

President Michel Suleiman's first year in office

International College "A Tradition of Excellence"

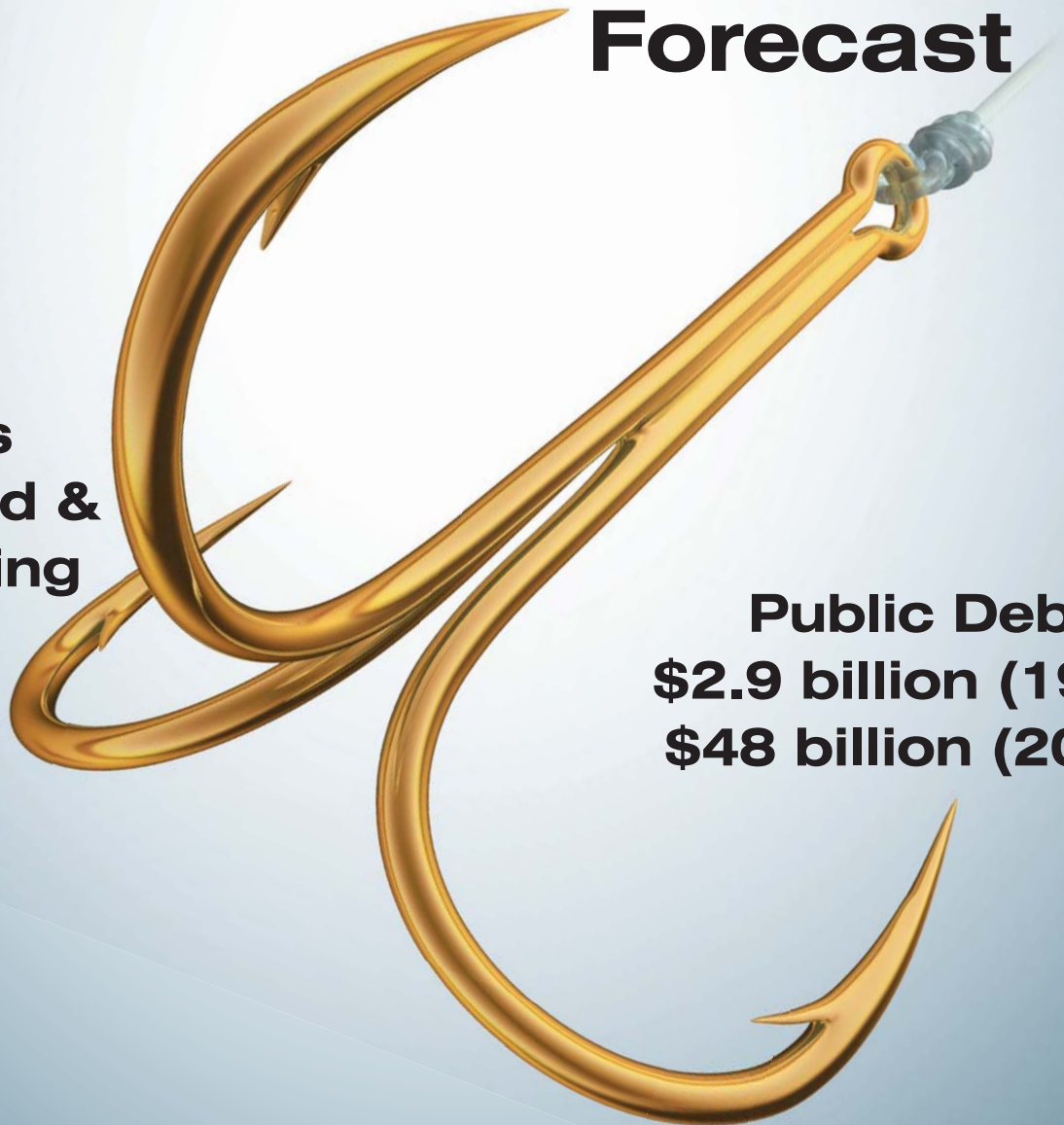
The Monthly meets Mr. Joham Verkammen,
Ambassador of the Kingdom of Belgium

Elections, Drugs and Public Debt

2009 Elections Forecast

**Drugs
Protected &
Spreading**

Public Debt
\$2.9 billion (1992)
\$48 billion (2009)



Electoral law, results, blocs and elections forecast

Drugs in Lebanon
Cultivation, trafficking and
its spread among youth

Public debt at USD 48 billion

President Michel Suleiman's first
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Whither the Republic of Lebanon:
Amnesty for drug crimes

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High Blood Pressure by
Dr. Hanna Saadah

Why do we read? by Antoine
Boutros

Lebanon: its geography and
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Between Yesterday and Today

Lebanon's MPs
and Lebanese
Parliamentary
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From the series of
"Children Entertaining Stories"*

Myth #24
Alexander, worshipper or fighter?

Jumblatt and Syria

Release of the four generals:
End of one phase, beginning of
another

International Media
Iran's 'New Proposal' & The USA

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Education Enrollment in the Arab
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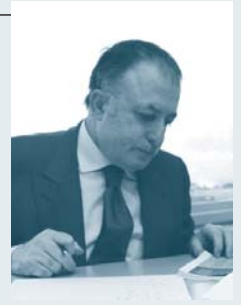
Real Estate Index: April 2009

Consumer Price Index
April 2009

Did You Know That? by Dr. Hanna
Saadah

Beirut Rafic Hariri International
Airport, April 2009

Madeleine Albright, the leaders of Lebanon, and the banality of evil



It has been said that the heart of Rome was not in the marble of its Senate, but in the dust of its coliseum or fighting arenas. The subject of concern today is the arena of parliamentary elections in Lebanon, and the international observers or 'referees' that have been delegated to monitor this election.

We have elected 'war lords', or more accurately 'war criminals' to office, rewarding them with legitimacy as a prize for killing 'the other' on our behalf. Should we add up the number of victims killed by these 'emperors or quasi-emperors', either directly or by proxy, the numbers would be very high, and yet more staggering when foreign powers are involved.

To elaborate on this point, let us all remember the following conversation that took place on CBS's 60 Minutes on May 12, 1996:

Lesly Stahl: "We have heard that half a million Iraqi children died. This is more than those who died in Hiroshima ... Is that price worth it? ..."

Madeleine Albright: "It is a difficult choice.... But we believe that it is worth the price."

It is therefore befitting that such observers monitor such an election, conducted in accordance with an appalling electoral law that only fosters polarization.

Let us not forget that many of those observers have approved the 1996 elections that were boycotted by a large segment of society, and also the 2005 elections, that were conducted under tragic and dubious circumstances, judging them as 'fair and impartial'.

Ruthless was Rome, but more chivalrous.

Today, the "killings" are by proxy, through the ballot box and under regional and international auspices. Maybe we deserve it. But are these leaders and observers really so bad? Of course not, they are human. Like us ordinary people, they have their families and their stories of joy and tears. Look at Bill Clinton, George Bush, Tony Blair and Condoleezza Rice and most recently, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who had 'a conscience revival experience', just like Kofi Annan did before him. They play music, dance, joke and travel. They are only human. Humans that find themselves caught in a Hobbsian machine, executing orders that cause the plight of millions without a blink of an eye. They have only their vanity to celebrate. Sometimes they shed words of wisdom and worthless tears. They are only human and pathetically so. They are a living proof of Hannah Arendt's thesis on the "banality of evil". This banality is further illustrated by the Arab League's participation in this charade by sending their observers as well.

Jawad N. Adra

Electoral law, results, blocs and elections forecast



Parliamentary Electoral Law

Ambiguity and Inconsistencies open door to vain contestations

The coming parliamentary elections based on Parliamentary Electoral Law number 25 of October 8, 2008, encompass several ambiguous and confusing provisions. This has led to different interpretations and raises the probability of contesting the deputyship of any elected member. The law also includes other provisions that are judged as inconsistent on the premise of justice and equality among Lebanese.

Running for Parliament

According to the law, persons holding official posts such as judges of different orders and degrees, functionaries of first and second degrees, full-time chairpersons and members of administrative boards, directors-general in public institutions, or presidents and vice-presidents of municipal councils are ineligible to run for parliamentary elections, unless they resign at least 6 months before the parliamentary term expiration (the current parliamentary term ends on June 20, 2009).

Likewise, such persons will also be prohibited for municipal councils' presidents and vice-presidents at the Muhafaza and Qada'a centers as well as presidents of Municipal Unions, unless they resign at least two years before the expiration of the parliament term.

This law provides a clear distinction between presidents of municipal councils. Furthermore, the law stipulates that judges, director-generals, chairpersons or members of administrative boards are ineligible to run as candidates, in order to prohibit such persons from taking advantage of their public offices to achieve electoral goals. The law, however, neglects in prohibiting ministers, who enjoys large and influential powers, from running for parliamentary elections.

It is also worth mentioning that the text of this electoral law, along with some amendments, also existed in previous electoral laws.

Aids to Associations

Pursuant to the provisions of Article 59 of the Electoral Law, candidates are banned during the election period from offering services, in-kind of financial aids or donations to individuals, charitable and sports organizations within the candidate's electoral constituency. However, if charities owned or run by candidates have donated money on a regular basis three years prior to the election campaign, they are not banned from carrying on with these donations. Accordingly, the aforementioned article permits important and more established wealthy candidates to spend sums of money in order to achieve electoral goals that are not being granted to new and smaller wealthy candidates.

Electoral Media Regulation

For the first time in the Electoral Law, the sixth chapter deals with the issue of electoral media regulation, which was omitted in previous electoral laws. Nonetheless, the provisions of these new articles remain ambiguous and susceptible to different interpretations.

Article 68 specifies that "all audio-visual media are to respect the freedom of expression of different views and intellectual currents broadcasted through the programs of the private broadcasting media during the electoral campaign, in order to secure justice, equality and neutrality in dealing with all candidates and electoral lists."

"It is forbidden for any private broadcasting medium to proclaim its support or to promote any candidate or electoral list subject to the principle of independence."

"During the electoral campaign, all broadcasting media are required to refrain from slandering, libeling or defamation as well as from broadcasting all programs that may arise confessional, religious or racial feuds or incite audience to commit violent acts or riots."

"The Election Supervisory Committee is required to secure equality in media appearance among the candidates and when any broadcasting media hosts any list representatives or candidate, it is also required to guarantee the hosting of the contesting party/parties within similar conditions with regard to timing, duration and type of program."

Article 70 stipulates that “the local competent authority shall define, under the supervision of the administrative authority in each city or village, the places devoted to hang or paste electoral pictures. Further, it is forbidden to hang or paste any pictures for the candidates outside the places assigned for advertising. In accordance with the first paragraph, the competent local authority shall handle the distribution of the determined places amongst lists and candidates according to the order of candidatures deposition.”

Article 75 entrusts the Election Supervisory Committee to decide whether it should count candidates appearance on non-Lebanese broadcasting media within the information or advertising area allocated by the Committee for each candidate.

However, any observer aware of the reality on the ground can confirm violations of electoral law provisions in several matters and cases.

Violations

For instance, the law permits each candidate to spend LBP 150 million in addition to LBP 4,000 for each voter registered in the electoral constituency. As such, each candidate in the constituency of Tripoli, can spend around LBP 895 million and each candidate in the constituency of Bent Jbeil is allowed to spend LBP 619 million. It however remains difficult to control this process and the amount of electoral expenses. In light of this reality, would it be possible for a losing candidate to challenge deputyship of his competitor when elected and would such an argument even be accepted?

Does any breach committed by a candidate with regard to duration and time of appearance in the media or pronouncing words against the law constitute a fundamental material for contesting the deputyship of this candidate after his/her election?

Do pictures and advertisements in improper places, or distortion of information and slandering held by the candidate provide enough substance to contest such breaches of the law?

If all these ongoing law violations constitute a valid and solid ground for contesting the winners' deputyship, one can safely argue that dozens of prospective deputies could have their deputyship contested due to the significant number of committed violations taking place.

Paralyzed Constitutional Council

However, it is important to note that all these disputes must be submitted before the Constitutional Council, which has been paralyzed since the issuing of the previous parliamentary election results in 2005. Consequently, in the absence of such a body, all contestations will remain meaningless and vain in this regard.

Originally, it is Article 19 of the Lebanese Constitution that called for the establishment of a Constitutional Council to supervise the constitutionality of the laws and settle conflicts and disputes that arise from presidential and parliamentary elections.

After the 2005 elections and in the first session held by the new parliament, law number 679 was passed on July 19, 2005 to postpone the revisions submitted to the Constitutional Council. As such, the 16 parliamentary disputes remain unsettled, while the term of the elected deputies, whose deputyships were contested, has expired.

Currently the Constitutional Council is incomplete in number and effectively paralyzed. On December 18, 2008, the Parliament held a session where it elected its share in the supposed Council, representing five members. However, the absence of an agreement impeded the Council of Ministers from appointing its share, which is also composed of five members. Consequently, the Council was suspended, leaving Lebanon with a judicial vacuum.

The principle issue to be questioned in this regard would deal with the constitutionality and legality of conducting a parliamentary election with the absence of the Constitutional Council. What would become of the parliamentary contests in case the new government (or the current government) fail to complete the appointment of its share in the Constitutional Council? Will the new elected members of parliament, whose deputyships are contested, continue their parliamentary terms as happened in the previous election?

The incomplete number of members in the Constitutional Council reflects a failure to reach a national agreement on a crucial and fundamental matter. This could also be followed by disagreeing the absence of an agreement to conduct the elections on June 7, 2009 due to the absence of the Constitutional Council and pending disputes that have not yet been settled. In this case, the Lebanese people would face a twofold issue, either to unanimously postpone the elections, or to disagree, and therefore lead the country to a gloomy and dark tunnel.

2009 Elections Forecast

As it stands now, legislative elections are expected to take place on Sunday June 7th, 2009 unless unpredicted developments or incidents occur that would result in its postponement. It however seems unlikely that conflicts will arise 18 days before the elections and affect electoral facts and trends. This is substantiated by surveys undertaken by Information International as well as the size of conflicting forces in some electoral constituents, the current alliances, and the absence of any major or serious development. As such, the following results can be expected, which are shown in the chart below. Noteworthy that many of the independant candidates are expected to withdraw especially after the finalization of all competing lists.

Lebanon MPs-2009 Elections															
#	Qada'a	14th of March probable seats	8th of March probable seats (oppositions)	# of MPs											
				Tot.	Sunni	Shia'a	Druze	A'alawi	Maronite	Orthodox	Catholics	Evangelic	Minorities	Armen. Orthodox	Armen. Catholics
North															
1	A'akar	7		7	3			1	1	2					
2	Tripoli	8		8	5			1	1	1					
3	Minieh/ Danniyeh	3		3	3										
4	Koura	2	1	3						3					
5	Bcharri	2		2					2						
6	Zgharta		3	3					3						
7	Batroun	2		2					2						
7	TOTAL North	24	4	28	11			2	9	6					
Mount Lebanon															
1	Ba'abda		6	6		2	1		3						
2	Jbeil		3	3		1			2						
3	Keserouan		5	5					5						
4	Metn	1	7	8					4	2	1			1	
5	Chouf	8		8	2		2		3		1				
6	A'aley	4	1	5			2		2	1					
6	TOTAL M. Lebanon	13	22	35	2	3	5		19	3	2			1	
Beirut															
1	1st District	3	2	5					1	1	1			1	1
2	2nd District	2	2	4	1	1								2	
3	3rd District	10		10	5	1	1			1		1	1		
3	TOTAL Beirut	15	4	19	6	2	1		1	2	1	1	1	3	1
South															
1	Saida	2		2	2										
2	Saida Villages		3	3		2					1				
3	Sour		4	4		4									
4	Nabatiyeh		3	3		3									
5	Bint Jbeil		3	3		3									
6	Marjeyoun/ Hasbaya		5	5	1	2	1			1					
7	Jezzine		3	3					2		1				
7	TOTAL South	2	21	23	3	14	1		2	1	2				
Beqa'a															
1	West Beqa'a/ Rachaya	5	1	6	2	1	1		1	1					
2	Zahle	3	4	7	1	1			1	1	2			1	
3	Ba'albeck/ Hermel		10	10	2	6			1		1				
3	TOTAL Beqa'a	8	15	23	5	8	1		3	2	3			1	
26	Lebanon	62	66	128	27	27	8	2	34	14	8	1	1	5	1

Note: these electoral estimations may be exact and quasi definite. However, the important detail worth considering is the expected minimal difference in the numbers of votes obtained by some of the candidates in Koura (1), Batroun (1), Beirut 1st district (2), Zahle (3) and Saida (1) districts. In fact, there are 8 seats that remain indefinite, which have been divided according to present estimations, giving 6 seats for March 14th alliance and 2 seats for March 8th and the opposition.

Forecasting parliamentary blocs in 2009

In the current electoral situation (18 days before the elections), electoral blocs that have been declared and opinion polls that have been conducted in some regions during April and May 2009 give us an idea of the potential parliamentary blocs that may result from the ballot. These predictions however do not take into account the possibility of a change in positions after the elections, which is not included in our present forecasts.

According to these forecasts, the Future Bloc may be the largest in number with 33 MPs followed by the Free Patriotic Movement with 20 MPs, the Amal Movement with 14 MPs, the Hezbollah Bloc with 13 MPs and finally the Socialist Progressive Party with 10 MPs.

In the case that current divisions between March 8 and opposition forces and March 14 were adopted, the number of MPs forecasted to succeed in the elections would be 66 for March 8 and the opposition, and 62 for March 14.

The MPs are distributed across different parliamentary blocs, some of which constitute an extension of the electoral alliances. These forecasts may change should there be a redistribution of the alliances. The blocs (as they are to date) are illustrated in the following:

Parliamentary Blocs	# of MPs that Resulted from 2005 Elections	Forecasted # of MPs in accordance with the 2009 Electoral Alliances	Differences
March 14 (Pro-government)			
Future Bloc (Hariri)	33 MPs	35 MPs	-2
Socialist Progressive Party (Jumblat)	10 MPs	18 MPs	-8
Lebanese Forces Party*	5 MPs	6 MPs	-1
Lebanese Phalange Party*	4 MPs	3 MPs	+1
Najeeb Mikati List	2 MPs	--	+2
Tripoli Bloc	2 MPs	4 MPs	-2
Islamic Group List	1 MP	--	+1
National Liberal Party (Chamoun)	1 MP	--	+1
MPs (supporters by March 14)	4 MPs	6 MPs	-2
Total March 14 MPs	62 MPs	72 MPs	-10
March 8 and Opposition			
Free Patriotic Movement (Aoun)	20 MPs	16 MPs	+4
Loyalty to the Resistance (Hizbollah)	13 MPs	16 MPs	-3
Liberation and Development bloc, Amal Movement	14 MPs	15 MPs	-1
People's Bloc (Skaff)	3 MPs	5 MPs	-2
El-Marada Party	3 MPs	--	+3
Syrian Social Nationalist Party	4 MPs	2 MPs	+2
Nasserite Popular Organization in Lebanon (Saad)	--	1 MP	-1
Arab Socialist Baath Party	2 MPs	1 MP	+1
MPs (Supporters by March 8/Opposition)	2 MPs	--	+2
Thnaq Party	5 MPs	1 MP from Free Patriotic Movement	+5
Total March 8/Opposition MPs	66 MPs	56 MPs	+10

* The number of votes obtained by candidates in Batroun and Koura districts are very close and may even lead to a modification in the number of MPs within each bloc contrary to what is mentioned in the above table, especially in case of any change in Tripoli alliances for instance or in case of any pressure and intimidation campaigns escalation. In fact, according to the table, the Lebanese Forces bloc will comprise 5 MPs while in reality this number may decrease to 3.

* The table also shows that the number of MPs in Lebanese Phalange bloc is 4; however, two seats in Tripoli and Achrafieh are subject to possible change which would decrease this number to 2.

The above mentioned results are based on a voters' trend study led according to the results of the elections held in 2000 and 2005, as well as according to the opposition and loyalists' current coalitions and on to the assumption that no radical changes will occur to these coalitions. The results were drawn as well from opinion polls led by Information International in some regions. It is worth mentioning that Information International is leading new polls in Koura, Saida and Zahle of which results will be ready after the publication of this issue of The Monthly. In order to avoid any contradicting figures, the new results as well as any possible modifications to the table will be published in As-Safir newspaper.

Candidates in The 2009 Parliamentary Elections

The total number of candidates for the parliamentary elections reached 702 candidates, where 115 candidates withdrew during the official time limit (15 days after the closing date for candidatures). Other withdrawals followed and the electoral alliance ballots of March 14, March 8, and other opposition forces were declared in districts with tough competition, while in other districts there was no such competition, such as in the South and A'akkar. The following tables show the different ballots declared before May 19, 2009 as well as the independent candidates to date.

Beirut 1st District (5): Maronites (1), Catholics (1), Orthodox (1), Armenian Orthodox (1), Armenian Catholics (1)	
March 8 & Opposition List	Issam Abou Jamra, Massoud Al Achkar, Nicolas Sehnaoui, Warij Sabonjian, Krikwar Caloust.
March 14 List	Michel Pharoan, Nadim Gmayal, Nayla Tueni, Jean Ogasapian, 5th candidate was not announced until May 19, 2009.
Independent	Serj Tor Sarkisian, Richar Qoyoumejian, Emil Hayek, Raymond Gbeili, Jad Sayawa, Georges Forides, Nasrallah Bou Fadel, Diran Sarkisian, Qorra Haroutonian, Fouad Karkour, Michel Khoroizian.
Beirut 2nd District (4): Armenian Orthodox (2), Shia'a (1), Sunni (1)	
March 8 & Opposition List	Hani Kobeisi, Artur Nazarian (uncontested winners).
March 14 List	Nuhad Machnouk, Sebouh Kalbankian (uncontested winners).
Independent	Abbas Yaghi, Adnan Arakji, Jalal Kabrit, Mehieddine Majbour.
Beirut 3rd District (10): Sunni (5), Shia'a (1), Druze (1), Minorities (1), Evangelical (1), Orthodox (1)	
March 8 & Opposition List	Najah Wakim, Rafic Nasrallah, Omar Ghandour, Abdel Nasser Jiri, Ibrahim Halabi, Bahaa Eddine Itani, Khaled Daouk, Ghazi Munzer, Georges Ashkhanian, Raymond Asmar.
March 14 List	Saad Eddine Hariri, Tamam Salam, Mohamed Kabbani, Ammar Hourri, Imad Hout, Ghazi Aridi, Atef Majdalani, Ghazi Youssef, Nabil de Freij, Bassem Chab.
Independent	Ali Baajour, Mohamed Ajouz, Ahmed Yassine, Saleh Arakji, Zuhair Khateeb, Bassam Barghout, Khalil Kharma, Adel al Daouk, Idriss al Saleh, Nizar al Kadi, Ghazi Khamis, Khodr Taha, Walid Jaber, Edmond Boutros, Donald Babikian, Bchara Merhej, Pierre Rbeiz, Fadi al Roumi.
Metn District (8): Maronites (4), Orthodox (2), Catholics (1), Armenian Orthodox (1)	
March 8 & Opposition List	Ibrahim Kanaan, Ghassan Mkheiber, Salim Salhab, Nabil Nicolas, Agop Bakradonian (uncontested), Ghassan Achkar, Ghassan Rahbani, Edgar Maalouf.
March 14 List	Michel Mur, Sami Gmayel, Majed Edy Abi Lamaa, Sarkis Sarkis, Elias Karamah, Elias Mkheiber, Emil Kanaan.
Independent	Milad Sebaali, Fouad Abu Nader, Ibrahim Abi Haidar, Bahij Hawi, Georges Kassis, Ziad Saliba.
Keserouan District (5): Maronites (5)	
March 8 & Opposition List	Michel Aoun, Gilbert Zwain, Farid Elias al Khazen, Neamtallah Abi Nasr, Youssef Khalil.
March 14 List	Farid Haykal Khazen, Mansour Ghanem el Bon, Fares Bouiz, 5th candidate was not announced until May 19, 2009.
Independent	Claudees El Khazen, Sejaan Kazi, Elie Zwayn, Kamil Zyadeh, Joseph El Zayek, Simon Sfeir, Nawfal Daw, Antoine Hkayyem, Naaman Mrad, Hanna Ghosn, Chaker Salameh, Mansour Akiki, Manoeil Maround Louis Abu Charaf, Carlos Edddeh, Charles Ayoub, Habib Mdawar.
Jbeil District (3): Maronites (2), Shia'a (1)	
March 8 & Opposition List	Walid Khoury, Abbas Hachem, Simon Abi Ramia.
March 14 List	Emil Nawfal, Nazem Khoury, Mustapha Hussein.
March 14 List	Fares Saaid, Mahmoud Awwad.
Independent	Jean Hawwat, Bchara Abi Younes, Michel Karam, Chamel Mouzaya, Fadi Sakr, Mohamed Ahmed, Mohamed Haidar, Rabah Abi Haidar, Ali Awwad, Hekmat Hajj, Rami ollaik, Talal Mokdad, Naim Chamas.

Ba'abda District (6): Maronites (3), Shia'a (2), Druze (1)**March 8 & Opposition List** Ali Ammar, Bilal Farhat, Fadi Aawar, Naji Garios, Alain Aoun, Hekmat Deeb.**March 14 List** Bassem Sabea, Ayman Chucair, Salah Hunein, Salah Harekeh, Edmond Garios, Elias Abou Assi.**Independent**

Suheil Aawar, Nadim Aawar, Hicham Aawar, Nabil Mezher, Naji Hatoum, Therese Rizkallah, Pierre Dakdash, Youssef Mounes, Joseph Ghanem, Gabi Semaan, Milad Kareh, Abdallah Farhat, Charles Chidyak, Joseph Beshaalani, Pierre Haddad, Said Alame, Ramzi Kanj, Hasan Khalil, Tarek Harb, Bassam Hamdar, Saad Slim, Riad Raad.

A'aley District (5): Maronites (2), Druze (2), Orthodox (1)**March 8 & Opposition List** Talal Erslan, Marwan Abu Fadel, Antoine Zoghby, Cesar Abu Khalil.**March 14 List** Akram Chuhaib, Fouad Saad, Henri Helou, Fadi Habr.**Independent**

Naji Kanaan, Suheil Bajjani, Antoine Maaz, Suleiman Sayegh, Salam Maamari, Albert Matta.

Chouf District (8): Maronites (3), Sunni (2), Druze (2), Catholics (1)**March 8 & Opposition List** Zaher Al Khateeb, Mario Aoun, Antoine Bustani, Nassif Kazzi, Abdo Munzer, Bahaa Abdel Khalek.**March 14 List** Walid Jumblat, Mawran Hamadeh, Mohamed Hajjar, Alaaeddine Terro, Georges Adwan, Elie Aoun, Dori Chamoun, Nehme Tohme.**Independent**

Amine Kazzi, Ghattas el Khoury, Yehya Achour, Nabil Owaidat, Ayad Abdallah, Adnan Baeyny, Walid Maalouf.

West Beqa'a and Rachaya Districts (6): Sunni (2), Shia'a (1), Druze (1), Maronites (1), Orthodox (1)**March 8 & Opposition List** Abdel Rahim Mrad, Mohamed Qoraawi, Nasser Nasrallah, Henri Chdid, Elie Forzli, Faysal Dawood.**March 14 List** Jamal Jarrah, Ziad Kadri, Robert Ghanem, Amine Wehbe, Antoine Saad, Wael Abou Faour.**Independent**

Sami Khateeb, Samir Harb, Ali Jinani, Ali Hajj, Farouk Dahrouj, Amine Hammoud, Khalil Yassine, Nabil Fares, Mohamed Taha, Salah Bkri, Mahmoud Abu Hamdan, Ibrahim Khoury, Norma Forzli.

Zahle: (7): Catholics (2), Shia'a (1), Sunni (1), Maronites (1), Orthodox (1), Armenian Orthodox (1)**March 8 & Opposition List** Elias Skaff, Fouad Turk, Hasan Yaacoub, Georges Kasarji, Salim Aoun, Kamil Maalouf. The Sunni candidate was not announced until May 19, 2009.**March 14 List** Nicolas Fattouch, Ikab Sakr, Elie Marouni, Chant Janjinian, Assem Araj, Antoine Abou Khater, Joseph Maalouf.**Independent**

Naji Skaff, Magda Breidi, Ghassan Naddaf, Tony Tohme, Mousa Fattouch, Abdo Skaff, Najib Hachem, Mohamed Araj, Ibrahim Meiss, Wajih Araj, Kamal Meiss, Omar Jammal, Said Salloum, Mohamed Husheimi, Abdallah Sayyed, Rida Meiss, Hasan Ali, Khaled Araj, Khaled Abdel Fattah, Rafic Rheimi, Bahjat Harati, Fayez Araj, Jihad Muallem, Imad Meita, Imad Kazoun, Mohamed Abdallah, Mohsen Dalloul, Hatem Taleb, Chafic Mousawi, Afif Mehdi, Ali Bou Hamdan, Ghazwan charaf, Khalil Hrawi, Joseph Chamoun, Georges Mazraani, Maroun Saghbini, Paul Charbel, Kaisar Maalouf, Michel Dmou, Chukri Teeni, Mousa Freiji, Ibrahim Maalouf, Boghos Kordian, Antoine Nashankian, Eddy Demerjian, Warojan Araklian, Nareek Ibrahimian, Setrak Hawtian.

Ba'albeck/Hermel Districts (10): Shia'a (6), Sunni (2), Maronites (1), Catholics (1)**March 8 & Opposition List** Hussein Hajj Hasan, Nawwar Sahly, Hussein Mousawi, Ali Mokdad, Ghazi Zaaiteer, Assem Kansa, Kamel Rifaei, Walid Sukkarieh, Marwan Fares, Emil Rahme.**March 14 List** Rached Hmadeh, Fadi Younes, Hafez Qamhaz, Mohamed Suleiman, Mohamed Yaghi, Bassel Hujeiri, Fadlallah Solh, Khalil Roufaeil.**Independent**

Ali Dandash, Toufic Dika, Ali Mousawi, Fouad Mawla, Fayez Chukr, Rifaat Masri, Ali Zaaiteer, Mohamed Suleiman, Ali Hajj, Bassam Mawla, Belkheir Chahine, Mofdel Allaw, Hani Chamas, Hussein Zaaiteer, Mohamed Jaafar, Riad Zaaiteer, Chawki Fakhri, Akid Hadchiti, Elias Hadchiti, Michel Salloum, Saadallah Ardo.

Saida District (2): Sunni (2)**March 8 & Opposition List** Oussama Saad.**March 14 List** Bahia Hariri, Fouad Sanioura.**Independent**

Mustapha Kawwas, Nasser Hammoud.

Zahrani (Saida Villages) District (3): Shia'a (2), Catholics (1)

March 8 & Opposition List	Nabih Berri, Ali Osseiran, Michel Moussa.
March 14 List	List was not announced until May 19, 2009.
Independent	Yehya Ghaddar, Hussein Zbib, Riad Al Asaad, Phillip Saliba, Robert Khoury, Walid Mezher.

Jezzine District (3): Maronites (2), Catholics (1)

March 8 & Opposition List 1	Ziad Aswad, Issam Sayawa, Michel Helou
March 8 & Opposition List 2	Samir Azar, Antoine Khoury, Kamil Serhal
March 14 List	List was not announced until May 19, 2009.
Independent	Maroun Kanaan, Fawzi Asmar, Georges Njeim, Ibrahim Azar, Edmond Rizk, Joseph Nahra, Nabil Nassif, Ajaj Haddad, Issam Haddad, Nicaols Salem, Raymond Semaan, Georges Hajjar, Hadi al Hindi, Asaad al Hindi.

Nabatiyeh District (3): Shia'a (3)

March 8 & Opposition List	Abdel Latif El Zein, Mohamed Raad, Yassine Jaber
March 14 List	List was not announced until May 19, 2009.
Independent	Nizam Houmani, Mohamed Jaber, Amine Saleh, Hazem Chahine, Adham Jaber, Majed Fayyad, Mohamed Mokaed, Nadim Osseiran, Mohamed Abbas, Ali Traboulsi, Kamal Wehbi.

Sour District (4): Shia'a (4)

March 8 & Opposition List	Mohamed Fneish, Ali Khreis, Abdel Majid Saleh, Nawwaf al Mousawi
March 14 List	List was not announced until May 19, 2009.
Independent	Mohamed Jbaei, Ali Sayyed Mohamed Baqer al Amine, Sayed Jamal Sayed Raef Saifyeddine, Ali al Khalil.

Bint Jbeil District (3): Shia'a (3)

March 8 & Opposition List	Ayoub Hmayed, Hasan Fadlallah, Ali Bazzi
March 14 List	List was not announced until May 19, 2009.
Independent	Mohamed Kaddouh, Nazem Ibrahim, Mahmoud Baydoun, Ali Mhanna, Mohamed Atwi, Ahmed Khawaja.

Hasbaya/Marjeyoun Districts (5): Shia'a (2), Sunni (1), Druze (1), Orthodox (1)

March 8 & Opposition List	Asaad Herdan, Anwar Khalil, Ali Hasan Khalil, Kassem Hachem, Ali Fayyad
March 14 List	List has not been announced yet.
Independent	Ahmed Asaad, Merhef Ramadan, Abbas Charaf Eddine, Saadallah Mazeraani, Adnan Abboud, Salman al Jbeili, Jamil Zaher, Munif al Khateeb, Wissam chrouf, Elias Abou Rizk

Tripoli District (8): Sunni (5), Alawi (1), Maronites (1), Orthodox (1)

March 8 & Opposition List	Omar Abdel Hamid Karami, Khaldoun Cherif, Rifat Eid. The list was not completed until May 19, 2009.
March 14 List	Najeeb Mikati, Mohamed Kabbara, Mohamed Safadi, Ahmed Karami, Samir Jisr, Badr Wannous, Samer Saadeh, Robert Fadel.
Independent	Jean Obeid, Mosbah Ahdab, Mohamed Jisr, Rafli Diab, Antoine Habib, Rami Dergham, Fadi Adra, Mohamed Zakour, Riad Salhab, Mustapha Awad, Ghada Dandachi, Bilal Jrad, Hoda Sankari, Bilal Chuwaiki, Mohamed Iqsmawati known as Aaraja, Hasan Chahal, Fayyad Halabi, Rami Hallab, Mohamed Jehjah, Nazih Tamra, Ali Ajaya, Nasr Khodr, Mohamed Traboulsi, Georges Toros, Georges Chabtini, Ibrahim Tawil, Pierre Hashash, Regina Kantara.

Koura District (3): Orthodox (3)**March 8 & Opposition List** Salim Saadeh, Fayez Ghosn, Georges Atallah.**March 14 List** Farid Makari, Nicolas Ghosn, Farid Habib.**Independent** Georges Borji, Jon Muferrej, Georges Wehbe, Suheil Khoury, Albert Indraous, Semaan Lakkis, Gabriele Derrayk, Edgar Boulos, Philippe Boulos.**Batroun District (2): Maronites (2)****March 8 & Opposition List** Gebran Jirji Bassil, Faeq Younes.**March 14 List** Boutros Harb, Antoine Zahra.**Independent** Nabil Hkayem, Salim Najm, Gebran Istéphan Bassil, Jean Mrad, Rony Doumit.**Zgharta District (3): Maronites (3)****March 8 & Opposition List** Suleiman Frenjeh, Estéphan Dwaihi, Salim Karam.**March 14 List** Jawad Boulos, Michel Moawad, Youssef Dwaihi.**Independent** Assad Karam, Kaisar Moawad, Romanos Boulos, Youssef Obeid.**Bcharri District (2): Maronites (2)****March 8 & Opposition List** List was not announced until May 19, 2009.**March 14 List** Elie Kayrouz, Setrida Tawk Geagea**Independent** Gebran Tawk, Rachid Rahme, Roy Issa el Khoury, Chahine Tawk, Mikhaeil Matta, Majid Abi Saab.**Minieh/Danniyeh Districts (3): Sunni (3)****March 8 & Opposition List** List was not announced until May 19, 2009.**March 14 List** Ahmed Fatfat, Kassem Abdel Aziz, Hachem Alam Eddine.**Independent** Jihad Samad, Adel Fatfat, Mohamed Fadel, Toufic Zraika, Mohamed Khalil, Ahmed Obeid, Jamil Raad, Saleh Kheir, Fadi Kheir, Kamal Kheir, Ahmed Chandab, Nafed Samad, Khaled Kheir, Mahmoud Seif, Mohamed Alam Eddine, Nazih Saadeh, Asaad Harmouch, Hasan Nedda, Khaled Dhaibi, Hachem Zraika, Abdel Baset Obeid, Ibrahim Ghareeb, Mohamed Abou Kanj, Abdel Salam Kheir, Mohamed Ahmed, Hasan Hallak, Mezhar Othman, Abdel Kader Chami, Toufic Dheibi, Mohamed Ahmed Alameddine.**A'akar District (7): Sunni (3), Orthodox (2), Alawi (1), Maronites (1)****March 8 & Opposition List** Wajih Baarini, Mohamed Yehya, Soud Youssef, Mustapha Hussein, Mkhail Daher, Karim Rassi, Joseph Chahda.**March 14 List** Khaled Daher, Khaled Zahraman, Mouin Merhbi, Khodr Habib, Riad Rahhal, Nidal Tohme, Hadi Hobeich.**Independent** Ali Allouch, Bilal Tarraf, Maher Abdallah, Ali Tlais, Ahmed Rajab, Hussein Merhi, Mohamed Suleiman, Mohamed Hawchar, Hasan Khateeb, Abdel Ilah Zakaria, Mohamed Dandachi, Khaled Zakaria, Mohmoud Khaled, Wehbe Katicha, Nafez Warak, Miguel Chahda, Georges Soud, Abdallah Hanna, Haitham Hamdan, Mohamed Tamer, Abdel Rahman Abdel Rahman, Rachid Daher, Amine Ibrahim.

The Monthly's next issue will cover the ballots declared after the above mentioned date.

Drugs in Lebanon

Cultivation, trafficking and its spread among youth

During the end of last March and beginning of April, the regions of Ba'albeck and Hermel witnessed many security events. This led to the killing of convicts from the Jaafar family, and was most recently followed by a response attack that left 4 Lebanese soldiers killed. In turn, the Lebanese army has conducted many attacks and arrest campaigns in Ba'albeck, Hermel and their remote neighborhoods. These events have brought to light an important and essential issue in the region; the cultivation, production and commercialization of drugs as well as the familial, political and religious aspects related to it.

1- Ba'albeck and Hermel

Ba'albeck and Hermel regions are the lands of drug cultivation and production in Lebanon (the cultivation of hashish or cannabis dates back to 1920, while opium became widespread in 1975 during the war). Moreover, these regions offer shelter to fugitives and outlaws, who hide in their remote neighborhoods. In 1975, before the beginning of the civil war and when the government's strength was still at its peak, it could not arrest these convicts and put an end to their illegal activities. Instead, a spoken agreement with tribe leaders was concluded later on, which laid some constraints and limits to these activities. Respecting this agreement ensured peace and stability in the region. However, violating these constraints and limits led to military operations that were again stopped when reconfirming the previous agreements and commitment of each party to respect their boundaries. In other words, the government chose consensus and agreement instead of confrontation, allowing these activities to operate on a quasi legal basis.

The districts of Ba'albeck and Hermel are situated in the Beqa'a province. However, upon the establishment of these two districts, the decrees to put the law into effect were never promulgated.

Hermel District

Hermel district is situated northwest of the Beqa'a province. It is bordered by Syria on its northern side (a small waterway separates it from Syria), by Ba'albeck on the eastern and southern sides and by the western mountains of Lebanon on its western side separating it from A'akar and Dennyeh districts. It covers an area of 56,716 hectares and is geographically closer to Syria than to Lebanon. In fact, it lies at 140 kilometer distance from Beirut and 60 kilometer distance from the Syrian city of Homs. The district encompasses 29 towns and villages.

The estimated number of people registered in the civil status records of this district is around 65,000 with a majority (96%) belonging to the Shia'a community. As for the number of residents, it does not exceed 20,000 since a greater part has migrated to the suburbs of Beirut.

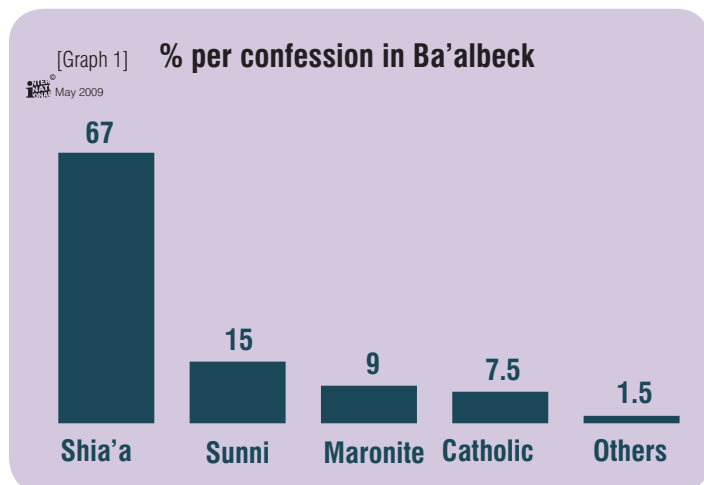
The estimated cultivated area varies between 11,200 and 12,000 hectares, where 1,700 to 2,000 hectares are used to cultivate hashish, a number that increases to 3,000 hectares or more, depending on the security situation and the government's disregard towards this cultivation.

Ba'albeck District

The Ba'albeck district extends from the north of the Zahle district to its northeastern side until the Syrian borders, where the borders of Hermel district constitute its northern frontiers. It is surrounded by the Zahle district from the south, the eastern mountains of Lebanon separating it from Syria, and from the east and western mountains of Lebanon separating it from Keserouan, Jbeil, Bcharre and Dennyeh districts from the west. It covers an area of 227,810 hectares which equals 22% of Lebanon's surface, and makes it the biggest district in surface.

“The government chose consensus and agreement instead of confrontation, allowing these activities to operate on a quasi legal basis.”

The district encompasses 102 towns and villages and the estimated number of people registered in its civil status records is 315,000, distributed as shown in Graph 1.



The area cultivated with Hashish varies between 15,000 and 17,000 hectares or more depending on the security circumstances.

Among the main families in both districts: Hamade- Chamas- Nasser El Din- Zaaite- Amhaz- Kanso- Safouan- Aloua- Dandach- Jaafar- Allam- Hajj Hassan- Masri- Yazbeck- Awad- Muchik.

This environment is well known for its widespread and prosperous drug cultivation, production, and export. These activities are backed by the big tribes of the region, protecting the people behind and keeping them covered against any mandate of arrest or juridical verdicts in absentia. These people move freely without any fear of arrest. They consider that juridical verdicts are just formal and will not be implemented by the government unless they violate the red lines (as it happened recently with the murder of the soldiers).

2- Lebanon's position

Lebanon is one of the first drug producing countries. The previously mentioned factors enable the cultivation of various kinds of drugs, a cultivation which is very prosperous due to the following:

- The Lebanese government's disregard towards it knowing its lucrative proceeds (around USD 4 billion). The number varies according to the cultivated areas, their upkeep by the government, the smuggling possibility, and the prevailing prices. This was especially the case after the failure of alternative cultivation projects that did not attract farmers due to the inability to ensure good revenues. Farmer's revenues were ten to a hundred times lower than those of the cultivation of drugs.

- The possibility to smuggle the production outside the borders since the local market is not big enough for the entire quantity produced. Moreover, the local prices are low compared to international prices. International strictness and control obstruct the cultivation of drugs and lead to a decrease in local prices because of the incapacity to export.

- Drug export takes place through local networks that go beyond political and religious divides. According to investigations conducted with members when uncovered, these networks encompass individuals from various confessions and are linked to international networks.

3- Drug takers in Lebanon

Accurate figures concerning the numbers of drug takers in Lebanon are not available; however, the statistics issued by the General Directorate of the Internal Security Forces show an increasing number of drug-related arrests. This may reflect stricter control and follow up by the security forces that led to more arrests; or a 37% increase in the number of drug takers (from different nationalities) in 4 years. As for the number of Lebanese drug takers, it has reached 50%.

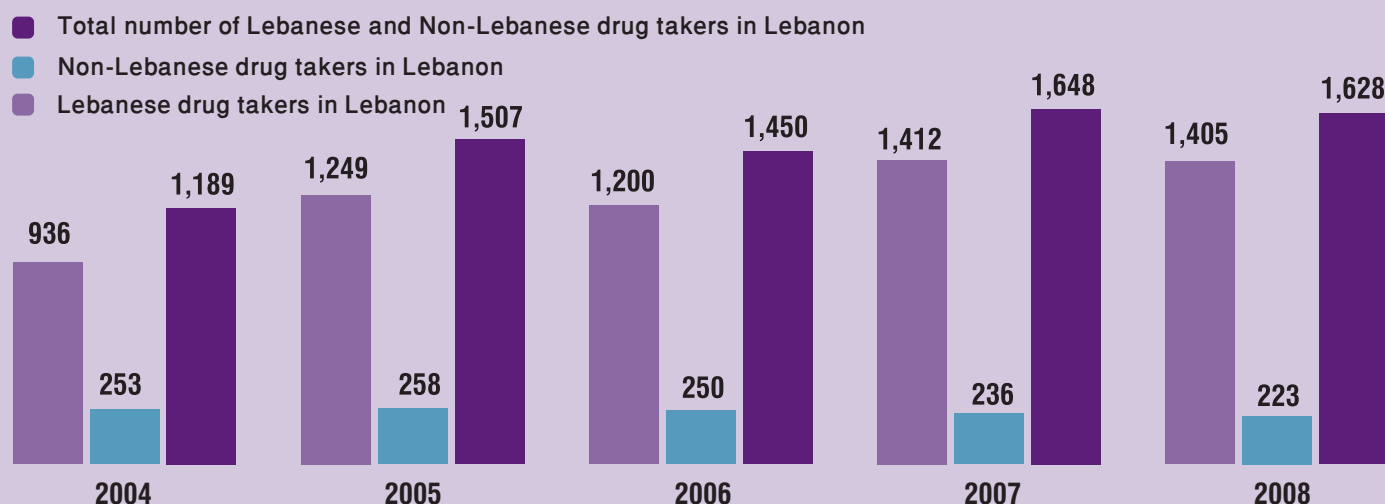
Table 1 shows the numbers of drug takers, dealers, agents and smugglers arrested between 2004 and 2008.

Numbers of drug takers, dealers, agents and smugglers arrested between 2004 and 2008.					Table 1
Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Lebanese Drug takers	936	1,249	1,200	1,412	1,405
Non-Lebanese drug takers	253	258	250	236	223
Hashish	450	634	567	598	738
Heroin	298	264	309	435	334
Cocaine	340	433	358	298	338
Drug capsules	45	84	121	163	120
Other kinds of drugs	56	92	95	154	98
# of drug dealers	Unavailable	164	165	118	168 (until end of September)
# of drug traffickers	Unavailable	277	402	392	186 Until end of September)
# of drug smugglers	Unavailable	41	37	34	40

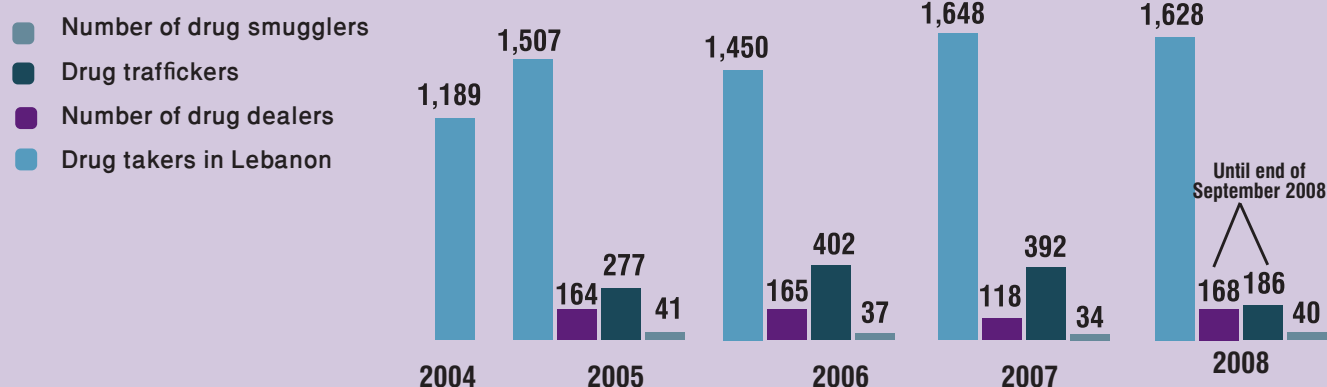
Source: Central Office for Drug Control – Internal Security

[Graph 2] **Comparison in the number of Lebanese and Non-Lebanese drug takers in Lebanon**

Central Office for Drug Control

[Graph 3] **Number of drug smugglers, drug traffickers, drug dealers and drug takers in Lebanon**

Central Office for Drug Control



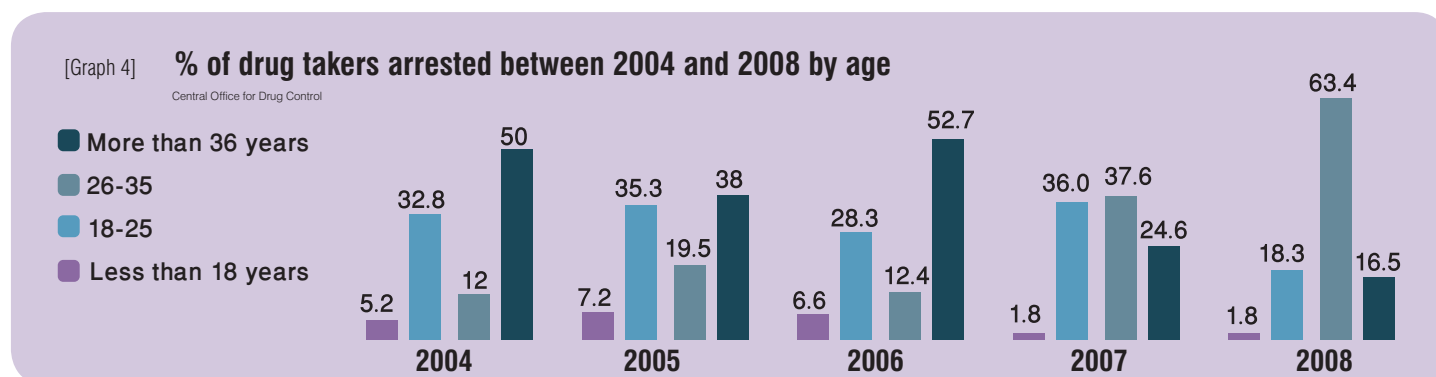
The numbers of non-Lebanese drug takers who were arrested in the last five years remained the same while significant increases occurred among Lebanese. This is a dangerous indicator that is a result of many reasons, such as the availability of drugs at affordable prices, the lack of control, and the disregard of some families towards their children's attitudes and addiction to drugs. In fact, a high percentage of drug takers (between 20% - 38%) that were arrested were aged 18 to 25 years as shown in table 2.

The number of drug takers arrested between 2004 and 2008 by age**Table 2**

	2004	%	2005	%	2006	%	2007	%	2008	%
Less than 18	63	5.2	109	7.2	95	6.6	30	1.8	30	1.8
18 – 25	390	32.8	532	35.3	411	28.3	594	36	298	18.3
26 – 35	143	12	295	19.5	180	12.4	620	37.6	1,032	63.4
More than 36	593	50	571	38	764	52.7	404	24.6	268	16.5
Total	1,189	100	1,507	100	1,450	100	1,648	100	1,628	100

Source: Central Office for Drug Control – Internal Security

Graph 4 shows the percentage of drug takers arrested between 2004 and 2008 by age.



4- Types and quantities confiscated

Hashish (cannabis) was one of the most confiscated drugs between 2004-2008 followed by cocaine as shown in Table 3.

The quantity of drugs confiscated in Kg (2004 – 2008)					Table 3
	2004 (kg)	2005 (kg)	2006 (kg)	2007 (kg)	2008 (kg)
Hashish and its derivatives	934	8,300	998	240	693
Cocaine and its derivatives	12	24	8.7	3.5	65
Heroin and its derivatives	11.5	3	2.7	19	4.3
Drug capsules (LSD) and others	37,000 capsule	2,603 capsule	9,777 capsule	2.1 million capsule	10,402 capsule

Source: Central Office for Drug Control – Internal Security

5- The situation in the Arab states

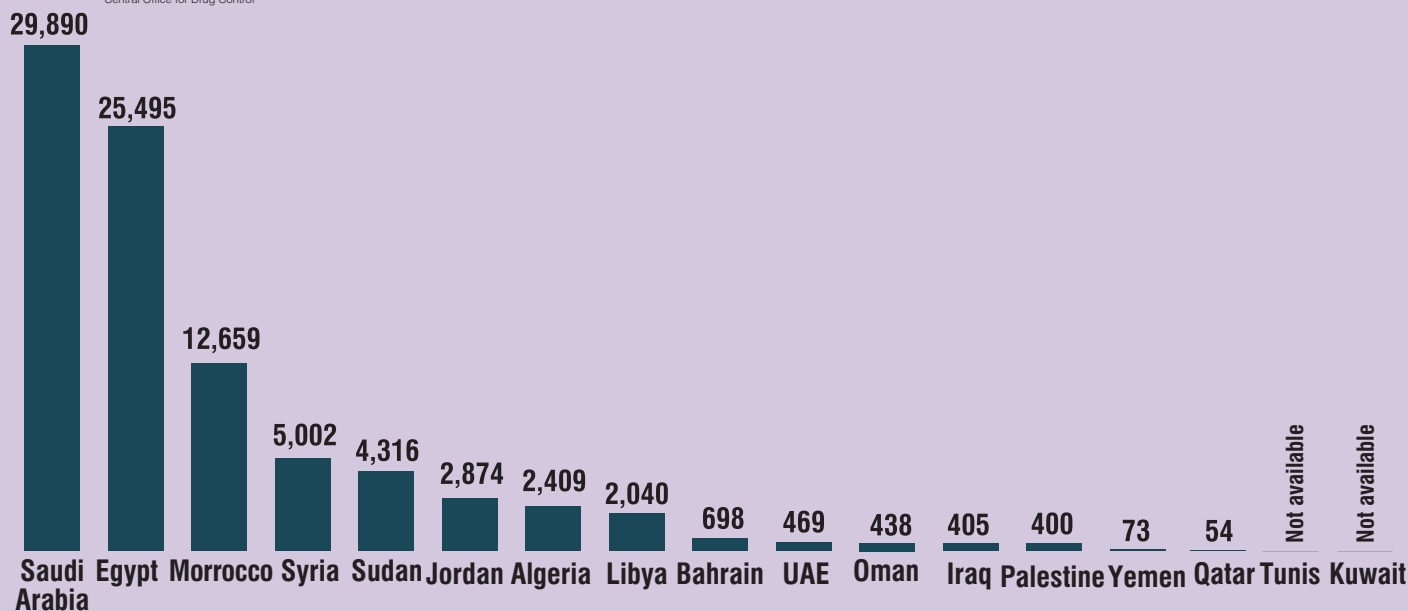
Drug taking is not limited to Lebanon but is spread all over the world, including the Arab world. Table 4 shows the quantities of drugs confiscated and the number of drug takers arrested in some Arab countries.

The quantity of drugs confiscated and the number of drug takers arrested in Arab countries (2005 – 2007)					Table 4
Country	# of takers arrested	Hashish (kg)	Heroin (kg)	Cocaine (kg)	
Jordan	2,874	347	-	4	
UAE	469	858	177	-	
Bahrain	698	1,113	1	-	
Tunis	Unavailable	-	-	-	
Algeria	2,409	44	-	20	
Saudi Arabia	29,890	15,124	40	5	
Sudan	4,316	19,258	-	-	
Syria	5,002	352	109	77	
Iraq	405	127	-	-	
Oman	438	311	8	-	
Palestine	400	6	-	-	
Qatar	54	521	1	-	
Kuwait	unavailable	411	39	-	
Libya	2,040	11,033	38	7	
Egypt	25,495	5,624	87	3	
Morocco	12,659	64,281	1	209	
Yemen	73	4,555	-	-	
Total	87,222	123,965	501	325	

Source: Annual Statistics Report for Drug Abuse confiscated in Arab Countries for 2007

[Graph 5] Number of drug takers arrested in Arab countries (2005-2007)

Central Office for Drug Control



Drug cultivation has spread in Lebanon, both as a result of tribal protection and governmental disregard during selected periods of time, aware that its huge financial proceeds cannot be generated by any other cultivation. Moreover, engaging in drugs is common among Lebanese, particularly with youth. Attacks and arrests, whether against drug takers, agents, or dealers are vain, especially since many families refuse to expose children of their's that engage in drugs in fear of social scandals and making the problem and its risks worse while no one dares raising the alarm.

6- Alternative Cultivation Project

The Alternative Cultivation Project was launched in 1992 in order to encourage farmers in Ba'albeck and Hermel to replace drug cultivation with other cultivations that ensure large financial revenues. It was expected that the project would extend over 15 years (1992-2006) with an estimated cost of USD 300 million that the United Nations who were supervising the project, promised to provide. However, the supplied amounts did not exceed USD 20 million and the project was stopped in 2000 due to widespread corruption, political interferences, and its incapacity to generate enough revenues for the farmers compared with cannabis cultivation. In fact, the cultivation of 1000 square meters with around one kilo of cannabis produced 40 to 50 kilograms of hashish. This could reach a price of USD 20,000 depending on circumstances, demand, smuggling possibility and upkeep of the harvest by the security forces, where no other cultivation in Lebanon can generate such revenue.

Letter to the President of the Republic

In addition to showing the extent and magnitude of the drug problem in Lebanon and the Arab world at large, The Monthly publishes a letter on the following page written by a concerned mother and citizen. It is based on her personal story, where she herself turns in her drug addicted son to authorities in the hope of rehabilitation. The letter brings to light a larger matter, that being the corruption in Lebanon's prison system, and how this very corruption is leading to the decay of society and particularly youth who are victims of their surroundings.

رسالة الى رئيس الجمهورية
 هذه رسالة من قلب أم محروقة على
 ولدها البكر. مشاء الله ومشاء الظنون
 أن يتركنا رب عالمنا أنا وأربعة أولاد
 منذ ما سنوات بحجة أنه لا يوجد عمل في
 لبنان. الله مشاء وقدر أن أربي الأربعة
 أولاد صغار في بيروت عاصمة الحضارة
 في الشرق الأوسط. الحضارة التي تجعل من ابن
 الله مشقة وأخره لا يقتلون بعضهم بحجة
 الدين وهم أجد ما يكون من دين الله.
 حضارتنا سمحت بزراعة الحشيشة
 في البقاع وحضارتنا سمحت للآباء
 باسم الشرع والعين إهمال أبناءهم
 بحجة العمل خارج البلاد. الله أفر
 المعروف ضامر بالنهي عن التفكير.
 وزراعة الحشيشة هـ إصالح

Letter to the President of the Republic

This is a letter from the heart of a tormented mother, distressed over the fate of her eldest son. Providence and circumstances have led the head of our family to desert four children and me under the excuse of not being able to find a job in Lebanon.

It was God's will that I raise four children by myself in Beirut, the so called 'capital of civilization' in the Middle East. A civilization that makes parties kill each other under the excuse of religion, while in reality, being so far from it. A civilization that has tolerated the planting of hashish in the Beqa'a.

I have screamed for three years, yet never found anybody to help me make the father take responsibility for his minor son, who in fact, became victim of a father running after his own pleasures. As for the legal courts that claim to apply God's word, it was merely a place for signing divorce papers, that freed the father from taking care of his children.

The Lebanese state overlooks hashish planting, pharmacies selling 'soothing' medicine to minors, the vending of tobacco to underage kids, the serving of alcohol to minors, and security services ignore law-violating night clubs and pharmacies, all this time led this innocent boy to fall into the trap of addiction to hashish and painkillers.

What about a single mother with 4 children, who has to work to raise these minors? Her only refuge was God Almighty, and her prayers that God watch over her son and not let any harm get to him. God Almighty inspired her to seek therapy for her son; so she called Oumm El Nour Association but she was told he had to come at his own will. How could she persuade a young boy under the effect of narcotics to quit using them? There was but one solution: to count on God and seek to have him jailed at Hbeich Station, so that he can see with his own eyes the fate of heroin addicts and the consequences of using drugs. I think it was God, through the existence of Colonel Adel Mashmousheh, a person with a living conscience, who helped show my son where addiction leads to. God has willed that my son finds refuge in Him again, and save my son from his fate. I thanked and praised my God for that. After Hbeich Station, my son and his friend were moved to Justice Palace Prison, where he spent three days.

God's will was that he got out on a bail. He came back home preaching to his friends and those who went astray, to turn to God Almighty and leave behind alcohol and drugs. It was a miracle that I thank God for. He promised me I should not worry anymore because he will not come close to any kind of narcotics or pills as long as he lived. God knows I first wanted prison for my son so that he would not get pills from pharmacies that are far from God's word.

I was shocked and appalled to hear my child tell me that the people who are supposed to be entrusted with his care are in fact the ones who buy his conscience. As for others, with little money; who deal with our minors'

souls, are also victims of the shady society we live in. I am embarrassed today to say I am Lebanese because Lebanon has become famous for prostitution and drugs. My son's trial is close and I will not let him go to jail. My son has made a mistake and I will not accept that a minor faces imprisonment for being the victim of a corrupt society and cruel system; a system that does not monitor corruption within its services, while it should be the refuge for the weak and for the mothers who raise their children on their own. God has willed that my son finds the right path again and stops using drugs, during and after his trial. However, what if he agrees to using drugs during that time? What about minors being jailed in Roumieh and paying the price of corruption? I will not allow that my son be jailed in a place that encourages the use of narcotics.

Mr. President, I only ask that you to do what God inspires you to do, if you are a believer. That is, forbidding the unknown and reforming my country, so that I could take pride in it. You, who are held responsible for the future of the youths in this country, stop the planting of hashish and summon outer forces whenever it takes. If you do not, you are responsible for our youth's decay, who are the future of this country. I am expressing this to all those who are running for elections.

I hope my letter is the beginning of a long path towards taking out corruption that destroys our youth and the future of our country. If you do not act, God anyway sees what they do.

Mr. President, I am the mother who turned to the law to help her son. Without God's support, I would have pushed my own son into the pit because I trusted the security forces and put my eldest son into their care.

Finally Mr. President, I ask you to urge the directorate of prisons, to jail minors only in suitable places. I wanted my son to heal. God helped me. I received help from Colonel Adel Mashmousheh, but Justice Palace Prison was the place that ruined his mighty work. I ask you to rehabilitate the young, instead of jailing them with criminals, and force them to do social work in helping to raise awareness on the level of astray young people. It is best for all.

Finally, I would like to call on all mothers to get in contact with Colonel Mashmousheh at Hbeich Police Station when they know that one of their children do drugs. This is the hardest thing I have done in my life, but I did the right thing. God showed me the right way.

God is the Greatest.

Mr. President, I ask you to eradicate drugs, fight its plantation, and go after the corrupted pharmacies to mark the end of Lebanon as we know it.

Mona El-Hage

Public debt at USD 48 billion

The “national unity government” contributed the most to its increase

Defense strategy, Hezbollah’s armaments, Ta’ef agreement, Doha agreement, Palestinian armaments inside and outside the camps, settlement, naturalization decree, judiciary, tripartite power distribution, Syrian-Lebanese relations, taxes, fees, public debt and others are some of the main headlines and political debates centered around the election campaigns. These issues are not due to electoral circumstances, but have always existed, where political parties recourse to them whenever they deem it appropriate and necessary. The public debt is an important subject of debate between Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, MP Ousama Saad and former Prime Minister Salim El Hoss. Fouad Siniora considers that public debt rose mainly during the mandate of Salim El Hoss who in turn replied deeming what Siniora said as “unjust”. Likewise, Ousama Saad considered Siniora to be “the father of taxes and public debt.” Under which mandate was the debt at its highest?



Public debt

At the end of 1992 and after the first elections in the post war period, late Prime Minister Rafic Hariri was assigned to form the first government and launch Lebanon’s reconstruction program. Public debt accounted for about LBP 5,000 billion at that time, which was equivalent to USD 2.9 billion. At the time, the average U.S dollar exchange rate was LBP 1,741. At the end of April 2009, public debt rose, totaling to around LBP 72,000 billion or around USD 48 billion. This enormous increase was mainly the result of high interest rates, which contributed to increasing the budget deficit, and thus raising borrowing in order to redress the deficit. Squander and corruption are also some causes of deficit increases in Lebanon. Debt interests from the end of 1992 and through the end of April 2009 account for about 80%-82% of the total public debt.

Public debt by government

The amount of public debt varied from one government to another and according to the length of their mandate, economic situation, expenditure amount, and tax collection.

The following table no 1 shows the evolution of public debt increases (in LBP) during the ten year period of successive Lebanese governments from the end of 1992 to the end of April 2009.

“Public debt is at its highest during the current national unity government mandate, with an increase of LBP 16.5 billion every day or 43.4% when compared to the previous government of Siniora.”

Public debt increases (in LBP) from 1992 to the end of April 2009

Table 1

Government Mandate	President of the Republic	Prime Minister	Minister of Finance	Public debt increase during the government mandate (Billion LBP)	Public debt increase (Billion LBP) / %	Daily increase (Billion LBP)	Daily increase %
31-10-1992 to 25-5-1995	Elias Hrawi	Rafic Hariri	Rafic Hariri (Fouad Siniora Minister of State for Financial Affairs)	5,000 → 13,621	8,621 / 172.4	9.2	
25-5-1995 to 7-11-1996	Elias Hrawi	Rafic Hariri	Rafic Hariri (Fouad Siniora Minister of State for Financial Affairs)	13,621 → 19,193	5,572 / 40.9	10.5	14.1
7-11-1996 to 4-12-1998	Elias Hrawi	Rafic Hariri	Rafic Hariri (Fouad Siniora Minister of State for Financial Affairs)	19,193 → 27,910	8,717 / 45.4	11.5	9.5
4-12-1998 to 26-10-2000	Emil Lahoud	Salim El Hoss	George Corm	27,910 → 36,241	8,331 / 29.8	12	4.3
26-10-2000 to 17-4-2003	Emil Lahoud	Rafic Hariri	Fouad Siniora	36,241 → 48,520	12,279 / 33.9	13.5	12.5
17-4-2003 to 16-10-2004	Emil Lahoud	Rafic Hariri	Fouad Siniora	48,520 → 52,257	3,737 / 7.7	6.7	50.3 -
26-10-2004 to 19-4-2005	Emil Lahoud	Omar Karami	Elias Saba	52,257 → 53,660	1,403 / 2.7	8.1	20.8
19-4-2005 to 19-7-2005	Emil Lahoud	Najib Mikati	Demienos Kattar	53,660 → 54,548	888 / 1.8	9.6	18.5
19-7-2005 to 11-7-2008	Emil Lahoud (through 24-11-2007)	Fouad Siniora	Jihad Azour	54,548 → 67,150	12,602 / 23.1	11.5	19.7
11-7-2008 to 30-4-2009*	Michel Suleiman	Fouad Siniora	Mohamad Shatah	67,150 → 72,000	4,850 / 7.2	16.5	43.4

Source: Related issues of the Union of Lebanese Banks newsletter

If we consider the size of the public debt increase in one month and distribute it on the days of the month in order to define the size of the public debt at the beginning or end of each government mandate, it can be deducted that Prime Minister Fouad Siniora was Minister of State or Minister of State on Financial Affairs for the longest period. Public debt is at its highest during the current national unity government mandate, with an increase of LBP 16.5 billion every day or 43.4% when compared to the previous government of Siniora. On the other hand, public debt was at its lowest with a LBP 6.7 billion increase during the second government of former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri, that had Emil Lahoud as president and Fouad Siniora as Minister of Finance.

Public debt reached its highest increases between the years 1992 – 1995, with a percentage of 172.4%.

*This government will stay in office until a new government is formed after the expected parliamentary elections in June 07, 2009

President Michel Suleiman's first year in office

Ending the void, return of stability, internal challenges and frequent visits

Commander in Chief of the Lebanese army General Michel Suleiman was elected president of the Republic of Lebanon during a ceremony on May 25, 2008 attended by Lebanese, Arabs and international delegates. This broke the 183 day presidential void that followed the end of former President Emile Lahoud's term in office on November 24, 2008.

Michel Suleiman was elected by a national agreement of 118 parliamentary votes and unprecedented Arab and international support. His first year in office is marked by the following:

- 1- Essential administrative nominations are still pending and positions in the administration remain vacant.
- 2- There were no attempts to deal with the prevailing economic and financial crisis and general budgets of 2008 and 2009 (and even those of 2006 and 2007) were not adopted. The public debt continues to increase, having jumped from LBP 65,674 billion in June 2008 to LBP 72,000 billion in early May 2009; an increase of LBP 6,326 billion.
- 3- The judicial nominations were executed; however, the judiciary suffers from political interference and corruption.
- 4- Social Security is in deficit and security problems continue to prevail across the country.

Apparently, despite the election of a new President, everything in Lebanon will remain suspended until the parliamentary Election Day on June 7.

The first year of the new mandate was also marked by frequent visits to various countries. President Michel Suleiman attempted to attend all invitations he received from states, particularly states that have decision making power and influence over Lebanon and the region. The most important achievement was that Suleiman reunified the image of the Lebanese state, as having one leader, whereas before his election, two Lebanese delegations used to participate in international conferences and each had different objectives.

Some consider these trips as unimportant, arguing that the President should have put more time and efforts to ameliorate the internal situation. They further claim that such visits were futile since they were mostly protocol visits and did not even lead to any important economic agreements.

Five years still remain in President Suleiman's term of office. Like any other president in Lebanon, Suleiman still faces the same recurring problems and challenges; too many responsibilities with very few prerogatives and very limited authorities. Accordingly, the first step to be taken should be a constitutional amendment that balances between presidential duties and prerogatives.

The most positive development was the end of the presidential void, peace and stability. 

Amnesty for drug crimes

Information International is working on a book that documents cases of corruption, oversight theft, the squandering of public money, laws and decrees contributing to a weak and paralyzed state. Starting from this issue, excerpts will be published in The Monthly.

During the Lebanese war, drug cultivation and trafficking thrived in Lebanon. The number of drug dealers and drug takers increased significantly, pushing the government to strengthen its control and struggle against this outbreak in the post-war years. This coincided with considerable international pressure to put an end to drug cultivation in Lebanon that was being protected by some key political parties.

Hundreds of drug crime perpetrators were arrested and more than 31,200 arrest mandates were issued against them. Parties concerned with these arrests put a lot of pressure on MPs and officials. Moreover, political and electoral considerations as well as financial interests merged, resulting in Law no. 666 on January 29, 1997. The law granted general amnesty for all drug crimes perpetrated before December 31, 1995, irrespective of the kind of verdicts concerned and whether issued by civil or military courts. This law was issued after a number of MPs proposed a draft law granting general amnesty for drug crimes perpetrated before December 31, 1992. This proposal was based on the following rationale:

“Since General Amnesty Law no 84\91 was issued, after the Lebanese conflicts, on August 26, 1991 aimed at turning the war’s page, with all the crimes it carried that were the consequence of scarcity and poverty and were perpetrated under the absence of a powerful government in order to illegitimately enlarge some people’s source of living;

Since the above mentioned General Amnesty Law had only encompassed drug cultivation crimes, leaving a large number of Lebanese citizens under prosecution, and contradicting the general amnesty concept of turning the war’s page, in order to enable those prosecuted to start a new sound life under the rule of law;

Since drug cultivation has definitively been prevented in 1992, and this issue has drained the courts with numerous prosecutions that date back to many years, in addition to the lack of justification for excluding these cases and prosecutions from the amnesty law;

We submit to your highly respected council this draft law with one article, which we hope to see approved.”

After discussing the proposal during a general assembly session in Parliament, the date December 13, 1992 was amended, and the law implemented December 13, 1995 (three additional years) as the new date instead. This amendment was advantageous for former MP Yehya Chamas who was accused of drug trafficking and detained since 1994. Initially, he claimed to have been detained because of his dispute with General Ghazi Kanaan, the head of the Syrian Secret Services in Lebanon, over the property of land in Beirut worth some millions of dollars.

Granting such an amnesty however is very risky, since it may lead to more easily perpetrated crimes if every few years such a law will be promulgated. In fact, the number of convicts among the citizens of Ba'albeck has increased, as well as their demonstrations and strikes calling for a new amnesty law for drug crimes. This was also met with the call for reprieving Samir Geagea and followed by calls for acquitting the perpetrators of the Dinniye crimes in 2000 and Majdel Anjar crimes in 2004.

Special amnesty

Eventhough the parliament has issued an amnesty law in 1991, that was followed by an amnesty law for drug crimes committed before 1995, this did not hinder former President Elias Hrawi from using his constitutional right of granting special amnesty according to Article 53 of the constitution. During six of his nine year term in office, he bestowed 160 amnesties, a precedent that the Lebanese Republic had not witnessed since its independence.

Consequently, the promulgation of amnesty laws and decrees has weakened the trust towards the government, discouraging some judges who were working hard in issuing verdicts, but saw their efforts contravened by such unjustified amnesties. ●●

** The title of this page “Whither the Republic of Lebanon” is quoted from Dr. George Yaacoub’s essay “Lebanon’s Security Dilemma” which The Monthly published with its issue # 71 of June 2008.*

Violation of Civil Rights and Duties

Every citizen has natural civil rights and duties such as the right to life, education and personal safety. After a certain age, he/she is entitled according to the law to other rights such as marriage, work and private property. In addition to these rights, citizens have some duties to fulfill such as paying taxes to the government and respecting the freedom of others.

Article 329 of the Lebanese Penal Code stipulates that “any act that may hinder a Lebanese citizen from putting his civil rights and duties into effect shall be punished by six months to one year of prison if perpetrated with violence and threats or with physical and moral intimidation. If the crime was perpetrated by an armed group of three or more, the sentence is prison from six month to three years; if no arms were used, the sentence is from one month to two years of prison.”

One of the citizens’ rights mentioned in all legislations is the participation of citizens in choosing their representatives in the syndicates, local counsels and parliament through elections. Anyone who tries to influence a Lebanese citizen in order to distort the general elections results through scaring him, threatening his family or job or money, or through offers and promises, shall be sentenced to prison from one month to one year and pay a fine of LBP 100,000 to LBP 1,000,000. The public employee by the government who uses his power to influence someone’s choice shall be sentenced to civil destitution.¹

In Egypt, the Penal Code defines the rights that should not be violated: the right to work, the right to hire or not, and the right to join an association. Anyone who uses violence or force or terrorism or threats or illegal measures and violates one of these rights shall be sentenced to prison for a maximum of two years.

Anyone who uses force or threats to stop someone from giving their opinion during elections or referendum, or who intimidates them to present another opinion shall be placed under a prison sentence.

In Jordan, the sentence is prison for a minimum of three months and a maximum of one year for any of the following acts:

- ⦿ Entering an election center in order to influence or delay the elections or to harm someone responsible for their progress by buying votes;
- ⦿ Influencing the freedom of the elections or hampering the elections by any means;
- ⦿ Cheating with the ballot boxes or the electoral lists or the electoral papers or stealing any of these lists or papers, destroying them or not putting them in the boxes or perpetrating any act in order to harm the safety and secrecy of the elections. This case is punished by the maximal sentence, stipulated in the article, with no applicable extenuating circumstances. 🇵🇸

¹ Article 49 of the Lebanese Penal Code stipulates that “the civil destitution leads to:

- 1- Isolation and dismissal from all public functions and services and destitution of any salary paid by the government
- 2- Isolation and dismissal from all functions and services within the administration of the confession or syndicate to which the accused belongs and the destitution of any salary paid by the confession or syndicate.
- 3- Destitution of the right to have a contract with the government.
- 4- Destitution of the right to elect or to be a candidate for the elections as well as all the civil, political, confessional and syndicate rights.
- 5- Destitution of the right to have private property or to publish or to be an editor for a newspaper or any other cyclical publication.
- 6- Destitution of the right of owning a school or to teach in the public and the private sectors.
- 7- Destitution of the right to be decorated and to hold medals or honorary titles on Lebanese and the International levels.”

Salt Production

An industry on its way to extinction

Over the past decades, salt production was renowned across several coastal cities and villages in northern Lebanon, especially on the coast of Anfeh where this practice was widespread. This craft was passed on through families, as its remunerative revenues were enough to satisfy living costs. Today however, the situation has changed and people's interest in this craft has dramatically decreased due to the drastic increase in the living and production costs. This is not counting the threat of external competition, which is also a major factor. The number of workers in this field has notably decreased as well. Salt-works, which were full of clamor and liveliness, are now deserted and neglected. In order to shed the light on this craft, The Monthly met with a number of workers and investors in this sector to discuss the ways and mechanisms of salt production as well as tackle the obstacles that led to the deterioration of this sector that is standing on the verge of its collapse.

Salt Production by Evaporation

The needed facilities are installed near the sea to reduce the cost of water transportation. These facilities encompass a huge reservoir and several roofless basins with different shapes and sizes, though these basins can also be constructed in identical shapes, depending on the nature and area of the land. After filling up the large reservoir (reservoirs), the sea water is emptied into the basins. A month afterwards, (duration varies according sun temperature, as it is shorter during summer and longer during spring) water enters the state of evaporation. Dust and residues are removed from the surface of the basins and the first layer of salt is then extracted. It should be noted that this layer is too small, yet has good quality and is used for food "supplies" with a price that reaches LBP 1,000 per kg. Moreover, this kind of salt is produced only when there are northern winds, while western winds transform salt to coarse grains. Subsequently, the salt is filled in sacks, which are shelved on wooden boards to dry up completely. The salt is then refilled and transported to storehouses, where the dried salt is grinded and packed before it is shipped to markets. It is also worth mentioning that during the phase of 'harvesting,' basins are filled with different levels of water so that production process is carried out in sequence. Each year, basins are subject to maintenance work to fix the cracks and fissures caused by salty water at the end of each production process.



 Salt Production - 2009

Problems

This sector suffers from many difficulties, leading to its current deterioration and threatening its future. The key problems are:

- ⦿ Raise of the manpower cost from LBP 15,000 to LBP 25,000 per day.
- ⦿ Increase of maintenance and reparation costs, especially that the used materials are imported from foreign countries.
- ⦿ Foreign competition, with the absence of a governmental tax that was imposed on imported salt (USD 30 per ton). The production cost is estimated today at USD 50 per ton and its selling price varies from USD 70 to USD 90, while the price per ton of the imported salt from Egypt does not exceed USD 40 in the local market e.g. half of the locally produced salt price. Undoubtedly, this factor is contributing in limiting salt production and compelling some producers to become traders instead and resort to importing salt rather than producing it.
- ⦿ Spread of seaside resorts along the coast because of their enormous returns comparing to salt-works profits.

Once again tourism in Lebanon prevails over industry while production sectors continue to decline in favor of other sectors or the advantages of foreign importation.

During the 1980's, local salt production reached about 23,000 to 27,000 tons and has now declined to 6,000-8,000 tons, while the market needs are estimated at 45,000 tons. As a result, Lebanon resorts to importation, mainly from Egypt because of lower prices comparing to the locally-produced salt price.

Egyptian salt is refined at Lebanese factories, which now suffer from a refinement cost increase. This problem is expected to lead to closing these factories and importing salt to satisfy the market needs, in addition to eliminating the refinement sector in favor of importation. ●●

Syndicate of Petroleum Companies Workers and Employees in Lebanon

The syndicate of workers in the fuel sector is one of the first trade unions established in the petroleum industry. This syndicate accompanied the 1950's "petroleum rise" in Lebanon when the oil refineries were installed in Tripoli and Al Zahrani followed by the fuel pipelines extending from Iraq and Saudi Arabia to Lebanon. The oil refineries, the fuel distribution companies, and the oil and fuel plants were the pillar of this new sector that attracted thousands of workers and administrative employees. It was therefore necessary to establish a syndicate that defended their interests and protected their rights. The year 1956 witnessed the birth of the union that gathered most petroleum companies' workers under its umbrella, and was first chaired by Afif Zinati.

“The syndicate of workers in the fuel sector is one of the first trade unions established in the petroleum industry.”

The Affiliation to the Syndicate

The applicant should be a Lebanese worker or employee in the Lebanese petroleum and oil companies. Those working in gas stations were excluded, yet the syndicate is trying to include them as well at a later stage. The affiliation fees are LBP 30,000 and the annual subscription is LBP 20,000.

Organization of the Syndicate

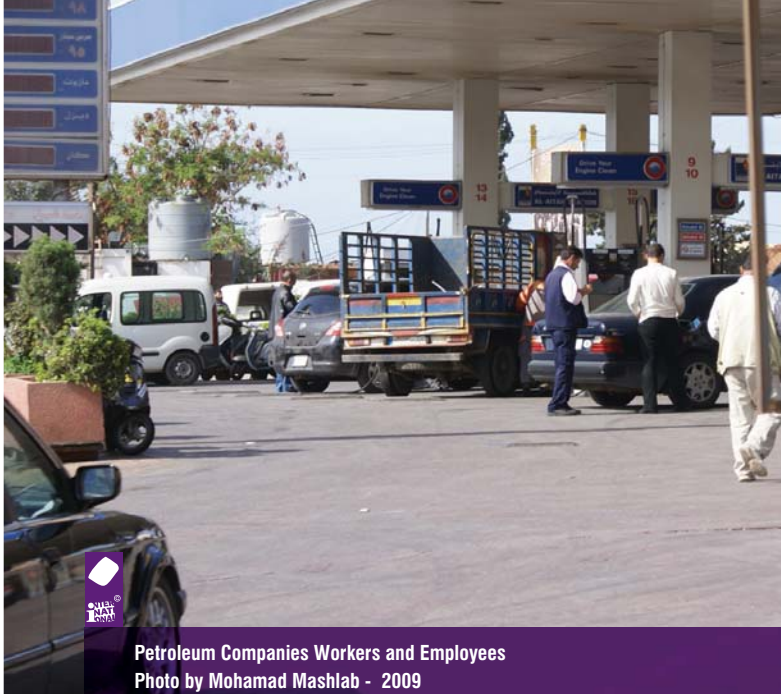
The syndicate is constituted of a General Committee, a Syndicate Board and a President.

1- The General Committee

The General Assembly encompasses the effective members of the syndicate. It holds periodical meetings on a yearly basis. Among its competencies are the electing of the Syndicate Board, hearing the reports submitted by the board, and discussing opinions concerning the completed activities and the scheduled projects. The General Committee also discusses the syndicate's budget and the amendment of the internal statute. The General Committee is comprised of 422 members.

2- The Syndicate's Board

The syndicate is led by a council consisting of 8 members that meets at least once a month. The members are elected by the General Committee for four years, where every two years, half of them withdraw by ballot. By the end of their term in office, the members are allowed to run again for the board's membership. The syndicate's board is in charge of the preparation of the budget and the annual report. Among its prerogatives is also the nomination of workers, fixing their salaries, suspending them, and contracting with technicians, consultants and lawyers. The actual board is headed by Maroun Al Khawli and includes Mahmoud Joueiji as Vice President, Claude Nammour and Eden Abou Jaoude as members, and others.



“The syndicate launched collective bargains with petroleum companies, which resulted in many benefits and social allowances to the union members.”

3- The President

The president heads the syndicate and its board and is its official representative. He signs on behalf of the syndicate all the letters, decisions and money withdrawal bonds, supervises the board's activities and follows up the execution of its decisions. He is elected by the syndicate's board for four years. Since its establishment, only two union members headed the syndicate: Afif Zinati from 1956 to 1986 and Maroun Al Khawli from 1986 until now. The latter was the youngest syndicate president in the Arab region; in fact he was 21 years old when he was first elected. Since then, he has been re-elected six times.

The Syndicate's Activities

The syndicate launched collective bargains with petroleum companies, which resulted in many benefits and social allowances to the union members such as getting permanent annual raises, salary for the 13th and 14th month, and full hospitalization and health care. Among these benefits as well were more annual leaves, increased school allowances, free fuel tickets, periodical promotions, bonuses, and a program enabling the withdrawal of the pension before retirement age.



President Al Khawli declared that “the syndicate realized many achievements in the field of operational, environmental safety, and security in order to protect the workers from any dangers at work. The syndicate contributed to the elaboration of adequate policies to organize the sector as well as the promulgation of convenient legislations concerning the workers' operational health and security. In addition, the syndicate still has an important role to play in defending the Lebanese citizen when it comes to lowering the price of fuel and has expressed its refusal of the high price of all kinds of carburant.”

Future Objectives

The syndicate is trying to enhance the union activities and to rally the biggest number of workers. The next target is the incorporation of gas station workers after the ratification of the amended articles in the union's internal statute, which will allow the affiliation of this category to the syndicate. ●●

Schools in Lebanon

International College

“A Tradition of Excellence”

The Monthly meets Mrs. Mishka Mourani, Senior Vice President of International College (IC) within its series dedicated to address the educational system in Lebanon. In this issue, The Monthly covers the history of IC as one of the largest and oldest schools in Lebanon and the world, its curriculum and educational system, extracurricular activities, its main characteristics and more.

History of the School

International College, one of the largest and oldest international schools in the world, was founded in Smyrna – Turkey in 1891 as a missionary school. In 1936, The American University of Beirut which at that time was called the Syrian Protestant College, invited International College to come to Beirut to affiliate as their Preparatory School. This is why for a long time, IC was called the “Prep”. During its first year in Beirut, IC welcomed 901 students from 37 countries and 16 religious sects.

Very soon after that, they started a French section which was called “Section Francaise” and that is how the dual track developed at IC. Until 1960, IC was actually the prep school of AUB. Later, the two institutions split with independent board of trustees but maintained excellent relations making IC a dual track school.

Curriculum and Education

IC is trilingual, meaning that it teaches three languages (Arabic, English and French) at all levels from pre-school to the graduating class, but prepares its students for tertiary education either in French or in English.

The French track is either the Lebanese baccalaureate in all its options, or the French baccalaureate in all its options.

The English track is also either the Lebanese baccalaureate in all its options, or the high school program and recently in the last 7 or 8 years, the International Baccalaureate (IB).

The school has been accredited twice by two international bodies (Council of International School and New England Association for Schools and Colleges), once in 1996 and again last year. It is also accredited by the French government as an Ecole Homologuée, an institution that offers an accredited French program.

In the first accreditation, the team that came included 28 examiners from all over the world. They advised IC to consider the IB program. It was introduced at the high school level a couple of years after that. IC then introduced the primary

program of the IB at the elementary school. Last year IC was officially authorized to offer the Primary Years Program (PYP) for preschool and elementary ages 3 – 11 years.

Mrs. Mourani continues, “The IB is extremely successful. It is an excellent program. Its constraints lie in the fact that if the student is Lebanese and does not have another nationality or is not exempted from Arabic, he/she cannot go into the IB program. Right now, the only foreign program that is recognized for Lebanese students is the French baccalaureate.”

IC students choose either the French or English track. The three languages are taught in both tracks right through. If the students are foreigners, they are taken as beginners in Arabic at whatever level they come in.

IC follows the class system rather than credit system. Schedules are composed of single 45 or 50 minute periods or blocks of double periods.

Extracurricular Activities

Mourani confirms that IC has a very rich program in arts, athletics, recreation games like chess and archery etc. Some of them are also offered within the curriculum like theater or music or visual arts. There are series of extracurricular electives where students can explore their fields of interest. The activities are part of the school’s program and no extra charges are imposed on the students.

Number of Students and Tuition Fees

IC currently has 3,400 students across all levels. According to Mrs. Mourani, this has been the case for the last 10 years at least. The number of students per class varies however. The mean of students per class, throughout the school is 22. At the secondary level, there can be a class of 4 students and there can be a class of 25. The mean at the preschool is 17. The ratio of teachers is 10:1, with about 350 teachers. There are 150 staff members with the maintenance staff.



The tuition fees in the school vary from one level to another. It ranges this year was between 8.7 million and 10.2 million LBP. This includes the registration fees. The bus fees and book fees are separate.

Main Characteristics of IC

According to Mrs. Mourani, “IC is a school that is a 120 years old. It has a long tradition of commitment to diversity. All members of society are represented here. We have a very generous financial aid program that helps students who cannot afford of our fees to join. About 400 of our students benefit from financial aid based on needs. There is a minimum GPA that needs to be maintained, but it is based on needs rather than on academic performance. The average allocation of financial aid is 40%. Some students may be getting 20% while others may be getting 100%. If we were to count the faculty and staff children, then the number of students benefiting from aid is around 700. We are able to reflect a composition of the Lebanese community.

“Other than financial aid, we have incentive programs. For outstanding students, we have an award system. If they are in the top ten of their class or among the top ten in their level, then they get for example, financial support towards their books. We have a very rich system of prizes and awards in math, science, creativity, writing and others. We are able to recognize our outstanding students in that way.

As for the graduating class, we have awards like the Penrose Awards, McLachlan Award, Bassel Fleihan Award, IC Scholar Award. Penrose is for leadership, citizenship and academic excellence.

“McLachlan is service oriented. Bassel Fleihan is for academic distinction, leadership and service. This was established after Deputy Fleihan’s assassination in 2005 with PM Rafik Hariri. IC Scholar Award for the highest ranking student in the school.

“Our community service program and activities program make IC very special and unique. We are very proud of the music, performing arts and visual arts programs.

“We have outstanding teachers. We have an excellent professional development program that touches every level.

If you were to ask our students, they like to come to school. Part of it is because we treat our students with dignity. Our discipline system is based on mutual respect. We encourage students to be confident and to speak their minds appropriately. IC students take positions. We encourage them, but of course they have to respect the framework. It is all part of being good citizens.

“We have 65 nationalities in the school of all nationalities with the largest numbers being Americans and Canadians. About a third of our students were either born abroad or lived

abroad and they have dual nationalities. A lot of them are a result of mixed marriages.”

Cooperation with other Schools

In terms of the cooperation with other schools, Mrs. Mourani continued, “We established a few years ago a network of schools (Principal’s Network). Around 20 schools were a part of this network. We share issues, as to how we handle certain problems. We have regular meetings once or twice a year. It is an informal network that doesn’t have any formal entity. It is a very nice sharing tool.

One of the things we do that is unique to IC is that we have an outreach program to the greater Lebanese community. We organize a number of workshops at the school with teachers coming in from all over Lebanon and other Arab countries. We publish a menu of workshops run either by IC teachers or by experts in the field.

This outreach program has another aspect to it, which is when we go to schools in areas difficult to reach in the North, South, Beqa’a etc and we hold full day workshops for the teachers at those schools. This is a program we are very committed to.”

IC is in two locations, Ras Beirut and Ain Aar. The facilities at both locations support the educational program through outdoor play spaces, libraries, technology labs, theatres, indoor play and recreation facilities, science labs and classrooms. The school has undertaken a master plan for both locations in an effort to keep providing superior facilities for decades to come.

Students talk

Below are some students’ impressions about IC:

☉ IC is a school where you learn how to be sociable, independent and organized.

☉ I had the luxury of having incredible and unique teachers that have taught me a lot academically and morally. The whole environment I lived in was really comforting, for this community is based upon cooperation.

☉ I feel that IC is a society within a society. It’s a world of its own that helps us develop skills necessary for life. This last year was the most special, we felt like adults in society.

☉ IC has taught me in so many ways, it gave me a chance to help my community, widen my talents and make everlasting friendships. I loved my teachers, classmates...

☉ ...IC has taught me the greatest gift of all, and I am who I am today because of faith, perseverance, and confidence. I would like to thank all those who helped me specially my teachers. Lastly, I would like to thank you, Mrs. Mourani for being such a supportive and a cheerful face, making my days more hopeful and proud. Keep that love, and keep that smile on, it really makes a difference. 🍀

Lebanese International University

from the Beqa'a to Sana'a

In this issue, "The Monthly" sheds light on the "Lebanese International University" (LIU).

Foundation

LIU is part of the Better Future Association (Al Ghad Al Afdal Association) that is chaired by Minister and former MP Abdul Rahim Mrad. The university is supervised by a Council of Secretaries constituting 21 members.

The University was established in 2001 under the name of Beqa'a University in accordance with decree 5294 on April 9, 2001. The head quarter of the university was built in Al Khiyara village in west Beqa'a, covering an area of over 150 thousand square meters, including dorms for more than 500 students.

Later on, the university expanded with the inauguration of branches in Beirut and Saida. Its name was then changed from Beqa'a University to the Lebanese International University, in accordance with decree 14592 on June 14, 2005.

In 2006, the university created two new branches in Nabatieh and Tripoli, making the university present in five Lebanese provinces out of six. It encompasses six faculties: Education, Arts and Sciences, Engineering, Management, and Pharmacy.

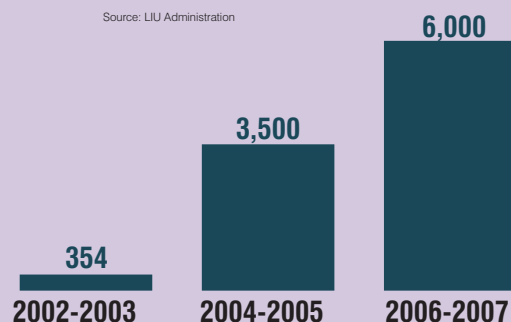
The University and its Educational System

LIU has adopted the American system of education based on credits and dividing the academic year into trimesters, of which two are mandatory and one is optional.

The university has registered increased attendance during the last two years. The number of students increased from academic year 2002-2007 as indicated in Graph 1.

[Graph 1] **Number of LIU students (2002-2007)**

Source: LIU Administration



In addition, the university hosts more than 253 non-Lebanese students, particularly in its Beqa'a campus close to Syria.

Administrative and educational staff includes more than 400 employees, in which 124 work in the administration department and 322 are teachers.

The LIU Beirut, Beqa'a and Saida branches include at least one central library and one cafeteria, in addition to computer laboratories with internet access.

Characteristics

The below are main characteristics of LIU:

- It is less expensive than other universities in Lebanon that have adopted the American education system. Table 1 shows the average cost of a Bachelor degree in the five faculties as well as the American Freshman Program.

Average cost of a Bachelor degree in the five faculties as well as the American Freshman Program Table 1

Specialization	Credit price (USD)	Period required to get the BA	No of credits required To get the BA	Total cost (USD)
Faculty of Education	90	4 years	120	10,800
Faculty of Arts and Sciences	90	3 years	99	8,910
Faculty of Engineering	135	2 to 3 years	52 to 108	7020 to 14,580
Faculty of Management	105	3 years	99	10,395
Faculty of Pharmacy	180	5 to 6	179 to 209	32,220 to 37,620
Freshman	105	One year	30	3,150

Source: LIU Administration

- The student-teacher ratio is very high with 18:1 (one teacher for every eighteen students)
- The university encompasses many centers, including the Computer and Languages Center, Tests and Evaluation Center, Research and Development Center, Information Technology Center, Strategic and Future Studies Center, Quality Control Center, Society Service

Center, and Human Rights Center.

- ⦿ The university is member of the Arab Universities Union and the Islamic States Union.
- ⦿ The university has signed many cooperation and exchange agreements with Arab and western universities, which offer many opportunities for its students to continue their studies outside of Lebanon. Among these agreements are: a cooperation and exchange agreement with the University of Ohio in the United States, a cooperation agreement with the University of Missouri in the United States, the Massachusetts Institute for Technology (MIT) with the aim of installing a Geological Movements Measurement Center in Lebanon, "Al Akhawain" in the University of Morocco, and Kaunas University of Medicine established in 1919 in Lithuania.
- ⦿ The university offers financial aid for students that can reach up to 40% of the expense in some cases, such as for orphans. Financial aid for other students may reach 25% of the payment except for pharmacy students who cannot get more than 15%.
- ⦿ The university administration communicates with the students through modern technological means. In fact, the students can register online and the university even sends them SMSs to inform them about the latest news in case other means were not available.

The University Ambitions for Today and Tomorrow

The university founders and directors have fixed a series of objectives and ambitions, in which some were already achieved and others are still in the planning phase.

For instance, under the objective of establishing a branch in Beirut, the university established a campus in Al Msaytbeh region in Beirut, consisting of three buildings and a fourth one still under construction. The university administration bought the lands surrounding these buildings; however they are overcrowded with residential buildings. It also set up a plan of extension over the course of three years that aims to expand the campus and establish courts and green areas.

Furthermore, the university became authorized for launching a Faculty of Agriculture that was supposed to open its doors in 2005-2006 but did not due to not having a sufficient number of registered students.

Moreover, the LIU inaugurated a branch in the Yemen capital of Sana'a in 2006 in the framework of its extension plan towards the Arab states such as Egypt, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and Syria.



Students Talk

The Monthly surveyed students about LIU. Students raised many important issues they considered essential for the university that are still unavailable, while also highlighting the many existing assets available at LIU. They include:

- ⦿ The absence of some specializations in the field of Human Sciences such as sociology, psychology, literature, history, geography and archeology.
- ⦿ The campus in Beirut is limited in space and does not include any green areas or courtyards. They particularly stressed the problem they face finding parking spaces near the university premises.
- ⦿ The inconvenience they (students) faced at the beginning of the academic year (2006-2007) where they were obliged to attend make up sessions on Saturdays to compensate the delay resulting from the Israeli aggression against Lebanon in summer 2006.
- ⦿ Absence of confessionalism, political extremism, and social or racial discrimination.
- ⦿ Art club, the environmental club, the human rights club, the science club, the diplomatic club, and the press club.
- ⦿ In addition, students stressed the importance of sports to them, mentioning their university's membership in the Lebanese Sporting Union for universities.
- ⦿ Furthermore, the students emphasized the importance of some activities led by the university and organized by one of the university clubs such as the first Job Fair held in the Beirut campus in 2005-2006 that enabled 50 students to find jobs. The university also celebrated the launching of the "Murex" submarine, a 4.4 meter long submarine weighing 4,900 kg, with a capacity to carry two passengers. 🌟



The Monthly meets Mr. Joham Verkammen, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Belgium

When did the embassy first open its doors in Lebanon and how many staff members do you have?

Before the independence of Lebanon from the French Mandate, we had what was then called the Consulate General and then, in 1941, Belgium immediately recognized the Lebanese independence and upgraded it to an embassy in June 1958. Last year we celebrated the 50th year of existence of a full fledged embassy in Lebanon.

We have 3 diplomats, one expatriate secretary and about 10 locally hired administrative staff. There is also 1 commercial attaché with 2 staff members of her own. Some are Belgians and others are Lebanese-Belgians. Almost all of them have the Belgian nationality. All our staff are extremely faithful to our embassy. Almost all of them have been with us for fifteen or even twenty years.

When did the diplomatic relationships between both countries begin? What are the milestones that enhanced its development?

Officially, it was the day of the independence of Lebanon. Our government immediately recognized it and it could be considered as the start of our relations. In terms of agreements, quite a few have been concluded between both countries. One of them is an agreement to promote and protect investment. Others agreements for example are the mutual recognition of driving permits and agreements on air travel. Another example is the agreement between the French community of Belgium (we are a federal country with several communities) and the Lebanese government in cultural and other fields. There is also an exchange agreement between our Parliament and the Lebanese Parliament which entails that delegations of MP's travel between the two countries to gain best practices. Currently, we are currently working on an agreement to avoid double taxation.

Belgium started its significant participation in UNIFIL after the 2006 war and the upgrading of UNIFIL in compliance with to UNSC resolution 1701. We have a significant presence. We had around 360 troops in the South. Of these 240 remain there at the moment. But Belgium is currently (since the 1st of March 2009) in command of the maritime component of UNIFIL, which takes the total number of soldiers up to more than 400, since the Belgian frigate has 160 sailors on board. Its mandate is to patrol Lebanese and international waters around Lebanon, trying to prevent smuggling, in close co-operation with the Lebanese navy. It is the first time that our navy commands such a big multinational fleet and it is an honor for Belgium to be doing this.

Are there any specific initiatives undertaken by the embassy to foster the cooperation between both countries?

In terms of agreements, we are working on the double taxation agreement. We are in the process of setting up a Belgium Business Council in Lebanon, which is an association of business men who have business with Belgium or who are interested of doing business with Belgium. Our Prime Minister who is scheduled to visit Lebanon from April 15 to April 17 will be present for the official launching of this association in Beirut. Membership is open to both Belgian and Lebanese business men located in Lebanon that have links with Belgium. The specific objective is to foster the commercial ties between both countries and to promote Belgium business in Lebanon and vice versa. It will provide information to businessmen about doing business with Belgium.

Belgium is a country of small and medium enterprises with a large variety of businesses. We are strong in chemicals and medical products. We are in fact the biggest exporter of medical products in the world. We have a large automobile industry, in addition to diamond trade and others.

About 90 % of our GDP consists of exports, by far the highest figure in Europe. We are reputed for our highly skilled and multilingual work force whose productivity is among the world's highest.

We enjoy, as far as I can judge, a positive image in the international community. This has maybe also to do with our comic strips, our chocolate and – last but not least – our beer. The biggest beer brewery in the world is located in Belgium and we have by far the largest varieties of beers in the world (several hundreds).

How big is the Lebanese community in Belgium?

The Belgian population counts about 10.4 million and we think that the Lebanese community in our country is made up of about 8,000 – 10,000 people. It is not easy to quantify them because many already have the Belgian nationality and we do not keep track of the origin of the person once he becomes a Belgian national.

How big is the Belgian community in Lebanon?

There are around 1,400 people registered with the embassy. They work in different sectors. Many of them are of Lebanese origin. They studied and became very successful in Belgium. Many stayed, others came back to Lebanon. The Belgian community, although of Lebanese origin, keeps strong ties with Belgium. We have set up a club for social and cultural activities – movies, hikes and the like – in Lebanon. This club enjoys considerable success.

When did you come to Lebanon? What is your diplomatic background?

I came to Lebanon in December 2007. I was born in Lebanon because my father was a diplomat and he was stationed in Beirut when I was born. I was first a lawyer and then shifted to diplomacy. When I started out, I went to Hong Kong. Upon my return, I spent 10 years in Belgium in different functions, among them in the Belgian representation with the European Union in Brussels and in our Ministry of Foreign Affairs. After that, I worked 4 years as Diplomatic Counselor to our Prime Minister. I came to Lebanon in September 2007.

At first, I was not very attracted to the diplomatic profession because as a child, seeing my father was a diplomat, I had to move homes all the time which bothered me. But then I worked 3 years as a lawyer and felt that I could not see myself in one place my whole life. I wanted to move around and so I decided to walk into the footsteps of my father.

What do you like most about Lebanon?

I love the resilience of the people, their will to live despite all the difficulties surrounding them. Although the country and the people have been through many hard times, the impression I have is that they master the art of enjoying life and that they know how to profit from the moment and manage not think too much of the future. The warmth of the people is just great. In Europe, perhaps we have forgotten this and are more focused on work. For us, coming from the North, Lebanon is like our holiday country.

“This country has a lot of unused potential. This is due, on the one hand, to the wars that have ravaged your country and, on the other, to the traditional weaknesses of government”

What do you like least about the Lebanon?

This country has a lot of unused potential. Due to the circumstances, you haven't been able to use your potential properly. This is due, on the one hand, to the wars that have ravaged your country and, on the other, to the traditional weaknesses of government which are understandable under the circumstances.

Are there any similarities between both countries?

There are some striking similarities. We are both rather small countries and are open to the world. 90% of our GDP goes to export. We are both countries that are made up of different communities. In Lebanon these are confessional whereas in Belgium they are mainly language communities. Around 60% of the people are Dutch speaking, around 40% are French speaking and about 1% speak German. We are in a situation where we have to manage the diversity of the communities. We try to manage this how we can. We however have the advantage of being located in a much more stable environment than Lebanon. It is not by chance that this is the case, it is in fact thanks to the vision of political leaders in Europe who had the courage to turn the page on World War II and build a new project.

How do you view the relationship between Belgium and Lebanon?

It has always been a very close relationship and it is developing well. Belgium is helping Lebanon to stabilize and develop. We do this mainly through our presence in UNIFIL – Lebanon hosts 1/3 of the total number of Belgian soldiers abroad – and through development co-operation projects in line with our pledges made during the Paris 3 conference in 2007. High-level political visits stress our interest in Lebanon and our wish for a stable, prosperous country. Trade is progressing rapidly: between 2007 and 2008 Lebanese exports to Belgium jumped with 50 % and in February 2009, Belgium even became Lebanon's 4th export destination!

Concluding we would like to say that Belgium stands by Lebanon's side. We wish for the elections to take place peacefully and for the good of the country.

High Blood Pressure by Dr. Hanna Saadah



Hypertension is a silent killer; it gives no warning symptoms but strikes suddenly, and often fatally, with strokes, heart attacks, or kidney failures

Of all the chronic diseases, Hypertension is the commonest, deadliest, least diagnosed, and least treated disease worldwide. Although it may begin in childhood, its incidence and complications rise progressively with age. It is not associated with any discernible symptoms but if it remains undiagnosed and untreated, it shortens life. It can cause strokes, heart attacks, renal failure, aneurism rupture, generalized arteriosclerosis (hardening of the arteries), and heart failure.

The diagnosis of Hypertension is both easy and hard. Measuring blood pressure is easy but having enough measurements to justify the diagnosis of Hypertension is hard.

To diagnose Hypertension, the average blood pressure must be more than 130/80. When the blood pressure is between 130/80 and 140/90, it is called Pre-Hypertension, a condition that leads to Hypertension if not properly managed with weight loss, exercise, and low salt diet.

When the average blood pressure is more than 140/90 it is considered True Hypertension and usually requires medications to control it. Weight loss, exercise, and low salt diet, will still help it but, unlike Pre-Hypertension, are seldom enough alone.

Measuring blood pressure is a tedious and complex task. Having one high blood pressure measurement is not sufficient to make the diagnosis of Hypertension. One must collect many blood pressure readings at different times of the day and over one or more months and then calculate the average. Only then, can one make the diagnosis of Hypertension with certainty.

Measuring blood pressure in the doctor's office is not reliable because many patients who are otherwise normal will have high blood pressure in their doctor's office, a condition known as Office Hypertension or White Coat Hypertension. Office Hypertension needs to be confirmed with home blood pressure recordings before it can be firmly diagnosed.

Measuring blood pressure at home is far more reliable and is the best way to confirm the diagnosis of Suspected Hypertension. Automatic blood pressure machines are now widely available, very affordable, and should be used by all patients to monitor and record their own blood pressures on a daily-to-weekly basis.

There are computerized blood pressure monitors that measure blood pressure every 15-20 minutes for 24 to 48 hours. These are expensive but have two advantages. One, they can confirm or refute the diagnosis of Hypertension in one or two days instead of a month or more. Two, they can diagnose Sleep Hypertension, a high blood pressure state that only occurs during sleep and cannot be diagnosed if the patient is awake.

The treatment of Hypertension can be easy and difficult. If caught early, before the kidneys become hormonally deranged, it responds to simple, cheap medications such as Thiazide Diuretics taken once daily. If caught late, however, it may need up to five different medicines to control it, which becomes a complicated and expensive situation.

The highest blood pressures occur in the early morning hours and during stressful times. The lowest blood pressures occur during sleep. When the blood pressure rises to very high levels that endanger life (more than 200/100), it is called Malignant Hypertension and is usually treated with fast acting medicines in the emergency rooms or doctors' offices. If left untreated, it may cause brain edema, coma, and death.

Since, with the global rise in weight, Hypertension has become such a prevalent disorder, it has become mandatory for all children and adults to have their blood pressures measured periodically. And since the most reliable measurements are the home blood pressure measurements, one does not need to go to the doctor to make the diagnosis. Having a blood pressure monitor at home and using it on family and friends is all it takes to make the diagnosis, seek treatment, and escape the ravages of this silent killer.

Patients on treatment for Hypertension need to take the personal responsibility of monitoring their own blood pressures at home. Neglecting to do so leads to partially treated Hypertension, a condition that occurs in about one third of all treated patients.

Although the treatment of Hypertension is the responsibility of the physician, the diagnosis and the monitoring of Hypertension has become, by necessity, the primary responsibility of the patient rather than the treating physician. 🌟

“Measuring blood pressure in the doctor's office is not reliable because many patients who are otherwise normal will have high blood pressure in their doctor's office, a condition known as Office Hypertension or White Coat Hypertension”



Why do we read? by Antoine Boutros*

In the previous issue of The Monthly, Kutub Ltd, the well known publishing house, announced that it was about to publish the “Journal of Excursion to Syria and Palestine 1860” written by Joseph Dalton Hooker, the English botanist known for his historical scientific voyages extending from the south pole to the Himalayas across India, Syria, Palestine, Morocco and the United States.

On a larger scale, the content of the book is unknown since it remains a manuscript that is still unrevealed. The author was a scientist who dedicated his life to accurate scientific observations, travels, and writing both scientific and above all agricultural articles. He helped his friend, the famous scientist Charles Darwin, in correcting the draft of his book “On the Origin of Species.” When he arrived to the Middle East, the region was experiencing major events on the political level. In fact, in 1860, the Levant was subject to many foreign interventions. Lebanon, in particular witnessed many religious massacres and political formulas that caused havoc to its foundations and is still affecting the country today, and for years to come.

What place will this book occupy in the readers’ minds and hearts? More importantly, we first ask ourselves, why do people read? It seems readers have two main tendencies that lead them to read: the first is Flaubert’s concept, “read to live,” and the second is Al Jahiz’s concept, “the book is my pleasure when I am alone and my leisure in times of distress.”

Looking at the world of books, we notice four main purposes behind reading and buying books. **The first is the feeling of “union” with great writers and the sense of virtual reality with great men.**

Something like saying we spent a day with Goethe or Tolstoy, as our poet Ahmed Chawki alluded to this relationship when he said, “I replaced my friends with books since books were the only thing loyal to me.”

The second purpose behind buying books is profiting from its practical use, such as guides and dictionaries. We use them to execute a certain job. It is an important and useful relationship, yet at times it is short and does not last more than a few minutes.

The third purpose is decoration, which has always accompanied books as an expression of their importance. Some old books are adorned in a way hard to describe. One of the main reasons for book decoration was the evolution of book production into printed papers, laminated volumes and colored designs. In other words, it was splendor added to the pleasure of seeing. This is how ornamented books became an object of pride for their owners who did not need to read them; especially knowing how rare they were.

The fourth group of readers, buys books for ambiguous reasons; as if we are talking about a silent majority that does not reveal or express its motives. In fact, this group does not read or admit that it reads. It buys books, which it is proud of and definitely realizes the importance of what it does. This category often likes to lend books just for show-off. It is a small wealthy category, of which income is similar to that of the paint collections of amateurs. Their collections are comparable to small libraries. Shakespeare equated the library with a duchy when with the mouth of one of his heroes, when he said “that is my duchy who would exchange it for a library?”

Talking about books leads us turn to libraries. In the University of Pennsylvania Museum is exhibited a tile board registered under number “166-15-29” that was found amidst the ruins of Sumer and is considered to be the first library catalogue in history. A similar board

can be seen in the Louvre and is thought to have been written by the same person according to experts in Sumerian language. This was the first methodological system for cataloguing books; a contribution of the Fertile Crescent civilization. It is not by coincidence that the first contemporary bibliographer who followed the path of the Sumerian civilization. He was Ibn An-Nadim, a citizen of Baghdad. In fact, he was the first to classify sciences and human knowledge. His “Fahrastr” was the first index for books known in his times that were in their original and translated versions. This classification became the basis adopted by the American library scientist Dewey (1952 A.D) in his classification system, a thousand years after Ibn An-Nadim. Moreover, the German mathematician and philosopher Leibniz, who was one of the greatest of his times and inventor of the binary number system that is the only language understood by computers until now, dedicated much of his time to library science and laid the foundations of alphabetical indexing.

It is also worth mentioning that the big national scientific libraries were founded during the same period that witnessed the birth of modern Europe. The major progress of libraries in the developed European countries was linked with the progress of science, culture and technology, which was a prerequisite for the formation of this intellectual treasure. The evolution of science and knowledge confirmed the saying by the novelist and historian Shelby Foote that “a university is nothing but a group of buildings surrounding a library.”

There is no doubt that the “Journal of Excursion to Syria and Palestine” will catch the attention of all four categories. The book will be particularly interesting to readers due to its international importance and the significant circumstances that were taking place during the author’s observations and remarks. In addition, the book is an important piece in the context of ‘the voyages literature,’ making its publication a documenting and cultural process that provides the reader with the pleasure of going back to the astounding facts of history. This leaves the amateurs of rare books impatient, shedding light on history from new angles and perspectives, where the author describes the Levant and the Himalayas with the same degree of importance. 🌟

* Writer and Editor-in-chief, Al Computer magazine

Lebanon: its geography and people

by Hassan Salameh Sarkis*



The Monthly is pleased to introduce the imminent archeologist Dr. Hassan Salameh Sarkis, who will contribute a series of articles for The Monthly under the heading 'Flashes of History.'

The attempt to interpret the name 'Lebanon' and shed light on its exceptional position as the 'communication and liaison between the old world's three continents' has become something absurd that is being repeated over and over in geography books and tourist publications.

Despite efforts to explain this name 'Lebanon' by resorting to some relatively modern Semitic roots, whether Hebrew, Syriac or Phoenician, it does not make sense to link its significance with yogurt 'Laban' or 'Louban' gum, or any other of its derivatives. Such an explanation would be flawed and desperate, and would not constitute a sound base for this kind of analysis. Even before languages were differentiated as being 'Indo-European', 'Semite' or 'Hamitic', the various geographic sites that Men at that time occupied have always been represented by referenced landmarks. Moreover, we do not know exactly which branch of languages and dialects were used at the beginning of the Neolithic era or even before. During this period, populations undoubtedly used to refer to these sites by certain names and terms, which was dependent on their language or dialect and may have nothing to do with what was later called the Semite, or other languages.

These names are meaningless, dating back to ancient civilizations that have now disappeared. They were transmitted from father to son across consecutive ages and modified or transformed to make them more comprehensible for each civilization's concepts, terms and mentality. Sometimes, these names remained unchanged and at other times, their meanings and pronunciations were adapted or altered to new comers or occupants. Such name changes in ancient times do not even related to Semitic or other kinds of languages known today.

The second assumption relating to Lebanon being the liaison does not make sense either and remains meaningless. In fact, every site or location in the world is in the middle of two or more regions! Therefore, what is being said about Lebanon's uniqueness and geography can actually be applied with all regions and countries of the world, so there is no need to expand on such trivial matters!

Irrespective of where the roots and original meaning of the name 'Lebanon' come from, it has always referred to a part of the mountains aligning the eastern Mediterranean coast. It was only after the declaration of 'Greater Lebanon' and the aftermath of the First World War that the name 'Lebanon'

implied any political connotation. Before this time, the new geopolitical entity was actually called the Mountain, and its borders were defined as such.

However, the areas that would later on constitute the entity of 'Greater Lebanon' formed different political units across history, as all other borders did. In fact, these political 'terms' are neither fixed nor definitive. Rather, they are subject to the circumstances of war, peace, politics, administration, society, religion and a series of ethnic, cultural and linguistic facts.

Here, one should consider all the groups and populations that settled or crossed Lebanon in the pre-historic eras and over thousands of years ago, whether for short or long periods seasonally or permanently. What were their 'languages', 'dialects', 'religious beliefs', and 'social systems'? Who were their 'ancestors'? Who were their 'successors'? The Canaanites, Amorites or Phoenicians? Who among them conserved the 'purity' of its 'race', not mixing or assimilating with the people, tribes and groups that crossed the region? Who among them preserved 'sound' relationships with those groups and tribes, staying away of any 'legitimate' or 'illegitimate' contact? One should also consider the role of women who were part of these societies and carried their own cultural and genetic traditions. What was the role of 'strangers' who arrived, fought, and settled in, or crossed this land throughout history; whether they were Egyptians, Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Armenians and Byzantines, in addition to Kurds, Turks, French, British, Australians, Algerians, people from Senegal and others? For this reason, one should consider the biological and cultural reactions, mixtures, mutations, and derivations carried in their genes and chromosomes. Having said this, would it be right to say that all these "have gone," leaving no genetic footprints in contemporary Lebanese veins?

Some radicals may be annoyed by this analysis; however, we cannot but have an objective look at the reality of Men and the historical influence on himself. As such, one must move away from a impotent and imaginative history to a factual, scientific and objective one. ●●

** Archeologist and a historian.; former Professor in the Department of Archeology at the Lebanese University; former Assistant Professor in Eastern Archeology at the University of Sorbonne; author of several books and about 200 research articles that have been translated in several languages and published in local and international scientific journals.*

Between Yesterday and Today

The Monthly publishes the continuation of the poem from the previous issue written by Omar al-Ze'ini (1898 – 1961) during the 1951 elections.

Your service is my duty...

Voter: Really, it was a great program...

Candidate: What use does it make? I lost

Voter: Don't worry, better luck next time

Candidate: I hope to God and with your prayers

Voter: What happened, happened. How do you evaluate the elections?

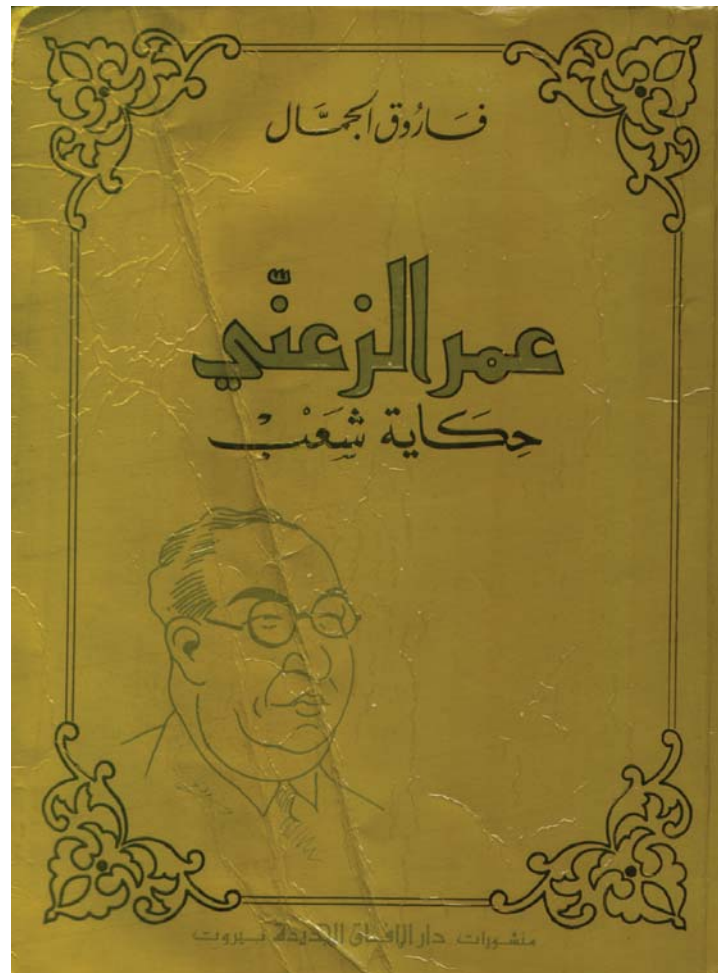
Candidate: Although I lost, but it was just and fair. I am not the only one to say this:

The foreign delegations are claiming
The opposition is insisting
The newspapers are saying
It was free, it was fair

The election was fair and clean
Oweini¹ made sure of it
They are saying there was money to feed on
To make vinegar you have to fertilize it
To fertilize it, you need worms.

Believe it or not, it's your call
Had there been pressure
We would not have seen 44 new faces

Election like no other
Didn't care for Khalil⁴
Neither from near nor from far



If it's true there was money
behind the curtains and under the table
And there was pressure by the police,
Why did the president's candidate lose?

If there was no discipline,
Jumblatt would not have won
In Zqaq El-Blat
Joseph Shader² would not have won over Khayyat³
And Dikran Tousbat would not have lost

Proof and evidence to that
Helou lost and Murr won

Stop talking
Stop nagging
Let us close this book
Such a nation, such a youth
Deserve such a parliamentary look
And that is the truth

May 1951

¹ Hussein Oweini, Prime Minister
² A politician
³ A politician
⁴ Son of President Bechara El-Khoury

Lebanon's MPs and Lebanese Parliamentary Elections 1960 - 2009

Information International SAL is publishing a book in Arabic on the Lebanese parliamentary elections from 1960 until 2005 including names of members of parliament and the number of electors in each Qada'a.

Electors are expected to vote on Sunday June 7, 2009 for candidates that will represent them for four consecutive years. This round of elections is different from all others that preceded due to the newly created divisions based on the 1960 Electoral Law. The divisions were agreed upon at the Doha Summit. It was then ratified by the Council of Parliament in its session held on Monday September 29, 2008, in which Electoral Law # 25, dated October 8, 2008, was established.

The book is divided into six chapters as follows:

- 1- Names of Speakers and Members of Parliament (1920 – 2009)
- 2- Number of electors in each Qada'a
- 3- Results of parliamentary elections from 1960 until 2005 in all electoral districts
- 4- Bi-elections
- 5- Parliamentary appeals
- 6- Appendices and electoral laws from April 1960 up to Law # 25 in 2008

"Lebanon's MPs and Lebanese Parliamentary Elections 1960 – 2009" is published by Information International SAL and Dar An-Nahar.



From the series of "Children Entertaining Stories."



"Little Odeon"

This is a short story with more pictures than words for children to relate to. It narrates the life of Odeon, the bee that wakes up hungry in the morning and moves from one friend to another to eat their food. At the end of the day, Odeon becomes tired and is unable to fly. Little Odeon is a great bedtime story for children.



"Martin the Little Trickster"

This is an exciting bedtime story for children. Martin loses his way back home when Saturin, the little chick, helps him find his way back in a smart way. How did they do it?



"Estelle the Little Beetle"

It is the story of a beetle that takes care of its flowers every morning, watching how they grow until she needs to look very high to be able to see them. One day, Simone the butterfly shows up and is amazed by the flowers, which makes Estelle angry, leading to a sweet and funny dispute between the two. A story to be read to children for bedtime.

**From the series of 'Children Entertaining Stories' with Pia, Estelle, Odeon, Martin, Bello, Pierrot, Simone and Ninny the little birds. Published by Gallimard, France 2000.*

Myth #24

Alexander, worshipper or fighter?

According to historians and recent research, the harbor of Sour also known as Tyre was founded around 5000 years ago. The city rose to hegemony in the 10th century BC, surpassing Saida and other Phoenician city-states. Its two natural harbors allowed it to expand outwards, founding colonies throughout the Mediterranean region and engaging in trade and commercial activities. The city was subject to many influences such as the Assyrians, Babylonians, Achaemenians, Persians, Egyptians and Romans, yet the most legendary episode in its history was the siege and burning of Sour in 333 BC by the Macedon King known as 'Alexander the Great'.

Myth: Alexander worshipper of the god of Sour

It is recorded in Lebanon's history books that 'Alexander the Great' conquered and destroyed the city of Sour to give worship to the god Hercules, the god that Macedon kings believe to have descended from (the god Hercules was called Melkart to the Tyrians and was the god of Sour). Alexander was furious when the Tyrians did not grant him permission to visit the city from inside to offer sacrifices to the god Hercules and instead sent him an envoy to tell him that there is a temple of Heracles on the mainland at Palaetyrus (old Tyre), suggesting that he offer sacrifices to the god there. Consequently, it was out of rage from this decision that Alexander conquered and burnt down the city, severely punishing the people of Sour.

Fact: Alexander fighter against the persians

Alexander used the pretext that he wanted to enter the city to offer sacrifices to the god Hercules. In reality, Sour was conquered and destroyed by Alexander in 333 BC in his quest to defeat the Persians who were his main rival in the region. The location and prominence of Sour was a very strategic base for the Persian Empire and conquering the city would deny the Persians their last harbour in the region that had not yet surrendered to Alexander.

The city at that time was the largest and most important city in Phoenicia, located along the Mediterranean Sea with two natural ports (one in south and one in the north). In Alexander's time, the city was on an island that had been fortified all around with high walls. By the time Alexander had reached Sour, all of Phoenicia had submitted to him without any resistance. Sour however, was confident in its fortifications and aware of the danger if Alexander did enter the city. As such, the people of Sour were only willing to admit his suzerainty and declined to receive him into the city.

The people of Sour proved to have a strong defence, taking Alexander seven months until he finally entered the city. In order to conquer the city, Alexander had to build a mole/causeway from the mainland to the island since he did not have a navy to attack the city from sea. Construction of the mole became more difficult as it expanded deeper in the water and closer to the city walls. As such, Alexander decided to construct two towers that would be moved to the end of the mole and equipped with siege engines, allowing his artillery

to get closer to the city walls. The people of Sour however devised a counterattack using a cavalry transport ship and filling it with combustible and inflammable materials.

This event made Alexander realize that he could not take the city without a navy. Alexander's fleet was reinforced with other ships that began arriving, mostly Phoenicians and Cyprians who had deserted the Persian fleet. This allowed Alexander to blockade both ports (north side facing Saida and south side facing Egypt).

Using their siege engines, the Macedonians were finally able to cause a break in the south side of the wall (facing Egypt). Alexander continued to launch more intensive attacks where in the final assault, Alexander coordinated with his navy to bombard from all sides, allowing their troops to force their way into the city and easily take over the garrison.

During the fighting, thousands of people in Sour had been killed, while the Macedonians lost a few hundred. Enraged from their defense for seven months, when Alexander entered the city he burnt and destroyed half the city. Most of the residents and foreigners in the city were sold into slavery, while Alexander only spared those who took refuge in the Temple of Hercules and the king.

In the end, Alexander did offer a sacrifice to the god Heracles, yet this was not his chief reason for wanting to enter the city. Sour would eventually recover from its destruction, but never regains the former influence and glory it once had in the region. Today the city is located in the south of Lebanon, where Alexander's causeway still exists. 🌟

Jumblatt and Syria

From “Al Mukhtara as part of Damascus” to “the beast is still the same”.

In the last four years, MP Walid Jumblatt's positions towards Syria have perpetually changed. Beginning with an “alliance sealed with blood between the Progressive Socialist Party and the Arab Syrian Army,” the position turned into a call for the organization of the Syrian military presence in some regions, to the non-interference of Syrian security services in Lebanese affairs, and finally developed in a call for avenging Bashar.

The following quotes summarize the relationship between Jumblatt and Syria during times of alliances and opposition:

Jumblatt the Ally of Syria

In April 1977, Walid Jumblatt succeeded his father, Kamal Jumblatt as the head of the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP). This occurred after the latter's assassination on March 16, 1977, which Syrian security services were accused of perpetrating. From that day, Walid Jumblatt considered it obvious and favorable to adopt a policy of alliance with Syria. Many of his positions reflected this point of view, some of which are listed below:

“Maybe at some points there was some distinction and difference knowing Lebanon's particularity; however, in hard and decisive times, Al Mukhtara is an integrant part of Damascus, of Arab Syria...Kamal Jumblatt was surrounded by great assistants; but the Arab position of Al Mukhtara was strengthened by our visit to Damascus under the patronage of late President Hafez Al Assad, in the presence of MP Khaddam, Generals Hikmat Al Chahabi and Ghazi Kanaan. They were all there and they supported me at that time. Together we launched the process of non-partition, peace promotion, stability and Ta'ef. A process that took time and that was marked with Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinian blood mixed in the whole region... Abu Jamal, you're welcome in your home; Syria was, is and will always be our great Nation. I wish for my son to have better days.”

(Welcome speech at the reception of Khaddam and General Ghazi Kanaan accompanied by a delegation during their visit to Al Mukhtara Palace on May 21, 2002)

“The relationship with Syria is strong and overcomes any secondary consideration. My position has always been and will always be the same when we stand at decisive turning points. We and the party are the main defenders of the national interests...the relationship with Syria is a national destiny since the occupation by the Crusaders...in the past, under the Israeli occupation in 1982 - 1983, we could prove with Syria that this national, military, Muslim alliance was able to dissuade the Israeli plans and lead them to failure.”

(Abyad wa Aswad magazine on February 24, 2003)

“We want stability in Syria and we stress on its importance. We cannot support a Western project or program, whether Israeli or not, that aims at destabilizing Syria...Syria's security depends on Lebanon's security and vice versa.”

(Interview with AFP on April 2, 2005).

Jumblatt Opposing Syria

After the assassination of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, MP Walid Jumblatt made many declarations against Syria and President Bashar Al Assad's regime, some of which are listed below:

“This time the regime should change and this sick man in Damascus should be judged because if he stays we will never know stability in the Middle East.”

(Interview with CMW on December 13, 2005)

“Al Assad is destroying Lebanon by mediation and is waiting for the opportunity of a certain consensus by telling us: here I am, look at my huge destruction capacity, come and let's dialogue.”

(Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation on July 20, 2006)

“We came to the Freedom's Square to tell you, tyrant of Damascus, you odd ape, you horrible snake, you shark rebuffed by all seas, you beast of the cruel world, you coward made by Israel at the price of the South and the bodies of the southerners, you liar in Iraq, criminal and murderer in Lebanon.

We came to tell you that Nizar Qabbani was right when he said that every twenty years an armed man rises to stab unity and abort dreams;

Every twenty years, a ruler ascends to imprison the sky and execute the sun;

Every twenty years, a new Narcissi claims to be the Mehdi and savior, the pure, the strong, the unique, the immortal, the wise, the erudite, the saint and the Imam;

Every twenty years, a gambler mortgages the country, the citizens, the heritage, the sunrise, the sunset, the trees, the fruits, the men and women, the waves and oceans on the altar of sadness;

Every twenty years, a troubled man rises with his pockets full of mines....”

(Speech delivered at the commemoration of Prime Minister Hariri's assassination on February 14, 2007)

“The Syrian philosophy, particularly that of the Bathist regime doesn't recognize Lebanon...for in the Syrian sense there is nothing called a Lebanese entity.”

(Interview with Al Sharq Al Awsat newspaper on July 27, 2007)

“Nothing differs today from the situation in 1979; and nothing will change. The beast is still the same... Like father like son... the Syrian regime is the one and only danger threatening the movement for independence.”

(Excerpt from MP Jumblatt's speech in front of the General Assembly of the PSP on July 12, 2008).

Release of the four generals: End of one phase, beginning of another

What about the tribunal's politicization?

On Wednesday April 29, 2009, at three o'clock in the afternoon, the pre-trial judge of the international special tribunal for Lebanon, Daniel Fransen, declared his approval of the demand submitted by Daniel Belmar, the tribunal's general prosecutor. The demand was submitted on Monday April 27, 2009 and called for the release of the four generals held on suspicion of involvement in the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.

As usual, the Lebanese people were divided over this event that made major headlines in all Lebanese newspapers and talk shows. In fact, each party perceived it differently. While March 14th saw it as evidence of the tribunal's honesty and non-politicization, others considered it a vocal condemnation of the Lebanese judiciary system and evidence of the tribunal's politicization. This is so because the four generals were detained upon the request of the first international investigator, Detlev Mehlis, and his two successors did not make the necessary efforts for their release, keeping them imprisoned for more than 44 months.

The event made the headlines of all major newspapers that were also divided over the decision.

[illegible]

Al Mustaqbal newspaper

The newspaper considered that the release confirmed the non-politicization of the tribunal and put an end to this "refrain" over and over sung by the opposition to break away from the tribunal. They also added that the generals' release was delayed because of the opposition that belated the establishment of the tribunal.

٦١ عاماً على النكبة:
القدس تحت مبضع الجلال

[illegible]

تمل البرغوثي
أدم أسير في العالم

[illegible]

انقسام في البرلمان العراقي بعد طلب الحكومة إلغاء مستشارية الأمن القومي

[illegible]



An-Nahar Newspaper

Al Nahar stressed on two positions. The first was Hezbollah's calling for the retribution of the ones behind the detention, and the second was Hariri's declaration that allegations of tribunal's politicization should be dropped. This way, An-Nahar covered the issue more objectivity, by summarizing the political picture in these two positions.



As-Safir Newspaper

As for As-Safir, it mainly focused on the political implications of the release. It discussed the changes that will occur on the political scene and the influence of the event on the elections and coalitions.



Al Akhbar newspaper

Al Akhbar followed the same political track as As-Safir, since it considered that the generals' release signaled an end of one phase and the beginning of another.

The disparity was not limited to the news content but appeared in the pictures as well.

In fact, Al Mustaqbal showed a picture of Saad Al Hariri declaring his position towards the tribunal's decision. On the other hand, Al Akhbar published a picture of Ali Al Hajj with his wife wiping his sweaty head and Jamil Al Sayyed, with his wife and mother in another small picture. Al Nahar and As-Safir chose pictures of the four generals with crowds receiving them.

International Media

Iran's 'New Proposal' & The USA

Iran President Says Ready for Nuclear Talks*By Nasser Karimi, Thursday April 9, 2009, Time Magazine*

"Iran's president said Thursday his country is open to talks with the U.S. and other countries over its nuclear program. But he insisted the talks must be based on respect for Iran's rights, suggesting the West should not try to force Tehran to stop uranium enrichment..."

Hard-liner Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said Iran would present a new proposal for negotiations, saying "conditions have changed" — an apparent reference to President Barack Obama's election and Iran's own progress in its nuclear program since previous talks with Iran were held last year...

Ahmadinejad's speech Thursday made clear he saw a difference between Obama and former President George W. Bush, who took a tough stance on Iran...

The United States announced Wednesday that it would join direct talks with Iran that Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia are seeking to convene...

Ahmadinejad said past negotiations failed because "they were insisting on stopping our peaceful activities, they were trying to impose that"...

In past talks, European nations backed by Washington offered a package of economic incentives for Tehran to suspend enrichment. Iran rejected it and countered with its own "package," but U.S. and European officials said its proposals were unclear.

On Thursday, Ahmadinejad said Iran would adapt its proposals. "Today conditions have changed. We had presented a package. Given new world developments, new subjects need to be added to the package," he said, without elaborating..."

**Iran claims new proposals will end nuclear row with the US and Europe:**

Comments from the US and Iran reflect the growing chance of a rapprochement between the long-term enemies

By Ewen MacAskill, Wednesday April 15, 2009, Guardian.co.uk

"President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran today claimed to have drawn up a package of proposals to end the stand-off with the US and Europe over Tehran's alleged nuclear weapons ambitions.

The US, in response, said it would study any proposals and expressed hope that they would address the international community's concerns.

The comments from both sides reflect the growing chance of a rapprochement between the long-term enemies...

Ahmadinejad may be ready to go further this time because of domestic pressure. The prospect of a deal has been increased by the willingness of Obama to drop Bush's precondition for talks with Iran. Negotiations could begin without it first suspending uranium enrichment.

Iran may be preparing a compromise in which it will continue with uranium enrichment, but allow the UN watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, to make more intrusive and surprise inspections to ensure it is not building a nuclear weapon. Another possible compromise, first put forward by Moscow, would be for Russia to supply Iran with enriched uranium, while retaining control over the enriched uranium...

Iran and the US may eventually have to settle for a fudge that would see Tehran mastering the technology needed to make a nuclear weapon but not making it. The Obama administration might reluctantly accept that, but the Israeli government, which is threatening an air strike against Iran's nuclear plants, may not..."



Iran ready to break impasse with West by opening nuclear talks:

Ahmadinejad 'open to progress' with Obama

By Ali Akbar Dareini in Tehran, Thursday April 16, 2009, *The Independent*

"Iran's president has said he is willing to build a new relationship with the United States and is preparing proposals aimed at breaking the impasse with the West over his country's nuclear programme.

The speech by Mahmoud Ahmadinejad took an unusually conciliatory tone, at a time when Barack Obama's administration has signalled that it wants to reach out to Iran and start a dialogue...

While the Bush administration had long insisted Iran scrap its enrichment programme – a demand Iran repeatedly rejected – Washington briefly softened its position two years ago. Its negotiating partners told Tehran they could accept a continuation of enrichment for a limited time until a time, place and topics for formal negotiations could be agreed upon. But the concession failed after Iran insisted it be allowed to enrich as part of its rights under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty...

Mr Ahmadinejad said that Iran welcomed dialogue provided it was based on justice and respect, suggesting the West should not try to force it to halt enrichment...

Mr Ahmadinejad's popularity has declined in Iran over the past year, and his speech comes about two months before presidential elections in which he is seeking a second term in office...

But it was unclear how far Iran will go to build a new relationship with the US. Last month Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's Supreme Leader, – who has the final say on all state matters – rejected Mr Obama's offer for dialogue."



Iran's Ahmadinejad offers new start with West

By Borzou Daragahi and Ramin Mostaghim, April 16, 2009, *Los Angeles Times*

"Iran's hard-line president said Wednesday that he would soon unveil proposals to resolve the international impasse over his country's nuclear program, and he offered a fresh start with the West, an announcement that comes as he struggles to shore up domestic support ahead of the presidential election in June...

"We are preparing a new package to be presented and we will hold talks based on that package ..." Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said in a speech to supporters...

Ahmadinejad revealed no details about the proposals...

One conservative Iranian lawmaker said the new proposal would have a moderate tone but would not raise the issue of Iran's enrichment of uranium, which the West wants stopped...

In any case, Ahmadinejad plays a relatively minor role in determining Iran's nuclear policy and its stance toward the U.S. Those positions are largely shaped by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the cleric who is Iran's highest religious and political authority, in consultation with other leaders of the national security establishment.

His speech comes amid potentially alarming news for Ahmadinejad, who is vulnerable among poor voters because of his handling of the economy and among educated urbanites for pursuing a foreign policy that has soured relations with the West..."



Karm Al Muhr

Village of Springs

Etymology

There is no apparent reason behind the name of this village. Most probably, its name goes back to marriage endowment (Muhr = endowment) and its vineyards (Karm= vineyard), which were considered the bride's endowment, which resulted in its name Karm Al Muhr (endowment's vineyard).

Location

Karm Al Muhr is situated in Qada'a of Minnieh- Dennyeh in the North Lebanon province, at an altitude of 1,050 meters above sea level. It is situated 110 km from the capital city Beirut and 24 km from the center of the province in Tripoli, covering an area of 850 hectares.

Karm Al Muhr can be reached via Tripoli- Zghorta- Kfarhata- Karm Al Muhr or through Zghorta- Al Khalidiyeh- Aymar- Karm Al Muhr.

Population

The estimated number of people registered in the Civil Status Records of the town is around 2,200. The majority belongs to the Maronite community. There are about 250 houses in the town, with 6 small commercial and artisanal enterprises.

Voters

The number of voters in the town of Karm Al Muhr in the year 2000 was 1,210 (of whom 274 voted). The number increased to 1,333 voters in 2005 (of whom 329 voted). In the year 2009, the number has reached 1,430 voters. Votes are distributed among the families as follows:

Al Katrib	48 voters	Youssof	80 voters
Jerjes	133 voters	Yaacoub	78 voters
Tannous	125 voters	Isaac	63 voters
Ibrahim	123 voters	Moussa	62 voters
Bshara	116 voters	Elias	55 voters
Boutros	111 voters	Lattouf	47 voters
Nakhoul	100 voters		

The above is in addition to the following families of Estefan, Jebrayel, Jermanos, Habib, Jamal, Badawi and Farah.

Local Authorities

The municipality of Karm Al Muhr, chaired by Mr. Mikhael Elias, was established by decree number 32 dated May 5, 1973 (however the first municipal elections were held in 1992). Its municipal share of the proceeds of the Independent Municipal Fund reached LBP63million in 2006. The town has a mayor, Mrs. Mary Yaacoub, and a council consisting of 3 members.



Educational Institutions

There is a public school in the town of Karm Al Muhr, "The Karm Al Muhr Mixed Public School," which was comprised of 17 students in the academic year of 2005-2006 and 2006-2007. There are 8 members in the teaching staff, including 5 contractual teachers.

There is also a private-free school in the town, "The Karm Al Muhr Maronite School," which included 38 students in the 2005-2006 academic year and decreased to 32 students in 2006-2007. It has 7 members in its teaching staff, including 4 contractual teachers.

Economic Activities

The residents of Karm Al Muhr depend on their living mainly from money sent from expatriates overseas. The town also used to depend on agriculture, particularly the cultivation of apples, pears and wheat. However, this sector is witnessing regression nowadays.

Archeological Sites

The Town of Karm Al Muhr is home to the Aycha Fortress built on the heights of Al Fawwar spring. It is a huge rock carrying the ruins of what used to be an important prince's palace or protection center, overseeing an old road linking the Dennyeh region and Ba'albeck.

Problems

Residents of the town suffer from many problems similar to those of any other towns, such as old electricity and water networks and sewage problems, since their network is still incomplete. The town also suffers from the emigration of its inhabitants seeking job opportunities abroad.

Town Characteristic

Karm Al Muhr is known for its abundant springs that constitute a large investment opportunity for filling, selling and commercializing water.

Families from Lebanon

Harb families

across confessions and regions



The Harb family is one of Lebanon's biggest families, where members of this family are dispersed all over Lebanon's regions as well as various confessions.

The origins

There is no single explanation for the origin of all Harb families, since each has a different origin. For instance, the ancestor of the Harb family in Tannourine is Abu Kurkumaz who governed Tannourine with the approval of the ruler of Tripoli after he informed on Abu Sader (Matar's family ancestor), one of Tannourine's inhabitants who killed him for revenge. His sons were:

Chalhoub, who is the direct ancestor of the Harb family, and also the ancestor of the Chalhoub, Merheb and Assaf families.

Other families who descended from the Harb family in Tannourine are: Baroud, Al Harouni, Beni Tayeh (in Keserouan), as well as Harb in Ain Ounoub, Chyah, Burj Al Barajina, Mazraat Al Chouf, Al Muhammariya (southern Lebanon), Yahchouch (Keserouan), Akkar, Kanat and Beqa'ata (Chouf).

Kurkumaz was a successor of Jerjes, ancestor of the Tarabey family in Tannourine. The Al Katrib family in Karam Al Muhr, Al Khoury Hanna family in Baskinta and Al Khoury family in Wadi Al Sett (Chouf) are descents also from this lineage.

Members

There are 14,070 individuals carrying the Harb family name, representing 10,050.

Their distribution

The Harbs are present in many Lebanese regions. The main places of residence and religious belongings are as follows:

- ⊙ Tannourine (Batroun) – Maronites
- ⊙ Al Ma'amariya (Saida)- Maronites
- ⊙ Ain Ounoub (Aley)- Maronites
- ⊙ Al Akoura (Byblos)- Maronites
- ⊙ Mrah Al Hage (Batroun)- Maronites
- ⊙ Kfarzebna (Zghorta)- Maronites
- ⊙ Feytroun (Keserouan) –Maronites
- ⊙ Jezzine (Jezzine)- Maronites
- ⊙ Nahla (Batroun) – Maronites
- ⊙ Bkassin (Jezzine) – Maronites
- ⊙ Baskinta (Metn) – Maronites
- ⊙ Al Diman (Bsherre)- Maronites
- ⊙ Al Loueize (Baabda)- Maronites
- ⊙ Mazra'at Al Chouf (Chouf) – Maronites
- ⊙ Ali An-Nahri (Zahle) – Shia'a
- ⊙ Yaroun (Bint Jubayl)- Shia'a
- ⊙ Al Hallousiye (Sour) – Shia'a

- ⊙ Hebshit (Nabatieh) – Shia'a
- ⊙ Bint Jbeil (Bint Jbeil) – Shia'a
- ⊙ Bashoura (Beirut) - Shia'a
- ⊙ Aytiti (Sour) - Shia'a
- ⊙ Al Taybe (Marja'ayoun) - Shia'a
- ⊙ Adeysse (Marja'ayoun) – Shia'a
- ⊙ Majdel Selem (Marja'ayoun)- Shia'a
- ⊙ Arabsalim (Nabatieh) – Shia'a
- ⊙ Toura (Sour) – Shia'a
- ⊙ Burj Al Barajneh (Ba'abda) – Shia'a
- ⊙ Al Achrafieh (Beirut) – Shia'a
- ⊙ Zebdin (Al Nabatieh) – Shia'a
- ⊙ Al Mansoury (Sour)- Shia'a
- ⊙ Shmestar (Ba'albeck) – Shia'a
- ⊙ Al Babiliye (Saida) – Shia'a
- ⊙ Kfarhouna (Jezzine) – Shia'a
- ⊙ Eastern Zouter (Nabatieh)- Shia'a
- ⊙ Al Ramadiye (Sour) – Shia'a
- ⊙ Tripoli (Hdadin)- Sunni
- ⊙ Msaytbeh (Beirut) – Sunni
- ⊙ Al Mina (Tripoli)- Sunni
- ⊙ Al Marj (Western Beqa'a)- Sunni
- ⊙ Kfarkouk (Rachayya)- Druze
- ⊙ Gharifa (Chouf) – Druze
- ⊙ Rahbe (A'akkar)- Greek Orthodox

Politicians

A prominent politician of the Harb family is former minister and current MP, Boutros Harb, elected MP in the 1972, 1996, 2000, and 2005 elections. He was also nominated Minister of National Education and Minister of Public Works and Transport from 1979 to 1980, as well as Minister of National Education from 1990 to 1992. He succeeded his uncle in parliament that had previously been elected MP in the 1953, 1957, 1960, and 1964 elections.

Doctors

There are 31 doctors of the Harb family registered in the Syndicate of Doctors on Beirut.

Lawyers

There are 19 lawyers of the Harb family registered in the Syndicate of Lawyers in Beirut.

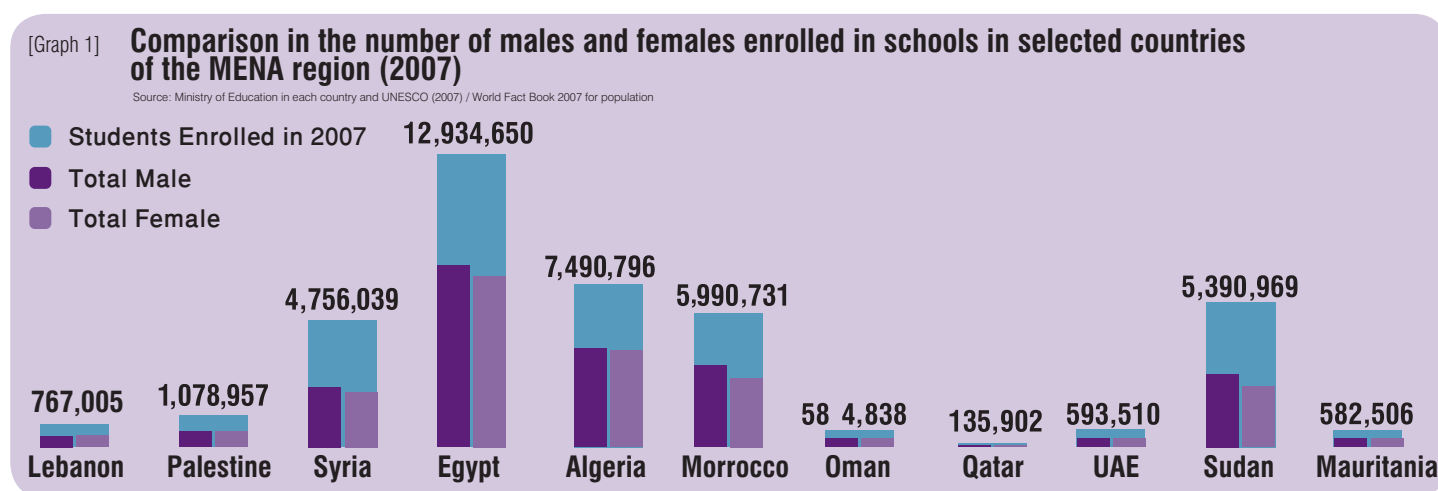
Engineers

There are 89 engineers of the Harb family registered in the Syndicate of Engineers in Beirut. ●●

Education Enrollment in the Arab World

Education is one of the central indicators of a country's social and economic development. Improving the education system therefore goes hand in hand with the overall development of a country. Statistics show that gender gaps in education have decreased, especially at the primary school level, and that education is becoming more accessible in Arab countries.

The data available reveals the most recent statistics of student enrollment in primary and secondary schools relative to gender and the country's total population. Graph 1 below shows a comparison in the number of male versus female students enrolled in public and private schools in selected countries of the MENA region.



As for the percentage of students enrolled in 2007 compared to the population, Palestine scored the highest with 27.7% of its students attending school followed by Syria (25.2%) and Algeria (22.7%). Sudan scored the lowest with 13.1%. Table 1 details the percentages in selected countries.

Percentage of students in selected countries			Table 1
Country	Total # of Students Enrolled in 2007 (Million)	Total Resident Population 2007—nationals and expats (Million)	%
Qatar	0.135	0.88	15.3
Oman	0.584	3.1	18.9
Mauritania	0.582	3.1	18.3
Lebanon	0.767	4.0	19.2
Palestine (Only West Bank and Gaza Strip)	1	3.9	27.7
UAE	0.593	4.0	14.8
Syria	4.7	18.8	25.2
Morocco	5.9	33.2	18.0
Algeria	7.5	32.9	22.7
Sudan	5.3	41.2	13.1
Egypt	12.9	78.8	16.4

Source: Ministry of Education in each country and UNESCO (2007) / World fact book 2007 for population

According to a document released by UNESCO in 2003 “STE in the Arab World in the 21st Century”, many Arab states are attempting to increase access to education through a variety of programs and strategies. This is evident from the increase in student enrolment at all educational levels in recent decades and the decrease in illiteracy among the population in general and among women more specifically.

Real Estate Index: April 2009

The prices of real estate have been on the rise since the beginning of April 2009 after its stagnancy during previous months. Prices are expected to keep rising, especially after the elections in June, as well as in July and August. During April 2009, the prices of real estate were generally stable, with an increase and decrease of 0.5% to 1%, also taking into consideration that prices have witnessed an increase in the past month.

Table no.1 and 2 show the average price of land and construction sold during April 2009.

Average price of land sold during April 2009				Table 1
Location	Area (m ²)	Price (USD)	USD/m ²	
Beirut				
Achrafieh	630	2,142,000	3,400	
Achrafieh	2,100	4,305,000	2,050	
Hamra	440	2,068,000	4,700	
Mazra'a	290	1,406,500	4,850	
Ba'abda				
Hazmieh	650	903,500	1,390	
Mar Taqla	520	343,200	660	
Matn				
Mazra'at Yachouaa	970	194,000	200	
Bolonia	1,680	221,760	132	
Broumana	1,020	397,800	390	
A'aley				
Bshamoun	990	168,300	170	
Doha	1,100	154,000	140	
Keserwan				
Faqra	1,250	393,750	315	
Adman	890	289,250	325	
Qlayaat	980	122,500	125	

Source: Information International – April 2009

Average price of construction (apartments) sold during April 2009				Table 2
Location	Area (m ²)	Price (USD)	USD/m ²	
Beirut				
Mathaf	550	1,100,000	2,000	
Achrafieh	300	600,000	2,000	
Syoufi	160	216,000	1,350	
Syoufi	170	323,000	1,900	
Mohammad Al Hout	160	320,000	2,000	
A'aisha Bakkar	150	285,000	1,900	
Koreitem	175	490,000	2,800	
Raouche (Australia Street)	180	520,000	2,888	
Ba'abda				
Yarzi	230	400,000	1,740	
Hazmieh	130	136,500	1,050	
Hazmieh	110	110,000	1,000	
Mar Takla	260	480,000	1,846	
Mar Takla	300	500,000	1,666	
Haret Hraik	210	153,300	730	
Matn				
Antelias	200	200,000	1,000	
Mansourieh	175	171,500	980	
Rabieh	270	351,000	1,300	
Zalka	150	150,000	1,000	
Sin El-Fil (Al Horsh)	245	735,000	3,000	
A'aley				
Chouifat	165	112,200	680	
Bshamoun	215	94,600	440	
Bshamoun	150	75,000	500	
Dohat El-Hoss	270	259,200	960	
Keserwan				
New Shaileh	250	170,000	680	
Adma	230	253,000	1,100	
Adonis	300	195,000	650	
Tabarja	160	124,800	780	

Source: Information International – April 2009

Consumer Price Index

April 2009

According to Information International's index during April 2009, there was a continuous decrease in the price of goods and food products. In addition, supermarket owners have noted a decrease in volumes sold, complaining that the high cost has decreased the purchasing tendency of the consumer. People are also complaining that prices worldwide are largely decreasing compared to Lebanon, and are therefore buying only necessary food products.

During the month of April 2009, the price of 37 products decreased, 9 others increased, while 54 products maintained the same price.

Table no.1 shows the price of goods and food products during April 2009 in LBP.

The price of goods and food products during April 2009 Table 1

Item and brand		Prices beginning of April 2009	Prices beginning of May 2009	% of price change
Oil				
Afia corn oil	(3.5 liters)	12,000	12,000	0
Mazola corn oil	(3.5 liters)	13,250	12,150	- 8.3
Mazola corn oil	(2 liters)	9,500	7,000	- 26.3
Slim corn oil	2 liters)	9,000	7,500	- 16.6
Wesson corn oil	(2 liters)	9,000	9,000	0
Ghandour soya oil	(3.8 liters)	10,850	10,000	- 7.8
Alfa corn oil	(4 liters)	14,100	13,500	- 4.2
Al-Wadi olive oil	(1/2 liter)	8,600	8,450	- 1.7
Ketchup and Sauces				
Libby's Ketchup	(567 g)	2,000	1,780	- 11
Extra Ketchup	(340 g)	1,230	1,170	- 4.8
Extra Ketchup	(2.2 kg)	5,650	5,550	- 1.7
Dolly's Mayonnaise	(500 ml)	3,900	3,900	0
Al-Wadi Mayonnaise	(500 ml)	3,800	3,800	0
Al-Bsat Tahina	(900 g)	7,750	7,500	- 3.2
Al-Bsat Tahina	(450 g)	4,100	4,000	- 2.4
Taous tomato sauce	(70 g)	525	525	0
Taous tomato sauce	(425 g)	2,750	2,750	0
Tala tomato sauce	(675 g)	2,500	2,500	0

Dairy Products			
Candia full cream milk (1 liter)	2,450	2,450	0
Candia full cream yoghurt (2 kg)	5,000	5,000	0
Bonjus labneh (1 kg)	3,750	3,750	0
Taanayel labneh (500 g)	5,000	5,200	+ 4
Candia labneh (500 g)	5,000	5,000	0
Taanayel yoghurt (1 kg)	3,000	3,000	0
Smeds cheese (400 g)	4,000	3,750	- 6.2
Picon cheese (360 g)	3,400	3,400	0
Picon cheese (160 g)	1,750	1,750	0
Double-crème cheese (1 kg)	6,100	5,500	- 9.8
Fresh country cheese (1 kg)	8,000	7,500	- 6.2
Khashkawan cheese (1 kg)	12,750	12,750	0
Lurpak butter (200 g)	2,250	2,250	0
Tatra butter (200 g)	2,100	2,000	- 4.7
Al-Maalaqtain margarine (2 kg)	10,000	9,860	- 1.4
Al-Baqara al-Haloub margarine (2kg)	21,550	21,550	0
Vegetaline margarine (2 kg)	16,750	16,750	0
Nido full cream milk (bag) (2,250 g)	19,000	18,000	- 5.2
Nido full cream milk (2,500 g)	22,100	23,250	+ 5.2
Tatra full cream milk (1,800 g)	15,250	15,250	0
Cereals			
Khater white lentils (1 kg)	2,600	2,600	0
Khater chick-peas fahli (1 kg)	2,700	2,950	+ 9.2
Khater beans (1 kg)	1,550	1,550	0
Peeled wheat (1 kg)	900	1,100	+ 22.2
Pineal Lima Bean (1 kg)	2,750	2,750	0
Brown Fine Burgul (1 kg)	1,100	1,750	+ 59
Egyptian rice (1 kg)	2,000	2,000	0
American rice (1 kg)	2,600	2,300	- 11.5
Italian rice (1 kg)	2,730	2,730	0
Al-Wadi Hommos Tahina (380 g)	1,125	1,125	0
Chtaura Hommos Tahina (380 g)	1,450	1,100	- 24.1
California Gardens beans (450 g)	1,100	1,100	0
Al-Wadi beans (450 g)	1,150	890	- 22.2
Chtaura beans (480 g)	1,250	1,150	- 8
Libby's corn (340 g)	1,500	1,250	- 16.6



Pasta				
Barilla spaghetti	(500 g)	2,050	2,050	0
Antonio Amato spaghetti	(500 g)	2,500	2,500	0
Monte spaghetti	(500 g)	2,250	2,250	0
Sugar and Salt				
Sugar	(2 kg)	1,870	1,850	- 1
Al-Ousra Sugar	(5 kg)	5,100	5,500	+ 7.8
Salt	(700 g)	500	480	- 2
Box of salt	(738 g)	1,420	1,400	- 1.4
Meat, Fish and Eggs				
Luncheon meat beef	(198 g)	1,420	1,420	0
Zwan chicken	(200 g)	2,450	2,250	- 8.1
Zwan beef	(200 g)	2,300	2,200	- 4.5
Al-Mona chicken	(200 g)	1,900	1,900	0
Al-Taghzia beef	(200 g)	1,750	1,750	0
Al-Taghzia chicken	(200 g)	1,750	1,750	0
Geisha sardine	(125 g)	1,075	1,000	- 6.9
Deli sardine	(125 g)	1,000	1,000	0
Milo sardine	(125 g)	1,000	1,000	0
Geisha tuna	(200 g)	2,050	2,050	0
White Bell tuna	(200 g)	2,000	2,000	0
White Diamond tuna	(200 g)	1,400	1,400	0
Skipper tuna	(185 g)	1,750	1,750	0
Eggs	(30 eggs)	6,500	8,000	+ 23
Beef	(1 kg)	13,500	11,000	- 22.7
Sheep	(1 kg)	22,000	22,000	0

Coffee and Tea				
Najjar coffee	(1kg)	13,000	11,800	- 9.2
Brazil coffee	(1 kg)	12,000	9,500	- 20.8
Al-Hisan tea	(180 g)	2,500	2,500	0
Nastle	(250g)	1,720	1,700	- 1.1
Halvah and Jam				
Al-Wadi halvah	(454 g)	4,000	4,000	0
Al-Bsat halvah	(450 g)	4,100	4,100	0
Chtaura apricot jam	(1 kg)	6,100	6,100	0
Al-Wadi apricot jam	(1 kg)	5,630	5,630	0
Tissues and detergents				
Mimosa tissues	(500 g)	2,500	2,500	0
Fine tissues	(200 tissues)	1,100	1,100	0
Primo tissues	(200 tissues)	1,100	1,200	+ 4.3
Gipsy tissues	(300 tissues)	2,275	2,275	0
Mimosa toilet papers	(4 rolls)	2,320	2,200	- 5.1
Yes detergent	(900 g)	1,900	1,980	+ 4.2
Clorox	(1 liter)	1,400	1,400	0
Persil	(4 kg)	17,830	17,830	0
Ariel	(4 kg)	18,000	18,000	0
Fruits and Vegetables				
Orange	(1 kg)	1,250	1,250	0
Tomatoes	(1kg)	1,000	700	- 30
Cucumbers	(1kg)	1,000	650	- 35
Bananas	(1kg)	1,250	1,250	0
Lemons	(1 kg)	600	400	- 33.3
Apples	(1 kg)	2,250	2,250	0
Potatoes	(1 kg)	900	700	- 22.2

Source: Information International – April 2009

Did You Know That? by Dr. Hanna Saadah

1. Finally, there is a real treatment for the common cold:

In a study published in the March 15, 2008 issue of the Journal of Infectious Disease, fifty ambulatory patients with common colds were treated for five days either with zinc lozenges 13.3 mg taken every 2-3 hours while awake or with placebo. The zinc group cold lasted 4 days while the placebo group cold lasted 7 days and the difference was statistically significant. Zinc lozenges reduced the severity and duration of cold symptoms because zinc has antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties.

2. Low calorie diets in the elderly enhance memory:

A German group studied 50 elderly women and found that a 30% reduction of caloric intake caused a significant increase in memory. This effect is thought to be due to lower circulating insulin and inflammatory levels, which enhance brain nerve connections. The study was published in the Proc Natl Acad Sci USA 2009 Jan 27;106:1255.

3. New tuberculosis screening blood tests are better than skin tests:

The tuberculosis skin test has been the main screening test for more than a hundred years. Now a new blood test, the Interferon- γ assay has been shown to be faster, more sensitive, and more specific. The study was published in the Arch Intern Med 2009 Jan 26;169:179.

Beirut Rafic Hariri International Airport

April 2009, 29.7% increase in passengers

Air traffic in the Beirut Rafic Hariri International Airport, has witnessed an increase during the month of April 2009. The total number of passengers reached 392,556, with an increase of 89,847 passengers or 29.7% compared to the previous month. It is considered a high increase, compared to the 8.6% increase that occurred in March 2009, while in February, it decreased by 9.2%. In comparison with April 2008, there is an increase in the number of passengers by 35.1% (101,998 passengers).

The total number of passengers from the beginning of the year to the end of April 2009 is 1,281,137 passengers compared to 1,053,255 during the same period last year, with an increase by 21.6%.

Table 1 shows the airport traffic in the month of April 2009 compared to the previous month of March and the month of April 2008.

Airport traffic in the month of April 2009 compared to the previous month of March and the month of April 2008. Table 1

	March 2009	April 2009	% of change March 2009 – April 2009	April 2008	% of change April 2008 – April 2009
Arriving airplanes	2,002	2,129	+6.3	1,656	+28.5
Departing airplanes	1,995	2,124	+6.4	1,648	+28.8
Total # of airplanes	3,997	4,253	+6.4	3,304	+28.7
Arriving crews	16,092	16,961	+5.4	13,192	+28.5
Departing crews	16,030	16,923	+5.5	13,130	+28.8
Total # of crews	32,122	33,884	+5.4	26,322	+28.7
Arriving passengers	152,281	203,006	+33.3	146,161	+38.9
Departing passengers	147,558	186,474	+26.3	139,155	+34
Transit passengers	2,870	3,076	+7.1	5,242	-41.3
Total # of passengers	302,709	392,556	+29.7	290,558	+35.1
Imported goods (per ton)	3,937	3,448	-12.4	3,041	+13.4
Exported goods (per ton)	2,283	2,278	-0.2	2,457	-7.3
Total size of goods (per ton)	6,220	5,726	-7.9	5,498	+4.1

Source: Directorate General of Civil Aviation – April 2009

Stats & Numbers

⊙ **LBP 575 million** is the amount of incoming money to the National Treasury from the withdrawal of 115 candidates from the parliamentary elections (each paid LBP 5 million). 587 candidates are still running in the election. Each of these candidates (587) should deposit LBP 8 million in the National Treasury divided as follows: LBP 2 million as non-refundable candidature fees and LBP 6 million as an electoral guarantee refunded to the candidate in the case he/she wins or in the case he/she loses by a minimum of 20% of the votes. Half of the electoral guarantees (LBP 3 million) are refunded in case of withdrawal within the legal deadline (45 days before the elections). If the candidate withdraws after this deadline, no money is refunded.

⊙ **LBP 2.1 billion** is the amount of the Lebanese government's contribution to the expenses of the United Nations Development Program in Lebanon. Some assume that United Nations projects are fully funded by the United Nations, but the truth is that the Lebanese government bears part of the expenses.

⊙ **LBP 3.3 billion** is the cost of printing financial stamps for the Ministry of Finance. Many countries have started replacing stamps with seals in order to spare time and money.

⊙ The establishment of **4 private universities** was authorized last April and will be added to the existing ones. The four authorizations enabled the transformation of two academic institutes into universities as well as the establishment of two universities, also taking into consideration the confessional balance. These institutions are located in Tripoli, Dennyeh, Ba'abda and Batroun.



Photo by Waddah Joma'a - 2008

Other publications by Information International and INMA (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- "I am Responsible, All of Us are Responsible"
- 9- "Our Environment is Our Home"
- 10- "My Society is My Responsibility"
- 11- "My Society is My Responsibility" Workbook
- 12- "I am a Student, I am a Citizen: Ways Towards State Building"
- 13- "I am a Student, I am a Citizen: Ways Towards State Building" Workbook
- 14- "Lebanon Wars, why?"
- 15- Discrimination in Lebanon

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"The Monthly" celebrates her 7 years

Information International launched its English "The Monthly" magazine previously known as "li Monthly" in June 2002. The Arabic version of this magazine, "الشهرية", was launched in September 2003. Its number of pages has increased from 12 to 52 and its content has gained diversity.

This month the magazine marks its seventh anniversary, with 83 issues in English and 68 issues in Arabic. On this occasion, The Monthly renews its commitment to quality and accuracy in the hope of becoming a main reference for opinion makers, decision makers, and researchers.

