

The Monthly

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- ♦ Wheat subsidies support the poor or the powerful?
- ♦ 62% of Saudis reported to be better-off
- ♦ Lebanon on fire: 2006 and 2007



63%

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The Disastrous Ride



A descendant of Mohammed Bin Shu'aib⁽¹⁾, having read the letter of Al-Saifa descendant, wished to clarify that A'arqa fortress was ruled by his grandfather Mohammed and not by Al-Saifa. He accused Al-Saifa of conspiring against Qurqumaz, the father of Fakhreddine II, adding that Mansour Assaf was responsible for killing his ancestor, Mohammed Shu'aib, the ruler of A'arqa.

Naturally, the descendant of Al-Shu'aib did not bother to mention the early history of A'arqa since the Bronze Age and long before the emergence of his family or their rivals and how his family acquired A'arqa.

Al-Shu'aib descendant says, and to his credit, that neither his ancestors nor Al-Saifa contributed to Trablous' (Tripoli) golden age; it was Judge Abi Taleb of Bani A'ammur, who was praised by Ibn Khaldoun for establishing "Madrasat al-'Ilm" (the school of science) and a library in 1069 A.D., before the crusaders took over the city.

Shu'aib hopes that a judge from "Ahlu al-Sunna" (the Sunni people) would be able someday to restore Trablous' glory.

Al-Shu'aib descendant recalls when Janbulad (Jumblat's ancestor) followed Youssef Saifa to Damascus: "The wise men of Damascus offered Al-Janbuladi 125,000 piastres. He accepted the offer and reconciled with Saifa". Janbulad said: "The soldiers of Damascus did not fight us but welcomed us peacefully"⁽²⁾.

The following are lessons that must be learned:

1- Alliances are not sacred: Jumblat family forged an alliance with the Tanukhs, who were close to the Persians, and with the Shehab family. Later on, Bashir ash-Shehabi and Bashir Jumblat had a feud with the Hamadeh family backing the Shehabs in destroying the Mukhtara castle (1824) and sending Jumblat to the guillotine.

2- Borders and identities are not timeless: The province of Trablous (or its jurisdiction) reached Latakia, sometimes old A'akkar and other times Kesrouan, depending on the circumstances. Moreover, the province of Damascus (or its jurisdiction) reaches Lebanon and its cities. So there is no harm in saying that Tartous was part of the province of Trablous or that Gibran Khalil Gibran was a "Syrian from Bsharri".

3- Confessions are not necessarily "religious" but "political": "When the Ottomans entered Lebanon, the Harfoushs, allies of the Sunni Hanash family, were ruling over the Beqa'a, the Christian Shehabs were controlling Wadi Haramoun and Wadi al-Taym, the Druze Ma'an were ruling over the Chouf and the Turkmen Assaf were protecting Kesrouan and A'akkar"⁽³⁾. It is said that the Shehabs (1697-1841) were either descendants of Bani Quraish, Kurds or Druze but what is sure is that they have succeeded the "Persian" Tanukhs and "converted" to Christianity.

4- History, in particular the history of Lebanon and this region, is replete with absurdities and fiction. Quoting Hamad Khaled as-Safadi and Kamal Salibi, Dr. Abdallah al-Mallah says:
"It is no longer possible to say that Fakhreddine I was the ruler of the Ma'an Emirate in 1516..."⁽⁴⁾
Then what about the story of Al-Shu'aib and Al-Saifa? Perhaps the whole thing was a fiction!

Those who do not see the relevance of these stories can just read the following: the "Shia'a" are imposing a siege on Riad as-Solh Square, the "Sunni" are blockading Qoreitem and the Protestant College and the "Druze" have quarantined Clemenceau and Trad Hospital. Furthermore, Kouchner is dancing the traditional Dabkeh in a "Shia'a" wedding and Bush reassuring "Sanioura's Cabinet", which is detained in the "Turkish Serail", where Sa'id Jumblat was once arrested for committing massacres against the Christians in 1860. Jumblat was asked by the British to say that Khorshid Pasha, the Ottoman High Commissioner, incited him to perpetrate the massacre, so they would hold an "international trial" against the Turks.

The Wahab family⁽⁵⁾, who are accused of killing Fouad Jumblat (1921), are visiting Franjeh family, the leaders of the Marada, (Aramaean, Syriac, Persians and Maronites) "in support of the Persian-Arabic front against the imperialist and Zionist front".

Under the slogan of "liberating Palestine", the Shia'a welcome the invasion of Iraq and "Ahlu al-Sunna" are asking for Bush's protection.

Having said that and after skimming through the results of a recent Information International poll, we should not be surprised that the Lebanese are prepared to hold a referendum on the identity of Lebanon, but reluctant to do the same on civil marriage, for example. Moreover, a significant percentage wishes that the Army takes temporary command of the country.

On a different note but still in the same context, why all this commotion on "Al-Ra'is al-'Atid", which figuratively means "the Prospective President" and literally means someone "ready to be ridden", according to Lisan Al-'Arab, the most important Arabic dictionary.

This is not the story of a president, but the story of a people's disastrous ride from the 16th century until today.

⁽¹⁾ Rulers of A'arqa and Trablous (1523-1528)

⁽²⁻³⁾ "Banu Saifa, the Rulers of Trablous: 1579-1640", Joseph Alian, Beirut 1987

⁽⁴⁾ "Fakhreddine al-Ma'ani I: A fact or a legend? - 1516", Abdallah Mallah, 2004

⁽⁵⁾ Wahab family in this text does not refer to the family of former Deputy W'am Wahab.

Jawad N. Adra

Opinion Poll

The majority of the Lebanese support holding a referendum on Lebanon's identity
62.7% favor a temporary military takeover

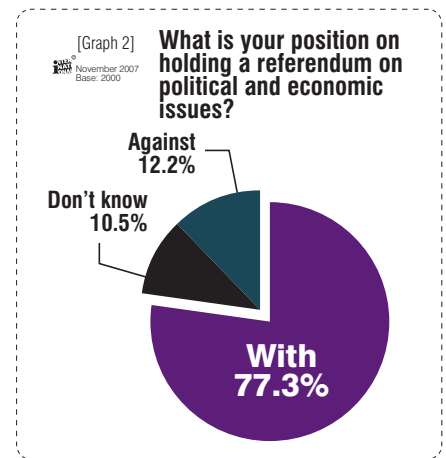
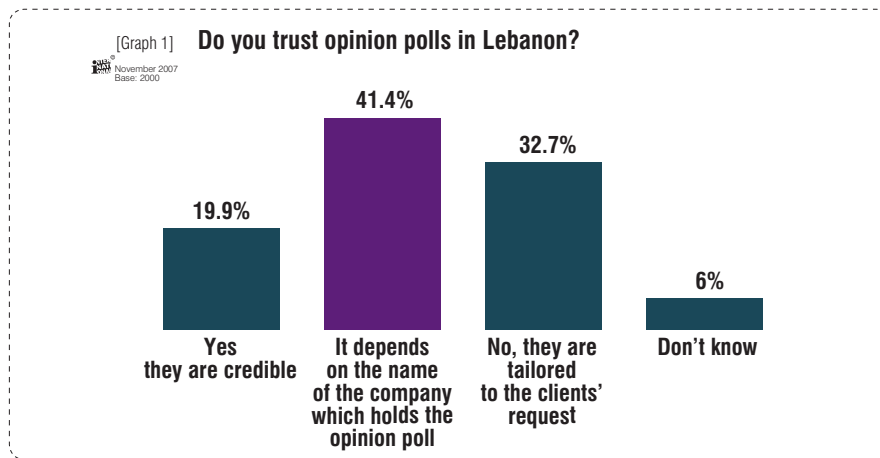
The Lebanese people are divided behind their zu'ama (leaders), who always disagree over national and critical matters in order to protect their status and interests. Recently, some politicians called for the need to hold a referendum on the presidential elections and other issues as a means to resolve the current political deadlock.

Unlike the Constitution in some other countries, the Lebanese Constitution does not include any article that stipulates the holding of referendums, knowing that the consecutive governments have decided not to conduct even a census to draw a demographic map of the Lebanese population.

Information International surveyed the Lebanese on holding referendums over critical matters.

Credibility of Opinion Polls

41.4% of respondents say their trust in the results of an opinion poll "depends on the name of the company which conducts" it. 32.7% say the polls "are tailored to the clients' request" compared to 19.9% who say "they are credible", while 6% "don't know" (Graph no.1).



Holding a Referendum

The overwhelming majority of respondents (77.3%) are with holding a referendum on political and economic issues, compared to 12.2% who are against it and 10.5% who "don't know" (Graph no.2).

However, respondents disagree over the issues that should be raised in referendums, as shown in Table no.1.

Distribution of respondents by national issues that could be raised in a referendum			
Table 1			
Should the following issue be raised in a referendum?	Yes	No	Don't know
Lebanon's identity	62.6%	32.1%	5.3%
Syrian-Lebanese diplomatic relations	71.8%	24%	4.2%
Peace with Israel	37.3%	55.4%	7.3%
Presidential elections by the people	67.7%	29.5%	2.8%
Hizbullah's arms	63%	32%	5%
International tribunal for Rafik al-Hariri's assassination	63.8%	29.4%	6.8%
Elimination of the political confessional system	73.5%	21.1%	5.4%
Optional civil marriage	51.2%	42.5%	6.3%
Naturalization of Palestinians in Lebanon	30.9%	63.1%	6%
Amendment of the Ta'if Accord	49.2%	39%	11.8%

Source: Information International – October 2007

Respondents' answers on holding a referendum on these issues are vague: their support of holding a referendum on a certain matter can imply their confidence that the majority of people will support this matter. On the other hand, their rejection of holding a referendum on a certain issue can highlight their belief that this issue is rejected by all the Lebanese and that it is unnecessary to survey the people about it (for example peace with Israel, naturalization of Palestinians and civil marriage). Respondents favor holding a referendum on Syrian-Lebanese diplomatic relations, Hizbullah's arms and Lebanon's identity. On the other hand, confessional divisions are apparent when it comes to holding a referendum on peace with Israel, presidential elections by the people and optional civil marriage. Moreover, 63% of respondents are against holding a referendum on the naturalization of Palestinians.

Regarding a referendum on peace with Israel, a high percentage of Maronite and Catholic respondents support it compared to a low percentage of Sunni, Shia'a, Druze and Orthodox respondents, as shown in Table no.2.

Distribution of respondents' answers on holding a referendum on peace with Israel by confession						Table 2
Holding a referendum on peace with Israel	Maronite	Orthodox	Catholic	Sunni	Shia'a	Druze
With	54.3%	38.6%	56.7%	24.8%	30.7%	34.2%
Against	35.5%	51.9%	29.8%	69.3%	66.8%	61.3%
Don't know	10.2%	9.5%	13.5%	5.9%	2.5%	4.5%

Source: Information International – October 2007

Concerning the holding of a referendum on presidential elections by the people, the overwhelming majority of Shia'a respondents support it, compared to a very low percentage of Druze, as shown in Table no.3.

Distribution of respondents' answers on holding a referendum on presidential elections by the people by confession						Table 3
Holding a referendum on presidential elections by the people	Maronite	Orthodox	Catholic	Sunni	Shia'a	Druze
With	56.8%	65.8%	52.9%	62.9%	93.1%	25.2%
Against	40.1%	29.1%	41.3%	34.7%	4.8%	73%
Don't know	3.1%	5.1%	5.8%	2.4%	2.1%	1.8%

Source: Information International – October 2007

When asked about civil marriage, a high percentage of Christians are with holding a referendum on this issue, compared to a low percentage of Muslims, as shown in Table no.4.

Distribution of respondents' answers on holding a referendum on civil marriage by confession						Table 4
Holding a referendum on civil marriage	Maronite	Orthodox	Catholic	Sunni	Shia'a	Druze
With	65.2%	61.4%	59.6%	33.3%	48.8%	49.5%
Against	25.5%	33.5%	33.7%	60.1%	46.4%	47.7%
Don't know	9.3%	5.1%	6.7%	6.6%	4.8%	2.8%

Source: Information International – October 2007

Hizbullah's Arms

59.4% of respondents say that Hizbullah's arms are "necessary to face Israel until the liberation of Sheba'a Farms and the detainees", compared to only 8.5% who call for the "immediate disarmament of Hizbullah by force". Table no.5 shows respondents' position on Hizbullah's arms.

Respondents' position on Hizbullah's arms				Table 5
Position on Hizbullah's arms	With	Against	Don't know	
Necessary to face Israel until the liberation of Sheba'a Farms and the detainees	59.4%	34.3%	6.3%	
Unnecessary after the Israeli withdrawal from the South	36.6%	54.1%	9.3%	
Reinforce the Shia'a at the expense of other confessions	36.5%	51.3%	12.2%	
Play into Syrian-Iranian agendas	42.7%	42.7%	14.6%	
Hizbullah should merge with the Lebanese Army through dialogue and agreement	62.2%	21.8%	16%	
Hizbullah should be disarmed by force	8.5%	82.9%	8.6%	

Source: Information International – October 2007

Confessional belonging is a major factor in respondents' answers. For example, the overwhelming majority of Shia'a respondents (91.6%) say that Hizbullah's arms are "necessary to face Israel until the liberation of Sheba'a Farms and the detainees", compared to 55.5% of Sunni, 42.8% of Maronites and 22.5% of Druze respondents.

On the other hand, 61.4% of Maronite respondents support merging Hizbullah with the Lebanese Army, compared to 57% of Orthodox respondents, 56.7% of Catholic respondents, 71.9% of Sunni, 78.4% of Druze and 49.1% of Shia'a. Table no.6 shows the distribution of respondents' answers on Hizbullah's arms by confession.

“When asked about civil marriage, a high percentage of Christians are with holding a referendum on this issue, compared to a low percentage of Muslims”

Distribution of respondents' answers on Hizbullah's arms by confession						Table 6
Hizbullah's arms are necessary to face Israel until the liberation of Sheba'a Farms and the detainees	Maronite	Orthodox	Catholic	Sunni	Shia'a	Druze
With	42.8%	53.8%	34.6%	55.5%	91.6%	22.5%
Against	48.6%	36.7%	56.7%	39.2%	6.7%	69.4%
Don't know	8.6%	9.5%	8.7%	5.3%	1.7%	8.1%
Hizbullah should merge with the Lebanese Army through dialogue and agreement	Maronite	Orthodox	Catholic	Sunni	Shia'a	Druze
With	61.4%	57%	56.7%	71.9%	49.1%	78.4%
Against	19.3%	20.9%	22.1%	19.3%	30.3%	13.5%
Don't know	19.3%	22.1%	21.2%	8.8%	20.6%	8.1%

Source: Information International – October 2007

The Legal Quorum of the Presidential Elections

Article 49 of the Lebanese Constitution stipulates: "...The President of the Republic shall be elected by secret ballot and by a two-thirds majority of the Chamber of Deputies. After a first ballot, an absolute majority shall be sufficient. The President's term is for six years..."

The legal quorum of the presidential elections is today one of the most controversial issues among politicians. The pro-government camp is arguing that if the two-thirds of deputies were not present in the first session, a second session is held with the half of deputies plus one. The opposition camp is saying that the two-thirds quorum is required in each presidential election session; if the President did not receive the two-thirds of votes in the first session, he wins if he receives the absolute majority of votes in the second session.

43% of respondents support the pro-government camp's argument, compared to 42.4% of respondents who support the other camp's. 14.6% "don't know" (Graph no.3).

The distribution of respondents' answers by confession shows that a majority of Shia'a, Orthodox and Maronite respondents support the opposition, while a majority of Sunni, Druze and Catholic respondents support the pro-government camp in this question.

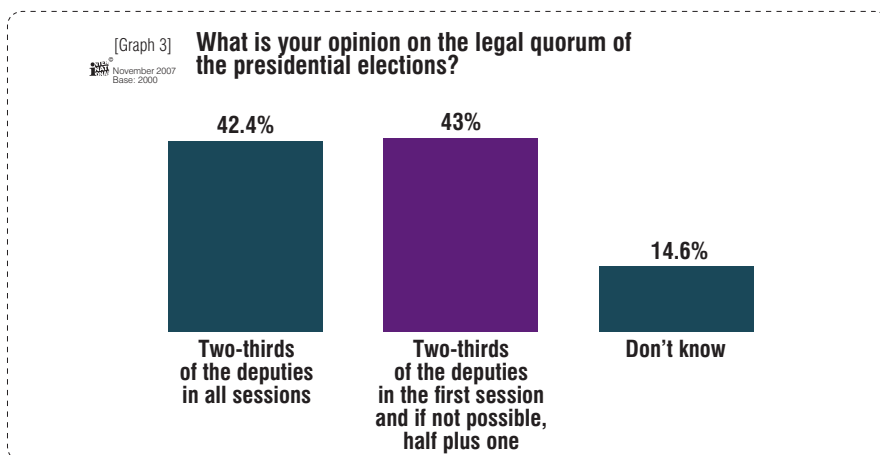


Table no.7 shows the distribution of respondents' answers on the legal quorum of the presidential elections by confession.

Distribution of respondents' answers on the legal quorum of the presidential elections by confession						Table 7
Confession/ Legal quorum	Maronite	Orthodox	Catholic	Sunni	Shia'a	Druze
Two-thirds of deputies in all sessions	46.1%	46.2%	26.9%	16%	72.7%	13.5%
Two-thirds of deputies in the first session and if not possible, then half plus one	36.8%	38.6%	48.1%	64.2%	21.5%	77.5%
Don't know	17.1%	15.2%	25%	19.8%	5.8%	9%

Source: Information International – October 2007

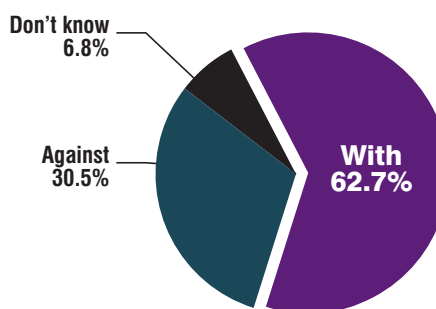
The Lebanese Army taking control of the country for an interim period

The majority of respondents (62.7%) support the Lebanese Army taking control of the country for an interim period until the election of a president and the formation of a new Cabinet are achieved. 30.5% of respondents are against this option and 6.8% say they “don't know” (Graph no.4).

The distribution of answers by confession shows that the overwhelming majority of Shia'a (85.4%) support this option, compared to 25.2% of Druze, as shown in Table no.8.

[Graph 4]
November 2007
Base: 2000

In your opinion, should the Lebanese Army take control of the country for a temporary period?



Distribution of respondents' answers on whether the Army should take control of the country for an interim period by confession							Table 8
Should the Lebanese Army take control of the country for an interim period?	Maronite	Orthodox	Catholic	Sunni	Shia'a	Druze	
Yes	60.5%	66.5%	43.3%	50.9%	85.4%	25.2%	
No	29.5%	27.8%	46.2%	41.9%	9.2%	71.2%	
Don't know	10%	5.7%	10.5%	7.2%	5.4%	3.6%	

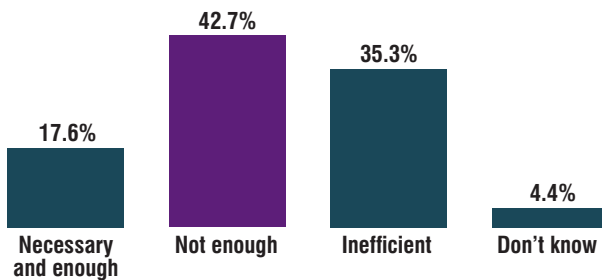
Source: Information International – October 2007

“The majority of respondents (62.7%) support the Lebanese Army taking control of the country for an interim period.”

Security Measures

The majority of respondents (78%) say that the security measures adopted by the Army and the Internal Security Forces are “not enough” (42.7%) and “inefficient” (35.3%), compared to 17.6% of respondents who say they are “necessary and enough”. 4.4% say they “don’t know” (Graph no.5).

[Graph 5] **How do you describe security measures in Lebanon?**
November 2007
Base: 2000



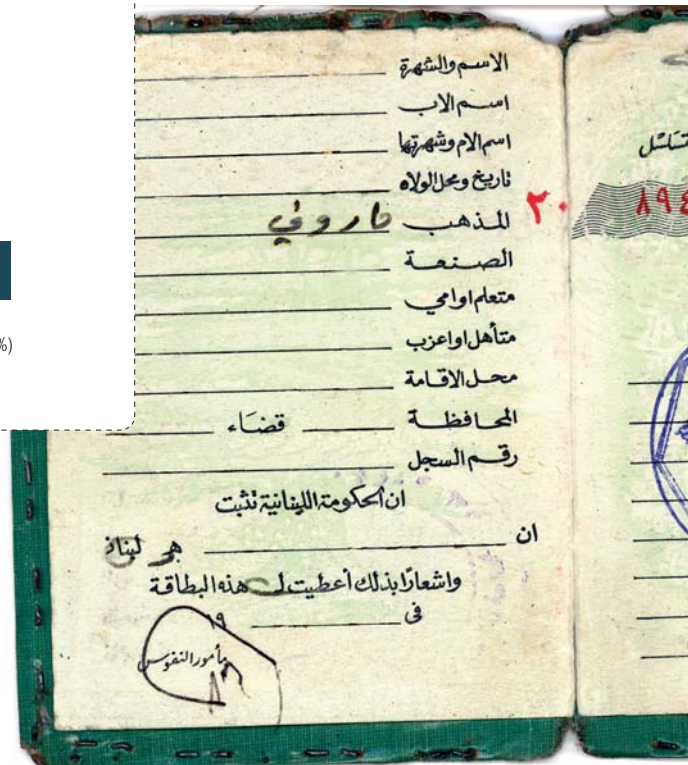
“The majority of respondents (78%) say that the security measures adopted by the Army and the Internal Security Forces are “not enough””

When asked about the best means to protect politicians from assassinations, 40.8% of respondents say politicians should reside “outside the country”, 28.9% say they should reside in a “hotel or compound”, 15.2% say security zones should be formed around their residences, while 3.6% think politicians should resign and emigrate. 11.5% gave other answers (Graph no.6).

[Graph 6] **In your opinion, what are the best means to protect politicians from assassinations?**
November 2007
Base: 2000



“63% of respondents are against holding a referendum on the naturalization of Palestinians.”

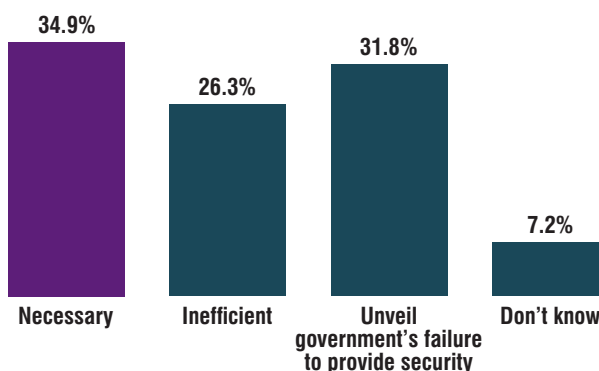


“The majority of respondents believe that “security islands” are areas where Hizbullah is strongly present.”

On the other hand, 34.9% of respondents believe that security zones surrounding the residences of political and military officials are “necessary”, compared to 31.8% of respondents who say those zones “unveil government’s failure to provide security”; 26.3% say they are “inefficient” and 7.2% say they “don’t know” (Graph no.7).

[Graph 7]
November 2007
Base: 2000

What is your opinion on security zones surrounding the residences of political and military officials?



“Security Islands”

Lebanon’s disputing camps are accusing each other of building “security islands”, where the government is forbidden to enter.

When asked about which areas they consider as “security islands”, 90.1% of respondents say the Palestinian camps, 67.8% say Beirut’s southern suburbs, 55.5% the areas located on the Lebanese-Syrian borders, 42.5% Ba’albek and Hermel, 31.7% Chouf and A’aley, 23.4% Bsharri and 21.9% Zgharta.

This means that apart from the Palestinian camps, the majority of respondents believe that “security islands” are areas where Hizbullah is strongly present. ●●



Description of the Sample

The opinion poll was conducted from October 22-28, 2007, on a sample of 2,000 Lebanese people distributed by Qada’a based on the electoral size and the confessional distribution, which was as follows: 22.6% Maronites, 7.9% Orthodox, 5.2% Catholics, 3.1% Armenian Catholics, 1.2% Christian minorities, 27.2% Sunni, 26.1% Shia’a, 5.6% Druze, 0.9% A’lawiyoun and 0.2% did not specify their confession.

Respondents were equally divided by gender. They were distributed among the different age categories and income levels.

The Saudis Polled

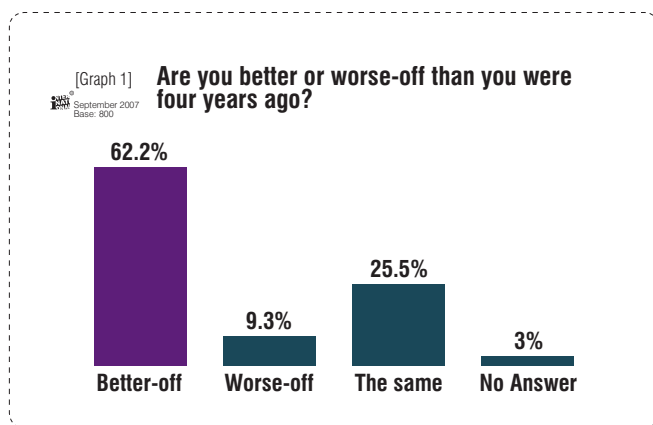
62.2% reported to be “better off”

Gender equality is an issue

Information International surveyed the Saudis on various issues.

Better or Worse Off?

62.2% of respondents say their financial situation today is better off than it was four years ago, compared to 9.3% who say it is worse. 25.5% say their situation remained the same and 3% did not answer. (Graph no.1)



When asked about the future, half of the respondents (50.1%) believe they will be better-off in four years, while 7.5% say they will be worse-off, and 20% say their situation will remain stable. 22.4% of respondents “don’t know” how their situation will be in four years.

Most Esteemed Personality

Saudi King Abdullah Bin Abdul-Aziz is the most esteemed personality among the respondents (25%). The remaining 75% is distributed among several figures, including: Yasser Arafat (4.3%), Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah (3%), Rafik al-Hariri (2.6%), Saddam Hussein (2.6%), Amr Khaled (2.6%), Bashar al-Assad (2.5%), George Qordahi (2.1%), Prince Al-Walid bin Talal (2%), Amr Moussa (1.8%) and Mohammed bin Rashed al-Maktoum (1.5%).

Educational System

The majority of respondents (46.1%) believe that Saudi Arabia’s educational system is “very good”. 30.8% say it is “good”, 11% describe it as “bad”, and 5.6% “very bad”. 6.5% “don’t know”.

This shows that 76.9% of respondents believe that the

educational system is “very good” or “good”, compared to 16.6% who say it is “very bad” or “bad”.

The distribution of answers by educational level shows that respondents with high educational level trust the Saudi system while those with lower levels do not. Table no.1 shows the distribution of answers by respondents’ educational level.

Distribution of answers by respondents’ educational level Table 1

Educational level/ Position on the Educational system	Elementary and below	Intermediate	Secondary/ Vocational	University/ Higher Studies
Very Good	20.7%	28%	49.4%	50.7%
Good	31%	40.2%	32.5%	25.9%
Bad	31%	15.9%	9.2%	9.6%
Very Bad	6.9%	4.9%	4.2%	8.1%
Don't know	10.4%	11%	4.7%	5.7%

Source: Information International – September 2007

Meanwhile, 58.9% of respondents believe that “the current educational system allows students to establish successful professions in today’s economic system”, while 25.6% say it doesn’t. 15.5% “don’t know”. Table no.2 shows that young respondents believe that “the current educational system allows students to find good job opportunities”.

Distribution of answers on the educational system and job opportunities by age category Table 2

Age category Does the current educational system allow students to find good job opportunities?	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 and above
Yes	63.6%	61.8%	58.6%	49.5%	55.6%	35.7%
No	25.8%	23.5%	25.8%	29%	24.4%	42.9%
Don't know	10.6%	14.7%	15.6%	21.5%	20%	21.4%

Source: Information International – September 2007

Moreover, the distribution of answers on whether “the current educational system allows students to establish successful professions in today’s economic system” by educational level shows that respondents with high educational levels are more optimistic about the system.

The distribution of answers on whether “the current educational system allows students to establish successful professions in today’s economic system” by educational level Table 3

Does the current educational system allow students to establish successful professions in today’s economic system?	Elementary and below	Intermediate	Secondary/ Vocational	University/ Higher Studies
Yes	31%	50%	62%	61.1%
No	34.5%	31.7%	22.6%	26.3%
Don't know	34.5%	18.3%	15.4%	12.6%

Source: Information International – September 2007

Equality between Men and Women

The majority of respondents (60.1%) believe in equality between men and women compared to 39.9% who don't (Graph no.2). However, out of the 60.1%, only 37% say equality is comprehensive, compared to 63% of respondents who say that equality is present at some levels, including: the social level (54.1%), the professional level (21.8%), the intellectual level (12.9%), the political level (7.6%) and the sexual level (4.3%).

The distribution of answers by gender shows that 73.2% of females believe in the existence of equality compared to 41.2% of males. However, only 31.1% of females believe equality is comprehensive, compared to 44.4% of males. 68.9% of females say there is equality at some levels.

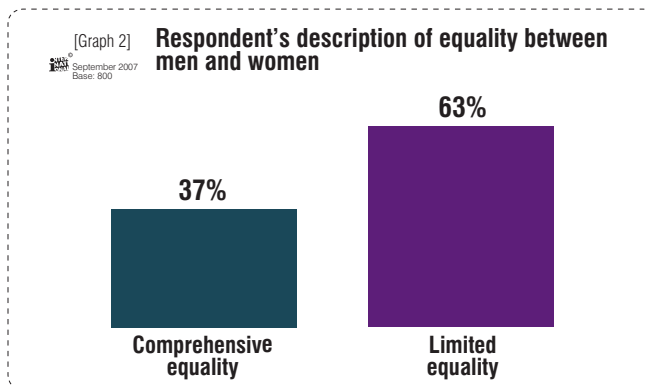
Meanwhile, the distribution of answers by age category shows that a low percentage of respondents aged 65 and above (35.7%) believe in equality compared to percentages ranging between 55.6% and 62.9% among respondents below 65 years-old.

Women and the Right to Work

The issue of working Saudi women is very controversial in Saudi Arabia. The opinion poll shows that the majority of respondents (75.7%) support the right for women to work outside the home. Out of the 75.7%, only 35.5% believe that women should work regardless of their situation and 40.2% say they should work only in case of financial necessity. 18.8% of respondents are “absolutely against” women working outside the home, while 5.5% “don't know”.

Position on working women depends on respondents' age and gender. 42.5% of females support working women compared to 29.7% of males. On the other hand, 41.6% of males support women working out of financial necessity compared to 38.6% of females. 22.5% of males are “absolutely against” women working outside the home compared to 14.2% of women. 6.2% of males and 4.7% of females “don't know”.

The distribution of answers by age category shows that only 14.3% of respondents who are 65 years-old and above are with women working regardless of their situation,



while the percentage ranges between 29.5% and 43% in other age categories.

Summary

- The majority of Saudis (62.2%) say that their financial situation today is better than it was four years ago
- Saudi King Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz is the most esteemed personality for 25% of respondents
- The majority of respondents (76.9%) trust the Saudi educational system and believe it allows students to find good job opportunities (58.9%). Trust increases with the increase of respondents' educational level
- 60.1% of respondents believe in equality between men and women
- 75.7% are with women working outside the home, 40.3% of whom say women should only work out of financial necessity
- Respondents who are 65 years-old and above show less support to working women than respondents in other age categories.

Description of the Sample

The opinion poll was conducted between September 20-28, 2007 on 800 respondents distributed in Saudi areas as follows:

Riyadh 53.4%, Jeddah 36.6%, Dammam 10%

The opinion poll was conducted on 589 Saudis (73.6%) and 211 non-Saudi Arabs (26.4%). 54.4% of respondents were males and 45.6% females.

Respondents were distributed by age category as follows:

18-24 years-old: 16.5%, 25-34 years-old: 34%, 35-44 years-old: 30.5%, 45-54 years-old: 11.6%, 55-64 years-old: 5.6%, 65 and above: 1.8%

The margin of error was ± 1.2

The Public Debt

Many Culprits and Few Beneficiaries

The Ministry of Finance issued in October the fiscal accounts of 1993-2006. What do figures say?

Revenues and Expenditures

The total revenues (budgetary and treasury) from 1993 to 2006 amounted to 68,415.6 billion LBP, while expenditures amounted to 122,294.6 billion LBP, indicating a deficit of 53,879 billion LBP or a rate of 44.06%. Revenues and expenditures from 1993 to 2006 are shown in Table no.1

Revenues and expenditures from 1993 to 2006															Table 1
	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total
Revenues	1,855	2,241	3,033	3,534	4,103.9	4,654.8	5,012.6	4,683.8	4,645.5	5,830.2	6,654.4	7,478.9	7,372.5	7,315.9	68,415.8
Expenditures	3,161.8	5,272.1	5,861.6	7,962.7	9,199.2	8,550.4	9,141.5	10,434	9,206.5	10,099.8	11,310.7	10,526.3	9,942.1	11,625.3	122,294.6
Deficit	-1,306.8	-3,031.1	-2,828.6	-4,428.7	-5,095.3	-3,895.6	-4,128.9	-5,750.2	-4,561	-4,269.6	-4,656.3	-3,047.4	-2,569.6	-4,309.4	-53,879
% of deficit	41.33%	57.49%	48.26%	55.62%	55.39%	45.56%	45.17%	55.11%	49.54%	42.27%	41.17%	28.95%	25.85%	37.07%	44.06%

Source: The Ministry of Finance – Fiscal Accounts 1993-2006

Public Debt

According to the Fiscal Accounts report, the public debt at the end of 2002 amounted to 5,400 billion LBP, equivalent to 3.6 billion USD based on the current exchange rate.

At the end of 2006, the public debt reached 39.5 billion USD, which is equivalent to 174% of the GDP, which means that the public debt witnessed a nominal increase becoming ten times higher than its value at the end of 1992.

However, these figures contain many errors. Officials who drafted the report should have mentioned that the public debt in 1992 amounted to 3.1 billion USD based on the USD average exchange rate (1 USD = 1,741 LBP). Debt service amounted to 40,201.7 billion LBP from 1997 to 2006 and 8,303 billion LBP from 1993 to 1996 (see Table no.2). Consequently, the total debt service would reach 48,504.7 billion LBP, which represents 79.7% of the public debt, amounting to 60,861.7 billion LBP.

This raises questions on the reason why the consecutive governments did not attempt to limit the increase of interests since 1993, knowing that Lebanon is the only country in the world where the public debt represents more than 220% of the GDP.

Accountability

In the late 1990s, the camp supporting President Emile Lahoud blamed Rafik Hariri's successive governments for the surge of the public debt. The pro-Hariri camp fought back pointing out at the high Army expenditures which it said was the major reason behind budget deficit and subsequently the rise of the public debt. In his book, "Rule and Responsibilities", Hariri highlighted figures of military expenditures at that time. The Military institution replied by saying that expenditures mainly went to salaries, compensations and donations, while arms and military equipment did not represent but a small part of the expenses. According to the Army, military expenditures represent 9-11% of the annual budget.

Other parties say that squandering of public money in reconstruction projects contributed largely to the increase in the public debt; but the current government replies that reconstruction costs did not exceed 7-8 billion USD and that revenues of these projects have covered these expenditures.

The current government instead puts the blame on Electricité du Liban (EDL), stating that an amount of 3.8 billion USD was transferred to this institution from 1993

to 2006 with interests reaching 7.5 billion USD, which means a total of 11.3 billion USD (or 28% of the public debt).

Another question is raised: Since huge sums of money were dedicated to the electricity sector, why are the Lebanese still facing long hours of rationing and power cuts?

Many observers argue that the same political leaders who agreed on taking bank loans with high interest rates are the main shareholders in Lebanon's banks, and hence the main beneficiaries of the debt surge.

The Banking Sector

Lebanese banks received 60% of the debt service (around 29,100 billion LBP). During 1993-2000, they were able to achieve profits worth 6,700 billion LBP. However, it is noteworthy that around 60% of bank deposits are controlled by around 2,000 depositors, who are the main beneficiaries of debt interests.

In the 2006 fiscal accounts report, the Sanioura government, and for the first time, declared that the public debt exceeded 40 billion USD, which contradicts previous reports and raises questions on their credibility.

Debt Service from 1993 to 2006 (Amounts in Billions of LBP)			Table 2
Year	Figures listed in the 2006 Fiscal Accounts report	Figures listed in the Public Budget of the relevant years (except in 2005 and 2006)	
1993	787.1	325	
1994	1,530.5	1,595	
1995	1,668.1	2,155	
1996	2,686.7	4,228	
1997	3,481.5	4,120	
1998	3,321.1	3,041	
1999	3,675.7	3,905	
2000	4,220.5	4,175	
2001	4,378.2	4,500	
2002	4,631.5	4,622	
2003	4,855.1	4,874	
2004	3,944.8	4,021	
2005	3,349.5	3,534	
2006	4,343.5	4,556	
Total	46,873.8	49,651	

Source:

Sanioura at the Ministry of Finance

Current Prime Minister Fouad Sanioura served more than 10 years as Minister of State for Financial Affairs and Minister of Finance, as shown below:

- October 31, 1992 >> May 25, 1995: Minister of State in Rafik Hariri's Cabinet
- May 25, 1995 >> November 7, 1996: Minister of State in Rafik Hariri's Cabinet
- November 7, 1996 >> December 4, 1998: Minister of State in Rafik Hariri's Cabinet
- October 26, 2000 >> April 17, 2003: Minister of Finance in Rafik Hariri's Cabinet
- April 14, 2004 >> October 26, 2004: Minister of Finance in Rafik Hariri's Cabinet



Brevet Students Score Below Average in Science

After having presented in the previous issue of *The Monthly* the language proficiency of Brevet students based on a sample of 360 candidates⁽¹⁾, the following article addresses the level of students in sciences by Mohafaza based on the same method.

Nabatieh

The sample was formed of 41 candidates, 28 of whom passed, representing a passing rate of 68.3%. Among the passing students, three students (10.7%) failed in Mathematics, eight (28.6%) failed in physics, eight (28.6%) in Chemistry and 10 students (35.7%) failed in Life Sciences.

However, a significant percentage of passing students scored an average grade⁽²⁾, as shown in Table no.1.

Percentage of students who scored an average grade (or a grade very close to the average) in Nabatieh				
	Mathematics	Physics	Chemistry	Life Sciences
# of students who scored an average grade	2	12	12	8
% of students who scored an average grade out of the total passing rate	8%	60%	60%	44%

Source: 2006- 2007 Official results

South Lebanon

The sample was formed of 82 students, 48 of whom passed, representing a passing rate of 58.5%. Among the passing students, 11 students (22.9%) failed in Mathematics, 14 (28.2%) failed in Physics, 11 (22.9%) failed in Chemistry and 16 students (33.3%) failed in Life Sciences.

The percentage of passing students who scored an average grade is shown in Table no.2.

Percentage of passing students who scored an average grade (or a grade very close to the average) in South Lebanon				
	Mathematics	Physics	Chemistry	Life Sciences
# of students who scored an average grade	6	18	15	18
% of students who scored an average grade out of the total passing rate	16.2%	53%	40.5%	56.2%

Source: 2006- 2007 Official results

Mount Lebanon

The sample was formed of 222 students, 175 of whom passed, representing a passing rate of 78.8%. Among the passing students, 33 students (18.9%) failed in Mathematics, 43 (24.6%) failed in Physics, 32 (18.3%) failed in Chemistry and 44 students (25.1%) failed in Life Sciences.

The percentage of passing students who scored an average grade is shown in Table no.3.

Percentage of students who scored an average grade (or a grade very close to the average) in Mount Lebanon				
	Mathematics	Physics	Chemistry	Life Sciences
# of students who scored an average grade	15	44	56	37
% of students who scored an average grade out of the total passing rate	10.5%	33.3%	39.1%	28.2%

Source: 2006- 2007 Official results

Beqa'a

The sample was formed of 82 students, 50 of whom passed, representing a passing rate of 61%. Among the passing students, 12 students (24%) failed in Mathematics, 17 (36%) failed in Physics, 11 (22%) failed in Chemistry and 16 students (32%) failed in Life Sciences.

The percentage of passing students who scored an average grade in the Beqa'a is shown in Table no.4.

Percentage of students who scored an average grade (or a grade very close to the average) in the Beqa'a				
	Mathematics	Physics	Chemistry	Life Sciences
# of students who scored an average grade	4	13	18	10
% of students who scored an average grade out of the total passing rate	10.5%	40.6%	46.1%	29.4%

Source: 2006- 2007 Official results

Beirut

The sample was formed of 65 students, 47 of whom passed, representing a passing rate of 72.3%. Among the passing students, 10 students (21.3%) failed in Mathematics, 12 (25.5%) failed in Physics, 8 (17%) failed in Chemistry and 9 students (19.1%) failed in Life Sciences.

The percentage of passing students who scored an average grade in Beirut is shown in Table no.5.

Percentage of students who scored an average grade (or a grade very close to the average) in Beirut				
	Mathematics	Physics	Chemistry	Life Sciences
# of students who scored an average grade	2	16	16	10
% of students who scored an average grade out of the total passing rate	5.4%	45.7%	41%	26.3%

Source: 2006- 2007 Official results

North Lebanon

The sample was formed of 121 students, 77 of whom passed, representing a passing rate of 63.6%. Among the passing students, 14 students (18.2%) failed in Mathematics, 23 (29.9%) failed in Physics, 20 (26%) failed in Chemistry and 32 students (41.6%) failed in Life Sciences.

The percentage of passing students who scored an average grade in North Lebanon is shown in Table no.6.

Percentage of students who scored an average grade (or a grade very close to the average) in North Lebanon				
	Mathematics	Physics	Chemistry	Life Sciences
# of students who scored an average grade	11	34	28	21
% of students who scored an average grade out of the total passing rate	17.4%	62.9%	49.1%	46.6%

Source: 2006- 2007 Official results

It should be noted that a rather significant percentage passed with a very bare minimum total grade in the 2007 Brevet. Since the passing grade is 140/280, those students who received a total ranging in the 130s were given points that would allow their grade to reach 140, thus passing satisfactorily. Students who passed with the bare minimum are those who received grades between 140 and 160 in each Mohafaza. The following results show the percentage of students that were given the raise to pass satisfactorily with a 140 total as well as those that obtained a grade ranging from 140 to 160 (it should be noted here that only the students who passed were used in the calculations). Table no.7 shows the percentage of students who received a bonus point and those who barely passed by Mohafaza.

Brevet students who received a bonus point and those who barely passed by Mohafaza		
Mohafaza	Students receiving a bonus point	Students Barely Passing (140à160/280)
North	14.3%	54.5%
South	12.5%	54.2%
Beirut	10.6%	34%
Beqa'a	12%	52%
Mount Lebanon	10.9%	29.7%
Nabatieh	14.3%	53.6%

Source: Compiled by Information International from www.schoolnet.edu.lb

This indicates that the actual number of students who achieved grades regarded as “good”, “very good” and “excellent” are much lower than those that passed satisfactorily, further indicating the drop witnessed in the educational system in Lebanon.

“It should be noted that a rather significant percentage passed with a very bare minimum total grade in the 2007 Brevet.”

⁽¹⁾ Kindly refer to The Monthly issue # 64 of November 2007

⁽²⁾ Average grades in Mathematics is 30/60 and 10/20 in Physics, Chemistry and Life Sciences

What do the Results say?

- ⑦ The sample was formed of 613 students with 425 passing students, 418 of whom failed in one or more scientific courses, as shown below:
 - 83 failed in Mathematics, representing 19.5% of passing students
 - 118 failed in Physics, representing 27.7% of passing students
 - 90 failed in Chemistry, representing 21.1% of passing students
 - 127 failed in Life Sciences, representing 29.8% of passing students
- ⑦ A high percentage of passing students got grades on the average or very close to the average, as shown below:
 - Mathematics: 40 students passed with average grades representing 11.7% of the total percentage of passing students in Mathematics
 - Physics: 137 students passed representing 44.6% of the total percentage of passing students in Physics
 - Chemistry: 145 students passed with average results representing 43.3% of the total percentage of passing students in Chemistry
 - Life Sciences: 104 students passed with average results representing 34.8% of the total percentage of passing students in Life Sciences

Females score higher than Males in Official Exams

The results of Lebanon's official exams, which were held last summer, in the Baccalaureate with its four sections (Life Sciences, General Sciences, Letters and Humanities and Socioeconomics) and the Brevet, showed that females scored higher than males.

The General Baccalaureate

The number of participants in the first session of the General Baccalaureate exams reached 40,363 students, 18,328 of whom were males and 22,035 females.

71.4% of male participants passed (13,090 students) compared to 81.5% of female participants (17,976 students).

Out of the total passing rate, 57.9% were females and 42.1% males.

Table no.1 shows the results of the General Baccalaureate exams by Mohafaza, gender and section (2006-2007 regular session).

Brevet Exams

The number of candidates in the regular session of Brevet exams reached 59,845, of whom 27,636 males and 32,209 females. 64.5% of male students passed (17,815 students) compared to 72.5% of female students (23,337). Table no.2 shows the results of 2006-2007 Brevet Exams by gender and Mohafaza.

The Lebanese population is almost equally divided between females (50.1%) and males (49.9%). Nonetheless, while figures show that the number of females in the education sector exceeds that of males, the presence of males in the job market is by far more significant than that of females. Is this due to the voluntarily retreat of women from the job market or to social and gender-related issues?

“The Lebanese population is almost equally divided between females (50.1%) and males (49.9%)”

Mohafaza	Life Sciences						General Sciences					
	Male	Passing student	Rate	Female	Passing student	Rate	Male	Passing student	Rate	Female	Passing student	Rate
Beirut	793	614	77.4%	828	726	87.7%	511	399	78%	145	138	95.2%
North Lebanon	964	706	73.2%	1,361	1,166	85.6%	911	646	70.9%	350	302	86.3%
South Lebanon	745	660	88.6%	767	717	93.5%	213	187	87.8%	97	94	96.9%
Mount Lebanon	2,346	1,863	79.4%	2,838	2,573	90.6%	1,499	1,288	85.9%	586	559	95.4%
Nabatieh	334	261	78.1%	464	419	90.3%	279	229	82%	108	97	89.8%
Bega'a	878	677	77.1%	968	844	87.2%	284	237	83.4%	114	104	91.2%
Total	6,060	4,781	78.9%	7,226	6,445	89.2%	3,697	2,986	80.7%	1,400	1,294	92.4%
Mohafaza	Letters and Humanities						Socioeconomics					
	Male	Passing student	Rate	Female	Passing student	Rate	Male	Passing student	Rate	Female	Passing student	Rate
Beirut	90	45	50%	370	300	81%	1,226	760	61.9%	1,373	1,056	76.9%
North Lebanon	124	78	62.9%	796	656	82.4%	1,048	632	60.3%	1,656	1,154	69.7%
South Lebanon	43	28	65.1%	329	293	89%	894	625	69.9%	1,335	1,093	81.8%
Mount Lebanon	265	198	74.7%	920	773	84%	3,494	2,161	61.8%	3,979	3,004	75.5%
Nabatieh	38	25	65.8%	213	177	83.1%	434	257	59.2%	686	491	71.6%
Bega'a	83	40	48.2%	390	316	81%	832	474	56.9%	1,362	924	67.8%
Total	643	414	64.4%	3,018	2,515	83.2%	7,928	4,909	61.9%	10,391	7,722	74.3%

Source: Center for Educational Research and Development – Educational Information unit

	Male			Female		
	Candidate	Passing students	Rate	Candidate	Passing students	Rate
Beirut	3,011	1,942	64.5%	3,302	2,590	78.4%
North Lebanon	5,125	3,194	62.3%	6,654	4,736	71.2%
South Lebanon	3,661	2,086	56.9%	4,376	3,002	68.6%
Mount Lebanon	10,574	7,365	69.6%	11,168	8,582	76.8%
Nabatieh	1,729	1,132	65.4%	2,258	1,577	69.8%
Bega'a	3,536	2,096	59.3%	4,451	2,850	64%
Total	27,636	17,815	64.5%	32,209	23,337	72.5%

Source: Center for Educational Research and Development – Educational Information unit

The Court of Audit 2005 Report

Nonstop Squandering of Public Money

In August 2007, the Court of Audit issued its annual report for the year 2005, knowing that it was completed in January 2007. The delay was due to vacant seats in the presidency and the board of advisors. With Judge Rashid Hatit retiring on January 20, 2006, Judge Othman Tohmeh was appointed as acting president but retired on July 1, 2006. On the second day, Judge Hoda Abdallah Hayek was appointed acting president. Article 47 of the law regulating the Court of Audit states: "The Court of Audit is to prepare an annual report on the outcome of its work and the amendments it suggests to laws and regulations".

Verdicts issued in 2005

1,557 verdicts were issued by the Court of Audit in 2005:

- ⊙ 989 verdicts of full consent
- ⊙ 413 verdicts of partial consent
- ⊙ 76 verdicts of rejection
- ⊙ 25 verdicts of ineligibility
- ⊙ 18 verdicts of return to source
- ⊙ 36 verdicts of consent with post-priori observations

Verdicts of rejection

76 verdicts of rejection (verdicts rejecting expenditures in a certain contract) were issued by the Court of Audit. They include:

- ⊙ Defects pertaining to contracting procedures: in case the consensual agreement or the tenders' terms of reference included texts contradicting rules and regulations pertaining to fair competition
- ⊙ The implementation of a transaction before being audited by the Court of Audit
- ⊙ Non-availability of legal documents to implement the contract
- ⊙ Non-availability of credits for some projects
- ⊙ Prices higher than those of similar agreements

The following are some cases of verdicts of rejection:

- ⊙ The Ministry of Telecommunications contracted a company for the issuance of a telephone directory. The contractor was to be given 96% of revenues of ads published in the directory.
- ⊙ The Ministry of Tourism set a consensual agreement in 2001 with the National Council of Tourism in cooperation with Impact/BBDO to launch a media campaign in Arab countries via all audiovisual and press institutions at the value of 1.9 billion LBP. The draft agreement included many flaws, such as the failure to determine the participating media institutions and hours of broadcast. Furthermore, the draft-agreement stipulated that the total value should be paid to the second party before confirming the execution of the project. The Court of Audit issued a conditional approval stating that the value should not be paid before the complete execution of the project. The government agreed to pay the contractor 25% of the total value as an advance payment. When the contractor failed to explain spending the advance payment on works pertaining to the contract, the Ministry presented before the Court of Audit a proposal to amend the contract in a way that explains expenses made by the contractor. The Court of Audit rejected the proposal and the General Prosecutor started investigation in the issue, noting that the contractor failed to abide by the conditions and stating that spending the amount of 644,3 million LBP violated the contract and represented squandering of public money.
- ⊙ The Ministry of Agriculture contracted a company for a project to buy olive harvesting machines at a value of 2.7 billion LBP, knowing that several proposals of lower value were rejected by the Ministry without any explanation.

- In 2002 and 2003, the Ministry of Energy and Water made tens of deals without public bidding. Some of the deals were 50% more expensive than similar deals made in the past. For example, a project to establish irrigation and drinkable water channels in the villages of Ta'labaya and Hzarta in Zahleh were valued at 9.4 billion LBP or 50% more than the value of similar projects conducted in the towns of Qa'a and Nabi Othman. When the Court of Audit rejected the deals, the Ministry invited offers, the value of which was 40% to 50% less than that of earlier offers despite the increase in raw material and foreign currencies occurring during the period between the first and second contracts.
- The Ministry of Energy and Water invited offers for the establishment of pumping, irrigation and drinkable water channels at the value of 7.2 billion LBP. After the Court of Audit's refusal to approve the offer invitation, the Ministry made a bidding invitation and contracted the project at 4.8 billion LBP.
- On October 1, 2003, the Ministry of Energy and Water presented to the Court of Audit a project to establish a potable water network in Hermel at the value of 8.7 billion LBP. The Court of Audit refused it for the lack of legal and valid reasons for the implementation of the project and its exuberant cost. The Ministry stressed the necessity to go on with the project before prices of building material start to climb, but the Court of Audit refused. On December 23, 2005, the Ministry submitted the same project before the Court, but at a value of 4.8 billion LBP and after a period of three years during which prices of building material rose significantly. This shows that the first project involved squandering of more than four billion LBP.

Council of Ministers Violations

Articles 40 and 41 of the law regulating the Court of Audit stipulate: "If the Court of Audit's decision contradicted the submitted project, the relevant administration should present the disagreement before the Cabinet, which in turn, settles the issue with justified decrees after listening to the president of the Court..."

Over the past decades, the consecutive governments violated verdicts issued by the Court of Audit without any justification and many times without listening to the president of the Court.

Decrees issued by the Cabinet in spite of the Court of Audit rejections (2005)		Table 1
Cabinet decision	Non-approval by the Court of Audit	
Contracting a company to clean and renovate water discharge channels within Jounieh reaching Casino du Liban	The Cabinet does not have the authority to amend the competence of municipalities in violation of legal texts	
The Ministry of Interior and Municipalities submitting a request to approve a consensual agreement to modernize the voting system and techniques	Bidding invitations are required	
Approving financial contributions to public hospitals (public institutions) and reimbursing Treasury loans	Unavailability of credits	
The Ministry of Interior and Municipalities requesting to consider credits dedicated to the 2004 municipal and mayoral elections, which amounted to 12.2 billion LBP, permanent expenses, and dedicate 9 billion LBP to the coming parliamentary elections	The deal does not fall within the original decree issued by the Cabinet, in addition to unavailability of credits	
The Ministry of Interior and Municipalities requesting an approval of a consensual agreement to buy containers for cameras used during the parliamentary elections	The deal does not fall within the original decree issued by the Cabinet, in addition to unavailability of credits	
The Ministry of Interior and Municipalities requesting an approval to maintain and renovate street lights in Beirut	The estimated value of the deal exceeded its actual costs, which limited the number of tenders without any legal justification in addition to the need to set fair prices	
The Ministry of Interior and Municipalities requesting to allow the Union of Kesrouan-Ftoun municipalities to execute joint projects within the Union	The relevant authority in this issue is the Ministry of Public Works and Transport	
The Ministry of Public Health requesting the permission to sign consensual agreements to buy medicine from the Association of Pharmacists Company as a sole agent	The Association of Pharmacists company is not a sole agent; the agreement becomes illegal	
The Ministry of Information requesting the permission to renew a contract with Fawaz Trade and General Contracting to clean the Ministry's headquarters from August 1, 2004 to August 1, 2005	The agreement was illegal	

Source: Court of Audit Report of 2005



Table no.1 lists decrees issued by the Cabinet in spite of the Court of Audit rejections (2005)

Cabinet's approval of the abovementioned decrees despite the Court of Audit verdicts represents squandering of public money.

Cabinet's Contribution to NGOs and Associations

The Lebanese government dedicates annual sums to NGOs and associations without the control of the Court of Audit. However, the Court allows the relevant ministries to acquit associations which received aid. Government's contributions to NGOs by value, beneficiary and ministry are shown in Table no.2.

Government's contributions to NGOs and associations by value, beneficiary and ministry			Table 2
Beneficiary	Ministry	Value	
Martyr Bassel Hafez al-Assad Cultural and Social Center- Sour (Tyre)	Ministry of Culture	57 million LBP	
Dar as-Sadaqa – Zahleh	Ministry of Public Health	65 million LBP	
Byblos Festival	Ministry of Tourism	74.7 million LBP	
Antonine Sports Center	Ministry of Youth and Sports	30 million LBP	
Al-Mashari' Youth Association	Ministry of Youth and Sports	36 million LBP	
Anibal Sports Club	Zahleh-Mu'alaga Municipality	49.8 million LBP	
Lebanese Red Cross	Ministry of Public Health	2574.7 million LBP	
The Social Club	Ministry of Public Health	149.5 million LBP	
Dr. Mohammed Khaled Association	Ministry of Public Health	244.2 million LBP	
The Union for the Protection of Minors	Ministry of Social Affairs	600 million LBP	
National Rehabilitation and Development Center	Ministry of Public Health	165 million LBP	
Al-Ansar Sports Club	Ministry of Youth and Sports	47 million LBP	
Ba'albek International Festival Committee	Ministry of Tourism	1,240 million LBP	
Lebanese Chess Federation	Ministry of Youth and Sports	142.5 million LBP	
National Educational Scientific and Cultural Committee	Ministry of Culture	405.2 million LBP	
Lebanese Armed Forces Veterans	Ministry of National Defense	65.4 million LBP	
General Security Reserve Fund	Ministry of Interior and Municipalities	2,498 million LBP	
Handi-Sport Lebanese Federation	Ministry of Youth and Sports	45 million LBP	
Al-Riyadi Club	Ministry of Youth and Sports	30 million LBP	
Al-Kahraba Club	Ministry of Youth and Sports	30 million LBP	
Lebanese Institute for the Disabled, Beit Shabab Hospital	Ministry of Public Health	326 million LBP	
Lebanese Taekwondo Federation	Ministry of Youth and Sports	30 million LBP	
The Union for the Protection of Minors	Ministry of Justice	500 million LBP	
Lebanese Kick-boxing Federation	Ministry of Youth and Sports	59.2 million LBP	
Lebanese Track and Field Federation	Ministry of Youth and Sports	78 million LBP	

Source: Court of Audit Report of 2005

Note: Most of the contributions were allotted in 2002 and 2003

Temporary and Final Verdicts against Public Institutions

Due to corruption and squandering of public money, verdicts issued against the employees become inefficient. The following are some examples of cases of violations:

- ⦿ Barouk Water Authority: the Authority director granting material to the contractor in violation of the norms
- ⦿ Rashid Karamah International Exhibition Center: financial violations (executing additional works before setting the expenses) and judicial violations (assigning an employee to conduct audit operations outside working hours and in violation of the laws)
- ⦿ Ministry of Finance: delay from the part of notaries to pay their taxes to the Ministry
- ⦿ The National Social Security Fund: one employee carrying out two jobs: one at the NSSF and another at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education
- ⦿ Ghobairi Municipality: releasing two false real estate reports without mentioning violations in common areas
- ⦿ Sawfar Municipality: violations committed by the mayor, the municipal council and the municipality accountant and members' agreement to spend expenses in violation of the norms

Verdicts against Civil Servants

The Court issued 141 judicial verdicts against employees in 2005. They were distributed as follows:

- ⦿ 33 temporary verdicts issued as warnings to employees requesting an alibi within at least three months
- ⦿ 101 final verdicts imposing fines on the employees. The fine ranges between 150,000 LBP and 10.5 million LBP. It can be raised to the value of a salary or the cumulative salary of a complete year.

Ministers Violations

Article 64 of the Court of Audit stipulates that Parliament should be informed of violations committed by the Ministers.

Consequently, the Court notified Parliament about 13 violations in 2005.

The Court, however, did not mention the names of the ministers in violation or elaborate on the violations committed. 

“Due to corruption and squandering of public money, verdicts issued against the employees become inefficient”

Central Inspection: A Mere Witness?

The Central Inspection Board issued its annual report of 2006, which highlighted several violations and infringements that occurred in public administrations and institutions.

Issued on June 12, 1959, Decree No. 115/59 stipulated the formation of the Central Inspection. Its tasks included:

- ⦿ Monitoring municipalities and public institutions and administrations
- ⦿ Developing the administrative system
- ⦿ Submitting its recommendations to administrative authorities
- ⦿ Coordinating joint projects between public institutions
- ⦿ Conducting studies, inspections and works requested by the authorities

The organizational chart of the Central Inspection includes 327 positions and 31 daily-wage posts. However, presently 24% of positions are vacant as there are only 221 employees, 15 daily-wage employees, 19 contractors, 10 appended employees, and seven employees who will not be replaced once they retire.

Central Inspection Budget

The Central Inspection's 2006 budget totaled 9.06 billion LBP, distributed as follows:

- ⦿ Office rental and maintenance: 1.06 billion LBP
- ⦿ Salaries and compensation: 5.86 billion LBP
- ⦿ Bonus: 618.8 million LBP
- ⦿ Transportation and movement: 746.5 million LBP

Recommendations

The Board proposed 124 behavioral disciplinary actions against employees, including verbal reproaches against 37 employees, diminution on salary against 73 employees, deferral of promotion against 10 employees and suspension from work against four employees.

It also passed a recommendation to cancel a contract with two contractors and requested the questioning of two directors-general, and the transfer of four employees to

the Higher Disciplinary Council and 26 employees to the Court of Audit. Moreover, the Board referred to the Public Prosecutor a case pertaining to infringements in invoices and a recommendation to return an amount of 31.2 million LBP, which was collected illegally.

⦿ The Architectural Inspection Unit proposed 41 behavioral punishments, including verbal reproach against seven employees, diminution on salary against 12 employees, deferral of promotion against 18 employees and suspension from work against four employees. It also referred a case to the Higher Disciplinary Council, 15 cases to the Court of Audit and eight cases to the Chief Public Prosecutor.

⦿ The Financial Inspection Unit proposed 43 behavioral punishments, including verbal reproach against two employees, diminution on salary against 25 employees and deferral of promotion against 16 employees. Moreover, 15 employees and four presidents and members of municipal boards were referred to the Court of Audit, in addition to six cases including two cases in the Directorate of Revenue and one case in the Educational sector. Moreover, eight cases pertaining to infringements and squandering of public money were transferred to the Chief Public Prosecutor, while two employees were referred to the Higher Disciplinary Council.

⦿ The Health, Social and Agricultural Inspection Unit proposed 21 behavioral punishments, including diminution on salary against 20 employees, and delay of promotion against one employee.

Central Inspection Decisions

The Central Inspection committee convenes at least twice a month and when necessary. In 2006, the committee held 25 sessions, during which it examined 330 cases and made 316 decisions, as shown in Table no.1.

Employees who were subject to disciplinary actions are distributed by institution and punishment as shown in Table 2.

Distribution of decisions issued by the Central Inspection in 2006
Table 1

# of employees subject to behavioral punishments	237
# of employees referred to the Court of Audit	91
# of cases referred to the Court of Audit	3
# of employees referred to the Chief Public Prosecutor	5
# of cases referred to the Chief Public Prosecutor	20
# of employees referred to the Higher Disciplinary Council	18
# of cases referred to the Higher Disciplinary Council	2

Source: Central Inspection 2006 report

“The organizational chart of the Central Inspection includes 327 positions and 31 daily-wage posts. However, presently 24% of positions are vacant”

Employees subject to disciplinary actions by institution and punishment Table 2

Institution	Verbal Reproach	Diminution of salary up to 15 days	Deferral of promotion up to 6 months	Deferral of promotion up to 30 months	Transfer to the Court of Audit	Transfer to the Penal Judiciary	Transfer of cases to the Penal Judiciary
Ministry of Interior and Municipalities	1	9	6	-	19	-	4
Ministry of Finance	1	8	1	-	2	1	2
Ministry of Public Works and Transport	1	6	11	1	4	2	5
Ministry of Education and Higher Education	27	59	17	5	9	2	1
Ministry of Youth and Sports	-	2	1	-	3	-	-
Ministry of Public Health ⁽¹⁾	-	34	-	-	25	-	-
Ministry of Economy and Trade	-	3	-	-	1	-	-
Ministry of Agriculture	4	-	3	4	5	-	1
Ministry of Telecommunications	2	-	1	2	4	-	3
Ministry of Social Affairs	-	4	-	-	5	-	-
Ministry of Energy and Water	1	5	6	-	6	-	1
Ministry of Culture	-	1	-	-	1	-	-
Electricité du Liban ⁽²⁾	-	1	2	-	-	3	3
Ministry of Administrative Development Bureau	-	1	-	-	-	-	-

Source: Central Inspection 2006 report

⁽¹⁾ 16 employees were referred to the Higher Disciplinary Council⁽²⁾ Employees were referred to the Higher Disciplinary Council

The Higher Disciplinary Council

An employee is referred to the Higher Disciplinary Council in line with the Laws or upon a decision from the relevant authority or by the Central Inspection. In 2006, nine cases were referred to the committee, which also completed eight final examinations of cases belonging to previous years. The number of cases and employees by institution is showed in Table no.3.

Number of cases and employees by institution		Table 3
Source of referral	# of cases	# of employees
Electricité du Liban	4	4
Ministry of Finance	1	2
Central Inspection	6	21
Kfar Selwan Municipality	1	1
Trablous Municipality	3	3
Ali al-Nahri Municipality	1	1
Hrajel Municipality	1	1
Total	17	33

Source: Central Inspection 2006 Report

The Bidding Administration

In 2006, 47 contracts valued at 335.2 billion LBP were awarded on the basis of bidding, compared to 114.5 billion LBP in 2005. Despite a certain increase in the reliance on bidding, these operations represent only less than 10% of government's contracts, the majority of which are made through direct cooperation with the contractors.

Lebanon's public institutions are replete with cases of infringements. Inspection bodies are incapable of preventing corruption in light of the prevailing political system based on the division of spoils.

“In 2006, 47 contracts valued at 335.2 billion LBP were awarded on the basis of bidding, compared to 114.5 billion LBP in 2005”

Public Education in the Central Inspection Report

The Central Inspection Report emphasized the condition of public education.

The report highlighted the high rental prices paid by the government and the lack of technical, architectural and educational requirements in the majority of public schools.

This problem affects the implementation of modern teaching techniques, which require laboratories, libraries, stages and sport courts.

Concerning vocational and technical schools, the report said: “The government owns 65 out of 83 buildings dedicated to vocational education. The remaining 14 buildings are owned by joint projects between the government and NGOs. These buildings are also not well equipped and do not meet the conditions required for technical and vocational schools.

The contracting system remains a major problem. According to the report, contracts include 155,894 class hours per week in 2005-2006 compared to 136,582 class hours per week in 2004-2005. This increase of 16,452 class hours indicates a squandering of 4.7 billion LBP annually.

At the secondary level, a surplus of around 212 teachers was noted in 2005-2006 which indicates a squandering not less than 3.2 billion LBP.

In the vocational and technical education, contracts include 2,405,606 class hours per year valued at 50 billion LBP.

Wheat Subsidies: Supporting the Poor or the Powerful?

Since the July-August 2006 Israeli war on Lebanon, the prices of food products have been witnessing a significant increase, which is due, among other reasons, to the rise of prices on the international level and the increase in the value of Euro against the USD and LBP.

Other reasons include the increase in transportation and insurance tariffs and attempts by big merchants to make profits in light of the unstable situation in Lebanon.

The percentage of price increase varied between 5%-50%, affecting, among others, the prices of wheat and flour.

As a result, Lebanon's bakeries threatened to either increase the prices of bread or reduce the weight of bread packs.

This was accompanied by the adoption of several measures by the government, which mainly benefited big merchants.

The government provides needs in wheat through local production and imports. The local production reaches around 60,000 to 70,000 tons annually, which is purchased from the farmers by the government at a promotional price of 375,000 LBP per ton. The government then sells the wheat to bakeries at a price relatively higher than previous international prices.

It is noteworthy that bakery owners are forced to buy a quota of local wheat to be allowed to import foreign wheat, as for each one ton of local wheat, bakery owners are allowed to import five tons.

Due to the rise of wheat prices on the international level this year, and which became equivalent to the local prices, farmers sold their production in Iraq and in local markets for the production of bulgur (crushed wheat) at prices much higher than prices of wheat sold to the government.

In fact, the government did not receive this year but 10 tons of wheat.

On the other hand, the government allows bakeries to import wheat, as the local wheat is neither suitable for making Arabic bread nor does it meet local demand. The amount of imported wheat varies between 370,000 to 400,000 tons annually. Lebanon imports wheat from the United States (35%), Argentina (27%), and Australia (26%), in addition to Russia, Croatia, Romania, Ukraine and Kazakhstan.

Prices of wheat have been rising since July 2006; the price of a ton increased from 150 USD to 210-300 USD. This led mill owners to increase the price of a ton of flour from 400,000 LBP to 480,000 LBP, threatening to further increase it by 70,000-90,000 LBP.

When bakery owners threatened to increase the price of bread, the government announced it would pay 50 USD for each ton of imported wheat with a ceiling of 30,000 tons per month until the end of 2007. This means that it would pay 7.5 million USD awaiting a change in the prices internationally.

The following is noteworthy:

1- The amount of flour used in making Arabic bread does not exceed 20,000 tons per month, which means that the government is not supporting Arabic bread but also sweets, French bread and all other bakery products. In fact, mill owners asked the government for 100 USD for each ton and the government's decision to support 30,000 tons per month would be equivalent to paying 75 USD for each.

2- It is known that there are seven main mills in Lebanon, of which three control 70% of the market needs, which makes them the first and main beneficiaries of government's initiative. Mill owners stress that this support does not achieve but a balance between production costs and revenues and does not generate any profits. They argue that a ton of wheat is at 300 USD, in addition to 30 USD for milling costs. 25% of bran is extracted from a ton (one ton of bran is sold at 170 USD), which makes the total price of a ton of wheat at around 370-380 USD.

When the government pays 50 USD for each ton, mill owners can sell flour to bakeries at 480,000 LBP (or 320 USD) to keep the price of a bread pack stable (1,120 grams at 1,500 LBP).

Observers ask why the government does not give licenses to open new mills and liberate the market or even resolve the rise of food products prices.

They argue that huge sums dedicated to support the wheat, beetroot and tobacco can be used in a way that would better serve the farmers and consumers, such as decreasing taxes on basic agricultural material and some food products.

Forgery

Crime and Punishment

“**F**orgery is the crime of falsely making or altering a writing, by which the legal rights or obligations of another person are apparently affected”⁽¹⁾.

Lebanon

Article 437 of the Lebanese Penal Code stipulates that a person who forges the signature of the Lebanese Government or that of a foreign country shall be sentenced to at least seven years of hard labor.

Meanwhile, a person who forges a golden or silver currency used in Lebanon or in any other country with the purpose of marketing it, or a person, who participates deliberately in the issuance and distribution of a forged currency and smuggling it into the Lebanese territories or any other country, shall be sentenced to at least five years of hard labor (article 440).

A person, who deliberately duplicates or forges stamped documents or any kind of stamps for the purpose of using them in an illegitimate way or distributing them, shall be sentenced to up to five years of temporary hard labor.

Jordan

Jordanian Penal Code stipulates the same punishments as those stipulated in the Lebanese laws.

Saudi Arabia

The Saudi Law stipulates that a person, who duplicates royal or government seals and signatures, with the purpose of forgery, is sentenced to five to ten years of imprisonment.

An employee who forges a document at work is sentenced to one to five years of imprisonment.

Article 2 of Decree no.12, which deals with forgery, states: “A person who counterfeits or duplicates currencies used in the Kingdom or abroad, or smuggles or deals with counterfeited money, or owns, without an official license, tools and material used in forgery, shall be sentenced to five to 15 years of imprisonment with hard labor and a fine ranging between 30,000 and 100,000 SR (Saudi Riyals)”.

Article 6 of the same decree stipulates: “A person who accepts with good faith a duplicated or counterfeited currency and deals with it while being aware that it is fake, shall be sentenced to a maximum of one year of imprisonment and with a fine of a maximum of 2,000 SR or with one of these two sentences”.

Egypt

Article 260 of the Penal Code states: “Shall be sentenced to criminal reclusion or imprisonment any person who duplicates or forges, personally or through another person:

- An order, law, decree or decision issued by the government or a governmental or presidential seal or signature
- A signature or stamp of a government institution or civil servant
- An invoice or bond issued by government’s Treasury
- Gold or silver stamps”.

Article 202 stipulates that a person who counterfeits, duplicates or forges a paper or metal currency used in Egypt or abroad, shall be sentenced to temporary hard labor. A person who circulates a forged currency shall be sentenced to the same punishment.

The United Arab Emirates

Article 211 of the UAE Penal Code stipulates that a “person shall be sentenced to temporary imprisonment (ranging between three and fifteen years) if he/she duplicates or forges personally or through another person a governmental or official seal or a signature, a stamp or signature used in government’s departments or directorates or by one of its employees or official gold or silver stamps or any other precious metal.

A person who deals deliberately with duplicated or forged currency shall be sentenced with the same punishment stated above”.

Meanwhile, Article 204 states: “A person, who duplicates or forges by himself or through another person, a paper or metal currency legally used in the UAE or abroad or any governmental financial bond, shall be sentenced to life or temporary imprisonment and with a fine”.

Moreover, Article 205 stipulates: “Shall be sentenced to the abovementioned punishment a person who deliberately smuggles or circulates a forged or duplicated currency or document”.

Article 217 of the same law states that a person, who forges official documents, shall be sentenced with a maximum of ten years of imprisonment, while a person, who forges unofficial documents, is sentenced to imprisonment ranging between one month and three years.

France

The French Law punishes forgery of official documents by 10 years of imprisonment and a fine of 152,000 Euros.

Forging currencies and bank documents is punished by 30 years of imprisonment and a fine of 450,000 Euros.

However, a person who circulates counterfeited currencies is sentenced to five years of imprisonment and a fine of 75,000 Euros. Moreover, a person is sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment if he/she duplicates the French Government’s seal or stamp. 🇫🇷

⁽¹⁾ *Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1) Based on the Random House Unabridged Dictionary, © Random House, Inc. 2006.*

Youssef Bek Karam in Exile

Youssef Bek Karam fi al-Manfa"⁽¹⁾ (Youssef Bek Karam in Exile) is the seventh volume of the biography of the Maronite leader⁽²⁾.

Following the events of 1840 and before the developments of 1860, power struggle between foreign forces in Lebanon reached its climax. At that time, France had good relations with the Maronite Patriarchate and Youssef Bek Karam. British documents show that Karam also had connections with Britain. Sema'an al-Khazen, the author of the book, focused on the romantic side of Karam's life, away from historical facts. The first volume presents the history of Karam family, Volume II recounts Youssef's birth and childhood, Volume III talks about the massacres of 1860, Volume IV on Karam becoming the Qa'imaqam of the Christians in Lebanon, Volume V talks about his relation with Patriarch Boulos Mas'ad, while Volume VI recounts his victory over Daoud Pasha. The following article presents Volume VII, which recounts the life of Karam in exile.

Nonetheless, the book constitutes a usual account of Karam's life in exile.

The book tells that following the numerous victories achieved by Karam in areas controlled by Fouad Pasha (Lebanon High Commissioner appointed by the Ottomans with the consent of European Powers), the Maronite leader arrived in the Matn town of Bekfaya. As a result, Fouad Pasha escaped from Beiteddine to Beirut, seeking the protection of foreign consuls. After negotiations with the French Consul in Bkriki, it was decided that Karam be exiled to Algeria, where he would reside in the French government seat there. He left Lebanon in 1867 on board "Le Forban".

Algeria

The book says that on his way to Algeria, Karam visited Alexandria for eight days after which he spent four days in Marseilles, where he met some Lebanese who supported his struggle against the Ottomans.

Upon his arrival in Algeria, Karam visited the Marshall of France Marie Edme Patrice Maurice

de Mac-Mahon, "who treated him with sympathy and respect".

He informed the French government of Daoud Pasha's actions in Beirut, and his violations of all the pledges he had made to the French Consul, in addition to harassing women and vandalizing places of worship.

In 1868, Karam left for Paris after pleading with the Marshall to allow him to visit the French capital.

Paris

According to the book, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs was hostile toward Karam and assigned police officers to watch him wherever he went. The French authorities were convinced that the Maronite leader launched the revolution against Daoud Pasha in retaliation for the French government not appointing him governor on Lebanon. Karam secretly left Paris heading to Brussels.

Rome

The book says that at his arrival in Rome, Karam visited the Vatican, met with Pope Pius IX and told him about the Maronite people's sufferings in Lebanon. Karam spent one year in the Italian capital during which Fouad Pasha was replaced by Franco Pasha. Despite the friendship between Karam and Franco, the latter could not achieve the Maronite leader's return to Lebanon fearing that such step would disappoint the Patriarch and the Sublime Porte.

Greece

Despite the big efforts he deployed to boost his military campaign, Karam was defeated by the Ottomans as he did not have enough money to pay the expenses of soldiers, in addition to some volunteers' refusal to fight in faraway countries.

Moreover, the Sublime Porte knew about the campaign and took extra measures to control the coasts.

Rome Again

After the collapse of the French regime following the defeat of Napoleon III by Germany in 1870, Karam submitted a report from Italy to France's new government about the "injustice he faced and his desire to return to Lebanon".

The French government assigned its


Commissioner in Astana to follow-up on his case. The Turkish government did not object to Karam's return to his country and threw the ball in Bkriki's court. The Maronite Patriarch Boulos Mas'ad, however, said that his return would lead to chaos in the country.

As he knew that his return to Lebanon was impossible, Karam wrote a memorandum in French, recounting his sufferings since he left his country. The memorandum, which was published in newspapers in 1871, raised a wave of concern among European politicians, who invited him to Astana in 1873 to resolve his case. The book says that Karam visited As-Sadr al-'Azam and met with ministers and foreign countries' ambassadors to the Sublime Porte. He also wrote several reports on difficulties he faced.

During his stay in Astana, Karam sought to create a Maronite Council in Lebanon; but his efforts were hampered by Patriarch Boulos Mas'ad.

The book says that Karam wanted to launch a campaign on Lebanon with the help of the Russians but failed.

The last days of Youssef Bek Karam

The book says that after 10 years of exile, Karam moved from Rome to the city of Napoli, where he rented a house which he called "Villa Libanese". During this period, he devoted himself to prayer and retreated from the political life. Karam then moved from Napoli and bought a castle in Rasina. Stricken by illness in 1888 for three months, Karam sent a letter to As-Sadr al-'Azam asking him to return to Lebanon; but the Sublime Porte did not want him to return. Karam passed away on April 8, 1889 after the passing of 22 years since his exile. His body was buried in Rasina and transferred to Lebanon on September 13 of the same year. 

⁽¹⁾ Youssef Bek Karam fi al-Manfa – Safahat min Tarikh Loubnan fi al-Qarn al-Taseh 'Ashar (Pages from Lebanon's history in the 19th Century) – Sem'an al-Khazen – Al-Insha' Publishing House – Trablous 1950

⁽²⁾ Youssef Bek Karam was born in Ehdén in 1823. He played an important role in Lebanon's political history, from 1840 to 1867. He was known for the battle of Zahleh where he fought against the Druze and the battles against Tanios Chahine in Kesrouan, from which he expelled Al-Kazen. He passed away in exile in 1889.

Myth #6

Lebanon's Tourists

More than One Million Annually

The Ministry of Tourism issues monthly reports detailing the number of tourists entering Lebanon. The number of tourists between 1993 and 2006 is shown in Table no.1.

Numbers of tourists between 1993 and 2006 Table 1	
Year	# of tourists
1993	266,061
1996	679,146
1999	673,261
2002	956,464
2004	1,278,469
2005	1,139,524
2006	1,062,635

Source: The Ministry of Tourism

“The number of “tourists” coming from Europe, the US and Australia in 2004 reached 537,893 people and represent 42% of the total number of “tourists”.”

However, these significant figures do not really reflect the number of tourists, as a large number of those are Lebanese living abroad.

1- Number of Tourists

A large percentage of tourists who entered Lebanon between 1993 and 2006 hold European or US passports. In 2004 - the year which registered the highest number of tourists (1,278,469) compared to the previous and following years - tourists were distributed by region as shown in Table no.2.

Distribution of tourists by region in 2004 Table 2	
Region	# of Tourists
Arab countries	545,150
Europe	338,475
Asia	173,897
America	152,075
Australia	47,343
Africa	20,180
Other	1,349

Source: The Ministry of Tourism

The number of “tourists” coming from Europe, the US and Australia in 2004 reached 537,893 people and represent 42% of the total number of “tourists”. It is noteworthy that this number is very close to the number of Arab tourists which is unusual in view of the country's nature and structure.

This high percentage is due to the fact that among tourists coming from western countries, there is a large number of Lebanese who hold foreign passports and enter Lebanon as tourists. This is further confirmed by the number of hotel guests.

2- Hotels and Furnished Apartments

The number of guests in hotels and furnished apartments in 2004 reached 570,000 which means that only 44.5% of tourists who reportedly visited Lebanon stayed in hotels or furnished apartments. It is true that some Arab tourists have their own residences in Lebanon, but around the half of tourists are Lebanese who visit Lebanon regularly and stay in their houses or their parents' houses.

Fact

“More than one million tourists visit Lebanon annually to enjoy its nature and discover its heritage” is a myth.

The truth is around the half of tourists are Lebanese holding foreign passports.

The Electoral Law...

Speaker Nabih Berry

"I announce to all the Lebanese that the majority system, whether it was in the small, medium or large district, or in the entire country, does not give a true representation of the Lebanese people". (January 31, 2005)

"I am ready to accept the Qada'a as an electoral district although it does not serve my interests; I am originally with the proportional system, but I accept what the Maronite Patriarch and the Christians in general approve of". (Berri was quoted as saying by Deputy Ghassan Tueni on March 27, 2007)

Maronite Patriarch Nasrallah Boutros Sfeir

"The Ta'if Accord gave us 64 deputies; so we should elect 64. We stress that we want to live Christians and Muslims together, equal before the Law". (May 12, 2005)

"The law proposed by the committee in charge of drafting a new electoral law is difficult to implement. It should reflect the situation of the Lebanese people as we had already said". (May 19, 2007)

Samir Geagea

"The medium district with a proportional representation is amongst the options. We, as Lebanese Forces, are yet to announce our final decision. We have several options". (March 25, 2007)

"We are not against the Qada'a system but we are trying to find a better law that would give a better representation of the Lebanese people. If we don't find such law, we go for the Qada'a..." (April 4, 2007)

Former President Amin al-Gemayel

"We believe that small electoral districts provide a good representation and are a better means to promote the relationship between the voter and the candidate..." (July 3, 2006)

Boutros Harb

"The proportional system becomes a good option when its negative points are resolved. I wish that the National Accord Document, which stipulates the Mohafaza as an electoral district, would be taken into consideration, awaiting a proposal based on the proportional system and the confessional distribution". (November 26, 2004)

"I propose the adoption of the Qada'a system, provided that the voter chooses only one name in order to avoid conflict of interests in towns and villages... this way the Christians would feel they are electing whomever they want without being forced to exchange votes". (April 14, 2007)

Walid Jumblat

"We stand behind the opposition and adhere to the Qada'a system, while pro-government forces want a proportional system based on the Mohafaza". (May 3, 2005)

"Enough complicated laws that combine between the majority with the proportional systems and between the Qada'a and the Mohafaza. The best electoral law is based on the Qada'a system, which would meet the promise of Deputy Sa'ad Hariri to Patriarch Sfeir and represent a response to those who accused us of being behind the 2000 electoral law". (June 2, 2006)

Sa'ad Hariri

"Late former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri had agreed on an electoral law based on the Qada'a system. We don't have a problem with any electoral law; we just want it to be fair and representative of all the Lebanese people". (May 14, 2006)

Suleiman Franjeh

"We adopted the Qada'a system after studying a number of proposals with deputies, politicians and religious leaders. The majority was for the Qada'a, which is called for by the opposition". (January 27, 2005)


"The last parliamentary elections were based on the electoral law which was set during the Syrian presence in Lebanon; consequently, the marginalization of the Christians has not changed since then. This contradicts the consecutive statements made by Bkirki over the past year". (July 5, 2006)

Michel Aoun

"I believe that the best law that offers a fair representation is the single district. Elections should be held in two rounds in case the candidate did not receive the absolute majority of votes in the first round. Another good law is the proportional law based on the Mohafaza, as it guarantees good representation..." (December 30, 2004)

"We support the Mohafaza and proportional system or the single-district system; however, we will not create problems inside the opposition over the Qada'a system; I am very flexible on this to preserve the unity of the opposition". (April 18, 2005)

Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah

"Everyone is saying that the 2000 law is unfair and tried to blame Hizbullah and Amal but failed. I want to talk about Amal and Hizbullah especially after Speaker Nabih Berri announced the approval on the Qada'a system. We don't have problems with any electoral law whether it was based on the Qada'a system or other districts". (April 8, 2007) 

Fires 2007:

31,101 dunums in 2007 compared to 34,602 dunums in 2006

On October 2, 2007, some Lebanese media institutions said the wave of fire that destroyed thousands of dunums of green areas across the country could have been intentionally perpetrated to confuse the government and security forces. An intensive coverage of the story was provided with some observers saying that it was the most destructive fire ever to happen in Lebanon.

Undoubtedly, these fires led to an environmental catastrophe, but were not new to the country as they break out every year during the same period (June- October).

This year, however, what is new is fires that erupted in several areas at the same time.

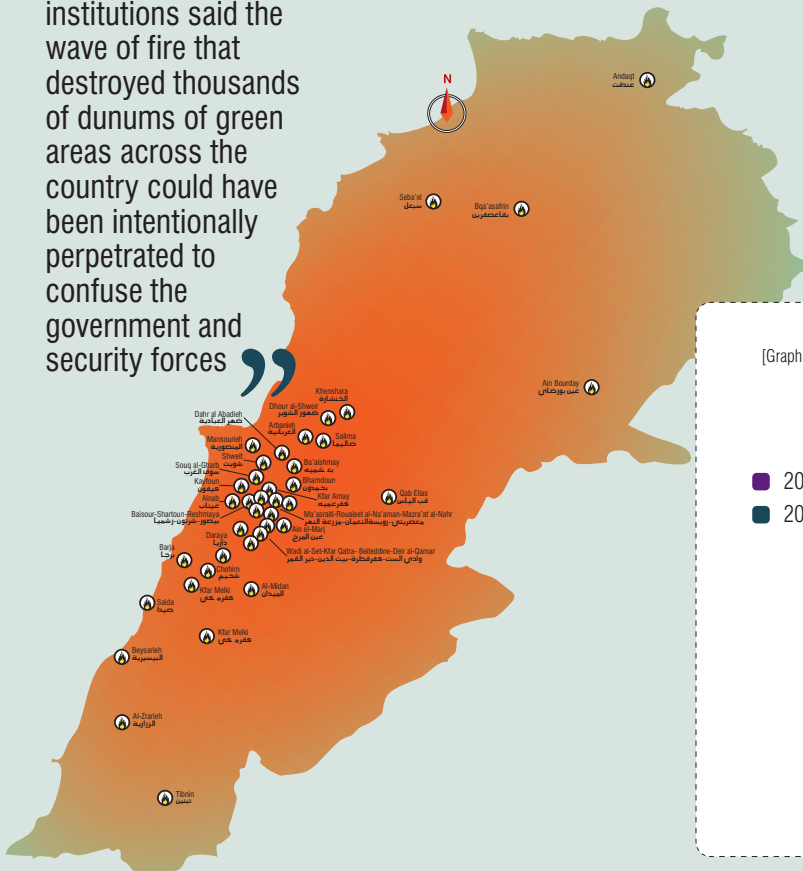
Figures

Statistics show that the percentage of destroyed green areas did not exceed that of last year. According to the Lebanese Army Command report issued on October 6, burnt areas in 2007 reached **31,101 dunums** of green, cultivated and arid areas, compared to **34,602 dunums in 2006**.

Green Spaces

Lebanon's green areas extend over 3,660,000 dunums. In 2007 and up to October 28, Lebanon lost 0.84% of these areas compared to 0.94% in 2006.

“some Lebanese media institutions said the wave of fire that destroyed thousands of dunums of green areas across the country could have been intentionally perpetrated to confuse the government and security forces”



Towns hit by fire

Lebanese towns stricken by the wave of fire on October 1 and 2, are shown in Map no.1.

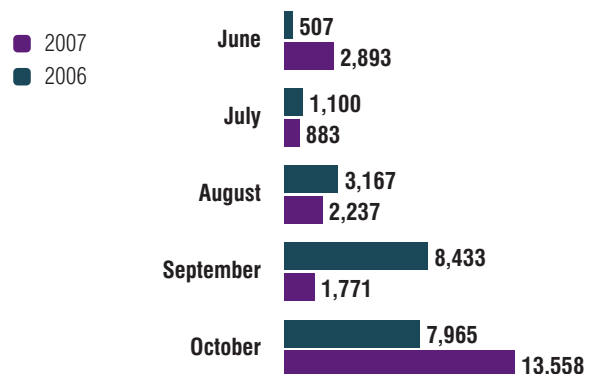
13,368 dunums were destroyed in two days, with almost the same area destroyed during the July-August 2006 war which reached 13,380 dunums.

Graph no.1 shows a comparison between areas hit by fire in 2006 and 2007.

[Graph 1]

Comparison between areas hit by fire from June to October 2006 and 2007 by dunum

Source: Lebanese Army Command - FAO report on the July-August 2006 War



Food Price Index: October 2007

Stability of Prices

After the rise of food prices in the past few months, prices in October remained relatively stable. Prices of oils and cereals slightly increased, while those of vegetables witnessed some decrease, compared to those of September.

Item and brand		Prices end of October	Prices end of September	Percentage of price change
Cereals				
Egyptian rice	(1kg)	1,350	1,100	+22.72%
Italian rice	(1kg)	1,338	1,599	-16.32%
American rice	(1kg)	1,500	2,247	-33.24%
Chick-peas	(1kg)	2,350	2,350	0%
Beans	(1kg)	1,250	1,250	0%
Red lentils	(1kg)	2,250	1,750	+28.57%
Yellow lentils	(1kg)	2,350	2,195	+7%
Sugar and Salt				
Sugar	(1kg)	1,100	1,100	0%
Al-Ousra Sugar	(1kg)	1,200	2,000	-40%
Salt	(1kg)	495	500	-1%
Box of salt	(738g)	995	995	0%
Dairy Products				
Elle & Vire butter	(500g)	1,900	1,900	0%
Lurpak butter	(500g)	1,895	1,895	0%
Tatra butter	(500g)	1,395	1,243	+12.22%
Al-Ma'alaqtain margarine	(2kg)	6,250	6,250	0%
Silver Vegetaline margarine	(2kg)	7,395	7,395	0%
Vegetaline margarine	(2kg)	11,950	11,950	0%
Al-Baqara al-Haloub margarine	(2kg)	18,950	18,950	0%
Mazola margarine	(2kg)	9,647	9,647	0%
Hawa Chicken eggs	(30 eggs)	6,000	6,000	0%
Eggs	(30 eggs)	5,000	5,000	0%
Taanayel lebneh	(1kg)	7,290	8,990	-18.9%
Dairiday lebneh	(1kg)	4,150	4,150	0%
Candia lebneh	(1kg)	6,910	6,910	0%
Candia fresh milk	(1 liter)	2,000	2,000	0%
Tatra powdered milk	(900g)	9,500	9,500	0%
Nido powdered milk	(900g)	9,250	9,250	0%
Dano powdered milk	(900g)	11,150	10,350	+7.73%
Fresh country cheese	(1kg)	10,000	10,000	0%
Amour Kashkawan cheese	(1kg)	12,250	12,250	0%

Item and brand		Prices end of October	Prices end of September	Percentage of price change
Oil				
Mazola corn oil	(2 liters)	6,490	5,850	+10.94%
Slim corn oil	(2 liters)	5,885	5,995	-1.83%
Afiah corn oil	(2 liters)	6,495	5,995	+8.34%
Olive oil	(1/2 liter)	5,966	5,966	0%
Al-Wadi olive oil	(1/2 liters)	6,650	5,950	+11.76%
Ketchups and Sauces				
Dolly's ketchup	(450g)	1,200	1,200	0%
Libby's ketchup	(450g)	1,195	1,195	0%
Extra ketchup	(450g)	935	935	0%
Ghandour Tahina jar	(500g)	2,398	2,398	0%
Al-Wadi Al-Akhdar Tahina jar	(500g)	2,893	2,893	0%
Meat and Cold-Cuts				
Maling Mortadella	(200g)	990	990	0%
Al-Taghzia Mortadella	(200g)	1,440	1,298	+10.93%
Al-Mona Mortadella	(200g)	1,495	1,495	0%
Zwan Mortadella	(200g)	1,990	2,090	-4.78%
Beef	(1kg)	11,750	11,750	0%
Sheep meat	(1kg)	18,000	15,000	+20%
Pasta				
Antonio Amato spaghetti	(500g)	1,750	1,350	+29.63%
Barilla spaghetti	(500g)	1,950	1,250	+56%
Monte Regale spaghetti	(500g)	1,100	1,100	0%
Coffee and Tea				
Coffee	(1kg)	11,000	11,000	0%
Najjar Coffee	(1kg)	11,792	11,792	0%
Al-Wazzi tea	(1kg)	8,800	8,800	0%
Silani tea	(500g)	4,500	4,500	0%
Twinning's tea	(200g)	10,240	10,240	0%
Fruits and Vegetables				
Tomatoes	(1kg)	1,000	1,290	-22.48%
Potatoes	(1kg)	1,000	1,300	-23%
Local Bananas	(1kg)	1,250	1,250	0%
Lemons	(1kg)	925	925	0%
Cucumbers	(1kg)	750	1,000	-25%

Source: Information International – October 2007

The Lebanese Jews

A Vanished Community

Judaism is one of the three monotheistic religions which began, according to the Bible, with God revealing his commandments to Moses in Egypt. Judaism was named after the Jewish people, who were in turn named after Jehovah, Prophet Jacob's eldest son.

Beliefs

According to the Bible, the history of Judaism begins on Mount Sinai, when God revealed his ten commandments to Moses in the form of two stone tablets. The most important commandment is the belief in one God.

Jews believe that a Jew is a person born of a Jewish mother.

They also believe that God assigned the Jews to be "His chosen people" in order to serve Him and guide the peoples of the world.

The Tanakh is the Jewish holy book.

A Jewish cleric is called a rabbi.

Judaism in Lebanon

History books do not mention any major presence of Jews on the Lebanese territories. The majority of Jews who lived in Lebanon were among those who escaped the Catholic persecutions in Andalusia and Granada, following the defeat of the Muslims. They were Sephardi Jews who speak Latin.

In the 19th Century, Jews started to emigrate from Eastern Europe to the Ottoman State. Those were Ashkenazi Jews who spoke Yiddish and came mainly from Germany.

Jews in Lebanon lived in Beirut, Hasbaya, Saida, Sour (Tyre), Trablous (Tripoli), Deir al-Qamar and 'Aley. Historians say the Jewish population excelled in textile dyeing and glass manufacturing.

Jewish families in Lebanon were of different origins, including Syrian, Iraqi, Yemeni and European (Italian, Spanish, Russian and Polish). The main families included: Haddad, Rayhoun, Srour, Safra, Kouhin, Trab, Livi, Laoui and Mazrahi. It is also said that the most famous circumciser in Beirut was a Jew named Salmoun, and one of the most important physicians was Dr. Shams.

Under the rule of Emir Fakhreddine al-Ma'ni II (17th Century), the Jewish population worked in trade and enjoyed religious freedom. Among them was Ibrahim Nahmias, who was in charge of the Emir's personal affairs and Isaac Caro, who accompanied him to Tuscany and served as a clerk for his personal advisor Hajj Kiwan. In the book "Fakhreddine al-Ma'ni II" wrote by Carali P. Paolo, it was said that the Emir assigned Jewish personnel to supervise the accounts of the State.

Jews continued to arrive to Lebanon in different phases, and many of them resided in Saida due to the economic importance of its port.

The Jews' Activities in Lebanon

Deir al-Qamar and Barouk were among the most important industrial areas for the Jews, who worked in textile manufacturing, in particular silk, and in upholstery and ironwork.

In 1750, the Jews built a synagogue in Deir al-Qamar. The synagogue was sold on May 21st, 1900 to Iskandar al-Qoba', and is today owned by the municipality.

When Ibrahim Pasha arrived in Beirut in 1831, there were around 200 Jews in the city. Their number started to increase with many coming from the West to Bilad ash-Sham (Syria, Lebanon and Palestine). They built their synagogues and cemeteries, some of which are still present today.

In 1829, the Jews built their first cemetery in Ras al-Naba'. During the massacres of 1860 (between the Druze and Maronites), they fled from Deir al-Qamar to 'Aley where they built a synagogue, called "Ohet Jacob".

A synagogue was built in 1951 in Bhamdoun by Jewish Beirutis who used to spend the summer in that town.

In the 19th Century, the Jewish presence was limited to Beirut. At that time, Grand Rabbi Ralph al-Verdani presided over the Jewish families. Since then, the Jews gathered in Wadi Abu Jmil and built their first school – the Alliance School – in 1878.

A synagogue was also built by an Indian Jew in the same area in August 1926, and is still present today. There was also a Jewish school called "Al-Helf", in addition to a

“The Israeli attacks on Lebanon and Arab countries and the six-day war of 1967 had a major impact on the Jewish presence in Lebanon.”

sanctuary “Zablouni” located in Saida, which is still present today.

In the 1960s, there were around 20,000 Jews in the country. Emigration from Lebanon started following the war of 1967, and then after the Israeli invasion. Their number suddenly dropped to 3,000 people. During that period, many Jews were arrested for allegedly working as spies for Jewish organizations in Israel. One of the most famous spies was Shaula Cohen, nicknamed the “Pearl”, who helped the Jews immigrate into Palestine through land and sea. Cohen was arrested in 1961 by the Lebanese intelligence office (the second bureau), and was released in 1967 through a prisoner swap between Lebanon and Israel.

The Israeli attacks on Lebanon and Arab countries and the six-day war of 1967 had a major impact on the Jewish presence in Lebanon. With the beginning of the 1975 civil war, the number of Jews decreased drastically and dwindled to almost naught in the 1980s mainly due to the destruction by Lebanese militants of Beirut’s central district. Only a small number of elderly people and families with properties and businesses stayed.

The “Israeli confession” is still officially acknowledged in Lebanon. There are 5,490 Jewish voters registered (but not residing) in Lebanon. Only one participated in the 2005 parliamentary elections in Beirut, while 13 others submitted complaints before NGOs about the absence of

their names in the voters’ lists. It is reported that more than 100 Jews still live in Lebanon incognito.

The Jews in the Political Life

In 1907, there were 819 Jews throughout Lebanon, and specifically Saida. However, they remained distant from the political life. Only two Jews occupied public positions at that time: Na’im Zalkha, who was member of the Beirut Court of Appeal and Ibrahim Afandi Hakim, who was elected member in the Beirut municipal board in March 1913.

The “Israeli confession” was officially acknowledged on March 13th, 1936, and was granted a personal affairs law and a law of procedures.

On January 11th 1944, the first Israeli religious council was established in Lebanon. The number of Jews at the time was 6,200 people. Rabbi Shbati Bahbout was appointed the first official leader of the confession in Lebanon.

In 1928, a group of wealthy Jews established a sports club, the Maccabee Club. During that period, the leading exchange companies were owned by Jews.

Jewish Holidays

1- The Passover: it commemorates the exodus from Egypt

2- Sukkot: it extends over seven days and commemorates the Israeli people’s years of wandering through the desert on their way to the Promised Land

3- Sabbath: Jews believe that God, after creating the universe, rested on the Seventh Day (Saturday). The Jews do not work on this day

4- Hanukkah: it marks the re-dedication of the Temple

5- Yom Kippur: It is a day of fasting and praying for forgiveness for one’s sins

Languages

The Jews spoke several languages: Hebrew, Yiddish, Latin, Dzhidi and Aramaic.

Presidents of the Jewish Diaspora in Lebanon from 1910 to 1985

1910: Azra Anzarout

1910-1924: Youssef Farhi

1925-1927: Youssef Bey

1928-1930: Youssef Farhi

1931-1934: Salim Harari

1935-1938: Youssef Farhi

1939-1950: Youssef Bey

1950-1976: Youssef Atieh

1977-1985: Isaac Sassoun

Rabbis from 1908 to 1978

1908-1909: Rabbi Danun

1910-1921: Yacoub Maslatoun

1921-1923: Suleiman Tagher

1924-1950: Shbati Bahboub

1932-1959: Banzion Litchmen

1949-1966: Yacoub Atieh

1960-1978: Shahoud Shreim

Mazra'at Beit Msheik

Named after a Family

Etymology

The town was named after family Msheik, which forms the majority of its residents.

Location

Mazra'at Beit Msheik is located in the Qada'a of Ba'albek in the Beqa'a Mohafaza (or Ba'albek Mohafaza which was established in line with Law no.522 of July 16, 2003) at an altitude of 1,300 meters above sea level and extends over 1,320 hectares. It is 85 kilometers away from Beirut, 35 kilometers from the Mohafaza center and 25 kilometers from the Qada'a center. It can be reached via the following road: Ba'albek-Majdaloun- Al-Mashtal- Mazra'at Beit Msheik.

Population

Registered residents are estimated at 1,337 people, with a Shia'a majority and one hundred Sunni. The town contains around 200 houses.

Voters

There were 891 voters in May 2004 compared to 725 in 2000.

They are distributed by family as follows:

Msheik 777 voters - Abu Merhi 35 voters - Radi (naturalized Arab Sunni) 50 voters
Zeaiter 17 voters - Yazbek 12 voters

Local Authorities

Mazra'at Beit Msheik reports to the Municipality of Shmestar, which is formed of 21 members, including a representative of the town.

The town has a Mukhtar and a mayoral council formed of three members.

Table no.1 shows the Municipality's share from the Independent Municipal Fund for the years 2000-2003.

The Municipality's share from the Independent Municipal Fund (2000-2003) (in LBP)				Table 1
Year	2000	2001	2002	2003
Share	677,826,000	1,267,480,000	1,017,659,000	1,351,288,000

Source: Official Gazette

Educational Institution

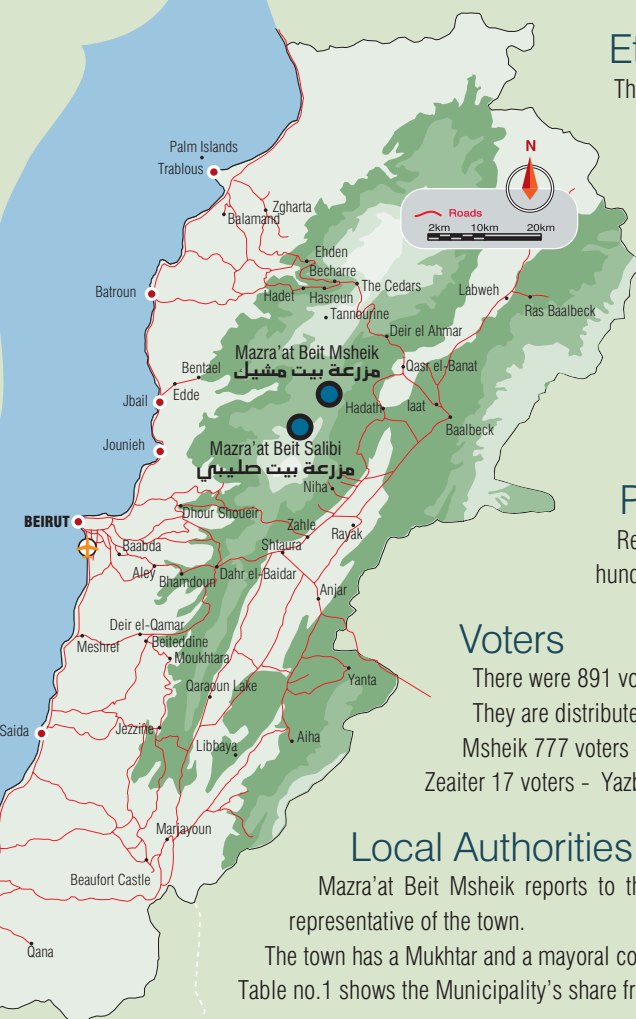
The town has an elementary and intermediate school with 54 students and 13 teachers and administrators.

Economic Activities

Residents depend on agriculture (tobacco, wheat and cereals). The town has two stone factories.

Problems facing the residents

Mazra'at Beit Msheik suffers from lack of potable water and proper sewage systems.



Mazra'at Beit Salibi

Facing solid waste problems

Etymology

The village was named after the Salibi family, which forms the majority of its residents.

Location

Mazra'at Beit Salibi is located in the Qada'a of Ba'albek in the Mohafaza of Beqa'a, at an altitude of 1,650 meters above sea level. It is 72 kilometers away from Beirut, 22 kilometers from the Beqa'a and 25 kilometers from Ba'albek. The village can be reached via the following road: Zahleh- Beit Chama- Shmestar- Mazra'at Beit Salibi.

Population

The number of registered residents reaches 780 people, the majority of whom belong to the Shia'a confession.

However, around half of the residents have moved to Beirut.

The town contains around 80 houses.

Voters

There were 520 voters in May 2004 compared to 348 in 2000. They are distributed among the following families:

Salibi: 245 voters

Mallah: 143 voters

Shehadeh: 132 voters

Local Authorities

The village reports to the Municipality of Shmestar, which contains 21 members, including a representative of Mazra'at Beit Salibi. The village has a Mukhtar and a mayoral council of three members. Table no.1 shows the Municipality's share from the Independent Municipal Fund in 2000-2003.

The Municipality's share from the Independent Municipal Fund (2000-2003) (in LBP)				Table 1
Year	2000	2001	2002	2003
Share	677,826,000	1,267,480,000	1,017,659,000	1,351,288,000

Source: Official Gazette

Educational Institution

There is a public elementary school in the village with 45 students.

Economic Activities

Residents mainly depend on agriculture, in particular the cultivation of roses, wheat, tobacco, cherry and apricot.

Problems facing the residents

Among the main problems facing the residents:

- Lack of proper infrastructure, including septic systems, which forces residents to use sewage wells
- Leakage of sewage which causes noxious smells and proliferation of diseases
- Garbage collected by the municipality of Shmestar from neighboring towns and villages and placed at the entrance of the village to be burnt, causing air pollution and health problems
- Lack of agricultural roads, which forces residents to use primitive means



“History Repeats Itself”

The Events of 1860 that led to the Creation of the Mutasarifia System

A sudden wave of international sympathy for the Druze erased all punishments imposed on those by foreign powers following the massacres of 1860.

Christians' rights were swiftly forgotten as the interests of European countries were no longer in exerting pressure on the Ottoman rule in the region.

The following is an excerpt from Colonel Churchill's “The Druze and The Maronites Under the Turkish Rule, from 1840 to 1860”, which recounts international delegations' sudden sympathy for the Druze community during the period that followed the massacre.

For what were the Druzes to blame? It became the fashion to say. All they had done was in self-defense. Had not the Maronites for years past been crouching like tigers ready to spring at their throats? Was it not the Maronites who began the war? Had they not, also, committed barbarities? Had they not coolly killed some dozens of Druzes, when following the French army into the mountain? Would they not, had they gained the day, have committed excesses at least equal to, if not exceeding, those committed by the Druzes? Were there not Christian criminals as great, if not greater, than the Druzes? Finally, had they not demanded 4600 Druze heads? The monsters! Had not the Druzes been already severely punished? Had they not for months been wandering about their mountains like wild beasts, the sword suspended over their heads, or hiding themselves in caves of the earth, feeding on black bread made of acorns, and on the roots of the field.

The Turks were in raptures at this revulsion of feeling. Perhaps, after all, the ambulatory tribunal might be established for Christians as well as Druzes.

Certain it is, opinions of this nature at last found an echo in the heart of the Commission itself. The plan of summary procedure against the Druzes was abandoned. The greatest alarm was entertained lest one of these unfortunate victims should be put to death innocently. To guard against so frightful a contingency, it was resolved that no Druze should be capitally tried, except on the charge of having murdered in cold blood an unarmed man, woman, or child, and that the evidence of two eye-witnesses should be considered necessary to secure a capital conviction.

In the mean time the trials of the Turkish officials and Druze sheiks at Beyrout had been brought to a close.

Lord Dufferin, in his interpellation to Fuad Pasha, had made use of the following remarkable expressions:

“Amongst the three classes of criminals who stand arraigned at the bar of Europe, the guilt of those Turkish officers and magistrates, whose apathy or connivance intensified the horror of what it was their duty to have prevented, must ever remain preeminent.” The cue was thus obtained, as to the opinion entertained by the British Commissioner, at least, with regard to the conduct of the Turkish officers implicated in the late events. It was evident that any sentence, to meet his approval, must place those officers in the first class of criminals, and visit them with the highest degree of punishment. The Austrian Commissioner was known to be averse to any executions whatever. The other Commissioners were known to be prepared to exact the utmost rigour of the law. By sentencing, therefore, the Druze sheiks to death, and the Turkish officials merely to imprisonment, not only would the apple of discord be flung into the midst of the Commission, but the chances were that all the criminals who had appeared before the tribunal would benefit by the dissension thus created.

The effect produced by this manoeuvre was exactly what had been anticipated. From the moment the sentences so framed were promulgated, the Commission became engaged in interminable disputes and altercations on the subject, and could never arrive at any decision whatever. Fuad Pasha now proceeded to Muchtara, leaving the Commissioners to extricate themselves as best they could out of the fourches caudines into which they had been dexterously thrust.

The proceedings at Muchtara have been so amply recorded that any further allusion to them is unnecessary. It should be remarked, however, that by what Fuad Pasha called “a summary process,” to which the activity and vigilance of Colonel Fraser not a little contributed, twenty-five Druzes had been condemned to death, on the clearest and most unquestionable evidence, for having, each one of them, slain in cold blood more than a dozen Christians. The immediate execution of these blood-thirsty savages was strongly called for.

Fuad Pasha, however, on the plea that a repetition of executions would not have the same effect as one grand execution on one

“From the moment the sentences so framed were promulgated, the Commission became engaged in interminable disputes and altercations on the subject, and could never arrive at any decision whatever”

and the same day, at various places throughout all the mountain, suggested that the Druze malefactors at Muchtara should not be executed until the fate of the Druze sheiks at Beyrout had been determined. The crafty suggestion was adopted. Another delay, and again time gained.

The Ottoman Commissioner returned to Beyrout to find the Commission in all the throes of an impossible delivery. Each Commissioner would study and pour over the “procès-verbal” of the trials separately; then all the Commissioners would lay their heads together and read them over collectively; then they would call in the members of the tribunal to assist them in their lucubration: all to no purpose. In common parlance, they could make neither head nor tail of the whole affair.

The Austrian Commissioner thought the Turkish officers accused had done their duty. The Prussian was for putting to death Turks and Druzes alike. The Russian had a pocket tribunal of his own, and rejecting the proceedings of the Turkish tribunal, as absurd and derisory, gathered his own information as to the culpability of all the criminals, and founded on it his own decision. The French only wanted two Druze heads, but made a deadly tilt at the head of that precious exemplar of the Druze aristocracy, Said Bey Jumblatt, to whose rescue, however, the British Commissioner advanced with a spirit of chivalry-worthy of a better cause, not objecting, at the same time, to the execution of some thirty or forty of the smaller Druze fry.

The field of disquisition was evidently becoming more and more contracted every day. In place of being discussed on the broad principles of justice and humanity, it was gradually being fought out on the narrow basis of political jealousy and contention.

It was absolutely necessary that all this unseemly bickering should be brought to a close. Accordingly, at the twenty-fourth meeting of the Commission, March 2nd, 1861, the Ottoman Commissioner, after having for six mortal hours patiently withstood a galling crossfire from his European colleagues, stepped forward and expressed “his deep regret that the revision of the processes to which the Commission had applied themselves had led to no result, and that the divergence of opinion was as great as ever. Under these circumstances he had nothing to do but to refer the whole subject to Constantinople.”

Another delay and again time gained! Often previously when asked by anxious inquirers when the executions were to begin, he would naively reply, “when these gentlemen have made up their minds.”

And to Constantinople, in effect, the whole mass of the judicial investigations was sent. There the bubble burst. With the consent of the Christian powers, the great Druze-Mohammedan retribution ended in a general reprieve for criminals, murderers and assassins of every sect, class and degree, engaged in the massacres — not a hair of one of whose heads has been, or is to be touched: even including the barbarous Mohammedans of Sidon, who were tried, and clearly convicted of having, without any provocation whatever, but merely out of a wild and fanatical hatred to their religion, ruthlessly slaughtered the men and violated the women of the poor Christian fugitives who fled from the mountain to that city for shelter!

Christian readers! Is not all this monstrous? is it not incredible? is it not heartless? is it not degrading to our common faith? is it not inhuman?

Christian peoples! Have you yet to learn that the best interests of Christianity, in those regions once hallowed by the presence of the Lord and Saviour of mankind, are sacrificed on the altar of diplomacy — frittered away by diplomatists vainly struggling against the wiles which circumvent them, and paralysed by the very power they crudely affect to regulate and guide?

Christian emperors and kings! How long will you continue to desecrate the sacred cause you so ostentatiously pretend to espouse, and to bring contumely, reproach and disaster on the Christians of the East, by your spurious protection, your baneful jealousies, your selfish intrigues, and your blundering ambitions? How long will you tarnish your crowns, sully your scepters, and put the name of Christ to open shame, by submitting to be led captives of the Turks! 🍇

“The Ottoman Commissioner returned to Beyrout to find the Commission in all the throes of an impossible delivery. Each Commissioner would study and pour over the “procès-verbal” of the trials separately; then all the Commissioners would lay their heads together and read them over collectively; then they would call in the members of the tribunal to assist them in their lucubration: all to no purpose. In common parlance, they could make neither head nor tail of the whole affair.”

The Arab Open University

From 1,293 students in 2002 to 2,484 in 2006

Establishment

The Arab Open University was established by Prince Talal bin Abdul-Aziz bin Saud, who heads the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND), to “support human resources development in the Arab world”.

In 1996, Prince Talal, in cooperation with UK's Open University, launched a project to establish the Arab Open University.

In 2002, the University's headquarters was inaugurated in Kuwait and was followed by the establishment of branches in Lebanon, Jordan, Bahrain, Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

AGFUND was given the license to open a headquarters in Lebanon in line with Decree no. 3257 of June 22, 2000. Courses began in the 2002-2003 academic year.

The university offers four B.A. degrees: English Language and Literature, Education/Preliminary Education, Business Systems/Economics, Information Technology and Computing.

Educational System

The University is located in the Beirut area of Tayouneh. It is formed of several attached buildings, which include a library, a language laboratory and an audiovisual center, but lacks sports courts and green spaces.

The academic year is divided into two four-month terms. It is based on credits and on English as the main language in Information Technology, Business Systems and English Literature. Arabic is the main language in the faculty of Education.

Number of Students

1,293 students enrolled at the AOU when it was inaugurated in 2002. The number rose to 2,484 in 2005-2006 with an increase of 92% in three years.

Teaching and Administrative Body

In 2005-2006, the administrative and teaching body counted 136 people, including 101 professors. The university is seeking to recruit more staff to meet the increase of students. Table no.1 shows the number of administrative staff, professors and students by academic year.

The number of administrative staff, professors and students by academic year
Table 1

Academic year	Administrative staff	Professors	Students
2002-2003	30	50	1,293
2003-2004	24	70	1,491
2004-2005	33	90	1,862
2005-2006	35	101	2,484

Source: Center for Educational Research and Development

Tuition Fees

Tuition fees at AOU are relatively low owing to financial support granted by the AGFUND.

Table no.2 shows the average tuition fees by specialization.

Characteristics

- AOU degrees are validated by the Open University Validation Services (OUVS) which means that they are of comparable standard to the B.A. Degree awarded by the Open University and other UK universities, which encourages students to pursue their studies abroad.
- The university offers courses from 8 a.m. till 10 p.m. (evening courses), allowing students to work during the day.
- Learning systems include: direct teaching, interactive learning, courses given through the VSAT and Video Conferencing, electronic courses, in addition to other audiovisual techniques.

Students Talk

The majority of students said they chose to enroll at AOU for two main reasons: relatively low tuition fees and the availability of evening courses.

Some students complained from lack of sport courts and green spaces and called for introducing new specializations, like marketing, hotel management and tourism. Others complained that extracurricular activities were limited to a small number of seminars and exhibitions.

Average tuition fees by specialization					Table 2
Program	Specialization	# of years required for a B.A.	# of credits required for a B.A.	Price of credit (in USD)	Average cost (in USD)
IT and Computing	IT and Computing	4	131 (18 electives and 113 core courses)	35/ elective 50/ core course	6,280
Business Systems/ Economics	Business Administration/ Economics	4	128 (18 electives and 110 core courses)	35/ elective 50/ core course	6,130
	Business systems	4	128 (18 electives and 110 core courses)	35/ elective 50/ core course	6,130
English Language and Literature	English Language and Literature	4	128 (18 electives and 110 core courses)	35/ elective 45/ core course	5,580
	Education	4	128 (30 electives and 98 core courses)	35/ elective 40/ core course	4,970
Education	Education competence	B.A.+1	35 (6 electives and 29 core courses)	35/ elective 55/ core course	1,805
	Specialized Studies	B.A.+2	73 (21 electives and 52 core courses)	35/ elective 40/ core course	2,815

Source: Information International based on the AOU Administration

“Learning systems include: direct teaching, interactive learning, courses given through the VSAT and Video Conferencing, electronic courses, in addition to other audiovisual techniques”



Arab Open University
Beirut - 2007



Production of Wine and 'Araq

A Successful Industry

The production of wine and 'Araq has always been among the most successful industries owing to Lebanon's cultural and environmental factors.

A Brief History of Wine Production

Regions inhabited by the Canaanites, including Lebanon, were the first to ferment grapes according to some historians. The Phoenicians, for their part, were the first to export wine to Egypt.

In Lebanon's modern history, the Jesuit Order established the first winery in 1857, which is today known as "Ksara".

The wine industry flourished with the arrival of French soldiers and foreign delegations to Lebanon who were known for their consumption of this type of alcohol.

The 1970s period was the golden age of wine in Lebanon. Wineries at the time produced around 1,536,000 liters annually until the eruption of the civil war in 1975.

With the end of war, wine production reached six to seven million bottles per year, which allowed producers to export their products to foreign countries.

Situation

There are today 10,000 hectares of vineyards and 15 wineries, the majority of which are located in the Beqa'a, including the wineries of Ksara and Solifed in Zahleh, Kefraya in West Beqa'a and Massaya in Ta'nayel.

The annual production of wineries varies between 40,000 bottles (Khoury winery in Ghazir) and 2.1 million bottles (Ksara).

Producers export 50% to 80% of their production to more than 20 countries around the world, including Syria, Jordan, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, France, Norway, Slovakia, Sweden, Holland, Belgium, Finland, England, Switzerland, Germany, Ireland, Russia, the United States, Canada, Japan, Brazil, Congo, Greece and Malta.

Exports are estimated at around 3-5 million USD per year.

Wine and 'Araq Production

There are three main types of wine: the Red wine, the White wine and the Rosé.

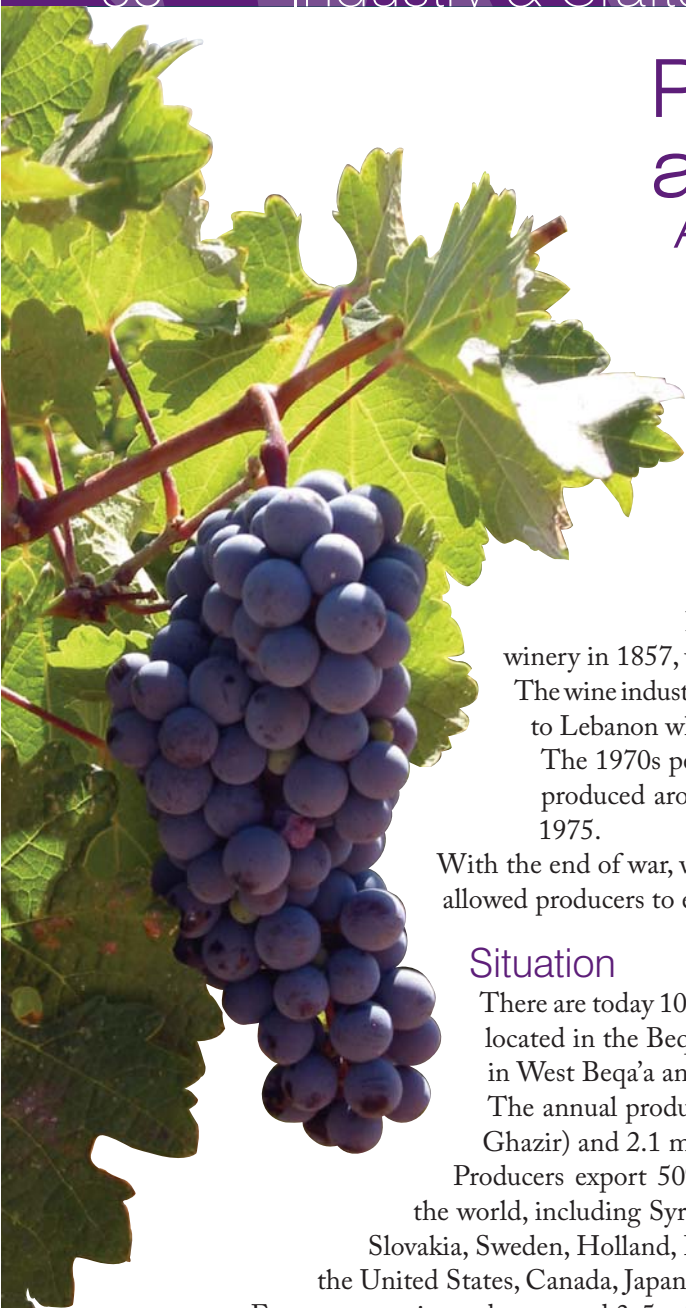
Wine is made by fermented grapes and one liter needs 2.5 to 3 kilograms of grapes.

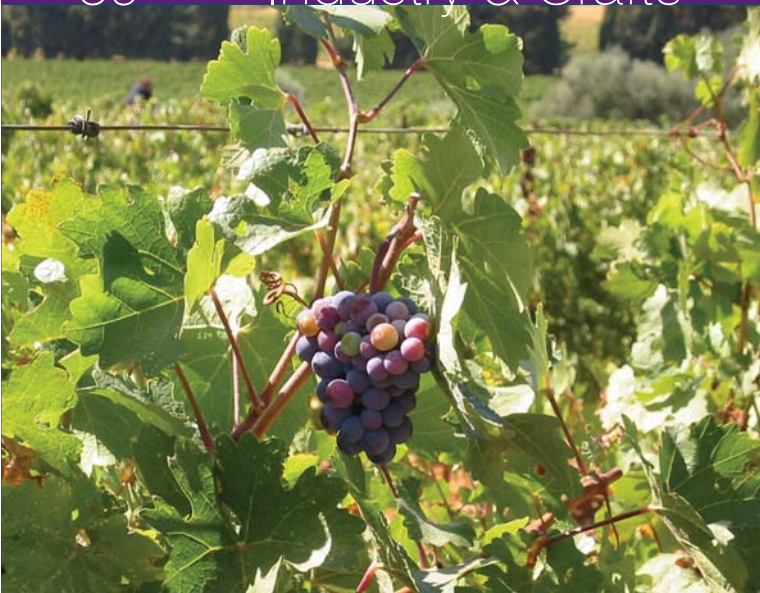
After the harvest, the grapes are crushed and allowed to ferment for a period ranging between 15 and 30 days after adding yeast called *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*. After the first fermentation, red wine undergoes a second process, unlike the white wine and the rosé, called the malo-lactique fermentation. Liquid Sulfur Dioxide is also added to protect wine from spoilage by bacteria and oxidation.

The making of Rosé and White wine takes around the three to six months, while Red wine cannot be consumed but after two years of its production.

Some wine bottles have validation time between 3 to 10 years depending on their type, to three to 10 years depending on their type, while other types cannot be consumed before several years of fermentation.

The color of the bottle plays a role in preserving the wine: the darker it is, the better the wine is preserved.





Types of Grapes used in Winemaking

There are 23 types of grapes used in winemaking: Muscat, Chardonnay, Merlot, Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Sauvignon Blanc, Viognier, Tempranillo, Clairette, Sémillon, Mourvèdre, Petit Verdot, Carignan, Garnay, Grenache, Muscat Petits Grains, Bourboulenc, Arinarnoa, Cinsaut, Gewurztramine.

Organization of the Sector

A union of Lebanese wineries (Union Vinicole du Liban) sets the laws regulating wine production in Lebanon.

A draft-law was recently submitted to the Lebanese government for the creation of the “National Institute of Vineyards and Wine”. The Institute would be responsible of developing the cultivation of vine trees and the production of all types of wine, in addition to making sure that Law no.216 of May 29, 2000, which regulates wine production, is being well implemented.

The Institute would also control the quality of Lebanese products based the standards set by the European Union and the International Organization of Vine and Wine (OIV).

Characteristics of the Sector

The Monthly met with seven Lebanese winery owners, who highlighted a significant improvement in wine production since the late 1990s.

Ten new wineries have been established since 1990, while the area of vineyards grew by 50% in a period of five years.

Moreover, new machines and techniques were introduced to the market, in addition to modern laboratories to promote the quality of Lebanese wine.

Problems and Solutions according to Winery Owners

Winery owners listed some problems which obstruct the development of this sector:

- ⦿ High energy costs (electricity and diesel), which raises production costs
- ⦿ Taxes on wine and alcohol: wineries pay 200 LBP for each kilogram of grape
- ⦿ Local and international competition: for example, wine imported from Bulgaria and Portugal is sold at 3,000 LBP while the cheapest bottle of Lebanese wines costs around 6,000 LBP
- ⦿ Lack of specialized labor force
- ⦿ The rise of the value of Euro against that of the Lebanese Pound, which leads to a rise in prices of imported material such as glass, which is imported from France, Belgium, Turkey, Bulgaria and Italy and corks imported from France and Portugal.

Among the solutions proposed by winery owners: decreasing taxes on grapes, energy and imported labeling material and rising taxes on imported wine to encourage local production. ●●



The Monthly meets S2C Chairman Ramsey Najjar

Censorship on television programs and advertisements raise talks on the quality of the Lebanese television production and its position internationally. *The Monthly* met with media specialist Ramsey Najjar director of S2C (Strategic Communication Consultancy) company, in an interview on Lebanese media and censorship today.

Do you believe in programs and advertisements censorships?

I, personally, am a fervent believer in self-regulation as opposed to censorship. I prefer to use that expression over the term auto-censorship as the latter implies a stifling of creativity and freedom of expression, both of which I adamantly oppose not only as a media person but as free thinking individual. As Voltaire said it best "I disapprove of what you say but will defend to death your right to say it". Self-regulation consists of setting its own standards in choosing what to air in a way that would be in line with the social and moral values of the environment in which the programs are broadcast, so as not to offend sensitivities or feed hatred and violence.

Censorship laws certainly differ from a country to another depending on the political climate and degree of freedom of expression in each.

In regards to Lebanon, the Sureté Générale, which is in charge of monitoring the media and censoring it at times, has given increasing leeway to the media in regulating itself. That is certainly understandable and can be attributed to the fact that there is panoply of political and cultural views within the Lebanese society. Not to mention that in our modern day and age, with the proliferation of the Internet and satellite TV, censoring information has become nearly impossible and a thing of the past.

If you were to name three most popular programs aired on our local stations, what would they be?

Deciding on what is a popular program is by no means an easy task. Specific programs might have a large audience within certain population segments but not others. Not to mention that popular is not always synonymous with quality.

Overall, and to answer your question, I would say that "Kalam el Ness" is undoubtedly the most popular political show. It manages to stimulate a healthy debate and establishes benchmarks of quality for political talk shows. It has become an unavoidable stop for all advertisers seeking to reach the middle to upper class segments of society. May Chidiac's new show "Bi koul Jour'a" is similarly witnessing an excellent debut and will surely build more equity with time. Additionally, the evening news has definitely a wide audience and constitutes a must for advertisers with the available budgets.

As for the second part of your question, there are definitely many programs that are not popular in the narrow sense of the term but still manage to reach specific target audiences. "Tele auto" for example might not pull strong ratings but is still an interesting program for car dealers to advertise on. The same logic applies to other shows as well.

Where does Lebanon's media production stand against international production?

I can honestly say in all objectivity that Lebanese media productions are with some of the best in the region and beyond, with Lebanon's post production facilities being by far the best, if not unique, in the whole area. The fact that despite the political tensions in Lebanon a large portion of regional media productions are still produced in Lebanon is a living testimony of the level of creativity and professionalism that abound in the country. Case in point, MBC, the leading Pan-Arab TV channel, has recently decided to produce more than half of its programs in Lebanon, which is an acknowledgement in itself considering the financial means and regional scope of the station.

The only disadvantage facing Lebanon's media productions, besides the political instability, is the financial resources that are sometimes lacking and impede on producing material that match up to the creative spark of Lebanese media professionals.

How would you assess the Lebanese media today? Is it up to the professional standards needed in the sector in terms of covering events, incidents and news briefing?

As I have mentioned, Lebanese media today is among the best in the region on certain dimensions and has nothing to envy, even from international media household names. On a daily basis we see courageous journalists defying death in order to cover stories of national interest, as we have seen during the July war on Lebanon and as we have been seeing in the latest Nahr al-Bared tragic events.

That said, it is a shame that some media outlets still resort and rely on sensationalism in their reporting. There is often a lack of sound judgment or ethical standards as well as a lack of professional maturity in covering news events as we have witnessed on a few occasions during the July war when certain TV channels chose to display images of corpses and dead children without any regards to viewers' sensitivities and emotions. There might be a plausible cause for such a decision if it is in the sake of "l'art pour l'art" but this is definitely not applicable in this case and is more in the line of "sensationalism for sensationalism".

Egypt: Banking Sector Still Developing

Ever since the National Bank of Egypt was stripped away from its central banking function in 1961, Egypt's banking sector has experienced a great deal of reform and progress.

Privatization, mergers, and acquisitions have been taking place since the early 1990s and as of 1999 there were 69 banks running in Egypt, including state-owned commercial banks, investment banks and specialized banks.

Actual development began in 2003 through the passing of the Unified Banking Law from the Central Bank of Egypt (CBE) which placed all public and private-sector banks under closer supervision by the CBE. The law was passed following the government's plan to reform the banking sector through the 2002 IMF-World Bank Financial Sector Reform Programme (FSRP), a project worth 8.7 billion USD. The CBE is granted the full freedom of modifying the monetary policy and stepping up the banking restructuring program in order for all merging operations to be completed in the first four months of 2006.

The goal was to limit the number of banks effective in the Egyptian market to less than 30. Although this goal has not yet been attained, Egypt currently has a total number of 39 banks and the aim in 2007 is to bring this number down to 22. The four prominent state-owned commercial banks are the following: the National Bank of Egypt, the Bank of Alexandria (which

was privatized under the FSRP and sold at 1.6 billion USD), the Banque du Caire, and Banque Misr. These four banks primarily control 55% of the banking system's total assets.

According to the new law, local Egyptian banks are compelled to meet a minimum capital requirement of 87 million USD while foreign banks' capital requirement is 50 million USD; the capital adequacy ratio of at least 10% is also required. The CBE directs all banks excluding Misr African International Bank, the Arab National Bank, and the Egypt Export Development. In the lead, the Bank of Alexandria is currently the largest privately-owned bank consisting of 188 branches.

Ranking second is National Société Générale Bank (NSGB) followed by the Commercial International Bank (CIB) and Credit Agricole Egypt Bank (CA-E). According to the Economic Trends Report Egypt (May 2007) published by the US Embassy, the level of competition among various banking units has risen in 2006 mainly due to the existence of foreign banks in the market. In 2006, the CBE shut down branches of three foreign banks which could not meet the capital requirement; it also merged 11 small banks into larger banks (six were forced to merge while seven merged voluntarily).

Currently, "ten banks have been divested of public shares, including MIBank; NSGB; Misr America International Bank; Egyptian Commercial Bank; Misr-Romania

Bank; Suez Canal Bank; Delta International Bank; and the Cairo Far East Bank"⁽¹⁾.

CBE's financial position at the end of 2006 reached to 357 billion LE versus 391.5 billion at the end of 2005 (1 LE = 0.18 USD). "Domestic assets went down by 55.5 billion LE or 19.6%, to reach 227.5 billion LE or 63.7% of the aggregate financial position at the end of June 2006. On the other hand, foreign assets moved up by the equivalent of 19.3%, to reach 129.5 billion LE or 36.3% of the aggregate financial position at the end of June 2006"⁽²⁾.

Referring to Egypt's NAEEM Research Department Weekly Report⁽³⁾, the CBE declared Egypt's foreign reserves to have amounted to USD 26.22 billion in February 2007 compared to 22.37 billion USD in February 2006. As for Egypt's Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), estimates have reached 7.2 billion USD in the fiscal year of 2006/2007. CBE announced that the new investments have been targeting manufacturing, real estate, and the petrochemical sectors. ●●

“The CBE is granted the full freedom of modifying the monetary policy and stepping up the banking restructuring program”

⁽¹⁾ Economic Trends Report Egypt US Embassy (May 2007)

⁽²⁾ Central Bank of Egypt – Annual Report 2005/2006

⁽³⁾ NAEEM Research Department Weekly Report (March 4 to March 8 2007)

KSA: Banking Sector

14.4 billion SR in the first half of 2007

Seventeen banks are currently operating in KSA, according to the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA). The government has set up the following five specialized credit institutions in order to grant loans to nationals for development projects in the sectors of agriculture and construction: the Saudi Industrial Development Fund (SIDF), the Saudi Arabian Agricultural Bank (SAAB), the Real Estate Development Fund, the Public Investment Fund and the Saudi Credit Bank.

Table no.1 shows the foreign, Saudi and Arab banks operating in KSA and their net profits in Saudi Riyal (1 SR equivalent to 0.26 USD) according to SAMA.

Bank Branches Operating in KSA and their net profits according to SAMA		Table 1
Bank	Number of Branches (May 2007)	Net Profit (Saudi Riyal) (first half of 2007)
1. Al- Rajhi Bank	392	3,180 (m)
2. The National Commercial Bank (NCB)	262	3,534 (b)
3. Riyadh Bank	198	655 (m)
4. The Arab National Bank	123	365 (m)
5. Banque Saudi Fransi (BSF)	70	1,417 (m)
6. Samba Financial Group	64	2.56 (b)
7. Saudi Arabia British Bank (SABB)	61	1,251 (m)
8. Bank Al-Bilad	52	60.4 (m)
9. Saudi Hollandi Bank	41	381.9 (m)
10. Bank Al- Jazira	23	509.7 (m)
11. Saudi Investment Bank	23	531.5 (m)
12. Gulf International Bank	2	-
13. Emirate Bank	1	-
14. BNP Bank	1	-
15. National Bank of Kuwait	1	-
16. Deutsche Bank	1	-
17. Bank Muscat	1	-
Total		14.4 (b)

Source: Monthly Statistical Bulletin, the Saudi Arabian Monetary Association (SAMA May 2007)

According to SAMA, "total bank deposits registered an increase of 3.6% (21.5 billion SR) reaching 612.8 billion during the first quarter of 2007, compared to a rise of 5.3% (29.9 billion SR) during the preceding quarter, achieving an annual rise of 16.8% (87.9 billion SR)"⁽¹⁾.

The National Commercial Bank (NCB) (also referred to as Al-Ahli Bank) was the first bank established in KSA in 1953 and is by far the largest bank in the Kingdom and the Middle East with concerns to total assets which reached a total of 41.5 billion USD in 2006; its net profit in the same year increased by 25% amounting to 1.67 billion USD versus 1.33 billion USD in 2005.

The financial highlights of SABB are illustrated in the Annual Report of 2006. The Bank's profits amounted to SR 3,040 million (811 million USD) the highest ever, customer deposits reached 59,258 million SR while net investments totaled 21,702 million SR,

Al-Rajhi Bank, which is the second largest bank in the Kingdom and the largest Islamic bank in the world, experienced a 10% decrease in its revenues for the first half of 2007. According to CEO Abdullah Suleiman Al Rajhi, the second quarter of 2007 will be undergoing huge progress as there are already 50 new branches operating under the expansion plan, which aims at opening 160 branches throughout KSA within the limited period of 18 months⁽³⁾.

Samba Financial Group is a Joint Stock Company which began business by taking over the operations of Citibank in KSA in 1980. In 2006 Samba was named the "best bank in Saudi Arabia" by Euromoney, the international finance magazine⁽⁴⁾.

Over 86% of bank employees were Saudis in 2005.

In 2004, the Arab News reported that KSA's private banking sector hired 24,590 employees including 1,518 women. In 2005 the total number of workers increased by 20.7% to 29,685, while the number of women grew by 42.8% (2,168) compared to 2004⁽⁵⁾. Islamic Banking within the industry is also expanding as its estimated size is about 800 billion USD.

- (1) Economic Developments First Quarter of 2007 SAMA
- (2) "3180 million Riyals: Al Rajhi Bank's profit for the first half of 2007" Al Rajhi Bank News (2007)
- (3) "Samba Gets 'Best Bank in Saudi Arabia' Award" Arab News (June 11, 2006)
- (4) "Saudi Arabia's Economy Growing at Fast Pace" Arab News (March 5, 2007)

205 billion LBP is government's total contribution to Télé Liban from 1978 (when it owned 50% of its shares) to August 2007; that in addition to the station's dues, which amount to 42.5 billion LBP, including 10.5 billion to the private sector, 31.1 billion to the public sector and 900 to the employees at the station. Télé Liban's monthly expenditures are estimated at more than 350 million LBP.

20 billion LBP was paid by the Lebanese government from July 2005 to September 2007 in the case of Rafik Hariri's assassination, including 12.5 billion LBP as expenses of the International Investigation Commission and 7.5 billion LBP for the international tribunal, knowing that Lebanon has to cover 49% of the tribunal expenses, which are estimated at 140 million USD in the first three years.

978 is the number of Lebanon's internal roads, including 263 in the North Mohafaza, 283 in Mount Lebanon, 264 in the South and Nabatieh and 168 in the Beqa'a. Concerning the Qada'a, A'akkar contains the largest number of roads (100).

129 Lebanese banks' branches and representative offices are present around the world, including 30 branches and offices in each of Syria and Jordan.

SRI International and INMA launch the first interactive mapping website in the Arab World

SRI International and the Social and Cultural Development Association (INMA), in cooperation with the Ministry of Tourism, launched the first interactive mapping website in Lebanon and the Arab world, www.LebanonMaps.net, with the financial support of USAID/Lebanon, under its Expanding Economic Opportunities program.

LebanonMaps.net is a publicly-available, interactive Internet-based application, built on a comprehensive tourism database of more than 15,000 points of interests (POIs).

The website is a freely available online mapping engine that provides comprehensive coverage of the entire country and tourism-focused interactive maps, in addition to detailed descriptions, photos, and contact information of most major and minor tourist sites and lodging.

The launching ceremony was held on November 7th 2007 at Al-Muntada Hall in the offices of **Information International** and INMA, Beirut, in the presence of USAID/Lebanon Director Raouf Youssef, Ministry of Tourism Director General Nada Sardouk and a large number of diplomats, syndicate presidents and representatives of NGOs.

INMA President Jawad Adra talked about the situation of Lebanon's tourism sector among other Arab countries.

Other publications by Information International and INMA (in Arabic):

- 1- Salaries and Remunerations in the Public Sector
- 2- Public Seaside Properties
- 3- Lebanon's Parliamentary History 1920-2000
- 4- Taxes and Fees
- 5- Lebanon in Figures 1992-2002
- 6- Lebanon in Figures 2003-2004
- 7- "I am Responsible, All of Us are Responsible"
- 8- "Our Environment is Our Home"
- 9- "My Society is My Responsibility"
- 10- "My Society is My Responsibility" Workbook
- 11- "I am a Student, I am a Citizen: Ways Towards State Building"
- 12- "Lebanon Wars, why?"

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LEBANON MAPS

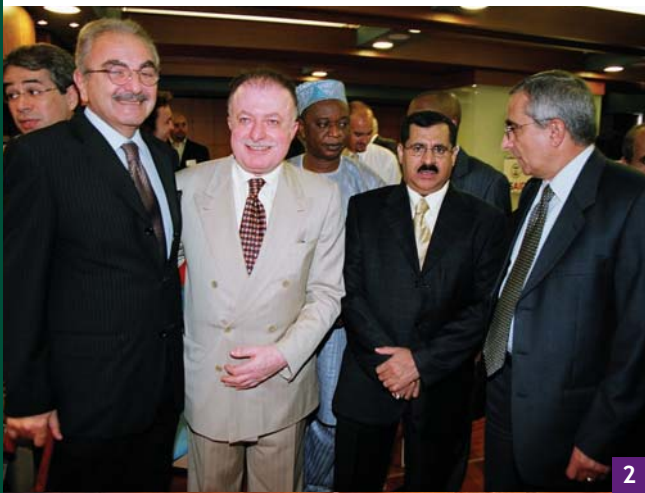
He added that the project was the fruit of successful collaboration between SRI International, USAID, INMA, ARABIA GIS, Maps Geosystem and GIS Transport, the Ministry of Tourism and the Directorate of Geographic Affairs at the Lebanese Army Command.

Adra also said that the project was “one of Lebanon’s modest success stories in difficult times”.

For her part, Sardouk talked about the new project and the efforts deployed by the Ministry to modernize the tourism sector. She also stressed the importance of sustainable collaboration between the public and private sectors.

Youssef said that the website was the latest accomplishment in a series of successful initiatives, including Destination Lebanon website and Discover Lebanon website.

Nada Khorchid from Arabia GIS gave a presentation on the website and its user-friendly applications. ●●



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4 3



- [1] from right: Representative of General Security Director General Charbel Ojeily, Ministry of Tourism Director General Nada Sardouk, Ambassador of Oman Mohammed bin Khalil al-Jazmi, British Ambassador Frances Guy, Colonel Elie Mnassa and the representative of State Security Director General, Major General Bshara Hamdan.**
- [2] from right: Raouf Youssef, Mohammed bin Khalil al-Jazmi, Jawad Adra, Amer Khayat and the representative of the Ambassador of Nigeria.**
- [3] from right: Tarek Waragi from the Embassy of the Netherlands, President of the Lebanese Hotel Association Pierre Ashkar, Media Consultant at the Egyptian Embassy Helmi 'Eshra and Ali Ghandour.**
- [4] Raouf Youssef delivering his speech**