to polarization.

The historical records documenting the Islamic movements that fought at some point against the Jews, the Christians or the infidels are full of parodies that stripped those who targeted certain tyrants or their troops or advocates of the epithet of Islam. The statement of Hassan Al-Banna – may God forgive him and forgive us – which deplored the operations carried out against enemy agents and the tyrant’s aides – some of whom had handed Palestine to the Jews – is no stranger to any of us. “They are neither brothers nor Muslims,” he berated them. Many movements that were close to bearing fruit were stamped down upon by these opinions, which derive from profound ignorance both of religion and the facts.

A further example, in the same context, is what happened in the 1990s when scholars of straw from the Islamic Jama’a in Egypt adopted, prior to the seditious conflicts within the lines and the stances of the Jama’a, religious rulings prohibiting attacks on certain groups, while the military wing was avoiding acts of violence against them for tactical political reasons. Since the earlier releases of the Jama’a as well as the fatwas of its prince Sheikh Omar Abdul

Rahman – may God set him free from detention – had legitimized and encouraged attacks against those groups, confusion and uncertainty later arose amongst the young Jihadists. As sedition started to gather pace, some leaderships reinforced their positions, criminalizing the targeting of groups who the jihadists had attacked in compliance with sound and authentic fatwas and evidence that authorized such attacks, thus forfeiting the bloodshed of their martyrs, and constituting one factor – among many – for the collapse in the ranks of jihadists.

Therefore, as we once warned you, jihadist brother, not to target groups based on fatwas issued by straw scholars, we should warn you as well not to be reluctant and desist from terminating those who ought to be terminated for the mercy of believers and the triumph of religion, in compliance with the hearsay of the ignorant and the infidels. If, however, the targeting of certain groups was deferred in conformity with the vision of the Highest Command or the Field Commands in the regions, this would then fall within their purview depending on the jurisprudence they deem best for jihad activity. But beware of those pedants who propagate that the postponement is on the grounds that such groups may not be targeted”. ●





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REAL ESTATE PRICES - APRIL 2014

Active transactions marked the real estate market in April 2014 compared to the preceding months and the last two years. Transactions rose by 15% to 20% compared to March, which had also seen significant momentum. This recovery may be attributed to several causes:

- The formation of the Lebanese government and the defusing of tensions between political rivals, which might pave the way for a certain political stability.
- The decline in security turbulence following the enforcement of the security plan in Tripoli and the absence of car bombings.
- The shifts in the military situation in Syria, particularly in the towns neighboring Lebanon.
- The stability in prices, with a slight upward inclination for mid-priced apartments particularly, which drove people to stop waiting for price declines and to venture into purchases.

Tables 1 and 2 illustrate the prices of some estates and apartments sold in April 2014.

Prices of some estates sold in April 2014			Table 1
Region	Area (m ²)	Price (USD)	USD/m ²
Beirut			
Zqaq Blat	820	6,560,000	8,000
Baabda			
Hazmieh	530	1,060,000	2,000
Araya	1,100	913,000	830
Matn			
Broumana (Al-Ouyoun)	1,000	400,000	400
Rabieh	910	2,502,500	2,750
Monteverde	1,200	1,200,000	1,000
Aley			
Aitat	870	278,400	320
Kessrouan			
Faytroun	1,000	330,000	330
Faraya	3,500	525,000	150
Ajaltoun	1,200	420,000	350
Ballouneh	850	935,000	1,100

Source: Compiled by Information International

Prices of some apartments sold in April 2014			Table 2
Region	Area (m ²)	Price (USD)	USD/m ²
Beirut			
Qasqas	200	600,000	3,000
Msaytbeh	185	545,750	2,950
Ras el-Nabe'e	150	450,000	3,000
Zqaq Blat	170	306,000	1,800
Hamra	230	839,500	3,650
Mar Elias	160	416,000	2,600
Sodeco	190	465,500	2,450
Nasira	160	464,000	2,900
Rmeil	100	160,000	1,600
Baabda			
Hazmieh	200	430,000	2,150
Hazmieh (Mar Taqla)	300	600,000	2,000
Ain Roummaneh	110	198,000	1,800
Jomhour	180	342,000	1,900
Loueizi	225	427,500	1,900
Matn			
Antelias	170	277,100	1,630
Monteverde	190	399,000	2,100
Mansouried	350	402,500	1,150
Dbayeh	200	260,000	1,300
Zalqa	330	495,000	1,500
Aley			
Doha Aramoun	120	144,000	1,200
Doha Aramoun	300	300,000	1,000
Bshamoun (Maderes)	160	192,000	1,200
Bshamoun (Yahoudiyeh)	230	241,500	1,050
Khaldeh	130	182,000	1,400
Aramoun	150	195,000	1,300
Kessrouan			
Shaileh	165	231,000	1,400
Ballouneh	260	340,600	1,310
Zouq Mosbeh	140	168,000	1,200
Ghadir	200	300,000	1,500
Adnonis	120	174,000	1,450
Sahel Alma	150	213,000	1,420

Source: Compiled by Information International

Sexual Harassment in the Arab World:

- **90%** of women in Yemen complained of sexual harassment in public and in the work place.
- **83%** of Egyptian women reported to have been sexually harassed according to a study conducted by the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights conducted in 2008.
- **46%** of these women said that they are harassed on a daily basis.
- The study also found that the majority of harassers are between the age of 19 and 24.
- **21%** of young women in Qatar also expressed being vulnerable to harassment, along with 30% who complained of harassment in the work place.
- **27%** of female university students in Algeria complained about being harassed by their professors.
- One-third of Lebanese women have reported being verbally harassed when they are out in public according to the Status of Women in the Middle East and North Africa Project.



Beirut International Airport

Rafic Hariri International Airport Traffic - March 2014

Compared to February 2014, the number of passengers using Rafic Hariri International Airport rose by 13.7%. The traffic decreased by 71,954 passengers or 14.3% compared to the same period last year.

Rafic Hariri International Airport handled 2,257,551 passengers over the first three months of 2014, i.e. down by 8.27% from the same period last year.

Rafic Hariri International Airport traffic in March 2014 compared to February 2014 and March 2013

Table 1

Traffic	February 2014	March 2014	March 2013	% of change February / March 2014	% of change March 2013/2014
Arriving airplanes	2,160	2,397	2,491	+11	-3.8
Departing airplanes	2,159	2,398	2,484	+11	-3.5
Total no. of airplanes	4,319	4,795	4,975	+11	-3.6
Arriving passengers	180,375	211,733	237,995	+17.4	-11
Departing passengers	194,465	217,910	263,372	+12	-17.2
Transit passengers	1,266	1,326	1,556	+4.7	-14.8
Total no. of passengers	379,106	430,969	502,923	+13.7	-14.3
Imported goods (per ton)	4,437	5,737	5,953	+29.3	-3.6
Exported goods (per ton)	2,551	3,265	3,471	+28	-6.3
Total amount of goods	6,988	9,002	9,424	+28.8	-4.4

Source: Information International based on the Civil Aviation Directorate General

- **2,203,000 m²** is the total area of the construction permits granted by the Beirut and Tripoli Orders of Engineers during January and February 2014. Cement deliveries amounted to 793,000 tons during the same period. Compared to the same period last year, the area of construction permits rose by 18.9% and cement deliveries by 14.5%.
- **LBP 4,475 billion** is the cost of the President of the Republic's flights operated by Middle East Airlines during the first five months of 2014.
- **LBP 64 million** is the worth of the reconciliation agreement signed between the Lebanese Army and the heirs of the two children ran over by a military vehicle in Akkar on October 21, 2010. The agreement was completed in May 2014, more than 3.5 years after the incident.
- **304** is the number of vehicles stolen in the first three months of 2014, of which 160 were recovered. In 2013, only 626 vehicles were recovered out of 2247 stolen vehicles.

Publications by Information International (in Arabic):

- 1- Salaries and Remunerations in the Public Sector
- 2- Public Seaside Properties
- 3- Lebanon's Parliamentary History 1920-2000
- 4- Taxes and Fees
- 5- Lebanon in Figures 1992-2002
- 6- Lebanon in Figures 2003-2004
- 7- Lebanon in Figures 2005-2006
- 8- Lebanon in Figures 2007-2008
- 9- Lebanon's MPs and Lebanese Parliamentary Elections 1960 - 2009
- 10- 2009 Parliamentary Elections by ballot box, candidate and confession-North District
- 11- 2009 Parliamentary Elections by ballot box, candidate and confession-Beirut District
- 12- 2009 Parliamentary Elections by ballot box, candidate and confession-Mount Lebanon District
- 13- 2009 Parliamentary Elections by ballot box, candidate and confession-Beqa'a District
- 14- 2009 Parliamentary Elections by ballot box, candidate and confession-South and Nabatiyeh District
- 15- Municipal Elections 2010

Publications by INMA (in Arabic):

- 1- "I am Responsible, All of Us are Responsible"
- 2- "Our Environment is Our Home"
- 3- "My Society is My Responsibility"
- 4- "My Society is My Responsibility" Workbook
- 5- "I am a Student, I am a Citizen: Ways Towards State Building"
- 6- "I am a Student, I am a Citizen: Ways Towards State Building" Workbook
- 7- "Lebanon Wars, why?"
- 8- Discrimination in Lebanon

Publications by Kutub (in Arabic):

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- 2- Mission in Hijaz - Lion Roche
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- 6- Al A'mal Al She'rya Al-Kamila -Kamal Keir beik
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LEBANON'S SALARY SCALE BETWEEN RIGHTS, COST AND CONSEQUENCES

As part of the periodic round-table discussions organized by Information International on a monthly basis, the company hosted its May session under the title “Lebanon’s Salary Scale between Rights, Cost and Consequences” in the presence of syndicate members and workers from both private and public sectors.

After Information International’s Founder and Managing Partner, Jawad Adra, opened the session, Mr. Amin Saleh, former President of the Lebanese Association of Certified Accountants and former head of the Office of the Accountant-General at the Ministry of Finance depicted the reality of public salaries noting that the salary scale can be approved without the need for additional taxes, through strict collection of the state’s funds and neglected rights. Noteworthy was the oral intervention of Mr. Adnan Bourji, head of the Basic Education Association and member of the Union Coordination Committee who elucidated the role of the Committee in raising the genuine demands of workers far from sectarian and partisan considerations and queues. Attendees contributed to the success of the session with their lively speeches and insightful remarks.

