



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice

Lebanon

Lebanon – LBN38440 – the Special
Tribunal for Lebanon – Hezbollah –
14 March Alliance
7 April 2011

1. Background on the March 14 political party including inception and policies.

The March 14 Alliance is a coalition of anti-Syrian parties, with a support base which is predominately made up from both the Sunni and Christian populations. The major party in this multi-facet coalition is the Future Movement (*Tayyar al-Mustaqbal*), also referred to as the Future Current. The Future Movement was formed by former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in late 2004.¹ In February 2005, Hariri was assassinated, for which Syria and Hezbollah were widely accused of being responsible.² As a result of this assassination, the March 14 Alliance was formed during the public demonstrations known as the Cedar Revolution, which took place one month after the assassination of Rafiq Hariri. The Alliance was named after the date on which Syrian troops withdrew from Lebanon after a 29 year occupation. This withdrawal is perceived as the major achievement of the Cedar Revolution.³

Currently, the March 14 Alliance coalition is led by Saad Hariri, the son of assassinated Rafiq Hariri. Legislative elections held in June 2009 resulted in the March 14 Alliance winning 71 of 128 seats, 26 of which were won by the Future Movement. Saad Hariri was appointed Prime Minister of Lebanon, and in November 2009 was sworn in as the head of a national unity government that consisted of 15 ministers from the March 14 Alliance (including five from the Future Movement), 10 ministers from the March 8 Alliance opposition, (including two members of Hezbollah), and 5 independents.⁴ During January 2011 the national unity government headed by Prime Minister Saad Hariri collapsed when 11 ministers submitted their resignations. Of those Ministers that resigned, 10 were from the Hezbollah dominated March 8 Alliance.⁵

¹ 'Lebanon' 2010, *Political Handbook of the World Online Edition*, CQ Press Electronic Library website http://library.cqpress.com/phw/document.php?id=phw2010_Lebanon&type=toc&num=101 – Accessed 30 November 2010 - Attachment 1

² Shanahan, R. 2011 'Justice or Stability? Hizbullah, the Special Tribunal for Lebanon and Consequences for the Region', *Lowy Institute for International Affairs*, March http://www.apo.org.au/sites/default/files/Shanahan%2C%20Justice%20or%20stability_web.pdf - Accessed 29 March 2011 - Attachment 2

³ 'Hundreds of Thousands Commemorate Cedar Revolution in Show of Force Against Hizbullah s Arms' 2011, *Agence France-Presse*, March 11 <http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/NewsDesk.nsf/Lebanon/44C869F81D7FA13CC225785200513FAF?OpenDocument> - Accessed 29 March 2011 - Attachment 3

⁴ 'Lebanon' 2010, *Political Handbook of the World Online Edition*, CQ Press Electronic Library website http://library.cqpress.com/phw/document.php?id=phw2010_Lebanon&type=toc&num=101 – Accessed 30 November 2010 - Attachment 1

⁵ Chulov, M. 'Lebanon's unity government collapses' 2011, *Guardian* 12 January <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jan/12/hezbollah-quits-lebanon-unity-government> - Accessed 29 March 2011 - Attachment 4

Saad Hariri has stated that he and those in the Future Movement would not participate nor support a Hezbollah dominated coalition government.⁶

The main policies of the March 14 Alliance are:

- To reduce and eliminate Syrian influence on the Lebanese political landscape
- To prevent Hezbollah from gaining an effective voice in the Lebanese political system. This prevention is to nullify Hezbollah's main sponsor – Iran – from encompassing Lebanese politics within its sphere of influence
- The request for and continuing support of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL). The STL's mandate is to prosecute persons responsible for the attack of 14 February 2005 which resulted in the death of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and in the death or injury of other persons at that time.⁷

2. What is the situation between the Sunnis and the Shi'ites, in North Lebanon and the rest of Lebanon? Is there a possibility of civil war?

There have been long simmering tensions between Shi'ite and Sunni communities in Lebanon. In January 2011, Hezbollah (a Shi'ite dominated group) played a significant role in the collapse of the then government headed by Saad Hariri (a Sunni) by using its power of veto. Hezbollah has since formulated a Hezbollah controlled cabinet.⁸ With each new conflagration of political upheaval there has been much conjecture that Lebanon will descend into civil war once again.⁹ Yet, the possibility that civil war could be reignited and the inevitable devastation and ruination of people's lives is in both politicians and people's minds in Lebanon and in the countries in the region. These memories have kept the dialogue open between the various factions and a continuing rapprochement between the various political players.¹⁰ The May 2008 "Doha Accord" was a negotiated compromise between the major players in Lebanese politics (Hezbollah and the Future Movement) and the major players in the region. The Accord continues to be successful in steering the country away from the precipice of civil war.¹¹

Nevertheless, a significant polarisation of the two sects has occurred since the assassination of Rafiq Hariri, a Sunni and former Prime Minister, in early 2005. Sunnis have united under the banner of the Future Movement and under the leadership of Saad Hariri. Although the

⁶ Hundreds of Thousands Commemorate Cedar Revolution in Show of Force Against Hizbullah's Arms' 2011, *Agence France-Presse*, March 11

<http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/NewsDesk.nsf/Lebanon/44C869F81D7FA13CC225785200513FAF?OpenDocument> - Accessed 29 March 2011 - Attachment 3

⁷ 'March 14 Alliance' 2006, *The Reut Institute* 12 December <http://reut-institute.org/en/Publication.aspx?PublicationId=1272> - Accessed 29 March 2011 - Attachment 7

⁸ Blanford, N. 2011, 'Lebanon: Sunnis Protest Hizballah-Backed PM Najib Mikati' *Time* 25 January <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2044310,00.html> - Accessed 30 March 2011 - Attachment 12

⁹ Blanch, E. 2011, 'Back from the Abyss?' *Middle East Magazine*, March, pages 22-24

<http://www.exacteditions.com/exact/browse/432/487/8405/3/22?dps=> - Accessed 30 March 2011 - Attachment 19

¹⁰ Kahwaji, R. 2010, 'Lebanon's Defense Policy: Challenges & Possible Solutions', Institute for Near East & Gulf Military Analysis, *Introduction*, August

http://www.inegma.com/reports/Special_Report_10/SpecialReport_10_web.pdf - Accessed 7 April 2011 - Attachment 40

¹¹ Addis, C. L. 2010, 'Lebanon: Background and U.S. Relations', Congressional Research Service, Federation of American Scientists website, 3 August, p.3 <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R40054.pdf> - Accessed 30 March 2011 - Attachment 10

Lebanese Sunni community is fragmented around the country, it is concentrated in northern Beirut, north Lebanon, the western Bekaa and the southern city of Saida and in these areas it has come to dominate.¹² The pro-Syrian and Shi'ite dominated group Hezbollah does not have a significant presence in the north, although it is a dominant force “in the southern suburbs of Beirut, the Bekaa Valley, and southern Lebanon”.¹³

Sectarian clashes between anti-Syrian pro-government forces and pro-Syrian opposition groups erupted across the country in May 2008, resulting in the deaths of more than 80 people. Groups including Hezbollah, Amal, and the Syria Social Nationalist Party (SSNP) militarily occupied areas of Beirut, attacking offices associated with the Future Movement. Conversely, members of groups such as the Future Movement and the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) captured and killed opposition fighters in northern Lebanon.¹⁴ Further reports of sectarian violence in and around the northern city of Tripoli in the years leading up to and during 2008 can be obtained from *Country Advice LBN37754*, 9 November 2010.¹⁵ These reports are indicative of ongoing tensions between the Sunni and Shi'ite communities. The violence of May 2008 was a crisis point for the Lebanese government as it showed that Hezbollah would use military means to achieve its political objectives and would not allow government interference in its affairs. There was concern at the time that these ongoing sectarian conflagrations would eventually reach a tipping point and the possibility of civil war would again break out.

In the past, the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) has been called out to intercede and to quell fears of escalating violence. In December 2006 it is reported that the Lebanese army commander, General Michel Suleiman had stated at that time that sectarian violence “drains the army’s resources and weakens its neutrality,” and he warned that, “[T]his weakness will make the army unable to control the situation in all areas of Lebanon”.¹⁶ During 2008, the army continued to be drawn into quelling sectarian violence and battling with militants. There are claims that Syria was behind these attacks on the Lebanese army in the northern city of Tripoli and supply weapons to extremist groups to create an atmosphere of instability.¹⁷ Commentators have alleged that these manipulations of Lebanon by outside agents such as Syria, Saudi Arabia, Israel and Iran are typical and are instrumental in

¹² International Crisis Group, 2010 ‘*Lebanon’s Politics: The Sunni Community And Hariri’s Future Current*’, *Middle East Report N°96*, 26 May,

<http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/Middle%20East%20North%20Africa/Iraq%20Syria%20Lebanon/Lebanon/96%20Lebanons%20Politics%20-%20The%20Sunni%20Community%20and%20Hariris%20Future%20Current.ashx> - Accessed 31 March 2011 -

Attachment 8

¹³ UK Home Office 2009, *Operational Guidance Note – Lebanon*, 10 June - Attachment 9

¹⁴ UK Home Office 2009, *Operational Guidance Note – Lebanon*, 10 June - Attachment 9; Addis, C. L. 2010, ‘Lebanon: Background and U.S. Relations’, Congressional Research Service, Federation of American Scientists website, 3 August - <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R40054.pdf> – Accessed 1 December 2010. - Attachment 10

¹⁵ Country Advice & Information Services 2010, *Country Advice LBN37754*, 9 December - Attachment 11

¹⁶ Blanford, N. 2006, ‘A New Civil War in Lebanon?’ *Time*, 5 December

<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1566289,00.html> - Accessed 29 March 2011 - Attachment 13

¹⁷ Worth, R.F. 2008 ‘Sectarian tensions worsen in northern Lebanon’ *New York Times* 16 October

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/16/world/africa/16iht-lebanon.1.17006550.html?_r=3&scp=1&sq=In%20northern%20Lebanon,%20sectarian%20violence%20has%20scarred%20the%20city%20of%20Tripoli%20and%20its%20economy.%20.&st=cse - Accessed 29 March 2011 -

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whether Lebanon remains relatively stable or descends again into being a devastated and disparate nation, as it was throughout the 1975-1990 civil war.¹⁸

It is unlikely that the LAF will, in the foreseeable future, make any attempts to disarm Hezbollah. Militarily, Hezbollah is quite sophisticated, as shown by its successful defence of southern Lebanon from Israeli attack in 2006. A major obstacle for the LAF in disarming Hezbollah (a Shi'ite movement) is the fact that 30% of its officers and 70% of its privates are Shi'ites and are unlikely to take on fellow Shi'ites that make up the majority of Hezbollah followers.¹⁹

3. Are there examples of “political rhetoric” escalating?

The political rhetoric is always at a highly combustible level and this has led to violent demonstrations and sectarian violence. This has been the case for many years,²⁰ but it escalated just prior to and after the ousting of Saad Hariri's as Prime Minister of a unity government dominated by the March 14 Alliance during January 2011.²¹ It appears the rhetoric from both the Hezbollah and Future Movement camps continues unabated up to and including March 2011 with the continuing political uncertainty surrounding the possible findings of the SDL and a lack of a leadership within a Lebanese government as it continued to remain in a 'caretaker' mode.²² A recent example is of Saad Hariri talking at a rally for supporters on 11 March this year in which he is quoted as accusing Hezbollah of carrying out Syrian and Iranian interests stating that, “their decision, the decision of their weapons, is not in their hands, but in the hands of the external forces that provide them with arms, finance them and press on them to make the weapons dominate our lives and to control our country, its resources and its future”.²³ On the other hand, Hezbollah has focussed its energies and strategies on disrupting and discrediting the STL. Hezbollah orchestrated a political coup in January 2011 by ousting Saad Hariri from his premiership. He and his party, the Future Movement are the main Lebanese sponsors of the STL. Politically, they will have the most to gain from Hezbollah being adversely implicated in the assassination of Rafiq Hariri.²⁴ Hezbollah is well aware of this and continues to be vehemently opposed to the STL's

¹⁸ Kalman, M. 2010, 'Saudi, Syrian Leaders Try to Avert Civil War in Lebanon' *AoL news online*, 30 July <http://www.aolnews.com/2010/07/30/can-saudi-and-syrian-leaders-stave-off-another-lebanese-civil-wa/> - Accessed 29 March 2011 - Attachment 15; Moscovitch, B. 2011, 'Hezbollah's Departure's Impact on Israel' *Foreign Policy Association - Foreign Policy Blogs Network*, 12 January <http://israel.foreignpolicyblogs.com/2011/01/12/hezbollahs-departures-impact-on-israel/> - Accessed 30 March 2011 - Attachment 16

¹⁹ Nerguizian, A. 2009, 'The Lebanese Armed Forces: Challenges and Opportunities in Post-Syria Lebanon' *Center for Strategic & International Studies* 10 February http://csis.org/files/media/isis/pubs/090210_lafsecurity.pdf - Accessed 1 April 2011 - Attachment 17

²⁰ Blanford, N. 2006, 'A New Civil War in Lebanon?' *Time*, 5 December <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1566289,00.html> - Accessed 29 March 2011 - Attachment 13

²¹ Blanford, N. 2011, 'Lebanon: Sunnis Protest Hizballah-Backed PM Najib Mikati' *Time* 25 January <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2044310,00.html> - Accessed 30 March 2011 - Attachment 12

²² Mehdi, G. & Faley, K. 2011, 'Iran-Lebanese Hezbollah Relationship Tracker 2011', *American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research* website, 11 March http://www.irantracker.org/military-activities/iran-lebanese-hezbollah-relationship-tracker-2011#_edn87 - Accessed 30 March 2011 - Attachment 14

²³ Mehdi, G. & Faley, K. 2011, 'Iran-Lebanese Hezbollah Relationship Tracker 2011', *American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research* website, 11 March http://www.irantracker.org/military-activities/iran-lebanese-hezbollah-relationship-tracker-2011#_edn87 - Accessed 30 March 2011 - Attachment 14

²⁴ Mehdi, G. & Faley, K. 2011, 'Iran-Lebanese Hezbollah Relationship Tracker 2011', *American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research* website, 11 March http://www.irantracker.org/military-activities/iran-lebanese-hezbollah-relationship-tracker-2011#_edn87 - Accessed 30 March 2011 - Attachment 14

mandate.²⁵ This was especially apparent when reports appeared that the STL had shifted its attention from the prime suspect in the assassination – Syria – to members of Hezbollah. Hezbollah's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, has vowed never to surrender any of his members to a Lebanese court. He claims that the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, which has sifted through telecommunications evidence and witness statements since Ragiq Hariri was killed by a massive car bomb, is an Israeli-US plot to discredit him and his movement.²⁶

4. What is the current position of Hezbollah?

Since the collapse of Saad Hariri's unity government in mid-January 2011, Hezbollah has been in the process of establishing a Hezbollah controlled cabinet.²⁷ With the support of the majority of the members of parliament, Hezbollah has ensured that Najib Mikati, a Sunni billionaire who has close ties with the Syrian President would be Prime Minister.²⁸ It is expected that as Prime Minister, Najib Mikati will withdraw Lebanese government support for the STL in yet another attempt by Hezbollah to stop the STL making findings about the Hariri assassination.²⁹ 'Der Spiegel' broke the news on 24 January 2011 that indictments would soon be handed to the prosecutor attached to the STL. Der Spiegel assumes that the STL may find that members of Hezbollah were the perpetrators in Hariri's murder and it was Syria and its intelligence organisation which provided the resources and would be the beneficiaries of his demise.³⁰ Should a public statement from the STL confirm this theory, it would lead to Hezbollah being discredited politically and shown to be Syria's puppet in Lebanon and any credibility it has gained in the past as a defender of Shi'ites and Lebanon from outsiders would be dented.³¹

Hezbollah continues to be militarily preeminent in southern Lebanon and to have a significant military presence in Shi'ite strongholds in Beirut. It remains unchallenged by any other sectarian militia force or the national LAF.³²

²⁵ Mehdi, G. & Faley, K. 2011, 'Iran-Lebanese Hezbollah Relationship Tracker 2011', [American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research](http://www.irantracker.org/military-activities/iran-lebanese-hezbollah-relationship-tracker-2011#_edn87) website, 11 March http://www.irantracker.org/military-activities/iran-lebanese-hezbollah-relationship-tracker-2011#_edn87 - Accessed 30 March 2011 - Attachment 14

²⁶ Chulov, M. 2010, 'Lebanon braced for bloodshed over report into Rafik Hariri killing' *The Guardian* 16 December <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/dec/16/lebanon-hezbollah-hariri-indictments> - Accessed 30 March 2011 - Attachment 39

²⁷ Blanch, E. 2011, 'Back from the Abyss?' *Middle East Magazine*, March, pages 22-24 <http://www.exacteditions.com/exact/browse/432/487/8405/3/22?dps=> - Accessed 30 March 2011 - Attachment 19;

Ali, M.H. 2009 'Hezbollah's political evolution', *The Guardian* 10 April, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/apr/08/middleeast-israel> - Accessed 30 March 2011 - Attachment 21

²⁸ Blanford, N. 2011, 'An Interview with Lebanon's Prime Minister Najib Mikati', *Time*, 13 March <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2058612,00.html> - Accessed 30 March 2011 - Attachment 18

²⁹ Blanch, E. 2011, 'Back from the Abyss?' *Middle East Magazine*, March, pages 22-24 <http://www.exacteditions.com/exact/browse/432/487/8405/3/22?dps=> - Accessed 30 March 2011 - Attachment 19

³⁰ 'Court Official Says Names to Be Made Public in Weeks' 2011, *Spiegel online*, 24 January <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,741231,00.html> - Accessed 1 April 2011 - Attachment 23

³¹ Blanch, E. 2011, 'Back from the Abyss?' *Middle East Magazine*, March, pages 22-24 <http://www.exacteditions.com/exact/browse/432/487/8405/3/22?dps=> - Accessed 30 March 2011 - Attachment 19

Blanford, N. 2010, 'The consequences of Hezbollah indictments at the STL', *Near East Quarterly* 28 November, <http://www.neareastquarterly.com/index.php/2010/11/28/the-consequences-of-hezbollah-indictments-at-the-stl/> - Accessed 30 March 2011 - Attachment 24

³² Nerguizian, A. 2009, 'The Lebanese Armed Forces: Challenges and Opportunities in Post-Syria Lebanon' *Center for Strategic & International Studies* 10 February http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/090210_lafsecurity.pdf - Accessed 1 April 2011 - Attachment 17

5. Would a member of the March 14 Party (or a Sunni) be targeted by Hezbollah?

The March 14 Alliance has its powerbase in what are prominent Sunni, Druze and Maronite Christian areas which are confined to the northern half of Lebanon, including the northern and western suburbs of Beirut. Therefore, it is unlikely that a March 14 Alliance member would be targeted by Hezbollah in this part of the country. However, the UK Home Office reports that although Hezbollah is a dominant force in the southern suburbs of Beirut, as well as in the Bekaa Valley and southern Lebanon generally, if an individual was of specific interest to the organisation, it is unlikely that either moving to another part of the country or relying on state protection would be an option.³³

6. Relocation information.

The area of El Menieh and northern Lebanon is a Sunni community enclave and a stronghold of March 14 Party supporters.³⁴ Hezbollah, the main protagonist of March 14 members, has very little presence in the northern areas of Lebanon.³⁵

However, The UK Home Office operational guidance notes for Lebanon states that “The law provides for freedom of movement, and the government generally respected this right for Lebanese citizens. “[However], for those fearing Hizballah, internal relocation to an area of Lebanon not controlled by Hizballah would be a viable option in the majority of cases and is not considered unduly harsh. However, those of serious adverse interest to the Hizballah are unlikely to be able to escape the attentions of the organisation by moving to another area of the country.”³⁶

7. What is the situation in Lebanon since January 2008?

Since January 2008 the situation in Lebanon has changed. Hezbollah now has a significantly more potent political and parliamentary voice than it ever held before. This has chiefly occurred quite recently in January 2011 when Hezbollah using its veto power in Parliament to cause the collapse of the Saad Hariri lead coalition government,³⁷ and the subsequent installation of a Hezbollah led coalition government from March 2011.³⁸ Potentially, this could lead to a re-emergence of Syrian influence in Lebanon after a hiatus of several years.³⁹

Timeline of events as they unfolded

³³ UK Home Office 2009, *Operational Guidance Note – Lebanon*, 10 June - Attachment 9

³⁴ ‘Lebanon’s Politics: The Sunni Community And Hariri’s Future Current’ 2010, *International Crisis Group Middle East Report N°96*, 26 May, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/Middle%20East%20North%20Africa/Iraq%20Syria%20Lebanon/Lebanon%20Lebanons%20Politics%20-%20The%20Sunni%20Community%20and%20Hariris%20Future%20Current.ashx> - Accessed 31 March 2011 - Attachment 25

³⁵ UK Home Office 2009, *Operational Guidance Note – Lebanon*, 10 June. Attachment 9

³⁶ UK Home Office 2009, *Operational Guidance Note – Lebanon*, 10 June. Attachment 9

³⁷ Blanford, N. 2011, ‘Lebanon: Sunnis Protest Hizballah-Backed PM Najib Mikati’ *Time* 25 January <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2044310,00.html> - Accessed 30 March 2011 - Attachment 12

³⁸ Blanford, N. 2011, ‘Lebanon: Sunnis Protest Hizballah-Backed PM Najib Mikati’ *Time* 25 January <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2044310,00.html> - Accessed 30 March 2011 - Attachment 12

³⁹ Shanahan, R. 2011 ‘Justice or Stability? Hizbullah, the Special Tribunal for Lebanon and Consequences for the Region’, *Lowy Institute for International Affairs*, March http://www.apo.org.au/sites/default/files/Shanahan%2C%20Justice%20or%20stability_web.pdf - Accessed 29 March 2011 - Attachment 2

In May 2008 there was an outbreak of violence after Hezbollah and its allies invaded Sunni dominated West Beirut that intimidated the then government of Prime Minister Fouad Siniora and his chief ally, the future Prime Minister Saad Hariri. Fighting spread to the Chouf Mountains above Beirut and to north Lebanon. It is estimated that 80 people were killed.⁴⁰

The May 2008 outbreak in violence, which was reportedly the worse since the 1975 -1990 civil war,⁴¹ occurred when Hezbollah felt threatened after Prime Minister Fouad Siniora had challenged Hezbollah by moving to close down the private fibre optic communications network created by Hezbollah that runs through critical areas of the country and is separate from the state system. Hezbollah claimed that it had set it up as part of its military arsenal against Israel. He had also dismissed the army general in charge of security at Beirut Airport because he had allowed Hezbollah to spy and eavesdrop on members of the Lebanese civil service and the STL arriving and departing Lebanon.⁴²

In the same month of May 2008, with fears that violence would escalate and the possibly another civil war, the Arab League and the Qatari government facilitated negotiations between the rival political factions. In the resulting “Doha Agreement,” the factions committed to end the violence, fill the vacant presidency, arrange for a power-sharing agreement in the cabinet, and hold parliamentary elections in 2009 based on updated electoral laws.⁴³ In effect the Doha Accord formally gave Hezbollah veto power over government decisions as it was ensured that a block of a third of Ministerial cabinet seats would be filled by members of Hezbollah’s coalition which enhanced its political strength, but the agreement also stipulates that no party can resort to arms or violence to solve disputes.⁴⁴

In June 2009 elections took place and on 9 November 2009 Minister-designate Saad Hariri announced that a consensus had been reached and that a cabinet had been formed.

It was not long after a cabinet was formed in November 2009 that Hezbollah felt that the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL), which had opened in the Hague on 1 March 2009⁴⁵ was being used as a tool by its opponents such as the March 14 Alliance to influence domestic issues and to gain political points against it. The Doha Accord disallowed Hezbollah from taking to the streets again and to resolving the issues surrounding the STL by force.⁴⁶ Instead, Hezbollah has used its extensive communication network⁴⁷ to broadcast propaganda

⁴⁰ UK Home Office 2009, *Operational Guidance Note – Lebanon*, 10 June - Attachment 9

⁴¹ Addis, C. L. 2010, ‘Lebanon: Background and U.S. Relations’, Congressional Research Service, Federation of American Scientists website, 3 August, p.3 <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R40054.pdf> - Accessed 30 March 2011. Attachment 27

⁴² Addis, C. L. 2010, ‘Lebanon: Background and U.S. Relations’, Congressional Research Service, Federation of American Scientists website, 3 August, p.3 <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R40054.pdf> - Accessed 30 March 2011 - Attachment 27

⁴³ Addis, C. L. 2010, ‘Lebanon: Background and U.S. Relations’, Congressional Research Service, Federation of American Scientists website, 3 August, p.3 <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R40054.pdf> - Accessed 30 March 2011. Attachment 27

⁴⁴ Yacoubian, M. 2011 ‘Lebanon: Tracking the Situation’ *United States Institute of Peace* website 13 January <http://www.usip.org/node/6756> - Accessed 30 March 2011 - Attachment 26

⁴⁵ ‘About the STL’(undated), Special Tribunal for Lebanon website <http://www.stl-tsl.org/section/AbouttheSTL> – Accessed 29 March 2011 - Attachment 6

⁴⁶ ‘Lebanon rivals agree crisis deal’ 2008, *BBC News*, 21 May <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7411835.stm> - Accessed 31 March 2011 - Attachment 28

⁴⁷ ‘Hezbollah as a case study of the battle for hearts and minds’ 2007, Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center

in an attempted to discredit both the STL as a political instrument of the West and Israel, claiming that it is “one more element in an alleged pro-American, pro-Israeli plot to turn Lebanon against the Arab world”⁴⁸

Since the opening of the STL on 1 March 2009, Hezbollah has intimidated supporters of the STL (primarily anti-Syrian and pro – Future Movement elements), and warned that failure of Saad Hariri’s government to denounce the tribunal will result in ‘firm action’ being taken. Nevertheless, some members of the March 14 Alliance believe that Hezbollah’s threats are meaningless as it cannot afford to promote its image as a sectarian militia. The International Crisis Group, however, argues that Hezbollah “can ill afford to do nothing”, while Hariri “would pay a heavy price for turning his back on the murder of the man who was both his father and [the Sunni] community’s pre-eminent leader”, including potential “violent action by Sunni groups angered at the denial of justice”.⁴⁹ Saad Hariri has vowed not to give in to threats to denounce the STL, although has withdrawn his accusation of Syria’s implication in his father’s assassination, which he admitted was ‘political’.⁵⁰

In the near future, the STL is expected to issue indictments for Hariri’s assassination. It is widely speculated that members of Hezbollah will be indicted, which could lead to renewed violence between Shiite and Sunni communities.⁵¹ The US Congressional Research Service reports that “[n]umerous media reports in July and August 2010 speculated that high-ranking members of Hezbollah may be indicted, and expressed concerns that such indictments could trigger sectarian and regional tensions that could lead to conflict”.⁵² According to *BBC News*, expected indictments of Hezbollah members have raised fears of “a new round of sectarian conflict”.⁵³ *Al Jazeera* reported in November 2010 that Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah

at the Israel Intelligence Heritage & Commemoration Center (IICC), June http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/hezbollah_e_0607.pdf - Accessed 31 March 2011 - Attachment 29

⁴⁸ ‘Trial by Fire: The Politics of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon’ 2010, Middle East Report N°100, International Crisis Group website, 2 December <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/iraq-syria-lebanon/lebanon/100-trial-by-fire-the-politics-of-the-special-tribunal-for-lebanon.aspx> – Accessed 3 December 2010 – Attachment 30

⁴⁹ ‘Trial by Fire: The Politics of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon’ 2010, Middle East Report N°100, International Crisis Group website, 2 December <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/iraq-syria-lebanon/lebanon/100-trial-by-fire-the-politics-of-the-special-tribunal-for-lebanon.aspx> – Accessed 3 December 2010 – Attachment 30

⁵⁰ Diab, Y. 2010, ‘Lebanon: Tensions between Hezbollah and Future Movement Escalate’, *Asharq Al-Awsat*, 22 September <http://www.aawsat.com/english/news.asp?section=1&id=22408> – Accessed 2 December 2010 – Attachment 31 ; ‘Hariri: Will not give in to threats’ 2010, *Al Jazeera*, 14 November

<http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2010/11/20101114133831828538.html> – Accessed 1 December 2010 – Attachment 32 ; Muir, J. 2010, ‘Deep divisions haunt Lebanese politics’, *BBC News*, 22 September <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-11392034> – Accessed 1 December 2010 – Attachment 35

⁵¹ ‘Trial by Fire: The Politics of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon’ 2010, Middle East Report N°100, International Crisis Group website, 2 December <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/iraq-syria-lebanon/lebanon/100-trial-by-fire-the-politics-of-the-special-tribunal-for-lebanon.aspx> – Accessed 3 December 2010 – Attachment 30 ; ‘UN criticises Hariri tribunal leaks’ 2010, *Al Jazeera*, 22 November

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has threatened that the group will “cut off the hand” of anyone attempting to arrest its members over Hariri’s assassination.⁵⁴

Tensions between anti-Syrian supporters of the STL, including the Future Movement, and pro-Syrian groups opposed to the STL, are sharply escalating in the lead up to the expected indictments. A September 2010 article in Arabic international daily newspaper *Asharq Al-Awsat* argues that “[t]he situation in Lebanon continues to be a source of concern, domestically, regionally, and internationally, particularly in light of the escalation between Hezbollah and some of its allies on one side, and the Future Movement and some of its allies, on the other. Despite efforts to dispel the climate of tension that has existed between the two sides since the events of 7 May 2008...the political discourse from both parties’ remains inflammatory, and a campaign of escalation continue”.⁵⁵

BBC News similarly reported in November 2010 that “[t]ensions have been steadily mounting over recent months” and that “[t]he issue is dominating the Lebanese political arena”. The issue is so significant that it is preventing the national unity cabinet from meeting.⁵⁶ In October 2010, the ICG indicated that the potential political stalemate resulting from the increasing tensions could create instability in areas divided over current events, including in Tripoli.⁵⁷

8. Anything else that you think relevant.

No further relevant information was found.

Attachments

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