



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice

Lebanon

Lebanon – LBN39198 – March 14 Alliance
– Hezbollah – State Protection

5 September 2011

1. Please advise whether the Lebanese state authorities could provide protection to a Sunni member of the 14 March bloc against targeting by Shiites and Hezbollah.

Foreign government reports indicate that the perpetrators of suspicious killings, including politically motivated assassinations, have generally not been identified and investigations have rarely led to prosecutions. According to Transparency Lebanon, judicial failures are partly to blame for the lack of investigations into politically motivated killings. It is argued that the judiciary is subject to political pressure, with influential politicians intervening to protect their supporters from prosecution.¹

Security forces in Lebanon include the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), which controls borders, and the Internal Security Forces (ISF) which “enforce laws, conduct searches and arrests, and refer cases to the judiciary”.² A 2007 *Now Lebanon* report indicates that the ISF is generally perceived as anti-Syrian and sympathetic to the Future Movement.³ Conversely, according to Stratfor, Hezbollah “has substantial influence over the Lebanese Armed Forces”.⁴ While laws against bribery and extortion by government security officials apply to the police force, “due to a lack of strong enforcement, their effectiveness was limited”.⁵

The most recent US Department of State (USDOS) *Country Reports on Terrorism* provided an assessment of the state of Lebanese authorities with regard to their counter-terrorism capacity, which in turn assesses in part their ability to provide protection. To wit:

The Lebanese government, despite continuous political crisis and the looming threat of armed civil conflict, continued to build its counterterrorism capacity and to cooperate in supporting U.S. counterterrorism efforts. Over the course of the year, Lebanese authorities increased efforts to disrupt suspected terrorist cells before they could act, arrested numerous suspected al-Qa’ida-affiliated militants and Palestinian violent extremists, and uncovered several weapons caches. The Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), in particular, were credited with capturing wanted terrorist fugitives and containing sectarian violence.⁶

¹ UK Home Office 2009, *Operational Guidance Note – Lebanon*, 10 June, pp.11-12 <Attachment>; US Department of State 2011, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2010 – Lebanon*, 8 April, Sections 1a, 1e, 1d, 4 <Attachment>

² UK Home Office 2009, *Operational Guidance Note – Lebanon*, 10 June, p.11 <Attachment>; US Department of State 2011, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2010 – Lebanon*, 8 April, Section 1d <Attachment>

³ Ryan, B. 2007, ‘Securing Internal Security’, *NOW Lebanon*, 12 November

<http://www.nowLebanon.com/NewsArticleDetails.aspx?ID=19296> – Accessed 8 September 2008 <Attachment>

⁴ ‘Syria, Iran: Estranged Allies Collide in Lebanon’ 2010, *Stratfor*, 10 August

http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/20100810_syria_iran_estranged_allies_collide_lebanon – Accessed 8 March 2011 <Attachment>

⁵ UK Home Office 2009, *Operational Guidance Note – Lebanon*, 10 June, p.11 <Attachment>

⁶ US Department of State 2011, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2010*, August, p.95 <Attachment>

A 2010 report by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) explored the availability of state protection for individuals who have received death threats, and detailed the procedures required for an individual to report such threats to authorities. The IRB cited an official from the Canadian Embassy in Beirut, who stated that having received a complaint, “police may take ‘preventive actions’ depending on the seriousness of the threats”. This was corroborated by the senior researcher and director of the Beirut office of Human Rights Watch (HRW), who told IRB that “Lebanese police have been able to provide some protection to victims of death threats on an ad hoc basis, particularly for cases in which the person who received the threats is famous”. In contrast, the President of the Lebanese Center for Human Rights stated that “Lebanese police generally do not provide ‘effective protection means’ to people who receive death threats”.⁷

An IRB report from 2008 also examined the availability of state protection, in this instance for Christians, and whether Hezbollah targeted Christians in particular. According to the report, the Lebanese army comprises officers from every community, while its soldiers are mostly Shi’a Muslims and Christian. The IRB considered the army to be “the only force able to keep the country together”. During riots in January 2008, soldiers were deployed to the Shi’a neighbourhoods of Chiyah and Mar Mikhaeil to “prevent the violence from spilling into neighbouring Christian and Sunni Muslim Neighbourhoods”.⁸

The UK Home Office noted that while inter-factional fighting in May 2008 resulted in many deaths and injuries, there were “no known reports of reprisals by Hizballah against individuals for affiliation to a particular Lebanese political group”. The report noted, however, that if an applicant feared the actions of local Hezbollah members, “internal relocation to an area not under Hizballah control is likely to be an option in the majority of cases”. Further, “[i]ndividuals who are able to establish that they are of significant adverse interest to Hizballah may be unable to obtain protection in Hizballah areas or relocate”.⁹

In 2008, *Ya Libnan* reported that Hezbollah did not consider itself to be subject to the authority of the ISF, and thought itself to be effectively above the law. Hezbollah maintains ‘closed areas’ in Beirut’s south and in Southern Lebanon more generally, while the government “believes that the ISF should allow Hezbollah to continue operating as is until the issue is solved on a regional level”. The organisation has reportedly established – and extended – its own borders, has bought land and properties, and is thought to be providing “road services, electricity and phone services, social and medical services.” According to the article, “Hezbollah’s disregard for the state authority is indicative of its disregard of the state as a whole...[a]s the political vacuum continues unabated, the state sadly seems to have accepted that Hezbollah will operate on its own terms”.¹⁰

⁷ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2010, *LBN103381.E Lebanon: Availability of state protection for people who receive death threats; steps required to file a complaint*, 22 January <Attachment>

⁸ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2008, *Lebanon: Treatment of Christians and availability of state protection for Christians; whether Hezbollah targets Christians in particular (2007-2008)*, 22 February <Attachment>

⁹ UK Home Office 2009, *Operational Guidance Note – Lebanon*, 10 June, p.12 <Attachment>

¹⁰ ‘Is Hezbollah untouchable?’ 2008, *Ya Libnan*, 2 May

http://yalibnan.com/site/archives/2008/05/is_hezbollah_un.php – Accessed 8 September 2008 <Attachment>

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