

- **LEBANON NAVIGATES ITS TENTH YEAR WITHOUT A BUDGET**
- **WASTE IN LEBANON**
- **THE MONTHLY INTERVIEWS NAZRUL ISLAM CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES AT THE EMBASSY OF BANGLADESH IN LEBANON**

## LEBANON'S UNIVERSITY STUDENT ENROLLMENT (2004-2012)

**PUBLIC**  
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**VS.**

**PRIVATE**  
**LIU: +14000**



## 4 LEBANON'S UNIVERSITY STUDENT ENROLLMENT (2004-2012) PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE

8 AFTER PRESIDENTIAL VACUUM:  
ELECTION OF A PRESIDENT DOES NOT REQUIRE  
CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

10 LEBANON NAVIGATES ITS TENTH YEAR WITHOUT  
A BUDGET

13 EXPENDITURES OF BEIRUT'S MUNICIPALITY

14 WASTE IN LEBANON

16 SEVEN INSTITUTIONS COSTING LBP 24 BILLION:  
WHEN WILL THEY BE ACTIVATED?

19 THE GENERAL SECURITY BUILDING IN BEIRUT

20 LAWS ON RESIDENTIAL RENTS IN LEBANON.  
2015 - BY PAUL MOURANI

24 PARLIAMENT OF BANGLADESH- JATIYO SANGSAD

25 BAHIJ TAKIEDDINE

27 AORTIC ANEURISMS: DR. HANNA SAADAH

28 THE FLEXIBLE EMPIRE (3/3): ANTOINE BOUTROS

29 INTERVIEW: NAZRUL ISLAM CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES AT  
THE EMBASSY OF BANGLADESH IN LEBANON

31 GREEN LINE ASSOCIATION

33 POPULAR CULTURE

34 DEBUNKING MYTH#90: CAN SUBLIMINAL  
MESSAGES REALLY PERSUADE THE MIND?

35 MUST-READ BOOKS: *LEBANON ILLUSTRATED BY  
ITS STAMPS* - DR. JOSEPH HATEM

36 MUST-READ CHILDREN'S BOOK: *HOW IS LIFE OUT  
THERE?*

37 LEBANON FAMILIES: SHAFSHAK FAMILIES

38 DISCOVER LEBANON: MRAH EL-HBAS

39 DISCOVER THE WORLD: MADAGASCAR

40 DECEMBER 2014 HIGHLIGHTS



P: 29



P: 13



P: 14

44 THIS MONTH IN HISTORY- LEBANON  
BOMBING OF THE SAYYIDAT AL-NAJAT CHURCH

46 THIS MONTH IN HISTORY- ARAB WORLD  
DEATH OF AL-HUSSEIN BIN TALAL, KING OF  
JORDAN

47 TERRORIST GROUPS PRETENDING TO  
STAND FOR ISLAM (1)  
TAKFIR WAL-HIJRA GROUP

49 REAL ESTATE PRICES - DECEMBER 2014

50 DID YOU KNOW THAT?: 2014 WORLD CUP  
BRAZIL IN NUMBERS

50 RAFIC HARIRI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT  
TRAFFIC - DECEMBER 2014

51 LEBANON'S STATS



## A RAILWAY BETWEEN SUNNI AND SHIA'A SO WE DON'T MISS THE TRAIN

Having received some comments from a descendent of Al-Saifa of A'akkar (accused in school history books of being traitors) on a previous editorial in issue no. 57 "Saints, Traitors, Villains, and Fools with Two Airports", a further examination is required.

In January 2007, we had a leader that Lebanon may soon have two presidents, two parliaments and two prime ministers, so why not two airports? Having seen that "Hariri International Airport" can be easily closed, (like what happened on January 23, 2007), a good 'planner' will make sure that an alternative is available. "René Mouawad International Airport", is almost ready and the planes can be easily diverted. In the future, as cantonization becomes more probable and alliances shift, a third airport might be called for.

What does this have to do with current fights and debates about democracy, peace, "Shia'a" and "Sunni"?

As always, ideologies are a cover up, a decoy and a cause that people live and die by and for. Before and after World War I, Pan-Arabism and independence were convenient banners to fight the Ottomans and insure that minorities run to the "West" for protection. The "ideological wars" went on. In order to fight communism, we sometimes resorted to the "Arab Nation" and at other times to "Islam".

Today, our leaders are hiding behind banners of "Freedom, Sovereignty and Independence" on one side and "Arabism, Dignity and Accountability" on the other side.

Friends, enemies, crises and wars were and still are made under those banners.

During World War I, T.E. Lawrence befriended King Faisal I to oust the Ottomans, blew up the Hijaz railway and participated in paving the way for British and French dominance in the region. Consequently, coups d'états were launched in the region starting with Husni Al-Zaim, Jamal Abdel Nasser to Abdel Karim Qasim and the Ba'ath Party in Syria and Iraq to Libya and Sudan. The leaders of the Arab Revolt and their descendents were butchered mercilessly.

In the meantime, Sykes-Picot Agreement (with modification) and Balfour Declaration were implemented and are perhaps yet to achieve their full potential, while 'we the people' of the region, were fighting each other and our leaders were studiously abiding by the instructions of external forces.

Even when T.E. Lawrence had something to say on Iraq against his government, his allies in the region were praising Great Britain.

"The people of England have been led in Mesopotamia into a trap from which it will be hard to escape with dignity and honour. They have been tricked into it by a steady withholding of information. The Bagdad communiqués are belated, insincere, and incomplete. A recent proclamation about autonomy circulated with unction from Bagdad.

We say we are in Mesopotamia to develop it for the benefit of the world. How far will the killing of ten thousand villagers and townspeople this summer hinder the production of wheat, cotton, and oil? How long will we permit millions of pounds, thousands of Imperial troops, and tens of thousands of Arabs to be sacrificed on behalf of a form of colonial administration, which can benefit no body but its administrators?"

Even when T.E. Lawrence expressed his doubts about Sykes-Picot geographical rationales, his allies were singing praise and queuing for positions in the newly founded states.

— Jawad N. Adra

[ This article was written and published in *The Monthly's* issue of April - May 2007. What was said 8 years ago still holds true today and this is why we are republishing the article. ]

# LEBANON'S UNIVERISTY STUDENT ENROLLMENT (2004-2012)

## PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE

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Until 1999, higher education institutions were very few in Lebanon, not exceeding 18. Among these, seven were major institutions which had 97% of the total student population. However, the number of academic institutions rose significantly after the government amended its education policy by licensing new higher education institutions, 40 in total today. Initially, some of these institutions started off as university colleges but were later licensed and fully accredited as universities with different faculties and branches. Others still have the status of university colleges, with numerous branches.



Lebanese University- Hadat

A number of these newly accredited universities were capable of rivaling older and more prestigious universities, recording higher enrollment rates and leaving their counterparts with either significant decline or meager growth in their student population. The established universities argued that their plan was to maintain quality education rather than have an overflow of students.

Central to the decline of enrollment rates in prestigious, established universities was the stark increase in tuition fees. According to Table 1, the following facts may be inferred:

- The number of university students rose by 45.1%, i.e. 59,877 students, between 2004 and 2012. The highest percentage of increase was registered at the Al-Manar University at 1219%, followed by the Sidon University College at 1184%, then Al-Kafaat University at 948%.
- In terms of numbers though, the Lebanese International University ranked first with its student population growing from 2131 to 16,721, i.e. by 14,590 students. The Arts, Sciences and Technology University (AUL) registered an increase by 3842 students, followed by the American University of Culture and Education at 3779 and by the Islamic University of Lebanon and the University of Balamand at 3095 and 2218 students respectively.
- The Lebanese University student population grew between 2004 and 2012 by 6889 students or 10.3%, a percentage lower than that recorded in the total numbers of higher education students.
- The percent of increase was limited to 18.2% at the American University of Beirut and 7.1% at the Université Saint Joseph. It registered 42% at the Lebanese American University. Most striking is that between 2011 and 2012, an increase of only 1% and 1.6% was seen at the AUB and the USJ respectively. At LAU, it was 6.1% during the same period.

Evolution of student numbers in higher education institutions

Table 1

University	Scholarly year	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2011	2012	% of growth or decline in student numbers (2004-2012)	Growth or decline in student numbers and % of change (2011-2012)
Lebanese University		62602	70711	66809	70627	74176	72813	72507	73698	10.3	1191 1.67
Beirut Arab University		9408	8898	9119	13653	17661	16124	15551	11362	25	-4159 -26.7
USJ		7034	7845	8740	9718	9361	9331	9197	9362	7.1	165 1.8
AUB		4796	5771	6619	6944	7078	7523	7747	7826	18.2	79 1
USEK		3880	4374	5460	5949	6791	6805	6980	6645	21.7	335 4.8
LAU		4470	4905	4454	4569	4879	5450	5954	3620	41.9	366 6.1
Hagazian		375	409	542	700	655	581	600	665	22.7	65 10.9
NDU		3175	3882	4236	4677	4959	5699	6256	6827	61.7	571 9.1
Dawa University Institute for Islamic Studies		407	579	568	290	299	513	687	540	-5	147 -21.4
Sagesse University		1138	990	1255	1893	2274	2650	2810	2966	119	156 55.5
Al-Imam Al-Ouzai University		1811	2214	2454	3039	4482	4365	4917	4172	70	745 151
Middle East University		111	118	141	174	124	178	214	137	-2.8	77 -36
Makassed University of Beirut		93	177	140	131	196	183	162	156	11.4	6 -3.7
St. Paul Institute of Philosophy & Theology		70	228	98	158	75	130	214	69	-29.6	-145 -67.7
University of Balamand		1891	2195	2505	2813	3194	3864	4451	4723	88.5	272 6.1

Evolution of student numbers in higher education institutions

Table 1

Scholarly year	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2011	2012	% of growth or decline in student numbers (2004-2012)	Growth or decline in student numbers and % of change (2011-2012)	
Near East School of theology	27	24	17	17	16	15	15	13	-23.5	-2	-13.4
Beirut Islamic university (Sharia'a Faculty)	447	503	525	448	430	532	650	347	-33.9	-303	-46.6
Al-Jinan University	299	697	977	1167	1615	1626	1895	1855	90	-40	-2.1
University of Tripoli	270	168	235	214	163	266	226	303	29	77	-34
Islamic University of Lebanon	978	1318	1716	2699	3740	5546	5932	4811	180.3	-1121	18.9
ESA Business School	155	172	375	422	385	145	167	258	-31.5	91	54.5
Antonine University	322	652	854	1120	1412	2039	2256	2445	186.3	189	8.3
Rafik Hariri University	-	241	253	399	810	1036	1075	1049	314.6	-26	-2.4
Université Libano-Française de Technologie et des Sciences Appliqués	-	-	377	395	399	1106	1169	1037	175	132	11.3
Lebanese German University	-	-	76	55	60	369	533	435	472.3	-98	-18.3
Al-Kafaat University	-	568	98	675	808	948	991	1027	948	36	3.6
American University of Technology	-	553	918	464	421	772	952	798	-13	-154	-16.1
Université Sainte Famille	-	178	210	239	256	335	389	383	82.3	6	-1.5
Sidoon University College	-	64	75	147	29	495	798	963	1184	165	20.6

Evolution of student numbers in higher education institutions

Table 1

University	Scholarly year	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2011	2012	% of growth or decline in student numbers (2004-2012)	Growth or decline in student numbers and % of change (2011-2012)	
The Arts, Sciences and Technology University (AUL)		-	1903	3081	1106	3744	3363	6580	7023	128	443	6.7
American University of Culture and Education		-	636	646	1020	2190	2993	3367	4425	585	1058	31.4
American University of Science and Technology (AUST)		-	1566	2866	2658	2102	2055	2623	5051	75	2392	91.2
Lebanese Canadian University		-	-	861	459	408	117	1368	1281	48.8	-87	-6.3
Modern University of Business and Science (MUBS, Damour)		-	340	366	432	693	1521	1478	2047	460	569	38.5
University Institute of Technology- Jwaja		-	262	606	151	50	199	183	224	-63	41	22.4
Arab Open University		-	-	1491	2484	3452	4075	4181	3710	149	-471	-11.2
Lebanese International University		-	-	2131	4722	7645	13706	16361	16721	685	360	2.2
Al-Manar University		-	-	41	133	133	380	478	541	1219	63	13.2
Al Rassoul Alaazam University Institute		-	-	-	-	-	-	224	257	-	33	14.7
Lebanese Red Cross		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	56	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>		<b>10369</b>	<b>124730</b>	<b>132645</b>	<b>146961</b>	<b>167165</b>	<b>180850</b>	<b>192138</b>	<b>192522</b>	<b>45.1</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>0.2</b>

Source: Statistical bulletin- Educational Center for Research and Development.

# AFTER PRESIDENTIAL VACUUM: ELECTION OF A PRESIDENT DOES NOT REQUIRE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

The term of former President General Michel Suleiman expired on May 25, 2014. No successor has been elected to the vacant office, in recurrence of what happened upon the expiry of the term of his predecessor President Emile Lahoud on November 24, 2007. It is yet to be seen when the presidential elections will take place. Speaker Nabih Berri has so far (end of January 2015) scheduled eighteen sessions for the purpose of electing a president, all of which were adjourned due to lack of quorum resulting from political disputes and a failure to agree over one candidate among the many running for the highest Maronite seat in the republic. Occasionally, we hear politicians and religious scholars voicing their support or objection to a constitutional amendment aimed to either facilitate or complicate the Grade 1 civil servants' assumption of presidency. However, the truth is, the precedent that was established by electing General Michel Suleiman as president on May 25, 2008 no longer requires amendment in the constitution after the presidential seat falls vacant.

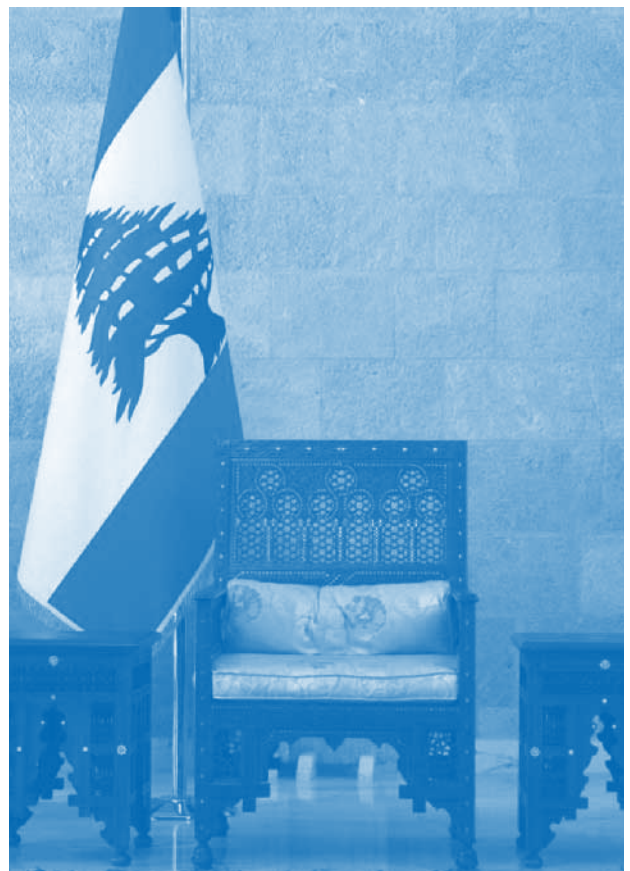
## Article 49 of the Lebanese Constitution

The third paragraph of Article 49 of the Lebanese Constitution as amended in 1990 pursuant to the Taef Accord provides that:

*“It is also not possible to elect judges, Grade 1 civil servants, or their equivalents in all public institutions to the Presidency during their term or office or within two years following the date of their resignation and their effective cessation of service, or following retirement.”*

This paragraph did not exist previously. For example, in 1958, Army Commander General Fouad Chehab was elected president of the republic without any alteration of the constitution and the same applied to Banque du Liban Governor Elias Sarkis in 1976.

It is said that this paragraph was added upon the request of Syrian President Hafez Assad when the Arab Tripartite Committee showed him the Taef Accord draft. Assad was at the time shocked by the anti-Syrian positions of the then Army Commander Michel Aoun who was seeking presidency. Since other Grade 1 civil servants did not have as much power as the Banque du Liban Governor and the Army Commander, this addition was mainly aimed at these two to prevent



their arrival to the presidency through their use of the currency markets and the army respectively. However, this article was amended in 1998 to permit the election of Army Commander Emile Lahhoud as president.

### Election of President Michel Suleiman

Upon the expiry of President Emile Lahoud's extended term on November 24, 2007, no successor was elected and the presidential office remained vacant. This vacuum dragged on until finally Lebanon's rival political factions convened in the Qatari capital, Doha, and an agreement was reached over resolving the political crisis, the electoral law and the election of consensus candidate General Michel Suleiman as president of the republic. To this end, Parliament held a session on Sunday, May 25, 2008 during which the first two paragraphs of Article 49 of the Lebanese Constitution were read, without any mention of the aforementioned third paragraph, which stipulates resigning two years before the date of election. Article 74, which provides that, should the presidency become vacant, the legislature shall meet to elect a successor, was also read during the session.

During this session, former Speaker Hussein Husseini proposed suspending the provisions that prevented the election of Suleiman in Article 49 and invoking Article 73. 'The government, which is present now, may convene in a separate hall and initiate the revision of Article 49. There doesn't seem to be any problem with that because the chamber is holding an ordinary session and therefore the amendment would be approved in half an hour and the process of the election would be perfectly right. I hope that my proposal will be taken into consideration, for it spares us many question marks. Nevertheless, if you choose to ignore it, I will adhere to what the majority decides.'

"As you have exactly said, after the expiry of the term, the convening of Parliament shall fall under Article 73, and therefore the timeframes shall no longer apply. If we endorse your proposition, we will be breaching the Constitution," said Speaker Nabih Berri.

Prior to Hussein Husseini's interposition, MP Boutros Harb also made a statement reiterating his support of General Michel Suleiman as president yet objecting to the election mechanism. "Did Article 74 of the Constitution stipulate that the timeframes set in paragraph 3 of Article 49, which was not read at the beginning of this session,

may be omitted? Why beat around the bush? Why can't we just amend this Article and elect a president in a perfectly constitutional manner?"

Harb wondered what would happen if every time there were presidential elections, a group of the Lebanese would use their one-third veto power to boycott the elections until the expiry of the two-month period. "Shall we apply Article 74 once again and allow a candidate prohibited from running for presidency except after resigning from his post two years earlier to become president?" he added.

"As if you, Sheikh Boutros, implement the constitution and the rest of us don't," responded Speaker Nabih Berri.

Along the same lines, MP Nayla Mouawad noted that the election of Michel Suleiman without a constitutional amendment breaches the Constitution. Mouawad expressed reservations over the election mechanism because it could establish a dangerous precedent.

All these constitutional objections fell on deaf ears and Suleiman was elected President of the Republic without any amendments to the Constitution. He obtained 118 votes out of 127. The remaining 10 included 7 blank votes and 3 votes, one for Nassib Lahoud, one for Jean Oubeid and one for Rafik Hariri.

### Article 73

***One month at least and two months at most before the expiration of the term of office of the President of the Republic, Parliament shall be convened by its Speaker to elect the new President of the Republic. However, should it not be convened for this purpose, Parliament shall meet automatically on the tenth day preceding the expiration of the President's term of office.***

### Article 74

***Should the Presidency become vacant through the death or resignation of the President or for any other cause, Parliament shall meet immediately and by virtue of the law to elect a successor. If Parliament happens to be dissolved at the time the vacancy occurs, the electoral bodies shall be convened without delay and, as soon as the elections have taken place, Parliament meets by virtue of the law. ●***

# LEBANON NAVIGATES ITS TENTH YEAR WITHOUT A BUDGET

## INCREASED SPENDING, DECLINING REVENUE AND PUBLIC DEBT INCREASES BY USD 31 BILLION

**The most recent public budget approved in Lebanon was in 2005, endorsed in early 2006. The country has since, however, been without a budget as all the draft budgets approved by the government have met obstacles in Parliament due to political rows and disagreement over how to legalize the extra-budgetary spending made under Fouad Seniora and Saad Hariri's governments. The failure to approve a public budget has translated into a financial mess and an increase in expenditure paralled with of unchanged revenue, thus resulting in further borrowing and increased public debt.**

### One-Twelfth Rule

The one-twelfth rule is used as a basis for government expenditures and revenue collection in the first few months of the year when the approval of a public budget is delayed. During this short period, the government is authorized to spend every month one-twelfth of the last approved budget and its amendments and additions. This rule enables the government to spend while waiting for a new budget to be approved without facing any crises such as delaying the payment of public salaries. However, problems have arisen when this rule has been in force longer than it was originally intended. In fact, the rule has now been adopted for roughly ten years rather than a few months, in place of a proper budget.

No public budget was approved for 2006 and Law no. 717 dated February 3, 2006 was issued authorizing the government to collect revenues as previously and spend according to the one-twelfth rule starting February 1, 2006 until a new budget had been passed. However, what started off as an alternative for a few months dragged on for years because of Parliament's recurrent failure to approve a public budget between 2006 and 2015, thus resulting, inevitably, in a major gap in public finances.



## 2005 Budget

The 2005 budget, numbered 715, was approved on February 3, 2006. In it public expenditure was estimated at LBP 10,000 billion and public revenue at LBP 6,917 billion, i.e. a deficit of LBP 3,083 billion or 30.8%. No final account statements were issued to illustrate the actual expenditures and the revenues, but figures showed that the government spent LBP 10,203 billion and collected LBP 7,405 billion, thus running an actual deficit of LBP 2,798 billion or 27.4%. Spending was distributed as illustrated in Table 1.

2015 estimated spending		Table 1
Item	Estimated expenditure (LBP thousand)	
Presidency of the Republic	4,571,000	
Parliament	43,90,000	
Prime Minister's Office	497,354,853	
Constitutional Council	1,724,190	
Justice Ministry	49,053,902	
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants	106,246,050	
Ministry of the Interior and Municipalities	443,952,908	
Ministry of Finance	1,197,881,338	
Ministry of Public Works and Transport	167,332,347	
Ministry of National Defense	852,267,250	
Ministry of Education and Higher Education	877,734,000	
Ministry of Public Health	260,266,913	
Ministry of Economy and Commerce	7,008,370	
Ministry of Agriculture	41,106,044	
Ministry of Telecommunications	12,127,750	

2015 estimated spending		Table 1
Item	Estimated expenditure (LBP)	
Ministry of Labor	108,580,244	
Ministry of Information	29,102,500	
Ministry of Energy and Water	61,201,900	
Ministry of Tourism	14,156,788	
Ministry of Culture	17,482,960	
Ministry of Environment	3,909,000	
Ministry of the Displaced	5,590,000	
Ministry of Youth and Sports	9,314,500	
Ministry of Social Affairs	87,299,569	
Ministry of Industry	5,843,400	
Due debts	3,900,000,000	
Pensions and end of service benefits	900,000,000	
Reserve Fund	194,992,224	
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,000,000,000</b>	

Source: 2015 public budget law

## Extra-budgetary spending under Seniora and Hariri

It was clearly inappropriate to apply those expenditure figures adopted in the 2005 budget as a basis for spending in 2006 and the years to follow. Worse still, the successive governments did nothing to legalize the extra-budgetary spending that occurred, which led to talks about wasted amounts worth USD 11 billion in the years following 2005.

## Extra-budgetary spending under Mikati and Salam

Luckily, the governments under Najib Mikati and Tamam Salam did not commit the same spending offence and approved two laws to cover the extra-budgetary spending occurring under their term in the absence of an approved budget. These laws are:

Law no. 238 dated October 22, 2012 which approved extra credits worth LBP 9,248 billion (LBP 8,315 billion for the public budget and LBP 933 billion for annex budgets) to be added to the digits of the 2005 public budget, i.e. an increase of 83.2%, to account for the public spending in 2012. Since no tax increases were imposed and against the decline in businesses, these extra credits were not to be covered by means of regular revenues but by allowing the government to issue short or long term treasury bonds in either local or foreign currencies to cover the debt in the public debt.

**“From LBP 58,050 billion in late 2005, the public debt soared to LBP 105,000 billion by the end of 2014, i.e. up by LBP 46,950 billion”**

Law no. 15 dated November 11, 2014 which approved extra credits worth LBP 340 billion dedicated to meet the needs of ministries in 2014. This amount was to be added to the digits of the 2005 public budget and to the extra credits approved by virtue of Law no. 238. As before, these credits are to be covered by further borrowing.

### Public debt increase

The budget deficit resulting from a growth in expenditures paralleled with no increases in revenue has led to an enormous increase in Lebanon's public debt over the past ten years. From LBP 58,050 billion in late 2005, the public debt soared to LBP 105,000 billion by the end of 2014, i.e. up by LBP 46,950 billion (USD 31.3 billion) as illustrated in Table 2. The public debt, which saw a significant increase in 2008 and 2009, recorded a decline in 2010 and 2011 only to rise again in 2013

and 2014 when it exceeded LBP USD 5.8 billion and USD 6 billion respectively. This enormous increase in the size of public debt is likely to reach alarming levels and exceed USD 100 billion in 2018.

**Increase in Public debt (2005- 2014) Table 2**

End of the year	Public debt (LBP billion)	Public debt increase (LBP billion)
2005	58,050	3,978
2006	60,880	2,830
2007	63,406	2,526
2008	70,941	7,535
2009	77,103	6,162
2010	79,278	2,175
2011	80,887	1,609
2012	86,959	6,072
2013	95,696	8,710
2014	105,000	9,304

Source: Association of Banks in Lebanon



# EXPENDITURES OF BEIRUT'S MUNICIPALITY

## ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION AT LBP 5 MILLION AND LBP 20 MILLION FOR GRANITE PAVING

**The ‘excellent’ municipality of Beirut, so dubbed in the past few decades, is only excellent at spending the exorbitant amounts of money deposited in its bank accounts. It is estimated that more than LBP 500 billion has been spent on superfluous tasks and projects.**

When it comes to delivering the public services to the residents living in its municipal scope, Beirut's municipality could do better. Below is a sample of its superfluous expenses:

- LBP 5 million, the cost of annual subscription to a Beirut's daily newspaper.
- LBP 18.6 million for a charity in Beirut tasked with burying the dead. It is noteworthy that the charity receives high fees from the families of the deceased in exchange for their services and thus does not deliver them free of charge.
- LBP 5.5 million to support an NGO located in Ras Nabe'e in holding a cultural activity during the month of La Francophonie.
- LBP 5 million for the Head of the Municipality of Beirut so he can participate in the Forum for Municipal Services held in Dubai on 7 and 8 April.
- LBP 19.8 million for paving with granite the floor of a tunnel in the capital.
- LBP 35.2 million for pest control, the benefits of which are yet to become clear.
- LBP 10 million as social aid for two workers at the municipality.
- LBP 22 million to host local and foreign delegations.
- LBP 10 million to repair the cars put at the disposal of the Head of the 2014 Municipal Council.
- LBP 3.6 million to buy three paintings.
- LBP 5 million for a dietitian supporting a food program that aims to raise awareness of the Mediterranean diet.
- LBP 10 million for an NGO organizing a student tournament. ●



Beirut Municipality  
Photo by: Mohammed Mashlab

# WASTE IN LEBANON

## WILL THE GOVERNMENT SUCCEED AFTER CHRONIC TREATMENT FAILURES?

Solid waste, including domestic, industrial and medical waste have posed a serious dilemma for all the governments that have succeeded to power since the end of the Civil War in 1990. The failure to find adequate and long-term solutions for this problem has led successive governments to award concessions to private firms to manage and dispose of solid waste. Foremost among these firms is Sukleen, which transfers garbage from populated areas to landfills outside towns and cities. The disposal of solid waste has resulted in filling up these sites beyond capacity thus triggering efforts to look for new sites amidst the objections by most residents to allow the dumping of garbage in their own towns.



### Reality and size of the problem

Around 4500 tons to 5000 tons of solid waste are produced in Lebanon on a daily basis, up from roughly 4000 tons prior to the influx of Syrian refugees. The waste is distributed by type as follows:

- 60%: organic materials that may be converted into fertilizers
- 15%: recyclable paper and cardboard
- 10%: recyclable plastics
- 5%: recyclable glass
- 5%: fabrics
- 5%: minerals and others

Geographically, amounts of waste are generated in:

- Beirut and Mount Lebanon: 2500 tons
- North and Akkar: 1000 tons
- Beqa', Baalbeck and Hermel: 600 tons
- South and Nabatieh: 700 tons

### Lack of central planning

In Lebanon, solid waste treatment is not predicated on a national plan covering all Lebanese territories. Rather, it is administered according to partial plans targeting certain areas:

- Sukleen and its subsidiaries collect garbage within the scope of administrative Beirut and Mount Lebanon's non-remote areas.
- Lafayette in Tripoli, Al-Mina and Qalamoun
- NTCC in Saida and its vicinity

In the remaining areas of Lebanon, municipalities undertake the collection of waste and dispose it in randomly chosen dumps. The lack of a comprehensive plan increases the cost of collecting garbage and treating only a fraction of it, thus leaving the problem largely unsolved. The spending on waste collection and treatment in Lebanon is estimated at USD 5 million, an amount paid from the Independent Municipal Fund or the direct funds of municipalities.

### Phased plan

The significant cost of solid waste collection and treatment coupled with the landfills' incapacity to accommodate the growing amounts of waste, which are fueled by the failure of treatment and recycling operations to target more than 20% of the overall waste material, have prompted the government to request the Council for Development and Reconstruction to issue a request for proposal to award cleaning service contracts to new companies. The proposal should not deny the present companies their right to participate in the bid. Until such bid materializes, it has been agreed to adopt the following phased plan:

- Expanding the landfill at Naameh, which accommodates the waste generated in Beirut and Mount Lebanon
- Granting those municipalities that establish a sanitary landfill or plant aimed to dispose of their own waste, an increase in their assigned Independent Municipal Council revenues equaling twice their normal share and giving those municipalities willing to set up a facility to accommodate the waste produced by at least ten other towns/municipalities an increase worth ten times their normal share.
- Extending the current contracts signed with Sukleen and Sukumi, which operate in Beirut and Mount Lebanon until January 17, 2015.

### Future plan\*

As for the new future plan covering all of Lebanon, it hinges upon the following:

- Thermal decomposition and conversion of waste into energy in large cities as well as drafting the legal texts ensuring the right of the private sector to produce and sell the said energy.
- CDR's unification of the requisite terms for the collection and transportation of garbage to treatment plants on all Lebanese territory.
- Centralizing the responsibility for waste treatment.
- State's financing of all the required facilities.
- Tasking the private sector with operating and maintaining all treatment plants in exchange for a certain amount for every ton.
- Ensuring that the firm tasked with constructing the facilities is the same one operating them.

It is uncertain if this plan will ever see the light and succeed in efficiently addressing the crisis of waste management in Lebanon at the lowest possible cost. Are we marching towards an extension of contracts with the current firms that keep the impasse unsolved: untreated waste at exorbitant costs? ●

\* The government approved on January 12, 2015 a solid waste plan based on dividing Lebanon into 6 service areas and designating one contractor for each two areas. The contracts' duration shall be 7 years that may be extended by 3 additional years.



Photo by: Mohammed Mashlab - Beirut

# SEVEN INSTITUTIONS COSTING LBP 24 BILLION: WHEN WILL THEY BE ACTIVATED?

Lebanon is oversaturated with ministries and public institutions and administrations and both auxiliary and independent councils. Some of these entities date back many decades; others were introduced over the past twenty years to keep pace with the post-war reconstruction and development phase. However, over the years, it has become evident that some entities have failed to realize the objectives they were originally established to serve, adding into a burden that is overstretching the already meager means of the state's treasury. Each of them is assigned an annual budget accounting for salaries, rent and overheads including water, phone and electricity bills and office supplies. These passive entities amount to seven and the combined costs close to LBP 24.3 billion.



## 1- The Social and Economic Council

The establishment of the Social and Economic Council was stipulated by the Taif Agreement approved in 1990. It aimed to “ensure the participation of all sectors’ representatives in formulating the state’s economic and social policies by providing advice and suggestions.” Article 1 of Law no. 389 dated January 12, 1995 provided that “an advisory council named the Social and Economic Council shall be established where all major economic, social and professional sectors shall be represented. The Council shall ensure the participation of the economic sectors in formulating the social and economic policies of the state and promoting inter-dialogue and cooperation among them. The Prime Minister shall refer to the Council requests to formulate opinions and make research over matters of a professional, social and economic nature.”

However, the founding of the Council was deferred until late 1999 when finally its 71 members were nominated for

a three-year term and the Director General and President were appointed, the former being Shia’a and the latter Geek Orthodox by convention. Staffing was set at 52 posts and the Council was headquartered in Downtown, Beirut. During its existence, the Council has not realized any notable achievements except issuing two books on the economic situation and suggested means to address it. In 2011, the term of the Council’s members expired and the Director General retired, leaving the Council in a state of paralysis, which still continues today. Despite the Council’s sluggishness, the state is still paying the rent of its headquarters and paychecks and assigned the Council a budget of LBP 2 billion in 2012.

## 2- Elissar

By virtue of Decree no. 6918 dated June 29, 1995, Elissar came to light as a public entity in charge of organizing the south-western suburb of Beirut. It is subjected to the administrative authority of the Prime Minister and

is tasked with re-planning the south-western suburbs located within the areas of Mazra'a, Shiyyah and Bourj Al-Barajneh.

A board of directors consisting of six members and respecting the sectarian balance is tasked with managing Elissar. The president of the board serves also as a Grade 1 Director General of Elissar and it has been agreed he should be Maronite. The institution has proved incapable of putting its vision of re-organizing the western suburbs of Beirut into action due to political and partisan considerations, foremost of which is the failure of late PM Rafik Hariri to agree with Hezbollah and the Amal Movement over the project. Twenty years after its inception, Elissar is yet to achieve its goals. However, its torpid performance has not scaled down spending on salaries, rent and expenditure, which stands roughly at LBP 3.3 billion annually. Since its establishment, Elissar has been given advance payments worth around LBP 137 billion to manage its business and cover the cost of the evacuation operations done during the expansion of the airport.

### 3- Public Authority for Consumer Markets

This authority was established pursuant to Decree no. 5735 dated September 29, 1994. It falls under the authority of the Prime Minister's office and is tasked with establishing, managing and investing in popular markets. It also aims to raise the awareness of consumers by advising them how to protect themselves from fraud and exploitation as well as to devise and implement, in cooperation with the relevant departments, a comprehensive plan designed to protect consumers, fight monopoly, encourage competition and draft related studies. However, the ultimate accomplishment of this authority was setting up non-fixed facilities to sell vegetables and fruits in the Cité Sportive area and introducing modern facilities in Karantina, most of which remained closed because of a low client turnout. A new Director General, Druze by agreement, was appointed to this authority, which is assigned close to LBP 670 million annually in return for an activity, which, at best, is undetectable. It is worth noting that the Public Authority for Consumer Markets has been given credits worth LBP 16 billion since its establishment to enable the authority to execute its alleged tasks.



### 4- Higher Council for Privatization

Law no. 228 dated May 31, 2000 stipulated the establishment of the Higher Council for Privatization with a clear objective to initiate, implement and control privatization programs and operations and to propose the general privatization policy and its means of implementation as well as a timetable for the suggested transactions. Although 15 years have lapsed since the Council's formation, the privatization operations are still halted due to political crises and disputes. Yet, the Council's General Secretariat continues to exist and is allocated a yearly budget estimated at LBP 4 billion, an amount which it may not even need, let alone spend.

### 5- The Syrian Lebanese Higher Council

Based on the Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination signed between Lebanon and Syria in 1991, the Syrian Lebanese Higher Council was established. Despite the rift that arose between some of the Lebanese and Syrian officials and the fact that the Council held no sessions, its General Secretariat was not dissolved and establishing embassies in the two countries came only to shrink its role even further. The yearly budget earmarked for the Council stands at roughly LBP 885 million and while some believe that the Council has become useless after the establishment of diplomatic relations between Lebanon and Syria, others object to dissolving the entity arguing that its functions differ from those of the embassies.

### 6- Rashid Karami International Fair

Decree-law No. 4027, dated May 4, 1960 stipulated the establishment of the Authority of Lebanon's Permanent International Fair in Tripoli. Law No. 76, dated August 16, 1991 changed the fair's name to International Fair of the Late PM Rashid Karami in Tripoli. The name underwent a final amendment by virtue of Law No. 415 on May 15, 1995, and became Tripoli-Lebanon Rashid



Rashid Karami International Fair

Karami International Fair. The Fair was assigned the following functions:

- Acquainting people with the resources of Lebanon and other Arab and foreign countries, and keeping traders and industrialists informed of the latest updates in the various production fields.
- Holding conferences and hosting international organizations.

This state institution falls under the control of the Minister of Economy and Trade with the assistance of the government commissioner, appointed by the minister. It is also subject to the posterior supervision of the Audit Court and the financial monitoring of the Central Inspection.

A board of directors consisting of a Chair and six members appointed by a decree for a renewable three-year term are responsible for running the Fair. The members are public figures active in commerce, industry, agriculture and economy. A Director General is assigned to handle the daily routines and duties of the Fair and to coordinate the work environment. It was agreed that the Director General should be Maronite and the Chair Sunni.

Well-known international architects planned the outline for the establishment and development of the Fair, but most of the plans remained on paper and only one hotel and a few aesthetic structures designed by the architects have materialized. The Fair's revenues are as small as LBP 500 million while its expenses exceed LBP 1.5 billion to cover the overheads and salaries of 20 personnel.

## 7- Railway and Public Transport Authority

Based on the draft law enacted by Decree no. 6479 dated April 14, a Railway and Public Transport Authority was founded with a clear objective to operate railroads and public transport buses. Rail tracks were all stolen at the onset of the war and buses have ceased to work except for a limited number which operates occasionally. Yet, the authority still employs directors and staff. A new Director General, agreed to be Druze, was appointed recently. The Authority's expenditures rise to about LBP 12 billion annually. Although the resources of this entity are worth tens of billions of dollars and despite the plans it devised to operate and organize public transportation, it is still awaiting a political decision to live up to its potential and perform more actively.

All these entities suffer from productivity paralysis and are still standing uselessly, simply because their directors and staff belong to certain sectarian communities and the dissolution of their workplace is deemed an encroachment on the rights and prerogatives of each sect, which seemingly rise above all the financial, administrative and national considerations. ●



Railway and Public Transport Authority  
Photo by: Mohammed Mashlab

# THE GENERAL SECURITY BUILDING IN BEIRUT

## USD 1.1 MILLION FOR RENT AND RENOVATION

The Directorate General of General Security has been expanding in the past few years as a result of the security and administrative situation prevailing in the country including the impact of the Syrian crisis. The general state of affairs entailed an increase in the General Security's personnel, thus making the provision of additional offices a necessity. A few years ago, a new building was built in Al-Mathaf area near the General Security headquarters, which consisted of several departments, including the Office of Beirut's General Security. However, space constraints in the new building required yet another office for Beirut's General Security. The choice fell on plots no. 780 and 782 of Al-Mazraa real estate zone in front of the Sodeco building, hundreds of meters from the previous office.

### Rent of the building

On January 9, 2014, an agreement was made between the Directorate General of General Security and the landlord Mohammad Samih Ghaddar who is also the head of the municipality of Ghazieh in South Lebanon for the lease of plots no. 780 and 782, the former to be used for parking and the latter as an office building. The agreement is for five years, from December 15, 2013 to December 14, 2018, the cost of rent being LBP 180 million per year and may only be renewed upon the written approval by Samih Ghaddar.

### Renovation of the building

It was known beforehand that the building located on plot no. 782 needed refurbishment and maintenance to be fit to accommodate the offices of Beirut's General Security. To this end, Brigadier General Abbas Ibrahim wrote on October 21, 2013 a letter to the head of the municipality of Beirut, Dr. Bilal Hamad, requesting a contribution from the municipality to renovate the site in question. Brigadier General Abbas Ibrahim noted that "the restoration of the offices is of general benefit to all the residents of the capital as it will be designed to receive the citizens living and registered in the city and process their transactions." Pursuant to decision no.46 dated January 10, 2014, Beirut's municipal council agreed to allocate the General Security USD 500,000 (LBP 754 million) to renovate the building and the donation was approved by the government on May 8, 2014 pursuant to decree no. 11401.

Renovating and renting the offices for five years would thus cost in total USD 1.1 million. This exorbitant amount should have motivated an alternative course

of action such as acquiring land from the state or the municipality of Beirut and constructing permanent headquarters for Beirut's General Security on it, especially that the quoted costs would allow for the construction of a building of at least 3000 square meters.

Renting does not seem to be such a wise decision because the landlord may increase the rent in five years or request that the dwelling be vacated without any compensation, thus wasting the funds paid for renovation works that will last longer than five years. It is noteworthy that the government spends on renting premises close to LBP 113 billion annually ●



# LAWS ON RESIDENTIAL RENTS IN LEBANON, 2015

BY PAUL MOURANI

Summary of an article posted (in Arabic and English) on the following site: <<lebanonstatebuilding.wordpress.com>>.

Readers are referred to the full-length article for detailed data and calculations and more developed argumentation.

**There is no question that the owner-tenant conflict has been festering for too long and requires a decisive solution. The new rent law of 2014 currently being reevaluated in a parliamentary committee, and most of the counterproposals being considered, combine some of the worst aspects of bureaucratic state intervention with unbridled parasitic capitalism.**

These proposals call for the creation of a fund by the Ministry of Finance that will subsidize drastic increases in controlled rents (rents initially contracted before 1992), eventually completely liberalizing them. Once this is attained, the subsidies would presumably stop. The extent of these subsidies that are expected to reach hundreds of millions of US dollars, and the rent increases, will be determined by committees set up by the state.

One set of committees would estimate the value of the rent-controlled apartments (estimated to be around 150,000 in number) as if vacant. This would create around 150,000 cases and files. Appeals and counter appeals would dramatically increase the complications in the management of these files. Rents would then be increased over a period of 6 years, to 5% of the estimated value of the apartments.

A second set of committees would look into the tens of thousands of income declarations (if there are any) of the tenants who are applying for subsidies. The level of the total household income per rented apartment will determine whether there would be a subsidy, and if so, whether the subsidy will completely cover the rent increases or only partially so.

Subsidies will be paid directly to the owners.

## Broad evaluation of the proposals

### 1. The true beneficiaries of the subsidies

The fund is supposed to help tenants in the lower income brackets. The truth of the matter is that the owners will be the sole beneficiaries of these subsidies as the



government money will go directly into their pockets (unless the tenants decide to vacate the premises), whereas the “subsidized tenants” will pay the same rents or more until the end of the subsidy program, at which time their contracts are eventually terminated and they are faced with eviction.

Tenants whose total household income is more than three times the minimum wage (\$448) will fully pay the drastic increases in rent which could easily reach a twenty fold (2000%) increase over 6 years. This category of tenants comprises the lower middle class and above and represent the most dynamic elements in society. The new law will go a long way to eradicate them.

## 2. Fiscal and economic burdens of the proposals

The subsidy deception has another socially unjust consequence, as these subsidies will be financed through additional taxes that, in the highly regressive Lebanese system of taxation, will put a greater burden proportionately on the poor and the productive classes. These taxes will also hit people who are neither tenants nor lessors in order to resolve a conflict that in no way concerns them.

### Inequitable allocation of government resources

The use of public resources to finance the subsidies program is a discriminatory measure. There are people who are poorer than these tenants, some with much greater need for help. Why doesn't the government also give them subsidies, grants and donations? Or is it that it acts as a welfare state when it benefits only the idle rich?

Most importantly, can the government find the hundreds of millions of dollars needed to pay for these subsidies? The government is incapable of paying long overdue increases in wages and salaries in the public sector. Its ratio of debt to GDP is among the highest in the world. It is incapable of providing water to its citizens, the infrastructure is in shambles. No money to pay the workers and no money to improve essential public services, but money can be drawn from the pockets of the poor, the lower middle classes and the productive sectors to give to the idle rich. A revealing set of priorities for our rulers!

### 3. Bureaucratic nightmare.

The Law initially stipulated that the decisions of these committees were not subject to appeal, but the Constitutional Council declared this to be unconstitutional.

This decision will add even more administrative complications to the state bureaucracy that the implementation of the new law will create. The process of estimating prices of more than 150,000 apartments will create recriminations, counter-estimates, appeals, conflicts, abuses and administrative chaos.

The committees estimating incomes will have to evaluate tens of thousands of files in order to determine who qualifies to receive subsidies. Given the tribalism, nepotism and corruption that have plagued the public sector, and the high proportion of undeclared income in the country, one can imagine the abuse, favoritism and

mishandling that will occur in the implementation of this process. The bureaucratic aspects of the proposed law are simply nightmarish.

## A deeper look at the old system of rent laws

### 1. Evaluation of the Constitutional Council's report on the new rent law.

The Constitutional Council (CC) characterizes the old system of rent laws as a "special law" (loi spéciale) rather than a law of exception, "...because of its continuity after starting exceptionally after the second world war, as a result of the scarcity in residential housing and the reduction in supply; this explains why the tenant was considered the sole and absolute victim, at the expense of the owner, and why the property owners abandoned rental housing and moved instead in the housing sales market." (Official Gazette, Supplement to issue No. 34, 19/8/2014, page 5).

**“The subsidy deception has another socially unjust consequence, as these subsidies will be financed through additional taxes that, in the highly regressive Lebanese system of taxation, will put a greater burden proportionately on the poor and the productive classes”**

A number of comments on the CC characterization are in order:

Special laws are coercive in their nature and are in response to exceptional circumstances, and therefore, temporary in their nature. They also would normally require a higher majority for their enactment than normal legislation. The old system of rent laws does not fit this characterization as the old laws were routinely enacted with normal majorities. There was nothing coercive about them and investors continued freely flocking in this market in the full knowledge of what they were getting into. Furthermore the facts that the CC uses to justify its characterization are simply false:

- 1- Regulation of rental laws was not started exceptionally after the war as was claimed in the CC report. Laws regulating rents predate the war and others were started at its beginning (Decision N.213 of 12/10/1936, Law of 11/5/1938, legislative decree No. 25 of 5/1/1940, legislative decree 134 of 31/12/1941 and legislative decree 288 of 11/12/1942 are examples of such legislation).

- 2- There was no exceptional scarcity due to the Second World War as the CC statement claims. Exceptional scarcity and limited supply of rental units would have resulted in steep increases in real estate prices and rent levels and, therefore, in government intervention aiming at decreasing rent levels. The rent regulations during and after the war, however, aimed at increasing rents very substantially, and not at decreasing them!
- 3- The property owners did not abandon the rental housing market as a result of government regulations. Tens of thousands of rental contracts were initially signed after this early period. Housing sales became prevalent only after the enactment of Law 160/92 that freed all new rents from state regulation. The facts indicate that the old system of laws managed to maintain a steady supply of rental units and that it was rent deregulation that impeded the growth of residential rental housing.

In addition to its characterization of the old system of laws, the CC builds its case that the owners were victimized on the grounds that these laws were encroachments on the rights to private property and violated the principle of contractual freedom.

Deviations from these principles are legitimate. The CC readily admits this, but it maintains that measures that encroach upon them are only legitimate, if they are publically useful (*d'utilité publique*), and if they offer a fair and balanced solution in a situation involving two parties, and not resulting in one party abusing the other. They reject the "*securité juridique*" argument, and accept overturning 80 years of "*constant jurisprudence*" for the same reason, namely that the old system of laws was not balanced and fair.

Fairness to owners is revealed by how well they performed economically under the old system of laws, and this is measured by the calculation of their cash flows and the rates of return on their investments. The CC implicitly assumes that rent differentials are *prima facie* evidence of unfairness to owners. Let us now consider the validity of equating rent differentials with lack of profitability in the rent-controlled sector.

### Large rent differentials do not mean lack of profitability

The compelling evidence that the controlled rent sector was profitable to owners is the fact that they kept investing in this sector when 50 laws covering a period

of more than 70 years made it abundantly clear that government controls were there to stay. Owners were not coerced into leasing under these conditions. They freely chose to do so, preferring to invest in this sector rather than in bonds, equity or in furnished apartments which were not subject to the same rent controls. The explanation for this is simple.

Initial levels of the "old rents" in Lebanon were determined by the market forces, that is, by free agreement between tenants and landlords. The crux of the matter, is that owners were able to make very high profits in the regulated rent market, as a result of their ability to extract a higher initial gross yield or ratio of rent (R) to apartment value (V) than in the unregulated market, because the tenants were willing to pay a premium for the security given them by the state regulatory controls. Some data and examples will clarify this.

### Data on gross rental yields

Picketty's data shows that the average gross yield (R/V) was 5% historically, but that it had fallen in the twenty-first century to an average of 4.5% (Capital in the 21st century. Harvard University Press, 2014. Pp. 54-55). In the unregulated rental market of today, gross yields have fallen even more according to the Global Property Guide, averaging between 2.09% and 4.36% in London, and between 3.39% and 3.67% in Paris. In Beirut the same source indicates that rental yields were between 3.7% and 4.7%, but have decreased recently and now range between 2.7% and 3.5%. Rent Law of 9/5/2014 calculates fair rent at 5% of the estimated value of the apartment if vacant.

Historical data on gross yields for regulated rents is not readily available, but consensus has it, and the case-study illustrates this, they were between 10% and 12% in Beirut.

Comparing rates of return (IRR) in regulated and unregulated markets for a period of 25 years, reveals that the rates of return in the unregulated market with initial gross yields of 4% and 5% only approach the IRR in the regulated market when the rate of growth of free rent levels reach the high historical average of 6% annually. The exercise assumes that in the regulated market initial gross yields are 10% and rents are nominally fixed. This underestimates profitability in the regulated sector as legislators would systematically increase controlled rents in later years.

In a case study of an apartment for which exact data could be obtained, IRR's were calculated after deduction of expenses at between 7.94% and 9.16% depending on the estimate of residual value of the investment: the price this apartment could fetch in the market today if its rent was still government-controlled. These high IRR's were achieved even though the calculations of the cash flows included rent levels that reached values in the last years of the war as low as \$8 per annum. The IRR's were also adjusted down from 8.94% and 10.16% respectively, to account for owners expenses.

(The reader is referred to the full-length article for detailed discussions of the various scenarios envisaged and their precise calculations).

The owners squeezed their profits in the first years of their investment, knowing fully that rent differentials would grow with time. The returns of the early years of an investment weigh more than those of later years in the calculation of profitability (IRR). That is the explanation why the owners can achieve high profitability even though their rental incomes become very low in real terms in later years. The legislators and the CC failed to take this into consideration, and this invalidates their legal reasoning based entirely on faulty economic and financial grounds.

The tenants paid a premium in higher initial yields for the security given them by 50 laws over 80 years. This security should not be denied them without proper compensation.

### **A simple and fair proposal to resolve the conflict between owners and their tenants**

We now have the elements for the elaboration of a simple and fair solution to the residential rental housing problem.

It should be recognized at first, that there are some categories of owners that were unjustly treated in the rent adjustments made by past legislators, because the latter were fixated on rent differentials and oldness of initial contracts rather than on overall profitability to owners. This is the case of contracts initially signed in the mid 1980's. Whereas the rent adjustments made in the 1992 law, to correct for the hyperinflation of the war years, multiplied the rents initially contracted before 1954 by a factor of 165, they only multiplied those contracted in 1984-1985 by a factor of 24, thus depriving these owners from the benefits of high early profits.

The simple way to correct for these inequitable adjustments is to return all old rents to their initial real value. A good approximation for the real value is their initial value in US Dollars, which can be easily calculated and then transformed into current Lebanese Pounds at today's rates. These values should then be subjected to all the raises voted since 1992 that were linked to cost of living adjustments to wages. These corrected rents will be referred to as Rehabilitated Wages (RW).

The proposal can now be summarized as follows:

- RW is used as the initial current rent, and its future increases will be linked to cost of living adjustments to wages, as stipulated in the 1992 law.
- All current expenses will be paid by the tenants.
- The rented apartments share in costs of rehabilitation of infrastructure, equipment purchases, renovation, will be fully born by the tenants. They will be given, however, the choice between making a lump-sum payment for the whole amount of their share in costs, or of incurring a rent increase equal to 5% of these costs.
- In both cases above, the tenants will have the right to participate in the decisions and in overseeing the execution of the works
- Should the owners be dissatisfied with the conditions of their lease under the extended Law1992/160 applied to the RW, the proposed solution offers them the possibility of reclaiming their property against compensation. The owners can, at their sole discretion, offer the following deal to tenants: The owners will provide an estimate of the value of their apartment as if vacant. This estimate will not be subject to revision. The tenant, within one year of this offer, will be obligated to select one of the two following options: buy the apartment for half the estimated price or accept an indemnity equal to the same amount in order to vacate the premises and end the rental contract. The tenants will be given enough time to find the financing if they decide to buy, or to seek alternative housing if they accept the indemnity to vacate their old lodging. ●

# PARLIAMENT OF BANGLADESH- JATIYO SANGSAD

## QUOTA FOR WOMEN

**Bangladesh may be one of the poorest countries in the world, but it is certainly one of its most significant democracies. Poverty and deteriorating economic conditions did not prevent the relatively modern Bangladesh, established in 1971 after its separation from Pakistan, from adopting a democratic system. This has permitted the alternation of power based on free elections and according to an electoral law ensuring proper representation of a people known for its ethnic and religious diversity.**

### State authorities

The Head of State is elected by the members of Parliament. The power the Head enjoys is symbolic and limited to signing laws, appointing the Prime Minister from the political party commanding the majority of seats in Parliament and other protocol procedures. The government is responsible for executive power and the Prime Minister should be a Member of Parliament and have the confidence of the majority of members.

### Parliament

Bangladesh parliament is known as the Jatiyo Sangsad. It consists of 350 members of which 300 are elected from 300 territorial constituencies. The remaining 50 seats are reserved for women. These women are selected by political parties in proportion to their overall share of the votes received in the election.

### Voting age

Bangladeshi citizens are eligible to vote at the age of 18.

### Parliament term

Parliament is elected for a five-year term of office.

### Electoral districts and voting system

A plurality voting system is used in 300 single-member constituencies. The candidate with the most votes wins a seat in Parliament. Voting is mainly party-centered.

### Parties

There are close to 30 political parties in Bangladesh including five major parties. The two primary parties are:



Parliament of Bangladesh- Jatiyo Sangsad

- Bangladesh Awami League, which, after its victory in 2008, also won the elections held in 2014 securing 232 seats in Parliament.
- Bangladesh Nationalist Party, which was previously in power but boycotted the 2014 elections.

### Other parties include:

- Jatiya party: 33 seats
- Workers' Party of Bangladesh: 4 seats
- Independents: 15 seats

It is noteworthy that leadership of the main two rival parties is vested in women. Sheikh Hassina Wajed chairs the majority-winning Awami League party and serves as Prime Minister, while Sheikh Khalida Diyaa heads the opposing Nationalist Party. ●

# BAHIJ TAKIEDDINE

## PSP AND SSNP

**The late MP and minister Bahij Takieddine was one of the very few Lebanese politicians who epitomized integrity and work ethics in their political and parliamentary career.**

### Birth

Bahij Takieddine was born in the town of Baakleen in Al-Shouf in 1909. His father, Mahmoud Takieddine, was a prominent dignitary in the area, a governor of different regions and a director of Al-Maaref. His mother, Zahiya Abdul Malak or Oum Said, was known for her political activity and was regarded as highly as Nazira Jumblat.

### Siblings

Bahij's older brother was the author and diplomatic correspondent Said Takieddine. His other brothers were the author Takieddine, Director General of the Ministry of Defense Mounir Takieddine, Professor Badih Takieddine who was one of the founding fathers of the Lebanese University and lawyer Nadim Takieddine.

### Education

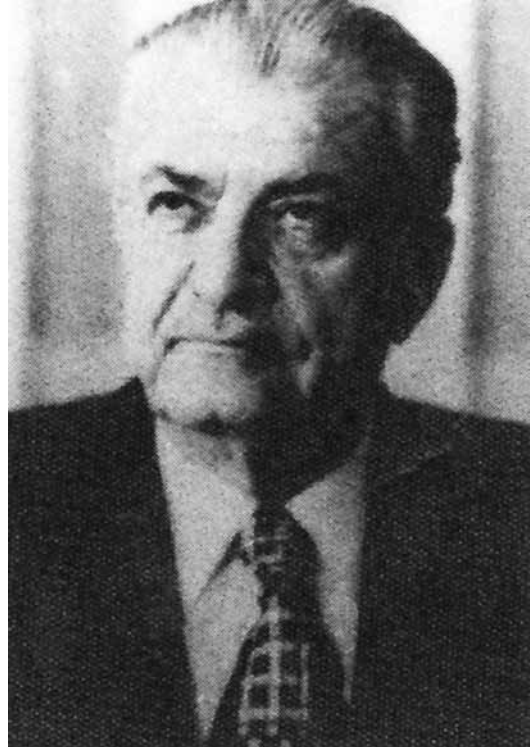
Bahij Takieddine studied in Baakleen before moving to the Lycée Francais in Beirut where he completed secondary school. In 1931, he obtained a law degree from the Saint Joseph University.

### Practicing law

Bahij Takieddine practiced at the Habib Abou Shahla law firm until 1949, after which he established an independent office and became one of the brightest criminal attorneys in Lebanon.

### Parliamentary deputyship

In 1947, Bahij Takieddine ran individually for parliament against strong lists, one of them headed by Camille Chamoun, another by Emile Eddeh and a third list by Salim Khoury. The support of both the Syrian Social Nationalist Party and Prince Majid Erslan helped him win the elections. He received 18,044 votes in the elections of 1960 and 18,724 in 1964. He won again in 1968 and 1972 amassing 22,929 votes and 26,163 votes respectively and remained a Member of Parliament until his death.



Bahij Takieddine

In 1951, Bahij Takieddine ran on the National Front list along with Kamal Jumblat, Camille Chamoun and Prince Majid Erslan, as both Aley and Al-Shouf were considered to be a single district. Takieddine gained 11,682 votes in the electoral battle against his rival Sheikh Fadlallah Talhouk who, after his defeat, appealed against Takieddine's deputyship. The appeal board dismissed his complaint.

Takieddine was not as fortunate in the elections of 1953 and 1957, especially after the rift between President Camille Chamoun and Kamal Jumblat. During those years, the seat was won by the Chamoun-backed candidate, Qahtan Hamadeh.

## Ministry

Bahij Takiieddine worked in several ministries and served as:

- Minister of Agriculture from October 1, 1949 to February 14, 1951 under Riad Solh's government;
- Minister of Public Health and Social Affairs starting June 7, 1951 under Hussein Ouwaini's government. He resigned from the post the same day.
- Minister of National Economy from November 18, 1964 to July 25, 1965 under Hussein Ouwaini's government;
- Minister of Information from January 15, 1969 to November 25, 1969 under Rashid Karami's government;
- Minister of Interior from July 8, 1973 to October 31, 1974 under Takiieddine Solh's government;
- Minister of Interior and Minister of Tourism from July 16, 1979 to February 9, 1980 when he resigned, under Salim Hoss's government.

## Relation with the SSNP

Much has been said about the relationship between Takiieddine and the Syrian Social Nationalist Party. Despite Takiieddine's admiration for the party's founder, Antoun Saadeh, and despite the support that the party gave him when he stood as candidate in the elections, Takiieddine did not join the SSNP. It is said that Takiieddine signed an application for membership to join the party, but it was never approved for unknown reasons. When Saadeh was executed, Bahij Takiieddine wrote "According to those who accused him falsely, the crime of Antoun Saadeh was that he opened our eyes when all of us were blind to what colonialism harbored and when the Jews were in Moscow, Paris, Washington and London compromising our land and souls. His greatest crime was his early detection of the Zionist peril hanging over us."

## Quotes and positions

"Lebanon was, still is and always will be a refuge for the persecuted and a shelter for those ravaged by certain political currents. It shall keep its heart open to receive all who were oppressed in their countries or pressured for the doctrines or political principles or opinions they held, whatever their color," Takiieddine said in 1962.

On the freedom of press he said "I can assure you that I will stand by journalists in whatever amendment they

seek, for this is the position that follows the dictates of my conscience and duty. Defending the freedom of thought is a sacred obligation required of all who believe in the democratic system and refuse to replace it." His words came in 1948 following the approval of a law that restricted the freedom of press.

**“When Saadeh was executed, Bahij Takiieddine wrote “According to those who accused him falsely, the crime of Antoun Saadeh was that he opened our eyes when all of us were blind to what colonialism harbored and when the Jews were in Moscow, Paris, Washington and London compromising our land and souls. His greatest crime was his early detection of the Zionist peril hanging over us”**”

In 1974, following the abduction of journalist Michel Abou Jaoudeh, the then editor-in-chief of *An-Nahar*, Bahij Takiieddine who at the time served as Interior Minister, visited the Fatah security official, Abou Hassan Salameh, accompanied by the owner of *An-Nahar*, Ghassan Tweini. Takiieddine confronted Salameh by saying that Abou Jaoudeh had been kidnapped by Abou Ammar and the accusation triggered a heated verbal clash between the two. The dispute would have escalated out of control had it not been for the intervention of Ghassan Tweini and the phone call made by Kamal Jumblat to Takiieddine requesting him to find another culprit for the abduction scenario and not to limit it to the Fatah organization. Later, findings revealed that the pro-Syrian Al-Saiqa was responsible for the operation.

## Family

He married Souad Abdul Malak and had four children with her.

## Death

He died on February 9, 1980 and was buried in his hometown, Baakleen. 🇅🇱

## AORTIC ANEURISMS

Dr. Hanna Saadah



**An aneurism is an abnormal dilatation of an artery caused by a localized weakness of the arterial wall. The aorta is the main artery that supplies blood from the heart to the entire body. Because of its large diameter and arterial pressure it is especially vulnerable to such sack-like dilatations, or aneurisms.**

According to the law of Laplace, the bigger the diameter of an aneurism, the thinner and weaker its wall gets, the faster it will grow and the sooner it will rupture. Think of blowing up a balloon. To start with, one has to blow very hard, but the balloon resists expansion and yields very little. However, after it grows to a certain size, its resistance declines and it becomes easier to fill up with air. If we continue to blow it up, it becomes bigger and bigger, its wall will get thinner and weaker, and suddenly it will burst. That is what aneurisms do as their diameter grows larger and their wall gets thinner and weaker. They suddenly and unexpectedly dissect or rupture, thereby making them deadly with a rate of mortality of 90%.

The trouble with aortic aneurisms is that they usually give no warning signs and cause no symptoms, much like a balloon, which quietly fills up with air and then, without warning, startles us by suddenly bursting. However, occasionally, when an aneurism does cause symptoms, it should be regarded as a surgical emergency. Dissection, which means that blood has burrowed a hole in the wall of the aneurism, is the commonest cause of symptoms. The most common symptom is sudden, escalating and unexplained pain that radiates to the neck, back, chest, or abdomen.

The main predictor of aneurismal rupture is size. In men, the critical size is 5.5 centimeters whereas in women it is only 5 centimeters. Older age (more than 50 for men and more than 60 for women), male gender, family history and smoking are the primary risk factors, whereas obesity, hypertension and high cholesterol are secondary factors. The risk is four times higher in men than in women and four times higher in those with a family history of aneurisms. These risk factors, through unknown mechanisms, cause progressive inflammation and destruction of the arterial wall, which ultimately leads to arterial dissection and rupture. Diabetes, on the other hand, is not a risk factor and may even be protective.

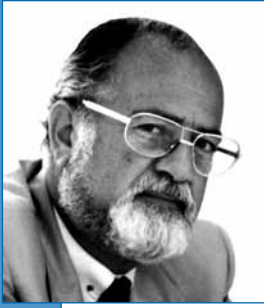
The incidence of aortic aneurisms has declined from 8% to 2% because fewer adults are smoking and more are living healthier lives, eating better diets and exercising regularly. In spite of this, in the USA alone, about 13,000 persons

still die of ruptured aneurisms each year. Consequently, the US preventive task force has recommended a one-time ultrasound screening of the aorta for aneurisms in men - who have smoked or have a strong family history of aneurisms - and are 65-75 years old.

The diameter of the aneurism determines the frequency of screening: a) Aneurisms 3 to 3.4 cm are screened every three years, b) aneurisms 3.5 to 4.4 cm are screened every year, c) aneurisms 4.5 to 5.4 cm are screened every six months. The incidence of rupture is less than 1% in aneurisms less than 5 cm in women or less than 5.5 cm in men. Aneurisms that reach 5.5 cm in men or 5 cm in women are referred to surgical repair because the incidence of rupture increases significantly with an increasing diameter. Hence, the incidence of rupture is: a) 9.4% for aneurisms 5.5 to 5.9 cm, b) 10.2% for aneurisms 6 to 6.9 cm, and c) 32.5% for aneurisms more than 7 cm. Moreover, the rate of growth of aneurisms is a major indicator of rupture; aneurisms that expand more than 0.5 cm in six months should be promptly repaired regardless of size.

Aortic aneurisms can occur in the chest or in the abdomen, but the closer they are to the heart, the more complex their surgical repair becomes. Surgical mortality is about 5% and full recovery may take several months. Depending on the location of the aneurism and its surrounding anatomy, surgical repair may be done either by cutting open the chest or abdomen, or by threading a specially equipped catheter into the aorta. In either case, patients will need regular follow-ups because complications increase with age and a second surgical repair will be required in 17% to 28% of patients.

There are no medical therapies that are known to delay the growth or rupture of aneurisms. Treating obesity, blood pressure and cholesterol may help slowing down the hardening of the arteries but such treatments do not help aneurisms because they are not caused by hardening of the arteries. Stopping smoking may be the only effective non-surgical remedy and patients should be strongly advised to stop smoking while their aneurism is under surveillance.



Antoine Boutros

## THE FLEXIBLE EMPIRE (3)

GAZA ETHOS: A GUIDE TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING REGIONAL TURKISH POLICIES

**Those who are familiar with the regional policies in the beginning of the 20th century might recall that the Turkish government bestowed upon Kemal Ataturk the title of Gazi, which is synonymous to 'khan' or 'Caesar', and the rank of Mashal in recognition of his accomplishments, thus aligning him with the Sultans. According to Sir James W. Redhouse's Turkish-English dictionary- A Turkish and English Lexicon- issued in Constantinople, the word 'Guz' means the Turkish ancestors of Ottomans, 'Ghazza' is the person who dedicates himself to war for the sake of Islam and 'Ghazat' is the military campaign in defense or in the path of Islam.**

Ever since when it was published in 1938 in a lecture by German Orientalist Paul Wittek, the gaza ethos has been a subject of particular concern. In Wittek's concept, the gaza ethos refuses to regard the Ottomans as a clan or people linked genealogically; rather, they are groups of Anatolian bound by a common intention to fight Christian infidels in their neighborhood (see part 1). In the second part, we highlighted how gaza provided a pretext for Ottoman expansion, and in this part, we will continue the debate surviving to this day on the gazi theory.

Foremost among those who joined the debate on the Gazi thesis is the Hungarian Turcologist Gyula Kaldy-Nagy who noted in his book published in 1979 that the Ottomans in the early centuries of their history were Muslims only in name and therefore their initial conquests could not have sprung from a gaza ethos. In other words, for Kaldy-Nagy there simply was not any conflict between Christianity and Islam in the early stages of Ottoman era.

In 1984, Pal Fodor, another Hungarian Turcologist, rekindled the debate with a cogent article arguing that the terms 'gazi' and 'gaza' in the works of poet Tajeddin Ahmedi were nothing but mere literary tools used to serve political purposes. Fodor's article is in many ways considered to be the most recent study on the renewable debate on Ottoman origins, for it challenged the evidence put forth by Wittek in order to advance his thesis.

In 1986, the renowned American Ottoman scholar Ronal Jennings became the latest to criticize Wittek's selection of passages from the early 15th century poem by Ahmedi and the 1337 inscription on the Bursa Grand Mosque. In so doing, he noted that since the occupation of the Balkans was the result of joint efforts by Ottoman and Christian military leaders, the theory of Wittek on gaza ethos was therefore false.

Colin Heywood, the British Turcologist and former student of Paul Wittek, depicted Wittek as a demon

that needs to be exorcised in two articles published in 1988 and 1989. He argued that the notion of a gazi hero serves more to unveil the childhood of Wittek and his upbringing in Vienna, capital of the Hapsburg Empire, than to enlighten us about the early Ottoman history.

A second English Turcologist, Colin Imber, in a series of three articles published in 1986, 1987 and 1993 argued that the 14th century is basically a black hole and that we do not have a sufficient amount of modern sources to be able to recreate that era of Ottoman history. He noted that the historians who attempted to reconstruct the history of that period were only repeating what their predecessors in the 16th and 17th centuries had said.

In 1993, the Turkish philologist Sinsai Tekin published two studies aimed to demonstrate that the Bursa Grand Mosque's inscription (second piece of evidence in Wittek's thesis) was in fact nothing but a 19th century forgery. He argued, rightly, that its current location on the Sehadet Mosque could not have been its original place.

The most significant recent book length study on this subject is the Cemal Kafadar's 1995 work, *The Construction of the Ottoman State*. Kafadar, a Turkish born and North American trained Ottomanist, tries to reexamine the emergence and growth of the Ottomans and to look at the 14th century gazis as one element in the patchwork of groups identifiable in Anatolia at the time. His view of Islam and Christianity alike underlines the inclusivity of these two cultures. Many criticized Kafadar's book for being a defense of Inalcik's modification of the gazi theory to accommodate it to the traditional notion of the tribal origins of the Ottomans.

The Greek scholar, Dimitri Kitsikis, on the other hand argued that the Ottoman Empire was in fact a Turco-Greek empire concealed by history over the ages. ●●

## THE MONTHLY INTERVIEWS

### NAZRUL ISLAM

#### CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES AT THE EMBASSY OF BANGLADESH IN LEBANON

**Could you please provide insight into your personal and professional biography (birth, educational background, family, previous posts, entry into diplomacy, etc)?**

I was born in 1968 in Barisal, Bangladesh. My father was a lawyer who has passed away now; he encouraged me to become an Ambassador of Bangladesh. I did my Honours and Masters Degree in Economics at the University of Dhaka. I did my PhD in Water Studies at the University of New England, Australia in early 2014. After completing my Masters degree I joined Bangladesh Foreign Service in 1995 through a competitive examination under Bangladesh Public Service Commission. Earlier I served in Bangladesh Missions in South Korea, Iraq and Australia as well as at the HQs in different capacities. Before taking up post here in Lebanon in September 2014, I was Director General for Middle East in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs since October 2011. I am here with my family-wife and three sons.

**How large is the Bangladeshi contingent in UNIFIL and how has it contributed to the success of the mission in South Lebanon?**

As you are aware, the United Nations Interim Mission in Lebanon, in short UNIFIL, was established in 1978 in South of Lebanon comprising of land force only. But in July 2006, following an event of illegal arms landing activity in Lebanese coast, Israel imposed a naval blockade causing huge economic pressure on Lebanon. Later a UN Security Council Resolution-1701 was passed allowing UN Maritime Task Force under UNIFIL. UNIFIL Maritime Task Force (MTF) has been deployed since October 2006 and supports the Lebanese Navy in monitoring its territorial waters, securing the Lebanese coastline and preventing the unauthorized entry of arms or related material by sea into Lebanon.

Since May 2010, Bangladesh Naval contingent has been deployed in Lebanon under MTF, UNIFIL. Currently, there are two naval ships from Bangladesh with 320 officers and sailors. The ships are BNS ALI HAIDER and BNS NIRMUL and both are modern warships. MTF currently



Nazrul Islam

comprises of a frigate and Large Patrol Carrier (LPC) from Bangladesh, a frigate as flag ship from Brazil, a corvette from Germany, a corvette from Indonesia, a corvette from Turkey and an LPC from Greece. Undertaking MTF mission is a challenging task. The Area of Maritime Operations (AMO) is about 5,000 Sq nautical miles sea areas along Lebanese coast. Warships of this Task Force are permitted to call on Beirut port, Limassol Port of Cyprus and Mersin Port of Turkey. For carrying out an operation effectively in this area at least three warships are needed at all times in AMO along the three main sea-lanes towards the ports. Another primary task of MTF is to enhance the capability of LAF Navy through training. In doing so, Bangladeshi Navy is regularly carrying out intruder exercise with the coastal radar stations. Besides, they regularly train Lebanese officers, cadets and ship's company on various theoretical and practical subjects onboard, such as boat handling, gun firing, seamanship, firefighting and damage control, combat system, navigation, etc.

**How large is the Bangladeshi community in Lebanon?**

There are about 70,000 Bangladeshi nationals working here in Lebanon, mostly as domestic maids and others in cleaning jobs. We understand that since there is unemployment amongst the Lebanese youth, it is difficult to find employment opportunities here in Lebanon for semi-skilled and skilled workforce from Bangladesh.

Currently, globally around 9 million Bangladeshi nationals are working in 157 countries, mostly in the Gulf.

**How do you assess the conditions of Bangladeshi domestic workers?**

Frankly speaking, Bangladeshi domestic workers in Lebanon are not badly off comparing to other countries in the Middle East. However, we need to address some issues such as low salary, working conditions, health and overall treatment of these workers. We need to create awareness among all parties concerned about their rights, responsibilities and obligations. We are trying to address all these issues through a bilateral manpower agreement between the two governments so that exploitation and malpractice can be stopped at both ends.

**How many visas does the embassy issue annually?**

There is not that significant number of travelers from Lebanon to Bangladesh. You know that the Embassy was re-opened in July 2013, and we issue annually about two hundred visas. We hope visitors from Lebanon to Bangladesh would increase in the coming months as we hope to see more interaction between the two nations.

**How have you developed the ties between Bangladesh and Lebanon during your term in office and what obstacles have you faced in the process, if any?**

You will be happy to learn that soon after the independence, Bangladesh established a resident mission in Lebanon in 1973. In fact, that was one of the first resident missions of Bangladesh in the Middle East. During the Liberation War, Bangladesh was able to open its first Information Centre in the Middle East, in Beirut in 1971. Lebanon, therefore, had served as a convenient springboard for Bangladesh. Unfortunately, after the outbreak of Civil War in Lebanon from 1975-76 onwards and the consequent deteriorating security situation, Bangladesh was compelled to wind up its Mission in Beirut. Bangladesh Embassy in Beirut was re-opened in July 2013.

Now Lebanon is important because of few aspects; Firstly, as I stated there is Bangladesh Naval Contingent [two Naval Ships-BNS Ali Hadier and BNS Nirmul] as a part of United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) Mission with 320 Naval officers [30 officers] and staff members. We could expand our relations in cooperation between the two armed forces. Secondly, there is a significant number of Bangladeshi workers (around 70,000), mostly unskilled domestic female workers. There could be a structured cooperation in manpower sector through a bilateral agreement between the two countries. Thirdly, we could explore trade cooperation which is currently insignificant.

Bangladesh exports quality garment products, pharmaceuticals, ceramics, leather and leather products to Europe, the USA and other destinations, and it is able to export those to Lebanon as well. There could be a Business Council (between Federation of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Beirut) to have frequent interaction between businessmen of the two countries as well as having trade exhibitions in Bangladesh and Lebanon. Lebanon imports nearly one billion dollars worth of medicines every year. Bangladesh is currently exporting world class medicines to more than 90 countries including USA and Europe with annual turnover of US\$ 70 million. Lebanon can import quality medicines from Bangladesh at a very competitive price. And finally, we look forward to have cooperation in the field of art, culture and education. Bangladesh is known for a vibrant society famous for art, culture and education areas. Lebanon is also known for its artistic, cultural and educational activities in the region. Both countries can have collaboration in these areas for mutual exposures and understanding. The Embassy of Bangladesh wishes to organise art exhibition and workshop in 2015 in Beirut where famous artists from Bangladesh will participate.

We are happy to receive cooperation from all departments of Lebanese government including the Foreign Ministry. We look forward to expedite all the cooperation between Bangladesh and Lebanon for mutual benefits.

**What have you loved the most about Lebanon and what is it that bothers you the most?**

I like Lebanese people, they are very friendly and cooperative. I also like the scenic beauty of Lebanon-Paris of the East, not to mention about its mouthwatering cuisine! Yes, occasionally, some security barricades bother me as do skirmishes in the bordering areas, but we are hopeful that Lebanon will remain peaceful in the coming years.

**Does Lebanon bear any similarities to Bangladesh? What are they? And what are the major differences?**

Yes, people of both Bangladesh and Lebanon love to gossip and enjoy festivities! There is not much difference between the two peoples except language and physical appearances.

**Any final words?**

I like this country, Lebanon. We want to see a peaceful and prosperous Lebanon. Bangladesh would like to expand her relations with Lebanon in all possible ways. Long live Bangladesh-Lebanon friendship! ●

# GREEN LINE ASSOCIATION

## A PIONEER IN GREEN ADVOCACY

**Much like everything else in Lebanon, controlling and managing the environment and natural resources need to be addressed more seriously if we are to pass on a greener and cleaner space to future generations. Amid the frequent violations affecting Lebanon's environment, from the lack of adequate urban planning to sporadic wildfires, from random sites for dumping waste and illegal and sporadic quarries to illegal hunting, from encroachments of the seaside to other forms of hostile human behavior, it may be hard to reverse the damage done. Knowing that this challenging task along with environmental literacy cannot be achieved without active cooperation between the government and civil society, NGOs stepped in to help mitigate environmental hazards and promote an eco-friendly culture. The Green Line Association is one such example.**

### Establishment

The association was established in 1991 when a group of professionals from the American University of Beirut (AUB) and their friends decided to translate their concern about the post-war devastated cultural, human and natural environment into an organized action. Thus, Green Line emerged as an independent non-partisan non-governmental organization concerned with environmental affairs and aiming to expose threats to the environment, raise environmental awareness and contribute towards a scientific framework for a sustainable environmental management policy. The association brings together people worried about conserving the past and the present and giving the future a better chance.

### Activities

The activities of the association are too many to mention. The Garden Project launched in 1997, aimed to increase the green areas, by encouraging the practice of agriculture. Initially, it included 20 schools; it then expanded to comprise close to 120 both public and private schools from all over Lebanon, a number of municipalities (Kahhaleh, Baalbeck, Zahle, Abbassiyeh...), local organizations, civil society groups, institutions and ministries.



Green Line's reforestation efforts yielded the formation of the National Reforestation Network, which included 68 NGOs and clubs that planted more than 100,000 trees across Lebanon. Reforestation projects were funded by Oxfam-UK and led to the establishment of nurseries in South Lebanon, Qoubayyat and Rmaileh.

Green Line also attended to organic farming and provided guidelines for the production, processing, labeling and marketing of organically produced foods, in a bid to promote organic agriculture and educate people about its importance.

Knowing the sensitivity of the thorny environmental issues they raised, Green Line's lobbying group envisioned beforehand the challenges lying ahead.

The association's action was therefore focused on awareness and outreach activities along with mobilization efforts aimed to correct the environmental policies in force and influence a change in legislation.

Green Line's lobbyists drew attention to the sporadic quarrying practices and joined hands with late MP Wadeh Akl to minimize the destructive implications of rampant and illegal sand and rock quarrying. Although it could not realize ultimate victory, its efforts forced the relevant authorities to put forth a master plan for quarries and abide by the administrative deadlines.

Green Line reinforced its presence as an effective environmental activist by launching a groundbreaking campaign against the extraction of sand from the beaches of Tyre. Despite the threats and challenges it received, Green Line's activism yielded the declaration of the coast of Tyre a protected area.

Green Line protested the transfer of garbage from the Normandy landfill to Sibline and reported the case to the General Prosecutor, but no action was taken to curb the violation.

Archaeological preservation was also put on the association's agenda and Green Line members were able to retrieve artifacts stolen from Tyre's newly discovered Phoenician Child cemetery that were being sold on the black market. The artifacts are now exhibited in the National Museum.

Green Line's campaigned to stop the privatization of public beaches; the association's advocacy coupled with the protests and fury of Beirut's residents forced the late PM Rafik Hariri to halt the project he was developing in Ramlet El-Bayda. In speaking against the flagrant and systematic seizure of public spaces, Green Line allowed the Lebanese access to their last place by the sea turning Ramlet El-Bayda into a public beach. Likewise, the association joined hands with the residents of Beirut to challenge the Daliyeh area project, denouncing the abusive practices and naming and shaming the violators and beneficiaries.

Green activists from the association petitioned and protested to preserve every inch of greenery in different areas such as Horsh Beirut and Beirut's hippodrome.

### Budget

Green Line's annual budget stood at USD 200,000 in the late nineties and funding was provided by Oxfam. However, after the 2005 Hariri assassination and the July War and all the subsequent events, things began to go downhill and are still deteriorating to date.

### Challenges

The overlap between politics and the environment coupled with the convergence of interests among powerbrokers and stakeholders and their ensuing intimidating practices seem to gravely undermine the performance of the association. Despite the vast awareness campaigns and the serious attempts made by Green Line and other green NGOs to educate people about the dangers of environmental neglect, environmental awareness and ethics still have a long way to go and a lot of work needs to be done to alter people's perceptions of and practices towards their environment. Funds from donor agencies are now being diverted towards non-governmental purposes; this, along with lack of local financing, further complicates the challenge of environmental reform. ♣



## AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TÜBINGEN

The tourist ticket from New York to Hamburg, north of Germany cost USD 100 and that of the New York-bound train USD 24. The ship was fancy and the trip pleasant. Most of the passengers were both male and female American students heading for Germany and Austria to spend the summer holiday there and learn German. Germany was very cheap for those who had money.

Delicious meals and delightful evenings and music; at 4:00 pm coffee was served. The sea was calm and the moon in full form.

The sea brings together the hearts of travelers. With its majesty, it renders humans helpless and makes them feel lost and detached from the world, thus leading them to seek friendship and companionship. O, how many eyes were awash with tears at the time of farewell.

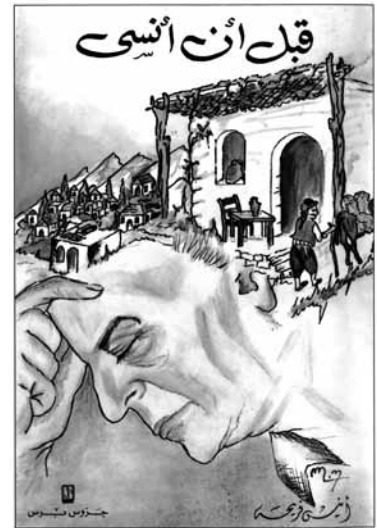
When Miss Samson, my friend's fiancée, heard I was traveling to Germany, she invited a bunch of our friends and threw me a small farewell party at a bar we used to frequent. They gave me a lighter and a chocolate box. I bid them, Chicago and its teachers goodbye.

From Hamburg, I headed by train towards Tübingen in the south. Germany mesmerized me with the beauty of its cities, the greenery of its woods and the charm of its countryside.

I spent my night in Tübingen at the Fox Hostel. The next morning, I left for college. The premises stretched across different areas of the lovely old city. I was ultimately guided to Mr. Annoltmen's office. He had a hulky body with an upright posture. His eyes were blue and his skin tone light. Mr. Annoltmen was an authority on Semitic languages and the history of their peoples. He was also well-acquainted with Syria where he had spent a lengthy period collecting inscriptions from Horan and Bilad Al-Safa.

He gave me a friendly welcome and said "I've been expecting you. You have arrived at just the right time. I'm preparing a German translation of Shaker Khoury's Fenianos. The story has words and terms that I could not find in any dictionary. It also refers to several Lebanese customs and traditions that I could not fully understand."

He showed me a pile of papers with many questions. I recognized the story immediately. I had read it and kept a copy in my library. "I would be delighted if I could be of any help", I said. ●



## CAN SUBLIMINAL MESSAGES REALLY PERSUADE THE MIND?

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### Myth

*The effectiveness of the power of advertising to influence consumer decisions has always been contested. But apart from the visual components of advertisements, subliminal images and messages have been thought to unconsciously manipulate the viewer's attitude towards products. Subliminal messages are usually presented faintly, but at the same time rapidly and repeatedly. This way they are perceived unconsciously by the mind and there is thus no conscious awareness of their existence. Through this exposure to enticing messages, we are expected to be encouraged to buy more, eat more or even vote more...*

### Fact

The dangerous implications resulting from this method of advertising have led to many investigations about its validity. Fortunately, the subliminal messages have not always proved reliable. Researchers Vokey and Read (1985) conducted an experiment where participants were shown three sets of images with a vacation theme. In the first set, words with sexual implications were embedded in the back of the image, in the second a three-letter nonsensical word was inserted and in the third there were no words at all. After viewing the slides, none of the participants could recall seeing any of the embedded words. Moreover, none of them recognized the embedded slides better than the non-embedded ones. This answers the question of whether subliminal motivations could change the attitude of viewers.

The same team of researchers conducted more tests to investigate audible subliminal messages (usually found in audio tapes and CDs). Using rock music recorded backwards (the manner in which audio recordings are thought to embed messages) the majority of listeners were able to determine the gender of the singer. What they could not decipher was whether the heard sentence was a question or a phrase; the accuracy rate of their answers was only 52.1%. Furthermore, 44.8% were able to identify when sentences heard backwards had the same meaning and only 19.4% were accurate in grouping the sentences they had heard into categories. This means that the listener cannot understand the sentences heard backwards, be it on a conscious or an unconscious level. Other relevant experiments have found that motivational audiotapes with 'inspirational' content had just the same effect on listeners as regular audiotapes do.

The extent to which subliminal messages can shape consumer choices remains debatable. But to the dismay of the advertising sector, to this day there has been no evidence that they do in fact work. The existence of these messages among our media is not certain, but even if they are present, this should in no way mean that they are effective. Finally, if some viewers/listeners were to be significantly affected by these hidden messages, it is important to wonder whether this could have resulted from any active construction on their part rather than the content of messages. ●

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## LEBANON ILLUSTRATED BY ITS STAMPS

**DR. JOSEPH HATEM**

Dr. Joseph Hatem who spent his life as a biologist and worked as a consultant for the World Health Organization, did not want the budding generations to forget their roots. For that, he decided to transform his fondness for stamp collecting from a hobby to a full-fledged professional pursuit, thereby coming into direct contact with history. Knowing that stamps attest best to the life of nations, Hatem issued his book entitled *Lebanon Illustrated by its Stamps* in three editions: Arabic, English and French. Published by Dergham, the book not only contains images of postal stamps but is also adorned with poems by Charles Qorm, Shebli Al-Mallat, Nadia Toueini, Michel Shiha, Hector Khallat, Shukri Ghane, Venus Khoury, Maarouf Rasafi and Al-Akhtal As-Saghir. Renan, Lamartine, G r me and others are also quoted in the book.

Rowland Hill is credited with the invention of the first postage stamp in London in 1840, on which the profile of Queen Victoria was engraved. The idea was then propagated across the world and postage stamps have since been featuring heads of state, kings, celebrities, the world's riches, heritage items as well as political, economic, social and cultural landmarks.

Postage stamps were issued for the first time in Switzerland and Brazil in 1843 and 1849 respectively. The first Lebanese stamps though were issued in France in 1924 before painter Philippe Mourani became the first Lebanese to produce postage stamps about Lebanon in 1936. Between 1942 and 1965, Russian artist Paul Koroleff was an important figure in the design of stamps of Lebanon and so was the famed Lebanese painter Mostafa Farroukh. At the time, the Catholic printing house was the first to issue these stamps before other houses followed suit. Until 1966, the names of both the printing house and the illustrator/designer were still shown in the bottom margin of the stamp.

Through his significant collection of commemorative stamps, which he began to amass in 1989, Joseph Hatem revived memories of the days of establishment of modern Lebanon, starting from the rule of emirs in the late 16th century to the birth of the modern state. In all five chapters, Hatem is careful to place Lebanon in both its Arab and international contexts and to accentuate its valuable heritage and the dynamism of its people both at home and



overseas. Every stamp has a story to tell about Lebanon's history and the occasions and landmarks that marked it.

A 1.5 piaster stamp featuring the Chehabi Emir was issued on the anniversary of the declaration of independence. Another airmail stamp with a 5 piaster value represented Emir Fakhreddine who was also illustrated on a 50 piaster stamp offered by Lebanese emigrants in Brazil. The LBP 1250 stamp was issued on the 60th anniversary of independence and the LBP 1000 stamp featured Tripoli's old souk. The pillars of Baalbeck were represented on a 500 piaster stamp and Miss Lebanon, Georgina Rizk, on a stamp worth 25 piasters. These are samples of the many stamps Joseph Hatem had collected, driven by the beauty of these small paintings with serrated edges and the testimonies they carried about Lebanon's history.

Although his first collection was destroyed by fire, Dr. Joseph Hatem did not hesitate to create other collections of rare stamps. He regretted that there were no stamps in the names of Charles Debbas and Habib Basha Saad, the two Lebanese presidents under the French Mandate, as well as Suleiman Frangieh and Bashir Gemayel who headed the state during the phase of independence. Hatem takes his regrets even farther saying "We glorify the cedar tree, our national symbol, but forget the mulberry tree, which provided livelihoods for the Lebanese through sericulture. We forget the olive tree, which has accompanied us throughout all ages and provides us with year-round oil and olives. We also forget the railway train and its small stations copied from the French style. We forget how its whistle used to penetrate the coastal area's neighborhoods and souks. We discarded in our stamps our distinctive houses and mosques and churches, which stand out for their architecture and location." ●

## HOW IS LIFE OUT THERE?

*How is Life Out There?* recounts the ordeal of a little boy who lost his mother when Israel bombed the building where his family and neighbors were gathered. Only the boy, his aunt and his cousin survived. His father, a soldier who used to point weapons at the enemy, was registered as 'missing' and nothing was known about him. Whether he was dead or alive, nobody knew.

In the orphanage where he now lived, the boy would look out of the window, feeling a pang at his heart. He grew up at the orphanage. He ate, drank, studied and passed classes there. He was cured from his illnesses and exercised his hobbies on the streets of a city teeming with preparations for Mother's Day. "Why do I insist on recalling the face of my mother today? Is it because it is Mother's Day?"

Sanaa El-Harakeh aimed to draw attention to the bitterness suffered by those orphans separated from their parents by the tragic whim of fate, before associations caring for orphans stepped in to lend them a helping hand. The first edition of the book was published in 2010 by Asala.

Why would I care about Mother's Day? Why would I not care? Many from this association have given out their heart to me, not only their time and energy.

It was then that the boy realized that had it not been for the compassion of the orphanage, he would have been homeless. He could have been that poor florist he saw from his room in the morning or the shoe-shiner working in the rain or under burning sun. It dawned on him how fortunate he was to have received the care and attention of the orphanage and he did not forget to offer roses to his now wheelchair aunt. ●



# SHAFSHAK FAMILIES

## SUNNI IN NORTH LEBANON

‘Shafshaka’ in the Arabic vernacular is used to denote a task done quickly and improperly, thus resulting in future problems. Several families in north Lebanon- Akkar- have the name ‘shafshak’.

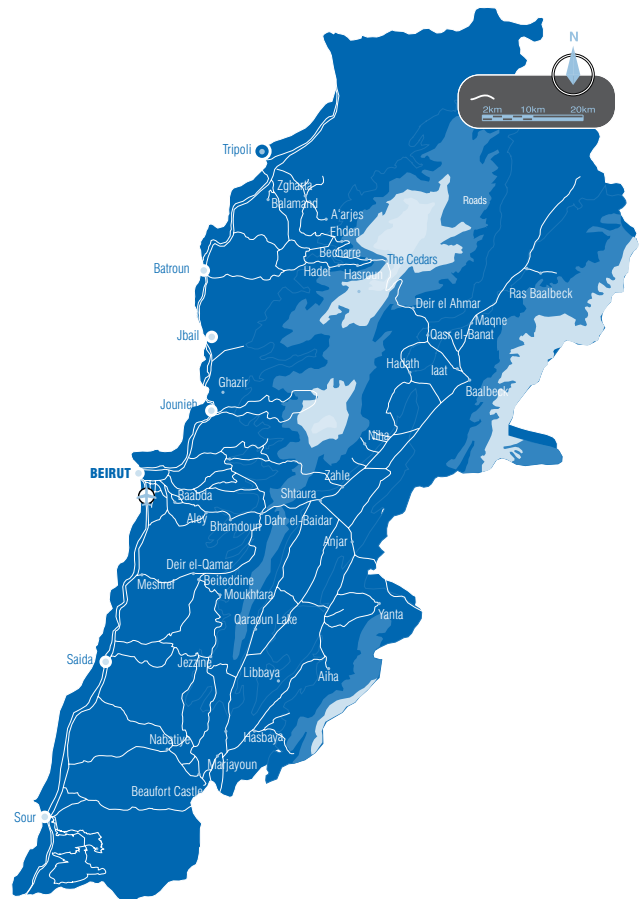
### Etymology

‘Shafashek’ is the Arabic plural of ‘shafshak’. Shafshak is synonymous to ‘dawraq’, which is a glass flask for water or fluids. It also means the small hat worn by hermits.

### Members

The Shafshaqs/ Al-Shafshaqs are estimated at roughly 190 members. The presence of this small Sunni family is confined within the north area, the majority being in the town of Hazmieh.

- Hazmieh (Mennieh-Dennieh Qada’a): 74 members
- Al-Qotteen (Mennieh- Dennieh Qada’a): 55
- Al-Tall neighborhood of Tripoli: 35
- Al-Qebbeh neighborhood of Tripoli: 21



## MRAH EL-HBAS

Not so long ago, Mrah El-Hbas was still a small town with a few houses. However, as the urban expansion of the city of Saida and its vicinity crawled towards the town, the erection of houses and high-rise buildings became a common occurrence in Mrah El-Hbas. If the phenomenon continues at the same rate, Mrah El-Hbas will soon turn into a large town failing to accommodate its native residents.

### Etymology

The name of the town consists of two units: ‘Mrah’, meaning a pasture for cattle and goats, and ‘El-Hbas’, meaning prison. Cattle used to be confined in the town for a long time during their transition from the mountain to the coast in the winter and from the coast to the mountain in summer, which is probably what inspired the name of the town.

### Location

Mrah El-Hbas is located in the Qada’a of Jezzine at an altitude of 440 meters above the sea level. Stretching across a small area not exceeding 80 hectares, the town is 60 kilometers from Beirut and 20 kilometers from Saida. It is bordered by Labaa to the west, Kfarfalous to the east and north and Ain El-Meer to the south. It may be reached via Saida, Majdelyoun, labaa, Ain El-Meer then Mrah El-Hbas.

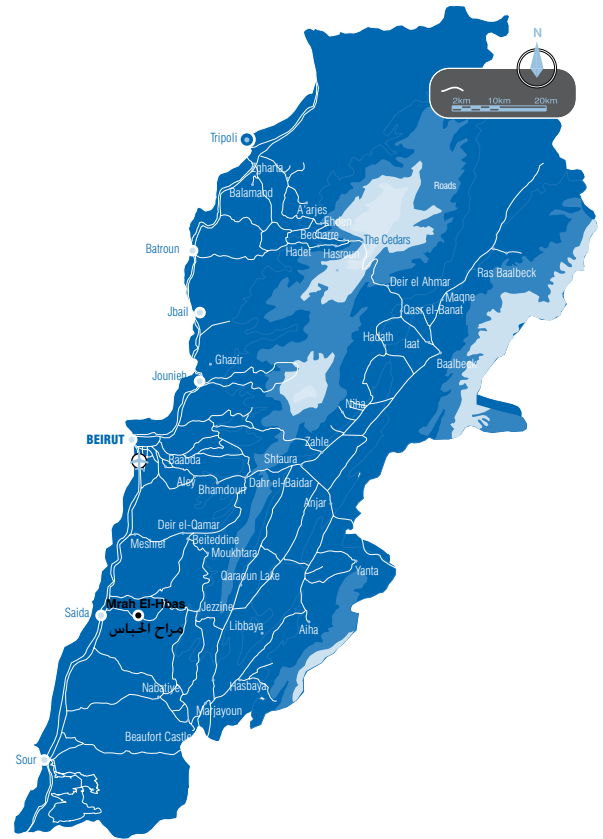
### Population and houses

The registered population in the personal status records of the town is estimated at roughly 500. They are distributed in 150 houses and are predominantly Greek Catholics with a small Maronite minority.

### Voters

The number of registered voters stood at 138 in 1972, then grew to 304 in 2000 and further to 339 in 2009. Voters are distributed among the following families:

- Dagher: 140
- Basset: 67
- Nashef: 50
- Najm: 30
- Youssef: 21
- Boulos: 18
- Shakhtoura: 13



### Local authorities

A Mukhtar and an Ikhtiyariyah body look after the town.

### Educational institutions

There are neither public nor private schools in Mrah El-Hbas. Students attend schools in the neighboring towns of Labaa and Ain El-Meer.

### Economic life

Agriculture is the main economic activity in the town. Some residents are employed in small industrial activities or are shopkeepers.

### Problems

The town has borne the brunt of war and Israeli occupation. Most of its residents fled the conflict and are yet to return home. One of the town’s primary problems is its small size of no more than 80 hectares. Large stretches of land have been sold to foreigners from outside the town, which, if it continues, may soon turn the natives into a minority. ●

# MADAGASCAR

Being the world's fourth largest island, Madagascar has been isolated from Africa for over 150 million years. It is home to many endangered species of flora and fauna holding over 90 percent of wildlife, which is found nowhere else in the world. The republic of Madagascar is also called "The Red Island" due to its large amounts of red soil. Madagascar is prominent for having a diverse mixture of immigrants, which has contributed to the cultural diversity of Madagascar.

## Location and area

Madagascar, officially called Republic of Madagascar is an island country in the Indian Ocean, off the coast of Southeast Africa. It covers an area of 587,041 km<sup>2</sup>, its capital and largest city is Antananarivo, which is home to over 2 million people and is located in the plateau highlands about half a mile above sea level.

Madagascar was colonized by the French in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and who established rule over the island. France used Madagascar as a source for timber and exotic spices. The country did not gain independence until June 26, 1960 making it the democratic state it is today.

## Population

The Republic of Madagascar has an estimated population of 22,599,098 (2013 est.) and its annual growth rate is 2.8%

## Religion

The majority of Madagascar's population adheres to traditional beliefs and Christianity. 55 percent of the population abides by the traditional beliefs, 40 percent are Christians and the remaining 5 percent of the population are Muslims.

## Language

The official language of Madagascar is Malagasy a language of Indonesian origin; in addition to Malagasy, French, and English are official languages.

## Economy

Madagascar's economy relies primarily on tourism, agriculture, mining and light industry. The country's unusual and endangered environment has turned it into a productive asset. Madagascar's climate, resorts and unique ecology make tourism one of its most dynamic and promising sectors for creating jobs and wealth. Madagascar produces close to half of the world's supply of vanilla, which comes from an orchid and is used for flavoring, as well as significant amounts of shrimp and lychee. The country currently provides half of the world's supply of sapphires and produces a number of other precious stones. There are a numerous oil fields, nickel mines and coal fields in Madagascar.



Despite all this Madagascar is a relatively poor country with approximately 70 percent of the population living below the national poverty line threshold of \$1 per day. Nearly half of Madagascar's children under five years old are malnourished. The lack of infrastructure and Madagascar's geographic isolation makes trade harder and more expensive. A weak educational system also contributes to the country's poverty making it challenging for the Malagasy to find jobs outside the agricultural sector. Logging and mining does not promote long-term economic growth since resources are depleted as they are removed.

## Political System and Elections

Since its independence from France in 1960, Madagascar has been a democratic republic. Currently the president, who is the head of state, is elected by universal suffrage to a five-year term with a two-term limit. Madagascar has a bicameral parliament, which is comprised of a senate and national assembly. The government is headed by a prime minister, who is nominated by the parliament and approved by the president. ●●

# DECEMBER 2014 HIGHLIGHTS

The last month of 2014 did not register any surprising turn of events and no changes were seen on the landscape that marked the previous months of the year. The initiation of dialogue between Hezbollah and the Future Movement might be the only new addition to the general spectrum. Below is the daily digest of news over December 2014.

## December 1

- PM Tamam Salam meets his Belgian counterpart and a number of European Union officials in Belgium and signs agreements worth 135 million Euros.
- Families of the kidnapped soldiers and policemen burn tires at night in Downtown, Beirut.
- Minister of Finance Ali Hassan Khalil announces during a press conference that he has referred 55 employees from the real estate departments of his ministry to the financial public prosecutor.
- Poet Said Akl laid to rest in a coffin designed and carved by sculptor Roudy Rahme in the Issam Fares Hall at Notre Dame University.
- The Daily Telegraph reports that British Forces are assisting the Lebanese Army in monitoring Syrian militants at the border with Syria near Ras Baalbeck in order to prevent their infiltration into Lebanon. A Lebanese military source acknowledges Britain's delivery of technical assistance.
- As-Safir reports that the Lebanese Army has arrested the wife of the Islamic State's leader Abou Bakr Al-Baghdadi.

## December 2

- Six Lebanese Army members die in an ambush set up by a terrorist group against an army patrol in the outskirts of Ras Baalbeck.
- The General Security assures that the Free Syrian Army Colonel Abdullah Rifai is still under arrest and was not freed in exchange for a Hezbollah fighter.
- Political figures, including foremost former presidents of the Republic, Amine Gemayel and Michel Suleiman and General Michel Aoun, attend poet Said Akl's funeral service in Downtown, Beirut. His body was transferred to Zahle after a mass led by Maronite Patriarch Mar Bechara Boutros Al-Rai.

- British Ambassador to Lebanon Thomas Fletcher reassures after meeting Speaker Nabih Berri that Britain is assisting the Lebanese Army in training and building watchtowers at the Lebanese-Syrian border line.
- Iraqi Vice President Nouri Al-Maliki meets Hezbollah's Secretary-General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah after having met Speaker Nabih Berri.

## December 3

- A Lebanese Army explosives expert dies while attempting to dismantle a bomb targeting the army in the outskirts of Eرسال.
- The monthly statement issued by Maronite bishops calls for resolving the negotiation over the kidnapped soldiers and policemen and urges the implementation of the security plan nationwide.
- Minister of Public Health Wael Abou Faour unveils another list of non-conforming restaurants and shops and brings Beirut's slaughterhouse under scrutiny, saying it is no coincidence that 19 of its employees have died of cancer.
- Minister of the Interior and Municipalities Nuhad Mashnouq reveals that Soja Doulaimi is an ex-wife of Al-Baghdadi and Iraq denies the claims.
- Minister of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants Gebran Bassil participates in the meetings of the International Coalition against ISIS in Belgium after eliminating the clause over the support of the Syrian opposition.
- The committee tasked with devising a new electoral law resumes its meetings after the return of MP Marwan Hamadeh.
- Minister of Justice Ashraf Rifi voices his objection to arresting women and children. His statement comes after the Lebanese Army has arrested the wives of a number of Syrian militants fighting the Army in the outskirts of Eرسال.

## December 4

- The Qatari envoy mediating to end the hostage crisis returns to Qatar after his meetings at the General Security in Beirut.
- The Cabinet convenes at the Gradn Serail and approves a number of non-contentious clauses. The discussion covers various topics including the hostage crisis, the Naameh landfill scheduled to close on January 17, 2015, amidst the absence of an alternative for the time being and the World Food Program's suspension of the food vouchers given to refugees in Lebanon.
- Head of the Independence Movement Michel Mouawad says during the ceremony held in Jounieh on the 25th anniversary of martyrdom of René Mouawad that the dialogue has only a numbing effect and the solution remains by adhering to the Baabda Declaration.
- A number of politicians and officials, including PM Tamam Salam, visit former PM Omar Karami at the American University Hospital.

## December 5

- The An-Nusra Front kills captive Ali Al-Bazzal and their commander Abou Ali Shishani threatens that his group will target the Shia'a and the wives of Lebanese Army soldiers if the Lebanese state failed to free his detained wife and the wives of his fighters.
- Military manifestations and kidnappings break out in the town of Al-Bzaliyeh after an announcement that soldier Ali Al-Bazzal has been killed.
- Russian President's Special Representative for the Middle East Mikhail Bogdanov arrives in Beirut and visits Lebanese officials, reiterating his country's support for Lebanon and noting, after meeting the former President Michel Suleiman, that the Baabda Declaration is fit to apply to the rest of the region.

- A political and administrative agreement results in suspending the protest of EDL's daily workers and reopening the institution after 117 days of closure. The agreement, sponsored by Minister of Agriculture Akram Chehayeb, stipulates holding an examination by the Civil Service Board after which those candidates who pass shall be awarded permanent status.

### December 6

- The cell governing the hostage crisis convenes at the residence of PM Tamam Salam with no results transpiring from its meeting.

- Gunmen from Al-Bazzal family protest at the killing of their family member by blocking the road to Al-Bzaliyeh.

- "We cannot keep the presidential seat vacant. You either need to head for Parliament or we will have to sit together and sort things out", says Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea to Aoun during a dinner held by the party in Beirut.

### December 7

- An official Qatari statement reveals that Qatar has ceased its mediation efforts after the execution of the policeman Ali Al-Bazzal.

- The Muslim Scholars Committee activates its initiative to free the hostages by calling for both to end the killing and releasing the women detained by the Lebanese Army.

- Delegations from different towns offer condolences in the town of Al-Bzaliyeh over the death of the policeman Ali Al-Bazzal.

- Israel plants spying devices in the farms at Sheba'a.

### December 8

- A delegation of the Muslim Scholars Committee visits Grand Mufti Abdul Latif Deryan and the head of the committee, Sheikh Salem Rafei, says that the government should formally delegate the committee to carry out mediation in the case of the captives, stressing that women should not be detained on grounds that their husbands are wanted for justice.

- Shelling the town of Eرسال leaves three people dead and conflicting information arises regarding the perpetrators of the attack with some blaming it on the

Lebanese Army and others on Syrian air raids.

- A bomb planted in a car in Eرسال belonging to a man wanted by the Lebanese authorities on charges of smuggling weapons.

- The French Foreign Ministry's envoy to Lebanon François Giroux visits Lebanese officials to discuss the status quo, particularly the presidential vacuum, which, according to him, worries France.

- The Special Tribunal for Lebanon continues to hear the testimony of MP Marwan Hamadeh who speaks of the threats and warnings that Hariri received, accusing the Syrian intelligence of putting pressure to thwart investigation into his own assassination attempt.

### December 9

- MP Walid Jumblat visits the families of the captives protesting in Downtown, Beirut, and emphasizes his support for a swap to release the captives.

- A delegation of the Muslim Scholars Committee visits Lebanese officials to discuss the mediation mechanism to release the captives.

- High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, assures during her meeting with Lebanese officials that the European Union will stand by Lebanon to help it overcome its crisis and elect a President of the Republic.

- Josephine Kallab, the mother of the former president Michel Suleiman, dies at the age of 88.

- The Special Tribunal for Lebanon decides to summon MP Walid Jumblat and journalist Ali Hamadeh to testify in the Rafik Hariri case.

- A number of heads of municipalities meet at the residence of the MP Michel Aoun to claim their share of the mobile phone revenues.

- The military judiciary issues an arrest warrant against an Iraqi woman Soja

- Doulaimi and her Palestinian husband.

### December 10

- Speaker Nabih Berri adjourns the session scheduled to elect a new president until January 7, 2015 due to lack of quorum.

- The Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea announces his readiness to visit General Michel Aoun at his residence in

Rabieh if there is a serious suggestion to surmount the presidential impasse.

- PM Tamam Salam arrives in France for an official visit and reveals that France will finalize the arms deal on December 13.

- Former PM Saad Hariri urges on Twitter for a solution in the hostage crisis and states that the ongoing siege on Eرسال is unacceptable.

### December 11

- PM Tamam Salam continues his official visit to France and heads to the French National Assembly, announcing that the Lebanese Army will start receiving the military equipment it needs in the next few weeks.

- Minister of Information Ramsey Jreij requests the media to abide by the law while covering the news of the kidnapped soldiers and policemen.

- A member of the Resistance Brigades exchanges fire with members from the Intelligence Branch in the Taameer area of Ain El-Helweh.

- Al-Jadeed news crew comes under the attack from MP Nicolas Fattouch's bodyguards while filming the site of a planned cement factory belonging to the brother of Fattouch.

- Speaker Nabih Berri confirms the statements made by the Minister of Energy and Water regarding the Israeli attempts to steal Lebanon's oil.

### December 12

- PM Tamam Salam meets French President Francois Hollande who, according to Salam, has provided instructions to accelerate the delivery of weapons to the Lebanese Army.

- Investigations with Desert Petroleum, a company providing the Internal Security Forces and the Rafik Hariri University Hospital with fuel oil, starts after claims accusing the firm of defrauding the state and manipulating the quantity of petroleum products.

- Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov arrives in Lebanon after his trip to Syria and meets Lebanese officials.

- Matthew Spence who was appointed Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Middle East stresses after his trip to Lebanon on the long-term security partnership between Lebanon and the US.

- The Lebanese Army arrests Jaafar Al-Shahhal, son of the Salafist Movement founder Sheikh Dai Al-Islam Al-Shahhal in north Lebanon on security grounds and Sheikh Shahhal views the arrest as vexatious.

### December 13

- A delegation of the families of the kidnapped soldiers and policemen visits MP Walid Jumblat and designates him to speak in its name in the negotiations to be held to release the captives.

- Head of the Phalanges Party, Amine Gemayel, visits Marjeyoun to inaugurate the party's bureau in the area. Minister of Finance Ali Hassan Khalil hosts a lunch at his residence bringing together all the prominent figures of the area, including MP Ali Fayad, to honor Gemayel. In his speech, Gemayel lauds the resistance for liberating South Lebanon in 2000.

### December 14

- Delegations stand in solidarity with the families of the captives in Riad Solh Square and the mother of martyr Ali Al-Bazzal calls on the crowd to allow the Free Patriotic Movement MP Naji Gharios to give the speech.

- An-Nusra Front tasks Sheikh Wissam Al-Masri with carrying out the negotiations with the Lebanese state.

- The Lebanese Army releases Sheikh Hossam al-Ghali on parole after having arrested him on an army checkpoint as he was heading to the outskirts of the northeastern border town of Eرسال along with four Syrian gunmen, one of whom one was carrying an explosive belt. Ghali was reportedly seeking to hold talks with the kidnappers of the Lebanese soldiers and policemen, upon instructions from a Lebanese security apparatus.

- The Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea arrives in Saudi Arabia on an official visit.

### December 15

- Families of the kidnapped soldiers and policemen burn tires in front of the Grand Serail following statements by the Islamic State threatening to execute the troops. The families later visit the former President Amine Gemayel.

- The Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea meets Crown Prince Moqren Bin Abdul Aziz in Saudi Arabia and commends the Saudi support of Lebanon.

- Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations Jan Eliasson arrives in Lebanon to participate in the launch of the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan at the Grand Serail and stresses that "Lebanon should not pay a disproportionate price for another country's conflict."

- The Special Tribunal for Lebanon adjourns its sessions until January 5, 2015.

- Beirut's Investigative Judge issues an indictment in the lawsuit filed by MP Walid Jumblat, preventing the trial of Bahij Abou Hamzeh for lack of evidence.

### December 16

- The Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea continues his visit to Saudi Arabia and meets former PM Saad Hariri and a number of Saudi officials including the head of the Saudi Intelligence and Prince Moutaib Bin Abdullah. The Lebanese embassy in KSA hosts a reception ceremony in his honor.

- The Lebanese Forces party suspends its participation in the work of the committee tasked with preparing a new electoral law until a plenary session is scheduled to vote on the law.

- Minister of the Interior and Municipalities Nouhad Mashnouq denies the claims attributed to him, suggesting that the captives should be considered war martyrs and the case should be closed.

### December 17

- Speaker Nabih Berri quoted as saying that no electoral law will be approved before the election of a new president, for he should also have a say in it. Berri adds that the dialogue between Hezbollah and the Future Movement will take place between Christmas and the New Year.

- Families of the kidnapped soldiers and policemen visit General Michel Aoun who stresses that the release of the captives comes at a price and that he is not against swapping them with Islamist detainees in Roumieh as long as it is within the law.

- Minister of Finance Ali Hassan Khalil heads to the Justice Palace and hands the officials a number of files exposing the theft of communal pieces of land altogether stretching across 93 million square meters in several Lebanese towns.

- A number of Future Movement leaders including former PM Fouad Seniora, Minister Nouhad Mashnouq and

Nader Hariri, leave for Riyadh to meet former PM Saad Hariri and discuss the anticipated dialogue with Hezbollah.

### December 18

- The Cabinet convenes to discuss the case of the captives and adjourns discussions over solid waste and licensing new colleges and universities until later.

- Sheikh Wissam Al-Masri meets the families of the captives after returning from Eرسال and reassures that he met seven of the troops abducted by the Islamic State. Al-Masri notes that the Lebanese state did not assign him to negotiate with the kidnappers.

- A Hezbollah delegation extends condolences to former President Michel Suleiman over the death of his mother after a rift between the parties.

- The Special Tribunal for Lebanon schedules the trial of the contempt case against Al-Jadeed for April 16, 2015.

- The General Security denies the rumors about potential terrorist attacks against Rafik Hariri's International Airport.

- Minister of Public Health Wael Abou Faour exposes the violations from another list of restaurants and shops, emphasizing that the wheat silos at the Port of Beirut lack the required health specifications.

### December 19

- Speaker Nabih Berri receives a delegation of the families of captives and reiterates ongoing efforts to release their sons, urging secrecy to bring negotiations to fruition.

- PM Tamam Salam chairs a ministerial and administrative meeting to discuss the oil topic and issue the decrees that would help launching exploration works.

- The United Nations issues a non-binding resolution urging Israel to repay Lebanon USD 860 million as compensation for the oil slick it caused during the July 2006 war.

- PM Tamam Salam declares a day of mourning for the 21 victims of the Algerian plane crash, concurrently with the arrival of their bodies at Beirut's Airport.

### December 20

- Ahmed Fleiti, deputy head of the municipality of Eرسال, announces that Health Minister Wael Abou Faour, upon instructions from Jumblat, has tasked

him with mediating in the case of the servicemen who were taken hostage and assures that the kidnappers have accepted his designation.

- Former French PM Francois Fillon arrives in Lebanon and drops by a number of Lebanese officials.

### December 21

- Grand Mufti Abdul Latif Deryan arrives in Saudi Arabia for an official visit.

- A plane carrying the bodies of the 19 Lebanese killed in the Algerian jet crash in July arrives at Beirut's Rafik Hariri International Airport. The coffins were received in a solemn ceremony at the airport, attended by a large number of relatives and top state officials.

### December 22

- President of the Italian Senate Pietro Grasso holds a meeting with Lebanese officials during his trip to Lebanon and reiterates that Italy will continue to support Lebanon.

- Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani arrives in Lebanon and holds talks with a number of Lebanese officials. He also delivers a speech at the Lebanese University commending the dialogue between Hezbollah and the Future Movement.

### December 23

- The Cabinet adjourns discussion of solid waste dossier until January 8, 2015.

- The Hezbollah-Future Movement dialogue kicks off at the residence of Speaker Nabih Berri in Ain Al-Tineh in the presence of Finance Minister Ali Hassan Al-Khalil. The Future Movement delegation, chaired by Nader Hariri, consists of Minister Nouhad Mashnouq and MP Samir Jisr while Hezbollah's delegation consists of Minister Hussein Hajj Hassan and MP Hassan Fadlallah and is headed by Hussein Khalil.

- Families of the kidnapped soldiers and policemen reopen the Riad As-Solh road as a gesture of good will before the holidays and a sign of appreciation for PM Tamam Salam.

- Hezbollah's deputy Secretary-General Sheikh Naim Qassem receives a delegation of the families of the kidnapped soldiers and policemen and promises to exert all efforts possible to release the captives.

- Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani meets Hezbollah's Secretary-General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah and a number of officials before leaving for Iraq.

### December 24

- PM Tamam Salam visits Bkerki and extends his wishes to Patriarch al-Rai for the holiday season. Salam notes that the situation is precarious and there does not seem to be a détente in the near future.

- "Lebanon needs a president known for his history and for his detachment from his personal interests," says Patriarch al-Rai in his message for Christmas.

### December 25

- Bkerke abuzz with visitors extending wishes and greetings for the holiday season and Patriarch al-Rai calls on General Michel Aoun not to downplay the role of the president in the presence of former President Amine Gemayel. Well-wishers include MP Walid Jumblat, a Hezbollah delegation and Nader Hariri.

### December 26

- After talks with a delegation from Zahle, Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea urges the Ministry of Industry to withdraw the license awarded to a cement factory in Zahle. Geagea also receives a delegation of the families of the captives.

- The government decrees the appointment of six judges in courts of cassation.

### December 27

- The Future Movement commemorates Mohammad Shatah on the first anniversary of his death in a ceremony held at the site where he was killed and names the area after him. Former PM Fouad Seniora hopes that the dialogue experience with Hezbollah will be genuine and fruitful.

### December 28

- Patriarch al-Rai extends his condolences to the families of the troops killed by the Islamic State in Beqa'a, then expresses sympathy to the Fakhri family in Btedai.

- Speaker Nabih Berri receives PM Tamam Salam who reiterates that the election of a president is the most urgent priority.

- Roads blocked in the Chtoura-Masnaa area, Teenayel and near Zahle in protest of the killing of Hassan Ureibi in the hands of people from Zahle.

### December 29

- The Lebanese Army reinforces security measures to separate the outskirts of Eرسال from the town and a number of residents try to raid army checkpoints in Wadi Hmid in protest of the measures taken, which results in the death of three among them. A delegation of Beqa'a MPs visits PM Tamam Salam and requests him to reconcile between security obligations and the interest of the residents living in the outskirts of the town.

- The Presidential Palace hosts a ceremony in Baabda despite the absence of a President.

- The young suspects accused of killing Hassan Ureibi in a clash in a nightclub turn themselves in.

### December 30

- Sheikh Wissam Al-Massri announces after meeting the kidnappers linked to the Islamic State in the outskirts of Eرسال that their demand is to find a neutral demilitarized zone between Eرسال and Toufail in order to protect Syrian refugees from Hezbollah and to provide hospitalization for the injured as well as to release the Syrian women.

- Ministers of Agriculture and Public Health make a tour in the wheat silos at the Port of Beirut and unveil the presence of rats and pigeons near the wheat warehouse.

### December 31

- The Lebanese Forces and the Free Patriotic Movement issue two separate statements announcing termination of all judicial proceedings between the two parties. The number of lawsuits between the two is estimated at 100.

- Speaker Nabih Berri quoted as saying after Wednesday's meeting that the Rent Act is no longer applicable after the decision of the constitutional Council.

- Minister of Public Health Wael Bou Faour states that some of the ministry's financial statements have been tampered with, in a bid to cover up the financial scandals.

- Former PM Omar Karami dies at the age of 80. ●

# THIS MONTH IN HISTORY- LEBANON

## BOMBING OF THE SAYYIDAT AL-NAJAT CHURCH

February 1994 was marked by a crucial event whose repercussions are still reverberating today. On February 27, a bombing targeted the Sayyidat Al-Najat Church and the Lebanese Forces were accused of the atrocity as a prelude to accuse its leader, Samir Geagea, and to jail him and thus take him away from politics. Today, twenty-one years after the attack, we recall the proceedings of the incident.



### Bombing

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of February 1994, at 9:15 am, an explosion raged through the Sayyidat Al-Najat Church during Sunday mass, which was led by Father Antoine Sfeir, killing 11 people and injuring another 54. The explosion was caused by the detonation of C4 explosives and two 81 mm mortar rounds. Another bomb was found, timed to explode at 10:15 am.

### Judicial measures

The Cabinet convened on the same day and decided to refer the crime, its ramifications and those persons who had instigated or participated in it, in any capacity, to the Justice Council, pursuant to Decree no. 4825 dated March 2, 1994. The then Minister of Justice Bahij Tabbara appointed Judge Joseph Fraiha as judicial investigator into the crime.

### Political implications

Political positions started to shape up immediately after the bombing. While some blamed the attack on Israel, MP and minister Walid Jumblat held the Lebanese Forces accountable saying “we cannot but link between the church massacre, Al-Saifi bomb and the attempt on Elias Hrawi’s life and between segregation and federalism.”

“I will not accept throwing accusations at Israel this time. I will not accept obscuring the perpetrator. The state should be in charge of security,” commented LF leader, Samir Geagea.

Afterwards, hearsay started circulating about the Lebanese Forces’ responsibility for the attack. On March 10, the Lebanese Army units encircled the LF leader’s residence in Ghedras in Kessrouan following news that

the perpetrators took refuge there. Pursuant to Decree no. 4908 dated March 23, 1991, the notification of establishment of the association named The Lebanese Forces in Beirut no. 178 on September 10, 1991 was withdrawn. Later on April 21, 1994, Judge Mounir Honein who was probing into the assassination of Dany Chamoun and his family ordered the arrest of Samir Geagea, after investigations into the attack on the Sayyidat Al-Najat Church revealed that he had a hand in Chamoun's assassination too.

### Trial

Judge Joseph Fraiha issued his indictment on June 13, 1994, upon which the Justice Council chaired by Judge Philippe Khairallah and consisting of judges Hekmat Harmoush, Ahmad Mouallem, Hussein Zein and Ralph Riach began trial work. During the closing sentencing hearing of July 13, 1996, Public Prosecutor Adnan Addoum requested death penalty for Samir Geagea, Jerjes Khoury, Antonios Elias, Rushdi Raad and Jean Shahine and hard labor for life for Fouad Malek and Paul and Rafik Al-Fahl. Addoum predicated his decision on the investigation conducted with the primary suspect in the case, Jerjes Khoury, who reported that the preparations for the operation had begun in Israel and then proceeded in Lebanon over the meetings held periodically in the Lebanese Forces' staff building in the Zouk area, in the presence of security officials from the party. Khoury later denied his testimony.

In his perusal, Addoum also noted "Samir Geagea was waiting for the situation to change in the Middle East and subsequently in Lebanon and was discontented with the Army's presence and its full control over the Lebanese territory, particularly in the areas of Kessrouan, Matn and Jbeil, which he believed were his very own spheres of influence. Geagea was seeking the opportunity to crackdown upon the state and its institutions and used to embolden the Lebanese Forces' officers not to harbor fears for the future because their forces, their security, their members are all at hand. With his security apparatus, he drew up plans and dispatched his members to Israel to hold meetings and gather instructions through a double agent and liaison officer Jerjes Khoury. Since the matter required a large-scale activity that would shake the Lebanese community and re-foment divisions, it was agreed to bomb a church to shock the public and leave the state in a helpless position depicting it as incapable of protecting the Christians."

Addoum understood that Geagea was the one calling the shots in everything that the Lebanese Forces did or rather its security apparatuses, for although names were changed after the decision of dissolution of militias, things remained pretty much the same in the party. He branded Geagea as the primary culprit responsible for the church attack on the grounds that he planned it, ordered its execution and helped obliterate its landmarks and hid those who were involved in it from justice.

Samir Geagea pleaded not guilty after debating the content of the indictment with respect to the church bombing charges and those of executing actions aimed at altering the constitution in illicit ways. He noted that the indictment was premised on what Jerjes Khoury had said during his initial testimony, arguing that the testimony made by one person should not be a basis for judgment in the absence of other supporting and corroborative evidence.

In its final irrevocable verdict, the Justice Council accused Israel of ordering the bombing of Sayyidat Al-Najat Church so as to deflect attention from the Ibrahim Mosque massacre that unfolded on February 25, 1994 and prevent the Pope from visiting Lebanon. A cell consisting of Jerjes Khoury, Tony Oubeid, Rushdi Raad and Jean Shahine- all LF members- was used as a tool for the crime. Following the dissolution of the militias and the perplexity suffered by the Lebanese Forces' apparatuses, these members had to shift their services in favor of Israel's Mossad and maintained contact with Israel, unlike Samir Geagea who had no connection whatsoever with it. Therefore, Geagea was acquitted from the Church bombing, especially that he was definitely not mentioned by Jerjes Khoury as having had commanded the attack. Yet, Geagea and Colonel Fouad Malek were criminalized for establishing, arming and training military factions after the decision to dissolve militias was issued.

Geagea was sentenced to ten years in prison and Malek to three commuted to one and half years. The former was also prosecuted in different cases foremost of which were the assassinations of Dany Chamoun, Elias Zayek and PM Rashid Karami. LF advocates insisted that the church case was fabricated by the Syrian intelligence in collaboration with the Lebanese Army's Deputy Chief of Intelligence, Colonel Jamil Sayyed with a view to put Geagea behind bars and eliminate the Lebanese Forces from the political scene for challenging the Syrian presence in Lebanon. ●

## THIS MONTH IN HISTORY- ARAB WORLD

DEATH OF AL-HUSSEIN BIN TALAL, KING OF JORDAN, AFTER 47 YEARS IN OFFICE AND DEVOLUTION OF HASHEMITE POWER TO HIS ELDEST SON ABDULLAH

**King Hussein was born in Amman in 1935 and was the eldest son of Prince Talal Bin Abdullah. He joined the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, one of the most important British Army officer training centers in England at that time, before he was crowned King of Jordan on May 2, 1953. His grandfather, King Abdullah, was shot dead by Mostafa Shoukri Ashi in 1951 while performing Friday prayer at Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. He was reportedly killed for conspiring with the United Kingdom to leave Palestine for the Jews in exchange for empowering him in the Badiyat al-Sham area, east of Jordan River, to build an emirate and then a kingdom for himself and his sons after him. After this incident, his eldest son Talal succeeded him and was heir apparent to the throne. In a year, Parliament forced Prince Talal to step down on account of his illness and his 17-year-old son, Hussein, was proclaimed King of Jordan in 1952. A Regency Council was appointed until he came of age. He was officially enthroned one year later on May 2, 1953.**

Many important events marked the reign of King Hussein. In 1957, the young King purged the army of foreign members and dismissed Sir John Bagot Glubb, the then commander of the Jordanian Army thus announcing the end of the British Mandate over Jordan according to the Anglo-Jordanian Treaty of 1948. The second landmark during his time in power was the Six-Day War of June 1967 when Israel initiated war against Egypt, Syria and Jordan that resulted in the Israelis seizing the Egyptian Sinai, the Syrian Golan Heights and the West Bank of the Jordanian River including Jerusalem. Thousands of Palestinians flocked to Jordan after the defeat. The Six-Day War was followed by the Black September events of 1970, a conflict that arose when the Hashemite rule viewed that some of the Palestinian groups who had taken Jordan as a military base and a venue for their administrative, political and media bureaus were becoming a threat to the kingdom. A state of emergency was declared and the Jordanian Army acted on the instructions of King Hussein Bin Talal and his military advisors to put an end to the presence of Palestinian organizations in Jordan. Subsequently, the armed Palestinian resistance moved from Jordan to Lebanon.

King Hussein's 1972 plan of establishing a United Arab Kingdom instead of the Jordanian Hashemite Kingdom was greeted with staunch rejection by the Palestine Liberation Organization. The United Arab Kingdom was to consist of two federal districts – Palestine, which would include the West Bank region and the liberated Palestinian areas whose residents wished to join the proposed federation and Jordan, which would include the East Bank region. Amman was to be the central capital of the Kingdom and Jerusalem the capital of Palestine. The king would be the Head of State and executive power in each federation would be vested in a general governor chosen from the federation's residents. The PLO slammed the plan as being a conspiracy aiming to abort the Palestinian cause and tension marked the relationship between the two parties.



Al-Hussein Bin Talal

King Hussein's term also saw the signing of a peace treaty between Israel and Jordan. Jordan's participation in the Madrid conference of 1991 paved way for multilateral negotiations through which Jordan and Israel agreed to sign the Wadi Araba Peace Treaty on October 26, 1994. Thus, Jordan became the second Arab country to normalize its relations with Israel after Egypt.

Diagnosed with cancer in 1992, King Hussein started regular medical treatment in the United States. His condition worsened in 1999 and the King issued a decision which named his eldest son Abdullah his successor, replacing his brother Hassan as crown prince. He lost his battle to cancer on February 7, 1999 at the age of 64. ●

# TERRORIST GROUPS PRETENDING TO STAND FOR ISLAM (1)

## TAKFIR WAL-HIJRA GROUP

**For the past 1400 years, the history of Islam has seen the emergence of hundreds of armed terrorist groups that have operated or are operating under the pretext of Islamic religion and consider defending and spreading Islam and the Quran to be their core mission, thus acting without any mandate from anyone. They have stained the good name of Islam, inflicted harm upon it and distorted its image among followers more than among rivals or the unbiased. From this issue onwards, we are going to dedicate an article to shed light on these groups.**

### Takfir wal-Hijra Group

#### Establishment

On July 23, 1952, a military coup was staged in Egypt overthrowing King Farouq. A number of officers who called themselves the “Free Officers” came into power and Major General Mohammad Najib was sworn in as President of Egypt. The Muslim Brotherhood participated and sympathized with the revolutionaries, although its role and position in the coup remain to date controversial.

Relations between the Free Officers Movement and the Muslim Brotherhood soon grew uneasy. A couple of years later, on January 14, 1954, the Revolutionary Command Council issued a decision ordering the dissolution of the Muslim Brotherhood. The Muslim Brotherhood was accused of plotting an assassination attempt against a member of the Free Officers, Jamal Abdul Nasser on October 26, 1954, but they denied the allegations. Later, it turned out that President Mohammad Najib was in touch with the Muslim Brotherhood and willing to support them should they succeed in toppling the regime. On November 14, 1954, the Revolutionary Command Council decided to relieve Najib of his duties and keep the presidential seat vacant. This provided a further pretext for the Muslim Brotherhood’s protests against the measures taken both by the Council and Abdul Nasser. Thus began a frustrating conflict between the two sides and prison cells were full of Islamists who suffered torture and killing.

In this atmosphere, radical Islamic views were born and inside the dark cellars, the doctrine of the Takfir wal-Hijra Group saw the light. The group charged the Egyptian Head of State Jamal Abdul Nasser of infidelity and

branded all his supporters, including those Muslims who prayed, fasted and went on pilgrimage as only pretending to be Muslims and thus the group deemed them as infidels and apostates. Therefore, the entire community was infidel and should be fought.

Accusing Muslim believers of not believing was the most alarming aspect of this group’s doctrine. The origins of takfir (judging one as an unbeliever) had appeared much earlier under the Kharijites, a Muslim group that emerged in 657 as a result of the political disputes that marked Caliph Ali Bin Abi Taleb’s era. They eventually killed him and were given the name Kharijites (Arabic plural *khawārij*, singular *Khārijī*, derived from the verb *kharaja* “to come out, to exit») for rejecting the leadership of Imams and other religious scholars.

Takfir is the cornerstone of this group’s beliefs and doctrines. It declares as infidel:

- The one who commits sin and continues in sin, refusing to repent and ask for forgiveness
- The rulers- heads of states, kings, ministers- who fail to rule by the principles and tenets of the Quran, which is the constitution for all Muslims, but rather opt for man-made constitutions, thereby abandoning the codes sent down by Allah to Prophet Mohammad.
- The religious scholars and clerics who have become a tool for rulers justifying their deviation from Quranic principles, thus turning into scholars for the sultans that are unfit to be entrusted with the Quranic and religious matters.
- Those citizens who have succumbed to their rulers and staged no rebellion to change the faithless reality violating the Quran.



The second pillar upon which the doctrines of the Takfir wal-Hijra Group rest is the departure from the community. Believers cannot live in a society of unbelievers; rather, they should isolate themselves, break off with the communities in their life and thought and choose a remote place, usually somewhere in the mountains.

The third pillar is the blind obedience to their Imams in everything, be it in life or in comprehending the meaning of Islam. The sayings of their Sheikhs, even those of the students among them, should be the basis for them, not the sayings of prominent religious scholars and clerics. Members of this group view that their prince and Sheikh Shukri Mostafa is the savior of the Islamic nation and that Allah shall realize, through the Sheikh and his followers, what was not realized by Prophet Mohammad himself as to the manifestation of Islam over all religions, peoples and nations. They believe that they should not weaken themselves with Jihad at this stage; rather they should strengthen themselves. They urge their followers to abandon Friday prayers and cease praying in mosques because all mosques are places of disbelief except four mosques: Masjid Al-Haram of Mecca (The Sacred Mosque), Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi (The Prophet's Mosque), Quba Mosque, the oldest mosque in Islam, and Al-Aqsa Mosque.

### Deeds of terror

Violence and fighting are the means used by Takfir wal-Hijra Group towards achieving its objectives. The group has waged several attacks on Egypt's police force, anchored by the conviction that the police, although Muslim, protected the tyrants and should thus be slaughtered in order to topple the rulers, take power and establish Islamic rule.

#### Among their most significant deeds of terror:

- Kidnapping and killing Sheikh Mohammad Hussein Al-Thahabi, former Minister of Egyptian Awqaf, after Egyptian authorities refused to meet the group's demands, foremost of which was the release of some of their members from prison.
- The Takfir wal-Hijra Group had a primary role in the war that erupted in Algeria between the government and Islamist extremists between 1992 and 2005.
- One of its members, Mohammad Bouyery, reacted to the movie Submission by cutting the throat of its maker, Dutch film director Teo Van Gogh, on November 2, 2004. The movie linked the abuse of women in Islam to Quranic texts and depicted naked women painted with verses from the Quran. ●●

## REAL ESTATE PRICES- DECEMBER 2014

Real estate transactions recorded a notable recovery in the last month of 2014, because of an increase in sales of apartments in Beirut and Mount Lebanon. Compared to 2013, real estate transactions increased by roughly 5%.

Prices have largely remained stable but increased slightly for small properties. Larger and more expensive properties registered a price decline between 7% and 10%.

Attention remains focused on the developments that the New Year will bring and which will only be a reflection of the situation unfolding in the region. The price of oil could become an influencing factor in the Lebanese real estate market, especially if it were to cause a decline in the remittances of the Lebanese working abroad.

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

Prices of some estates sold in December 2014			Table 1
Region	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	Price (USD)	USD/m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Beirut</b>			
Spears	350	2,555,000	7,300
Ramlet Al-Bayda	1,250	8,000,000	6,400
<b>Baabda</b>			
Baabda	1,750	2,450,000	1,400
<b>Matn</b>			
Broumana	1,410	662,700	470
Monteverde	1,150	1,150,000	1,000
<b>Aley</b>			
Khaldeh	1,000	1,000,000	1,000
<b>Kessrouan</b>			
Ashqout	2,250	855,000	380
Sahel Alma	810	583,200	720
Adma	950	950,000	1,000
Faraya	1,470	205,800	140

Source: Compiled by Information International- December 2014

Prices of some apartments sold in December 2014			Table 1
Region	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	Price (USD)	USD/m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Beirut</b>			
Sodeco	150	555,000	3,700
Ashrafieh (Mar Mikhael)	125	287,500	2,300
Saqiyat Janzeer	190	627,000	3,300
Burj Abi Haidar (Sidi Hassan)	140	245,000	1,750
Ramlet Al-Bayda	300	1,200,000	4,000
Corniche Al-Mazra'a	100	220,000	2,200
Tareeq Jdideh	130	234,000	1,800
Msaytbeh	180	378,000	2,100
<b>Baabda</b>			
Baabda	210	462,000	2,200
Road to airport	250	487,500	1,950
Hadath (Amerkan)	175	302,750	1,730
Hazmieh (Mar Taqla)	150	345,000	2,300
Burj Al-Barajneh	125	137,500	1,100
<b>Matn</b>			
Awkar	140	161,000	1,150
Ain Saadeh	200	300,000	1,500
Dbayeh	185	351,500	1,900
Monteverde	230	361,100	1,570
Ouyoun (Broumana)	190	304,000	1,600
Dekwaneh	150	210,000	1,400
<b>Aley</b>			
Bshamoun (Yahoudiyeh)	200	170,000	850
Aramoun	150	180,000	1,200
Khaldeh (coastal line)	185	296,000	1,600
Doha Aramoun	120	138,000	1,150
<b>Kessrouan</b>			
Shaileh	200	250,000	1,250
Zouq Mosbeh	170	232,900	1,370
Sahel Alma	190	304,000	1,600
Adonis	150	180,000	1,200
Sarba	200	300,000	1,500

Source: Compiled by Information International- December 2014

## 2014 World Cup Brazil in numbers

FIFA posted on its website a document detailing an array of statistics and figures to tell the complete story of the 2014 World Cup that was hosted by Brazil in the summer.

- **5,154,386** attended FIFA Fan Fests in Brazil during the World Cup, with Rio de Janeiro's spectacular Copacabana site attracting 937,330 - the highest number in any individual city.
- **171 goals**, an average of 2.67 per game, made Brazil 2014 the joint-highest-scoring World Cup of all time, level with France 1998.
- **7.2 billion USD** in tax revenue shall be received by Brazil as a result of investments in the 2014 World Cup.
- **3,429,873** was the total attendance for the 64 matches, the highest recorded at any World Cup since USA 1994. The average crowd of 53,592 was also the highest in two decades.
- **3,240 Adidas balls**, including both training and match balls, were used during the tournament.
- **3,127,674** food and beverage transactions took place at the stadiums over the course of the competition.
- **420 tons** of recyclable waste was collected from the stadiums and additional World Cup-related facilities.
- **90 countries** were visited during the 267-day FIFA World Cup Trophy Tour by Coca-Cola, with 45 heads of state and 33 previous World Cup winners among those to get their hands on the Trophy.



## Beirut International Airport

### Rafic Hariri International Airport Traffic- December 2014

The number of passengers who used the Rafic Hariri International Airport Traffic in 2014 stood at 6,569,469 compared to 6,265,132 passengers in 2013, i.e. up by 4.8% or 304,337 passengers. In December 2014, the airport handled 573,229 passengers compared to 510,367 in December 2013, i.e. an increase of 12.3% or 62,862 passengers. Compared to November 2014, passenger traffic rose by 34.1%.

**Rafic Hariri International Airport traffic in December 2014 compared to November 2014 and December 2013**

Table 1

Traffic	November 2014	December 2014	December 2013	% of change November/December 2014	% of change December 2013/14
Arriving airplanes	2,384	2,794	2,647	+17.2	+5.6
Departing airplanes	2,388	2,793	2,661	+17	+4.9
<b>Total no. of airplanes</b>	<b>4,772</b>	<b>5,587</b>	<b>5,308</b>	<b>+17</b>	<b>+5.2</b>
Arriving passengers	203,482	299,509	268,941	+47.2	+11.3
Departing passengers	222,574	272,387	239,742	+22.4	+13.6
Transit passengers	1,347	1,333	1,684	-1	-20.8
<b>Total no. of passengers</b>	<b>427,403</b>	<b>573,229</b>	<b>510,367</b>	<b>+34.1</b>	<b>+12.3</b>
Imported goods (per ton)	4,080	4,520	5,752	+10.7	-21.4
Exported goods (per ton)	2,843	2,687	3,196	-5.5	-16
<b>Total amount of goods</b>	<b>6,923</b>	<b>7,207</b>	<b>8,948</b>	<b>+4.1</b>	<b>-19.4</b>

Source: Information International based on the Directorate General of Aviation

- **LBP 305.5 million** is the government's contribution to the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee affiliated with the Office of the Prime Minister and chaired by former Minister Hassan Mnayneh. The purpose of this contribution was not specified.
- **18 judges**- 15 females and 3 males- graduated from the Institute of Judicial Studies and were appointed as Grade 1 judges within the juridical judiciary personnel at the end of 2014. Their sectarian makeup was as follows: 7 Sunni, 4 Shia'a, 5 Maronite, 1 Greek Catholic and 1 Greek Orthodox.
- **LBP 6.4 billion** is the cost of updating two radars at the Rafik Hariri International Airport in Beirut.
- **LBP 2 billion** is the advance payment allocated by the government to the National Employment Institution, which would in turn distribute the funds to 5 NGOs based on a sectarian-political quota. These NGOs will work on training the youth in the New Entrants to Work Program.
- **LBP 90 million** is the contribution paid by the Ministry of Culture to cover the rent of Al-Madina Theater for Culture and Arts for 2014.

## Publications by Information International (in Arabic):

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

## Publications by INMA (in Arabic):

- 1- "I am Responsible, All of Us are Responsible"
- 2- "Our Environment is Our Home"
- 3- "My Society is My Responsibility"
- 4- "My Society is My Responsibility" Workbook
- 5- "I am a Student, I am a Citizen: Ways Towards State Building"
- 6- "I am a Student, I am a Citizen: Ways Towards State Building" Workbook
- 7- "Lebanon Wars, why?"
- 8- Discrimination in Lebanon
- 9- Najma men Biladi
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## Publications by Kutub (in Arabic):

- 1- May Ziadeh, Evolution of a Free Female Thinker
- 2- Mission in Hijaz - Lion Roche
- 3- Aleppo Cuisine
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- 6- Al A'mal Al She'rya Al-Kamila -Kamal Keir beik
- 7- Majhoulat Gibran
- 8- Shweir and Its Hills, *A photographic record*
- 9- The Wars of Lajat 1837-1838
- 10- New Funerary Phoenician Stelae, *Private Collection*
- 11- Harakat Al Hadasa fi Al-She'r Al-Arabi Al-Mo'aser -Kamal Keir beik
- 12- Al Tanassot Ala Al Hatef fi Lebnan 1947-1958
- 13- Beirut *Daw' Ala Warak 1850-1915*



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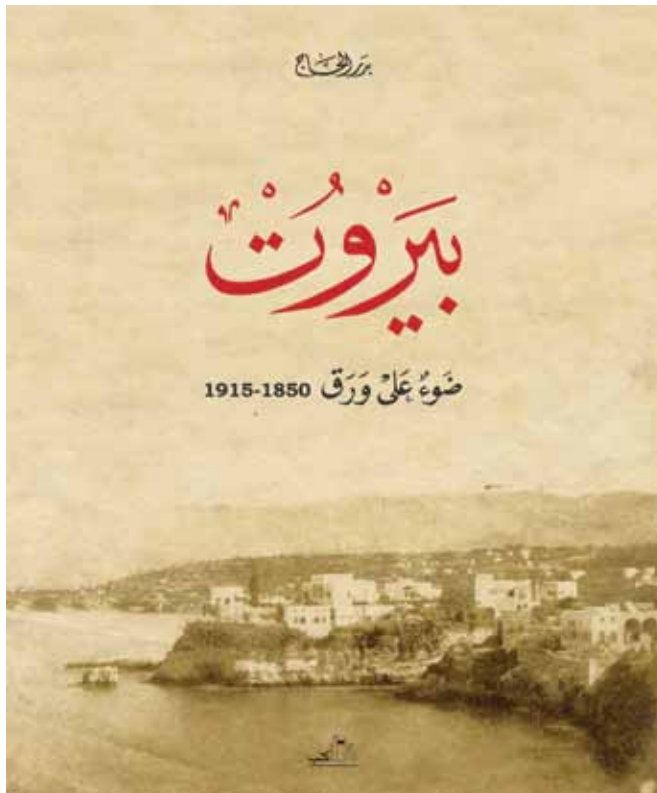
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# BEIRUT

## LIGHT ON PAPER 1850-1915

As usual, the author Badr El-Hage spares no opportunity to uncover what he has found for us. His vast and valuable cache of documents, photographs and books takes us back to a golden era that lost its luster in the passage of time. After documenting Tripoli (Tarablus Al-Sham), Choueir and Damascus, Badr El-Hage chose Beirut this time, lifting the veil on scenes and places that marked the heart of the capital between 1850 and 1915, but have ceased to exist in our collective memory. The first chapter is dedicated to the contextual climate that prevailed in the city from the second half of the nineteenth century as well as the geographical, economic and social factors that fueled its expansion and urbanization making it a destination for prominent photographers. Being a visual documentation, the work attends in its second chapter to the birth, evolution and impact of photography, with emphasis on its invasion of the Levant and the studios established by foreign photographers in Beirut. The author analyses the background that paved way for the rich photographic productions that pervaded the capital at the time. He then moves to display a collection of rare photos taken in Beirut during that era, reviving in our minds scenes and places that testify best to the radical and bitter changes that affected the city and consequently altered its identity.



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