

Libanon (32)

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LEBANON

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT

**COUNTRY INFORMATION AND
POLICY UNIT**

**ASYLUM APPEALS AND POLICY
DIRECTORATE IMMIGRATION AND
NATIONALITY DIRECTORATE**

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I. SCOPE

1.10 This assessment has been produced by the Country Information & Policy Unit, Immigration & Nationality Directorate, Home Office, from information obtained from a variety of sources.

1.11 The assessment has been prepared for background purposes for those involved in the asylum determination process. The information it contains is not exhaustive, nor is it intended to catalogue all human rights violations. It concentrates on the issues most commonly raised in asylum claims made in the United Kingdom. It represents the current assessment by the Immigration & Nationality Directorate of the general socio-political and human rights situation in the country.

1.12 The assessment is sourced throughout. It is intended to be used by caseworkers as a signpost to the source material, which has been made available to them. The vast majority of the source material is readily available in the public domain.

1.13 It is intended to revise the assessment on a 6-monthly basis while the country remains within the top 35 asylum producing countries in the United Kingdom.

1.14 The assessment will be placed on the Inte (<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/ind/cipul.htm>). An electronic copy of the assessment has been made available to the following organisations:

Amnesty International UK

Immigration Advisory Service

Immigration Appellate Authority

Immigration Law Practitioners' Association

Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants

JUSTICE

Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture

Refugee Council

Refugee Legal Centre

UN High Commissioner for Refugees

II. GEOGRAPHY

2.10 The Republic of Lebanon lies in western Asia, bordered by Syria to the north and east, and by Israel and the emerging Palestinian Autonomous Areas to the south. The country has a coastline of about 220 km (135 miles) on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. The country consists of 5 administrative regions (Beirut, Mount Lebanon, Beka'a, South and North) which cover an area of 10,452 square kilometres. The capital city is Beirut. [1,2(a)]

2.11 The population is estimated at between 3 and 3.5 million (no official census has been taken in Lebanon since 1932 because of the potentially volatile issue of political power and confessional balance). Beirut has a population of 1.5 million. The official language is Arabic, which is spoken by almost all of the inhabitants. French is widely used as a second language, while Kurdish and Armenian are spoken by small ethnic minorities. [1,2(a),3]

III. HISTORY

POLITICAL HISTORY

3.10 Lebanon became part of Turkey's Ottoman Empire in the 16th century. When the Ottoman Empire was dissolved, following the end of the First World War (1914 - 1918), a Greater Lebanese state was created by the Allied powers. The new state was a response to the nationalist aspirations of the predominant Christian population in the area, but it included territories traditionally considered to be part of Syria, with largely Muslim populations. Lebanon was administered by France, under a League of Nations mandate, from 1920 until independence was declared on 26 November 1941. A republic was established in 1943, and full autonomy was granted to the new state in January 1944. [1,3]

3.11 Lebanon is characterized by great religious and cultural diversity. At the time of independence, Christians formed a slight majority of the population, the largest single community (nearly 30% of the total) being the Maronite Christians, who mostly inhabited the north of the country and Beirut. Other Christian groups included Greek Orthodox communities, Greek Catholics and Armenians. The main Muslim groups were the Sunnis (living mainly in the coastal towns of Tyre, Sidon and Beirut), the Shi'as (a predominantly rural community in southern Lebanon and the northern Beka'a valley) and the much smaller Druzes, an ancient community in central Lebanon with unorthodox Islamic beliefs. Inter-community rivalries have been endemic, but until the 1970's were generally kept within bounds by a complex confessional system, enshrined in the 1943 National Pact. Under this system executive and legislative posts were to be shared in the ratio of six Christians to five Muslims, and seats in the Chamber of Deputies (renamed the National Assembly in 1979) were distributed on a religious, rather than an ideological basis. By convention the President was a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim and the Speaker of Parliament

a Shi'a Muslim. [1,3]

3.12 The demographic justification for Christian Maronite domination of the system has long since disappeared with a rapid increase in the Shi'a population. At the end of the civil war in 1990 the estimated population breakdown was: Shi'as 32 per cent, Maronites 24 per cent, Sunnis 21 per cent, Druzes 7 per cent, others 16 per cent, creating an overall balance of about 60 per cent Muslims and 40 per cent Christians. [2(a),3]

3.13 Following the establishment of Israel in 1948 and during the subsequent Arab-Israeli wars, thousands of Palestinians sought refuge in camps in Lebanon. The creation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964 led to military training centres for Palestinian guerillas being established in these camps. These guerillas or 'fedayeen' (martyrs) began making raids into Israel in 1968, with the Israeli forces retaliating with attacks against targets in southern Lebanon. In 1969 there were clashes between Lebanese security forces and the fedayeen, and many Christians, particularly the Maronites, advocated strict government control over the Palestinians' activities. In contrast, the majority of Muslims were strong supporters of the Palestinians' operations against Israel. [1]

3.14 An influx of Palestinian fighters who had been expelled from Jordan in July 1971 led to further destabilisation of the population. Conflict between Israeli forces and Palestinians based in Lebanon intensified, while Christian groups began their own armed campaign to control the fedayeen. In July 1974 there were clashes between Palestinian forces and the armed members of the Phalangist Party (the Phalanges Libanaises, also known as al-Kata'eb, a militant right-wing Maronite Christian group). [1,3]

3.15 In April 1975 there was further conflict between Phalangists and Palestinians. The government was unable to control the violence and the conflict quickly developed into a full-scale civil war between the religious communities. Although the initial cause of the violence was the status of Palestinians, the constitutional order of the state soon became the main divisive issue. The Muslim groups advocated an end to the confessional political system which they claimed favoured Christians. [1]

3.16 Numerous attempts to mediate in the civil war were made by Arab and Western states, but no durable cease-fire was achieved until October 1976, after the Syrian forces intervened at Lebanese request initially to prevent a Christian defeat. The presence of the Syrian forces was subsequently authorised by an Arab League mandate as the "Arab Deterrent Force." However, intermittent fighting continued and an estimated 10% of the population was killed or wounded between 1975 and 1982. The militias of the various warring factions were left in control of most of the country. [1,3]

3.17 In June 1982 Israeli forces entered Lebanon with the declared objective of finally eliminating the PLO's military threat to Israel's northern border. A Multinational Force (MNF) of US, French and Italian contingents was deployed in Beirut after the Israeli siege of the city, to supervise the evacuation of the PLO fighters to various Arab countries. The MNF returned in September following the assassination of Bashir Gemayel (the President-elect) and the subsequent massacres committed by Christian Phalangist forces in the Palestinian camps of Sabra and Shatila. A British contingent (of approximately 100) joined the MNF in February 1983. In early 1984 fighting erupted even more intensely than before, and in response to this deterioration of the security situation the MNF was withdrawn in the Spring. [1,3]

3.18 The new Israeli Government, formed in September 1984, pledged to withdraw Israeli forces from Lebanon. The Lebanese government demanded that the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) be permitted to police the Israeli-Lebanese border. However, when the last phase of the Israeli withdrawal was completed in June 1985, Israel maintained a buffer zone along the border, between 10 km and 20 km

wide, to be policed by the pro-Israeli South Lebanese Army. With the Israeli presence in Lebanon reduced to a token force, Syria withdrew 10,000-12,000 troops from the Beka'a valley in July, leaving some 25,000 in position. [1,3]

3.19 In December 1985 the leaders of the three main Lebanese militias (the Druze forces, Amal and the military arm of the Christian Phalangist Party, the LF) signed an accord in Damascus, providing for an immediate cease-fire and for the cessation of the civil war within one year. However, tension within the Christian community over the Accord led to the Lebanese Forces (LF) coup of January 1986 in which the pro-Accord leaders of the LF were replaced, ending any hope that the Accord could be implemented. [1,3]

3.20 The period 1986-1988 saw numerous militia clashes. Heavy fighting in February 1987 in West Beirut between Amal (Shi'a group) and a coalition of left-wing forces headed by the Druze militia, led to Syrian military intervention. Other clashes were mainly between Amal, Hizbollah (Shi'ite fundamentalists) and the Palestinians. These encounters were refereed by the Syrians (who controlled arms supplies to both Amal and Hizbollah) with occasional Iranian intervention. [3]

3.21 Lebanon slipped further into crisis in September 1988 when the Parliament failed to elect a successor to Maronite President Amin Gemayel, after the required quorum was not achieved. Gemayel's final act was to appoint the Maronite commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces, General Aoun, as Prime Minister. The legitimacy of this government was disputed by the acting Prime Minister of the previous administration, Selim Hoss (a Sunni). This led to the establishment of two rival governments in Lebanon and virtual partition along sectarian lines. The Christians held East Beirut and the Muslims West Beirut. [1,2(a),3]

3.22 The rivalry erupted into fighting in March 1989 following Aoun's blockade of the Muslim ports in South Beirut. There was heavy shelling of the Christian enclave by Syrian forces, returned by Aoun's troops. [1,3]

3.23 In September 1989 the Tripartite Arab Committee on Lebanon announced a new peace plan. A seven point "charter of national reconciliation" was approved by the Syrian Government and the leaders of Lebanon's Muslim militias. Aoun reluctantly approved the charter when he found himself to be diplomatically isolated. A cease-fire accordingly took effect on 23 September. The National Assembly subsequently met and approved the charter in Taif, Saudi Arabia. Known as the Taif Accord, the charter provided for the transfer of executive power from the presidency to a cabinet, with portfolios divided equally among Christian and Muslim ministers, while the number of seats in the National Assembly was to be increased from 99 to 108 and divided equally among Christian and Muslim deputies. The Taif Accord also included an outline timetable for Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon and the disbandment of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias. [1,2(a),3]

3.24 The Taif Accord was ratified by a meeting of the National Assembly in Kleat, Northern Lebanon, on 5 November which also elected Rene Moawad, a Maronite Christian, as President. Aoun, however, declared the presidential election unconstitutional and announced that he would hold elections himself in 1990. Following the assassination of Moawad on 22 November his successor, Elias Hrawi, immediately removed Aoun from his command of the Lebanese Armed Forces, surrounding the Christian enclave with Syrian troops. [1,3]

3.25 An anticipated Syrian attack on the enclave did not materialise as, from January 1990 until mid-May, East Beirut was locked in an intra-Christian war between the Lebanese Armed Forces loyal to Aoun, and Samir Geagea's Lebanese Forces militia. Aoun remained in the enclave, resisting all pressure to accept the Taif Accord or join a national unity government, until 13 October 1990 when Syrian forces, invited by President Hrawi, launched an air attack to force Aoun's surrender. Aoun took refuge in the French Embassy in Beirut where he stayed for nearly a year before going into

exile in France. [1,3]

3.26 Since the overthrow of Aoun, great progress has been made towards implementing the Taif Accord and restoring stability in Lebanon. Beirut has been unified, the port officially re-opened and militias expelled or disbanded (with the exception of Hizbollah who maintained armaments in the Beka'a valley and in southern Lebanon, in order to continue the struggle against Israel's occupation). President Hrawi made determined efforts to extend the Government's authority through the deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces under the widely respected General Lahoud. The Lebanese Armed Forces now control many positions in the South and took over UNIFIL positions when the UN peace-keeping force cut back its operations. The government in Beirut, however, remains heavily under the influence of the Syrians and it is still doubtful if the Lebanese Armed Forces could control the whole of the country without the Syrian army's presence. Under the Taif and subsequent agreements Syrian troops were to have withdrawn to the Beka'a Valley on the eastern frontier with Syria by mid-1992, however, some 35,000 Syrian troops remain stationed in much of the country. [1,2(a),3,4(a)]

3.27 Syria has consolidated its position in Lebanon through a series of accords between the two countries. On 22 May 1991 the Syrian/Lebanon Fraternity Treaty was signed which established formal structures for the creation of links in a wide variety of fields but with particular emphasis on security and foreign policy. [1,2(a),3]

3.28 Elections were held in August 1992 for the first time in 20 years. The elections passed off peacefully though not without controversy. There were many irregularities reported and the Maronite community boycotted them, on the grounds that the continued Syrian presence would prejudice their outcome. The overall turn-out was low, at about 30%. Hizbollah took part in the elections and did well (winning 8 seats in a Parliament of 128 Deputies). [1,2(a),3,5(a)]

3.29 Following the elections Rafik Hariri was appointed as the Prime Minister. Hariri is a Lebanese born Saudi businessman and had no previous political experience. [1,2(a),3]

3.30 In March 1994, following terrorist attacks on Christian targets in Beirut, the Government proscribed the LF-the military wing of the Phalangist Party-for allegedly having promoted the establishment of a Christian enclave and, hence, the country's partition. A trial against the LF leader, Samir Geagea, began in November 1994 in Beirut. Geagea was charged with organizing a terrorist attack on a Maronite church in Beirut in late February 1994. [1,2(a)] It was feared that the trial would provoke further disaffection among Lebanon's Maronite community, which was far from reconciled to the post-Taif, Syrian dominated Lebanese order. [1,3] In July 1996, Geagea was acquitted of charges relating to the bombing, but sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment for "maintaining a militia in the guise of a political party" and "dealing with military weapons and explosives". [5(a),8(c)] Geagea is currently on trial for the 1987 assassination of Sunni Muslim Prime Minister Rashid Karami. He is the only sectarian militia leader from the civil war to have faced trial. Several former leaders of other militias are in the government or hold high offices. [4(i)(j)]

3.31 Hariri has reacted to the difficulties presented by Lebanese politics by tendering his resignation on a number of occasions. Each time, a Syrian-brokered compromise has allowed him to return with a strengthened position, but this confirmation of Syria's controlling influence is not welcome to many Lebanese. In September 1993 Hariri threatened to resign as a result of being publicly rebuked by Damascus for his decision to deploy troops in southern Lebanon. In May 1994 he "resigned" in protest at not getting his way over a proposed cabinet reshuffle and in December 1994 he resigned due to his frustration at perceived attempts within the National Assembly to obstruct Lebanon's economic reconstruction. Hariri resigned again in May 1995 because of clashes with Parliamentary Speaker Nabih Berri over the issue of the presidential succession. On this occasion he was able to form a new Cabinet which

omitted two of his main opponents. [1,3]

3.32 On 19 October 1995 the Lebanese National Assembly voted to amend Article 49 of the Constitution and thereby extended for a further three years the term of office of President Hrawi which would otherwise have concluded in November 1995. [1]

3.33 Fighting in southern Lebanon has continued throughout the 1990s. Israel continues to occupy part of south Lebanon - its self-declared security zone - and controls the area through Israeli Defence Force soldiers and a Lebanese proxy army, the South Lebanese Army (SLA). UN troops (UNIFIL) are deployed in Lebanon outside the security zone but cannot intervene in the fighting. Hizbollah remains armed and active in its war of resistance against Israeli occupation. Violence and tension in the South periodically escalate in a series of attacks and reprisals by both sides. On 25 July 1993 Israeli Armed Forces launched their heaviest artillery and air attacks on targets in southern Lebanon since 1982, with the declared aim of eradicating the threat posed by Hizbollah and Palestinian guerillas. The Israeli operation displaced as many as 300,000 civilians towards the north and caused many civilian casualties. On 11 April 1996 Israeli armed forces began an intense, sustained campaign of artillery and air attacks on what they claimed to be Hizbollah military positions. These included, for the first time since 1982, attacks on the southern suburbs of Beirut. The declared aim of the campaign, code-named "Grapes of Wrath", was to achieve the complete cessation of rocket attacks by Hizbollah on settlements in northern Israel. Some 400,000 Lebanese were displaced northwards by the campaign. The campaign ended following a US brokered cease-fire which took effect on 27 April 1996. [1,3]

3.34 In July 1996 the first meeting took place of an international committee formed to monitor the cease-fire agreement concluded between Israel and Hizbollah in April. The Israel/Lebanese Monitoring Group (ILMG) consists of representatives of the US, France, Syria, Lebanon and Israel. Despite the cease-fire agreement, clashes between Hizbollah and the Israel forces and the SLA continue to claim civilian as well as military lives. [1,4(b),6]

3.35 Parliamentary elections took place in August and September 1996. Some 189 candidates contested the seats and the voter turnout, about 45 per cent, was significantly higher than that in 1992. [1,5(a)]

3.36 In late October 1996 Hariri was appointed for a third term of office as Prime Minister. [1]

3.37 The former leader of Hizbollah, Shaykh Subhi al-Tufayli, re-emerged from political obscurity in the summer of 1997, by launching a "hunger revolt" in the Bekaa valley to press the government to help the poor. He called on Beka'a residents to prevent government ministers and officials from visiting the area until his demands were met, a move that prompted the army to strengthen its presence in the area. [4(g), 7(b)] Tufayli resigned from the Hizbollah leadership in 1992, in disagreement with the party's decision to join parliamentary elections. [4(g)]

3.38 On 24 January 1998, the Hizbollah leadership announced that it was expelling Tufayli from the party. Tufayli and about 200 of his followers then seized a Hizbollah religious seminary in Baalbek on 30 January 1998. Hizbollah decided to refrain from engaging in a military confrontation with Tufayli and his supporters, and left the Lebanese army to deal with the occupation. The gunmen ignored an ultimatum to evacuate the building and surrender to the authorities, which led to heavy fighting in which at least 8 people died with many more wounded. [7(b),17(a),21]

3.39 Tufayli and 20 of his supporters escaped capture by the army. Warrants have

been issued for their arrest, but Tufayli continues to evade the security forces. [17(a),18(c)]

3.40 In May and June 1998, the first local elections in 35 years took place. They were held amid strict security measures, with Lebanese army units deployed at strategic points and around polling stations. [12(d),18(d)] The elections were reported to be relatively free and lively and "one the most civilized and democratic" that Lebanon has ever witnessed. [22(a),23(a)] Opposition groups made strong gains in the ballot, including right-wing Christian groups, who oppose Syria's presence in Lebanon. [7(c),12(d),23(a)]

3.41 On 15 October 1998, the National Assembly formally elected General Emile Lahoud as Lebanon's 11th post-independence president in an election heavily influenced by Syria. Parliament altered the constitution on a one-time basis to allow his election as otherwise his being the then commander of the army would have barred him from running for president. There was broad popular support for Lahoud becoming president. He was sworn into office on 24 November 1998. In his inaugural address he said he would focus on deepening the rule of law and fighting corruption. [5(c), 30(c), 30(d), 35(a), 36(a)]

3.42 Following his swearing in, Gen. Lahoud asked incumbent Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri to form the government. Mr al-Hariri apologised and declined the invitation. Following parliamentary consultations the President asked Dr Salim al-Huss to form a government. [18(g), 18(h)] The new Prime Minister stated that his actions would proceed from the guidelines in the President's inaugural speech, with reducing the budget deficit being the top priority, with other issues mentioned including the liberation of occupied southern Lebanon and Western Biqa and completing the return of the displaced persons. The new government, featuring a 16 member cabinet rather than 30 as previously, is reported to reflect a move away from politicians connected with the different factions who disputed Lebanon during the civil war and a move towards technocrats. [4(s), 18(i), 18(j)]

3.43 Following his election in May 1999 as Israel's Prime Minister, Ehud Barak pledged that, through agreement with Syria and Lebanon, he would withdraw Israeli troops from Lebanon within a year. [39] At time of writing he has maintained this pledge, although it remains to be seen as to if and when an agreement is reached. [40] In the event of an Israeli withdrawal the leader of the South Lebanese Army, Antoine Lahad, has promised to move the families of SLA members to settlements in northern Palestine. [18(m)] The Secretary General of Hezbollah stated that Hezbollah would continue its attacks until there was an Israeli withdrawal. [33(b)]

ECONOMIC HISTORY

3.44 Prior to the 1975-1990 hostilities, Lebanon was an important regional financial and commercial centre. The war weakened its commercial leadership and inflicted massive damage on the economic infrastructure. [5(a)]

3.45 Since the end of the civil war in 1990, the aim of the Government has been to guide the country's reconstruction while maintaining stability, and to facilitate the participation of the private sector in economic recovery. Hariri's government has had considerable success in revitalising the Lebanese economy. Considerable foreign investment has been secured and by the end of 1996 the Government had successfully reduced interest rates and inflation. However, Hariri's tight monetary policies have had a particularly hard impact on the poor, whose minimum salaries fall below the inflation rate. There is concern that serious social unrest may occur if the government does not give a higher priority to combatting poverty. [1,2(a)(c),3,5(a),12(c),16(b),18(a)]

3.46 Recently, Lebanon's mounting budget deficit has caused growing concern. The

budget deficit amounted to 59 per cent of public expenditure in 1997. [12(e),15(a)] There has been a substantial increase in Lebanon's debt since Rafik Hariri took office: from 46 per cent of GDP in 1992 to 78 per cent of GDP by the end of 1996. [1,19(a)] However, the first six months of 1998 have seen an improvement in Lebanon's public finances, with the budget deficit averaging 35 per cent of expenditure against a target figure of 42 per cent. [15(a)]

3.47 In a statement to the Chamber of Deputies on 14 December 1998 the new Prime Minister set out his proposed policies to improve the economy. This included increased privatisation, reduction of taxes on the less well off and combating monopolies and promoting fair competition. [18(l)]

IV. INSTRUMENTS OF THE STATE

Government

4.10 Under the 1926 Constitution (as subsequently amended), legislative power is held by the National Assembly, with 128 members elected by universal adult suffrage for four years. Seats are allocated on a religious basis, divided equally between Christians and Muslims. The President of the Republic is elected for six years by the National Assembly. The President, in consultation with the deputies and the President of the National Assembly, appoints the Prime Minister and other Ministers to form the Cabinet, in which executive power is vested. According to the unwritten "National Pact of 1943", the President is a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim, and the President (also known as the Speaker) of the National Assembly a Shi'a Muslim. [1,2(a),5(a)]

4.11 Legislative elections are due in August/September 2000, given that the normal term of the National Assembly is 4 years and the last elections took place in 1996. [1]

4.12 A Presidential election was held on 15 October 1998. [30(c)] Officially, the President is chosen by the 128 members of parliament. However, the opinion of Syrian President Assad is paramount. [4(h),24] On 29 September, the Lebanese Foreign Minister, Fares Boueiz, stated that President Hrawi, Prime Minister Harrari and Parliamentary speaker Berri had authorised Assad to choose Lebanon's next president. [24] The candidature of the leading contender, General Emile Lahoud, was approved by Syria and he was duly elected with 118 votes from the 128 member National Assembly. [7(d),30(c)]

4.13 At the time of the vote General Emile Lahoud was head of the Lebanese army. He had the backing of an overwhelming majority in the parliament and a commanding lead in public opinion polls. [4(h),24] Article 49 of the Constitution stipulates that a grade-one state employee, such as the army commander, should quit their post two years in advance of the vote if they wish to run for president. [24] However, Parliamentary Speaker Berri used his constitutional right to call an extraordinary session of parliament, in order to amend the Article to allow Lahoud to stand for election. [25,30(c)]

4.14 Rival candidates in the presidential election included the Liberal Nationalist Party leader, Dori Chamoun, who is a hardline opponent of the government, and Boutros Harb, who announced his candidacy with an implicit message to Syria to stay out of Lebanon's internal affairs. [15(a),25]

4.15 Following his election, General Lahoud asked incumbent Prime Minister Rafiq

al- Hariri to form the government. Rafiq al- Hariri apologised and declined the invitation. Following consultations with the Chamber of Deputies' Speaker and the Lebanese parliament the President asked Dr Salim al- Huss to form a government which subsequently won a vote of confidence in the Chamber of Deputies with 85 votes out of the 116 deputies present [4(r), 18(h), 18(j)]. The resulting cabinet was composed of 16 rather than the former 30 members, with some former warlords reportedly being removed or marginalised and more emphasis in the cabinet on technocrats. [4(s), 12(h), 18(g), 18(j)]

Local Government

4.16 The first municipal elections since 1963 were held in May and June 1998. Political crises and the civil war prevented holding the ballot for nearly 35 years. [23(a)] The elections were held amid strict security measures, with Lebanese army units deployed at strategic points and around polling stations. [12(d), 18(c)] In general they were judged as a success with violence being limited to a handful of scuffles. The feared outbreak of fighting between Hizbollah and Amal supporters in the South failed to materialise. [12(d),23(a)]

4.17 The press were allowed to enter all polling stations during the voting process, as a transparency measure to show the government's commitment to an honest ballot. Very few irregularities were reported during the ballot, with most consisting of technical matters that did not affect voting results. [5(c), 23(a)]

4.18 Reports described the elections as relatively free and lively and "one the most civilised and democratic" that Lebanon has ever witnessed. [22(a),23(a)] Opposition groups made strong gains in the ballot, including right-wing Christian groups, who oppose Syria's presence in Lebanon. [7(c),12(d),23(a)]

4.19 Twenty-one towns whose residents who were evicted during the civil war and have yet to return, and the towns and villages in the Israeli occupation zone in the South were excluded from the polls. [12(d),17(b)]

Independence of the Judiciary

4.20 Law and justice in Lebanon are administered in accordance with the following codes, which are based upon modern theories of civil and criminal legislation:

- (1) Code de la Propriété (1930)
- (2) Code des Obligations et des Contrats (1932)
- (3) Code de Procédure Civile (1933)
- (4) Code Maritime (1947)
- (5) Code de Procédure Pénale (Code Ottoman Modifié)
- (6) Code Pénal (1943)
- (7) Code Pénal Militaire (1946)
- (8) Code d'Instruction Criminelle [1]

4.21 The following courts are now established:

- (a) Fifty-six 'Single-Judge Courts', dealing in the first instance with both civil and criminal cases.
- (b) Eleven Courts of Appeal, dealing with civil and criminal cases.
- (c) Four Courts of Cession, three dealing with civil and commercial cases and the fourth with criminal cases.
- (d) The Council of State, which deals with administrative cases.
- (e) The Court of Justice, which deals with matters affecting the security of the state.

In addition to the above, Islamic, Christian and Jewish religious courts deal with affairs of personal status (marriage, death, inheritance, etc.). [1]

4.22 The judiciary is generally impartial and independent. However, parts of the system are open to influence from politicians and Syrian intelligence officers, who intervene to protect their supporters from prosecution. [5(a)(b)(c),11]

4.23 There were no reports of political prisoners in Lebanon in 1996, 1997 or 1998, although the Lebanese authorities often detained without charge for short periods of time political opponents of the Syrian and Lebanese Governments. [5(a)(b)(c)]

Security Forces

4.24 In August 1996, the Lebanese Armed Forces numbered an estimated 48,900, some 47,500 of these personnel belong to the army. [1] Since the end of the civil war, under the command of General Emile Lahoud, the Lebanese Army is reported to have emerged in recent years as a unified, competent fighting force capable of maintaining order. [2(a),17(d)] An important feature of this achievement has been the successful integration of former militias into the Lebanese Army. A further key development has been the practice of rotating brigades around the country in order to get away from the traditional influence of local warlords. [2(a)]

4.25 The Lebanese Army works in close coordination with the Syrian Army and together the two forces maintain a presence in most of the country excluding southern areas held by Israel or the SLA, and excluding refugee camps run by Palestinian authorities. Syria has some 35,000 troops stationed in Lebanon. They are dominant in the Beka'a Valley, while the Lebanese Army has concentrated its forces in southern Lebanon. [1,2(a),5(a)]

Further information on the areas outside the control of the Lebanese government is located in section VII.

4.26 Lebanese Internal Security Forces (ISF) are estimated to number between 13,000-15,000. These forces consist of seven groups: the Prime Minister's intelligence service, the President's intelligence service, the military police, the civilian police, the judicial police, the military security service and the Second Bureau of the Ministry of Defence. The Lebanese internal security forces also work closely with their Syrian counterparts. [1,2(a),5(a)]

Current Security Situation

4.27 The level of violence in Lebanon has receded immensely since 1991, except in the Israeli "security zone" (refer to section VII). It has been reported that the level of violence in major Lebanese cities is significantly less than in cities such as New York, Los Angeles or Chicago. [2(b)(c)] Beirut has been described as considerably safer than most cities in the West. [26] State protection has greatly increased in terms of police presence in the street during both the day and night. As a result it is reportedly safe to go out at all hours of the night. [2(b)(c)]

4.28 In August 1997, the US State Department lifted its 10 year ban on US citizens travelling to Lebanon. Since then, dozens of American businesses have established offices in Beirut, some as regional headquarters for their operations in the Middle East. [12(f)]

4.29 Affluent Lebanese, who spent the war years in exile, have begun returning to Beirut. There is also a free flow of Christians and Muslims across the "green line", which divided Beirut into confessional enclaves during the war. In addition, the once thriving tourist industry is being redeveloped, with the construction of hotels and other facilities. [1,12(c),14]

V. HUMAN RIGHTS: GENERAL ASSESSMENT

5.10 There have been reports by human rights organisations that some detainees have been subjected to human rights violations in Lebanon. These reports relate to people who are perceived to be in opposition to the Syrian presence in Lebanon, or are considered a threat to the internal order in Syria, and as a result they reportedly can be subject to sudden and arbitrary arrest by Syrian or Lebanese intelligence officers, ill-treatment, torture, prolonged incommunicado detention, and sometimes even removal to Syria. [2(a),5(a)(b)(c),8(a)(b),9(a)(b)]

5.11 Lebanese law requires security forces to obtain warrants of arrest prior to making an arrest. However, prosecutors reportedly issue blank warrants of arrest to be completed after a suspect has been arrested. Arresting officers must refer a suspect to a prosecutor within 24 hours of arrest, however, it is reported that this provision is frequently breached. [5(a)(b)(c)]

5.12 The law also requires the authorities to release suspects 48 hours after their arrest if formal charges are not brought against them, but this provision is also subject to breaches with suspects being detained for long periods in pretrial confinement without a court order. Judges are authorized to remand suspects to incommunicado detention of 10 days which can be extended for a further 10 days. [5(a)(b)(c)]

5.13 The fate of thousands of people taken prisoner by armed groups during the civil war remains unclear. [5(a),8(a)(b)] In May 1995, the National Assembly approved a law that allows those who disappeared during the civil war to be officially declared dead. [5(a)]

5.14 It has been reported that Lebanese citizens and stateless Palestinians continue to disappear in Lebanon, taken into custody there by Syrian security forces and then transferred to and detained in Syria. [6(c),9(b),28] The Lebanese security forces are alleged to acquiesce in such activities and in some cases collaborate with Syrian forces in carrying out disappearances. [9(b),28] Two persons were reported to have "disappeared" and been transferred to Syrian detention facilities in 1997. One has been released, the whereabouts of the other are still unknown. [8(b)] The use of

torture in Syrian prisons is reportedly common. [2(a),6(c)] There were reportedly no allegations during 1998 of the transfer of Lebanese citizens by the Lebanese authorities to Syria. [5(c)]

5.15 In 1997, President Hrawi stated that 210 Lebanese prisoners were being held in Syria. [5(b),6(c)] The Syrian authorities released 121 Lebanese detainees in March 1998. Most of the detainees were immediately able to go home, but 14 of them faced prosecution by Lebanese courts, mainly for crimes related to "terrorism" and criminal offences. [5(c), 6(c)]

5.16 Press freedom is partially limited, in particular by discriminatory implementation of the 1996 media law to restrict radio and television broadcasting. The Government restricts freedom of assembly and bans demonstrations. Limits are also imposed on the freedom of movement. [5(b)]

Further information is contained in section VII.

5.17 Whilst several human rights groups operate freely without overt government restriction, local human rights groups and individual activists have reported that fear of Lebanese and Syrian intelligence services curbs their activities. Among the established groups inside Lebanon are the Lebanese Association for Human Rights, the Foundation for Human and Humanitarian Rights and the Lebanese Lawyers Association. The Lebanese Centre for Policy Studies, a research institution in Beirut, publishes the monthly, "The Lebanon Report", which provides information related to human rights. [5(b),9]

5.18 Human rights abuses have continued to be committed by the various armed groups which operate in areas which are outside the State's authority. [5(a)(b)]

The following paragraphs should be read in conjunction with sections VI and VII.

5.19 Palestinian groups are reported to operate their own "autonomous and arbitrary system of justice" in the refugee camps, which has led to the detention and torture of their Palestinian rivals. [2(a),5(a)(b)] However, in 1998 there were no known reports that members of the various groups that control the camps tortured and detained their Palestinian rivals. [5(c)]

5.20 The SLA and the Israeli Defence Forces enforce law and order in the so-called "security zone." SLA officials reportedly arbitrarily arrest and detain persons, and mistreat detainees. It has also been reported that some alleged criminals have been deported to Israel to face legal charges, and some local residents expelled from their homes in the zone. [5(a)(b)(c)]

5.21 The SLA holds an estimated 120-150 Lebanese citizens and an undetermined number of Palestinians at al-Khiam prison. [5(b)(c),8(b)] Relatives had been permitted to visit detainees since October 1995, but these were suspended on 10 September 1997 after 12 Israeli soldiers were killed in a Hizbollah ambush in Lebanon. [5(a),7(e),29] Visits resumed in July 1998, when 34 Lebanese citizens were allowed to visit 14 detainees. [18(d)] A further 48 people were allowed to visit relatives detained at Khiam in September 1998. [30(a)] The International Committee of the Red Cross has conducted periodic visits to the detainees but these were also suspended in September 1997. [29] A total of 210 detainees were released from al-Khiam during 1995, 1996 and 1997. [5(a)(b),8(a)(b)]

5.22 Hizbollah, the main armed group fighting the SLA and Israeli forces, controls most of the areas north of the "security zone" and has been accused of maintaining its own ad-hoc judicial system based on Islamic law. According to Human Rights Watch, human rights violations associated with Hizbollah include beatings, abductions and summary executions. [2(a),5(a)(c),8(a),9(a)]

VI. HUMAN RIGHTS: SPECIFIC GROUPS

Palestinians (see also section VII)

6.10 The number of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNWRA) is 352,668. [5(b),27] Only those who originally arrived in 1948-49, and their descendants, are allowed to register with UNWRA and receive international aid. The figure is presumed to include many thousands who currently reside outside Lebanon, and it is reported that the actual number now in Lebanon is fewer than 300,000. [5(a)]

6.11 It has been reported that Palestinian refugees are subject to arrest, detention and harassment by the Lebanese security forces, Syrian forces, the various militias and rival Palestinians. [2(a),5(a)] However, there were no known reports that members of the various groups that control the camps detained and tortured their Palestinian rivals in 1998. [5(c)]

6.12 Palestinians who arrived in Lebanon in 1949 but did not register at the time, have the right to aid from the Lebanese government but not international aid. Those forced to emigrate to Lebanon after 1949, have no right to government or international aid. [2(a)]

6.13 The Lebanese government does not provide health services to Palestinian refugees, who must rely on UNRWA. UNRWA provides a wide range of social assistance in education, health, emergency relief and other sectors, but services have been reduced as a result of budget cuts. In addition, the PLO has traditionally provided financial support, however, it has considerably reduced its social disbursements to Palestinians in Lebanon since the PLO-Israeli accord in 1993. [2(a),5(a)]

6.14 Refugees registered with UNRWA have a residence card and travel document that is shared with their families. Those who have been in Lebanon since 1949 but did not register at the time, have either temporary or permanent residency permits and a travel document. Palestinians that arrived in Lebanon after 1949 have no right to residence or travel documents. [2(a)]

6.15 Most Palestinian refugees live in camps, which fall under the control of one or more of a number of Palestinian factions that operate in Lebanon (see section VII). The proportion of refugees registered with UNRWA living outside the camps is 48 per cent, with 52 per cent living inside. [2(a),3,5(a)]

6.16 Since 1959, Palestinians living outside the refugee camps, who have residence rights, have been allowed to change their residence and travel freely in Lebanon as long as they notify Lebanese authorities. Those living in camps must obtain permission to change camps. [2(a)]

6.17 The government issues laissez-passers (travel documents) to Palestinians to enable them to travel and work abroad. In response to the expulsion of Palestinians from Libya in 1995, the Lebanese interior ministry issued a decree in September of that year requiring Palestinians residing abroad to obtain entry visas before re-entering the country. [5(b),27] The government maintained that the visa requirement is necessary to ensure the validity of Lebanese laissez-passers, as a large number of those documents were forged during the civil war years. The effect was to discourage foreign travel by Palestinians resident in Lebanon. [5(b)] In response to complaints by Palestinian officials over difficulties in re-entering Lebanon, in January 1999 the

Lebanese General Public Security Directorate stated that although Palestinians with Lebanese travel documents would still need clearance to travel, the permits to travel would be valid for six months and enable their bearer multiple trips within that period. Previously Palestinians needed exit and re-entry visa for every trip. [18(k), 24(b)]

6.18 Work permits are very difficult to obtain for Palestinians. The only sectors that do not require work permits are construction and seasonal work. Palestinians are not entitled to social assistance and have no protection from arbitrary dismissal from employment. Unemployment in Palestinian refugee camps is estimated at 40 per cent. The PLO formerly employed as much as 50 per cent of the Palestinian work force, but in recent years it has closed many of its offices in Lebanon. [2(a),5(a)]

6.19 The Lebanese government has often stated that it will not accept the permanent settlement of Palestinians. It is feared that the introduction of 300,000 Palestinians, mostly Sunni Muslims, to the voting population would upset the delicate confessional balance in Lebanon. [2 (a),23 (b),27] The government has proposed a resettlement solution which would see 25 to 30 per cent of its resident Palestinians go to the West Bank and Gaza Strip, 40 per cent to the Gulf States, Iraq, and Syria, and the rest to the United States, Canada and Australia. [27]

Lebanese Forces (LF)

6.20 The Lebanese Forces (LF) were, during the 1980s, the largest and most powerful Christian militia in Lebanon. [2 (a)] The LF was the military arm of the Lebanese Front, a coalition of Maronite leaders, in which the Phalangist Party was dominant. [1,31] The LF, backed by Israel during the 1975-1990 civil war, was accused of political assassinations and numerous sectarian killings during the conflict. [2(d),4(i)]

6.21 In 1991, the Lebanese Forces were officially disarmed and became a political party. Following terrorist attacks on Christian targets in Beirut, the LF was banned in March 1994, for having promoted the establishment of a Christian enclave and, hence, the country's partition. Eight top LF members, including leader, Samir Geagea, were charged with the bombing of a Maronite church in Beirut in late February 1994. [1,2 (a)] In July 1996, Geagea was acquitted of charges relating to the bombing, but sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment for "maintaining a militia in the guise of a political party" and "dealing with military weapons and explosives". [5 (a),8 (c)] Geagea is currently on trial for the 1987 assassination of Sunni Muslim Prime Minister Rashid Karami. He is the only sectarian militia leader from the civil war to have faced trial. Several former leaders of other militias are in the government or hold high offices although some (including Elias Hobeika who was allegedly linked to the 1982 massacres in the refugee camps and former Druze leader Walid Jumblatt) have been dropped following the formation of the new government in December 1998. Parliamentary Speaker Nabih Berri has, however remained in his post. [4(i)(j)(s), 12 (h)]

6.22 A car bomb in June 1998 killed 2 former LF members. The 2 men were reported by a government security source to be planning to plant the device in a church in mainly Christian east Beirut, when it prematurely exploded near to the target. A spokesperson for LF supporters said the former militia group had no link to the bombing or its 2 victims. The spokesperson stated:

"The Lebanese Forces formed a big slice of Lebanese society, around 38,000 people. We can't control everyone and we don't put the incident in the framework of the Lebanese Forces. It was a personal action. Only those two know what they were doing". [4(j)]

6.23 Eighteen former members of the Lebanese Forces were charged in July 1998 by

Lebanon's military prosecutor, with carrying out a 1996 bus bombing in Syria that killed 11 people. They were also accused of plotting to assassinate Interior Minister Michel al-Murr and the (now former) Electricity and Water Resources Minister Elias Hobeika. [4 (i),17 (c),18 (e)] Murr and Hobeika are Christian allies of Syria and opponents of the Lebanese Forces. Hobeika is a former LF leader who defected to the pro-Syrian camp. [2 (d),4 (i)] A statement by the Political Council of the Lebanese Forces on 8 July 1998, denounced "acts of violence and sabotage by any individual, group or party", stressing that the LF became a political party in 1991. [32]

6.24 Supporters of the LF made gains in the local elections in June 1998, emerging on the political scene for the first time since the group was officially banned in 1994. [4 (i)] In Beirut, LF supporters were included in a candidate list backed by the then Prime Minister Hariri and Parliament Speaker Berri. [15(b)]

Aoun supporters

6.25 General Aoun, a Maronite Christian, has lived in exile in France since 1991 after leading an unsuccessful attempt to drive Syrian forces from Lebanon. [4(k)]

6.26 In 14 December 1997, security forces used tear gas and clubs to disperse Aoun supporters who had gathered at a television station which the authorities had barred from broadcasting an interview with the former army commander. Sixty-three people were detained during the protest, all of whom were released the next day. [4(l),8(b)] 10 of those arrested were subsequently charged with fighting with security agents who had ordered the protestors to leave. Their trial began on 18 December 1998 but the hearing was swiftly adjourned while appeals proceeded on two legal technicalities. If convicted the suspects face up to a month in jail or a maximum fine of LL100,000. [18(j)] The government lifted its long standing ban on demonstrations in December 1998, although a rally or demonstration must still receive the prior approval of the Interior Ministry. [4(l),5(b)(c)]

6.27 Some 5,500 Lebanese lawyers staged a three-day strike in response to the arrests. A further demonstration was held on 15 December with no arrests reported. [4(a)(l)] In January 1998, the government stated there would be no restrictions on interviews carried on terrestrial television channels. The television interview with General Aoun, his first in seven years, was subsequently broadcast on Murr TV. [16(a)(c)]

6.28 A report in January 1996 stated that supporters of former General Aoun were still active and conducting political activities in Lebanon. Some of Aoun's supporters were reported to have had difficulties with the Lebanese authorities in the past, but there had been no such reports in the previous two years. Well-known pro-Aoun candidates ran during the last elections to the Lebanese Doctors' Association and the Lebanese Engineers Association, including the winner of the poll for the president of the Doctors' Association. Several professional associations have active well-known Aounist members. [2(e)] Former Aoun supporters are reported to have been welcomed into the Lebanese Army and are able to advance. [2(c)]

6.29 Supporters of Aoun took part in the local elections in June 1998. They were among right-wing Christian groups who made strong gains in the ballot. [7(c),12 (d),23]

South Lebanese Army (SLA) members (see also section VII)

6.30 The SLA is a militia force sponsored by the Israelis to police the south Lebanon "security zone". It has some 2,500 members and is supported by approximately 1,000

Israeli troops stationed in the zone. [1,2(a)(f)] The SLA began as a mainly Christian Phalangist movement but now includes a sizeable number of Shi'a Muslims. [2(a)(f)] Israeli and SLA forces are locked in a cycle of attack and counterattack with the Iranian-backed Shi'a Muslim militia, Hizbollah, and anti-Arafat Palestinian guerrillas. [5(b)] In south Lebanon, there is an average of two or three attacks daily against Israeli Defence Force or SLA positions with a similar number of IDF/SLA counter attacks. [5(c)]

6.31 Morale among the SLA is reported to be quite low as a result of the difficult guerrilla war with Hizbollah, the possibility of withdrawal of Israeli support and protection in the event of peace, and pressure to join the militia against the will of some members. [2(a)(f),12(g),30(b)]

6.32 Many SLA militiamen have deserted and fled to areas under the control of the Lebanese government. [2(b),12(a),18(f)] Under Lebanese law, serving in the SLA is a treasonable offence. The Lebanese government's treatment of an individual under this law may depend on the person's social status. In the case of "ordinary people", the government may hardly take any action against such individuals and may even ignore them. However, the government may prosecute "important persons" who have co-operated in any way with the SLA. [2(g)] In the event of an Israeli withdrawal from the "security zone", it is generally accepted that low-ranking militiamen will not face prosecution. [12(g)] In March 1998, Hizbollah members of the National Assembly submitted a bill providing for an amnesty for ordinary SLA militiamen. [6(d),33]

6.33 Hizbollah has declared that forgiveness would be granted to members of the SLA who were forcibly recruited and who deserted in order to repent. It has published a list of former SLA members who have done so. These former militiamen are reported to now be living a normal life in Lebanon. [2(b)]

6.34 Some former SLA militiamen have even joined the Hizbollah militia. [12(a),30(b)] In November 1997, Hizbollah announced the formation of the Lebanese Resistance Brigade, which will allow all Lebanese - including former members of the SLA - to join, regardless of their religious confession. [12(b),34]

Opponents of Hizbollah / Refusal to join Hizbollah militia (see also section VII)

6.35 Hizbollah maintains a strong presence among predominantly Shi'a areas such as West Beirut and the southern suburbs, Ba'albek and the Beka'a Valley in the east, and southern Lebanon. Lebanese government control over Hizbollah, which remains legally armed in order to fight against the Israeli occupation forces in the south, is said to be limited. However, Hizbollah has been willing to submit to the state authority, especially regarding criminal justice. [2(a)(b)] In January 1998, Hizbollah refrained from engaging in a military confrontation when the former Hizbollah leader, Tufayli, seized a religious seminary in Ba'albek. The situation was left in the hands of the Lebanese Army. [7(b),17,21]

6.36 There are no Hizbollah checkpoints between Tripoli and Beirut, or between Beirut and Tyr in the south. There are also no Hizbollah checkpoints in Beirut, not even in the Hizbollah's strongholds in Beirut's southern suburbs. Hizbollah members do not carry weapons in the streets of Beirut. They would be arrested by Lebanese security forces. [2(b)]

6.37 Since 1992, Hizbollah has increasingly turned its attention towards Lebanese parliamentary politics and currently has 6 members in the National Assembly. [12(b)(g)] Hizbollah does not harass or threaten people who publicly disagree with its policies. It does not recruit its members by force and does not lack new recruits. The leadership of Hizbollah is well aware that there is a large section of the Lebanese

population that disagrees with its ideology. There have been no instances where the government has had to provide protection to ordinary citizens because they were afraid of Hizbollah. Even regular Hizbollah members who leave the party for whatever reasons, would not have problems with the party because ordinary members do not have information that would threaten the organisation. [2(b)]

6.38 High ranking party members who were involved in security matters for the organisation and later became involved in anti-Hizbollah activities may be at risk from Hizbollah. This represents an extreme case that would rarely happen, and such an individual could easily provide documents such as identity cards or newspaper articles which prove their rank in the organisation. [2(b)]

6.39 Recruits for military operations are volunteers. They pass through a strict screening process to weed out any possible double agents. [2 (b),12 (b)] A party member is not necessarily a military man. Military people represent a small fraction of Hizbollah membership. Recruitment for the Islamic Resistance, Hizbollah's military wing, requires strong ideological beliefs and commitment, as well as rigorous military training. The principal ideological beliefs are sacrifice to the cause of liberation of Lebanese territory, and martyrdom. The Islamic Resistance leadership must be totally convinced of the person's trustworthiness, something that cannot be ascertained in a short period of time. [2(b), 7(f), 38]

Military service evaders

6.40 Military service is compulsory for males at 18 years of age and lasts 12 months. Lebanese are not required to perform their military service after the age of 29. Exemptions are granted to those who have physical disabilities, those with brothers who have died during military service and those who are the only son in the family. Students, including those resident abroad, can obtain deferments. [2(i),11] A conscript who fails to report for service would receive a prison sentence of 12 months if caught by the authorities. [2(i)]

6.41 Following the civil war the Lebanese Army has been rebuilt into a non-sectarian force. [4 (m),17 (d)] It has successfully incorporated the various former militia members, including former Aoun supporters who have been welcomed and are able to advance. [2(a)] The Lebanese Army is reported to have emerged in recent years as a unified, competent fighting force. [2(a),17(d)]

VII. HUMAN RIGHTS: OTHER ISSUES

Freedom of Political Association

7.10 The Constitution provides for freedom of association and this is generally respected by the Government. [5(a)(b)(c)]

7.11 In general the government does not interfere with the establishment of private organisations. Persons forming an organisation are required to notify the Interior Ministry, which is responsible for issuing permits for the formation of associations. [5 (a) (b) (c)] In April 1997, the Lebanese Bar Association criticized the practice of issuing permits but did not provide any examples of groups that had been denied a permit during 1997. [5(b)]

7.12 The Ministry of Interior also scrutinizes requests to establish political movements or parties, and to some extent monitors their activities. The army Intelligence Service monitors the movement and activities of members of opposition groups. Persons opposed to government policies have been subject to arbitrary arrest and detention (see also section VI). [2(a),5(a)(b)(c),8(b)]

7.13 Opposition groups, including right-wing Christian groups who oppose Syria's presence in Lebanon, made strong gains in the local elections in May and June 1998. [7(c),12(d),23] Many analysts in Beirut are reported to believe that the municipal and mayoral elections have brought all Lebanese, even hardline opposition groups, back to the country's post-war political arena. [23] In October 1998, candidates in the Presidential election included Dori Chamoun, a hardline opponent of the government, and Boutros Harb, who announced his candidacy with an implicit message to Syria to stay out of Lebanon's internal affairs. [15(b),25]

7.14 All workers, except government employees, may establish and join unions and have a legal right to strike. Worker representatives must be chosen from those employed within the bargaining unit. Forty-two per cent of the 900,000 active labour force are members of 160 labour unions and associations. The major umbrella organisation, the General Confederation of Labour, embraces 22 of the unions and 200,000 workers. [3,5(a)(b)(c)]

7.15 In general the government does not control or restrict unions. However, in 1997 the International Labour Organisation (ILO) voiced heavy criticism of the Lebanese government's policies towards the General Confederation of Labour. The government has been accused of "undue interference" in the union's internal affairs, "excessively close government regulation of union elections", and the unlawful arrest of labour activists. The criticism came after security forces surrounded the Confederation's headquarters in late April, destroyed union property and arrested its re-elected president, Ilyas Abu Rizq. Subsequently, in what has been described as "a sham election organised by a breakaway faction", the defeated candidate, Ghanim Zughbi, was elected president. Abu Rizq has since launched an "independent GLC", which led to him being charged with usurpation of political authority and disseminating false information. His case is pending. In July 1998 elections were held in the GLC for the chairmanship following the resignation of Ghanim Zughbi. [5(a)(c),6(b),8(b)]

Freedom of Assembly

7.16 Although the Constitution provides for freedom of assembly, the Government restricts this right. A rally or demonstration must receive the prior approval of the Interior Ministry. [3,5(a)(b)] In 1996 the Government banned all rallies apart from during parliamentary elections. However, even while this ban was in force, various political factions, both opposition groups and supporters of the Prime Minister held rallies without obtaining government permission. [5(a)(b)] In January 1998, some 4,000 people defied the ban on demonstrations to protest against the government's proposed budget in front of parliament. It was the largest public demonstration in Beirut since 1991. [4(n)] No arrests were reported. [4(n)(o)] In December 1998 the Government lifted the decree banning demonstrations. [5(c)]

7.17 On 14 December 1997, 63 supporters of the exiled Christian leader General Aoun were detained following a demonstration against the Government's decision to bar the television broadcast of an interview with him. All were released by 16 December 1997, but 10 face proceedings in the military courts for attacking security forces and 23 are to be tried in civilian courts for causing riots and violating a ban on demonstrations. The 10 charged with fighting with security agents were brought trial on 18 December 1998 but the hearing was swiftly adjourned while appeals proceeded

on two legal technicalities. If convicted the suspects face up to a month in jail or a maximum fine of LL100,000. [18(j)] Fresh demonstrations were held on 15 December 1997, with no further detentions being reported. [4(a)(g)]

Freedom of Speech and of the Press

7.18 The Constitution provides for freedom of the press, but in practice this right is partially limited by the Government. During 1996, freedom of the press declined as a result of Government prosecution of several newspapers, and the passing of a new media law to regulate radio and television broadcasting. [5(a),9(c)]

7.19 Lebanon has a strong heritage of freedom of opinion, speech and press. [3,5(a)(b)(c)] Dozens of newspapers are published in Beirut and they are recognised as amongst the freest in the Arab world. [3] The various factions print their own newspapers and also own radio stations. Daily criticism of government policies and leaders continues despite repeated attempts to restrict press freedom through prosecution. The law prohibits attacks on the dignity of the Head of State or foreign leaders, and offending journalists may be tried by the specialist Publications Court. [3,5(a)(b)(c)] Najah Wakim, a Maronite MP for Beirut, has routinely made allegations of corruption and authoritarian excesses on the part of senior government figures. [6(e)]

7.20 Since 1991, there has been very little press criticism of Syria, though it is not clear whether this is enforced by the Syrians or is self-censorship. The 1991 security agreement between Lebanon and Syria banned the publication of any information deemed to endanger the security of either state. [3,5(a)(b)(c)]

7.21 Television flourished during the civil war years, with the various militias setting up their own stations. Some 50 channels were established. [22(b)] The government sought to regulate this unlicensed network with the passing of the 1994 Media Law. Only 5 television stations received licenses, three of which are owned by or closely associated to prominent government figures. [4(p),9(c)] In July 1998, facing mounting protests, the government granted licenses to several additional radio and television stations. The decision raised the number of licensed television and radio stations to 25. [5(b)]

7.22 A Government ban on the transmission of political programmes on satellite television in January 1998, was later lifted in October 1998. [4(p), 5(c)] Interviews on terrestrial television do not face restriction. On 11 January 1998, the first television interview in seven years with exiled Christian leader General Aoun was broadcast in Lebanon. The Government originally decided in December 1997 to impose censorship over the broadcast, but this was overturned by its later decision to remove all restrictions from terrestrial television. [16(a),16(c)]

7.23 Lebanon has a strong tradition of academic freedom and a flourishing private educational system due to inadequate public schools and a preference for sectarian affiliation. Students exercise the right to form campus associations and the Government usually does not interfere with student groups. [5(a)(b)(c)]

Freedom of Religion

7.24 There is considerable freedom of worship. There is no state religion nor any restrictions on particular religious groups. The various denominations publish their own material and operate private schools. [1,3,5(a)(b)(c)]

7.25 As a result of the civil war much of the Lebanese population now lives within

their religious or confessional group in particular areas of the country. This process of confessional "compartmentalization" is reported to have continued even after the end of the war in 1990. Consequently, the various confessions have little reason to mix and the tolerance of other religions has been affected. [1,2(a),3,11]

Freedom from Racial Discrimination

7.26 Discrimination based on race is illegal, and is not widespread. [5(b)]

Freedom of Movement/Internal Flight

7.27 In general, travel to most areas of Lebanon outside the Israeli controlled "security zone" has become quite routine, now that the militia checkpoints have been removed. There are still a few Lebanese and Syrian army checkpoints throughout the country but these do not restrict the movement of the various confessional groups. [3,5(b)] Since 1992, checkpoints between Tripoli, Beirut and Tyr have been mainly in place to signal a presence. They are reported to be more involved in assisting traffic than checking passengers' identity or searching vehicles. [2(b)(c)] A free flow of individuals has been reported, even to previously difficult areas, with Christians visiting Ba'albek for the first time and Muslims travelling to the famous cedars of Mount Lebanon. [2(a)] There is also a free flow of Christians and Muslims across the "green line", which divided Beirut into confessional enclaves during the war. [14]

7.28 At the crossing points between the "security zone" and the rest of south Lebanon the Lebanese Armed Forces, Israeli army and SLA maintain tight restrictions on the movement of people and goods. [2(a),3,5(a)(b)(c)]

7.29 Over 600,000 Lebanese were displaced during the civil war. Efforts to return and settle those displaced are ongoing, but the process has been slowed by tight budgetary constraints, shattered infrastructure, lack of schools and economic opportunities and the fear that physical security is still incomplete in some parts of the country. [2(a),5(a)(b)(c)]

7.30 The Lebanese government was praised by the United Nations for its handling of the July 1993 crises which saw 350,000 southern residents flee from Israeli bombardments, and flood into Beirut and its southern suburbs, and Saïda. According to the UN's report, the government reacted "quickly and resolutely" to the emergency, responding well to both the immediate needs of those displaced and assisting in the repair of damaged houses and villages. [2(a)]

7.31 The Lebanese have always been free to travel abroad and providing a Lebanese or Palestinian has valid papers, there is no legal obstacle to them re-entering Lebanon. In response to complaints by Palestinian officials over difficulties in re-entering Lebanon, in January 1999 the Lebanese General Public Security Directorate stated that although Palestinians with Lebanese travel documents would still need clearance to travel, the permits to travel would be valid for six months and enable their bearer multiple trips within that period. Previously Palestinians needed exit and re-entry visa for every trip. [18(k), 24(b)] Although travel to Israel is prohibited by law, many Lebanese go there via the Israeli occupied territory in southern Lebanon. [3,5(a)]

AREAS OUTSIDE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT / SYRIAN CONTROL

7.32 A patchwork of areas remain outside the Government's control. These include

the Israeli/SLA "security zone", Shi'a militia controlled areas and the Palestinian refugee camps. [1,2(a),3,5(a)(b)(c)]

South Lebanon "Security Zone"

7.33 Israel's "security zone" in south Lebanon is for the most part 10 to 15 kilometres wide and extends along the Israeli-Lebanese border for about eighty kilometres, accounting for some 10 per cent of the area of Lebanon. The population of the zone has been estimated at 150,000-200,000, most of which are Shi'a Muslims. The zone remains the one area of active fighting in Lebanon. [1,2(a),3]

7.34 The zone is governed by the Israeli Civil Administration. Life within the zone has been described as being "suprisingly normal", with the local economy functioning fairly well and Israeli pay being comparatively high. [2(a)]

7.35 In addition to the Israeli-backed SLA, which has a force of some 2,500 troops, a contingent of about 1,000 Israeli troops are stationed in the zone. The SLA began as a mainly Christian Phalangist movement but now includes a sizeable number of Shi'a Muslims. Israeli and SLA forces are locked in a cycle of attack and counterattack with the Iranian-backed Shi'a Muslim militia, Hizbollah, and anti-Arafat Palestinian guerrillas. In August 1996, Hizbollah's fighters were estimated to number some 3,000, with reports in March 1999 estimating a core of 400 experienced fighters. [1,2(a),5(a),7(f),35(a),38]

7.36 Attacks between the warring parties include the use of roadside bombs, rockets, mortars, rocket-propelled grenades and anti-tank missiles. During 1997, 39 Israeli soldiers were killed in the occupation zone. In addition, 22 SLA militiamen were killed in 1997. The losses of Hizbollah and their allies for the same period are estimated at less than those of their opponents. [2(a),4(c),6(a),12(a)] According to various reports, an estimated 37 Islamic Resistance guerrillas, 20 Israeli soldiers and 22 Lebanese civilians were killed in south Lebanon during 1998. [5(c)]

7.37 Israeli airstrikes have been commonplace, and at times hit civilian targets. Hizbollah have also targetted civilians, and periodically fire rockets into northern Israel. Both sides have therefore breached the cease-fire agreement of April 1996, under which the two parties committed not to target civilians. In 1997, 47 civilians were killed and 122 wounded by Israeli shelling or bombs planted by unknown assailants. At its first meeting of 1998, held on 13 January, the five-nation Israel/Lebanon Monitoring Group (ILMG) urged Israel and Muslim guerrillas to try harder to avoid civilian casualties and damage when fighting each other. [2(a),4(c)(d),5(a),6(a),12(a)]

7.38 Israel holds an estimated 50 Lebanese prisoners inside its borders and the SLA is estimated to hold a further 120-150 at its detention facilities at al-Khiyam and Marjayoun. [4(q),5(b)(c),7(e),8(b)] In April 1998, the UN Commission on Human Rights stated it was;

"Gravely concerned at the persistent detention by Israel of many Lebanese citizens in the detention centres of Khiyam and Marjayoun, and at the death of some of these detainees as a result of ill-treatment and torture".

The Commission also deplored the Israeli;

"abduction and ongoing arbitrary detention of Lebanese citizens, the destruction of their dwellings, the confiscation of their property, their expulsion from their land, the bombardment of peaceful villages and civilian areas, and other practices violating the most fundamental principles of human rights". [29]

Fourteen detainees have died at al-Khiam. [7(e)]

7.39 The 39 Israeli soldiers killed in the "security zone" in 1997 represented the heaviest annual loss since 1982. This has given strength to calls in Israel for an immediate end to the occupation in Lebanon. [7 (c),12 (a)] However, the Israeli government has vowed not to withdraw its troops from the zone unless it receives an assurance from Hizbollah that it will cease its attacks, and either a multi-national force or the Lebanese army is deployed in place of the Israeli troops. [12 (a),20] In November 1998 Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu stated that any withdrawal would also be conditional on the welfare of the SLA being assured. [37] The pre-conditions which Israel sets for withdrawal would have to be approved by Syria, given its influence over both the Lebanese government and Hizbollah. Syria regards Hizbollah as a useful pawn to pressure the Israelis into making concessions on the future of the Golan Heights. Hence, an Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon will only occur as part of a comprehensive peace in the region. After his election in May 1999 as Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Barak pledged to withdraw Israeli troops from Lebanon in a year by seeking agreements with Syria and Lebanon (see History). [6(f),12(a),17(e)] The last Israeli-Syrian talks were at Wye Plantation in April 1996. [1]

Shi'a Militia Controlled Areas (see also section VI)

7.40 Hizbollah has a military presence in the south, starting at the mountain on the outskirts of Jezzine down to Nabatiye and the western Beka'a Valley, passing by the eastern chain of mountains to the boundary of the Israeli "security zone" all the way to Tyr. The fighting force of Hizbollah is estimated at some 3,000. Hizbollah is influenced by both Syria and Iran, who provide finance and arms for the organisation. Lebanese Government control over Hizbollah, which remains legally armed in order to fight the war in south Lebanon, is said to be limited. However, Hizbollah has willingly submitted to the emerging state authority, especially regarding criminal justice. [1,2(a)(b),12(b)]

7.41 In the above mentioned areas and also in the southern suburbs of Beirut, Hizbollah is heavily involved in community, religious and development work. In addition, Hizbollah has a powerful block of six members in the National Assembly. There is a strong separation between its political and military wings, reportedly to distance the political side from the military operations and to maintain military secrecy. The secretary-general of Hizbollah's political wing is Hassan Nasrallah. [2(a)(b),12(b),19(b)]

7.42 Recruits for military operations are volunteers and there is no lack of new recruits. Hizbollah does not recruit its members by force. [2(b)(h)] Although it has traditionally been a Shi'a Muslim militia, Hizbollah recently announced the creation of the Lebanese Resistance Brigade, that will allow all Lebanese regardless of their confessions to participate in military operations directed against the Israeli occupation. [2(b),12(b)]

7.43 Hizbollah does not harass or threaten people who disagree with its policies. There have been no instances where the government has had to provide protection to ordinary citizens who were afraid of Hizbollah. Even regular Hizbollah members who leave the party for whatever reasons, would not have problems with the party because ordinary members do not have information that would threaten the organisation. [2(b),12(b)]

7.44 Amal is another Shi'a militia which has retained its weaponry in order to continue attacks against the Israeli "security zone". Like Hizbollah, it has bases in

south Lebanon and receives Syrian backing. [2(a)]

Palestinian Refugee Camps (see also section VI)

7.45 Palestinians were originally accommodated in 16 refugee camps spread throughout Lebanon. As a result of the destruction during the civil war this figure has been reduced to 12. [2(a),27] The Lebanese government has little or no authority in the camps, which are run by Palestinian groups, and which maintain their own prisons and an arbitrary system of justice. [2(a),5(a)(b)] Lebanese security forces are banned under international conventions from entering the camps. [23(b)]

7.46 The many Palestinian factions present in Lebanon are essentially split over the September 1993 PLO-Israeli accord which provided for limited Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza. The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) leader Yassar Arafat, signatory to the agreement, has witnessed his Fatah party split into pro- and anti-Arafat factions. [2(a),23(b)] Regular incidents of fighting have been reported in Arafat's former stronghold, the large refugee camp at Aïn al-Hilweh. [2(a),27] Members of the various Palestinian groups that control the camps were reported in previous years to have tortured and detained their Palestinian rivals. There were no known reports that this occurred during 1998. [5(a)(b)(c)]

7.47 One of the most powerful anti-Arafat factions is a Fatah splinter group called Black September 13 Brigades. This group controls a substantial portion of the Aïn al-Hilweh camp. Another anti-Arafat group is the Fatah Revolutionary Council (FRC). [2(a)]

7.48 The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC) is also strongly opposed to the PLO-Israeli accord and has been active in the war against Israel and the SLA in south Lebanon. [1,2(a)]

7.49 Conditions in the camps have deteriorated due to Lebanese government interference with efforts to reconstruct damaged camp housing and infrastructure, UNRWA's tight budget constraints, and the cessation of aid for basic services from the PLO. [2(a),27]

United Nations Interim Force In Lebanon (UNIFIL)

7.50 UNIFIL is made up of some 4,500 troops from nine countries, and was established in 1978 to restore the Lebanese government's authority over the southern part of the country after an Israeli incursion against Palestinian guerrillas. The force's 20 year old mandate is to oversee the complete withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanon. Militarily, the force is not equipped to separate warring sides or enforce peace. Nevertheless, UNIFIL's presence in the south has had a stabilising effect over the years. [1,2(a),4(e)]

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ANNEX B: PRINCIPAL POLITICAL ORGANISATIONS

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Amal (Hope): Shi'ite politico-military organisation led by Nabih Berri.

Al-Hizb ad-Damuqratiya al-Ishtiraqi al-mashi (Christian Social Democratic Party): Secretary General; Walid Faris.

Al-Jabha ad-Damuqratiya al-Barlamaniya (Parliamentary Democratic Front): Mainly Sunni Muslim support.

Al-Katae'b (Phalanges Libanaises, Phalangist Party): Nationalist, reformist, democratic social party. Largest Maronite party. Led by Georges Saadé.

An-Nida' al-Kawmi (National Struggle): Led by Kazem as-Solh.

Bloc National Libanais: Right-wing Lebanese party led by Raymond Eddé.

Hizbollah (the Party of God): Militant Shi'ite faction. Strong separation between political and military wings. Secretary General; Hassan Nasrallah.

Islamic Amal: Breakaway group from Amal led by Hussein Moussavi.

Lebanese Front: Grouping of right-wing parties (mainly Christian). Secretary; Dory Chamoun.

National Front: Grouping of left-wing parties (mainly Muslim). Secretary General; Kamal Shatila.

Parti Communiste Libanais (Lebanese Communist Party): Led by Faruq Dahruj.

Party Démocrate: Supports secular, democratic policy, private enterprise and social justice. Secretary General; Joseph Mughaizel.

Parti National Libéral (Al-Wataniyin al-Ahrar): Liberal reformist secular party. President; Dory Chamoun.

Parti Socialiste Progressiste (At-Takadumi al-Ishteraki): Progressive party. Mainly Druze support. President; Walid Joumblatt.

ANNEX C: RELIGIOUS GROUPS IN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Maronite Catholics 34

Sunni Muslims 27

Shi'a Muslims 27

Greek Orthodox 14

Druzes 8

Greek-Melkite Catholics 8

Armenian Orthodox 5

Alawites 2

Armenian Catholics 1

Protestants 1

Others 1

TOTAL 128

ANNEX D: GLOSSARY

IDF - Israeli Defence Forces

ILMG - Israel/Lebanon Monitoring Group

ISF - Lebanese Internal Security Forces

LF - Lebanese Forces (distinct from LAF)

LAF - Lebanese Armed Forces

MNF - Multinational Force (see UNIFIL)

PLO - Palestinian Liberation Organisation

SLA - South Lebanese Army

UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNIFIL - United Nations Interim Force In Lebanon

UNRWA - United Nations Relief and Works Agency

ANNEX E: CHRONOLOGY

26 November 1941

Independence declared

1943

Unwritten "national pact" established system by which government power shared on confessional basis.

1957

Considerable unrest, mainly among Muslims who advocated Lebanon's closer alignment with Syria and Egypt.

1958

US forces deployed in July to restore peace at Lebanese government's request. Peace was restored by October and the US forces were withdrawn.

1969

Clashes between Lebanese security forces and Palestinian guerrillas.

July 1971

Palestinian fighters expelled from Jordan enter Lebanon. Subsequently, the conflict between Israeli forces and Palestinians based in Lebanon intensified, while Christian groups began their own armed campaign to control the Palestinian guerrillas.

July 1974

Clashes between Palestinian forces and Christian militias.

April 1975

Further conflict between Christians and Palestinians.

May 1975

Unable to control the growing violence the government resigned and the conflict quickly developed into a full-scale civil war between the religious communities.

October 1976

Cease-fire achieved largely as a result of intervention in the conflict by Syrian forces in mid-1976. Following the cease-fire a 30,000-strong Arab Deterrent Force (ADF) entered Lebanon and prevented hostilities for a short time.

March 1978

Renewal of fighting followed raid by Palestinian forces which provoked Israeli retaliation. Israeli forces advanced into southern Lebanon but withdrew after intervention of UN which established a United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. The withdrawing Israeli forces, however, maintained a buffer zone along the border.

June 1982

Israeli forces entered Lebanon with declared objective of finally eliminating Palestinians' military threat to Israel's northern border. Israeli troops surrounded western sector of Beirut trapping more than 6,000 Palestinian fighters there. In late August 1982 US diplomacy achieved an agreement that allowed the dispersal of the Palestinian fighters from Beirut to various Arab countries, and the deployment of a multinational peace-keeping force in the city.

August 1982

The National Assembly elected Bachir Gemayel to succeed President Sarkis.

14 September 1982

President-elect was assassinated.

16 September 1982

In retaliation for assassination of Gemayel, Christian forces massacred many inhabitants of the Palestinian refugee camps at Sabra and Shatila.

October 1983

241 US and 58 French marines were killed in "suicide bombings", perpetrated by Muslim groups suspicious of the multinational forces role in supporting the Christian-led Government.

December 1983

Israeli forces redeployed to south of Beirut along Awali river, reducing their presence in Lebanon from 30,000 to 10,000.

Early 1984

USA, Italy and United Kingdom decided to withdraw their peacekeeping troops.

September 1984

Israeli government pledged to withdraw its forces from Lebanon. However, when the last phase of the Israeli withdrawal was completed in June 1985, Israel maintained a buffer zone along the border.

1986

Palestinian guerrillas resumed attacks on settlements in northern Israel, and Israel responded with air attacks on Palestinian targets in Lebanon. Meanwhile, Hizbollah escalated its attacks on SLA positions within the Israeli security zone.

May 1986 - January 1988

Fighting between Palestinian guerrillas and Shi'ite Amal militiamen for control of the refugee camps claimed over 2,500 lives.

August/September 1988

Failure of the National Assembly to elect a President results in a constitutional crisis, with two governments claiming legitimacy. One the Muslim-dominated civilian Government of Selim Hoss,

and the other the military administration of General Aoun.

March 1989

Violent clashes in Beirut between Aoun's Lebanese army and its allies on the one hand, and Syrian troops and their local militias on the other.

May 1989

A Tripartite Arab Committee was formed to produce a peace plan.

June 1989

Tripartite Arab Committee announced a peace plan which was immediately rejected by General Aoun.

September 1989

Tripartite Arab Committee announced a new peace plan, "the charter of national reconciliation", which Aoun reluctantly agreed to. A cease-fire accordingly took place on 23 September.

22 October 1989

The National Assembly met in Taif, Saudi Arabia, and approved the charter. However, the endorsement of the charter (the Taif agreement) was immediately denounced by General Aoun.

November 1989

The National Assembly elected René Mouawad as the new President. General Aoun declared the election unconstitutional and declared himself President.

22 November 1989

President Mouawad was assassinated. Two days later, the National Assembly elected Elias Hrawi as the new President.

January 1990

Violent clashes took place between the Christian communities, who were divided over the Taif agreement. By March more than 800 people had been killed and over 2,500 wounded.

August 1990

The National Assembly approved amendments to the Constitution granting an equal share of the seats in the Assembly to Muslim and Christian deputies.

13 October 1990

General Aoun and his forces were expelled from East Beirut by Syrian forces and units of the Lebanese army loyal to President Hrawi.

December 1990

Lebanese army began to deploy in Beirut, all militia forces having withdrawn from the city.

Mid-February 1991

Lebanese army established in most southern Lebanese towns.

Late May 1991

Lebanon and Syria signed a bilateral treaty providing formal structure for links between the two countries, particularly with regard to security.

June 1991

Israel mounted fierce attacks on Palestinian bases in southern Lebanon.

February 1992

Escalation of the conflict in southern Lebanon followed the assassination of Sheikh Abbas Moussawi, the Secretary-General of Hizbollah, by the Israeli air force. Retaliation by Hizbollah fighters prompted an Israeli incursion beyond the buffer zone to attack Hizbollah positions.

April and May 1992

General strikes took place amidst a deterioration in Lebanon's economy.

August/September 1992

First legislative elections since 1972.

22 October 1992

Rafik Hariri was invited by President Hrawi to form a government.

October/November 1992

Serious escalations of the conflict in southern Lebanon between Hizbollah fighters, the SLA and Israeli armed forces.

25 July 1993

Israeli armed forces launched a heavy attack on targets in southern Lebanon, with the declared aim of eradicating the threat posed by Hizbollah and Palestinian guerrillas. The Israeli operation displaced as many as 300,000 civilians towards the north and caused many civilian casualties.

1994

Violence remained at a high level in south Lebanon.

March 1994

The Government proscribed the LF (military wing of the Phalangist Party).

May 1994

Prime Minister Hariri resigned but later resumed his duties following the intervention of President Assan of Syria.

December 1994

Hariri resigned but later withdrew his resignation.

February 1995

Israel imposed a blockade on southern Lebanese fishing ports, in retaliation for the imposition of stricter controls between the southern Lebanese security zone and the sovereign Lebanese territory by the Lebanese army.

May 1995

Hariri again resigned and later withdrew his resignation.

June 1995

LF leader Samir Geagea was found guilty of a terrorist attack on a Maronite church and of the murder of Maronite leader, Dany Chamoun. Geagea was sentenced to life imprisonment with hard labour.

19 October 1995

The National Assembly voted to amend Article 49 of the Constitution and thereby extended President Hrawi's term of office for a further 3 years.

February 1996

The Government placed the army in charge of national security and imposed a curfew in the country's principal cities and towns in response to a general strike.

11 April 1996

Israeli armed forces began an intense, sustained campaign of air and artillery attacks on what they claimed to be positions occupied by the Hizbollah militia. The declared aim of the Israeli campaign (code-named "Grapes of Wrath") was to achieve the complete cessation of rocket attacks by Hizbollah on settlements in northern Israel. As a result of the operation some 400,000 Lebanese were displaced northwards.

18 April 1996

An Israeli attack on a UN base at Qana resulted in the death of more than 100 Lebanese refugees who had been sheltering there.

27 April 1996

A US brokered cease-fire agreement between Israel and Hizbollah took effect.

July 1996

The first meeting took place of an international committee formed to monitor the cease-fire agreement concluded between Israel and Hizbollah.

August/September 1996

Legislative elections held.

October 1996

Hariri was appointed for a third term of office as Prime Minister.

1997

Continued fighting in south Lebanon resulted in the deaths of 39 Israeli soldiers, 22 SLA soldiers, 60 Hizbollah guerrillas and 47 civilians.

14 December 1997

63 supporters of exiled General Aoun were detained following a demonstration outside a television station, which was held in protest at the government's decision to bar the station from broadcasting an interview with Aoun.

15 December 1997

5,500 Lebanese lawyers called a three-day strike following the detention of Aoun's supporters. Further demonstrations by Aoun supporters took place without further arrests.

7 January 1998

The Lebanese cabinet decided to ban the transmission of news and political programmes on satellite television, but to allow all kinds of interviews on terrestrial television.

13 January 1998

The first interview in 7 years with exiled General Aoun is broadcast on Lebanese terrestrial television.

22 January 1998

Some 4,000 Lebanese protested in front of parliament against tax rises in the proposed 1998 budget, making it the largest public demonstration in Beirut since 1991.

30 January 1998

Heavy fighting took place in Baalbek, in the Beka'a Valley, between the Lebanese Army and followers of Shaykh Subhi al-Tufayli, the former leader of Hizbollah. The Lebanese Army expelled the group by force from a Hizbollah religious seminary which they had seized.

May and June 1998

The first local elections in 35 years were held across the country.

15 October 1998

General Emile Lahoud was elected as Lebanon's 11th post-independence president.

End of November and start of December 1998

Lahoud asks incumbent Prime Minister Rafik Hariri to form a government, but he declines the offer. Lahoud approaches Salim al-Huss to replace him. Huss forms the new government. Known as the "White Revolution".

December 1998

The Government lifts the ban on demonstrations, although they still require prior notification and

authorisation.

Sources:

Europa World Yearbook 1997

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