

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	419
Land:	Libanon
Kilde:	United States Department of State
Titel:	Country Reports on Terrorism 2013 - Lebanon
Udgivet:	30. april 2014
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	1. august 2014

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Publisher [United States Department of State](#)

Publication Date 30 April 2014

Cite as United States Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2013 - Lebanon*, 30 April 2014, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/536229dc8.html> [accessed 31 July 2014]

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Overview: Lebanon's security situation deteriorated in 2013 as a result of the spillover from the violence in Syria, the involvement of Lebanese fighters in the conflict (including Hizballah, which openly backed the Asad regime, as well as Sunni individuals and groups supporting various opposition forces), and continuing internal political deadlock that prevented formation of a new Lebanese government that is fully empowered to respond to these challenges. Prime Minister Najib Mikati resigned on March 22 amidst political disagreements over the leadership of the Internal Security Forces (ISF) and timing of parliamentary elections. The Lebanese caretaker government is headed by a centrist caretaker Prime Minister, but the cabinet remains dominated by the Hizballah and pro-Syrian regime-aligned March 8 coalition. PM Mikati and his cabinet remained in caretaker status following the resignation while Prime Minister-Designate Tammam Salam tried to form a new government. Although the Lebanese Parliament extended its term for 17 months in May, Parliament did not reconvene for the remainder of the year due to a boycott by various political parties. Although various branches of the Lebanese state, including the Central Bank, ISF and Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), continued to cooperate with international partners in combating terrorism, the political stalemate in Beirut has hindered progress on many fronts such as rigorous prosecution of long-standing and new terrorism-related cases.

The challenges emanating from the Syrian spillover include issues dealing with border security, internal stability, and terrorism. Lebanese towns and villages near the border with Syria regularly experienced shelling from Syria – both by the Syrian regime and Syrian opposition forces – because of regime allegations that opposition fighters use Sunni-dominated areas as safe havens and opposition allegations that Hizballah uses Shia-dominated areas to enter Syria or launch attacks. Lebanon, a country of approximately four million, now hosts nearly a million refugees from Syria. Lebanese authorities are challenged not only by the significant burden the refugees place on its financial and natural resources, but also by concerns over potential terrorists hiding within the refugee population who may perpetrate violent acts in both Lebanon and Syria.

Although Hizballah, with considerable support from Iran and Lebanon's Shia population, remains the most capable and prominent terrorist group in Lebanon, radical Sunni groups based in Syria but operating in Lebanon constitute a visible and growing terrorist threat. Al-Nusrah Front announced in December its presence in Lebanon and al-Qa'ida in Iraq/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant has threatened to enter Lebanon because of Hizballah's involvement in the Syrian conflict. At the same time, other groups, including Hamas, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Popular

Front for the Liberation of Palestine General Command (PFLP-GC), Asbat al-Ansar, Fatah al-Islam, Fatah al-Intifada, Jund al-Sham, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the Abdullah Azzam Brigades, and several other splinter groups, continued to operate within Lebanon's borders, although primarily out of Lebanon's 12 Palestinian refugee camps. The LAF did not maintain a daily presence in the camps, but it conducted operations and patrols near the camps and across Lebanon to counter terrorist threats, including attempts to launch rockets against Israel from south Lebanon. In November, the UN Interim Forces in Lebanon (UNIFIL) reported that there has been no progress in efforts to dismantle military bases maintained by the PFLP-GC and Fatah al-Intifada, which are primarily located along the Lebanese-Syrian border.

Despite Lebanon's official disassociation policy regarding the Syrian conflict, Hizballah dramatically increased its military role in support of the Syrian regime in 2013, including openly participating in major armed offensives against Syrian opposition forces, which exacerbated the already tenuous security situation inside Lebanon. Various radical Sunni groups and individuals from Lebanon actively participated in the Syrian conflict as well. Hizballah and its Sunni extremist rivals had largely kept their fighting limited to Syria, but Lebanon was increasingly affected by spillover violence originating from Syria.

2013 Terrorist Incidents: Attacks conducted in Lebanon included:

- On January 18, a convoy carrying the Lebanese Minister for Youth and Sports, Faisal Karame, was attacked in Tripoli, wounding five. Tripoli continued to suffer from armed clashes between the pro-Syrian Alawite community of Jabal Mohsen and various Sunni groups in Bab al-Tabanneh throughout 2013. In March at least six people were killed during such clashes, and a weeklong round of violence commenced on May 19, killing at least 36 and injuring over 200.
- On May 26, following a speech by Hizballah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah announcing Hizballah's military role in support of the Syrian regime, the Shia-dominated areas of south Beirut were hit by rockets.
- On May 28, in the northern Bekaa Valley town of Aarsal, unknown assailants killed three soldiers at a LAF checkpoint. On June 23, followers of Sunni extremist preacher Sheikh Ahmed al-Asir killed two soldiers at a checkpoint in the southern city of Sidon. The LAF responded to the Sidon attacks by conducting a military operation against al-Asir and his followers, during which at least 17 soldiers and over 20 armed al-Asir supporters died. Al-Asir escaped and was hiding in an undisclosed location at year's end.
- On July 9, a car bomb exploded in Bir al-Abed, a predominantly Shia neighborhood in the southern suburbs of Beirut, wounding at least 53. On August 1, two rockets also landed near the Presidential Palace.
- On August 9, two Turkish Airlines pilots were kidnapped near Beirut International Airport, reportedly by relatives of Lebanese Shia who were held for several months by groups in Syria allied with the Syrian opposition. The Lebanese citizens and Turkish pilots were released on October 19.
- On August 15, a car bomb targeted Rouweiss, another Shia neighborhood in the southern suburbs of Beirut, killing at least 24 and wounding over 200.
- On August 22, two car bombs hit two different Sunni mosques in Tripoli, killing over 40 and wounding several hundred.
- Also on August 22, four rockets were fired towards Israel from the outskirts of the southern Lebanese city of Tyre, at least three of which landed inside Israeli territory. Although the

Abdullah Azzam Brigades later claimed responsibility for these rockets, Israel responded on August 23 by striking sites reportedly belonging to PFLP-GC near the city of Sidon.

- On November 19, two suicide bombers from the southern city of Sidon attacked the Iranian Embassy, located in the Shia neighborhood of Bir Hassan in the southern suburbs of Beirut. Abdallah Azzam Brigades took responsibility for this attack that killed at least 25, including an Iranian diplomat and four guards, and wounded several dozen.
- On December 25, a car bomb exploded in the Ein al-Hilweh Palestinian refugee camp. The blast reportedly targeted a supporter of Sheikh Ahmed al-Asir, but it resulted only in material damage to the car and surrounding area.
- On December 27, Mohammad Chatah, former ambassador to the United States and advisor to former Prime Minister Saad Hariri, was assassinated in downtown Beirut using a remote-controlled car bomb. At least seven other individuals were killed by the bomb blast.

Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: Several articles of Lebanon's criminal code deal with terrorism, but their implementation has at times been hindered by Lebanon's complex political and confessional system, and also at times by Hizballah restricting access to attack sites that were within areas under its control. By definition, the caretaker government's legislative power is circumscribed, but the fully empowered cabinet before PM Mikati's March resignation did not consider legislative initiatives that could potentially threaten Hizballah's operations, as Hizballah and its allies were members of the cabinet.

Neither the caretaker cabinet nor the parliament considered counterterrorism initiatives in response to the EU's July terrorist designation of Hizballah's military wing.

The LAF and ISF remain functional in combating terrorism, but they would benefit from stronger political support from state institutions, including a fully functional cabinet and parliament.

Several agencies focus on combating terrorism, including the LAF, ISF, and the Directorate of General Security (DGS). Lebanon has been a participant in the Department of State's Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) program since 2006, and this assistance focused on border security as well as building law enforcement's investigative and leadership capabilities. Lebanon has also been working with Department of State's Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) to improve the capabilities of the ISF through a multi-year program.

Lebanon has a Megaports and Container Security Initiative program, and it participated in Export Control and Related Border Security programs. Through INL and the Criminal Justice Information Service (CJIS), a biometric assessment will be conducted for the ISF. The LAF also partnered with several friendly nations on a bilateral basis to conduct training programs that focused on strengthening its counterterrorism capabilities.

Lebanon did not have biometric systems in place at the official points of entry into the country. Lebanese passports were machine readable, and the government was considering the adoption of biometric passports. The DGS, under the Ministry of Interior (MOI), controls immigration and passport services, and it uses an electronic database to collect biographic data for travelers at all points of entry. The Lebanese government maintained bilateral agreements for information sharing with Syria.

Although the case against Michel Samaha, a former Lebanese Minister of Information arrested on terrorism charges in 2012, made some progress, a Lebanese court in June postponed trial proceedings until December. On February 4, Lebanese authorities also issued an arrest warrant for General Ali Mamlouk, the head of the Syrian National Security Bureau, due to his ties to the Samaha case.

On October 14, the State Commissioner to the Military Court announced the indictment of seven suspects alleged to have been involved in the August 22 Tripoli bombings, at least three of whom had been arrested.

Lebanese authorities maintained that amnesty for Lebanese involved in acts of violence during the 1975-90 civil wars prevented terrorism prosecutions of concern to the United States.

Countering the Financing of Terrorism: Lebanon is a member of the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force, a Financial Action Task Force-style regional body. Lebanon's Central Bank, the Banque du Liban, issued circulars to improve its anti-money laundering/countering the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) regime:

- Basic Circular No. 128 dated January 12, 2013 – and amended by intermediate Circular No. 338 dated September 23, 2013, requested that banks establish an AML/CFT Compliance Unit
- Intermediate Circular No. 325 dated June 6, 2013, regulated electronic funds transfers
- Intermediate Circular No. 337 dated September 20, 2013, regulated cash transfers in the hawala system.

From January 2013 to November 20, 2013, the ISF prepared files on three suspected cases of terrorism and was in the process of investigating each of these cases at year's end. The Special Investigation Commission (SIC), Lebanon's financial intelligence unit, is an independent legal entity empowered to investigate suspicious financial transactions and freeze assets. The SIC is a member of the Egmont Group, and reported that there were no allegations of terrorist financing in 2013, and that no related accounts were found and frozen in Lebanon's banking sector.

Hizballah continued to use its Lebanese connections to further its agenda. Lebanese nationals in Latin America and Africa continued to provide financial support to Hizballah, including through the laundering of criminal proceeds using Lebanese financial institutions. In June, the Lebanese Canadian Bank paid a fine of US \$102 million to U.S. regulators for laundering drug profits that also benefitted Hizballah. Requests for designation or asset freezes regarding Hizballah and affiliated groups are sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but the Lebanese government does not require banks to freeze these assets, because it does not consider Hizballah a terrorist organization.

Only NGOs are subject to enhanced due diligence from the banking sector, which reports suspicious transactions to the SIC. Monitoring the finances and management of all registered NGOs is the responsibility of the Ministry of Interior, but it was inconsistent in applying these controls. The deficiency could be attributable to an absence of laws, lack of political will to effectively prosecute cases, corruption, and lack of training for effective CFT law enforcement.

For further information on money laundering and financial crimes, see the 2014 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR), Volume 2, Money Laundering and Financial Crimes: <http://www.state.gov/j/inl/rls/nrcrpt/index.htm>.

Regional and International Cooperation: Lebanon continued to voice its commitment to fulfilling relevant UNSCRs, including 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006), and 1701 (2006). The Special Tribunal for Lebanon, an international body investigating the 2005 assassination of PM Rafiq Hariri, received Lebanon's annual contribution of approximately US \$40 million on December 30. Lebanon is a member of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.