

INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING

# Lebanon's Security Forces Struggle with Compounding Crises





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## Contents

Introduction . . . . .	3
A Coming Catastrophe . . . . .	4
The State of Security Forces . . . . .	7
Conflict Areas in Lebanon . . . . .	10
Tripoli . . . . .	10
Bekaa Valley . . . . .	11
Greater Beirut . . . . .	12
Khaldeh . . . . .	13
Beirut . . . . .	14
Syrians and Palestinians in Lebanon . . . . .	15
Security Forces Struggle . . . . .	16
Conclusion . . . . .	19
Endnotes . . . . .	24

*The content and views expressed in this intelligence briefing are those of the author and should not be taken to reflect an official policy or position of the New Lines Institute for Strategy and Policy.*

**COVER:** Riot police remove anti-government protesters occupying the “Ring” intersection in downtown Beirut on Nov. 4, 2019. Demonstrators blocked roads around the country and called for a general strike aimed at government corruption and economic mismanagement. (Sam Tarling / Getty Images)

### The New Lines Institute for Strategy and Policy

**Our mission** is to provoke principled and transformative leadership based on peace and security, global communities, character, stewardship, and development.

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## Introduction

Since the October Revolt of 2019, Lebanese security forces have been struggling to manage compounding crises in their country. The Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and Internal Security Forces (ISF) have increasingly stood between Lebanese leaders, factions, militias, criminals, and people. In doing so, they have had to remain loyal to the republic, within which they must operate despite its deep flaws; work under leaders who claim privileges and perks while abdicating duties and responsibilities yet remain powerful; and serve and protect – but also clash with – Lebanese people with whom soldiers and police have much in common.<sup>1</sup>

As the state decays and society frays, Lebanese security forces will struggle to meet their mandates, maintain their operational tempo, and preserve – let alone keep developing – the personal pride, unit morale, discipline, institutional integrity, and public trust they have long labored to regain since the end of Israeli and Syrian occupations in 2000 and 2005.<sup>2</sup>

Even the LAF may thus lose its luster, or what some call its “aura” of authority or “halo effect,”<sup>3</sup> as soldiers increasingly fall to fighting with citizens, fail to stop others from clashing, and otherwise ensnare themselves in the complex policing of people



People try to extinguish flames after the “Revolution fist” was torched during clashes between anti- and pro-government protesters in Martyr’s Square in October 2019. (AFP via Getty Images)

who are suffering severely. The LAF is still one of the most capable state institutions in Lebanon and retains tens of thousands of soldiers who have continued to “abide by [their] mission” in difficult circumstances,<sup>4</sup> but even beyond its significant shortcomings, LAF officers, soldiers, and their families are suffering, too. Ultimately, they are “children of their society and environment.”<sup>5</sup>

To help maintain stability in the Levant, U.S. officials may wish to increase support for and improve cooperation with the LAF, ISF, and other Lebanese security forces. Without additional support and cooperation, Lebanese security

forces “cannot in such a dire, worsening situation [meet] responsibilities for preserving public security and safety.”<sup>6</sup> In addition to being primarily responsible for maintaining stability and managing complex challenges in the coming years, the LAF and ISF will be important security partners of the United States, which has long-range interests in helping to preserve their institutional integrity, improve their overall practice, and cooperate with them over time in the Levant.<sup>7</sup>

This Intelligence Briefing examines the compounding crises in Lebanon; provides background and context, including on prevailing political issues in Lebanon; shares information and insights gathered through more than 220 interviews and conversations, mostly in Beirut and Washington, D.C.; and provides perspectives on U.S. policy toward Lebanon, including important and urgent cooperation with partners such as the LAF and ISF. The author interviewed lawmakers, ministers, officials, generals, officers, soldiers, police, advisers, academics, analysts, activists, business owners, lawyers, and citizens in Lebanon. The Institute also interviewed American, European, and Arab officials, diplomats, and analysts. In addition to secondary sources cited in the endnotes, the author reviewed books, journal articles, and archival materials for broader context.





Firecrackers thrown by protesters explode near riot police amid clashes near parliament in central Beirut on August 2020. The demonstrations followed the huge chemical explosion in Beirut's port. (AFP via Getty Images)

## A Coming Catastrophe

After decades of war, occupation, and factional feuding, the Lebanese began suffering through compounding crises in 2019: fiscal, monetary, financial, and economic.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, they have been “sinking” through one of the worst socioeconomic collapses in the world since the 1800s. As Lebanon's GDP crashed from \$55 billion to \$33 billion in two years, GDP per capita plunged by about 40 percent in dollar terms – metrics that, while imperfect and masking deeper issues, indicate peacetime problems as severe

as those usually associated with wars.<sup>9</sup> More than 500,000 Lebanese have lost their jobs or businesses. At least 40 percent of Lebanese are now unemployed. Others in construction, hospitality, and transportation have been unable to earn income regularly due to the collapse and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Millions of people have lost their savings, salaries, and benefits. As the currency has slid and collapsed, only to then slide and collapse again, even those fortunate enough to remain employed have now been living without living wages. Many employed Lebanese do not

even earn subsistence wages. About 80 percent of Lebanese are poor,<sup>10</sup> and 90 percent need help.<sup>11</sup> About 90 percent of the Syrians and Palestinians living in Lebanon, regardless of whether they are registered and how the Lebanese state and international organizations classify them, need additional assistance.<sup>12</sup> Already living under egregious legal frameworks and sociocultural conditions, beginning with the restrictive guardianship system and abject abuse of individuals, hundreds of thousands of migrants from Asia and Africa have also suffered while living in Lebanon.<sup>13</sup>







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**“ People in Lebanon are also dealing with longer-running challenges and problems: poor infrastructure; unreliable power and water supplies; disastrous waste-management systems and practices; inefficient and ineffective government and administration ... ”**

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The Lebanese government(s), central bank, and parliament have not acted decisively. Instead, they have feuded politically about the crises' causes, past blame, and future burdens while colluding to preserve their position atop the constitutional-political order, manipulate the postwar political system, and exclude challengers from different institutions. Beirut-based banks have maintained parallel banking systems for depositors who placed their money with them before or after 2019. Others, from “top dogs”<sup>14</sup> who influence the parallel rates, to the agents of international financial services companies and “neighborhood hustlers,”<sup>15</sup> have exploited their role as intermediaries, with more control, access, and information, to line their pockets while managing business in the parallel markets.<sup>16</sup>

People in Lebanon are also dealing with longer-running challenges and problems: poor infrastructure; unreliable power and water supplies; disastrous waste-management systems and practices; inefficient and ineffective government and administration; and imbalanced, skewed state institutions and state-society relations. Acute crises have exacerbated these challenges over the past few years. Receiving

as little as an hour of electricity per day, people might struggle to keep certain foods or medicines at home – or even at points of sale or distribution, purportedly safer but subject to the same limitations in many instances. Waiting hours every time they need gasoline, they might then spend the rest of their days hunting for basics like food and medicine – the former now less affordable, the latter hoarded or smuggled out of Lebanon. The Lebanese have increasingly struggled to maintain basic services in sectors that – though imbalanced, tiered, and factionalized – were the pride of professionals a few years ago: banking, education, health care, and hospitality. In each sector, different intermediaries and practitioners have made matters worse by working to exploit the crises to their advantage.

While millions of people in Lebanon have been suffering a great deal,<sup>17</sup> they will suffer more before – or if –<sup>18</sup> it gets better. Lebanese leaders<sup>19</sup> will not end their own existence, attack their sources of influence, or dismantle the patronage networks they have cultivated within and outside of the state.<sup>20</sup> Even since the Beirut blast, the August 2020 port explosion in which more than 200 people died, thousands of people were injured,

and hundreds of thousands of people suffered damage to their homes, businesses, or personal well-being, Lebanese leaders have kept squandering time, money, and energy. They took 13 months to create a cabinet,<sup>21</sup> only to again – as they did in 2018, 2019, and 2020 – squander time until another purported political milestone: the 2022 parliamentary elections, which officials, diplomats, negotiators, and analysts alike set as an arbitrary horizon – only to then, like the Lebanese themselves, move on regardless of results. Having yet to begin domestic reforms, they have only just begun reengaging in international negotiations for an economic rescue package. They certainly haven't contemplated deeper changes that their own advisers – in the Lebanese republic or in the most powerful factions and organizations – have at times urged.

Change takes time. In theory, Lebanese leaders could approach politics differently. Courageous and competent ministers could defy the leaders who really rule Lebanon: Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, former president Michel Aoun, former foreign minister Gebran Bassil, former premier Saad Hariri, parliamentary speaker Nabih Berri, Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea, and Progressive Socialist





Lebanese soldiers clash with retired military personnel trying to break into the parliament in Beirut on Sept. 26, 2022. The parliament was in session to approve the 2022 budget. (Anwar Amro / AFP via Getty Images)

Party leader Walid Jumblatt.<sup>22</sup> Reformists, revolutionaries, and other dissidents could seize the reins (formally and in institutions, though not informally or among societal factions). But even if the relevant people do all of these things, and even if they receive every benefit of the doubt and kiss of fortune, the Lebanese will need months to head “in the right direction;”<sup>23</sup> years to restore the republic, or whatever semblance of a republic existed before these crises manifested; and at least a decade to begin promoting positive, meaningful, and sustainable change.<sup>24</sup> Barring

a miraculous change, they will need generations to transform the deeper constitutional-political order while obstructionists – powerful transnational organizations like Hezbollah, garden-variety Lebanese factions, and/or bosses – continue to exercise influence alongside, within, outside, and against the state; above the law, beyond the ballot box, through peaceful protest, and with violence or threats.

As Lebanese leaders refuse or fail to overcome political deadlock, handle an economic collapse, reverse state decay, and help address sectoral struggles, people

in Lebanon will increasingly experience “seasonal chaos:”<sup>25</sup> social unrest, factional clashes, political violence, crime, and more.<sup>26</sup> In turn, the state and society may be tested by the proliferation and aggregation of these “isolated incidents of different intensity” – regardless of any escalation, which policymakers and analysts have thus far fixated on as the chief concern. Factions will feud and skirmish, even if they do not – or do not intend to – wage war. Protesters or rioters will take to the streets in a city, town, or village as they did in Tripoli in January 2021, Beirut in March 2021, and





different parts of Lebanon in summer 2021, without necessarily turning out in large-scale, sustained protests like they did in the Cedar Revolution of 2005 or the October Revolt of 2019. Party partisans and supporters may engage in directed and/or organized violence, be it against other partisans or against protesters in their areas of influence, even as others clash spontaneously or protest peacefully.<sup>27</sup>

People will riot more, whereas they once protested peacefully; by early 2021, before more recent riots and clashes, a third of documented social unrest in Lebanon was violent in some way.<sup>28</sup> They will commit more crimes, be they acts of desperate individuals or acts of organized, predatory cartels, as the country experienced in 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022.<sup>29</sup> Murders, burglaries, robberies, thefts, and carjackings are all up; so, too, is everything from narcotics production and transshipment to smuggling and gender-based violence.<sup>30</sup> Armed men have been burglarizing pharmacies and stores, seeking medicine and basic supplies. Others have stolen pieces of infrastructure, construction supplies, sewer covers, machinery, car parts, and more – usually to sell for hard currency or at parallel market rates.<sup>31</sup>

Since early 2020, several Lebanese and Syrian men have self-immolated or tried to do so in Beirut, Tripoli, the central Bekaa Valley, and southern Lebanon.<sup>32</sup> People have shot each other or brawled at gas stations, supermarkets, grocery stores, cab stands, bus stations,

and elsewhere. Customers have driven their cars into pharmacies, while others have assaulted doctors, pharmacists, gas station owners, and bakers they believe are hoarding or gouging in the market. They've also robbed banks, repeatedly trying to recover deposits that leaders, lawmakers, and bankers have held up without formal capital controls or transparent, fair, predictable processes for depositors of any background.<sup>33</sup>

As the Lebanese people cope with crises and contribute to serial social unrest, Lebanese factions will continue to feud and clash, often directing, encouraging, or creating conditions for armed violence. Having long since carved out so-called “security quadrants,” “patrolling zones,” or “areas of reporting,” political parties have also coordinated with security forces in their areas of influence, thereby legitimizing their own roles as security providers while contributing to conditions of insecurity more generally.<sup>34</sup> Party officials, resident business owners, and diaspora Lebanese have increasingly been “considering and sometimes discussing seriously” whether and how to use young men “with nothing to do and nowhere to go” to protect interests or acquire influence.<sup>35</sup> Others have declared publicly that they will use force to protect their property and other interests if the state fails to do so, as it did in Tripoli in January 2021<sup>36</sup> and the summer of 2021 or in Beirut repeatedly since 2019.<sup>37</sup> Men have formed “local security groups,” often loosely affiliated with different factions, over the past few years.<sup>38</sup> They may establish new “private

security providers” or work through companies they have created and used for years, purportedly to protect people against others before they mostly police their own constituents.<sup>39</sup>

Most people in Lebanon will suffer through acute crises and uncertainty for the foreseeable future. With their own leaders unwilling to change and without significant international assistance, people are unsure how to obtain basic necessities. They are also struggling to keep true senses of self, purpose, and dignity.<sup>40</sup> Crucially, they have also struggled to engage in dedicated, tenacious campaigns for long-range change. People have descended into “a very difficult place when it comes to lives and livelihoods. They lack basics: food, health care, fuel, education, and security. As these are affected severely, people will find it even more difficult to fight their conditions. They are already stressed and reporting more mental health issues that seriously affect their ability to function in families, groups, and society. People are trapped. And they feel trapped. It will all get worse.”<sup>41</sup>

## The State of Security Forces

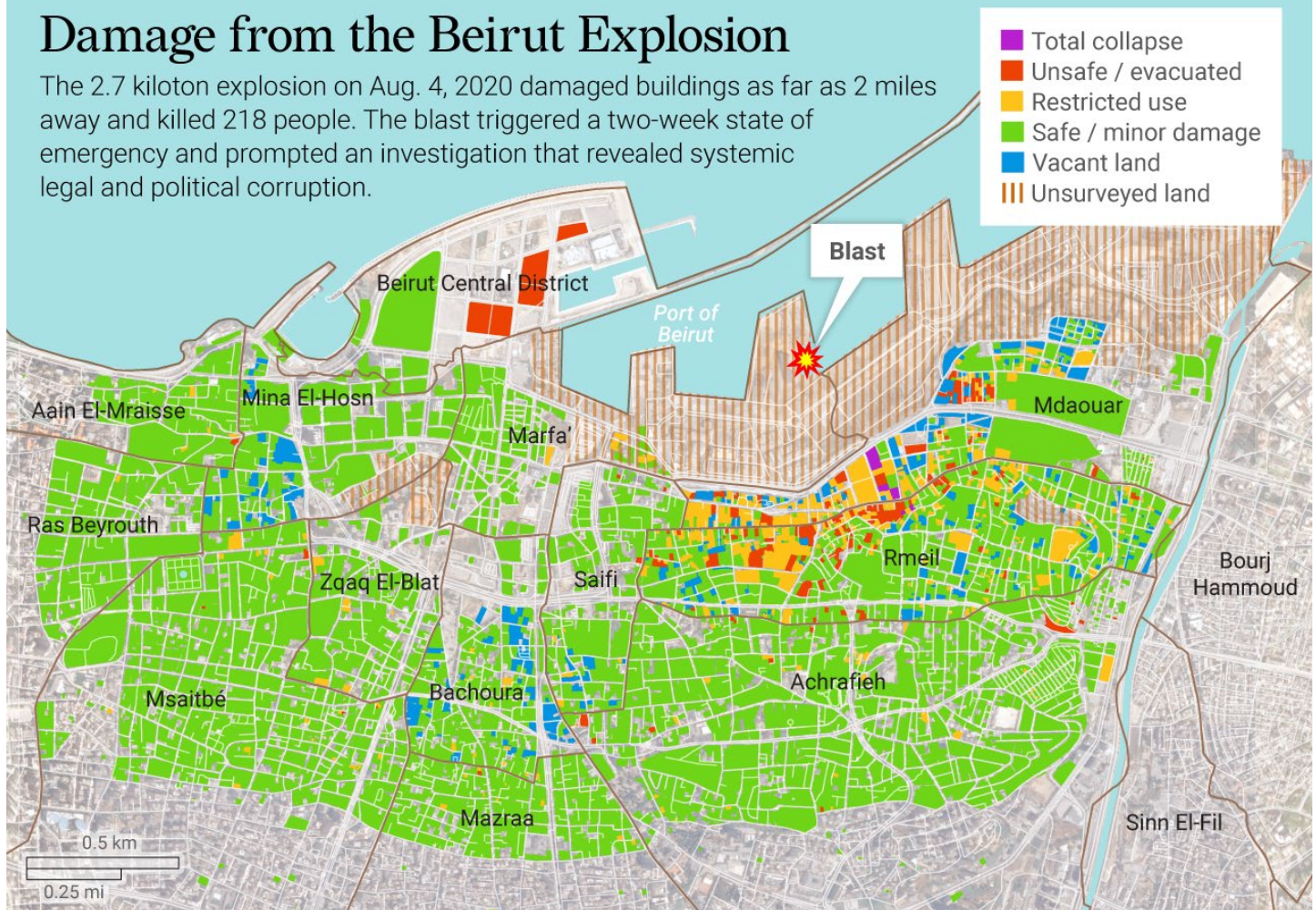
Lebanon's political leaders have been ineffectual except when intending to be obstructionist. After clashes in October 2021, for instance, Hezbollah and the Amal Movement suspended their participation in cabinet sessions to protest the purported politicization of the Beirut blast investigation. Then-premier Najib Mikati declared that he would not





## Damage from the Beirut Explosion

The 2.7 kiloton explosion on Aug. 4, 2020 damaged buildings as far as 2 miles away and killed 218 people. The blast triggered a two-week state of emergency and prompted an investigation that revealed systemic legal and political corruption.



Sources: Beirut Port Explosions Response, October 2020; OpenStreetMap; esri

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call for such cabinet sessions until Lebanese leaders worked out their differences over the investigation. Even so, ministers held informal meetings at times. They even had the occasional crisis cell gathering or inter-ministerial meeting, once with a foreign diplomat to consider crises in Lebanon's relationships with other states.

Regardless of their differences, including skill, temperament, wealth, and influence, Lebanon's politicians are beholden to a half-dozen Lebanese leaders who are more powerful, influential, and popular – and who, in most

instances, can also work with those above, below, and beside unpliant officials to get what they want. Bureaucrats have been running out of money, electricity, water, paper, and ink for at least two years.<sup>42</sup> Dedicated people in the central government, municipalities, judiciary, businesses, and non-governmental organizations must refrain from – or modify, share, or shelve – work that factional bosses, other elites, and certain security officers consider sensitive, have an interest in, or assess as more suitable for their lucrative hustles.<sup>43</sup> Soldiers and police posted to government

buildings, at checkpoints, near critical infrastructure, or at important junctures fret – openly, requesting neither anonymity nor discretion – about whether the state and central bank are going to run them toward ruin.<sup>44</sup>

Security forces have been struggling to manage the consequences of compounding crises. Grappling with “outsized domestic security concerns”<sup>45</sup> for decades, the LAF has included internal stability as an important part of its mandate in the post-war period.<sup>46</sup> Even by that standard, though, LAF officers and soldiers







have had to increase and intensify operations across Lebanon since 2019.<sup>47</sup> They have prevented, mitigated, and contained factional feuds within and across different segments of society.<sup>48</sup> They have secured critical infrastructure and patrolled disaster zones, with conflicting guidance, orders, and interference from civilian leaders and factional bosses<sup>49</sup> – including those who circumvent the chain of command to incite violence or to let their partisans or communal constituents run free.<sup>50</sup> They have coordinated with the ISF to improve border management, counter-smuggling, and counter-terrorism practices. They have helped manage the pandemic, secure private businesses, distribute subsidized foods, and deploy to points of delivery across the country. They have also set up monitoring and other presence posts throughout Lebanon, in addition to checkpoints maintained along important thoroughfares since the end of the civil war. At times, the LAF has led crisis-response planning because special councils, civilian ministries, interagency cells, and other entities have simply failed to plan and implement effectively or at all.<sup>51</sup>

The LAF's and ISF's institutional budgets are inadequate and allocated poorly<sup>52</sup> due to a combination of poor practice by civilian leaders, inherited structures from the occupation era, ongoing crises, and their own institutional missteps in the postwar period.<sup>53</sup> LAF and ISF personnel – now about 130,000 people, with the LAF accounting for at least 80,000 of them – earn income and receive benefits in lira. As the currency



Families of victims of the Beirut port blast, which killed more than 200 people, hold pictures of loved ones near Lebanese army soldiers during a protest outside the Beirut judiciary palace in September 2022. They are opposing the potential appointment of a second judge to the blast investigation which has stalled. (Marwan Naamani / picture alliance via Getty Images)

has collapsed, they have thus struggled to provide and care for their own families while clashing in the streets with citizens who have common concerns.<sup>54</sup> Soldiers, for instance, have gone from earning the equivalent of \$700-\$1,000 per month in mid-2019 to less than \$50 per month in mid-2021.<sup>55</sup> Nor have the fundamentals improved in 2022, despite the lira's short-term volatility during longer-range devaluation.<sup>56</sup> A brigadier-general may now make the equivalent of a few hundred dollars per month, with money made and saved before the crisis now less valuable and less accessible.<sup>57</sup> Officers, soldiers, and police are still freelancing and moonlighting throughout Lebanon.<sup>58</sup> At some prisons, moreover, incarcerated people are "sharing their meals, which families bring, with members

of security forces."<sup>59</sup> Moreover, some soldiers and police now believe their own (institutional) superiors are preventing them from obtaining passports or traveling abroad – even as others help them do so on an informal basis, perhaps with unofficial acquiescence from above.<sup>60</sup>

As crises have continued, officers have gone from sharing their concerns in a measured manner to warning about the decaying state and fraying society.<sup>61</sup> In March 2021, the LAF commander blasted Lebanese leaders for abdicating their responsibilities, pushing problems to others they concurrently constrain, and doing nothing to prevent an LAF "implosion."<sup>62</sup> Lebanon's then-caretaker interior minister warned that security forces were





already struggling to complete “90 percent of [their] tasks.”<sup>63</sup> In July 2021, officers indicated that the LAF alone needed an immediate injection of \$100 million to continue operating.<sup>64</sup>

Officers in the LAF, ISF, and elsewhere have since warned publicly and privately that Lebanese security forces could “disintegrate” without significant support – above all, for salaries or stipends.<sup>65</sup> Civilian officials and security officers have also worried about meeting their increasing – and increasingly complex – obligations with fewer resources. If struggling soldiers and police once took solace in remaining relatively better off than most citizens, having both purpose and some means, they have now spent three years in constant conflict – with fellow members of society, with their superiors, with Lebanese leaders, and indeed within themselves.<sup>66</sup> Some have deserted or taken administrative or educational leave without intending to return. Others have tried to work side jobs or dabble in different hustles, including agriculture, resale, and other segments, when off duty.<sup>67</sup>

LAF leaders have been addressing these problems in ways that could be counterproductive over time. They are tolerating informally and as a matter of necessary practice what they might disapprove of formally and as a matter of principle: flexible service. With this “flexible and tolerant attitude towards personnel,” LAF leaders have been able to “limit desertions and maintain operations.”<sup>68</sup> Even so, while 1,500-2,000 LAF personnel have left in declared desertions

since 2019,<sup>69</sup> LAF leaders are worried about other operational challenges like transportation, health care, and the consequences of part-time reporting.<sup>70</sup> (Active and retired LAF generals and officers also note that the number of acknowledged desertions is higher, perhaps around 5,000, though differ in specific estimates and in their framing of desertion, leave, and other arrangements.) Since the summer of 2021, the LAF has essentially been rationing operations – and, indeed, security – like others have been rationing money, goods, and services.<sup>71</sup>

Security forces will only need to do more to manage complex challenges throughout Lebanon. They will work to maintain public order as more people engage in social unrest, including peaceful protests, violent riots; crimes of necessity and desperation, and spontaneous skirmishes – all unfolding alongside familiar forms of political violence, targeted killings, organized crime, and factional feuding.<sup>72</sup>

## Conflict Areas in Lebanon

Common crises will manifest in different contexts across Lebanon. Lebanese leaders, Hezbollah, and other powerful people will continue to create “cocktails” of spontaneous, organized, and/or planned unrest, sometimes including or leading to violence.<sup>73</sup> Security forces may try to contain such conflicts, but they will not prevent or adequately address them. Even if the Lebanese now cooperate effectively, delineate roles, adopt area-specific plans, and do more to cope with other failures,

they will need money, personnel, equipment, morale, political capital, and trust to stabilize their society.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, security forces have been grappling with such challenges in Beirut, Tripoli, the Bekaa Valley, and beyond.<sup>75</sup>

## Tripoli

The LAF, ISF, and others have increasingly struggled to manage complex challenges in Tripoli. In January 2021, for instance, they clashed with peaceful protesters, violent rioters, and organized saboteurs and attackers who were out in Tripoli’s squares and streets.<sup>76</sup> The police killed one protester, and more than 400 protesters and at least 40 security personnel suffered injuries.<sup>77</sup> Military court officials charged 35 men with terrorism, and relatives and citizens protested those decisions in Beirut.<sup>78</sup> Others across Lebanon mobilized to support them, protest their own living conditions, or barricade roads upon the instructions of Lebanese leaders or local intermediaries. Increasingly policing and clashing with people in Tripoli, as they did again in July 2021, security forces have also continued to combat terrorists,<sup>79</sup> prevent certain intermediaries and racketeers from gaining too much influence both in cities and in more distant areas with sociocultural connections; and contain clashes like those waged by gunmen in and between Jabal Mohsen and Bab al Tabbeneh.<sup>80</sup>

They may not be able to manage combinations of social unrest, political violence, sabotage, and other attacks as people react to failures of the state.<sup>81</sup> At least twice



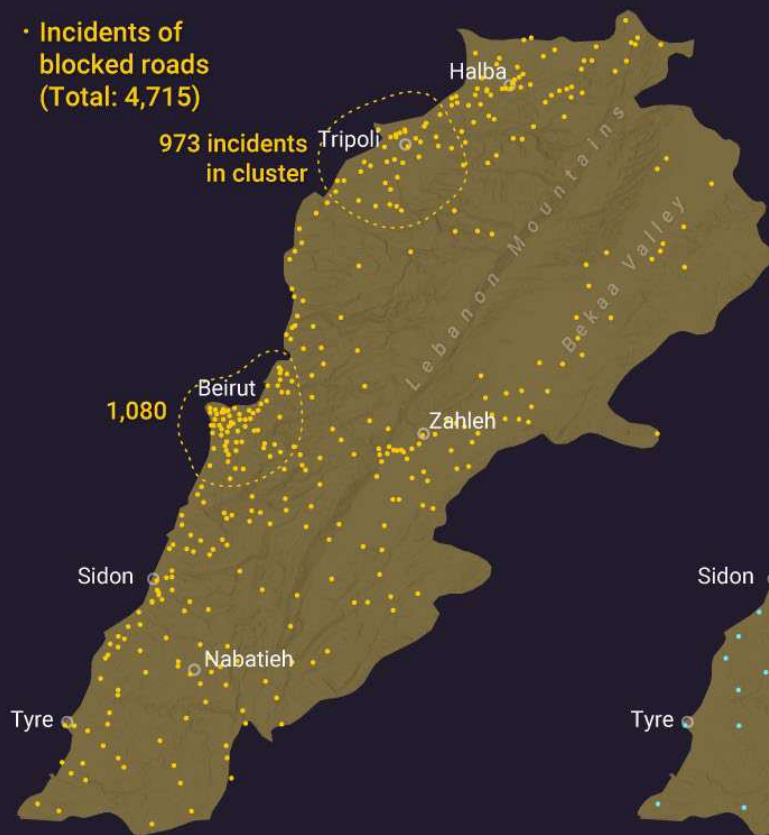




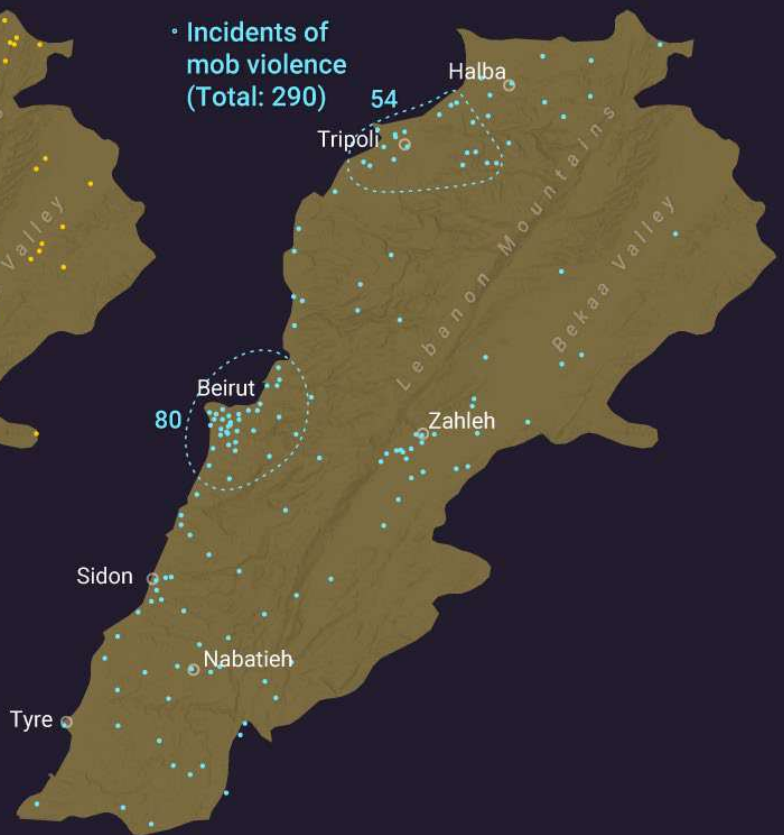
# Unrest in Lebanon

Oct. 29, 2021 to Nov. 1, 2022

Incidents of  
blocked roads  
(Total: 4,715)



Incidents of  
mob violence  
(Total: 290)



Source: The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)

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in the past decade, the LAF, ISF, and political parties have implemented so-called security plans around Tripoli.<sup>82</sup> In doing so, they have dealt with specific terrorist threats and addressed some radicalization risks. Nonetheless, they have failed to plan and respond adequately to sustained social unrest during these crises. They have also triggered tensions, over the years, with Sunni Lebanese – of all stripes, from all backgrounds – by eradicating smaller Sunni Islamist extremist groups while Hezbollah has established powerful parastate institutions, participated in successive governments, and

retained significant influence in much of Lebanon.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, Lebanese leaders have been unable or unwilling to address underlying socioeconomic, administrative, and other issues in Tripoli, which is now one of the poorest cities around the entire Mediterranean but was neglected well before these crises manifested.<sup>84</sup>

## Bekaa Valley

In the Bekaa Valley, Lebanese officials and security forces maintain presence posts; monitor and contain specific threats; and try to avoid costly conflicts for which they “lack political cover,

governmental commitment, [sociopolitical] expertise and mandate, and other will.”<sup>85</sup> Although they have for decades struggled to bring law and order in the northeast Bekaa Valley<sup>86</sup> security forces now are also grappling with underappreciated challenges throughout the fringes of the republic – including in the central Bekaa Valley, through which the state, entrepreneurs, and criminals all manage overland traffic and trade into Syria and beyond.<sup>87</sup>

The LAF and ISF have busted several criminal rings over the past two years. After the Lebanese Higher Defense Council announced





in May 2020 that security forces would curb smuggling, they stepped up operations, announcing more than 100 significant busts in 2020 and continuing to improve their practices in 2021.<sup>88</sup> The LAF and ISF also disrupted several terrorist cells operating in the Bekaa Valley and northern Lebanon, including members of an ISIS cell that attacked Kaftoun.<sup>89</sup> In February 2021, the LAF arrested 18 members of an ISIS and seized a weapons cache in the northern Bekaa Valley.<sup>90</sup> Nonetheless, Lebanese officers have been unwilling and unable to combat or even constrain large-scale smugglers, hoarders, drug lords, or other armed non-state actors – from organizations as powerful as Hezbollah, to different clans and cartels – in the area. They may have “plans in place for the area but require political cover”<sup>91</sup> and “more outside cooperation and operational support, given the [socioeconomic] collapse.”<sup>92</sup>

Because they cannot overcome “complex sociocultural contexts and serious political problems,”<sup>93</sup> security forces have not countered smugglers, drug lords, or armed clans who clash within and between communities and contribute to general lawlessness.<sup>94</sup> Since 2020, rival Shiite Lebanese clans have already clashed repeatedly in the northern Bekaa Valley. They have also skirmished with partisans of Hezbollah and Amal Movement, with whom they maintain complex relationships. Using rocket-propelled grenade launchers, truck-mounted munitions, fixed guns, and personal firearms, members of these clans have often outgunned the security

forces responsible for policing these areas.<sup>95</sup> They have clashed with each other, with Hezbollah, and with Lebanese state security forces including the LAF and ISF.<sup>96</sup>

While clashing with security forces from time to time, clansmen have also feuded with each other – as they do in nearby areas like northern Mount Lebanon, the central Bekaa Valley, and around Beirut itself. In October 2020, gunmen from one clan killed a man from another family in broad daylight – fulfilling a years-long vendetta.<sup>97</sup> They traded fire throughout late 2020. Those involved in the cultivation of cannabis, long a cash crop in the area, have suffered along with everyone else as the combination of global decreases and the lira’s collapse has crushed their earnings per kilogram.<sup>98</sup> Often outgunned, sometimes harassed, and almost always constrained by political leaders, officers may find it difficult to maintain morale and discipline in relevant security units without special efforts in the Bekaa Valley generally and borderlands specifically.<sup>99</sup>

In the central Bekaa Valley, Lebanese have clashed with each other and with Syrians in and around Zahle, Taalabaya, Saadnayel, and Chtaura. Reacting to protests in Tripoli, Baalbek, and Mount Lebanon, groups have blocked highways, roads, and roundabouts. They did so at least twice in early 2021, including in Taalabaya and Chtaura. Men also blocked the main road from Rayaqa, where the LAF has an airfield, to Baalbek.<sup>100</sup> Burglars have repeatedly targeted restaurants

and supermarkets in the area. Gunmen have lured Lebanese – who need to exchange cash, due to the crises – to then rob them of thousands of dollars at a time or stealing their cars.<sup>101</sup> People from villages in the Zahle heights and the central plains have attacked grocery stores, gas stations, pharmacies, and restaurants.<sup>102</sup> In turn, Lebanese legislators, municipal leaders, area groups, and individuals have turned out or threatened to turn out at different businesses either to protect owners or to pressure them into delivering goods and services – while Lebanese leaders who own businesses have threatened to turn to so-called private security providers if the state they lead fails to protect the businesses they own from the people they represent.<sup>103</sup>

## Greater Beirut

Clashes also have occurred in greater Beirut: the capital, suburbs once known as the “belt of misery,”<sup>104</sup> and urbanized coastal strips stretching north and south of the city. In these areas, the state maintains a stronger presence and may deploy more quickly and provide more adequate infrastructure and services than it does in outer areas, although it has strained to do so even in this imagined core over the past three years.<sup>105</sup> Since the summer of 2020, the Lebanese have clashed repeatedly in the greater capital area. For instance, factions fought in Khaldeh in August 2020 and August 2021 and in Beirut proper in September 2020, March 2021, and October 2021.







Lebanese soldiers guard the Central Bank of Lebanon in Beirut during a protest against the current economic situation of the country in July 2022. (Marwan Naamani / picture alliance via Getty Images)

## Khaldeh

Since the summer of 2020, gunmen have clashed repeatedly in Khaldeh,<sup>106</sup> a key area south of Beirut that straddles major thoroughfares and overlooks Rafik Hariri International Airport.<sup>107</sup> In August 2020, mere weeks after the Beirut blast, Sunni, Shiite, and Druze gunmen began a spontaneous skirmish that Lebanese leaders then exploited. Two people died, with at least 10 suffering physical injuries and others dealing with damage to their property.<sup>108</sup> Fighters paraded across the main highway linking Beirut to the airport, which is Lebanon's only international civilian airport,

and to the Chouf mountains and southern Lebanon.

Clerics, party partisans, and business owners who had sometimes stoked sectarianism in the area were more provocative in the months before the clashes, such as a Sunni cleric who "sermonized [against] Shia" and a Shiite businessman who often put up "provocative posters, signs, and flags."<sup>109</sup> Although they did not initiate that armed violence, Lebanese leaders worked immediately to expand, exploit, and contain the conflict. Druze factions, Sunni elites, Sunni tribesman, and Shiite political parties all clashed with each other in feuds that were

political and communal. While Sunni tribesman condemned Hezbollah and praised former Lebanese premier Saad Hariri during the clashes, contributing to some sectarian sentiment around those clashes, they were also operating with longstanding political, administrative, electoral, and other relationships with different Druze factions. Meanwhile, one Druze faction may have escalated the conflict even though one of the casualties, a young man, was affiliated with its rival faction.<sup>110</sup>

LAF military intelligence, ISF information branch, and other security forces worked to contain





the spontaneous skirmish, while they and the factions fueling the fight in Khaldeh cooperated to dissuade the gunmen's kin and party counterparts in the Bekaa Valley and Chouf mountains from moving to join the fray, conduct reprisals nearby, or retaliate elsewhere.<sup>111</sup> A year later, despite resolution efforts, gunmen continued the conflict. In August 2021 a man related to a murdered teenager shot his alleged killer at a wedding. The next day, during a funeral procession, gunmen affiliated with the Sunni Arab tribes, Hezbollah, and the Amal Movement clashed in Khaldeh again. They killed four people, including a Hezbollah coordinator responsible for areas in the hills to the southeast of Khaldeh proper. As these gunmen clashed, also disrupting transportation around the capital for at least three hours, kinfolk, party partisans, and others mobilized – some peacefully, others in armed convoys – across Lebanon.<sup>112</sup>

## Beirut

Factions have fought within and across communities in Beirut proper. In September 2020, Christian and Sunni factions skirmished with rivals in their communities – the former continuing a struggle for supremacy in their own community, the latter engaging in more layered and less predictable conflicts.<sup>113</sup> Supporters of the Lebanese Forces and FPM confronted each other during a parade, in which they were both commemorating the 1982 assassination of president-elect Bashir Gemayel. Men began firing guns in Achrafieh area, with the

LAF, Lebanese Forces, and FPM offering different accounts about what happened.<sup>114</sup> Brawling and clashing repeatedly over the past few years, partisans of the Hariri<sup>115</sup> brothers skirmished in the streets least once in September 2020. With familial, clan, political, and neighborhood differences all dovetailing,<sup>116</sup> fighters from Sunni factions – one Palestinian family and one rural Lebanese clan, both possibly involved in illicit activities – used rocket-propelled grenades and machine guns against each other in the heart of the capital.<sup>117</sup>

In March 2021, protesters, barricaders, gunmen, and security forces contributed to conflict in Beirut and across Lebanon. Ostensibly reacting to the lira's rapid depreciation, though also upon orders of political bosses, men set up roadblocks and fought across Lebanon.<sup>118</sup> Likely acting on specific orders and general instructions, Amal Movement supporters protested, blockaded roads, and burned tires in and around Beirut. As they moved to Baabda, LAF units closed other roads to prevent them from reaching the presidential palace or entering neighborhoods where they might clash with supporters of the Free Patriotic Movement.<sup>119</sup> Beyond that, the LAF and ISF refrained from clearing roads immediately due to "sincere concern about morale and objections to lack of leadership" and "possibly to pressure Lebanese leaders into controlling the situation."<sup>120</sup>

A week later, also acting on instructions or loose understandings, men affiliated with Sunni parties set up roadblocks

and forced businesses to close as the currency collapsed again.<sup>121</sup> At one roadblock in the Aicha Bakar area, Future Movement supporters and "Sunnis with more hardline dispositions" argued with a Shiite man trying to use that road.<sup>122</sup> As it turned out, the man's father was the security director for the chief of the Parliamentary Guard, a unit under the umbrella of the ISF and ministry of interior that has operated like an auxiliary force for Lebanese Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri and the Shiite-majority Amal Movement. The man called in his family; others kept obstructing roads in the area. "All a bit trigger-happy because of [roadblocks and mobilizations] and other, older tensions in the neighborhoods between hardliners and tough guys,"<sup>123</sup> Sunni and Shiite gunmen fought each other and wounded several people – including the security boss, who was then taken to a hospital.<sup>124</sup> LAF and ISF units deployed to pacify or separate the fighters while also working to dismantle roadblocks around Beirut and parts of Lebanon.

Shortly thereafter, Lebanese leaders returned to political theater. Having created the conditions for conflict, political elites and intermediaries rushed to pacify their partisans and warn against "sedition" during this "delicate period" for Lebanon.<sup>125</sup> The president and premier-designate – the former even less effective in late 2021, the latter having resigned before taking office – then jabbed at each other through the media, social media platforms, and spokespersons who took to television shows to trade blame over violent unrest, the currency collapse, and more.







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“ Security forces, including the LAF, ISF, and municipal police, then went around setting up checkpoints, patrolling streets, and raiding homes. Around 1,600 Syrians fled Bsharre that night. Almost none have returned to live in the town since. ”

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Hezbollah's secretary-general emerged to chastise allies and adversaries alike, criticize the central bank governor, and conjure the specter of war. (Gunmen affiliated with Hezbollah and Amal also shot at each other in Beirut during March 2021, too.) In spring 2022, frustrated Lebanese citizens again took to the streets near the state-owned power company and Beirut Port.

### **Syrians and Palestinians in Lebanon**

More than 1 million Syrians and Palestinians live in Lebanon – a place with about four or five million resident-citizens.<sup>126</sup> In the past three years, Lebanese, Syrians, and Palestinians have fought frequently – within and between communities in contact – over basic resources, jobs, international assistance, and land. Lebanese and Palestinians have skirmished in or near Palestinian refugee camps, just as Palestinian factions and gangs have fought each other. Security forces and criminal organizations have also clashed frequently, especially as the former continue to maintain checkpoints and patrols around larger refugee camps.<sup>127</sup>

Frustrated, fearful, and angry Lebanese have responded to

incidents with spontaneous and organized campaigns of violence.<sup>128</sup> At least three times since 2019, Lebanese have attacked Syrians on a large scale after disputes between individuals or smaller groups. In December 2020 in Bsharre, after a Syrian man killed a Lebanese man during a dispute and turned himself in to authorities, Lebanese in the area attacked and expelled hundreds of Syrians who had lived in the town for years. Security forces, including the LAF, ISF, and municipal police, then went around setting up checkpoints, patrolling streets, and raiding homes. Around 1,600 Syrians fled Bsharre that night. Almost none have returned to live in the town since.<sup>129</sup> Syrians “were in fear of their lives and safety. Some of the Lebanese had guns, while others hit people or [trashed] homes.”<sup>130</sup> After Syrians fought with members of a Lebanese clan refusing to pay them, Lebanese burned their makeshift shelters at night – forcing at least 300 Syrians to flee.<sup>131</sup> Lebanese men also attacked Syrians traveling to the Syrian embassy in Beirut in May 2021, from where they were to vote in Syria's presidential election.<sup>132</sup>

Ministries, municipalities, security forces, and factional partisans have also worked with U.N. agencies and

Syrian intermediaries to mitigate conflict.<sup>133</sup> Even then, they have often done so reactively and with serious imbalances. Instead of addressing tensions and working to reassure constituents with old grievances, renewed fears, and inevitable misunderstanding, Lebanese leaders have turned to scapegoating, inflammatory rhetoric, and inhumane approaches while failing to solve even those problems within their capacity to address, such as managing the currency more effectively, adopting targeted social support programs, and cracking down on large-scale hoarding.<sup>134</sup> Security forces and municipalities have evicted Syrians near Bsharre, in Hadath, and around Zahle while failing or declining to stop people who have damaged or destroyed Syrians' homes. The LAF, ISF, and municipalities have expelled, evicted, or served eviction notices to tens of thousands of Syrians in the past few years.<sup>135</sup> Authorities have also announced curfews for Syrians, prohibited or discouraged Lebanese from renting to Syrians, and – alongside factional partisans in each of Lebanon's larger communities, who in turn retain influence in different areas – patrolled city neighborhoods, towns, and villages.<sup>136</sup> In southern Lebanon, men have beaten, threatened, and





Lebanese soldiers and tanks guard the Lebanon-Syria border near Baalbek, Lebanon, shortly after “Dawn of the Mountains” operations against the Islamic State in August 2017. (Muhammed Ali Akman / Anadolu Agency via Getty Images)

otherwise abused Syrians – often without public condemnation or even awareness.<sup>137</sup> Those engaging in violence are triggering or aggravating tensions across Lebanon and creating “high risks” of conflict in the future.<sup>138</sup>

## Security Forces Struggle

Since the LAF commander and others warned openly about an “implosion,” soldiers and police have clashed with citizens, factional partisans, political saboteurs, criminals, and others who have rioted or engaged in vandalism during otherwise peaceful protests.<sup>139</sup> Lebanese security forces have already become the faces of failure, even if they have succeeded in doing their jobs with limited practical options and inherently flawed mandates. At times, members of the security forces have committed blatant

crimes, abused people, and responded disproportionately. Lebanese security forces have also been making mistakes and otherwise triggering tensions by doing or trying to do their jobs in good faith.<sup>140</sup> At times, they have been – or have been seen as – too harsh, in other instances, they have been – or have been seen as – too passive, permissive, or weak. Lebanese officers, while working to maintain public security and institutional integrity, also have been attempting to preserve future legitimacy, discipline, and morale, and to manage these current crises without sacrificing their progress in the longer run.

In July 2021, soldiers and police around Lebanon again fought gunmen, clashed with rioters, and struggled to police other peaceful protesters who took to the streets with their own

grievances. For instance, they faced such challenges in Beirut and Tripoli. When Saad Hariri resigned as premier-designate in July 2021, partisans, supporters, and members of the Sunni community protested peacefully, rioted, and attacked soldiers in Beirut.<sup>141</sup> Rolling in with armored personnel carriers and deploying poorly, soldiers and police mismanaged the response and thus contributed to tensions and clashes. Most acted with restraint, but some soldiers and police fired live ammunition into the air while attempting to disperse crowds and may have thrown rocks at protesters, rioters, and assailants.<sup>142</sup>

Meanwhile, relatives of Beirut blast victims tried to bring attention to the lack of progress in the investigation of their case and push back against obstructionists occupying positions of power.







Joined by other protesters, they gathered at Lebanese leaders' homes and clashed<sup>143</sup> with security forces protecting the residences. Protesters were peaceful at first, but eventually some tried to enter a minister's residential building, graffitied the walls, smashed glass, and threw rocks at police.<sup>144</sup> While some police demonstrated restraint, others beat protesters with batons, may have used riot control agents excessively or improperly, and otherwise engaged in questionable and potentially excessive uses of force.<sup>145</sup>

In August 2021, Lebanese security forces had to manage four important incidents. First, factions fought in Khaldeh. At least two people died and another ten suffering physical injuries, while the LAF and ISF deployed throughout Beirut, Khaldeh, and important infrastructure that day. Days later, while Lebanese civilians commemorated the Beirut blast, partisans and supporters of at least four factions – the Lebanese Forces, the Lebanese Communist Party, the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, and the Amal Movement – clashed in neighborhoods near Beirut Port and the highway between Beirut and north Lebanon.<sup>146</sup>

Then, Hezbollah fired rockets into Israel and set off two tit-for-tat exchanges on the international and domestic stages.<sup>147</sup> Internationally, the Israelis and Hezbollah engaged in another of their deterrence dances as U.N., U.S., and other officials worked to contain any conflict. Domestically, meanwhile, different Druze and Shiite Lebanese people confronted each other in

greater Beirut and Mount Lebanon: residents of a mostly Druze villagers stopped a Hezbollah fighter after discovering that he was driving the truck-mounted launcher in their backyard. Ultimately, LAF units took the Hezbollah operative into custody and seized the truck, launcher, and remaining rockets – only to release the fighter to his family and return the weapons to the self-styled Party of God. A week later, at least 28 people died and about 80 suffered wounds after fuel tanks exploded in northern Lebanon.<sup>148</sup> Either distributing fuel they had seized from a hoarder or siphoning fuel alongside desperate citizens after dark, members of security forces were among the victims. After the explosion, irate citizens torched trucks nearby and attacked the hoarder's house.

Already stretched thin, Lebanese security forces then struggled to contain clashes in the Beirut neighborhood of Tayouneh. In October 2021, the LAF and ISF had to respond to the most significant skirmishes in years when gunmen from different factions and some LAF soldiers fought for much of the day near a protest organized by supporters of Hezbollah, the Amal movement, and a smaller Christian-majority faction that suspended its participation just before the protests. The security forces killed at least seven people and wounded more than 30 others using sidearms, hunting rifles, sniper rifles, automatic weapons, and rocket-propelled grenade launchers.

The Hezbollah and Amal partisans were protesting the Beirut blast investigation. Hezbollah and its political partners, as well as

others who are the self-styled Party of God's adversaries except on such issues, have repeatedly obstructed investigative processes and judicial proceedings. Failing to deter an incumbent judge who had persisted in his work despite an integrated campaign to intimidate him, chill his work, or engage in lawfare, Hezbollah and Amal have repeatedly politicized and polarized the issue<sup>149</sup> and remove judges or investigators who have sought to question Lebanese leaders (including former legislators, former ministers, and others).

While some soldiers moved to contain the conflict, others skirmished with militants and partisans of the Amal Movement and Hezbollah. While peaceful protesters moved from the Shiite-majority Chiyah neighborhood to the Christian-majority Ain al-Rummaneh area, some rioters and armed individuals also moved from main thoroughfares along the way to a peaceful protest into the streets and alleys of the latter area. Some of these partisans smashed glass doors and windows, vandalized cars, and attacked members of security forces and citizens alike; others merely engaged in verbal provocations, just as residents of the neighborhood did. Meanwhile, shooters in Ain al-Rummaneh began to target these partisans and supporters.<sup>150</sup> Factions had clearly prepared for a showdown, regardless of the trigger.<sup>151</sup> Moreover, their respective partisans, supporters, sympathizers, and others had equipped themselves to do damage, further disproving the notion, which factions helped plant in the press, that those responsible





for the violence were all passive participants in the conflict.<sup>152</sup>

Lebanese leaders immediately spun the conflict.<sup>153</sup> For instance, Lebanese Forces leaders and representatives tried to claim political success while distancing themselves from legal or other liabilities, costs, and risks. Using the pretexts of politicization and polarization, which they have created and driven more than anyone else, Hezbollah and Amal immediately suspended their participation in cabinet meetings (as they did in the mid-2000s when obstructing the investigation into Hariri's assassination and the formation of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon).

Meanwhile, then-premier Najib Mikati announced he would not call the cabinet into session until Lebanese leaders resolve their differences related to the Beirut blast investigations and cases. Indeed, after the clashes in Tayouneh, Lebanese ministers only met in informal, side sessions and during one emergency gathering – with a U.S. diplomat in attendance – to deal with a diplomatic crisis with the Gulf Arab states. Creating another cabinet to “perhaps move in the right direction,” Lebanese leaders have instead repeatedly obstructed, halted, or delayed formal measures (such as electing a president, creating a cabinet, or passing a law) and informal action (working through ministries or even factions, as they have done in other contexts, to address issues even while paralyzing state institutions through cycles of consolidation and competition).<sup>154</sup> Because of constitutional rules and customs,



An anti-government protester pushes a police officer as she tries to prevent a fireman from extinguishing flames from a burning barricade in Beirut on Nov. 13, 2019. The previous night, protests erupted after President Michel Aoun defended the role of his ally, Hezbollah, in Lebanon's government. (Patrick Baz / AFP via Getty Images)

and their own dithering and disputation, the Lebanese have since the parliamentary elections of 2022 been without a new, empowered cabinet and are on the brink of another combination of constitutional crises, political paralyzes, and institutional voids.

Security forces will continue to struggle, triggering tensions

with frustrated citizens they are responsible for protecting and managing with difficulty the complex conflicts of others in Lebanon. They will, if nothing else, stumble into skirmishes as they have repeatedly since the October Revolt of 2019. They will also have to absorb the costs of reactive containment, which they have now engaged in for 15 years, given that





they are unable and unwilling to prevent or even combat conflict more aggressively.<sup>155</sup> They will struggle to manage serial social unrest, which they have not had to manage since the Lebanese civil war ended, and the specific subset of factional-communal clashes involving Hezbollah, which has in the past year alone clashed with factional partisans, supporters, and members of every community in Lebanon – including in its own Shiite community, and even its base within a constellation of constituencies. They will need help, which for the foreseeable future can only come from beyond Beirut.

## Conclusion

No state in the world can maintain order – let alone build positive peace – in conditions like those in Lebanon today.<sup>156</sup> The Republic of Lebanon can't do so now, with most of its institutions struggling in a tough geopolitical neighborhood, grappling with failed policies of the past, and working under insidious leaders, in inefficient structures, and with ineffective personnel.

No Lebanese leaders, officials, or people can change conditions while pursuing positive, meaningful, and sustainable political change in reasonable timeframes. Even visionary, prudent, and patient leaders – including those who might see themselves as stewards of a republic, not transnational militia bosses, factional chieftains, or legitimated robber barons – would be able to solve Lebanon's problems or even mask their manifesting consequences in the coming months and years. What's worse,

Lebanese leaders will continue to wrangle, logroll, gladhand, and backslap in private; praise, chastise, insult, and undercut each other while addressing different audiences in public; and selectively uphold and undermine order in Lebanon. They will also continue to selectively plan, orchestrate, initiate, escalate, manage, contain, and prevent limited armed conflicts – all at once, all layered over other political violence and socioeconomic unrest.

No dissidents may achieve positive, meaningful, and sustainable political change immediately. Regardless of their origins, ideas, and approaches, they simply lack the formal authority, political popularity, and other influence. Barring some sudden and unforeseen change, they will not acquire sufficient authority, power, or influence in elections – parliamentary, presidential, and municipal – scheduled, but not held on time or in the appropriate sequence, in 2022. (While the Lebanese held parliamentary elections on time, they have postponed municipal elections and have not yet struck the sort of political deal needed to elect a president, appoint a new cabinet, and again begin operating through formal, animated state institutions. In any event, authority, power, and influence in Lebanon do not flow only from formal institutions.)

Moreover, no ally, partner, or friendly state or people can do for the Lebanese what they are ultimately unwilling or unable to do for themselves. They can't solve domestic dimensions of the Lebanese predicament, regardless

of their own regional policies and interests. They can't circumvent the state, cronies, connected actors, and the broader elite (including, incidentally, many self-styled reformists and revolutionaries).<sup>157</sup> Without true transformations in policy, in and by several states in the Middle East, they can't change or eliminate unfavorable regional conditions.

However, they can help. Unlike indifferent leaders who will not end their own existence or undermine their own influence, and unlike Lebanese people who lack ability or will to achieve meaningful and positive change within a reasonable timeframe, officials abroad can aid the Lebanese in coping with their crises, maintaining stability, and managing complex challenges. In doing so, they may also work to promote mutual interests in the longer term.

American, European, and Arab officials have been trying to reconcile competing strategic, political, and moral interests in Lebanon. None of these officials see Lebanon as the priority, and even those who focus on Lebanon, one of whom said he “had not seen the word ‘Lebanon’ on [his] desk in years,”<sup>158</sup> are grappling with “political interests,” “undeniable necessity,” and “moral hazard.”<sup>159</sup> These officials have serious and legitimate concerns:<sup>160</sup> Lebanese leaders’ brinksmanship and gamesmanship; the state’s political positions; endemic structural problems, including in institutions and in different informal mechanisms, processes, and practices; and the power and influence of adversarial actors like Hezbollah.<sup>161</sup> Officials





## U.S. Bilateral Aid to Lebanon

In 2021, the U.S. provided more than \$400 million in humanitarian assistance as well as more than \$200 million in security assistance.

USD in millions	Fiscal years				
	2018 Actual	2019 Actual	2020 Actual	2021 Enacted	2022 Requested
Development Assistance	-	-	7.55	-	-
Economic Support Fund	117	112.5	78.95	112.5	112.5
Foreign Military Financing	105	105	105	105	160
International Military Education and Training	3.12	2.97	2.68	2.97	3.5
International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement	10	10	10	10	8.2
Non-proliferation, Anti-terrorism, Demining, and Related Programs	10.82	11.82	11.82	11.82	11.76
<b>Total</b>	<b>245.94</b>	<b>242.29</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>242.29</b>	<b>295.96</b>

Sources: Congressional Research Institute, State Department Budget Justifications (FY2017-FY2022)

and diplomats have expressed frustration, acknowledging their own flaws, outlining policy predicaments, and wondering what the Lebanese have been doing in their post-war, post-occupation era of independence. For instance, a retired U.S. diplomat vented about Lebanese leaders who protest the strings attached to international support (including the packages of grants, soft loans, and other support that American, European, and Arab donors cobbled together in 2017 and 2018, subject to as-yet unenacted reforms): “Lebanese leaders sometimes protest that [foreign officials] are being too harsh. They ask for ‘carrots’ to go with the ‘sticks’ that they see in the policies of the United States

and Europe. How’s \$11 [expletive] billion? How’s that for a carrot?!”

Against that backdrop, U.S. officials have been giving Lebanese partners the policy equivalents of “pills to die softly or manage the pain.”<sup>162</sup> American assistance “is like a suppository: They will give it to you, but [neither party] will enjoy what is happening or how it is happening.”<sup>163</sup> They have provided or greenlighted some basic humanitarian, disaster-recovery, small-scale rehabilitation, and pandemic-related assistance but have withheld more significant aid.<sup>164</sup> Aside from these measures, American, European, and Arab officials have not yet crafted separate or collective strategies toward a collapsing Lebanon;<sup>165</sup>

what they have done separately has been insufficient, and what they have purported to do collectively has been incoherent, inconsistent, and even contradictory. Beyond sharing vague and potentially misaligned senses that they must avoid calamity and promote reform, American and other leaders are understandably reluctant to initiate a long-range, large-scale program for Lebanon. They have not looked for a middle ground between abandoning the country and enabling its leaders, with Arab and French officials being both the loudest in their declarations and the meekest in their policies in Beirut. Nor have they really combined positive policies with restrictive measures, each doomed to fail alone and only a potentially useful part of a still-missing calibrated approach for each critical sector in Lebanon today.<sup>166</sup>

Even so, American, European, and Arab officials have a clear, common, and immediate interest in avoiding another catastrophe in the Levant, or at least helping people cope with one. The consequences of letting Lebanon collapse are manifold:<sup>167</sup> crime, which may be organized, opportunistic, reactive, or desperate; internal and cross-border conflicts; migration<sup>168</sup> of Lebanese and others living in Lebanon because their places of origin are even less accessible and safe; and militancy in all factions and segments of society. They also have interests in helping to manage all such risks and challenges while they reengage and realign in the region – as Americans and Iranians, Arabs and Israelis, Turks and French, and others have been doing.







With that in mind, American, European, and some Arab officials have already been increasing support for – and, with mixed results through – Lebanese security forces.<sup>169</sup> They have also provided humanitarian assistance for the LAF to distribute to people in Lebanon. While considering whether new, special measures are appropriate given different strategic, political, and legal considerations, U.S. lawmakers and officials have been doing more within a security sector partnership framework that existed before broader collapse in Lebanon. They initially increased annual foreign military financing to \$120 million for FY2021 and may be increasing it again for FY2023.<sup>170</sup> They have tried to use reimbursement, drawdown, humanitarian, and other means to find or free up funds for the LAF.<sup>171</sup> They have worked under existing legislation to reimburse the LAF for border security and related operations.<sup>172</sup> They have thus been able to provide the LAF with \$60 million, likely against invoices for costs incurred in FY2018.<sup>173</sup>

In September 2021, the Biden administration authorized \$47 million in direct drawdowns of commodities, articles, and services from U.S. government agencies to the LAF pursuant to the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act.<sup>174</sup> While Lebanese factions clashed in the streets in October 2021, a senior U.S. diplomat visiting Beirut announced an additional \$67 million in assistance, which was approved by Congress in 2022.<sup>175</sup> With allies and partners, including officials in European and Arab states, they have also considered cooperating with the

LAF on specific issues, helping offset certain costs and providing necessary goods or services to the Lebanese.

The United States could try to use certain stockpiles of medicines and related supplies to assist the LAF, ISF, and dependents – all, of course, people in Lebanon. They could also engage in military-to-military cooperation in health care and/or emergency management, while they and select Lebanese state institutions, enterprises, and people also assist others. (Now that the minister of health is not connected to Hezbollah, as in a cabinet created after the October Revolt, U.S. officials and diplomats may be more willing – and certainly more able – to increase financial, technical, and in-kind assistance while initiating limited institutional partnerships in that area.)

U.S. officials, lawmakers, and members of the armed services must increase support for and improve cooperation with Lebanese security forces – the LAF,<sup>176</sup> the ISF,<sup>177</sup> and select others<sup>178</sup> immediately, across the board, and for the long haul. In doing so, U.S. lawmakers and officials are able to provide Lebanese security forces with needed money.<sup>179</sup> U.S. lawmakers and officials will ultimately decide which mechanisms are available and appropriate and, while consulting with Lebanese and other partners, if and to what extent they may help with different needs. If they move forward with some special support, regardless of different mechanisms or bilateral and multilateral approaches, they may wish to consider that the LAF and

ISF will together need anywhere from \$150 million to \$300 million in additional international assistance – cash and adjusted technical assistance, including for instance to offset the consequences of currency collapse in areas like fuel, equipment, parts, and maintenance – per year during the relevant program's timeframe.<sup>180</sup>

The U.S. must also persuade others, although doing so within a useful timeframe may be difficult.<sup>181</sup> Over the past three years, American and Arab officials have taken turns prodding each other to do more – with the former trying to induce the Saudis to step up, only for others such as the Qataris to later provide funding to push the Americans themselves.<sup>182</sup> The U.S. must use already-authorized government drawdowns and existing reimbursement mechanisms more effectively and<sup>183</sup> should reconsider proposals that members of regional and thematic bureaus had on hold due to the status and composition recent cabinets in Lebanon. For instance, they could cooperate on emergency management, healthcare, and other assistance made available through strategic stockpiles. While they may wish to help LAF and ISF personnel and their hundreds of thousands of dependents, officials abroad must also consider how their assistance and cooperation will contribute to imbalances in the state, society, and state-society relations. Instead of elevating the LAF and those in its orbit as a community above communities, they may wish to work with the LAF to broaden benefits and beneficiaries in the public – including through collective action involving select





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**“ Americans and Lebanese who continue to cooperate on security will also probably contribute to the ongoing securitization of the state. ”**

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civilian ministries, units, and teams in Lebanon.

U.S. lawmakers and officials should work together to adopt special measures for limited periods.<sup>184</sup> They could thus provide and/or authorize the provision of general sustainment funds, contingency or discretionary funding, or specifically authorized funding for stipends for LAF and ISF personnel. They may do so bilaterally or, considering financial, political, legal, and diplomatic factors, through multilateral mechanisms. For instance, American leaders may be considering funds for a program involving the U.N. Office of the Special Coordinator for Lebanon and the U.N. Development Programme in Lebanon – both of which, though not as ideal a bilateral assistance program, they’ve assessed are preferable to other agencies operating in the Levant. By making an initial contribution, somewhere in the ballpark of \$100 million, U.S. officials could lead and encourage others to use multilateral mechanisms as conduits for coordinated, additional assistance during these acute crises in Lebanon.<sup>185</sup> In these and other ways, U.S. leaders can thus do what is necessary today so that they and their partners may do what is sufficient tomorrow.

Of course, security forces are not substitutes for a state. Nor can

they alone address the challenges in Lebanon “these days or at any time.”<sup>186</sup> Moreover, despite their significant progress since 2005, Lebanese security forces must continue to develop and improve in core areas of operations and in overall organization, policies, and standards.<sup>187</sup> At times, too, Americans and Lebanese cooperating to address immediate imperatives have made – and may again make – it more difficult to pursue longer-term interests and address imbalances that undermine the hard-earned, cross-communal support and “aura” of authority that the LAF has enjoyed since the Cedar Revolution. Americans and Lebanese who continue to cooperate on security will also probably contribute to the ongoing securitization of the state. Furthermore, they will also contribute to stratification of security forces, the state, and society regardless of how they help (with salaries or stipends, in-kind aid and services, or intermittent improvements to institutional transportation, health care, and other services).

Even so, Lebanese security forces are necessary and important institutions. If and as they retain their integrity and function effectively, they may preserve order, protect citizens, and balance competing imperatives and interests – even if incompletely and unevenly.<sup>188</sup> Although they

cannot impose order, security forces may help maintain stability in most of Lebanon and contain conflicts – not just in their armed, violent form – that people will engage in within and between communities. Although they can’t combat or constrain all problematic actors – above all Hezbollah, but also other Lebanese factions, criminal cartels, and clans – they can continue to occupy space that nefarious actors would otherwise fill. They can’t overcome their own shortcomings and flaws rapidly, but if helped appropriately, they will continue to develop, reorganize, and improve as they have since the end of the Israeli occupation in 2000 and the Syrian occupation in 2005. The LAF and ISF, while they have aggravated some imbalances in the state and society, also enable others to operate effectively and have a better chance of doing what is sufficient in the long run. Though security forces can’t lift Lebanon merely by retaining their integrity, or even by beginning to function fully and effectively, Lebanon will certainly get worse if these security forces strain, decay, or collapse.<sup>189</sup>

For now, U.S. and other officials can’t do more than help manage compounding crises while tending to their respective political, humanitarian, and strategic interests.<sup>190</sup> They may increase humanitarian assistance, including cash, while improving disbursement







and monitoring mechanisms. In time, building upon small-scale initiatives already underway, they may provide assistance and initiate comprehensive cooperation with appropriate Lebanese partners on five fronts: food, healthcare,<sup>191</sup> education,<sup>192</sup> justice,<sup>193</sup> and security.<sup>194</sup> Regardless of whether they see stabilization as a first step in a longer-range approach or as the only step in a rudimentary effort

to serially manage ever-evolving crises, they must help Lebanon maintain and improve critical capacities now. To do that, they must help security forces meet their mandates in the next couple of years. Building from that baseline, they may consider how to keep cooperating with the LAF and ISF to maintain institutional integrity, unit morale, and personal pride while also helping reorganize and

redevelop those security forces in the long run.

Beyond helping keep critical capacities, U.S. leaders must withhold more significant, broad-based assistance until Lebanese leaders change their behavior, Lebanese people change their leaders, or a significant, sudden change again affects the republic of Lebanon. □



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## Endnotes

- 1 See, generally, [“Riots in Lebanon’s Tripoli are Harbingers of Collapse,”](#) Crisis Group Alert, February 2, 2021.
- 2 Interviews and conversations with three generals and four retired generals in Lebanese security forces, August 2020–August 2021; phone interview with a Lebanese–American security consultant, August 2021; conversations with U.S. diplomats in February 2021 and July 2021.
- 3 Interviews with retired LAF general, retired ISF general, and general in Lebanese security force, January–March 2021; conversations with former Lebanese lawmakers, activists, representatives of domestic non–governmental organizations, and scores of citizens, January–July 2021. Moreover, as Lebanese, Arab, and American security analysts explained,
- 4 Interviews with retired LAF general, retired ISF general, and general in Lebanese security force, January–March 2021; conversations with former Lebanese lawmakers, activists, representatives of domestic non–governmental organizations, and scores of citizens, January–July 2021.
- 5 [“Riots in Lebanon’s Tripoli are Harbingers of Collapse,”](#) Crisis Group Alert, February 2, 2021.
- 6 Interview with a retired general in a Lebanese security force, March 2021.
- 7 Conversations to assess the American interest with active and retired U.S. officials and diplomats, August 2020–October 2022, and with advisers to lawmakers, 2021; interviews with a Lebanese–American security consultant, August 2020–October 2022, and a U.S. foreign–policy analyst in Washington, D.C., August 2021, March 2022, and October 2022.
- 8 “Pulling Lebanon out of the Pit,” Crisis Group Middle East & North Africa Report No. 214, June 8, 2020; “Lebanon’s economic crisis did not happen overnight. So how did it get to this point?” The Washington Post, Hannes Baumann, October 22, 2019.
- 9 See, [“Lebanon Sinking \(To the Top 3\),”](#) Global Practice for Macroeconomics, Trade & Investment Middle East and North Africa Region, World Bank Group, Spring 2021.
- 10 See, generally, [“Riots in Lebanon’s Tripoli are Harbingers of Collapse,”](#) Crisis Group Alert, February 2, 2021.
- 11 More than half of Lebanese have been below the poverty line since at least May 2020, according to World Bank assessors. In the past few years, Lebanese officials and U.N. representatives have told the author that at least 75 percent of the Lebanese and 90 percent of Syrians and Palestinians need help. Moreover, before the compounding crises manifested in 2019, the Lebanese government assessed that about 90 percent of households made 5,000,000 lira or less per month. If they were correct in their assessment, then any household once earning such an amount has seen the dollar–equivalent value of its income drop from \$3,300 before the October Revolt to less than \$330 for much of 2021 and less than \$250 per month in 2022.
- 12 Interviews with former Lebanese government officials, surveyors, and representatives of U.N. agencies, August 2020–October 2022.
- 13 See, generally, [“End Kafala: Justice for Migrant Domestic Workers in Lebanon,”](#) Campaign Portal, Amnesty International. For a recent, comprehensive report, please also see [“Their House is My Prison: Exploitation of Migrant Domestic Workers in Lebanon,”](#) Report, Amnesty International.
- 14 Interview with Beirut–based businessperson, October 2021.
- 15 Conversation with former Lebanese parliamentarian, October 2021.
- 16 Interviews and continuing conversations with money exchangers in Beirut, Beirut’s suburbs, Byblos, Chtaura, and other parts of Lebanon, August 2020–March 2021, October 2021, March 2022, and October 2022; conversations with members of three industrial or commercial syndicates, summer 2021 and summer 2022; and ongoing conversations with businessowners operating in Beirut, the Bekaa Valley, around Tripoli, and in the Metn region.
- 17 While the longer–range consequences of collapse and prospects of recovery were beyond this paper’s research scope, some political and economic analysts assess that the Lebanese could be losing their “remaining roles in the Middle East and global economy.” At least three former advisers to Lebanese premiers shared similar long–term concerns, with a Lebanese academic specializing in the state’s evolution noting that “not enough thinking has been done on how the Lebanese and others [connected to Lebanon] may suffer during these changes. A retired general, however, told the author that “the world has managed without the Baghdad of old and the Cairo of old, so it might soon manage without Beirut.”
- 18 Interviews with former adviser to Lebanese premiers and with three academics specializing in the Lebanese political system.
- 19 The author will analyze Hezbollah, and the predicaments it presents, in a separate forthcoming publication.
- 20 Interviews with four former advisers to Lebanese premiers and ministers of interior, January–July 2021.
- 21 With outgoing ministers ended up serving as caretakers – with limited administrative authority, and no mandate or legitimacy – for twice as long as they were in office. And never mind the months and years of constitutional crises, political paralysis, institutional vacuums, and more before then.
- 22 Hezbollah is a Shiite–majority transnational Islamist organization, which the United States and scores of states around the world have designated a terrorist entity. It is, or includes and operates as, a political party in Lebanon. The Free Patriotic Movement is a Christian–majority political party that emerged from a network, then current, led by Aoun – a former LAF commander – while he was in exile in the 1990s. Established formally in 2007, the Sunni–majority Future Movement emerged earlier as a political–business network and collection of enterprises created, acquired, or funded by former Lebanese premier Rafik Hariri. The Lebanese Forces is a Christian–majority political party that was once a militia, which first emerged as a coordinating committee of other Christian–majority nationalist or sectarian militias during the Lebanese civil war. The Amal Movement is a Shiite–majority faction whose leader, Berri, has served as party chief since 1980 and as Lebanese parliamentary speaker since 1992. The Progressive Socialist Party, a Druze–majority faction, is an instrument of the Druze Jumblatt family – a political dynasty that has exercised different degrees of influence in Lebanon for centuries, being particularly prominent since the mid–1800s.
- 23 Interview with adviser to the PSP, January 2021, and conversations with political adviser to the Lebanese Forces in September 2002.
- 24 Interviews with former adviser to the Future Movement, November 2020, January 2021, September 2022, and with an adviser to the Phalange Party, November 2020.
- 25 Interviews with adviser to the PSP, January 2021, and with former adviser to Lebanese premiers, January 2022.







- 26 Interviews with Lebanese academic at the American University of Beirut, December 2020; analysts connected to Christian-majority political party, December 2020; and a retired general in Lebanese security force, March 2021 and summer 2022.
- 27 Interviews with an adviser to the Lebanese presidency, two former advisers to Lebanese premiers, three former Lebanese MPs, and advisers and analysts connected to the largest six political parties by parliamentary representation.
- 28 [“A New Season of Unrest in Lebanon,”](#) Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, May 12, 2021.
- 29 See, for instance, “Lebanese face risks of social unrest, economic collapse in 2021,” The Daily Star, December 29, 2020, and [“Violence, suicide creep up as Lebanese population flounders,”](#) Al-Monitor, October 12, 2022.
- 30 Interviews with active and former officers in Lebanese security forces, a senior official in the ministry of justice, and two former political advisers to the offices of the Lebanese presidency and premiership, November 2020–January 2021; conversations with Lebanese security forces personnel in March 2021, October 2021, and March 2022; and conversations with businessowners, private security providers, or neighborhood watch groups summer 2022.
- 31 Interview with analyst in Beirut, who told the author that the organization has sometimes struggled to prevent theft and still clashes with clans and criminal organizations. A retired Lebanese general and former adviser to Lebanese premier told the author that different factions have faced similar challenges in their areas of influence, March 2021.
- 32 See, for instance, [“People are definitely not OK: Lebanon struck by self-immolation and other suicide attempts,”](#) The National, January 13, 2021.
- 33 See, for instance, [“In Lebanon, armed customers rob banks to get their own money,”](#) CNN, 14 September 2022.
- 34 Interviews and follow-up conversations with three retired Lebanese generals, January–July 2021. Conversations with civilian officials, soldiers, police, political party advisers, and citizens on districts such as Beirut, Metn, Zahle, Chouf, Aley, Kesrouan, Batroun, Tripoli, and Bsharre. See, also, [“\(In\) formal Hybrid Security in Lebanon,”](#) Lebanon Support/The Centre for Social Sciences Research & Action, Policy Brief, 2016, and [“Managing Lebanon’s Compounding Crises,”](#) Crisis Group Middle East & North Africa Report No. 228, October 28, 2021. Interviews with advisers to Lebanese political parties and connected analysts and journalists, October 2021.
- 35 [“Managing Lebanon’s Compounding Crises,”](#) Crisis Group Middle East & North Africa Report No. 228, October 28, 2021. the author also interviewed five former Lebanese MPs, three former advisers to Lebanese premiers, an intermediary for a large political party in Beirut, an intermediary in Tripoli, two intermediaries in the Bekaa Valley, and businesspeople from October 2020–February 2021.
- 36 “Mikati: I will protect myself if army can’t contain situation,” The Daily Star, January 29, 2021, and “Riots in Lebanon’s Tripoli are Harbingers of Collapse,” Crisis Group Alert, February 2, 2021.
- 37 [“Riots in Lebanon’s Tripoli are Harbingers of Collapse,”](#) Crisis Group Alert, February 2, 2021.
- 38 [“\(In\) formal Hybrid Security in Lebanon,”](#) Lebanon Support/The Centre for Social Sciences Research & Action, Policy Brief, 2016. the author also discussed different local developments at length with civilian officials, security officers, factional advisers, soldiers, police, and citizens.
- 39 “Private force no match for Hezbollah,” Los Angeles Times, May 12, 2008.
- 40 Interviews with three former Lebanese parliamentarians, January–March 2021, and conversation with founder of non-governmental organization helping citizens cope with psychosocial consequences of crises, March 2021.
- 41 Interview with Lebanese founder of non-governmental organization specializing in mental health issues, February 2020.
- 42 In one of Lebanon’s ministries, a high-level official had to call in a favor with the state-owned power company to obtain “an extra 30 minutes of power” for an interview.
- 43 Interviews with officials in four Lebanese ministries and two municipal councils, June 2021. Conversations with three academics specializing in local governance and state-building in the Levant, November 2020–March 2021.
- 44 Outside one ministry, two Lebanese soldiers were splitting a single cup of coffee. Offering it to the author, who was waiting on interlocutor, they asked what different researchers or experts might be saying about the collection of policies public institutions have maintained in Lebanon in the past – including, but not limited to, direct subsidies.
- 45 See, generally, [“Playing Politics: International Security Sector Assistance and the Lebanese Military’s Changing Role,”](#) Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, September 7, 2020.
- 46 Interviews with retired LAF general and Beirut-based security sector researcher, February 2021.
- 47 Interviews with generals in Lebanese security forces, November 2020, January 2021, and March 2021; conversations with Lebanese security sector researcher, June 2021, and Washington-based security analyst, July 2021.
- 48 Interviews with former adviser to Lebanese a premier, retired LAF general, Lebanese journalist connected to the Lebanese presidency and Shiite-majority political parties, and senior representatives of two U.N. agencies in Lebanon, October 2020–March 2021. After the October 2021 clashes between Christian and Shiite gunmen, who were affiliated with different Lebanese factions and the LAF itself, a Lebanese security analyst reiterated that the LAF and ISF had been trying to contain conflicts – including by engaging in limited escalations – if and as they failed to prevent them.
- 49 During previous protests, for instance, a Lebanese defense minister called officers in security forces to pressure them into cracking down on peaceful protesters in Beirut and its environs. Interview with Lebanese security consultant, January 2021; conversations with officials, advisers, and analysts connected to the Lebanese presidency, September 2020.
- 50 [“Managing Lebanon’s Compounding Crises,”](#) Crisis Group Middle East & North Africa Report No. 228, October 28, 2021.
- 51 Conversations with representatives of U.N. agencies in Lebanon, February–April 2021, interviews with representatives of Lebanese non-governmental organizations, August 2020–August 2021, and conversations with Lebanese citizens August–September 2020.
- 52 Interviews with retired LAF general, March 2021, and with Beirut-based security sector researcher, June 2021.
- 53 Interviews with retired LAF general, March 2021, and with general in Lebanese security force, November 2020.





- 54 “Army’s biggest threat: the collapsing Lebanese currency,” The Daily Star, March 19, 2021, and “Riots in Lebanon’s Tripoli are Harbingers of Collapse,” Crisis Group Alert, February 2, 2021..
- 55 [“Lebanese army ‘risks disintegrating’ without cash aid, diplomats worry,”](#) The National, September 22, 2021; interviews with security forces personnel moonlighting for private security providers, including those contracted to protect businesses in the hospitality and entertainment sector; and with a retired Lebanese officer who has spent the past few years working in the non-governmental organizations, summer 2022.
- 56 Interview with LAF officer, September 2022.
- 57 Hezbollah still pays some of its fighters and others in dollars, although it maintained tiered and parallel compensation systems in its organization, institutions, associations, and media even before these crises.
- 58 Conversation with Lebanese academic studying LAF desertions, leave, informal arrangements, and side jobs, November 2022.
- 59 Despite decades of discussion, the ISF continues to operate most of Lebanon’s prisons (about two-dozen, counting different holding facilities). Officers focusing on what they describe as the “Islamist terrorist problem” describe Lebanese prisons as “under control, with the real threats cleaned up.” Officials and officers with more comprehensive responsibilities – including terrorism and radicalization, which they have acknowledged as concerns – have repeatedly described the prison system to the author as a “a ticking time bomb.”
- 60 Conversation with retired Lebanese officer and conversation with Lebanese academic, November 2022.
- 61 Conversations with three Lebanese generals, October 2020–August 2021, and two former advisers to the offices of the Lebanese presidency and premiership, December 2020.
- 62 [“Lebanon’s collapse piles strain on army, security forces,”](#) Reuters, March 9, 2021.
- 63 [“Lebanon’s interior minister says security forces reached ‘rock bottom’: local media,”](#) Reuters, March 10, 2021; [“Fahmi Sounds Alarm on Crisis: Security Forces Unable to Perform 90% of Tasks,”](#) Naharnet, March 12, 2021.
- 64 [“Lebanon’s army needs \\$100 million immediately for soldiers’ basic needs, general says,”](#) CNBC, July 12, 2021.
- 65 [“Lebanese army ‘risks disintegrating’ without cash aid, diplomats worry,”](#) The National, September 22, 2021.
- 66 Interviews with active and retired generals in three Lebanese security forces, August 2020–August 2021; conversations with soldiers and police in Beirut, Mount Lebanon, Bekaa Valley, and North Lebanon, October 2020–August 2021.
- 67 Interviews with retired LAF general, February 2021, and with general in Lebanese security force, November 2020.
- 68 [“Lebanese army ‘risks disintegrating’ without cash aid, diplomats worry,”](#) The National, September 22, 2021; conversation with Lebanese academic studying LAF desertions, leave, informal arrangements, and side jobs, November 2022.
- 69 LAF, ISF, and General Security have been dealing with undeclared desertions – or different forms of leave, flexible arrangements, non-deployment, and more – in different parts of Lebanon. Interviews with retired LAF general, retired general in Lebanese security force, and Lebanese security analyst, October 2021, March 2022, and October 2022.
- 70 Interview with political adviser relaying concerns of LAF command and mid-level officers, October 2021; interview with retired LAF general, September 2021.
- 71 Interviews with retired LAF general, retired general in Lebanese security force, and Lebanese security analyst, October 2021, March 2022, and October 2022.
- 72 Interview with retired Lebanese general, March 2021.
- 73 Conversations with a former political and economic adviser to a Lebanese premier, December 2020; an adviser to the Lebanese presidency, November 2020; a political analyst in a working group close to the Lebanese presidency, November 2020; and advisers and analysts connected to the largest six Lebanese political parties, judging by parliamentary representation.
- 74 Interviews with general in the Lebanese security force and with advisers and analysts connected to the six largest political parties by parliamentary representation, October 2020–February 2021.
- 75 Interviews with retired LAF general, July 2021, and retired general in a Lebanese security force, March 2021.
- 76 For comprehensive coverage, please refer to the following detailed report: [“The Killing of Omar Tayba: A Visual Investigation of a Protester’s Death in Tripoli,”](#) The Public Source, February 19, 2021.
- 77 [“Riots in Lebanon’s Tripoli are Harbingers of Collapse,”](#) Crisis Group Alert, February 2, 2021.
- 78 [“Military prosecutor brings terrorism charges against Tripoli protesters,”](#) L’Orient Today, February 22, 2021. [“The US military assistance program to the Lebanese Armed Forces must endure,”](#) MENASource, the Atlantic Council, 30 April 2020.
- 79 [“Lebanon says nine ISIS-linked suspects killed in hunt for ‘terrorists’,”](#) Al Arabiya, September 27, 2020.
- 80 Interviews and conversations with intermediaries in Tripoli, Beirut, and central Bekaa Valley, August 2020–October 2021. See also, [“Old Demons in Lebanon: The Forgotten Lessons of Bab-Tebbaneh/Jabal Mohsen,”](#) Crisis Group Middle East & North Africa Briefing No. 29, October 14, 2010.
- 81 Interviews with two former Lebanese MPs from north Lebanon, Lebanese–American security consultant, and Lebanese political analyst, October 2020–February 2021.
- 82 Lebanese security forces and factions have implemented many significant security initiatives or campaigns in and around Tripoli over the years. These plans reflect a convergence of state and factional interests since the Syrian civil war began, plus the personal and political cover provided by leaders – for instance, Sunni ministers – to “essentially police their own.” Interview with general in Lebanese security force once involved in intelligence and counterterrorism work, March 2021. A Lebanese security analyst concurred with this assessment during an interview in June 2022.







- 85 Interviews with a former Lebanese lawmaker, an advisor to a reformist party, and a political intermediary, March 2021; conversations with a Beirut-based security-sector researcher January 2021–April 2021; interview with Lebanese–American security consultant, October 2021.
- 84 Interviews with a former Lebanese lawmaker, an adviser to a reformist party, and a political intermediary, March 2021; conversations with a Beirut-based security-sector researcher January 2021–April 2021; interview with Lebanese–American security consultant, October 2021. See, also, “[Arsal in the Crosshairs: The Predicament of a Small Lebanese Border Town](#),” Crisis Group Middle East & North Africa Briefing No. 46, February 23, 2016 and “[New Crisis, Old Demons in Lebanon: The Forgotten Lessons of Bab-Tebbaneh/Jabal Mohsen](#),” Crisis Group Middle East & North Africa Briefing No. 29, October 14, 2020.
- 85 Interview with retired ISF general, March 2021. Other advisers, analysts, and personnel working in the security and justice systems shared similar assessments.
- 86 Interview with Lebanese academic at the American University of Beirut, December 2020.
- 87 Interviews and conversations with retired generals in Lebanese security forces, August 2020–November 2021, March 2022, July 2022, October 2022.
- 88 Interviews and conversations with retired generals in Lebanese security forces and Lebanese security analyst, August 2020–November 2021, March 2022, July 2022, October 2022.
- 89 Interview with retired general in security force, March 2021.
- 90 “[Lebanon army arrests 18 Lebanese, Syrians linked to Islamic State: statement](#),” Reuters, February 1, 2021.
- 91 Phone interview with Beirut-based security sector researcher, February 2021.
- 92 Interview with Lebanese security consultant, March 2021.
- 93 Interview with advisor to Lebanese political party, 2021.
- 94 Active and former advisers to Lebanese presidents, Lebanese premiers, the Future Movement, Lebanese Forces, Free Patriotic Movement, PSP, and Amal Movement shared similar assessments in 2020, 2021, and 2022.
- 95 Interviews with former LAF officer, September 2022.
- 96 Interviews with Lebanese political scientist, November–December 2020; conversation with Beirut-based analyst, December 2020.
- 97 “[Tensions Between Two Clans in Baalbek Persist after Retaliation](#),” Ahsarq Al Awsat, October 8, 2020. See [past coverage](#), with differing degrees of reliability and sensationalism, for general context.
- 98 “[Lebanon economic crisis: Hashish farmers tap into wellness industry](#),” Middle East Eye, November 22, 2020.
- 99 Interview with two retired generals in Lebanese security forces, February–March 2021. For more context, including on how morale and discipline may suffer in such areas in the current context, please see “[Managing Lebanon’s Compounding Crises](#),” Crisis Group Middle East & North Africa Report No. 228, October 28, 2021.
- 100 “Blocage de routes : l’armée n’intervient pas en dépit de l’appel de Baabda,” L’Orient-Le Jour, March 10, 2020.
- 101 Interviews with retired ISF general, April 2021, and with Lebanese businessowners, July 2021.
- 102 Interviews with business owners in the central Bekaa Valley, March 2021, October 2021, and March 2022.
- 103 “[Riots in Lebanon’s Tripoli are Harbingers of Collapse](#),” Crisis Group Alert, February 2, 2021.
- 104 “[Revisiting Vulnerability in a Slum of Beirut: when Citizenship Disempowers](#),” July 2015, Civil Society Knowledge Centre.
- 105 Interview with Lebanese political-security analyst, February 2021.
- 106 Involved factions had different political, administrative, and social connections to the capital, the Chouf and Aley districts, the central Bekaa Valley, and southern Lebanon.
- 107 “[In Khaldeh, a ‘gate to four places,’ the Arabs stake out their turf](#),” L’Orient Today, 6 May 2022.
- 108 “[Two dead in clashes south of Lebanese capital](#),” Reuters, August 27, 2020; “[Deadly sectarian clashes near Beirut between Hezbollah supporters, local clan](#),” Al Arabiya, August 27, 2020. The author spoke with a Lebanese security consultant regarding these clashes in August–October 2020 and then again in August 2021.
- 109 Interview with a veteran Lebanese journalist with close ties to Lebanese presidency, military, and Christian-majority and Shiite-majority political parties, November 2020. Conversations with Lebanese security analyst in August 2020, August 2021, and October 2021. Although they each differed in their degrees of familiarity and details, advisers to different Lebanese political parties agreed with the overall picture painted by the journalist. At least two state security forces were aware of tensions before armed clashes but were unable or unwilling to intervene to prevent a conflict.
- 110 For a detailed description, also refer to “[Managing Lebanon’s Compounding Crises](#),” Crisis Group Middle East & North Africa Report No. 228, October 28, 2021.
- 111 Interviews with Lebanese–American security consultant, October 2020, and with veteran Lebanese journalist with close ties to Lebanese presidency, military, and Christian-majority and Shiite-majority political parties, November 2020.
- 112 Interviews with a Lebanese–American security consultant in October 2020 and March 2021; a veteran Lebanese journalist in November 2020; and political intermediaries connected to involved factions, October 2021.
- 113 Interview with academic at the American University of Beirut, November 2020. The author also had conversations with a Lebanese political analyst, February 2021, and Lebanese–American security consultant, March 2021.
- 114 “[‘Boiling again’: Lebanon’s old Christian rivalries rear up amid crisis](#),” Reuters, September 17, 2020.





- 115 Sons of a billionaire father, the Hariri brothers – Saad, a former premier and head of the Future Movement, and Bahaa, a businessman with operations in and ties to Jordan, Turkey, and beyond – have disagreed politically and otherwise feuded for primacy at times. Despite funding different initiatives, including media enterprises, so-called reformist groups, and more traditional networks of sponsored protesters and others, Bahaa has usually not been willing and able to challenge his brother in overt and sustained campaigns for control.
- 116 [“Beirut clash between rival clans leaves one dead,”](#) The National, September 8, 2020.
- 117 Interviews with retired general in Lebanese security force, March 2021; a Lebanese academic, a Beirut political intermediary, and a Bekaa Valley businessperson, December 2020; and former adviser to a Lebanese premier, February 2021 and May 2021.
- 118 Interview with Lebanese security consultant, March 2021. The author also had conversations with advisers and analysts connected to three Lebanese political parties about whether party partisans or intermediaries were ordering or encouraging blockades; with a Lebanese security consultant on whether the LAF and ISF were refraining the clearing the roads initially; and with soldiers and police around Beirut, regarding their impressions of institutional policies and partisan behavior.
- 119 Lebanese factions traded accusations and denied, or professed ignorance regarding, these protests. A Lebanese security source and an analyst connected to one of the parties separately shared with Crisis Group their belief that some party partisans did mobilize in this way. Parties also deconflicted during those days, which suggests that they were engaging in some activity to begin with.
- 120 Interviews with Lebanese security consultant, March 2021.
- 121 Phone interviews with a security analyst and with a Beirut political intermediary connected to the Future Movement, March 2021.
- 122 Phone interview with a Lebanese political analyst, March 2021.
- 123 Phone interview with Lebanese political analyst, March 2021.
- 124 Interview with Lebanese political analyst, March 2021.
- 125 “Un cadre du mouvement Amal blessé dans des heurts à Aïcha Bakkar,” L’Orient-Le Jour, 17 March 2021.
- 126 Estimates vary, and results and processes are highly politicized. Lebanese authorities and U.N. agencies essentially froze the registration of Syrians as refugees in 2015. At the time, about a million Syrians had registered. See [“Protection,”](#) UNHCR Lebanon. Hundreds of thousands of Syrians live in Lebanon, with different formal and informal statuses; others work seasonal jobs or commute in and out of Lebanon for shorter stints to work in different sectors. Interviews with senior representatives, program managers, and analysts affiliated with relevant U.N. agencies in December 2020–February 2021; conversation with U.N. program manager, August 2021. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians live in Lebanon, where the state and international agencies classify them as refugees regardless of their places of birth. Interview with a senior representative of a U.N. agency in Lebanon, November 2020.
- 127 Interview with senior representative of U.N. agency in Lebanon, November 2020.
- 128 Phone interview with Beirut-based journalist who covered the incident and subsequent tensions between different Lebanese and Syrians, January 2021; interviews with senior representatives, program managers, and analysts affiliated with relevant U.N. agencies in December 2020–February 2021.
- 129 [“Three months after the Bsharre incident, over 300 Syrian families are still paying for the crime of one person,”](#) Syria Direct, 23 February 2021.
- 130 Phone interview with Beirut-based journalist who has reported on the incidents and on different tensions or clashes between Lebanese and Syrians, January 2021; see, also, [“Managing Lebanon’s Compounding Crises,”](#) Crisis Group Middle East & North Africa Report No. 228, October 28, 2021, citing a journalist who covered the incident and aftermath.
- 131 [“Hundreds of Syrian refugees flee Lebanon camp as tents torched,”](#) NBC News, 27 December 2020.
- 132 [“Lebanese scuffle with Syrians voting abroad in support of Assad,”](#) Reuters, May 20, 2021.
- 133 Interviews with senior representatives of two U.N. agencies in Lebanon, November 2020 and January 2021; [“\(In\)formal Hybrid Security in Lebanon,”](#) Lebanon Support/The Centre for Social Sciences Research & Action, Policy Brief, 2016.
- 134 Interview with leader of Lebanese non-governmental organization that operates in more than 20 formal camps and other settlements, while navigating formal rules and informal practices of at least six Lebanese ministries, different overlapping committees, donor states, and international agencies, November 2020 and July 2021; conversations with advisers and analysts connected to four large Lebanese political parties, August 2020–August 2021; conversations with two directors of non-governmental organizations examining human rights in Lebanon, June 2021.
- 135 Interviews with senior representatives of two U.N. agencies in Lebanon, November 2020 and January 2021; [“\(In\)formal Hybrid Security in Lebanon,”](#) Lebanon Support/The Centre for Social Sciences Research & Action, Policy Brief, 2016; [“Zahle and Bar Elias: Municipality-Led Evictions in Central Bekaa,”](#) Conflict Analysis Report, UNDP, September 2018.
- 136 [“Zahle and Bar Elias: Municipality-Led Evictions in Central Bekaa,”](#) Conflict Analysis Report, UNDP, September 2018.
- 137 Interview with U.N. program manager. See, also, [“Managing Lebanon’s Compounding Crises,”](#) Crisis Group Middle East & North Africa Report No. 228, October 28, 2021.
- 138 Interviews with senior representatives of two U.N. agencies in Lebanon, November 2020, January 2021, July 2021, and August 2021. They assessed that conflict risks are high in parts of the central Bekaa and northern Lebanon and warned about tensions in and around refugee camps for Syrians and Palestinians.
- 139 Interviews with retired Lebanese general, March 2021; conversations for more context with Lebanese–American security consultant, July–August 2021.
- 140 [“Riots in Lebanon’s Tripoli are Harbingers of Collapse,”](#) Crisis Group Alert, February 2, 2021.
- 141 [“Protesters and army clash in Lebanon after Hariri announces resignation,”](#) The National, July 15, 2021.
- 142 Interview with Lebanese security analyst, July 2021; conversation with retired general in Lebanese security force, September 2021.







- 143 The author reviewed videos of these clashes, in addition to interviewing and speaking with security analysts and human rights advocates as per the endnotes below.
- 144 Interview with activist, who conceded the clashes were more complex. The author also had conversations with Lebanese and non-Lebanese security analysts monitoring police use of force in Lebanon and elsewhere, January 2021–October 2021.
- 145 Interview with Lebanese security analyst, July 2021; conversations with security analyst monitoring police use of force in Lebanon and elsewhere, July–August 2021.
- 146 Author interviews, conversations, and review of posted and shared videos..
- 147 Interviews with three Lebanese analysts, including a Beirut-based security analyst and a political analyst living abroad, August 2021.
- 148 [“At least 20 killed and 79 injured in fuel tank explosion in Lebanon,”](#) The Guardian, August 15, 2021.
- 149 Interviews with three retired Lebanese generals, different advisers to four Lebanese parties, reformists, non-governmental sector practitioners, and diplomats, August 2020–November 2021. The author also had conversations with scores of Lebanese lawmakers, officials, officers, analysts, activists, and others.
- 150 Lebanese authorities and others have offered different accounts of the triggers, escalation, and sequence of clashes. Residents of Ain al-Rummaneh, including organizers and members of the Lebanese Forces and other factions, had prepared themselves for possible clashes. Residents, factional partisans, and/or soldiers may have shot people. A pistol-wielding man, rooftop snipers, and back-alley shooters were all engaged in the clashes. One LAF soldier shot at partisans of Hezbollah and the Amal Movement in the street. Other LAF soldiers shot and killed armed partisans who were taking aim at Ain al-Rummaneh with assault rifles and grenade launchers. Initially believing they were fighting factional rivals, gunmen then exclaimed that the LAF – not another party – was engaging them in the firefight. In other interviews, officers, advisers, and political analysts have disagreed – citing different information, relaying different stories – the LAF itself had decided to prevent or crack down on factional clashes or provocations.
- 151 Interviews with Lebanese sources, in security forces and political parties, October 2021.
- 152 Interviews with retired LAF general, advisers to four political parties, and area residents or people originally from the neighborhoods, October 2021.
- 153 Interviews with sources close to Lebanese security forces and the Lebanese Forces, October 2021 and March 2022.
- 154 Interview with adviser to Lebanese political party in cabinet, October 2021.
- 155 Please see endnotes 128 and 129, above, and 180, below.
- 156 Interview with general in a Lebanese security force, November 2020; conversations with retired LAF general, April 2021. Moreover, while identifying the state’s gradual decay as the primary problem in Lebanon, a former political adviser to a Lebanese premier emphasized that Lebanese leaders – and, above all, Hezbollah – would work to prevent positive peace in the long term.
- 157 “Dangerous Liaisons: How Finance and Politics Are Inextricably Linked in Lebanon,” [Part I](#) and [Part II](#), L’Orient Today, January 15, 2021.
- 158 Conversations with U.S. officials, diplomats, and analysts, summer 2021. The specific quote is from a senior U.S. official.
- 159 Interviews with former U.S. diplomat, January 2021.
- 160 Conversations with active and former U.S. officials, two former U.S. diplomats, senior representatives of two U.N. agencies in Lebanon, and European diplomats based in Beirut, and three Lebanese-origin analysts assisting in different policy responses, October 2020–March 2021.
- 161 Interviews with officials in U.S. government, July 2021; conversations with former U.S. diplomats, January–June 2021, Lebanese-origin analysts, August 2020–August 2021, and European diplomats and staff, March 2021–August 2021.
- 162 Interview with a former adviser to two Lebanese premiers, April 2021.
- 163 Interview with a retired corporate executive who has worked extensively with American and European development agencies and Lebanese ministries on reconstruction, rehabilitation, and other projects since the mid-1990s, July 2022.
- 164 Interviews with two former U.S. diplomats, January–February 2021.
- 165 Interviews with retired U.S. diplomat and Lebanese-origin analysts studying U.S. policy toward Lebanon, August 2021.
- 166 Interviews with retired U.S. diplomat, January 2021, and with U.S. diplomat, February 2021; conversations for context during ongoing policy deliberations, U.S. officials, diplomats, advisers to lawmakers, and analysts, August 2020–November 2021.
- 167 See [“Six Things Biden Must Consider in Lebanon,”](#) The Hill, March 24, 2021.
- 168 See, for instance, [“Lebanese submarine finds 10 bodies on sunken migrant ship,”](#) Associated Press, August 26, 2022.
- 169 Interviews and conversations with American officials and diplomats, European diplomats and analysts, and Arab analysts familiar with state policies, August 2020–September 2021, December 2021–March 2022, and October 2022.
- 170 See, for instance, [“U.S. Security Cooperation With Lebanon,”](#) Fact Sheet, U.S. State Department Bureau of Political–Military Affairs, May 21, 2021.
- 171 Conversations with U.S. Department of State officials, congressional staffers, former political appointees, and retired ambassadors, July 2020–September 2022.
- 172 [Preserving the Lebanese Armed Forces Amid State Decline,](#) The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, June 9, 2021.
- 173 Conversations with advisers to lawmakers, political party advisers in Lebanon, and retired LAF officers, 2021.





- 174 The Biden administration may provide up to \$25 million worth of commodities and services from the inventory and resources of any U.S. government agency and as much as \$22 million to provide immediate assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces. See “Memorandum on the Delegation of Authorities Under Sections 552(c)(2) and 506(a)(1) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961,” The White House, Briefing Room, Presidential Actions, September 7, 2021. They may, but are not compelled to, provide any or all authorized assistance. See [“Biden clears \\$47 million for Lebanese forces, but that doesn’t mean they’ll receive it,”](#) Defense News, September 10, 2021.
- 175 [“US boosts support to Lebanese army as Beirut violence overshadows diplomat’s visit,”](#) The National, October 14, 2021.
- 176 While the LAF can’t abandon domestic security and indeed must maintain it as a part of its core mandate for the foreseeable future, it can’t continue to be this frequently, constantly, and intensely involved in policing public spaces, containing conflicts, and even taking on broader service roles in the long run.
- 177 To help the LAF, states must also help the ISF. It is, and must be, primarily responsible for policing and other domestic security roles. The ISF has cooperated with the American and French executive departments since the mid-2000s, though never with the substantive scope or the scale of LAF partnerships with allies, partners, and friends of Lebanon in the world. In and since the mid-2010s, the ISF lost out on a crucial assistance package due to the imprudent politics of Lebanese leaders – including a foreign minister purporting to manage Lebanese relations with others in the world. See, for instance, [“Boundaries of taste crash down when manners and respect are lacking,”](#) The National, October 26, 2014; [“Saudi Arabia halts \\$3 billion package to Lebanese army, security aid,”](#) Reuters, February 19, 2016; and [“Why is Hariri Back in Lebanon?,”](#) Al-Monitor, March 16, 2016.
- 178 Municipal police, for example, are different and must be treated separately from the ISF; the former are local police, while the latter are nationwide police and gendarme with offices, presence posts, and patrols in and around different cities, towns, villages, critical infrastructure, backroads, and more. Interview with retired general in Lebanese security force, comparing the municipal police to other security forces, March 2021, and two Lebanese security consultants, generally considering different examples across Lebanon, July 2021.
- 179 “They need cash. Bottom line.” An outgoing diplomat and a Lebanese security analyst each used the exact turn of phrase in the summer of 2022. They need such money for salaries or stipends, and different operational improvements, regardless of relevant classifications and related authorizations, workarounds, offsets, and the like. Each form of indirect support is necessary and helpful. No form of indirect support is sufficient or optimal. And almost all forms of indirect support have significant transactional costs and hidden holistic consequences. In conversations with the author, LAF officers and Lebanese security analysts expressed different concerns regarding whether additional assistance would be a “substitute” for partnership rather than part of ongoing, longer-range cooperation in the security sector.
- 180 Please also note that the author is considering the nominal dollar amounts of pre-crisis assistance levels of FY2019 as the rough baseline, from which officials may consider any “additional” assistance, and is not recommending a specific amount, not addressing the all-in costs of such assistance, and not necessarily accounting for other monies that American allies and partners could perhaps provide under a U.S.-organized initiative for the LAF and ISF.
- 181 See, for instance, endnotes 149 and 150 (above).
- 182 Interview with Lebanese security analyst, August 2022; [“Qatar to support Lebanese soldiers’ salaries with \\$60 million pledge,”](#) Reuters, June 30, 2022.
- 183 They may also consider whether to amend, or broaden interpretation and implementation of, existing laws and programs to include advances and/or account for ancillary costs of Lebanese operations under partnership.
- 184 Although U.S. lawmakers and officials in the U.S. Departments of State and Defense may explore using discretionary funding, overseas contingency operations funding, and other pools of money, they are also having broader conversations regarding such funding classifications. As American leaders reconsider their approach for such funds, which successive U.S. Congresses have appropriated even when executive departments have not requested them just as executive departments have requested different funding that lawmakers have declined, those working to promote partnership between Americans and Lebanese will need to consider the appropriate mechanism to achieve the necessary substantive results.
- 185 Conversations with U.S. officials, August 2021–October 2022.
- 186 Interviews with general in a Lebanese security force and a former political-security adviser to a Lebanese premier, November 2020, March 2021, October 2021, and March 2022. Although U.S. officials and lawmakers must cooperate with Lebanese security forces, they must also adopt a political policy toward – and encourage other engagement with – the Lebanese to promote mutual interests in the long run.
- 187 They remain factionalized. Failing to coordinate effectively, they sometimes compete openly and even clash within and across units and services. Different security forces have clashed at critical infrastructure, including Rafik Hariri International Airport, Beirut Port, overland crossings, and main thoroughfares. Members of the same security forces have even clashed with each other while enforcing or skirting laws, regulations, and societal rule sets (such as when off-duty and on-duty State Security personnel fought at a gas station in 2021). At the airport, they have clashed with each other despite operating formally under an umbrella committee. At Beirut Port, which does not have a specialized security force or umbrella committee, at least six state security forces operate while somehow maintaining overlapping mandates and incomplete coverage of shared responsibilities. Hezbollah maintains parallel lines of control and influence, too. Lebanese security forces have also struggled to constrain large-scale smugglers, bust connected hoarders, or capture drug lords and other criminal bosses operating openly across the land despite warrants for their arrest. Other problems include the prison system, which security forces manage improperly due to the usual combination of political problems and technical limitations. Beyond that, Lebanese security forces remain improperly involved in other spheres. For instance, the LAF maintains military tribunals whose judges – not necessarily holders of law degrees, or otherwise trained in the practice of civil law – still preside over the adjudication of civilian cases and controversies. Different security forces, including General Security and ISF, maintain offices for the monitoring, censorship, and informal chilling of expression in different media. The author includes these details derived from interviews and conversations with scores of officials, officers, and stakeholders in Lebanon from August 2020 to October 2022.
- 188 See [“Managing Lebanon’s Compounding Crises,”](#) Crisis Group Middle East & North Africa Report No. 228, October 28, 2021.
- 189 Interviews with retired LAF general, general in Lebanese security force, advisers to four Lebanese political parties, and former advisers to the offices of the Lebanese presidency and premiership, September 2021; conversations with Lebanese academics, including two former government advisers, January 2021–October 2021.
- 190 See [“Managing Lebanon’s Compounding Crises,”](#) Crisis Group Middle East & North Africa Report No. 228, October 28, 2021.







- 191 See, for instance, [“Saving the Suffering Lebanese Healthcare Sector: Immediate Relief while Planning Reforms,”](#) Arab Reform Initiative, October 15, 2020; [“Lebanese hospitals at breaking point as everything runs out,”](#) AP, August 23, 2021; [“Amid Lebanon’s Economic Crisis, The Country’s Health Care System Is Ailing,”](#) NPR, February 9, 2020.
- 192 [“Education under Threat: Urgent Call for Reform to Address Lebanon’s Declining Education Outcomes and Build Forward Better,”](#) Press Release, The World Bank, June 21, 2021. The U.S. Agency for International Development and European counterparts, including in the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, and Germany, may do more in the education sector to assist children who, now in generations to come, may suffer from conditions bequeathed to them by their predecessors in this polity.
- 193 See, for instance, “Towards an Independent Judicial Branch in Lebanon?,” TIMEP, October 26, 2021. In [Part I](#), they provide an excellent overview and analysis of the civil judiciary. In [Part II](#), they do the same for the administrative judiciary.
- 194 They may also work to minimize the direct benefit to corrupt Lebanese, by releasing assistance in while taking care not to craft incentive structures that only reward leaders for doing what they need to do anyway. They can’t prevent Lebanese leaders and/or adversarial actors like Hezbollah from benefitting indirectly from stability, but they and others can do more to minimize some direct benefits, pilfering, redirection of revenues, and the like. Over time, officials may consider more creative proposals for positive incentives, restrictive measures, and even hybridized institutional initiatives – all integrated into a new political policy toward, and for, Lebanon.



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