

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Lebanon

CAPITAL: Beirut

SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT: Unitary Multiparty Republic

AREA: 10,452 Sq Km (4,036 Sq Mi)

ESTIMATED 2000 POPULATION: 3,319,800



LOCATION & GEOGRAPHY: Lebanon is located on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea in the Middle East. It is bound by Syria to the north and east, Israel to the south and the Mediterranean Sea to the west. The country can be divided into four topographical regions (1.) The coastal plain which is a narrow strip in the north. (2.) The coastal mountain range or Lebanon Mountains which are a series of crests and ridges. (3.) The Central Plateau which consists of the Syrian Plain and part of the Biqa valley. (4.) The eastern mountain range which comprises the remainder of the Biqa Valley and rises to form the Jabal ash Sharqi or Anti-Lebanon Mountains as well as the Jabal ash Shaikh or Mt. Hermon, which forms the eastern border with Syria. The two principal rivers are the Orontes and the Litani or Leontes. Major Cities (pop. est.); Beirut 1,100,000, Tripoli 240,000, Zahlah 48,000, Sayda (Sidon) 40,500 (1991). Land Use; forested 8%, pastures 1%, agricultural-cultivated 30%, other 61% (1993).

CLIMATE: Lebanon has a Mediterranean climate with a wide variation in climatic conditions. Summers are generally hot and dry while winters are warm and moist. Temperatures and precipitation vary depending on altitude, while winters are cooler on the central plateau region and on the coast. Precipitation, in general, decreases from west to east, with most rainfall occurring in the winter months. Average annual precipitation in Beirut is 920 mm (36 inches) and average temperature ranges are from 11 to 17 degrees Celsius (52 to 63 degrees Fahrenheit) in January to 23 to 32 degrees Celsius (73 to 90 degrees Fahrenheit) in August.

PEOPLE: The principal ethnic majority are the Lebanese Arabs who account for 83% of the population while Palestinian Arabs account for 10%. The remainder are comprised of other ethnic minorities and include Armenians, the largest ethnic minority accounting for 5% of the population, Assyrians, Kurds, Jews, Turks and Greeks.

DEMOGRAPHIC/VITAL STATISTICS: Density; 268 persons per sq km (695 persons per sq mi) (1991). Urban-Rural; 83.7% urban, 16.3% rural (1990). Sex Distribution; 48.6% male, 51.4% female (1990). Life Expectancy at Birth; 61.5 years male, 69.0 years female (1990). Age Breakdown; 35% under 15, 31% 15 to 29, 15% 30 to 44, 10% 45 to 59, 7% 60 to 74, 2% 75 and over (1990). Birth Rate; 31.7 per 1,000 (1990). Death Rate; 8.7 per 1,000 (1990). Increase Rate; 23.0 per 1,000 (1990). Infant Mortality Rate; 44.0 per 1,000 live births (1990).

RELIGIONS: Around 40% of the population are Christians mainly Maronite or Greek Orthodox, Assyrian Catholic, Roman Catholic and Protestant. While around 60% of the population are either Sunni, Shiite or Druze Muslims.

LANGUAGES: The official language is Arabic, although French and English are used for government and diplomatic purposes. Other minority languages include Armenian, Kurdish, Assyrian and Syriac.

EDUCATION: Aged 25 or over and having attained: no formal schooling 45.6%, incomplete primary 28.5%, primary 10.8%, incomplete secondary 7.1%, secondary 4.9%, higher 3.1% (1970). Literacy; literate population aged 15 or over 80.0% (1990).

MODERN HISTORY - WWII TO 1993: On Jan. 1, 1944 Lebanon gained full independence from France. Christian and Muslim leaders agreed to share power in the government and retained strong ties with the West after independence. From 1948 to 1949 Lebanon participated in the Arab League's war against Israel, however, the country remained peaceful until 1958 when some Nasserist Muslims rebelled against the government. At the request of Pres. Camille Chamoun, the US sent thousands of Marines to restore peace. As a result Fuad Chebab replaced Chamoun as President until 1964 when Charles Helou replaced Chebab. Until 1970 the Muslims and Christians shared power peacefully when in 1969 the activities of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) led to fighting in Lebanon. During the 1970's conflict between Lebanese Christian and Muslim groups flared up, as the Christians opposed the PLO while the Muslims supported them. In Apr. 1975 after a series of clashes between the PLO and the Maronites' armed militia ended in the massacre of a bus load of Palestinians, a full scale civil war broke out between Christians and the Muslim-PLO alliance. In Apr. 1976 Syria sent thousands of troops to the country in an effort to restore order at the President's request and full scale fighting in Lebanon ended in late 1976. However, tension continued between the Christians and Muslim-PLO alliance with continual conflict resulting in the UN sending a peace keeping force to Lebanon in 1978. In Mar. 1978 Israeli forces responded to PLO attacks by invading Lebanon and driving the PLO forces out of the southern part of the country. In June 1982 Israeli troops launched a further invasion and in Aug. after heavy bombing of Beirut the PLO withdrew to other Arab countries. In Sept. 1982 President elect Bashir Gemayel was assassinated and two days later Israeli backed Phalangists massacred Palestinian civilians. In 1983 foreign troops in Lebanon became victims of terrorist bombings and in May 1983 Israel withdrew to southern Lebanon but came under heavy attack from the Druze Muslim militia. In May 1984 Pres. Amin Gemayel formed a national unity government headed by Rashid Karami, a Sunni Muslim, who was later assassinated in June 1987. By mid-1985 Israel had completely withdrawn from Lebanon but remained in control of a security corridor along their border to eliminate further PLO

attacks from Lebanon. During the late 1980's Muslim militia resorted to kidnapping Westerners and after the end of Gemayel's presidential term in Sept. 1988 he appointed a transitional military government headed by Gen. Michel Aoun, a Maronite army commander. In Mar. 1989 Aoun launched a "war of liberation" against the Syrian occupants and their Muslim allies. In Nov. 1989 Rene Mouawad was elected President and 17 days later was assassinated in a bomb attack. Elias Hrawi, a moderate Maronite, was elected President. In Oct. 1990 at Hrawi's request Syrian warplanes attacked the Presidential Palace where Gen. Aoun had held up since refusing to hand over power. Aoun escaped to the French Embassy and pledged his alliance to Hrawi's government while his 15,000 strong force stopped retaliating. In Jan. 1991 Pres. Hrawi declared Lebanon's 15 year old civil war over, although the Lebanese Army still had to regain control of the ports and economic centers as well as disarm the private militia. On Mar. 15, 1991 the Beirut Airport was reopened and in June 1991 the first western commercial air flight since 1985 landed at the airport. On June 7, 1991 some forty new members of the Chamber of Deputies (Parliament) replaced the 1972-elected members that had died since then. On June 14, 1991 the government appointed Council for Development and Reconstruction signed an venture agreement with a US engineering firm to work and oversee local engineers redevelopment of Beirut. By July 11, 1991 the Lebanese army had control of PLO strongholds in southern Lebanon. Following which Pres. Hrawi requested the US to help in getting Israel to withdraw its troops from their border territory. On Aug. 8, 1991 John McCarthy was released after being held hostage by pro-Iranian militants for 5 years followed by Terry Anderson, the longest-held hostage on Dec. 4, 1991. On Dec. 20, 1991 a car bomb killed 20 people in Beirut. Also during 1991 Gen. Aoun left for exile in Paris after the government announced a general amnesty for "offenses" committed in the civil war that also resulted in the resignation of two leading Shiite politicians. In Feb. 1992 the government introduced an economic austerity program and on March 6, 1992 in response to the austerity measures the General Confederation of Lebanese Workers began a series of strikes. On May 6, 1992 Prime Minister Omar Karami resigned and Rashid as-Solh was elected caretaker Prime Minister that led to political infighting between the Druze and Maronite factions. On June 17, 1992 the last two Western hostages, German aid workers, were released by Shiite militia that enabled a US \$212 million grant in EU aid to proceed. On Aug. 23, 1992 the first elections held since May 1972 began although most of the Christians boycotted the polls. The elections resulted in new National Assembly consisting of mostly of pro-Syrian members as well as pro-Iranian Hezbollah fundamentalists. On Sept. 11, 1992 Pres. Hrawi met with the Syrian President, Hafez al-Assad and agreed to continue with the US-sponsored Arab-Israeli peace talks, although no progress was made regarding the withdrawal of some 40,000 Syrian troops still stationed in Lebanon. On Oct. 22, 1992 Pres. Hrawi appointed Rafiq al-Hariri, a business entrepreneur, as Prime Minister. In Dec. 1992 after Israel had deported some 415 Palestinian men to Lebanon's border territory, the government announced it would not assist the men with aid declaring that they were Israel's responsibility. In March 1993 Prime Minister al-Hariri announced plans of a 10-year US \$10 billion reconstruction and revival plan for Beirut. In April 1993 the government order the suspension of two of the country's leading newspaper and on television station as well as the prosecution of a third newspaper. In the same month a military court ruled that the persons responsible for the 1983 truck-bombing of the US Embassy were covered by the 1991 amnesty. In response the US

government ordered the US offices of Lebanon's Middle East Airlines to close. In May 1993 there was further political strain between the Christian and Muslim factions over Cabinet reshuffles and the appointment of 72 civil servant posts by Prime Minister al-Hariri without the consultation of his Cabinet. In June 1993 an escalation of Hezbollah guerrilla attacks on Israel from southern Lebanon positions led to Israel launching on July 25, 1993 its largest naval, air and artillery attacks on Lebanon since 1982. On July 31, 1993 a cease-fire was implemented after the Lebanese government revoked all gun permits in the south and deployed an army battalion to quell the situation. The six days of fighting resulted in some 130 dead, 500 wounded and 300,000 displaced villagers. On Aug. 18, 1993 Lebanon and Syrian agreed to establish a permanent secretariat for the Higher Council in terms with a bilateral treaty signed in May 1991 and on Sept. 16, 1993 Lebanon and Syrian entered into accords on transport, agriculture and other socio-economic affairs.

CURRENCY: The official currency is the Pound (LP) divided into 100 Piastres.

ECONOMY: Gross Domestic Product; USD \$15,800,000,000 (1994). Public Debt; USD \$1,169,200,000 (1995). Imports; USD \$6,101,000,000 (1994). Exports; USD \$737,000,000 (1994). Tourism Receipts; N/A. Balance of Trade; USD -\$5,364,000,000 (1994). Economically Active Population; 938,000 or 32.2% of total population (1994). Unemployed; 7.5% (1993 est.).

MAIN TRADING PARTNERS: Its main trading partners are Saudi Arabia, Syria, Kuwait and Iraq.

MAIN PRIMARY PRODUCTS: Apples, Citrus Fruits, Cotton, Goats, Grapes, Limestone, Olives, Potatoes, Sheep, Sugar Beets, Wheat.

MAJOR INDUSTRIES: Agriculture, Cement, Cotton, Fertilizers, Food Processing, Oil Refining, Trade and Banking, Textiles, Tobacco Processing, Yarn.

MAIN EXPORTS: Cement, Chemicals, Clothing, Fruit and Vegetables, Machinery, Metal, Textiles, Tobacco.

TRANSPORT: Railroads; route length 417 km (259 mi) (1982), passenger-km 8,570,000 (5,325,000 passenger-mi) (1982), cargo ton-km 42,010,000 (28,773,000,000 short ton-mi) (1982). Roads; length 7,370 km (4,580 mi) (1987). Vehicles; cars 473,372 (1982), trucks and buses 49,560 (1982). Merchant Marine; vessels 175 (1990), deadweight tonnage 473,189 (1990). Air Transport; passenger-km 1,503,227,00 (934,062,000 passenger-mi) (1990), cargo ton-km 24,037,000 (16,463,000 short ton-mi) (1990).

COMMUNICATIONS: Daily Newspapers; total of 16 with a total circulation of 500,000 (1992). Radio; receivers 2,247,000 (1994). Television; receivers 1,100,000 (1994). Telephones; units 350,000 (1993).

MILITARY: 44,300 (1995) total active duty personnel with 97.1% army, 1.1% navy and 1.8% air force while military expenditure accounts for 4.4% (1994) of the Gross National Product (GNP).