



مصرف لبنان
تأري ومطعمين من ربح الرسوم والضرائب ؟
ان الاساتذة والمعلمين وسوقس الشغل العام والمحا
والقضاة مدرس والعسكريين وانظائهم بعض مقولتهم
السلطة
من مزروع للمرضى
رداه على لونه

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LEBANON in CONFLICT

2013 - 2014



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This report was produced as part of "Understanding Fault Lines in a Changing Lebanon: Perspectives of Emerging Grassroots Religious and Traditional Leadership," a program funded by the United States Institute for Peace (USIP). The views expressed herein are Hayya Bina's alone and are not intended to reflect or substitute for those of USIP.

To enable sharing of the documentation on which this report is based, Hayya Bina and UMAM Documentation and Research partnered to add two new sections to UMAM's online database, Memory At Work (www.memoryatwork.org). Titled (in Arabic) *fahras al-onf fi lubnan 2013* and *fahras al-onf fi lubnan 2014*, these sections contain most of the open source, Arabic language documentation used to compile this report.

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صفحة بيضاء

Lebanon 2013 – 2014

“Stability” vs. “Instabilities”

The year 2015 had barely begun when a double suicide bombing struck a café in Jabal Mohsen just outside of Tripoli. The attack in this largely Alawi area (essentially the capital for Lebanese Alawi) claimed the lives of seven people and injured 35 others. The most interesting aspect of this incident is that the two young men who perpetrated it were themselves residents of Tripoli. They lived in its poorest quarter, *al-Mankoubeen*, which is within walking distance to the café they targeted. Ironically, *al-Mankoubeen* translates to “the Quarter of the Unfortunates!”

Two days after the bombing, a special ISF detachment forcibly relocated the (Sunni) Islamist “landlords” of Roumieh Prison's B block, and their parish, to another area in the prison. The pretext for that action was that some prisoners in block B—transformed over the years (thanks to the blessings of some politicians) into something of an Islamist *principality*—were

involved in the Jabal Mohsen bombing. But accusatory fingers were also being pointed at the Ain al-Helwe Palestinian refugee camp east of Saida, where Tripoli Islamists sought refuge following the LAF's substantial military operation to “pacify” the city in October 2014. In concert with the “Sunni-oriented” actions and associated accusations, more was heard about reactivating the Bekaa-oriented security plan announced several months earlier. Though public statements refer only generally to the Bekaa, it is common knowledge (at least among the Lebanese) that the epicenter of unrest in the Bekaa is almost exclusively the north. That area, associated historically with the production of drugs, has emerged over time and through wars as the hub for a variety of criminal activities including kidnapping for ransom, arms smuggling and even more “traditionally,” auto theft. The idea behind the security plan called for enforcement of the law via a reinvigorated program

to arrest criminals. The approach was considered particularly important because the dramatic increase in crime included incidents that endangered “civil peace” and were even linked to terrorist activities.^{1,2}

Today, however, not everything that affects Lebanon takes place within its borders. On January 18, 2015, for instance, an Israeli helicopter attacked a joint Hezbollah-IRGC patrol in the southern Syrian region of Quneitra.³ The strike reminded the Lebanese that several thousand of their countrymen, primarily Shia, are involved in armed conflicts outside the country. As if it were a tennis game, people held their breath in anticipation of the return, which came quickly enough when Hezbollah launched a “restrained” response in the contested Shebaa Farms area that straddles the Lebanese-Syrian-Israeli tri-border zone. That action closed the brief episode. Similarly, as the Lebanese remain involved in Syria, refugees from that country have also emerged as a new and populous demographic within Lebanon itself. In response

to the strain caused by that tremendous influx, a quasi-consensual political decision was made in late 2014 by Tammam Salam's “National Interest” government to close Lebanon's borders to newcomers from Syria and adopt a “zero Syrian refugee” policy. Enforcement of that decision began in early 2015.

In contrast to the security events that would soon begin to unfold, 2015—from a political perspective—began on what seemed a reassuring note. For example, none of the incidents that occurred succeeded in interrupting the dialogue commenced in December 2014 between the pro-Saudi Sunni Future Movement and pro-Iranian Shia Hezbollah (an engagement that coincided with general appeasement by the Christian allies of the two large “Muslim” actors). Nevertheless, the aphorism used to describe that initiative was not particularly reassuring, as the entities involved (which had been members of the same government since the beginning of 2014) agreed that the talks were needed to “cool down the Sunni-Shia tension.”

¹ On November 15, (Christian Maronites) Sobhi and Nadimah Fakhri were killed at home in Btedii, in northwest Bekaa. They died at the hands of Shia criminals from the Jaafar clan who were fleeing the LAF patrol that was pursuing them. The gunmen entered the Fakhris' home intending to steal their vehicle, but when the family resisted, the criminals shot the couple and their son. The issue spiked tensions in the Bekaa and stoked emotions among the Christian community to the point that Maronite Patriarch Beshara al-Rahi intervened. He urged the government to exact justice for the couple's murder and called on the Jaafar family to hand over the killers and reject any “political immunity” the criminals might enjoy. Today, the killers remain free.

² See page 94, footnote 5.

³ Dehghan, Saeed Kamali. “Top Iranian general and six Hezbollah fighters killed in Israeli attack in Syria.” *The Guardian*. January 19, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/19/top-iranian-general-hezbollah-fighters-killed-israel-attack-syria>.

Realistically, that slogan says as much about the state of Sunni-Shia tension in the country as it does about the balance of roles within the various Lebanese communities. For instance, the vague notion of easing Sunni-Shia tension via dialogue conducted between the two "camps" (each of which asserts that it represents the respective communities involved) clearly takes precedence over the election of a new Lebanese president. More to the point, Salam's "National Interest" government (formed in early 2014) was seated thanks to a "nihil obstat" registered by the Saudis and Iranians (acknowledgments brokered by France on behalf of the international community). Moreover, the new government was formed in anticipation of an enduring presidential vacancy, since all involved were well aware of how difficult it would be to agree on a successor to President Michel Suleiman (who was elected under exceptional circumstances in May 2008 following the Doha Agreement that ended the country's "mini-civil war" and who left office at the expiration of his term on May 25, 2014). It must also be noted that these political machinations have prevailed over any attention being given by the State to ensure at least minimal functioning of its institutions (as if their full functionality could

somehow fail to guarantee some form of calm within the country). Further, the exclusive character of the ongoing inter-Muslim dialogue illustrates the new "division of labor" that exists within Lebanon's various communities and underscores just how little the Christians count when it comes to preserving the security of the country.

In general, January 2015 may be considered representative of the motivations behind, and actors involved in the violence Lebanon witnessed in 2013 and 2014 and for which this report seeks to account. The areas described herein include:

- Sunni-Shia tension
- Political polarization
- Security-oriented attempts to contain violence
- Interplay between events and actors on both sides of the Lebanese/Syrian border
- Social decay that has affected some areas and fomented their "reinvention" as hotbeds for extremism
- Political protection of criminal acts in some areas

At several instances during these two years, Lebanon seemed to be losing its fragile equilibrium and on the edge of collapse. Yet regardless of that impression or how likely the country's implosion may be in the future, Lebanon never fails to remain resilient in the

face of new and/or worsening challenges. That resilience begs the question: "Is the country simply experiencing a resurgence of "more of the same" kinds of violence and responding to them with "more of the same" kinds of fixes?" While that query comes to mind frequently and is entirely legitimate, another question deserves to be asked: "To what extent are Lebanese leaders in the various communities and groups (even if they are clients of regional superpowers) actually controlling their communities and guaranteeing that the same level of resilience shown thus far will remain evident?" Obviously, the dilemma faced by Lebanon's Sunni community—which is currently experiencing a significant leadership crisis that parallels its feverish soul-searching process—comes immediately to mind. However, the situation in other communities is certainly no better—even though it may not be quite as visible.



This report derives from the documentation and research component of a USIP-funded program, "Understanding Fault Lines in a Changing Lebanon," which was led by Hayya Bina. In sum, the program consisted of two distinct areas—a research-based effort that included a field aspect accomplished by conducting dozens of interviews

with the actors involved (including ground actors and key actors, and decision and opinion makers) and another effort that focused on assembling those same actors in various regions throughout Lebanon in an attempt to tackle specific tensions and sources of violence. As work on this report progressed, its structure and design were revised to ensure the output product would not be an exercise in simply "checking the boxes." Rather, we hoped to design a flexible template that could be reproduced easily and on a regular basis. Notably, the substance of this report benefits directly from those meetings and interviews.

Initially, the report focused on gathering data for the 2013 – 2014 period within the following 11 areas: borders, the role of the LAF, inter-confessional incidents, incidents of mass killings, assassinations and assassination attempts, kidnappings, prisons, real estate incidents, domestic violence, violence at universities and at athletic events and the Palestinian/Syrian refugee situation. Data on all of these areas were gathered gradually as the incidents occurred and with insights obtained from the various actors involved. We began drafting the report as events continued to unfold but realized that our initial intent had shifted

somewhat, particularly after concluding that focusing on some of the topics and referencing others within those areas would be far more interesting than attempting equal treatment of the topics listed above.



Aside from our "mid-course correction," we must also describe how we tracked and told this comprehensive "story" despite the fact that it was still being played out. As 2012 was ending, Lebanon experienced an act of violence that proved to be particularly important. Late on October 19, 2012, a car bomb exploded on a side street off the bustling Sassine Square in east Beirut's Christian Ashrafieh neighborhood. The event was unique, as it was the first such bombing to terrorize Lebanon since 2008. By nightfall, it had become evident that Brigadier General Wissam al-Hassan, who headed the intelligence agency of the Internal Security Forces, was among the three people killed and dozens injured by the huge explosion. Hassan's most recent exploit was foiling a plot to destabilize Lebanon which involved high ranking figures such as General Ali al-Mamlouk (the head of the

Syrian national security office and a close confidant of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad) and pro-Syrian, former Lebanese minister Michel Samaha. In short, the plot consisted of inciting sectarian conflict in the country by emplacing and detonating explosives during the holy month of Ramadan—particularly in Sunni areas.⁴

The unique status accorded the late General al-Hassan (who hailed from north Lebanon) was evident based on the decision to bury him beside the late former prime minister in downtown Beirut. Still, the decision to honor al-Hassan was a difficult one, as his funeral prompted vitriolic statements against Prime Minister Najib Mikati (notably, when Hezbollah decided in 2011 to drop its support for the cabinet led by Saad Hariri, Mikati agreed to succeed the "son of the martyr"). Further, when Mikati formed a "partisan" cabinet (as his own was devoid of any March 14 representation), he was dubbed "the Sunni Quisling." Ultimately, Mikati was even accused of being morally responsible for al-Hassan's assassination. The situation seemed to reach a deadlock, especially through the perception that any

⁴ Of note, beyond his official capacity within the Lebanese security "establishment," the late Brigadier General al-Hassan was especially close to former Prime Minister Saad Hariri. In fact, al-Hassan conducted overt and covert missions on behalf of the former prime minister and the March 14 Alliance, which included engaging in "shadowy" talks with Hezbollah, the Syrian regime and other parties.

support Hezbollah could have given Mikati would include negative side effects, which simply exacerbated Mikati's proscription from his own community. Unsurprisingly (given the international community's abiding interest in Lebanon), a "miraculous" resolution to the situation—which also affected Mikati's cabinet—originated directly and at the highest level from *outside* Lebanon. On October 22, 2012, the ambassadors of the five superpowers and the permanent UN representative in Beirut visited President Michel Suleiman at the presidential palace and insisted on the importance of preserving Lebanon's stability. Since then, the term "stability" (previously used quite often) became the key to both understanding international attitudes toward Lebanon and comprehending the amazing flexibility Lebanese actors demonstrate in their handling of the country's affairs regardless of any prior differences of opinion.

Compared to the many other violent incidents that rocked Lebanon since the February 2005 assassination of former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri, no other assassination received such attention—or had as much potential to derail Lebanon's

already fragile stability. In fact, considering the late Brigadier General al-Hassan's activities, his assassination meant that all channels of communication between the belligerent parties in Lebanon were blocked. *The "infernal machine" had finally lost its brakes.* Unfortunately, and despite the intensive care that continues to be shown by the international community, that dire assessment of the situation has proven correct. Although the violence that continues to affect Lebanon has not yet reached the same levels of barbarity apparent in neighboring countries, the lengthy catalog of violent incidents featured in this report demonstrate clearly that the "infernal machine" was indeed running wildly in the country.

Despite the support Mikati and his government received from the international community, the political situation stagnated to the point that Mikati was compelled to resign soon afterward (March 22, 2013).⁵ Moving at its typically glacial speed, Lebanon was unable to seat a new government until February 15, 2014, when it was formed by Tammam Salam. That government received parliament's vote of confidence on March 20, 2015, almost a

⁵ "Najib Mikati's Resignation: A self-sacrifice that has little to do with altruism...." ShiaWatch Alert 40. March 30, 2013. <http://www.shiawatch.com/article/293>

year to the day after Mikati's resignation. The formation of this new government failed to satisfy any favorable domestic necessity, nor was it immune to the ideological differences that separate its components or the day-to-day challenges posed by dynamic actions that continue to occur outside Lebanon. Indeed, any wish that this coalition government would pave the way for the election of a new Lebanese president vanished when it was replaced by the murky reality that there was no urgency to address the presidential vacuum.

Another somewhat "unique" feature in these developments is that the dialogue that should have taken place between the chief components of this government before its formation were placed "on hold" until many months afterward. In view of this particularly *laissez-faire* attitude, it should be apparent that any demonstrable political developments that do occur will have been conceived and implemented *outside* the council of ministers. The most that can be expected of this cabinet is that it *could* reflect the positive or negative effects of events that occur outside its conference rooms, whether among local Lebanese actors or their respective regional and international patrons. At

this point, it is important to underscore the fact that we have not, and will never describe this strange reality metaphorically.

The framework described above, coupled with the intersection (or lack thereof) of various developments, will impact the many layers of Lebanese national life differently. These effects will fall on, and shape the entity we refer to as "deep Lebanon." That country, the truest, most elemental form of Lebanon, is not the same as the Lebanon covered by the media—even the Lebanese media. "Deep Lebanon" is so unique, so raw, that it is typically ignored when Lebanese citizens are discussing their own country or debating the challenges it faces. Certainly as complex as any other country, it is impossible to understand and appreciate Lebanon simply by viewing a snapshot of its reality, of the way it vacillates between "stability" and "instability."



The ambiguity inherent in the aforementioned "stability" and "instability" is proportional to the complexity that characterizes Lebanon. For instance, "stability" does not necessarily mean that the country is doing well or heading in the right direction, and "instability" does not immediately insinuate that it is descending into chaos. In

reality, “stability” and “instability” refer to the ambient level of understanding between the primary local actors and their regional patrons (primarily but not limited to Iran and Saudi Arabia) to maintain control over a situation, the components of which make it inherently unstable. Admittedly, the persistent mantra of “stability” has been able to withstand the various social, security and economic challenges to which it has been subjected. Nevertheless, even if the exceedingly precarious current conditions persist, the cost of Lebanon’s present and future will be extremely high. Chief among those costs is the increasing gap between a shrinking “political realm” and an expanding “military-cum-security domain.”

Of course, Lebanon continues to give the impression of being a country in which non-military and non-security-oriented “State institutions” are fulfilling their chartered roles—with the exclusion of the presidency, of course, which has remained vacant since May 2014. Yet that impression is fading. Lebanon’s parliament, for instance, has already renewed its mandate twice under the catchall justification that the “prevailing situation” is not conducive to holding elections, while the cabinet, which has the latitude

to make decisions (both vital and petty), will do so only if an understanding is reached ahead of time by the seemingly incestuous and definitely self-serving community leaders/former warlords. Thus, discussions about voting on a national budget or auditing public expenses are all but superfluous!

In tandem with its political decay, Lebanon and the international community are exhibiting increasing reliance (possibly over reliance) on the military and security agencies, each of which shows favoritism toward one political side or another. That excessive reliance, advertised to the Lebanese public as a *last resort* due to the hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees who sought shelter in Lebanon, is risky in and of itself owing to the tendency to use the defense and continued security of the country as justification. It also leads to the virtual recognition that a *quasi-institutional* partnership exists between Lebanon’s military and security bodies and the “military wing” of Hezbollah, which has evolved from a militia into a small army (interestingly, the size difference between Hezbollah and the LAF is largely offset by the technical superiority of Hezbollah’s hardware). In a best-case scenario, the sustained disconnect between “politics” and “security” (quite

probable given the prevailing regional situation) will maintain equilibrium between “stability” and “instability.” Unfortunately, it will not promise a better future for the Lebanese people, particularly its younger generations.

Nevertheless, we cannot simply ignore other, less reassuring scenarios, since a number of factors may conspire to incite an escalation. For instance, three major factors come to mind, the most salient being the institutional involvement (directed by pro-Iran Hezbollah) of one Lebanese community—the Shia community—in the Syrian conflict. Any justification Hezbollah gives for its involvement is condemned by mainstream Sunni public opinion within and outside Lebanon, since its involvement is seen by that community as a direct insult. While condemnation by the Lebanese Sunni community of Hezbollah’s involvement in Syria was kept under wraps (insofar as the alleged “moderate leadership” of that community represented by the Hariri establishment, was an outspoken supporter of efforts by the Syrian people to rid the country of the Assad dynasty/regime), it steadily lost political and financial steam. As the likelihood of reinstating a single source of moderate leadership within the Lebanese Sunni community is certainly

farfetched, the promotion of Sunni sectarian identity is likely to continue, and tensions between Sunni and Shia will quite probably increase over time. Further, since such sectarian identification is quickly becoming the common ground on which Syrian and Palestinian Sunnis express their frustration, the eventual (negative) outcome becomes rather simple to predict. By extension, the current over reliance on security measures intended to contain radicalism within the Sunni community may actually accelerate the course of that outcome, especially since the partnership between the LAF, other security agencies and Hezbollah is viewed by the Sunni community as tantamount to hijacking State institutions to advance Hezbollah's agenda.

Where the Syrian refugee issue is involved, the absence of an informed Lebanese policy that gives due consideration to the situation in Syria means that Lebanon will continue to rely primarily on the generosity of the international community—and on its security mechanisms. Relief efforts and security measures are indeed quick, albeit ineffective fixes to a situation that is likely to persist for an indeterminate but certainly lengthy period. Yet neither relief nor security can change the reality that the situation in Syria is unlikely to

improve in the near term and that refugees in Lebanon may remain there for quite some time. In the meantime, a generation of resentful young Syrians forced to live under appalling economic and social conditions will eventually emerge. In the absence of other options, they will embody two decisive identities: being refugees and being Sunni Syrians. Unfortunately, that situation is almost a duplicate of what happened in Lebanon when the Palestinian refugees arrived. The only difference is that the national Palestinian identity that has been shaped in the camps will have been replaced by a sectarian identity.

Altogether, the foregoing factors are the makings of a horrific nightmare. In fact, that is precisely why most Lebanese prefer to believe that the current status quo, despite the high cost involved, will never end. Moreover, while “stability” and “instability” are vague at best, the same can be said for the two poles between which Lebanon and the Lebanese continue to swing: “status quo” and “nightmare.” While the nightmare that follows the factors noted above (and others) is still a matter of speculation, the Lebanese perception of their status quo has neither precedent nor

historical roots. In this context, the status quo is the situation that emerged following the outbreak of violence in Syria, a crisis which devolved from a popular protest to armed conflict and about which the Lebanese have always disagreed. That disagreement took on a number of different forms (some violent, some not) before it culminated in the establishment of Lebanon's National Interest government. That government embodies the conditions that (1) Hezbollah, based on instructions from Iran, will continue to fight in Syria and (2) the Future Movement, a client of Saudi Arabia, must admit its political defeat and content itself with vocal protestations of Hezbollah's involvement in Syria.

Clearly, while this novel status quo reflects the fluid dynamics of the overall situation, it does not tell the entire story. A major consequence of the Syrian crisis and Hezbollah's involvement there has been a revision to the status of Lebanon's borders with Israel, Syria and the Mediterranean. Taken together, we must conclude that the wishful thinking and prayers of the Lebanese will fall short of ensuring this status quo remains intact.



This report is composed of

nine chapters, each of which addresses a topic that falls under the general heading of "Lebanon in Conflict." While these chapters can be reviewed individually or collectively, they do not describe all aspects of the approach we utilized to establish the technical boundaries for our work. For instance, two chapters are conspicuously absent in this effort, the first of which is the Syrian refugee issue. While that situation is mentioned frequently in the various chapters, we did not feel that it could be treated adequately within the constraints we set for this work. The second, rather glaring absence is a chapter devoted to the "random acts of violence" that occurred during the two-year period covered by this report. Suffice it to say, Hayya Bina already showcased the importance of random acts of violence in a partnership effort that involved UMAM Documentation and Research. Given the tenuous nature of "stability" in Lebanon since the end of the civil war, the country has the propensity to react wildly to even the most innocuous crimes. For instance, a murder committed in a quarter of Beirut may be little more than a crime of passion, theft or extortion. Yet such a crime can easily fan the flames of sectarian tension which could threaten to undermine the country as a whole. Fortunately, Lebanon

has—to date—avoided that eventuality.

Most of the chapters in this report are followed by a selective chronological list of incidents associated with the topic being addressed. While those chronologies indeed mention the most significant incidents that occurred during the period covered by the report, they are not intended to be exhaustive and comprehensive. Rather, they are included to add context to the topics they cover.

Finally, Hayya Bina would like to thank everyone who contributed to this effort. We extend our appreciation to the USIP for having funded this program, to all with whom we brainstormed and to those who shared with us their experience and/or knowledge of a specific subject. Closer to home, we also express our thanks to the Hayya Bina team, particularly Rasha el-Amine who gathered and organized the data cited in this report, and Joseph Norman who contributed to the research effort and helped draft several chapters. We also thank John McLean for his meticulous editing and revision of this report and other examples of English language Hayya Bina literature. In conclusion, the authors of this report are solely responsible for its content and the views expressed herein.

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The Lebanese Discover their Borders

Where the current situation in Lebanon is concerned, it is important to recall that Lebanon is but a small enclave. Just 210 kilometers long and 45 – 50 kilometers wide, it is situated between Syria, Israel and the Mediterranean Sea. For years, however, particularly since the conclusion of the Taif Agreement and the near total assumption of control over Lebanon by the Assad regime, it was all too easy to forget that Lebanon shared a border with Syria. From the Arida Lebanese-Syrian junction near the Mediterranean in the north, Lebanon's geography courses southward along the Mediterranean to Naqoura, at the Lebanese-Israeli border governed by United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1701. Using Arida as a landmark, it runs east along Syrian territory before bending south to the Lebanese-Syrian-Israeli tri-border area in the Anti-Lebanon Mountains.

During the era of Syrian "tutelage," Lebanon's most problematic politico-military border separated the country from its "Israeli enemy."¹ This exclusivity was so developed that the Arabic-language media—which reflects extant linguistic trends—used the word *houdoud* (borders) without

further specification to indicate that Lebanese-Israeli line of demarcation. Not until the withdrawal of Syrian troops in 2005 and publication of UNSCR 1701 following the 2006 War would Lebanon start gaining some familiarity with the notion that the country has more than one border! By extension, a number of popular pro-March 14 protests that capitalized on the Lebanese-Syrian border as a target of symbolic hatred helped "disclose" the existence of that border.

Beyond this assessment of Lebanese-Syrian interaction, the border has other, more dire connotations. For example, it served as one of Hezbollah's major supply routes and has since become the road used by Hezbollah fighters heading to Damascus to support the Assad regime. Nevertheless, the Lebanese-Syrian border began to regain a semblance of its delineation function only after the outbreak of the Syrian conflict, an outcome that can be attributed to developments on both sides of the border. Still, the events that have continued to occur on the Syrian side of the border have had a massive impact on life within Lebanon. Chief among these developments is the

¹ "Tutelage" is the term agreed upon by the Lebanese after 2005 to refer to Syria's occupation of Lebanon from 1990 to 2005.

decision by Lebanese authorities in late 2014 to close the Lebanese borders to Syrian refugees seeking shelter in the country.

Lebanese-Syrian Border

The ongoing violence in Syria has produced two significant features to which this change—a new "definition" of life within Lebanon—can be attributed. The first is the positively overwhelming number of Syrian refugees that have arrived in Lebanon, due either to military operations or growing fear of the overall situation. Secondly, certain stretches of the border have been pressed into service as battlefields on which the Assad regime—with tacit Lebanese agreement if not overt support—has confronted its opponents. Officially, in 2012 Lebanon's Najib Mikati government (January 2011 – March 2013) adopted what became known as the policy of "disassociation" from the conflict raging in Syria. Since the entire concept behind that approach is "hazy" at best, the government can always claim neutrality, a stance that would not affect the behavior of non-State actors. Of course, Hezbollah's sustained involvement in the Syrian conflict cannot be compared to that of any other actor. Moreover, until the fall of al-Quseir in June 2013 and Kalaat al-Hosn (*Krak des Chevaliers*) and Yabroud in March and April 2014, respectively, Lebanese Sunni fighters had still been using points along the border to cross into Syria and support the rebels. By extension, therefore, some Lebanese territory has been used similarly by Syrian rebels. Therefore, the conclusion to be drawn is that throughout 2013, border-related tensions moved steadily northward despite the fact that the southern

border region has been the traditional zone of confrontation between Hezbollah and Israel, which lies to Lebanon's south and east.

Beyond the military operations that have occurred and continue to take place at several locations along the Lebanese-Syrian border, those areas also spurred a broader understanding of the term itself. This dramatic change in the perception of what the Lebanese borders are has various short- and long-term implications, three of which are examined here.

(1) From an official State perspective, it meant amending the LAF's creed, which was based on the uniqueness of the "enemy." While no one today claims that Syria is an enemy, it is also no longer an ally. Rather, Syria has become a hinterland and the "source of the threat." So far, that shift has been addressed under the pretext of "fighting terrorism," but it is easy to assign a specific "nationality" to that terrorism. Unfortunately, that very thing has happened several times during LAF operations focused on border areas that have become homes to refugee settlements (at which conspicuous breaches of basic human rights have been registered).

(2) Despite the victories achieved by Hezbollah and the Assad regime in some border areas (commencing with the fall of al-Quseir), those actions neither eradicated the rebels nor stripped them of the capacity to reconstitute. Hezbollah continued to fight *an-Nusra Front* in the Qalamoun-Anti-Lebanon Mountains, which prompted attacks against those areas. Retribution attacks by the rebels came in the form of car bombs (discussed

further, below) and rocket attacks in the Shia Baalbek-Hermel region. Despite the fact that the rockets lacked precision and caused minimal loss of life and material damage, they indeed proved sufficiently “troublesome” to remind Hezbollah’s Shia constituency that its victories were far less comprehensive than advertised. For example, on May 28, 2013, a rocket struck Hermel and killed a 17-year-old woman.² Between June 2013 and March 2014, Hermel and Baalbek were attacked with rockets several times, for which *an-Nusra Front* repeatedly claimed responsibility.^{3,4,5,6,7,8} Sadly, the roadside bombs were far more dangerous than the largely theatrical rocket attacks. Such explosions targeted convoys supposedly filled with Hezbollah combatants headed to Syria. Several attacks were also launched against Hezbollah convoys by Sunni groups operating along roads in the Bekaa leading toward Syria. One such attack was the June 28 bombing in the city of Zahle.⁹ On July 7, two bombs were detonated in Hermel injuring three people including civilians and military personnel.¹⁰ A week later, a roadside bomb exploded near a Hezbollah convoy in the Bekaa Valley between Masnaa and Majdal Anjar.¹¹ These attacks not only represent focused responses by Sunni groups to Hezbollah’s involvement in Syria, but

they also demonstrate the capacity of such groups to inflict damage at will on that organization—and more importantly, to bring the war to Hezbollah at home.

(3) From a longer-term perspective, it is worthwhile to consider the impact of military operations conducted by Hezbollah along the Lebanese-Syrian borders in terms of demography (on both sides of the border). From the perspective of the sectarian real estate cleansing policy being practiced in Syria by the Assad regime and its allies, there is little doubt that Hezbollah-led operations are focused (among other goals) on removing the major Sunni pockets from strategic points along the Lebanese-Syrian borders, such as in al-Quseir, Tall Kalakh and Zabadani. While it may still be too early (and imprudent) to draw different conclusions, it is clear that the demographic changes taking place on the Syrian side of the border will exact commensurate impacts on the Lebanese side, thus giving the Lebanese State something else to contend with.

Lebanese-Israeli Border

There is a great deal of contrast between the Lebanese-Syrian borders and those Lebanon shares with Israel. For instance, despite all the efforts made to exert control over the

² http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/29/world/middleeast/syria.html?_r=2&

³ <http://www.nna-leb.gov.lb/en/show-news/10086/Woman-injured-in-rocket-attack-at-Hermel>

⁴ <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2013/08/18/five-rockets-hit-eastern-lebanon-hermel/>

⁵ <http://en.alalam.ir/news/1555814>

⁶ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/01/17/us-lebanon-syria-rocket-idUSBREA0G0IX20140117>

⁷ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Jan-25/245286-nusra-front-in-lebanon-claims-hermel-rocket-attack.ashx>

⁸ <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/archive/538431-al-nusra-front-claims-hermel-rocket-attack>

⁹ <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2013/06/28/Explosives-target-alleged-Hezbollah-convoy-in-Lebanon.html>

¹⁰ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Local-News/2013/Jul-07/222791-hermel-blasts-wound-two-lebanese-soldiers.ashx#axzz2YR6pPUdo>

¹¹ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/2013/Jul-17/223970-ambush-targets-hezbollah-convoy.ashx>

Lebanese-Syrian borders, they have always been and will likely remain exceptionally porous. Neither country will assert nor concede control of the borders, which may be one reason why the Lebanese-Syrian border region has hosted so many full-scale military engagements. Even though those same areas experienced numerous "small" incidents during 2013 and 2014, none were significant enough to compromise Lebanon's broader security situation. But the same cannot be said for the Lebanese-Israeli border areas. The incidents that occurred in those regions during the reporting period can be categorized generally into three types: random incidents involving LAF and IDF (Israel Defense Forces) members, incidents involving Hezbollah and incidents that center on "spoiling attacks." The first category seems self-evident—incidents that take place at or near the meandering and ill-defined borders shared by two "enemy" states. Interestingly, however, on August 3, 2010—still in the aftermath of the 2006 War—the seemingly random and inconsequential act of attempting to fell a tree descended into a serious incident that caused fatalities on both sides. Ultimately, the deaths of three LAF soldiers in that incident dramatically enhanced the LAF's stature in the eyes of the Lebanese public, and briefly, the LAF seemed to concur entirely with Hezbollah's *raison d'être*! In general, however, incidents of this type are quickly mediated by troops of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and thus pose no serious threat to the stability of the borders.

Incidents of the second category are more likely to inspire fear, as they involve both State and non-State

actors. In this case, we can state with confidence that regardless of whether the incidents were coincidental or retaliatory in nature and despite the number of casualties each side suffered, none of those incidents ever really threatened to spiral entirely "out of control." In early August 2013, for instance, four IDF soldiers patrolling the border region were wounded by an explosion. According to the LAF, the Israeli soldiers penetrated 400 meters into the Lebanese side of the Blue Line, the tense demarcation that serves as a buffer between the two countries. Hezbollah ultimately claimed responsibility for the explosion, explaining that its personnel surprised the Israelis and detonated hidden improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Nevertheless, while Hezbollah tried to use the situation to demonstrate that its operational capability in the south had not been weakened by its involvement in Syria, the incident prompted no genuine "follow up." A similar example occurred September 5, 2014 when Hezbollah discovered an eavesdropping device in a telecom network in Adloun (south). One Hezbollah member was killed when the device exploded as he attempted to dismantle it. On October 7, two Israeli soldiers were injured when their vehicle struck an IED near Shebaa Farms, which prompted the IDF to respond by shelling some Lebanese villages along the southern border. That same day, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah claimed responsibility for the operation as revenge for the September 5 incident. In that case, there was no specific "follow up" and both sides seemed happy with that zero-sum game. Of note, all retaliation operations that occurred from that period until the time this report was prepared took

place in the Shebaa Farms region, an area that is akin to a “geographic riddle” since its actual ownership is in perpetual dispute. Thus, any action in that area may be considered “unique.”

Considering that neither State vs. State (e.g., LAF vs. IDF) nor State vs. non-State (IDF vs. Hezbollah) confrontations represented any serious threat to the stability of Lebanon's borders, it remains quite improbable that a “spoiling attack” would be any more dangerous than a conventional attack. However, spoiling attacks that occur along the Lebanese-Israeli borders are interesting because of what they represent to Lebanon from a domestic rather than a regional security perspective.

In the midst of the conflict between Gaza and Israel, another “mini war” was underway on the other side of Lebanon. Specifically, fighting on the Qalamoun front along the Lebanese-Syrian border erupted once again. While Hezbollah's military operations in Qalamoun (referred to in its literature as “cleansing operations”) should have been almost imperceptible compared to its dustups with Israel, they galvanized the attention of Lebanon's Shia community. In contrast to those chance engagements, Hezbollah's losses at Qalamoun approached those it suffered during the al-Quseir battles. Some estimates held that during the first 72 hours of fighting (which began the night of July 13/14), at least 20 Hezbollah members were killed—and other sources doubled that figure. The number of wounded and captured escaped estimates....

As those fierce and very costly engagements were taking place in the Anti-Lebanon Mountains, several rockets were launched—some successfully and others unsuccessfully—toward Israel from two locations in south Lebanon. The decrepit rockets launched from a region that borders Israel (which falls under the auspices of UNSCR 1701) caused only a trivial amount of damage. However, those nearly inert weapons drew more high profile expressions of condemnation and concern than did the hundreds of rockets exchanged along the “other” border. The point, of course, is not to criticize the scope of one act compared to another. Instead, the issue rests with the interplay between the two episodes mentioned, and that all somehow occurred in Lebanon.

On July 11, the fourth day of the 2014 Gaza-Israel conflict, several rockets were fired from the outskirts of the Lebanese village of al-Mary, which, since it is near Hasbiya, essentially faces Israel.¹² A few hours earlier, an attempt to launch another rocket caused in an explosion that injured the individual involved. An LAF-run investigation disclosed that Hussein Atwi had been admitted to a hospital and that he was responsible for the abortive launch of the weapon. As an individual, Atwi's personal history is interesting. A long-time member of *Jamaa Islamiyya* (the Lebanese branch of the Muslim Brotherhood), Atwi accompanied the organization's “al-Fajr” military branch as it fought alongside Hezbollah in the 2006 war.¹³ Notably, the organization's single MP stressed that it played no

¹² <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/archive/558254-hussein-atwi-released-on-bail>

¹³ <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/20732> and http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=864#.Vc2oT1Oqqko

part in launching the rockets toward Israel.¹⁴ Atwi is also an academic, who holds a PhD from al-Da'awa University, where he also worked as a professor.¹⁵ Atwi also became a problematic presence for the Lebanese government and Hezbollah. Left unaddressed, Atwi's ineffectual actions might have encouraged similar attempts able to produce an Israeli response, an outcome that neither the government (essentially defenseless against the IDF) nor Hezbollah (which was already heavily engaged in Syria) could afford. Alternatively, if the Lebanese government had blatantly condemned the act and/or attempted to punish Atwi severely, Hezbollah would have been found guilty by association, as Atwi's actions were undeniably motivated by its resistance ideology. In reality, Lebanon's government has endorsed wholeheartedly Hezbollah's operations and philosophy of resistance. Therefore, any attempt to halt similar attacks (presumably the preferred option) would leave it open to accusations of hypocrisy.

In general, Hezbollah remained exceptionally tight-lipped about the rocket launches, as most other responses would have contradicted a central tenet of its ideology (which is largely responsible for its legitimacy in Lebanon, especially among the non-Shia population). Further, the fact that Atwi apparently tried to "support the people of Gaza" simply highlighted Hezbollah's lack of action in the same area—which caused others to question not only its resistance

credentials, but also its involvement in a foreign war which, demonstrably, has brought unnecessary danger to Lebanon—especially in Hezbollah's own population centers.¹⁶

Hussein Atwi was freed shortly after his apprehension. The Lebanese-Israeli border has remained relatively quiet since then, and the fanfare prompted by Atwi's actions eventually died down. Thus, both parties achieved the desired outcome. Yet with Hezbollah still mired in the Syrian conflict and relations with Israel showing no improvement, the conditions are still ripe for other would-be resistance "fighters" to copycat Atwi's actions.

Another example of what may be considered a spoiling action requires the review of an incident that took place along the Lebanese-Israeli border near the end of 2013. On December 15, 2013, an IDF soldier was killed by an LAF counterpart near Naqoura. Some media outlets reported that the incident happened as Israeli soldiers attempted to cross the border. As an IDF spokesman explained, however, "shots were fired at a civilian vehicle traveling along the Israel-Lebanon border." Of note, the IDF also explained that it responded by firing into Lebanon. Although the LAF asserted that the attack had been committed by a lone, rogue soldier, the summary it provided seemed unconvincing for two reasons. First, the incident occurred almost simultaneously with the double suicide bombings of two LAF checkpoints near Saida. Second,

¹⁴ <http://en.annahar.com/article/150442-odd-couple-netted-for-southern-lebanon-rocket-attacks-into-israel>

¹⁵ <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/20732>

¹⁶ Ibid.

the "rogue" soldier was from Akkar, a Sunni area, which makes it likely that he had been "brainwashed" by Islamist groups. Finally, the matter was settled by the two sides involved, neither of which attempted to blow the incident out of proportion. Additionally, no association can be found, for instance, between that soldier's actions and the defection of LAF soldiers from predominantly Sunni areas in the north during and after the Battle of Orsal (August 2014). Nevertheless, connecting the dots between these incidents vis-à-vis Lebanon's extant sectarian tensions is certainly a tempting endeavor.

Aside from the incidents that occurred along the southern border, Israel violated Lebanese airspace a number of times throughout the year. In fact, the practice became so common that it rarely attracted media attention. Many of those violations were believed to have been associated with Israel's monitoring of the situation in Syria and the Lebanese-Syrian-Israeli tri-border region. Of note, the latter area is steadily gaining attention because of rebel victories over the Syrian army. According to Asher Kaufmann of the International Relations and Security Network:

The tri-border region has always been a center of cross-border activities, particularly in times of conflict, because of its rugged topography and strategic location. From the late 1960s to 1982, for example, the Arqub region—then nicknamed "Fatahland"—was a crucial territorial bridge for

Palestinian guerillas to transfer arms and combatants from Syria to Lebanon, and to launch guerilla attacks against Israel. Now, the region has assumed this role again, only this time in the opposite direction. The village of Shebaa has sheltered thousands of Syrian refugees and functioned as a territorial bridge to transfer arms and combatants to opposition groups operating in southern Syria. The close proximity to Israeli-controlled Golan Heights makes this cross-border activity particularly dangerous, and Israel has already noted that any spillage to its territory would be answered in full force.¹⁷

Of course, since Islamist activity is steadily becoming more pronounced in this area, the reasons behind Israel's concerns become somewhat clear. Likewise, efforts by Israel and Hezbollah to minimize the number of incidents taking place along the southern border also become more understandable.

The Druze Factor

While the spoiling attacks mentioned above highlight the potential risks to the Sunni community in south Lebanon, the true picture of the situation is incomplete without mentioning another "minority" in Lebanon's southeastern corner, which hosts the intersection of the Lebanese-Syrian-Israeli borders. The Druze community represents an exceptionally complex "wildcard" in this situation, as it has a presence in each of these three countries. To this

¹⁷ <http://isnblog.ethz.ch/security/border-of-syria-israel-lebanon-shows-signs-of-war#respond>

day, the Druze take an unrelenting and unequivocal attitude toward their "survival" in each of those areas.

It should come as no surprise that the conflict in Syria and the rise of radical Islamist elements (which consider the Shia, Druze and Alawi to be as well outside the "fold" of Islam as are those who practice other religions) have challenged the relationship the Syrian Druze community has with its Sunni neighborhood. That much became clear during a series of "appeasement visits" Druze leader Walid Jumblatt made to his constituency there, in which he exhorted them to revive their historical Muslim "membership." Based on that entreaty, most Druze now practice a strategy of "disengagement," thus remaining neutral and disassociated from the conflict in Syria.^{18,19,20} Nevertheless, 22 Syrian Druze pro-regime fighters were killed in an ambush on November 9, 2014, an attack conducted by Syrian rebels in Arna on the Syrian side of Mount Hermon (near the border with Lebanon's Shebaa and Rashaya). Overall, however, the Druze response was relatively muted.²¹ In fact, in late September 2014, Jumblatt, the most influential Druze leader in Lebanon,

warned that the Druze needed to maintain a stable relationship with their Sunni neighbors and avoid clashes with Syrian refugees.^{22,23} Following the deadly skirmishes of November 2014, however, he asked Syrian Druze to join the anti-Assad revolution—even though the second most respected Druze leader in Lebanon, Prince Talal Arslan warned the Druze that they would "pay the price" for their involvement in the Syrian revolution.^{24,25}

Of course, it is not the intent of this document to examine closely the details of cross-border incidents and associated Druze-Sunni issues. At the same time, this chapter would not be complete if it failed to identify that "situation" as being a potential hotbed for violent developments.



In summary, the information contained herein suggests that while the Lebanese-Syrian border is likely to remain not only a sprawling battlefield but also an epicenter of instability, the border Lebanon shares with Israel is very likely to maintain its status quo. In fact, while the Lebanese-Syrian border is becoming increasingly domestically

¹⁸ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2015/Jan-22/284915-israeli-towns-in-panic-over-hezbollah-reprisal.ashx>

¹⁹ <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/22313>

²⁰ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/11/09/us-mideast-crisis-lebanon-idUSKBN0IT07720141109>

²¹ http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Life/Lubnan/2014/Nov-09/276988-lebanons-druze-community-fearful-as-syrias-war-moves-closer.ashx?utm_source=Magnet&utm_medium=Entity%20page&utm_campaign=Magnet%20tools

²² http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Nov-11/277180-jumblatt-urges-syrias-druze-to-join-anti-assad-rebels.ashx?utm_source=Magnet&utm_medium=Entity%20page&utm_campaign=Magnet%20tools

²³ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Sep-21/271388-jumblatt-not-every-syrian-refugee-is-a-terrorist.ashx>

²⁴ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Sep-22/271466-jumblatt-tells-druze-they-must-embrace-muslim-unity.ashx>

²⁵ http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Nov-11/277180-jumblatt-urges-syrias-druze-to-join-anti-assad-rebels.ashx?utm_source=Magnet&utm_medium=Entity%20page&utm_campaign=Magnet%20tools

oriented, the "other" border is also undergoing a pronounced shift. While that demarcation line once separated Lebanon and Israel, only one of the two "neighbors" has remained constant. Today, that

border seems very much to separate Israel from Iran. Consequently, it is less apt than ever to reflect the desires or actions of the Lebanese State and/or those of the country's non-State actor, Hezbollah.

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A Chronology of Major Border Incidents

2013

January

4

» Syrian warplanes cross into Lebanese airspace over the border village of Machta al-Helou in Akkar to attack the Krak des Chevaliers area inside Syria. [NORTH]

» A strike launched from within Syria hits near the border villages of Hekr Janin and al-Qochloq (Akkar). [NORTH]

18

» Syrian warplanes attack two trucks and a bulldozer on the outskirts of Orsal. [EAST]

21

» An attack launched from within Syria strikes near Menjez (Akkar). [NORTH]

23

» The border villages of Hekr Janin, al-Qochloq and Amar al-Bikat are hit by Syrian missiles and heavy weapons. [NORTH]

Number of Incidents by Border / January 2013		
Southern Border	Northern Border	Eastern Border
0	4	1

February

1

» Several border villages in Akkar are struck by Syrian munitions. [NORTH]

4

» The border villages of Hekr Janin, an-Noura and Dabbabiyeh are attacked 13 times by Syrian munitions. [NORTH]

12

» The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) step up patrols near Shebaa Farms. [SOUTH]

14

» Syrian forces drive Lebanese citizens away from the border area of Mashari' al-Qaa. [EAST]

17

» The Lebanese (Shia) village of al-Qasr is struck twice with munitions fired by Syrian rebels. [EAST]

19

» Munitions launched by Syrian rebels strike twice in Hermel. [EAST]

» Arida residents block the border crossing between Lebanon and Syria to protest nightly attacks against their homes. [NORTH]

21

» The sounds of armed conflict are heard outside Deir al-Ashayer and Janta. [EAST]

22

» Many Arida residents flee after being targeted regularly from within Syria. [NORTH]

» For the third night, munitions from Syria hit the Akkari border villages of al-Abboudiye, an-Noura, Dabbabiyeh and Arida. [NORTH]

24

» A weapon launched by Syrian rebels strikes (Shia) al-Qasr in Hermel but fails to explode. [EAST]

25

» Two people are killed and two others are injured in Wadi Khaled by snipers and bombs from Syria. [NORTH]

26

» Two weapons launched from within Syria strike an-Noura (Akkar). [NORTH]

Number of Incidents by Border / February 2013		
Southern Border	Northern Border	Eastern Border
1	7	5

March

2

» Syrian regime munitions strike Machta Hammoud. [NORTH]

7

» Syrian regime engineers work on military roads near the border in Akkar. [NORTH]

» IDF engineers continue work on a road near Wazzani. [SOUTH]

11

» Syrian regime munitions hit the Akkari villages of Dabbabiyeh and Menjez. [NORTH]

12

» A Lebanese civilian from Arida is wounded by gunfire from Syria. [NORTH]

13

» Several different types of munitions fired from within Syria strike the Akkari villages of Abboudiye, Hekr Janin and an-Noura. [NORTH]

14

» Some 25 tank-carrying trucks unload their M113s near Israeli positions in the eastern sector of the Lebanese/Israeli border. [SOUTH]

15

» Anti-aircraft artillery fired from within Syria hits the Akkari villages of Abboudiyeh, an-Noura, Hekr Janin and al-Qochloq, causing several injuries. [NORTH]

16

» A resident of al-Qochloq is injured by Syrian munitions. [NORTH]

» The IDF reinforces its presence near Shebaa Farms but halts road construction close to Wazzani. [SOUTH]

17

» Munitions launched from within Syria strike the outskirts of several Akkari border villages. [NORTH]

18

» Lebanese border villages in Wadi Khaled and Akkar are hit by Syrian munitions and heavy machine gun fire. [NORTH]

» Syrian warplanes attack the Orsal countryside. [EAST]

» In preparation for a large-scale exercise in the Golan-Wazzani area, the IDF builds sand barriers on the east bank of the river and observation posts on Wazzani Heights. [SOUTH]

20

» Syrian rebels conduct an attack just outside the border village of al-Qasr. [EAST]

» Syrian aircraft fire at Wadi al-Kheil and Wadi Oweine near Orsal, but no injuries are reported. [EAST]

» The (Shia) region of Sahlat al-Mayy in Hermel is attacked. [EAST]

» IDF reinforcements arrive near Wazzani. [SOUTH]

21

» IDF warplanes roam over the northern side of the Golan Heights and Shebaa Farms. Israeli forces establish sand barriers along the border with Lebanon. [SOUTH]

» Following an attack on Hermel's Sahlet

el-Mayy, the village mayor claims the projectiles had been launched by Syrian rebels in al-Quseir. [EAST]

22

» Syrian warplanes attack several positions along the Lebanese-Syrian border near the outskirts of Orsal. [EAST]

23

» Assad regime positions opposite Hekr Janin and Abboudiyeh are fortified when a huge crane arrives into position to move heavy containers. Afterward, the site is reinforced with heavy weapons and tanks. [NORTH]

25

» Syrian warplanes are seen over the northern borders. [NORTH]

27

» Syrian munitions and heavy machine gun fire strike Lebanon's northern and northeastern borders, from Arida to Nabi Berri point in Akkar. [NORTH]

29

» A fisherman is injured after being shot by Syrian sailors off the coast of Arida in North Lebanon. Electrical power is lost in an-Noura after the town was struck by munitions launched from Syria. [NORTH]

30

» Several Akkari border villages are attacked with munitions launched from within Syria. [NORTH]

31

» Syrian munitions struck the outskirts of several Akkari border villages. [NORTH]

Number of Incidents by Border / March 2013		
Southern Border	Northern Border	Eastern Border
6	15	6

April

3

» The IDF constructs military roads near Wazzani. [SOUTH]

4

» Syrian helicopters attack the Orsal countryside. [EAST]

8

» Several Akkari border villages are attacked with Syrian munitions. [NORTH]

9

» When the IDF begins pruning trees at Odayse, the LAF simultaneously increases its alert status. A previous (2010) tree-trimming mission by the IDF in the same area resulted in a bloody incident that claimed the lives of several Lebanese and Israeli servicemen. [SOUTH]

10

» Munitions launched from within Syria hit Dabbabiyeh. [NORTH]

11

» Syrian munitions explode between Torbol and al-Fourzol. [EAST]

14

» The border area of Sahlat al-Mayy (Hermel) is attacked three times with explosive munitions. [EAST]

15

Two people are killed and several others injured in (Shia) al-Qasr and Hawsh es-Sayyed Ali. The shelling, probably by Syrian rebels, forced many residents to flee the area. [EAST]

16

» The northern side of (Shia) al-Qasr (Hermel) is attacked but no injuries are reported. Nevertheless, the death toll from the recent attacks in al-Qasr and Hawsh es-Sayyed stands at four. [EAST]

21

» The (Shia) town of Hermel is shelled amidst

threats that the ongoing battle in the Syrian town of al-Quseir will surge into Lebanon. [EAST]

» Israeli warplanes conduct out mock airstrikes over Khiam, Marjaayoun and Nabatieh. [SOUTH]

24

» Hermel is attacked twice. [EAST]

26

» Hezbollah distributes leaflets in Hermel asking residents to stay in their homes. [EAST]

27

» The outskirts of the Akkari villages of an-Noura, Dabbabiyeh and al-Fraidis are attacked with large munitions. [NORTH]

30

» A Syrian woman is wounded during an attack in the Mashari' al-Qaa. The munitions used were launched from within Syria. [EAST]

Number of Incidents by Border / April 2013		
Southern Border	Northern Border	Eastern Border
3	3	9

May

1

» Munitions fired from Syria strike the outskirts of al-Qasr (Hermel). [EAST]

» Four Israeli F-16s fly surveillance missions over the eastern parts of south Lebanon. They later stage mock raids near Shebaa. [SOUTH]

3

» Munitions fired from al-Quseir (Syria) strike near Qanafez (Hermel). [EAST]

4

» Pro-Assad militia troops enter Lebanese territory near Qaa, set fire to several buildings and threaten to destroy any homes used by rebels. [EAST]

» Following several days of calm, the shelling of Akkari border villages resumes. [NORTH]

» An IDF patrol attempts to arrest a shepherd at Shebaa. [SOUTH]

5

» Munitions launched from within Syria hit near an-Noura (Akkar). [NORTH]

9

» Munitions launched from within Syria strike Shawaghir (Hermel). [EAST]

» Israeli soldiers at the Kfar Kila point along the Lebanese-Israeli border suddenly go to high alert. [SOUTH]

» Munitions launched from within Syria hit near the public hospital in Hermel. [EAST]

10

» The entrance to Hermel is shelled. [EAST]

12

» Hermel is attacked with large munitions. [EAST]

» Two men were injured in al-Qasr when two munitions hit near the village. [EAST]

13

» An attack in an al-Qasr border town injures a Syrian woman and a Lebanese citizen. [EAST]

14

» The outskirts of al-Qaa are attacked with large-scale munitions. [EAST]

15

» More attacks hit near al-Qaa. [EAST]

16

» The Israeli border is on high alert following the commemoration of "an-Nakba Day." [SOUTH]

19

» Maarboun (Bekaa) is shelled twice. [EAST]

» Areas in Hermel suffer eight attacks. [EAST]

» Syrian warplanes appear over Wadi Khaled. [NORTH]

21

» Eight people are injured when several missiles hit the Akroum Mountain and Wadi Khaled areas. [NORTH]

» IDF soldiers near al-Ghajar crossed the technical fence. [SOUTH]

22

» Elements of the Syrian army penetrate 50 meters into Akroum Mountain and burn crops tended by Syrians and Lebanese. [NORTH]

» Syrian attacks strike the outskirts of the Akkari border villages of Hekr Janin, Abboudiyeh and al-Qochloq. No injuries are reported. [NORTH]

24

» An LAF patrol operating near the border point of Nabi Beri (Akkar) takes fire from within Syria but no injuries are reported. [NORTH]

» A Syrian helicopter attacks near Orsal. [EAST]

26

» Al-Marah (Hermel) is attacked twice but no injuries are reported. [EAST]

27

» The LAF announces that one woman is killed and two others are injured when Hermel is attacked. [EAST]

» Two Lebanese farmers escape after being apprehended by Syrian troops in Hnaider. [NORTH]

28

» Munitions fired toward Israel from Marjaayoun raise alert levels in the LAF and IDF. [SOUTH]

» Three LAF soldiers are killed in the early morning hours after their position on the outskirts of Orsal is attacked. [EAST]

» Hermel suffers more attacks. [EAST]

29

» Attacks in Hermel wound five more people. [EAST]

» Akkar is attacked with three rocket-propelled grenades. [NORTH]

30

» The General Security checkpoint near al-Qaa is attacked, but no injuries are reported. [EAST]

» Weapons fired from within Syria hit several Akroum Mountain villages. [NORTH]

» Shelling in Hermel injures two women. [EAST]

31

» Several points along Wadi Khaled are attacked, as is the area near Akroum Mountain (Akkar). [NORTH]

» The area near al-Qaa is attacked. [EAST]

Number of Incidents by Border / May 2013

Southern Border	Northern Border	Eastern Border
6	11	22

June

1

» More attacks hit Wadi Khaled and the Akroum Mountains. [NORTH]

» Attacks target (Shia) Nabi Chit, Nasseriyye, Brital and Nahle (North Bekaa). [EAST]

2

» Several Hermel neighborhoods are attacked, but no injuries are reported. [EAST]

» An IDF patrol crosses the technical fence near the Wazzani River. [SOUTH]

3

» Hermel is hit by three more attacks. [EAST]

» Munitions strike Akroum and Wadi Khaled. [NORTH]

5

» A Syrian helicopter attacks Kherbet Daoud near Orsal. [EAST]

» Munitions from Syria hit the home of a Lebanese citizen in Akroum but cause no injuries. [NORTH]

» Munitions from Syria strike Baalbek. [EAST]

6

» Weapons from Syria strike al-Abboudiyeh. [NORTH]

» Syrian warplanes fly low-level missions above Orsal. [EAST]

» Munitions from Syria strike a number of villages in Akkar and Wadi Khaled. [NORTH]

9

» An orchard is burned in the Akkari village

of Amar al-Bikat following an attack launched from within Syria. [NORTH]

10

» Pro-Assad forces rake the Akkar Menjez-Abboudiyyeh highway with heavy machine gun fire. The attack causes fires in some agricultural areas of Arida. [NORTH]

11

» Seven explosions rock al-Marj (Hermel) injuring four people. [EAST]

» IDF engineers work on a military road near Wazzani. [SOUTH]

12

» One person was killed when a Syrian helicopter attacks an Orsal neighborhood. [EAST]

» Six explosions occur in Hermel residential neighborhoods near an LAF barracks. Four people are injured and several homes are damaged. An orchard is burned because of the attack. [EAST]

13

» IDF soldiers cross the technical fence, and a bulldozer shuttles Israeli fortification materials at the Abbassiyyeh border point. [SOUTH]

14

» Four projectiles strike Shia villages in north Bekaa. [EAST]

16

» Munitions from Syria injure two Lebanese farmers in the Akkari village of al-Arme causing a fire in the wheat crops. [NORTH]

17

» IDF soldiers fire warning shots at a Lebanese citizen near Wazzani. [SOUTH]

» Two projectiles hit the (Shia) North Bekaa villages of Brital and Taibe but cause no injuries. [EAST]

21

» The IDF repositions elements near Wazzani and al-Ghajar. [SOUTH]

22

» The Akkari village of Dabbabiyeh is shelled. [NORTH]

Number of Incidents by Border / June 2013		
Southern Border	Northern Border	Eastern Border
5	9	11

July

9

» Two explosions occur in Hermel. [EAST]

» A shepherd is arrested by the IDF near Shebaa. [SOUTH]

10

» Seven students are injured while playing with unexploded munitions they discover in the town of Bani Sakhr in Wadi Khaled. [NORTH]

13

» The IDF crosses the technical fence in Wazzani twice and eventually reaches the eastern riverbank. [SOUTH]

18

» A Syrian warplane attacks an area near Orsal but causes no injuries. [EAST]

20

» Munitions from Syria strike the Akkari village of Kawashra. A woman is wounded and the area suffers significant material damage. [NORTH]

26

» IDF soldiers fire flares over the village of Rmaich. Military vehicles are seen moving on the Israeli side of the border. [SOUTH]

Number of Incidents by Border / July 2013		
Southern Border	Northern Border	Eastern Border
3	2	2

August

2

» Munitions from Syria strike farms near Mashari' al-Qaa. [EAST]

5

» A Syrian helicopter attacks targets near Orsal. [EAST]

8

» Two devices explode near the Israeli-Lebanese border fence as IDF soldiers cross into Lebanese territory. [SOUTH]

14

» A Syrian refugee is arrested in the neighborhood of Shebaa by the IDF. [SOUTH]

18

» Hermel and al-Qaa are attacked but no casualties are reported. [EAST]

22

» IDF soldiers deploy to the Wazzani border area and remain there for about three hours. [SOUTH]

23

» More than 20 homes in al-Moukaylbe are damaged by munitions fired from within Syria. [NORTH]

» The IDF conducts exercises along the Lebanese-Syrian border near Shebaa. [SOUTH]

24

» The IDF raids Naameh (south of Beirut), which prompts the Lebanese to complain to the Security Council. [SOUTH]

31

» The Syrian navy fires on two Lebanese vessels crewed by eight fishermen off the coast of Arida. A Lebanese vessel is driven toward Syrian waters. [NORTH]

Number of Incidents by Border / August 2013

Southern Border	Northern Border	Eastern Border
5	2	3

September

14

» Three munitions explode outside (Shia) Laboue causing one injury and a large fire. [EAST]

16

» Ordnance launched from within Syria strikes near the Akkari villages of Hekr Janin, Amar al-Bikat and al-Qochloq. [NORTH]

20

» The northern border villages in Akkar are taken under fire from within Syria. [NORTH]

23

» Akkari border villages are again taken under fire. [NORTH]

26

» Ordnance launched from within Syria strikes the Akkari village of Bani Sakhr. [NORTH]

28

» Munitions from Syria explode near several villages in Akkar. [NORTH]

Number of Incidents by Border / September 2013

Southern Border	Northern Border	Eastern Border
0	5	1

October

2

» Ordnance from Syria strikes several points in Wadi Khaled. [NORTH]

4

» Akkar's Hekr Janin is attacked by munitions launched from Syria. [NORTH]

7

» Syrian helicopters attack Wadi Humayyed near Orsal. [EAST]

9

» A Syrian helicopter attacks an ambulance at Wadi Humayyed (Orsal). [EAST]

14

» Units of the Syrian army enter Lebanon near Mashari' al-Qaa and destroy a house. [EAST]

15

» Ordnance from Syria strikes the Akkari village of Charbila. [NORTH]

19

» Abboudiyeh is taken under fire from within Syria. [NORTH]

21

» Four explosions are heard in Hermel but no one is injured. [EAST]

24

» Several Akkari villages are taken under fire from within Syria. [NORTH]

Number of Incidents by Border / October 2013		
Southern Border	Northern Border	Eastern Border
0	5	4

November

10

» Several Akkari villages are hit by projectiles launched from within Syria. [NORTH]

11

» Several Akkari villages are hit by ordnance from Syria. [NORTH]

14

» Munitions from Syria strike Baalbek, and Syrian forces raid Orsal. [EAST]

18

» A Syrian raid near Orsal kills two members of the Houjeiri family. [EAST]

» Several Akkari villages are hit by projectiles launched from Syria. [NORTH]

19

» A Syrian warplane attacks Wadi al-Hosn. (Orsal). [EAST]

» The Wadi Khaled village of Bani Sakhr is hit by ordnance launched from within Syria. [NORTH]

20

» Munitions launched from Syria strike the border villages of Abboudiyeh, an-Noura and Wadi al-Hor, and sniper fire blocks the Abboudiyyeh Highway. [NORTH]

21

» The Akkari villages of an-Noura and Dabbabiyeh are hit by projectiles launched from Syria. [NORTH]

Number of Incidents by Border / November 2013		
Southern Border	Northern Border	Eastern Border
0	5	3

December

5

» Ordnance from Syria strikes outside the Akkari villages of Dabbabiyeh, an-Noura, Hekr Janin, al-Arma and al-Qochloq. [NORTH]

12

» Several Akkari border villages are attacked by projectiles. [NORTH]

13

» Information emerges that an IDF patrol was fired on near Metula and that the IDF returned fire. Lebanese security sources state that the exchange of fire was not caused by anything that might have happened on the Lebanese side—not even because of hunters (hunting is forbidden, especially near the borders and the Blue Line). [SOUTH]

16

» Syrian ordnance strikes several Akkari villages. [NORTH]

17

» Hermel and its environs, including a military barracks, are hit by munitions. The attacks injure several LAF soldiers. [EAST]

18

» Attacks launched from within Syria hit Akkari villages. [NORTH]

21

» UNIFIL notifies the Lebanese authorities of Israel's intent to trim a tree that fell across the border fence during the last storm. The debris is impeding sensors mounted on the fence. [SOUTH]

23

» Clashes occur between Hezbollah and the Syrian opposition outside Nahle, North Bekaa. [EAST]

25

» A fire started in Israel spreads into Lebanon and destroys 50 perennial olive trees. [SOUTH]

28

» An Israeli spy camera and two monitoring devices are discovered outside Rmaich. [SOUTH]

30

» A Syrian helicopter attacks Kherbet Daoud (Orsal), and the LAF responds. [EAST]

» Ordnance launched from Syria hits near Khalsa and Ouwaynat (Akkar). [NORTH]

» Four rockets are launched from the vicinity of Rashaya al-Foukhar. Two hit inside Lebanese territory while two others strike Israeli border settlements. The LAF and the government are accused of the attack. [SOUTH]

» For the first time ever, LAF anti-aircraft artillery fires at Syrian helicopters over Orsal. [EAST]

Number of Incidents by Border / December 2013

Southern Border	Northern Border	Eastern Border
5	5	4

2014

January

2

» Heavy clashes occur between combined Syrian regime/Hezbollah forces and the opposition in the Syrian villages adjacent to the Lebanese-Syrian borders (including Ras Baalbek, Orsal and Qaa (North Bekaa)). [EAST]

10

» The LAF expands its presence by establishing new security belts near Qaa to help control Lebanon's eastern borders. [EAST]

» Weekly raids conducted by the LAF focus

on the hundreds of tents scattered throughout the areas of Ras Baalbek and Qaa. [EAST]

15

» Eight IDF soldiers penetrate 20 meters beyond the technical fence in Mays al-Jabal and then search the area for 30 minutes before withdrawing. The incident prompts UNIFIL to redeploy elements in the region. [SOUTH]

17

» Some 20 projectiles hit Orsal. Seven people are killed when their home is destroyed, and 15 others are injured. [EAST]

22

» A projectile fired from a Syrian army tank strikes a house in Danke, Akkar but does not explode. All six family members survive. [NORTH]

24

» Three projectiles hit neighborhoods within Hermel. [EAST]

28

» Syrian air force aircraft fire into the Mashari' al-Qaa area. [EAST]

30

» One 44-year-old Syrian worker is killed and another wounded when shots are fired from Syria into a cement factory in Wadi Khaled. [NORTH]

Number of Incidents by Border / January 2014		
Southern Border	Northern Border	Eastern Border
1	2	6

February

5

» More than 30 explosions caused by ordnance launched from Syria strike several Akkari villages. [NORTH]

6

» Tensions remain high after ordnance fired from within Syria hits al-Qochloq, an-Noura and Fraidis. [NORTH]

10

» A Syrian air force aircraft attacks the Orsal countryside. [EAST]

» Eight people are killed and 15 injured when ordnance hits the village of Orsal. Syrian warplanes attack the eastern outskirts of Orsal. [EAST]

18

» Seven rocket-propelled grenades strike

the (Shia) villages of Bazzaliyyeh and Harbata (North Bekaa). No casualties are reported. [EAST]

» An Israeli reconnaissance plane crashes near Mays al-Jabal, between the Blue Line and the technical fence. While no explanation is given for the crash, a number of IDF soldiers cross the fence line to retrieve the debris. [SOUTH]

21

» Two explosions rock the village of as-Sowwaniyyeh (North Bekaa), but neither cause any injuries. After an LAF patrol investigates the crater, a security representative announces that the ordnance had been launched from within Syria. [EAST]

28

» Three explosions rock the area in and around Brital. [EAST]

Number of Incidents by Border / February 2014		
Southern Border	Northern Border	Eastern Border
1	2	5

March

4

» A Syrian helicopter attacks the Orsal countryside. [EAST]

» Three mortar rounds fired from within Syria hit Laboue (North Bekaa). In protest, some local citizens block the Orsal-Laboue road. [EAST]

» An armored military bulldozer moving along the border between Kfar Kila and Odaisse

releases a thick, white smokescreen in an attempt to obscure visibility of some type of armored vehicle. That vehicle ultimately enters the border gate adjacent to Kfar Kila, and a high alert is observed on the opposite side of the Israeli border. [SOUTH]

5

» Syrian warplanes launch a number of attacks outside Orsal. [EAST]

» Munitions fired from within Syria hit the outskirts of Janta and Nabi Chit but cause no damage. [EAST]

» An IDF spokesperson says its soldiers fired on and hit two Hezbollah members who were preparing an explosive device near the Israeli-Syrian border. [SOUTH]

7

» Four rocket-propelled grenades fired from within Syria strike between (Shia) Laboue and Nabi Osman (North Bekaa) damaging homes and cars. [EAST]

» A Syrian helicopter attacks the Orsal countryside. [EAST]

9

» A number of munitions fired from within Syria strike the outskirts of Hermel near the public hospital. The Abdalla Azzam Brigades tweet responsibility for the attack in collaboration with *an-Nusra front*. [EAST]

11

» Three explosions rock (Shia) Nabi Chit and two more hit the village orchards. [EAST]

14

» A bomb explodes in the path of an IDF patrol in the Shebaa Farms area. In response, Israeli artillery fires dozens of rounds. Artillery fire also targets Owaida between Kfar Kila and Odaisse. Israeli news reports that the response was intended to prevent the capture of IDF soldiers. [SOUTH]

15

» Ordnance fired from Syria hits Nabi Osman and Laboue. The attack kills a 16-year-old from Nabi Osman, injures four other people and causes substantial material damage. [EAST]

16

» Syrian warplanes conduct several attacks outside Orsal. [EAST]

» An LAF patrol fires at a pickup truck headed toward Lebanon (outside Orsal) from Syrian territory and forces it to return. [EAST]

17

» LAF positions in the Orsal countryside are hit by sniper fire. [EAST]

» Several projectiles strike Laboue, and three more pieces of ordnance hit the area outside there and Nabi Osman. [EAST]

20

» As scores of Syrians try to flee the fighting on the Syrian side of the border by crossing the Nahr al-Kabeer River, they are fired upon from the Syrian side. Three Lebanese and 51 Syrians are injured. [NORTH]

» Heavy gunfire from Syria strikes villages along the Lebanese-Syrian border area of Wadi Khaled. Syrian warplanes fly over the northern Lebanese-Syrian border area. [NORTH]

21

» Clashes in Krak des Chevaliers (Syria) result in munitions hitting border villages near Wadi Khaled. [NORTH]

» The IDF launches a balloon near Metula (adjacent to Kfar Kila), which remains aloft for three hours. Military patrols scour the roads adjacent to the border, and a possible command and control vehicle is spotted behind a military bulldozer (see 4 March). [SOUTH]

22

» Syrian warplanes attack the Orsal countryside. [EAST]

25

» The outskirts of (Shia) Haour Taala and Brital are hit by projectiles. [EAST]

26

» An IDF patrol of 13 soldiers and military working dogs crosses the Blue Line in Khallet Warde (Shebaa Farms area). The patrol penetrates 20 meters inside Lebanon, takes a Hezbollah flag and then departs. [SOUTH]

27

» Five people are injured after Syrian warplanes attack the Orsal countryside. [EAST]

31

» A driverless, Jeep-sized military utility vehicle equipped with antennas patrols near the Lebanese border. [SOUTH]

Number of Incidents by Border / March 2014		
Southern Border	Northern Border	Eastern Border
6	3	16

April

1

» A 17-year-old from Wadi Kahled is shot by Syrian soldiers manning one of the border positions near the Lebanese side of the Nahr al-Kabeer River. [NORTH]

2

» Three Syrian projectiles hit Laboue (Northern Bekaa) killing a Syrian refugee and injuring another. [EAST]

3

» For the second time in three days, the IDF deploys a driverless vehicle equipped with antennas (it had been parked along the border road between Kfar Kila and Odaisse). The vehicle's presence alerts the LAF and UNIFIL. [SOUTH]

4

» Two projectiles strike Laboue but cause no injuries. An unknown group calling itself "Free Sunni Brigades of Baalbek" claims responsibility and declares that the attack was in response to LAF actions against Tripoli residents at Hezbollah's behest. [EAST]

6

» An LAF patrol clashes with a Syrian rebel group outside Orsal. The five-member group was trying to infiltrate into Lebanese territory in a car when it was taken under fire. The patrol arrests four, but the fifth suspect escapes. [EAST]

7

» The IDF increases its security measures after Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah acknowledges responsibility for attacking an

Israeli patrol in the Shebaa Farms area earlier in the month. That attack was in response to an IDF attack against a Hezbollah position in Janta last February. [SOUTH]

14

» Three mortar rounds explode in Laboue. [EAST]

17

» A 12-man IDF patrol penetrates 200 meters into the contested Shebaa Farms area. Soldiers apprehend two shepherds and another man. [SOUTH]

19

» An IDF unit fires at a shepherd from Kfar Kila. The man had been working in a field between Kfar Kila and al-Khiam with members of his family. No injuries are reported. [SOUTH]

23

» Four Syrian rocket-propelled grenades explode near Brital. [EAST]

» Three projectiles hit between Laboue and Nabi Osman in north Bekaa. The "Free Sunni Brigades of Baalbek" claim responsibility on Twitter. [EAST]

25

» After several weeks of relative calm, Hermel is attacked with rocket-propelled grenades. [EAST]

» Twenty IDF soldiers cross the fence adjacent to the Wazzani but depart about two hours later. [SOUTH]

27

» Syrian warplanes attack the Orsal countryside. [EAST]

Number of Incidents by Border / April 2014

Southern Border	Northern Border	Eastern Border
5	1	8

May

1

» A seven-man IDF foot patrol breaches the Blue Line near Houla-Marjaayoun. In response, the LAF deploys to the region to take defensive measures. [SOUTH]

4

» Hezbollah claims to have foiled an attempt by rebels to infiltrate the Orsal countryside. Heavy clashes ensue. [EAST]

7

» Syrian ordnance strikes the outskirts of the Shia villages of Brital, Khraibe and Haour Taala. [EAST]

12

» An IDF Navy gunboat approaches Lebanese territorial waters in Ras an-Naqura before withdrawing. Patrols are launched after IDF soldiers remove a tree near the Labboune border (where the August 7, 2013 incident took place). [SOUTH]

» IDF warplanes fly over the western and central sectors of the Lebanese border, particularly near Tyr. [SOUTH]

13

» An IDF patrol penetrates beyond the technical fence line south al-Ghajar before it returns to a hill overlooking Wazzani River. [SOUTH]

15

» IDF and LAF soldiers face off in Ras an-Naqoura. [SOUTH]

17

» The city of Hermel is hit twice by ordnance fired from the eastern mountain chain. [EAST]

18

» An IDF bulldozer enters Lebanese territory near Labboune before it withdraws to resume working between the technical fence and the Blue Line. [SOUTH]

» The Brital countryside is hit by a projectile, and two others impact near Haour Taala. [EAST]

20

» The IDF widens and paves the border road opposite Kfar Kila. [SOUTH]

21

» A smoke canister is fired toward a shepherd some 150 meters inside Lebanese territory near Kfar Chouba. [SOUTH]

» A 20-man IDF patrol situated at Fatima Gate directs their weapons toward an LAF area. [SOUTH]

26

» Syrian warplanes raid the Wadi Humayyed area outside Orsal. [EAST]

» Two pieces of ordnance strike the Laboue-Nabi Osman road. One civilian is injured. [EAST]

27

» A Syrian is seriously injured when a land mine explodes. He was entering Lebanon from Syria via an illegal passageway near Dabbabiyeh-an-Noura. [NORTH]

28

» Syrian warplanes again strike the Wadi Humayyed area. [EAST]

29

» An IDF patrol supported by four military vehicles crosses the technical fence line in al-Abbasiyyeh. It travels 25 meters into Lebanon but withdraws after completing its reconnaissance. [SOUTH]

Number of Incidents by Border / May 2014

Southern Border	Northern Border	Eastern Border
10	1	7

June

9

» Rocket-propelled grenades hit Hermel and Hawsh es-Sayyed Ali. [EAST]

10

» Syrian rebels attack a quarry located some 500 meters from Ras Baalbek and abduct several employees. [EAST]

13

» Syrian warplanes conduct three attacks against opposition locations along the eastern Lebanese-Syrian border. [EAST]

14

» The Lebanese village of Tofayl, an enclave

inside Syrian territory, is hit by intense shelling from Assad forces and Hezbollah associated with the battles raging near Rankous. [EAST]

17

» Syrian shelling targets opposition locations around Tofayl. [EAST]

18

» IDF engineers use a bulldozer to create a new site from which to oversee the Wazzani area and beyond. [SOUTH]

19

» An IDF unit penetrates more than 200 meters inside Lebanese territory to arrest a shepherd. [SOUTH]

25

» Violent clashes involving heavy weapons and mortars take place between opposition forces and the Syrian army outside (Shia) Brital. [EAST]

28

» Ordnance hits the outskirts of Brital, and three more projectiles strike the village itself. [EAST]

Number of Incidents by Border / June 2014		
Southern Border	Northern Border	Eastern Border
2	0	7

July

4

» Syrian warplanes raid opposition forces near Orsal and Qaa. [EAST]

5

» An IDF unit attempts to arrest a shepherd in the Shebaa Farms area, but he eludes them and reports the incident to the LAF. [SOUTH]

6

» Syrian warplanes attack rebel sites in Wadi al-Khayl and Rahwa near Orsal. [EAST]

8

» Projectiles strike the area between al-Ain and Fakha. [EAST]

11

» Ordnance explodes between Taibe and Brital. [EAST]

» A projectile is fired toward Israel from Mari, and the IDF responds immediately. [SOUTH]

12

» In coordination with UNIFIL, the LAF moves its Eighth Brigade from southern Lebanon to reinforce security in the northern Bekaa and Lebanese-Syrian border areas. [SOUTH]

» Following a projectile attack launched from south Lebanon toward Israel, the IDF's artillery responds. [SOUTH]

13

» IDF warplanes bomb the outskirts of Mansouri-Majdal Zoun in Tyr in response to a rocket attack. [SOUTH]

14

» Heavy fighting between Hezbollah and Syrian opposition forces along the border in the Anti-Lebanon Mountains kills six Hezbollah members. [EAST]

» A projectile attack is launched toward

Israel from south Tyr. In response, the IDF fires artillery into the outskirts of Mansouri, Majdal Zoun and Zebqin. The LAF and UNIFIL forces deploy to the area to search for the launch points. [SOUTH]

» An LAF patrol discovers two rocket-launch points south of Tyr. [SOUTH]

15

» Syrian warplanes launch a number of attacks against the outskirts of Orsal. Five residents and some Syrians are injured in the attacks. [EAST]

» Additional projectiles are fired into Israel from a location south of Tyr, immediately prompting the LAF to launch patrols and impose a security cordon. The IDF fires artillery in response. [SOUTH]

» The LAF and UNIFIL patrol the borders while an Israeli reconnaissance aircraft remains aloft in the vicinity. [SOUTH]

16

» Brital and Taibe are hit by ordnance. [EAST]

» Heavy fighting takes place in the Anti-Lebanon Mountains between Syrian army-Hezbollah forces and opposition forces. The clashes follow an opposition attack against Hezbollah-controlled areas near Younin. [EAST]

» Another projectile is launched from south Lebanon toward Israel, but it strikes Khiam in Lebanon. In response, IDF warplanes launch flares over the international borders. Another projectile strikes Lebanese territory, and IDF reconnaissance aircraft continue to overfly the area throughout the night. [SOUTH]

17

» The LAF discovers and dismantles two rocket launchers near Tyr. [SOUTH]

18

» The LAF and UNIFIL reinforce their coverage along the border and within the villages. [SOUTH]

19

» A woman and her daughters are injured when a missile hits their home in Wadi Khaled's Bani Sakhr. [NORTH]

20

» Ordnance launched from within Syria strikes Lebanon near Wadi Khaled's Bani Sakhr and Machta Hammoud. [NORTH]

» An LAF patrol discovers a rocket launcher used recently to target Israeli territories. [SOUTH]

22

» An LAF checkpoint between Orsal and Nabi Osman is attacked by Syrian rebel forces that had infiltrated the area. The soldiers' weapons are taken, as are a set of night binoculars and a communications device. An LAF soldier suspected of having facilitated the attack defects to the rebels. [EAST]

» Munitions fired from north Hasbaya toward Israel land near an LAF checkpoint east of Shebaa. [SOUTH]

23

» Several explosions rock Bazzaliyyeh and Harbata. [EAST]

» The IDF continues installing devices on a column it erected two weeks ago opposite the Wazzani. [SOUTH]

25

» An armed group attacks an LAF checkpoint near Orsal. [EAST]

» A Syrian aircraft attacks areas near Rahwa (Orsal). [EAST]

» LAF patrols discover three rocket launchers in Rachaiyya (southeast) that were aimed toward Israel. [SOUTH]

27

» Syrian warplanes attack locations near Orsal. [EAST]

29

» Four projectiles explode in an area between Laboue and Nabi Osman. [EAST]

» Syrian warplanes attack the Wadi Ajram area near Orsal injuring four Syrians. [EAST]

» A 10-man IDF patrol crosses the technical fence outside Shebaa. [SOUTH]

30

» Two projectiles strike near Hermel. [EAST]

» A 15-man IDF patrol chases shepherds near the Saddana Hills (Shebaa Farms) and apprehends one of them. [SOUTH]

31

» The shepherd kidnapped on 30 July is repatriated by UNIFIL. [SOUTH]

Number of Incidents by Border / July 2014		
Southern Border	Northern Border	Eastern Border
18	2	16

August**2**

» Some 60 projectiles are launched from Syria toward the outskirts of an-Noura, Dabbabiyeh, and Bani Sakher in Wadi Khaled. [NORTH]

4

» A projectile launched from south Lebanon toward Israel lands instead within Lebanon. [SOUTH]

7

» Syrian warplanes raid armed groups outside Orsal. [EAST]

13

» An IDF patrol fires toward An-Nakkar pond in the Shebaa Farms area. [SOUTH]

19

» Lebanese security forces close the Arida border passageway. [SOUTH]

20

» An IDF patrol of about 20 soldiers crosses the barbed wire fence outside Rmeich. [SOUTH]

23

» Assad regime soldiers armed with heavy weapons advance toward Deir al-Achayer and its environs to establish military checkpoints. [EAST]

» The sound of a projectile being fired toward Israel is heard in south Lebanon. In response, the IDF fires a projectile toward south Lebanon. [SOUTH]

25

- » A citizen discovers two balloons marked with Hebrew writing in his backyard in Kfar Tebnit. [SOUTH]
- » A projectile is launched toward Israel from the area around the Litani River. [SOUTH]
- » An IDF soldier is wounded by a sniper operating near Odayse. [SOUTH]

26

- » The IDF launches more than 20 rockets toward villages near the Litani River. The attack is in response to two rockets being fired from Jarmaq (one of which hits Israel while the other lands inside Lebanon). The LAF confirms that the launch sites were in Jarmaq, and an investigation discloses that another projectile was ready to be fired. [SOUTH]
- » Twelve IDF soldiers cross the technical fence between Lebanon and Israel and penetrate to the Wazzani River. [SOUTH]

27

- » Syrian fire targets a house in Abboudiyeh. [NORTH]
- » IDF movements within the occupied sector of al-Ghajar prompt UNIFIL to intensify its presence in the area. [SOUTH]

28

- » Rachaiyya residents demand that the LAF establish more checkpoints to prevent individuals from sneaking into the Shebaa Farms area via illegal mountain routes. In the most recent incident, one Syrian was killed and two others were injured when the microbus they were in was fired on when it refused to stop. [SOUTH]

30

- » A patrol from UNIFIL's Spanish battalion is blocked by residents of Chacra when members of the unit are suspected of having photographed the village. [NORTH]

Number of Incidents by Border / August 2014		
Southern Border	Northern Border	Eastern Border
12	3	2

September**3**

- » LAF units deployed between Shebaa and Rachaiyya al-Wadi notice armed elements moving toward the Bekaa from Syria through Mount Hermon. They withdraw when the LAF takes them under fire. [SOUTH]

5

- » Hezbollah elements discover an eavesdropping device in a telecom network in Adloun. A Hezbollah member is killed when the device explodes as he attempts to dismantle it. [SOUTH]

8

- » The area between Laboue and Nabi Osman is struck by ordnance, as is Haour Taala (north Bekaa). [EAST]

10

- » Armed Syrians remove old sand blocks from the Lebanese-Syrian border area and build another outside Akroum (Lebanon). [NORTH]
- » The Akkari villages of an-Noura and ad-Dousa are attacked with projectiles. [NORTH]

13

- » An IDF patrol attempts to arrest a Lebanese shepherd near Shebaa Farms but he escapes. [SOUTH]

17

- » An IDF drone is spotted at low altitude over Marjaayoun. [SOUTH]

19

- » Laboue is hit by two projectiles but no injuries are reported. [EAST]

» The IDF launches a white aerostat above the Wazzani River. Afterward, the IDF deploys soldiers near the technical fence. [SOUTH]

20

» An IDF drone crashes in the Sarda-Marjaayoun district. [SOUTH]

22

» Two IDF reconnaissance aircraft enter Lebanese airspace in the south. [SOUTH]

30

» An IDF patrol chases two shepherds in Saddana-Hasbayya. [SOUTH]

Number of Incidents by Border / September 2014		
Southern Border	Northern Border	Eastern Border
8	2	2

October

1

» The IDF emplaces more surveillance devices south of the international border with Lebanon, including camera-equipped aerostats. [SOUTH]

5

» Clashes take place near al-Qaa between Syrian rebels and Hezbollah. A Hezbollah position is attacked near the Lebanese-Syrian border. Reports indicate that 10 people are killed. [EAST]

» Hermel is hit by two projectiles. *An-Nusra Front* tweets that it attacked Hezbollah outside Nahle killing and injuring several Hezbollah members. [EAST]

6

» *An-Nusra Front* clashes with Hezbollah outside Younin, Baalbek, Nahle and Orsal. [EAST]

» An LAF position in the Shebaa Farms area is fired on by the IDF, and an LAF soldier is wounded. The incident is contained thanks to UNIFIL intercession. [SOUTH]

7

» Two Israeli soldiers are injured when their vehicle strikes an IED near the Shebaa Farms area. The IDF responds with an artillery bombardment of Lebanese villages along the southern border. [SOUTH]

9

» Brital is hit by three projectiles. [EAST]

10

» Ordnance fired from Syria hits the outskirts

of Hekr Janin, al-Qochloq and Amar al-Bikat. [NORTH]

» The IDF intensifies its land and air activities near Lebanese and Syrian territory. [SOUTH]

11

» Assad forces bomb Akkari border villages intensely causing significant property damage. [NORTH]

18

» Akkari villages are struck by projectiles. [NORTH]

19

» A Syrian regime force penetrates into Lebanese border villages in the Rachaiyya district. They withdraw to their positions after stealing 37 sheep from local shepherds. [EAST]

20

» Eight members of the IDF cross the technical fence and head to the Wazzani River. [SOUTH]

22

» Fifty Israeli soldiers cross the technical fence near al-Ghajar and proceed to the eastern bank of the Wazzani River. [SOUTH]

23

» The IDF fires a smoke canister in near Mays al-Jabal to frighten a shepherd. [SOUTH]

28

» Hermel is hit by three projectiles. Syrian warplanes attack positions outside Orsal. [EAST]

Number of Incidents by Border / October 2014		
Southern Border	Northern Border	Eastern Border
7	3	6

November

17

» Syrian warplanes target positions outside Orsal. [EAST]

18

» Ten Israeli soldiers cross the technical fence near Wazzani. [SOUTH]

19

» Syrian warplanes attack Orsal and Ras Baalbek. [EAST]

» Twenty-two Israeli soldiers cross the technical fence near Wazzani parks while 10 other soldiers keep watch. [SOUTH]

20

» Two projectiles fired from Syria strike east Shebaa. [EAST]

» Syrian projectiles strike al-Qochloq, Amar al-Bikat and the highway that connects al-Abboudiyeh to Menjez. [NORTH]

» Explosions are heard in the Shebaa Farms area due to Israeli military drills. [SOUTH]

21

» *An-Nusra Front* tweets that it lured Hezbollah members into an ambush outside Nahle and injured several of them. [EAST]

25

» The LAF reinforces its positions along the Shebaa-Mount Hermon axis. [SOUTH]

26

» At least 11 projectiles are fired toward the Akkari villages along the Lebanese-Syrian border. [NORTH]

28

» Syrians fire on Akkari border villages. [NORTH]

29

» The Aabboudiye-Menjez Highway is attacked from within Syria, and a retired Lebanese sergeant is injured. [NORTH]

Number of Incidents by Border / November 2014

Southern Border	Northern Border	Eastern Border
4	4	4

December

3

» The LAF constructs watchtowers and staffs them with soldiers equipped with night vision binoculars. [EAST]

6

» The LAF fires on armed Syrian groups in the Orsal countryside. [EAST]

8

» The LAF places sand blocks along border passages outside Orsal. [SOUTH]

» The IDF intensifies its patrols between Kfar Kila and Odaisse. [SOUTH]

9

» Four smuggling routes through the eastern Lebanese-Syrian borders are closed by the LAF. [EAST]

16

» The IDF begins installing devices on a telecom pillar they erected previously on a hill facing the Wazzani River. [SOUTH]

17

» Several raids are conducted against the Zamarani smuggling route through the Lebanese-Syrian border. [EAST]

18

» The Akkari villages along the Lebanese-Syrian border are fired on. [NORTH]

24

» The Syrian coast guard fires on a boat owned by Arida residents fishing near the village. One of the boats is captured and the fishermen on board are taken to Syria. [NORTH]

27

» The LAF inspects illegal passages that connect Orsal and its environs to Qalamoun. [EAST]

29

» The LAF arrests Syrian citizens trying to sneak into Beit Jinn (Syria) via the Shebaa Farms. [SOUTH]

30

» The IDF erects two tents on the road that runs from the border to the Wazzani River. [SOUTH]

» Ramiye residents clash with a UNIFIL patrol from the Ghanaian battalion. Residents suspect

that some members of the patrol had been photographing the village. The residents detain three vehicles and hold them until the LAF intervenes. [SOUTH]

Number of Incidents by Border / December 2014		
Southern Border	Northern Border	Eastern Border
6	2	5

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The LAF: Lebanon's Hope...by Default

Introduction

On December 29, 2013, shortly after the funeral for the late Mohammed Chatah (the Sunni former Finance Minister and prominent member of the Hariri establishment who was assassinated earlier that month), President Michel Suleiman announced that Saudi Arabia had pledged \$3 billion in aid to the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF). In Lebanon, the announcement received an enthusiastic welcome from friends of Saudi Arabia, particularly the Future Movement which sponsored a series of billboards in Beirut thanking the "Good King" for his donation.¹ During the August 2, 2014 Battle of Orsal between the LAF and Islamist (Syrian) rebels, several LAF members were killed and wounded, while some 35 other individuals from the LAF and Lebanon's Internal Security Forces (ISF) were taken prisoner. Shortly afterward, Saudi Arabia pledged another \$1 billion, which was to be divided among the various Lebanese security organizations, including the LAF.²

In reality, Saudi Arabia is not the only country that responds decisively when Lebanon is shaken by a significant event. On February 22, 2014, just a few hours after a suicide bomber attacked an LAF checkpoint in Hermel (northern Bekaa), British Ambassador to Beirut Tom Fletcher tweeted his country's concern for Lebanon's stability: "Appalled that our Leb army allies hit by cowardly terrorism tonight. We'll help rebuild Hermel checkpoint+offer \$500,000 of protective kit."³ On October 22, 2014, the British Embassy announced that the United Kingdom had delivered military equipment to the LAF to help it deal with the jihadist threat on its eastern border with Syria. The UK donation, described by Ambassador Fletcher in a series of tweets ("to help army secure Syrian border from extremists"), was valued at \$16 million and included 164 Land Rovers, 1,500 sets of body armor, a secure radio communication network, border watchtowers and HESCO barriers to protect LAF positions along the frontier.^{4,5}

¹ <http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/198400>

² <http://www.businessinsider.com/r-saudi-arabia-grants-lebanons-army-1-billion-in-aid-2014-06>

³ <https://twitter.com/HMATomFletcher/status/437293081634025472>

⁴ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Oct-22/274964-uk-delivers-aid-to-lebanese-army.ashx#sthash.310kOfJ9.dpuf>

⁵ <https://twitter.com/HMATomFletcher>

Obviously, the LAF's primary benefactor—the United States—is equally magnanimous. On Army Day, August 1, 2014 (commemorated discretely that year due to the presidential vacancy and a day before the Orsal battle began), the U.S. Embassy in Beirut posted a YouTube clip that described the range and depth of U.S. military assistance to the LAF. Soon after the battle, U.S. Ambassador David Hale stated:

The United States will soon deliver additional munitions and ordnance for offensive and defensive combat operations by the LAF. This assistance will enhance the LAF's ability to secure Lebanon's borders, protect Lebanon's people and fight these violent extremist groups. U.S. military assistance will begin arriving in the next few weeks and continue in the months to follow.⁶

Why the LAF Matters to Lebanon

The urgent responses noted above to situations involving the LAF say a great deal about the perspective of the LAF held by regional and international powers—and their expectations of that organization. In a country rife with sectarian divisions, one that continues to experience an enduring political crisis and today is burdened with some 1.5 million Syrian (and several hundred thousand Palestinian) refugees, the LAF is seen as the “only [Lebanese] institution ... considered ... a national body.”⁷ Implicit in that description is that, short of Lebanon achieving a sustainable political life, the LAF is

considered the only institution capable of guaranteeing at least a modicum of national order. Moreover, while many Lebanese institutions either do not function at all or do so at markedly reduced levels of productivity because of the political deadlock (to say nothing of the corruption inherent in the Lebanese system), the LAF is seen as the only institution that has continued to function more or less satisfactorily. According to its mission, the LAF is key to preserving “stability” in its most literal sense, and it does so largely by “containing” related incidents.

At the same time, however, the LAF represents the last Maronite Christian concentration of power within the complex Lebanese landscape. While the country's presidency remains vacant (an office earmarked by the constitution for a Maronite Christian), the prerogatives of that office were truncated dramatically by the Taif Agreement:

The Taif Agreement stripped the President of his constitutional powers and arguably left him with only one effective tool of governance—the authority to appoint the members of the Cabinet as agreed to by the Prime Minister. Paradoxically, under the Taif Agreement, the President is the Supreme Commander in Chief of the Army but the Army is under the authority of the Cabinet in which the President does not have the right to vote.⁸

⁶ <http://www.timesofisrael.com/lebanon-asks-us-for-combat-planes-to-battle-jihadists/>

⁷ <http://www.economist.com/blogs/pomegranate/2014/04/lebanons-armed-forces>

⁸ <http://www.loc.gov/law/help/lebanon-constitutional-law.php#taef>

Critically, Lebanon's Christian Maronite community has been wrestling with an acute crisis in leadership. That predicament can be traced technically to the day former President Amin Gemayyel left office in 1988, near the end of the war. Unfortunately, no successor president was waiting in the wings, and the temporal significance of Gemayyel's departure was that disintegration within the State was just then reaching its peak. From that time until the Taif Agreement was concluded, Lebanon existed under the official rule of two governments, one of which was presided over by General Michel Aoun, the chief of staff of one of the factions spawned by the divided army. Clearly, implementation of the Taif Agreement required the clout of the Syrian military (officially a joint Lebanese/Syrian effort that had the blessing of the U.S. and its allies) to dislodge Aoun from the presidential palace when he rejected some provisions of the Taif Agreement and clung to the idea of "legitimacy." The predicament faced by Lebanon's Christians, particularly the Maronites, assumed even greater proportions during the 15 years of "Syrian tutelage." During that period, the LAF's chief of staff accreted ever more constitutional authority to the detriment of the political elites, the members of which either were excluded physically or became secondary actors who seemed unable to accept their own marginalization.⁹

Despite the 15 years of *Syrian tutelage* and the ideological imprint it made on Lebanese society, that outcome has never been addressed

comprehensively at a general or constitutional level. Indeed, the Lebanese and Syrian armies were aligned according to "brotherhood, cooperation and coordination" during that time. Demonstrably, the last two presidents of the Lebanese Republic also served previously as LAF chiefs of staff: former President (General) Émile Lahoud (1998 – 2006) and former President (General) Michel Suleiman (2008 – 2014). Thus, given the current "vacancy" at Baabda Palace, it is unsurprising that a top candidate for the position is General Jean Kahwaji—the LAF's current chief of staff.

As is typical for the Syrian Baathists who blur the lines between the political and military realms, the presidency of the republic seems to have emerged as the ultimate "promotion" a chief of staff may expect. Of course, this propensity has not only exacerbated the malaise that has affected the Maronite Christian political elite, but it has also debased the position of the LAF's chief of staff. Since a chief of staff is thus expected to keep one eye trained on Baabda (the presidential palace), he would also be expected to do his utmost to please the country's various political powers—and even influential regional and international actors—to achieve the dream of exchanging his present title, "general," for that of "Mr. President."

Sustaining the LAF

As mentioned above, the U.S. historically has been one of the LAF's most generous international donors. By consistently declaring its support for

⁹ General Michel Aoun and former President Amin Gemayyel were forced to leave the country, while Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea was jailed.

the LAF as Lebanon's "sole legitimate defense force," U.S. authorities have often expressed their preference for Hezbollah's disarmament and that the LAF assert itself as Lebanon's sole military organization. At the same time, the U.S. has generally restricted its aid to training and logistical support rather than armaments because of its reluctance to provide Lebanon with any equipment that could harm U.S.-Israeli relations. Nevertheless, the LAF received a dramatic increase in U.S. funding after former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri was assassinated in 2005 and Syrian troops withdrew from the country. A year later, the July 2006 War between Israel and Hezbollah (ended by UNSCR 1701, which also reintroduced the LAF to south Lebanon after a decades-long absence) prompted the U.S. to provide even more funding, such that between 2006 and 2008, the LAF received more than \$400 million in U.S. assistance.¹⁰ Similarly, in early January 2013, the U.S. promised the LAF 200 more armored vehicles to help protect Lebanon's borders and sustain internal stability.¹¹ It seems, therefore, that pitting the LAF against Hezbollah (an unlikely matchup as will be discussed later in this document) is no longer a precondition to the LAF receiving aid.

Such grants, whether from the U.S. or other nations, help underscore the complexity of the LAF's funding regimen. Although the organization generally enjoys broad domestic

support (a recent report by Norwegian NGO FAFO indicated approval ratings as high as 80%), it remains chronically underfunded, which helps explain the LAF's dependence on international donors.¹² The LAF's funding sources are also tied both to Lebanon's relationships with the nations involved and to the organization's internal struggles with domestic terrorism, factors that are linked inextricably to events occurring throughout the region (including Syria and Iraq).

The "CIA World Factbook" states that as of 2010, Lebanon spent 4.04% of its GDP on military expenditures, thus making it the tenth highest spending country in the world.¹³ But according to Aram Nerguizian of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C. and an expert on Lebanon's military, "Lebanon is unable to develop its military forces without the assistance of funds and equipment from other countries such as the United States, France, the United Kingdom, Belgium and the UAE."¹⁴ In fact, the LAF's overdependence on foreign assistance highlights the issue of the shifting political agendas behind that assistance. For instance, the post-2006 assistance to the LAF, framed within the provisions of UNSCR 1701, is vastly different from today's version which justifies such aid as a means to achieve the objectives of "fighting terrorism." But while that kind of assistance may expand or contract based on the agendas involved, and

¹⁰ <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-future-of-u.s.-military-aid-to-lebanon>

¹¹ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Local-News/2013/Jan-07/201181-us-gives-lebanon-200-armored-vehicles.ashx>

¹² <http://www.fafo.no/images/pub/2013/10179.pdf>

¹³ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2034rank.html?countryname=Lebanon&countrycode=le®ionCode=mde&rank=10#le>

¹⁴ http://csis.org/files/media/isis/pubs/090210_lafsecurity.pdf

while the LAF may indeed receive more weapons and training, the long-term outcome does not favor its sustained development. One example is the ad hoc interest shown in the LAF by the "International Support Group for Lebanon."¹⁵ During a daylong conference held in Rome on June 17, 2014 and attended by representatives from 43 countries and regional and international bodies (including the UN), Italian Foreign Minister Federica Mogherini stated that the group's aim was to "support Lebanon in the face of all the challenges its security and stability are facing.... The Lebanese army is a main base for Lebanon's stability."¹⁶

Later that summer, several other countries pledged moral and material support for the LAF. Egyptian Ambassador Mohamed Zayed said on December 5, 2014 that Lebanon must be isolated from regional crises to maintain its stability and that Egypt would provide security assistance if needed. Zayed explained that Egypt's support for the fight against extremists in Lebanon was linked to a broader regional strategy. In addition, Interior Minister Nouhad al-Mashnouq (who

headed a security delegation to Egypt on November 9, 2014 to purchase military equipment as part of the second Saudi grant) expressed the need "to put efforts together in a bid to combat the spread of terrorism."¹⁷ According to Basem Shabb, a Lebanese MP and member of the parliament's Committee on Defense, cooperation between Lebanon and Egypt would improve the capabilities of the armed forces because of Egypt's advanced weaponry, the existing legal framework within the Arab League's Common Defense Pact, a shared training doctrine, the common language and Egypt's opposition to radical Islamic factions.¹⁸ During a meeting in New York, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi expressed to Prime Minister Tammam Salam Egypt's readiness to train Lebanese troops to fight against terrorists.¹⁹ Iran also offered to donate military equipment to the Lebanese army, but that offer was held in abeyance to prevent harming relations with the West.²⁰ Additionally, March 14 figures in Lebanon have been voicing opposition to Iranian offers by explaining that they would represent a violation of extant

¹⁵ "The inaugural meeting of the International Support Group for Lebanon was held on 25 September 2013 at United Nations Headquarters in New York and was chaired by the United Nations Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-moon. Participants invited to the meeting were: the People's Republic of China, the Republic of France, the Republic of Lebanon, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, the European Union, the League of Arab States, the World Bank, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Development Group, the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon and the Force Commander of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL)." See: <http://www.presidency.gov.lb/English/News/Pages/Details.aspx?nid=20763>

¹⁶ <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/551910-international-support-group-for-lebanon-kicks-off-rome-conference>

¹⁷ http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Dec-05/279994-egypt-ready-to-assist-lebanon-against-jihadis.ashx?utm_source=Magnet&utm_medium=Related%20Articles%20widget&utm_campaign=Magnet%20tools#sthash.hjhYp7ie.dpuf

¹⁸ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Opinion/Commentary/2014/Jun-20/260820-look-to-egypt-for-military-cooperation.ashx#sthash.idK4TbF2.dpuf>

¹⁹ <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/148546> and <http://al-anwar.com.au/index.php/salam-sees-defensive-role-lebanon-egypt-ready-train-lebanese-army-battle-terrorists/>

²⁰ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Sep-30/272465-iran-to-donate-military-aid-to-lebanese-army.ashx#sthash.nTgGwee6.dpuf>

international sanctions against Tehran over weapons exports.²¹ Based on the international accords concluded recently with Tehran, however, that situation may change. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov added his country's contributions to the mix when he stated at a joint news conference in Moscow attended by his Lebanese counterpart Gebran Bassil, "Russia will enhance military cooperation with Lebanon, mainly by reinforcing the defense capabilities of the Lebanese Army and security forces."²² Notably, former President Michel Suleiman had previously sought stronger military support from Moscow for the LAF during his second visit to Russia in January 2013. This collection of donors and would-be donors spans a remarkably broad political spectrum. At the same time, however, they share the notion that the LAF should be supported in its fight against "extremist groups" to ensure "Lebanon's stability."^{23,24}

Although many foreign statements made to explain the provision of material support to the LAF emphasize the importance of "stability" and "security," they have increasingly included references to fighting Sunni extremism. For instance, a February 26, 2014 announcement posted on the U.S. Department of Defense website asserts "Sunni terrorist attacks

are on the rise in Lebanon" and that the U.S. is continuing to provide "counterterrorism funding" to the LAF.²⁵ Of note, such statements are consistent with a wider U.S.-led discourse surrounding the "war on terror" and the need to tackle global Sunni extremism. In a speech delivered to the 2014 graduating class of the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, New York on May 28, 2014, President Obama announced a \$5 billion "Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund," which includes support to Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq to "confront terrorists working across Syrian borders."^{26,27}

The LAF vs. "Sunni Terrorism"

Lebanon did not discover Sunni extremism recently or as a result of the Syrian conflict. In the post-Taif era at the turn of the millennium, a spotlight was focused on the presence of radical Sunni Islamists in Lebanon when the LAF clashed with a group of Islamists entrenched in Akkar (northern Lebanon). Though the LAF proved victorious, it paid a relatively high price (investigations revealed later that the Islamists involved had international connections, and the failure of Lebanon's political/judiciary system to try them properly ultimately fueled the rise of Islamism in Lebanon). Another wakeup call came on September 11, 2001 when the Lebanese learned that

²¹ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Oct-31/276081-no-good-reason-to-refuse-iranian-aid-hezbollah-mp.ashx#sthash.iPulKxcN.dpuf>

²² <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Apr-25/254307-russia-to-lend-a-hand-to-lebanese-army.ashx#sthash.ZVqNN8B8.dpuf>

²³ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Apr-25/254307-russia-to-lend-a-hand-to-lebanese-army.ashx#axzz37Rsi9JQv>

²⁴ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Jul-05/262788-iran-offers-to-help-lebanon-fight-terrorism.ashx#axzz37Rsi9JQv>

²⁵ <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=121731>

²⁶ http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/obama-wants-to-set-up-new-5-billion-counterterrorism-fund/2014/05/28/c5ee3362-e662-11e3-a86b-362fd5443d19_story.html

²⁷ <http://www.haaretz.com/news/world/1.595842>

one of the terrorists involved in the attacks against the United States was from the Bekaa. Clearly, we cannot find a direct link between the groups that operated in the early 2000s and those that are active today, but we can be certain that the presence of radical Islamists in Lebanon was neither imported into the country nor was it related to spillover—whether from the war in Afghanistan (as was the case with some who were involved in the 2000 incidents) or the ongoing war in Syria. Some Lebanese, however, would disagree....

In reality, Sunnis represent approximately 40% of the LAF's strength, which complicates the already awkward dichotomy in which the LAF is regarded concurrently as an important job provider and a potential source of ideological opposition.^{28,29} This is particularly true in northern Lebanese districts such as Akkar, which have significant Sunni majorities. Districts such as those are also among Lebanon's most deprived since the north is home to just 20.7% of Lebanon's population but 46% of the country's "extremely poor" according to a 2008 UNDP report.^{30,31} The same report observes, "Regional disparity is...a major characteristic of poverty" in Lebanon.³²

In turn, feelings of socioeconomic hardship among the members

of Lebanon's Sunni community, particularly those in the country's rural areas, have been exacerbated by a perceived lack of leadership. Since the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri, the so-called "moderate Sunni leadership" has contended with a political vacuum, which enabled some members of that community to drift toward a more radical philosophy. As Raphael Lefèvre noted in a recent report, "With Hariri's death, the Sunnis were left without a charismatic leader with influence at the top of the state. The subsequent ascendancy of Shia Hezbollah only served to reinforce the anti-statist trend among Sunnis."³³ In addition, Lebanon's Sunnis are militarily weak in the face of Hezbollah's arms and lack a single, powerful State backer.

The influence traditionally exerted by the Hariri family has continued to wane in the face of an ascendant Hezbollah. For instance, the 2008 Doha Agreement was considered a triumph for Hezbollah, which gained veto power in the new Cabinet. In 2011, Hezbollah ousted Rafic Hariri's son Saad, the country's serving prime minister. After a self-imposed, three-year exile in Paris, Hariri returned to Lebanon on August 8, 2014, a few days after the Battle of Orsal, an event that altered the prevailing mood within the Sunni community.³⁴ Criticism of the Hariri establishment

²⁸ <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2014/03/lebanon-sunnis-alienated-army-actions-2014317115444492619.html>

²⁹ <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/sunni-anger-lebanon-against-army-grows>

³⁰ <http://www.carnegie-mec.org/2014/04/15/roots-of-crisis-in-northern-lebanon/h86r>

³¹ <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/rbas/report/2008%20en.pdf>

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Lefèvre, Raphael. "The Roots of Crisis in Northern Lebanon." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. May 7, 2014. http://carnegieendowment.org/files/crisis_northern_lebanon.pdf

³⁴ <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/08/08/Former-PM-Hariri-back-in-Lebanon-for-first-time-in-three-years.html>

and its policy of buying its survival and the durability of its interests in Lebanon (a propensity originated by the late Rafic Hariri) is certainly not new. Rather, it can be traced to the Future Movement's muted response to Hezbollah's punitive campaign of May 2008 and shifts in Saudi Arabia's policy in the region, such as the short-lived rapprochement between it and Syria in 2009. A symbolic response to the growing dissatisfaction within Lebanon's Sunni community was evident in video released on January 22, 2014 and titled "A message from the Sunnis of Tripoli to Saad Hariri and the Future Movement." In it, a masked gunman taunts the former prime minister: "You sold the blood of martyrs, you sold the blood of your own father just to reach power."³⁵

From a "field" perspective, the concurrent weakening of the Hariri-based structure and emergence of other poles is illustrated by considering the geography in which the LAF faced Lebanese groups that posed a threat to State security and/or the stability of the country. Three regions were involved, but all three, Saida, Tripoli and Orsal, are historically Sunni strongholds. For instance, Saida is the traditional home of the Hariri family while Tripoli, "the capital of the north," gave its full weight to the Future

Movement's parliamentary bloc in the 2005 and 2009 elections. Similarly, Orsal is the sole Sunni pocket in northern Bekaa, an area that is overwhelmingly Shia.

It should be evident that it is not our intent to discuss exhaustively the situation being faced by Lebanon's Sunni community. At the same time, that knowledge is vital to developing an understanding of the interplay between the weakening of its once strong leadership and security conditions within the country from the LAF's perspective. For instance, the LAF has certainly been buffeted by recent events in Lebanon. For example, its rout of Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir's movement in Saida (June 2013) spawned three lingering considerations. 1) Until today and despite discussions held by the Lebanese parliament's defense committee, it is unclear what role Hezbollah played in that military action.^{36,37} 2) Though the Future Movement was only too happy to see Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir removed from the political scene, the FM and its allies did not hesitate afterward to advocate some of Assir's perspectives—to the point of using them to negotiate with Hezbollah and the LAF.³⁸ 3) Despite the high casualties the LAF suffered during that operation,

³⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4EigUDsIf3w>

³⁶ Blanford, Nicholas. "Lebanon hit by the worst fighting since its civil war." *The Times*. June 25, 2013. "Although the Lebanese Army's special forces units spearheaded the attack on Sheikh Assir's compound, they had Hezbollah's battle-hardened fighters to back them up."

³⁷ "Saida incidents: Who dares to ask for accountability?" In this article, *Al-Mustaqbal* newspaper (a mouthpiece of the Hariri-led Future Movement) relates the principal findings of a report published by a Lebanese human rights organization which proves that the LAF and Hezbollah have colluded. <http://www.almustaqbal.com/v4/Article.aspx?Type=np&Articleid=579800>

³⁸ For instance, in apparent deference to al-Assir's demand, Hezbollah agreed just days after the Abra battle to release to the LAF several apartments it had used previously. Another instance that describes how the FM jumped on some al-Assir-derived, anti-Hezbollah propaganda is apparent in the debates that occurred within the parliamentary defense committee in the aftermath of the Abra clashes. <http://m.naharnet.com/stories/en/88440-hizbullah-vacates-disputed-apartments-in-sidon>

its image was tarnished by accusations that it engaged in torture.³⁹ According to Nadim Houry, deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch, "Not only is justice for the victims at stake, but also the army's reputation."⁴⁰ The aftermath of the crackdown on al-Assir further exacerbated tensions in Saida, particularly following the death of Nader Bayoumi (while in military custody) and numerous accusations of mistreatment and beatings. In fact, Human Rights Watch documented those accusations and urged the LAF to "ensure a thorough, impartial, and transparent investigation...following clashes with armed supporters of Sheikh Ahmed al-Assir."⁴¹ The report references a detainee named "Ahmed" who claimed, "the army and members of the "Resistance Brigades" (*Saraya al-Muqawama*, a multi-confessional militia created, armed, funded and run by Hezbollah) beat him severely at a nearby checkpoint."⁴² Without doubt, such accusations have the potential to incite sectarian tension since they appear to compromise the LAF's non-partisanship. Even al-Assir, who went missing after the June 2013 assault (but was finally arrested on August 15, 2015), continued to taunt and criticize the LAF in videos in which he

accused the organization of using "death squads" to target Sunnis.⁴³ He also released a video critical of Saudi Arabia's pledge to fund the LAF.⁴⁴

The various rounds of violence Tripoli experienced in 2013 and 2014 seem much more difficult to understand and explain than anything else the country has witnessed. While the mutual hatred between the largely Alawi town of Jabal Mohsen and the Sunni majority town of Bab Tabbaneh may have historical roots, it is difficult to conceive of those sour relations degenerating today into armed conflict. Further, the successive rounds of violence (halted in fall 2014 after a large LAF operation) may seem equally confusing. No more so, of course, than the way Hezbollah and the Future Movement, directly or through the military and security agencies controlled by each, offered "assistance" to either side. There are other players involved, of course, such as former Prime Minister Najib Mikati, who is considered a benefactor (among others) of the armed groups involved in the fighting. Even the LAF's intelligence branch contributed, seemingly, to the machinations that advanced the bloody game.⁴⁵

<https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/hezbollah-empties-two-sidon-apartments>

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/2013/Jun-19/220870-lebanese-army-sets-up-posts-after-sidon-clashes.ashx>

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/2013/Jun-19/220860-sidon-in-crosshairs-of-syria-crisis.ashx>

³⁹ "Amnesty Calls for 'Transparent' Probe into Death of Sidon Clashes Detainee" <http://m.naharnet.com/stories/en/89876-amnesty-calls-for-transparent-probe-into-death-of-sidon-clashes-detainee>

⁴⁰ <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/07/17/lebanon-investigate-army-beatings-death-custody>

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xdG5YdDm1c>

⁴⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F0sZTvlA7DU>

⁴⁵ Among the tremendous amount of media coverage of the clashes in Tripoli, the most notable examples are *al-Akhbar's* interview with, and profile of Islamist MP Khaled Daher (December 1, 2014), and its article on General Amer el-Hassan (the head of the LAF's intelligence organization in northern Lebanon) which alludes to the roles he played during the unrest in Tripoli during 2013-2014. <http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/231977>

Yet, it is important to note that the role played by the LAF (and the ISF's intelligence organization) during those rounds of violence in Tripoli remains unclear. But since a prevalent perception is that its actions there seem uncannily similar to those of other non-State actors on the Lebanese scene, its organizational image—particularly as a model Lebanese institution—was tarnished even further. Still, the presence of that "prevalent perception" must be couched by the fact that it emerged in media reports published later (and cited herein). From August 2014 onward, for instance, negotiated "arrangements" led some Sunni militia leaders to surrender to the LAF (they were tried later by the Military Court). Interestingly, however, Ali Eid and his son Rifaat, main figures in the Alawi pro-Assad/Hezbollah Arab Democratic Party, were "permitted to leave the game" despite having been accused of complicity in the August 23, 2013 bombings of two Sunni Mosques.

From a critical perspective, not even the vagueness of the overall situation can hide its significant importance, particularly that the deadly rounds of violence between Jabal Mohsen and Bab Tabbaneh may well have become the blueprint for increasingly violent Islamist radicalism. Indeed, since the LAF's intercession in Tripoli—following the "arrangements"

mentioned above—the army and other State security agencies focused on Islamist activists who had little if anything to do with those who surrendered. In April 2015, the Military Court began the trials of those militia leaders. Not only did the proceedings disclose the criminal profiles of the leaders involved, but they also ignited "a war between Hariri and Mikati."⁴⁶ Indeed, based on the depositions taken, a key outcome of the trial is that most of the leaders involved have very little to do with the Islamist militants of *an-Nusra* or ISIL, some of whom were killed or captured by the LAF and other security agencies.⁴⁷

The Direct Effect of Sectarianism on the LAF

While the LAF often describes its June 2013 actions in Sidon (Abra) against Assir's supporters as a "victory" (and its pacification of Tripoli somewhat less so), the third main Sunni hotbed of violence remains exceptionally active due to several factors. For instance, similar to the events that took place in Abra (which raised a host of still-unanswered questions), events in Orsal also prompted comprehensive reviews. In fact, some pro-Hezbollah press outlets urged after the battle of August 2 that an investigative committee be established to conduct just such a review.⁴⁸

Following those actions, sectarian

⁴⁶ Al-Modon website. <http://www.almodon.com/politics/769cd1c1-2683-4efb-87c8-a8dde4d63c36>

⁴⁷ The transcript of the Military Court trial of a Tripoli-based militia leader such as Ziad Allouki (an-Nahar, April 15, 2015) demonstrates clearly that he is completely dissimilar to Oussama Mansour, for instance, an Islamist militant from Tripoli who was killed by ISF intelligence on April 9, 2015. Mansour was eulogized by *an-Nusra* Front as its "prince" in Tripoli (*as-Safir*, April 17, 2015).

⁴⁸ On August 22, 2014, *as-Safir* ran the headline, "As-Safir requests a military investigation commission look into the events in Orsal." Obviously—and as is typical in Lebanon—no action was taken on the request despite the amount of information disclosed by a newspaper known for its support of Hezbollah's positions. The most common question prompted by that headline and the accompanying report was, "Who decided to highlight General Kahwaji's responsibility in that debacle?"

tensions within the LAF seemed to reach a breaking point. When LAF soldier Atef Saadeddin went missing near the end of July 2014, his disappearance was presumed to have been an abduction. It soon became apparent, however, that he deserted the army in order to join a jihadi group.⁴⁹ Shortly afterwards, another LAF soldier, Abdul Qader Akkoui, announced his defection to the Islamic State jihadist group in a video posted to the Internet.⁵⁰ Then, in early October 2014, Abdallah Shehadeh, a serving LAF soldier, explained in a video that Hezbollah's "manipulation" of the military and its "discrimination" against Sunni personnel prompted him to join *An-Nusra* Front. "We enlisted in the Army in order to defend the Lebanese people, but we were surprised to see that [the Army] is a tool in the hands of Hezbollah."⁵¹ Ideologically driven defections such as these are unique in the history of the LAF and Lebanon in general. Although certain organizations split away from the core of the army during the civil war to affiliate with individual political actors, the phenomenon of "free agency" is a new twist indicative of the impact sectarianism is having within the ranks of the LAF. "Defections" such as those mentioned above also illustrate that the LAF reflects the Lebanese social fabric from which its soldiers originate.

The failed negotiations to free the LAF

and ISF members taken prisoner at Orsal became a constant reminder that the battle never really ended. Moreover, the "military security zone" instituted there has not truly pacified the area in terms of normalizing relations between the Sunni and Shia neighborhoods involved. Similarly the news blackout imposed on the situation regarding the refugees from Syria in Orsal and the LAF's self-acknowledged "misbehavior" in the nearby refugee camps has certainly not helped the LAF regain its once vaunted status. Then there are Hezbollah's operations in Qalamoun—the proverbial icing on the cake—to be considered.⁵²

Considering these events, the LAF's "balance of debt," particularly where Lebanon's Sunni community is involved, can only be corrected by reviewing the prodigious factors that add value to the LAF. First, the LAF is the biggest employer in rural areas of Lebanon, especially in Sunni and Christian areas. At least in those areas, no other jobs provider can compete with the LAF. Second (despite some "friendly criticism"), the country's moderate Sunni poles (and not just that represented by the Hariri establishment) see the LAF as their firewall against the radical trends within their respective communities. Third, for a number of reasons, the LAF generally enjoys support from the Christian communities and the Shia community (largely because Hezbollah

⁴⁹ <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/20859>

⁵⁰ <http://m.naharnet.com/stories/en/150822-lebanese-soldier-announces-defection-to-is-in-internet-video>

⁵¹ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Oct-16/274312-lebanese-army-tool-of-hezbollah-defected-soldier.ashx#sthash.CZu2AFcY.dpuf>

⁵² Following a mid-September 2014 LAF raid against some of Orsal's refugee camps, the secretary general of the Syrian coalition there claimed that a Syrian child had been killed in the melee and called the LAF's actions "abusive." Interestingly, Saad Hariri defended the LAF against those accusations. See: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Oct-28/275602-hariri-warns-those-who-try-to-undermine-lebanese-army.ashx#sthash.xgLVjgg.dpuf>

now sees itself working from the same agenda as the LAF: defending Lebanon and the Lebanese people).

Viewed from a Sunni angle, the LAF seems to have total support from the Shia community, including public and political opinion. With the Hezbollah-contrived motto “the Army, the People and the Resistance” (theoretically appended to all governmental statements since 2005, it has since become indicative of the day-to-day intimacy between Hezbollah and the LAF. In a recent demonstration of that “jointness,” Hezbollah “permitted” the LAF to help it secure Beirut’s southern suburbs following a spate of bombings in 2013. During the chaotic August 2013 – February 2014 period when bombings seemed to occur weekly, the country’s security situation seemed to improve—in parallel with political appeasement and despite some exceptions. That much became clear through increased cooperation between the State’s various security agencies.

As mentioned above, sectarian strife in the LAF is also a potentially troublesome factor that could be exacerbated by the proportions of the different sects. When efforts were being made following the civil war to reconstruct the LAF, several measures were implemented to prevent the army from crumbling as happened during that conflict. These changes

included universal conscription (ended in 2007), the rotation of battalions throughout the country to reduce the risk of forming localized militias and perhaps most prominently, the introduction of quotas for Sunni, Shia and Christian members within each battalion.⁵³ Although officer positions are generally reported to be distributed equitably among Muslims and Christians, Sunnis now make up a disproportionate number of the lower-ranking positions, thus reflecting a wider decline in Sunni fortunes (and the recognition that the LAF is a jobs provider).^{54,55,56} This means that not only is competition for enlistment and advancement intense, but non-Sunnis are also likely to receive certain benefits (e.g., a greater likelihood for promotion) due to the relative scarcity of recruits combined with the need to fulfill sectarian quotas.

Is the LAF Really the Model Institution in Lebanon?

Apparently, improvements in cooperation (primarily between the LAF and the ISF) deserved a public announcement, such as the July 5, 2014 statement in which Sunni Minister of Interior Nouhad Machnouk mentioned, “there is a partnership between the Army and security agencies in confronting terrorism threatening Lebanon.”⁵⁷ In that same speech, however, Machnouk admitted that the cooperation he extolled included Hezbollah. “There

⁵³ Barany, Zolton. 2014. Building National Armies after Civil War: Lessons from Bosnia, El Salvador and Lebanon in The Lebanese Army’s Unique Path. P. 11.

⁵⁴ See Knudsen, Are J. 2014. Lebanese Armed Forces: A United Army for a Divided Country? <http://www.cmi.no/publications/file/5284-lebanese-armed-forces.pdf> and <http://www.wsj.com/articles/syria-conflict-puts-lebanese-army-under-pressure-1401229578>

⁵⁵ <http://www.wsj.com/articles/syria-conflict-puts-lebanese-army-under-pressure-1401229578>

⁵⁶ <http://www.cmi.no/publications/file/5284-lebanese-armed-forces.pdf>

⁵⁷ In early 2013, Hezbollah ceded responsibility for the security of Beirut’s suburbs to the LAF. Daily Star. September 25, 2013.

shouldn't be any embarrassment over coordination between security and military agencies and any Lebanese party to secure the application of the law."⁵⁸ Apparently, recent cooperative advancements between key organizations have not been restricted to domestic Lebanese agencies. Rather, they include collaboration with foreign intelligence agencies such as the CIA. More specifically, the LAF and the General Security organization (headed by an individual who must have Hezbollah's blessing to serve in that key position) represent the conduit for the enhanced cooperation deemed necessary to maintain Lebanon's stability. It has been suggested that the U.S. and Lebanon are sharing intelligence, and reports indicate for instance that Naim Abbas, an *Abdullah Azzam Brigades* commander, was captured with help from Western intelligence services.⁵⁹ Aram Nerguizian also stated, "External intel feeds and intelligence sharing" were key factors in the capture of terrorism suspects, and the U.S., UK, France, Germany, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Assad's Syria were listed as some of the sources of that intelligence.⁶⁰ Despite the U.S. government's action to place Hezbollah on its list of foreign terrorist organizations, it appears that country's intelligence agencies are working with Hezbollah (albeit indirectly) to combat Sunni extremism in Lebanon.⁶¹ As with the LAF, Hezbollah and the U.S.

share a common enemy, and that shared opposition to extremist groups, accords neatly with Hezbollah's public discourse and U.S. foreign policy machinations. A July 2014 report suggests that when the CIA uncovered intelligence that suggested al-Qaeda-affiliated groups were plotting attacks against Hezbollah's strongholds in Lebanon, it passed that information on to the Lebanese government with the understanding that it would then be given to Hezbollah.⁶²

Clearly, "Sunni extremism" and the danger it poses has not only changed the LAF's agenda (and those of its beneficiaries), but it has also changed the enduring notion that the LAF serves as the model for the establishment of State institutions in Lebanon. Indeed, in just a single decade we have learned conclusively that despite international support, the LAF alone cannot guarantee that the Lebanese State will reclaim its prerogative as the sole holder of arms and legitimate purveyor of security for the country. Not only is the LAF in no position to challenge Hezbollah militarily, but the very rationale behind any such challenge is no longer relevant. On the contrary, defending Lebanon's borders and maintaining an acceptable level of stability within the country appears increasingly to require coordination between the LAF and Hezbollah—despite all of the risks that coordination suggests, such as estranging a large

⁵⁸ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Jul-05/262748-army-and-security-agencies-united-in-anti-terror-battle.ashx#axzz3AASaMug>

⁵⁹ <http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/2014/05/13/is-lebanon-winning-against-al-qaeda/hap7>

⁶⁰ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Jul-07/262887-western-help-boosted-cooperation-behind-security-successes.ashx#axzz385prUx6>

⁶¹ U.S. Department of State. List of Foreign Terrorist Organizations. <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm>

⁶² <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2013/07/15/196755/lebanese-officials-say-cia-warned.html#.UeXkhNK1Fsk>

portion of the Sunni community and all actions related to State building according to generally accepted democratic ideals.

Nevertheless, the emergence of Sunni extremism is not the only causal factor behind the apparent "intimacy" between the LAF and Hezbollah. Even if the LAF were to confront Hezbollah, it is very likely that the significant proportion of Shia soldiers in its ranks could precipitate the LAF's disintegration along sectarian lines. Accordingly, many sources caution against any effort (particularly U.S. aid) intended to help the LAF "overthrow" Hezbollah. In fact, one U.S. Congressional Research Service report published in February 2014 drew a parallel between that notion and U.S. attempts to bolster the LAF to combat the Palestinian Fedayeen—which became a precursor to the civil war.⁶³

•

Despite the December 2013 announcement that Saudi Arabia would donate \$3 billion to the LAF, quite some time would pass before any of that assistance became tangible. In fact, the agreement between Saudi Arabia and France was not even ratified until November 4, 2014 (nearly a full calendar year after the announcement was made), and none of the assistance promised actually reached the LAF until April

2015.^{64,65} The delay certainly seemed odd, especially since the threat posed to Lebanon (and the LAF) by radical groups grew substantially throughout 2014. Additionally, during the winter of 2014 – 2015, people from across the political spectrum were predicting major spring clashes between forces from Lebanon (LAF or Hezbollah) and various "spillover militants" from the Syrian war. Many of those individuals suggested reasonably that the Saudis imposed the delay to ensure that the arms destined for the LAF would not fall quickly into the hands of Hezbollah.⁶⁶ Although its receipt of the Saudi funding was indeed delayed, the LAF continued to receive critical support from the United States. Regardless of reservations within the U.S. government, Lebanon was the fifth largest recipient of U.S. military aid in 2014 (\$100 million). In early February 2015, Lebanon received another \$25 million—this time primarily in the form of heavy artillery—that U.S. Ambassador David Hale said would be used to "defeat the terrorist and extremist threat from Syria."⁶⁷

These actions and statements disclosed the wishful thinking of many others (individuals and states) that such generous aid packages (the Saudi gift was the largest the Lebanese State has received since it gained independence from France) would finally give the LAF the firepower it needed to defeat Hezbollah militarily.⁶⁸

⁶³ Blanchard, Christopher M. Lebanon: Background and US Policy. P. 12.

⁶⁴ <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/NewsReports/564883-france-to-start-arming-lebanon-in-spring>

⁶⁵ French weapons arrive in Lebanon in \$3 billion Saudi-funded deal. Reuters (UK). April 20, 2015. <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2015/04/20/uk-mideast-crisis-lebanon-army-idUKKBN0NB0GE20150420>

⁶⁶ <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/02/06/the-battle-for-the-qalamoun-mountains-syria-lebanon-hezbollah-isis-al-nusra-front/>

⁶⁷ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/02/08/us-mideast-crisis-lebanon-usa-idUSKBN0LC0LT20150208>

⁶⁸ <http://www.mintpressnews.com/saudi-funded-french-weapons-sent-to-lebanon-to-destroy-hezbollah/202500/>

In the context of worsening “spillover” from Syria, however, the LAF was more unlikely than ever to turn its guns on the powerful Shia militia in 2014 – 2015 since the party had become a strategic partner. But clearly, that never happened.

In the span of a single decade, 2005 – 2015, the LAF experienced dramatic changes. From being little more than an auxiliary actor during the lengthy period of Syrian tutelage, it became a source of hope for many Lebanese (following the Syrians' withdrawal, in the aftermath of the 2006 War and in the wake of the Nahr el-Bared battle) and a promising bet for regional and international actors who hoped to see Lebanon recover some of its original sovereignty and regain its sense of statehood. Today, the LAF is busy defending some of Lebanon's border areas—in full partnership with Hezbollah. It is also engaged with

other State security organizations in policing the country, once again in partnership with Hezbollah. In the meantime, the very notion of genuine political life is disappearing steadily, as is the Taif Agreement-generation of leaders (literally and figuratively). These eventualities are creating the conditions in which the LAF can play a steadily larger role in all aspects of national life, to the point that it may be perceived ultimately as an autonomous political stakeholder. While that increasing role may help preserve Lebanon's stability, however, the overall outlook is anything but rosy. After all, current events compel us to assume that the challenges facing Lebanon and the region are heading for a crescendo, which can only mean that continued Lebanese stability will demand the implementation and maintenance of policies that depend on military and security-oriented “muscle.”

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Chronology of Major Attacks Against the LAF and Other Security Agencies

2013

January

18

» The Badih al-Hajj barracks in Hermel was shot at. Security information indicated that the attack could have been in response to a previous Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) operation to arrest wanted criminals.

February

1

» Captain Pierre Bashaalani (Christian) and Sergeant Ibrahim Zahraman (Sunni) were killed and additional LAF soldiers were wounded when their patrol was ambushed on the outskirts of Orsal. The unit was chasing Khaled Ahmad Humayyed, a suspected terrorist who was later killed. This incident marked the beginning of an ongoing political debate, punctuated by countless security incidents of varying magnitudes regarding the status of Orsal and its environs.

March

April

15

» An explosion occurred outside the officers' club in Qobbe (Tripoli).

18

» A force of about 40 armed men attacked an Internal Security Forces (ISF) patrol investigating construction violations in Qobbe.

21

» An LAF patrol was fired on in Sharawneh while pursuing criminals. Situated in Baalbek, Sharawneh is a haven for outlaws.

26

» Clashes involving security forces in the Mankubin quarter of Tripoli occurred when officials tried to halt illegal construction. LAF reinforcements were summoned after two ISF vehicles were attacked.

27

» Beddawi (north) residents protesting the cessation of illegal construction projects led to a clash with the LAF and security forces. Two people died and more than nine were wounded.

May

6

» A car owned by an ISF member in Meryata (North) was set ablaze.

9

» Two wanted criminals fired on an LAF patrol in Qobbe.

14

» A patrol was firebombed in Tripoli as security forces tried to stop illegal construction projects.

20

» Several armed men fired at LAF soldiers in Tripoli killing one and wounding six.

23

» Three soldiers were wounded when their position in Daher Al-Maghr (Tripoli) was taken under fire. Two others were shot inside a civilian car near a military medical facility in Tripoli.

28

» Three soldiers were killed when their position in Orsal was attacked.

June

5

» Two LAF positions were attacked in Orsal.

17

» Supporters of Sheikh Ahmed al-Assir clashed with the LAF in Saida (South) after a woman accused a soldier of hitting her.

23

» The LAF issued a statement about being attacked in Saida (see 18 June entry, above). The statement indicated that "several martyrs and wounded" had fallen. Interestingly, it adds, "the premeditated, coldblooded targeting of the LAF was meant to kindle the wick of unrest in Saida similar to what happened in 1975 so that Lebanon enters again a whirlwind of violence."

July

7

» An LAF patrol encountered an IED on the main road in Hermel. The explosion followed another that destroyed a civilian vehicle. According to an LAF statement, the first explosion was intended to attract the LAF patrol to the area. One officer and a soldier were injured.

31

» One soldier was killed and another injured when they were firebombed by an unidentified assailant in Sunni Majdal Anjar. Majdal Anjar is a historic stronghold of Sunni militancy. Its proximity to the Lebanese/Syrian border made it a favored destination for newly arrived refugees.

August

2

» The individual who killed LAF soldier Charbel Hatem in Majdal Anjar on July 31 was arrested by the LAF.

3

» Two people were killed and four wounded in the cross fire between an LAF security post and an armed group in Sharawneh – Baalbek.

4

» A Lebanese General Security station north of Arida along the Lebanese-Syrian border was attacked.

13

» An ISF officer was wounded in Jezzín (south) during an ambush. Some media reports asserted that political reasons were behind the attack.

21

» A clash occurred between security elements and armed men along (Shia) Nahle Road (Bekaa). The gang was trying to prevent officials from arresting an individual who had several outstanding warrants for his arrest. When it was rumored that the individual was dead, a group of armed men gathered and firebombed the general directorate of the General Security office in Nahle.

September

1

» The officers' club in Talya (Bekaa) was attacked by unknown assailants.

October

2

» During an operation in Harbata to catch drug dealers, an LAF patrol was firebombed by the gang. Three soldiers were injured.

9

» Several ISF members were injured when a crowd of onlookers threw stones at them as they tried to remove illegal construction projects in Alma (North). The incident occurred against a sectarian backdrop aggravated by the fact that those trying to lead the construction are not only "Muslims" but had also recently become naturalized Lebanese citizens.

22

» Three soldiers were wounded when their military checkpoint was firebombed in Sharawneh (Baalbek).

24

» Two soldiers and two other individuals were wounded during a cross fire in Hawsh al-Harimeh (Bekaa) between an intelligence division patrol and four armed individuals in a car—which was discovered to be filled with explosives. Further, one of the wounded terrorists was wearing an explosive belt.

31

» The LAF clashed with an armed group in Bab Tabbeneh during a raid to arrest several wanted criminals. The men had been charged with participating in the earlier armed clashes in Tripoli.

November

2

» A soldier was killed in a firebomb attack on an LAF patrol in (Shia) Dar al-Wassiaa. The soldiers had been pursuing a criminal charged

with the deaths of an ISF member and a civilian. The criminal was later killed after he shot at the patrol. Dar al-Wassiaa, home of the Shia Jaafar clan, is also known as a haven for outlaws and a favored location for criminal activities.

21

» An officer and two ISF members were wounded while removing construction violations in the area of Majdlayya (North).

December

2

» A sniper targeted two soldiers at Mallula Bridge (Tripoli).

5

» Seven soldiers, including two officers, were wounded in Bab Tabbeneh (Tripoli). The incident occurred as the soldiers were

escorting an Al-Jadeed TV crew. Al-Jadeed is considered a pro-Hezbollah station.

6

» Clashes took place when armed men tried to break into Qobbe military barracks to free a prisoner. Seven soldiers were injured.

15

» A hand grenade exploded outside the main LAF checkpoint at the entrance to Saida. Approximately 45 minutes later, a suicide attack was directed against another LAF checkpoint in the Saida area. The LAF reported that one individual had been killed and two others injured.

18

» A clash took place between ISF officials and the members of a local family in Minyeh (North) due to a construction violation.

2014

January

10

» Three soldiers were wounded when their military vehicle was taken under fire in Bab Tabbeneh and then attacked with an anti-tank weapon.

15

» LAF Intelligence arrested the leader of the *Abdullah Azzam Brigades*, a wanted terrorist named Jamal Daftardar, after discovering his whereabouts in a village in western Bekaa. The operation was a follow-up to the attack conducted by terrorists against an LAF checkpoint in Saida on December 15, 2013.

» Mazen Abu Abbas, an Islamist from Kamed al-Lawz (western Bekaa), was killed after he firebombed and threw a hand grenade at an intelligence division patrol that had been sent to arrest him. Another version of the incident was that the patrol behaved as a death squad and killed Abu Abbas purposely.

22

» LAF soldier Hussein Saadeddin was killed and eight of his comrades were wounded when Bab Tabbeneh fighters engaged LAF tanks and assaulted roadblocks and checkpoints.

February

6

» During a raid on the homes of several outlaws in Sharawneh (Baalbek), an LAF patrol was shot at.

14

» One soldier was wounded when unidentified assailants threw a grenade at an LAF checkpoint in the Ghuraba quarter of Tripoli.

21

» As an LAF patrol was arresting Syrian national in Majdal Anjar, he tried to throw a hand grenade toward the patrol. The patrol responded to the assault (which injured one soldier), and the wanted person was killed as a result.

22

» Several members of the LAF, including a lieutenant and several civilians, were killed or injured in a suicide bombing that took place near an LAF checkpoint on the Assi Bridge near the main entrance to Hermel.

24

» The LAF arrested two wanted Syrian nationals in a stolen car along the airport road. According to the LAF, the stolen car

was previously used in attacks against the LAF.

26

» Two people on a motorcycle threw a hand grenade at an LAF position in Ghuraba (Tripoli).

March

3

» While officials were attempting to dismantle a roadblock between Bab Tabbeneh and Zahriyeh, a group of individuals assaulted and shot at them.

7

» Five gunmen fired their light weapons toward an LAF position in Baalbek but caused no injuries.

8

» While conducting periodic searches near the Palace of Justice in Saida, a joint ISF-intelligence division patrol was fired on by a member of the pro-Hezbollah Resistance Brigades (Saraya Al-Muqawama).

14

» Gunmen attacked an LAF position in the Qobbe quarter of Tripoli. Skirmishes ensued between the LAF and the aggressors, and several soldiers were wounded.

16

» Unidentified gunmen fired at an LAF checkpoint in the Orsal countryside.

21

» An explosive device placed under a car parked near the Chamber of Commerce and Industry was set to explode as an LAF patrol passed by.

27

» Soldier Fadi Jbaili was shot dead by an unidentified gunman in the Boulevard quarter of Tripoli.

» Gunmen hidden in Tripoli's Bab Ramel cemetery opened fire on ISF Corporal Samer Dandachi. The individual was not wounded.

» A patrol was sent to arrest Sami Al-Atrash, a Lebanese Islamist militant affiliated with a Syrian rebel organization, who fled to a house in Orsal and began shooting at the patrol. The patrol returned fire and struck the individual, who later died.

28

» ISF official Boutros Albayeh was shot dead in his car by gunmen in Majdlayyah (North).

29

» A suicide bomber blew up his vehicle at an LAF checkpoint in Wadi Ata along the Lebanese-Syrian border near Orsal. Three soldiers were killed and four others were wounded.

30

» LAF units defused a homemade explosive set to detonate near an army checkpoint in Tripoli. The device, which contained nearly 15 kilograms of explosive material placed inside an oxygen container, was connected to a rudimentary timer.

April

8

» An LAF patrol was attacked in Qammouah (Akkar). A lieutenant and a sergeant were killed.

» Four soldiers were wounded during a raid staged by the LAF intelligence directorate to arrest criminals who had thrown two hand grenades at an ISF premises in Hermel on April 5, 2014.

10

» A soldier was wounded while his patrol was pursuing armed elements in Bab Tabbeneh (Tripoli).

14

» An ISF patrol was firebombed in Jubaniyyeh (Orsal) by unidentified assailants.

26

» During an LAF raid to arrest several individuals in Bab Tabbeneh (Tripoli), seven soldiers and an officer were wounded when their patrol was attacked with a bomb.

30

» Five members of an LAF unit patrolling near Orsal were wounded when they were shot at by gunmen.

May

16

» Two security force officers and a corporal were slightly injured while searching for an individual in Orsal. The perpetrator threw two hand grenades and fired his Kalashnikov at the patrol.

21

» Eight soldiers were wounded and a military vehicle was destroyed during clashes that occurred while the LAF was pursuing armed elements on Bazar Street (Tripoli). The assailants fired heavy weapons and rocket-propelled grenades.

» Three militia leaders surrendered to LAF intelligence in Bab Tabeneh (Tripoli). They were involved in the clashes that injured eight soldiers and destroyed a military vehicle.

June

5

» Three Syrian civilian refugees and a Lebanese civilian were wounded during a clash between the LAF and unidentified armed elements in Wadi Humayyed (Orsal).

10

» A clash occurred between ISF members and several individuals on Syria Street (Tripoli) as raids were being conducted.

14

» Shots were fired during an encounter between the LAF and several individuals following the arrest of a criminal involved in previous security incidents in Bab Tabeneh.

16

» The LAF placed a security cordon along Churches Street in Zahriyeh (Tripoli) after an unidentified individual shot a soldier.

20

» A suicide bomber blew up his Nissan Murano at the Dahr al-Baydar checkpoint. Packed with 25 to 30 kilograms of explosives, the detonation was timed to inflict damage on a passing convoy. Officer Mahmoud Jamaledin was killed and six soldiers manning the checkpoint were wounded. Two other soldiers and 23 civilians were injured as well.

July

19

» Several armed men attacked an LAF checkpoint situated on Tripoli's main roundabout. One of the assailants was injured.

» Gunmen targeted an LAF patrol on Syria Street in Tripoli, and an LAF installation on the same street was bombed.

20

» A large ISF contingent raided a residential compound in Tripoli to arrest terrorist Monzer

Khaldoun Al-Hassan. The terrorist was killed after fiercely resisting arrest.

22

» An LAF checkpoint between Orsal and Nabi Osman was attacked by gunmen who infiltrated the area in order to steal the soldiers' weapons. One of the soldiers, (Sunni) Atef Saadeddin from Akkar, was suspected of having facilitated the attack on his colleagues before fleeing with the assailants. The suspicion was later proved correct when Saadeddin announced his defection in a video posted to the Internet.

25

» An armed group attacked an LAF checkpoint outside Orsal, and the LAF responded in kind.

August

2

» Following the LAF's arrest of senior Islamist Imad Ahmed Jumaa, armed groups composed of *Jabhat an-Nusra* and ISIL drove into Orsal in SUVs equipped with machine guns. The assailants attacked Orsal's police station and took officers and members of the platoon prisoner. At about the same time, dozens of gunmen conducted a massive attack from the Syrian side of the border against LAF positions on the outskirts of Orsal. Several LAF members were killed and injured, and a dozen soldiers were taken prisoner. This was the first such occurrence in the history of the LAF.

3

» A number of attacks were conducted by masked gunmen against checkpoints and LAF positions throughout the Bab Tabbeneh quarter of Tripoli. The clashes spread quickly to other troublesome quarters in the city.

5

» Clashes continued in Tripoli between the LAF elements and gunmen. A series of attacks against LAF and ISF positions killed and injured several officials.

6

» An armed group of 15 individuals attacked an LAF site near Kafar Zabad (central Bekaa).

» More attacks against LAF positions in Tripoli.

15

» When an attempt was made in Sawiri (West Bekaa) to arrest an individual charged with belonging to a "banned Islamist organization," an exchange of gunfire took place. The individual escaped.

22

- » An ISF patrol was fired on in Baalbek while trying to enforce a construction violation.
- » Two LAF soldiers were wounded when a bomb exploded at a checkpoint in the Talaat al-Omari quarter of Tripoli.

28

- » Gunmen ambushed an LAF patrol between Wadi Humayyed and Wadi ar-Rahwa outside Orsal. One soldier was killed and another was wounded.

September

6

- » An intelligence patrol was fired on in al-Qaa. The patrol returned fire killing one, wounding another and arresting the third. The three individuals were Syrian nationals.

9

- » Outlaws shot at an LAF patrol in Brital. A military vehicle was damaged and an LAF soldier was injured.

17

- » An LAF position in the Orsal countryside was fired on by armed assailants.

19

- » A remotely detonated bomb targeted an LAF vehicle carrying seven passengers between Wadi Humayyed and Masyada (Orsal). Two soldiers were killed and three wounded. The LAF staged several raids in response, which resulted in the arrest of several suspects.

- » Armed men targeted an LAF checkpoint in Tripoli with a rocket-propelled grenade.

23

- » An armed group fired on an LAF military center in Beddawi (Tripoli) killing one soldier.

24

- » An LAF soldier was wounded when three military positions in Tripoli were attacked by armed groups.

25

- » A minor clash occurred between elements of the LAF and Syrians affiliated with the pro-Syrian Social Nationalist Party on Hamra Street. The LAF was trying to arrest a Syrian member of the party, which led to the clash.

- » Following the attack on an LAF vehicle, the LAF conducted patrols and raids of Syrian

locales in Orsal. A number of Syrians were arrested for monitoring the LAF centers and the movements of soldiers and vehicles.

October

2

- » Armed clashes took place between an LAF contingent and so-called smugglers on the western slopes of Mount Hermon.

3

- » The LAF foiled the attempted bombing of a patrol sent to secure one of its positions outside Orsal. The LAF detected a 50 kg IED several meters from an LAF checkpoint.

9

- » An LAF position in Masyada (Orsal) was fired on from inside a nearby Syrian refugee camp.

10

- » An armed group fired on the LAF checkpoint in Talaat al-Omari (Tripoli), but no injuries were reported.

11

- » A hand grenade was thrown at an LAF checkpoint in Talaat al-Omari (Tripoli), but no injuries were reported.

14

- » An LAF patrol in Bab Tabbeneh (Tripoli) was fired upon by unidentified assailants.

- » Clashes occurred between the LAF and an armed group in Wadi ar-Rayan (outskirts of Orsal).

17

- » A military vehicle transporting soldiers was ambushed on a side road that connects Kawashra to Bireh (Akkar). One soldier was killed in the attack. Raids were conducted on Syrian refugee settlements in the area, and some 50 Syrians suspected of targeting the LAF were arrested.

- » Two LAF patrols were fired on in Bisar (Tripoli), and a hand grenade was thrown at one of the LAF centers.

22

- » A hand grenade was thrown at an LAF checkpoint in Mankubin (Tripoli) by an unidentified group of armed men.

25

- » The LAF clashed with a group of armed

men in Zahriyeh (Tripoli). Seven soldiers and an officer were injured as were a number of civilians.

» Two LAF officers and two soldiers were killed when an LAF contingent was ambushed at Dhour Dhour Muhammara.

» In parallel with those two attacks (and probably in connection with them), a sizeable fight took place in the village of Bhannin. A group led by Sheikh Khaled Hoblos occupied a school from which they attacked an LAF patrol. Another group affiliated with Hoblos set up a checkpoint on the Bhannin Bridge from which they attacked two military vehicles. Three soldiers were killed and four others were injured. Additionally, several unarmed soldiers were abducted while returning home from duty, but they were later freed by the LAF. The LAF reclaimed the bridge, apprehended the armed men and pursued the Hoblos groups; however, the incident marked a significant advancement in armed Islamist militancy in north Lebanon.

27

» Four soldiers were shot during an LAF search in Bhannin.

29

» The LAF raided various quarters of Tripoli and ultimately arrested a number of individuals involved in attacks on the LAF in Bhannin and Bab Tabbeneh.

November

5

» An LAF soldier was shot by two masked men on a motorcycle in Orsal.

14

» Two LAF officers and a soldier were injured when their military vehicle was struck by an IED while en route to an LAF position outside Orsal. In connection with the attack, the LAF announced that two more 15 kg IEDs had been discovered at the same location.

23

» During raids in Akkar, the LAF arrested several people suspected of participating in attacks against the LAF in Bhannin and Muhammara.

27

» An LAF military center in Sharawneh (Baalbek) was shot at by unidentified armed men.

December

2

» After being lured into an ambush that had been set up outside Orsal, an LAF patrol was attacked. Six soldiers were killed, including a lieutenant, and another soldier was wounded.

3

» While disarming an explosive device discovered in Wadi Ata (outside Orsal), armed assailants killed an LAF explosives expert and wounded two other soldiers.

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Bombs and Bombers: Reappearance of the Suicide Bomber/Martyrdom Seeker

On January 22, 2014, Hussein Sharafeddin was arrested at a checkpoint in Haret Hreik, the heart of Dahiyeh (Beirut's southern suburbs), when the security forces stationed there suspected him of being some kind of terrorist. After being held for several hours, however, Sharafeddin was transferred to the anti-terrorism unit and released the following day. What made this particular scare exceptional was that Sharafeddin, a local rapper also known as "Double A the Preacherman", simply had a penchant for wearing bulky clothing, and sported a full, bushy beard!¹ As a result, a substantial amount of criticism was heaped on the security forces, much of which focused on them blindly accepting crude stereotypes.² Yet while this incident may seem trivial and even somewhat comical, when considered against the string of suicide bombings that struck Lebanon between 2013 and 2014, it assumes far greater importance. Indeed, one such bombing (which killed four people and wounded 46 others) took place in Haret Hreik just a day before Sharafeddin was arrested.

Against that backdrop, therefore, Sharafeddin's arrest indicates more than a prevailing prejudice among those in charge of security in that locality. In fact, it demonstrates the tension and even paranoia these attacks continue to spread among the areas and institutions that continue to be targeted.

The use of explosives is generally nothing unique in Lebanon's history. While the attacks to which the country has been subjected remain "case studies" (such as the bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in 1983 or the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri in 2005), the seemingly "modest" explosion of July 3, 2013 (which injured 37 people and was timed to coincide with the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan) in a Bir el-Abed parking lot in what is considered an exceptionally secure area of Dahiyeh, deserves to be included in the "landmark" bombings that punctuate Lebanon's recent history.³ In fact, that event is important for a number of reasons, such as where and when it took place. According

¹ <http://noisy.vice.com/blog/meet-the-lebanese-rapper-who-was-mistaken-for-a-terrorist>

² <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Jan-23/244999-bearded-rapper-detained-supporters-decry-profiling.ashx#axzz3Ck4A5Zyx>

³ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jul/09/beirut-car-bomb-hezbollah-stronghold>

to Hezbollah propaganda and the perception of a great many Lebanese, Dahiyeh is a combination of “forbidden city” and impregnable fortress. The sense of adventure or fear Dahiyeh evokes is related directly to its perceived security. After all, everything and everyone is constantly under electronic or human surveillance. Further, the timing of the attack is especially telling. July 3, 2013 marked two months, almost to the day, after Hezbollah celebrated its “victory” in al-Quseir, a strategic Syrian town located northeast of Lebanon. Moreover, it was about two weeks after the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) assaulted the Saida stronghold of Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir, a Salafi, anti-Hezbollah, pro-Syrian lightning rod on the Lebanese scene.

Clearly, the location and timing of the July 3, 2013 bombing makes it a “turning point” in the complex “spillover” effects from the war in Syria that have changed both the “host nation” (Syria) and its next-door neighbor, Lebanon (e.g., refugees from Syria continue to stream into Lebanon while swarms of Lebanese fighters (among which the Shia far outnumber the Sunni) continue to head to Syria!). Unfortunately, that “inaugural” attack did not hold that credential very long. Less than two weeks later (August 15), the Dahiyeh quarter of Roueiss was hit by a car bomb that killed 22 people and injured some 290. Soon after, an unknown group called “Aisha Um-al Mouemeneen” claimed that it

conducted the attack in response to Hezbollah's involvement in Syria.⁴ Further attacks confirmed the supranational character of this wave of violence and proved conclusively the delusional nature of the “disassociation” policy adopted by Lebanese lawmakers vis-à-vis the Syrian conflict. On August 23, 2013, a double attack was staged against Tripoli's Sunni at-Taqwa and as-Salam Mosques, which killed 42 people and injured at least 300 others. Subsequent investigations disclosed the involvement of Ali and Refaat Eid, the leaders of the pro-Assad Alawi Arab Democratic Party—which also insinuates some degree of complicity in the attacks by the Damascus regime. Also during August, a former minister was arrested after being accused of plotting with Syrian intelligence operatives to smuggle explosives into Lebanon from Syria and planning a series of attacks against clerics and politicians in northern Lebanon to spark inter-sectarian conflict.

Notably, the bombings ultimately underscored the impression that not only is Lebanon at stake because of regional conflicts, but it is also the primary arena for such conflicts. For instance, two high profile, double suicide bombings targeted Iranian institutions in Lebanon in November 2013 and February 2014. The first attack was focused on the Iranian Embassy while the second struck the Iranian Cultural Center.^{5,6} Responsibility for the attacks, which

⁴ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/08/2013815152140188564.html>

⁵ <http://country.eiu.com/article.aspx?articleid=221249806&Country=Iran&topic=Politics&subtopic=Forecast>

⁶ <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Security-Watch/terrorism-security/2014/0219/Suicide-bombers-in-Beirut-target-Iranian-cultural-center-video>

caused extensive loss of life and material damage, was claimed by the jihadi group *Abdullah Azzam Brigades*.⁷ In the meantime, attacks against Lebanese "civilian" targets (primarily in Shia areas) continued, as did those on non-civilian objectives. In fact, beyond the attacks that seem to have targeted civilians exclusively, the LAF was also subjected to several bombings. The attacks are typically legitimized by the widespread perception that the LAF is implementing a partisan agenda that intersects with Hezbollah's own schedule. LAF checkpoints in Saida, Hermel, Orsal and elsewhere were certainly on the terrorist "target list," which also included some less obvious, non-civilian targets apparently related to Hezbollah. On December 17, 2013, an explosion occurred near a Hezbollah premises located in the small village of Sbouba (Bekaa north). Information about the type of attack (suicide or not) and the resultant death toll remained vague since Hezbollah took control of the crime scene and removed all evidence before the LAF arrived.⁸ Sbouba is generally known as a "rotation area" for Hezbollah affiliates entering and leaving Syria.⁹ Similarly, a series of devices exploded at several points along the Bekaa section of the Beirut-Damascus Road. Although very little information was available about those improvised explosive devices because of the intentional blackout, it has since become an open secret that the targets were Hezbollah vehicles, often civilian in nature, transporting fighters between Beirut and Syria. This

chapter, however, will focus primarily on attacks conducted to kill civilians rather than members of the LAF.

Just Who Are the "New Bombers?"

While one of the pervasive themes in Lebanese political culture is to blame anything untoward that happens in the country on external factors or actors, the series of bombings (particularly the suicide operations in 2013 – 2014) forced the Lebanese to consider revising that well-worn approach. In fact, the bombings and other manifestations of sectarian unrest that took place in 2013 – 2014 have emerged as a landmark in the history of Lebanese militant Sunni Islamism. Also unique has been the emergence of young Lebanese Sunni clerics who, in contrast to more traditional Lebanese Sunni clerics, appear increasingly similar to their peers in neighboring countries who are struggling with their own "sects" of jihadi Islamists. Along those lines, announcements by jihadi groups in Iraq and Syria periodically mentioned that a certain "Abou X, the Lebanese" led a suicide operation or had "fallen as a martyr" on some remote battleground. Yet 2013 was the first time a Lebanese Sunni who adopted jihadist ideology actually piloted a booby-trapped car with the express intent of killing his fellow Lebanese. This new reality is unique not just because of the ramifications it has on national security, but also for what it represents from a competitive standpoint over those simply seeking a "quick death." By extension, while

⁷ <http://dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Feb-19/247793-twin-suicide-car-bombings-kill-five.ashx#axzz3AGmFAJW3>

⁸ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/17/lebanon-car-bomb-targets-hezbollah>

⁹ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2013/Dec-17/241370-casualties-in-east-lebanon-blast-near-hezbollah-position-security.ashx#axzz3AG3vCF83>

the identity of the bombers killed in the attacks they perpetrated remains unclear in several cases, most of those identified were local actors, such as Lebanese nationals and Palestinian refugees residing in Lebanon. That much became evident following the first bombing at the Iranian Embassy in November 2013, an attack carried out by a Lebanese and a Palestinian. That disclosure prompted the *Daily Star* to publish an article about the potential for increased "homegrown terrorism," largely a result of increasing Sunni resentment of Hezbollah's role in the Syrian war.¹⁰ According to the article, these conditions prompted concern for a number of reasons, one of which is that "homegrown" recruits are more knowledgeable about the local area, do not need to be ferried across borders and are readily available. Evidently, those concerns proved well founded, as Lebanese and Palestinians ultimately conducted many more attacks.

Each November 11, Hezbollah commemorates "Shaheed Day." Interestingly, the "martyr" for whom the event was dedicated is Ahmad Kassir, who destroyed the Israel Defense Forces headquarters in Tyr (southern Lebanon) after driving an explosive-laden car into it on November 11, 1982. It is not coincidental that Hezbollah literature refers to Kassir as "the man who ushered in the era of the martyrdom seeker." Indeed, the list of "martyrdom seekers" who traveled on foot or in cars and trucks is long. Moreover, we must acknowledge that Hezbollah's combat creed, which is rooted in the mythical/historical

narrative of Imam Hussein (who, on the battlefield on which he was killed asked the leader of the opposing army, "Are you trying to frighten me with the [likelihood] that I may die [in this fight]?") was once a pillar of its strength in fighting the Israeli occupation. As long as Hezbollah maintained a monopoly on "death seeking" among the Lebanese, its capacity to deter a given condition remained unchallenged. Conversely, once it lost that monopoly domestically and other non-Shia, non-Hezbollah affiliated Lebanese began fighting—using intimidation and/or murder—for causes other than those Hezbollah espouses, Lebanon was forced to confront a new reality in terms of security and culture.

Ultimately, "death seekers" who lay down their lives for conflicting causes cannot be described adequately by language alone. For instance, Arabic has an extremely flexible system of declination, such that a "death seeker" who makes his (or her) decision to die for a "good" cause is also a "martyrdom seeker." But if he or she chooses to die for a "bad" cause, then the individual is referred to simply as a "suicide seeker." This rather subjective approach generally follows a statement made by Omar bin al-Khattab, who became the second Khalifa: "Our dead will go to heaven, their dead to hell."

One of the most immediate questions prompted by this spate of attacks is why they are suicidal in nature. Lebanon has a long history of bombings since hostilities in the country ended formally in 1990, yet few (if any) of those bombings were of the suicide

¹⁰ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Analysis/2013/Nov-25/238800-homegrown-terrorism-taking-hold-in-lebanon.ashx#axzz2lftW0TUu>

variety. In fact, Israel's Institute for National Security Studies reported that Lebanon "for years was free of this phenomenon."¹¹ Bombings that occurred before 2013 were most often associated with political assassinations that either did not suit suicide tactics or failed to interest the groups that employed such methods. The sources consulted in the preparation of this work contained relatively little analysis of the changed nature of these attacks, but the likelihood of a fundamental cause does exist. Attacks in Lebanon against Hezbollah and its allies began in June 2013, about a month after Hezbollah announced that it was fighting alongside the Syrian regime. As noted, those attacks persisted for nearly a year before they became suicidal in nature that November. Thus, it is relatively easy to speculate that Hezbollah's involvement in the crisis drew the ire of groups that employ and are extremely well versed in suicide tactics. Similarly, the LAF has been targeted frequently, most likely because of its role in fighting extremist groups in Lebanon and its perceived collaboration with Hezbollah. In other words, suicide attacks emerged because a different set of attackers was attracted once Lebanese factions became involved in the Syrian crisis.

Notably, although two of the three experts quoted in the article highlighted the dangers of homegrown terrorism, they also expressed doubt

that a "new wave" of suicide bombers would soon appear. The fact that those experts were so profoundly wrong may again be indicative of just how alien the phenomenon of suicide attacks had become in Lebanon, to say nothing of the dramatic changes in the country's political and security environment that facilitated their reappearance.

A Pause in the Bombings

Another subject that warrants investigation is the eight-week pause in the bombings that occurred from March 29 to June 20, 2014. Several sources cited the LAF's "security crackdown" as one reason for the cessation (aided by the long-awaited formation of Lebanon's new government), in addition to the recapture by Syrian regime forces and Hezbollah of towns used as bases for extremists conducting attacks in Lebanon.¹² But since the pause was short lived, experts identified a range of elements that contributed to the resurgence in bombing attacks.^{13,14} One security source was quoted as having remarked that due to the pressure on the border (noted above), many militants fled to Lebanon's interior to continue their operations.¹⁵ That observation could be corroborated by a security report obtained by *The Daily Star* in July 2014, which notes an increased number of *Jabhat an-Nusra* members in Lebanon, individuals who have since made preparations for

¹¹ <http://www.inss.org.il/index.aspx?id=4538&articleid=6408>

¹² <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2014/0626/Suicide-bombers-bring-Iraq-conflict-ever-closer-to-Lebanon>

¹³ <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/perspective/analysis/2014/06/24/Is-ISIS-behind-the-Beirut-bombing-.html>

¹⁴ At the time of this writing, no further suicide attacks have occurred. Yet while that pause may imply that the factors mentioned are effective, it would be inaccurate to consider the interruption definitive.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

numerous suicide attacks. Another factor mentioned frequently as a reason for the resurgence of suicide bombings relates to the recent advances made by ISIL in Syria and Iraq. Based solely on the sources consulted in this report, it may be impossible to ascertain the degree to which ISIL has been involved in the suicide bombing campaign in Lebanon or when its involvement may have begun. Yet the group claimed responsibility for previous attacks in Lebanon and has been linked (though accounts vary) to the *Abdullah Azzam Brigades* and *Liwa al-Ahrar al-Sunna*, both of which conducted or claim to have conducted attacks.^{16,17,18} Apparently, ISIL was strongly linked to the June attack on Beirut's Duroy Hotel.^{19,20} Thus, it is possible the resurgence occurred because an emboldened ISIL wanted to stage an even greater demonstration of its power and influence by focusing at least some attention on Lebanon. Nevertheless, even if the group was not directly involved, those who perpetrated the June attacks were likely encouraged by its success. That outcome is also a future concern noted by Lebanese Foreign Minister Nohad Machnouk in July 2014 when he warned that other jihadists are likely to gain inspiration from ISIL.²¹

Rumors Spread, Fear Increases and Life Changes

This chapter began with an explanation of the arrest of rapper

Hussein Sharafeddin, whose choice of clothing and grooming style contributed directly to his arrest. In today's "version" of Lebanon, which continues to experience more than its share of bombings, an atmosphere of fear and suspicion among residents and security services exists, particularly in the areas targeted most frequently. Consider this new reality: on January 23, Hezbollah established checkpoints in the southern suburbs following rumors that two cars were rigged to explode. Unfounded reports being circulated on the WhatsApp mobile messaging service indicated that Hezbollah was warning residents to stay clear of certain areas (though Hezbollah chose not to validate that notice). Fortunately, the anticipated bombings never materialized, but the warnings being circulated certainly caused angst and disrupted commerce—likely another (intended) outcome of the bombing campaign. A similar situation occurred on June 20, 2014 following the bombing at the Dahr al-Baydar checkpoint on the Beirut-Damascus Road. Now Media reported that Dahiyeh's streets were emptying and referenced a radio report of imminent road closures throughout the country in anticipation of other bombs set to explode in several neighborhoods. It must be noted, however, that two subsequent bombings did occur on June 24 and 25, though it remains unclear if the initial reaction to the bombing on June 20 was based on information that

¹⁶ <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/17660>

¹⁷ <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/539597-free-sunnis-of-baalbek-fire-back-at-al-nusra-front>

¹⁸ <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/news/middle-east/12288-lebanon-concerned-about-a-potential-isis-attack>

¹⁹ <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/isis-suicide-bomber-blows-part-beirut-hotel-official-n140736>

²⁰ <http://www.haaretz.com/news/middle-east/1.601892>

²¹ <http://rt.com/news/171892-lebanon-isis-terrorism-hotel/>

related to the bombings that followed. Importantly, public scares are not limited to the days in the immediate aftermath of an actual explosion. An Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) report highlights the frequency with which alarms occur and includes an interview with a Dahiyeh resident who related that such scares are now "a normal part of daily life." According to the IRIN report, both conditions are indicative of a "growing community psychosis."²² Many other reports focused on the issue include interviews with residents who explain that they are living in fear, the effects of which are damaging their local society and economy. But while such fear

is understandable given the current circumstances, it is nevertheless evidence that the bombings are fulfilling at least part of their purpose: beyond simply reminding everyone that Lebanon is part of the larger regional theater of operations, the attacks are forcing changes to the *modus vivendi* in targeted area and others that could be targeted. Moreover, those changes also exact social and economic consequences. In that sense, and as long as Lebanon remains actively or passively involved in the conflicts of other nations, the likelihood that this type of violence will become increasingly fashionable seems a foregone conclusion.

²² <http://www.irinnews.org/report/99844/fear-stalks-beirut-s-shia-suburbs>

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Chronology of Major Incidents Involving Bombings and Booby-Trapped Cars

2013

February

2

» Numerous Hezbollah elements responded to a suspected booby-trapped car in Dahiyeh.

June

13

» A suspected booby-trapped car was detected near the Arab University in Tarik Jdide.

July

9

» A booby-trapped car exploded in a parking lot in Bir el-Abed (Dahiyeh) injuring 53 people.

August

5

» A suspect in the 2010 murder of an LAF officer (and other crimes) was arrested in Sunni Majdal Anjar (Bekaa). Investigation disclosed that the car in which he was riding was booby trapped and prepared for explosion.

15

» A booby-trapped car exploded on Roueiss Street (Dahiyeh) killing 25 people and injuring 290 others. It was estimated that the car contained some 60 kilograms of explosive materials.

16

» An unknown Sunni group which calls itself Saraya Aishaa Oum al-Moeminin (Aisha Divisions) uploaded a video to YouTube which announced that the group was responsible for the explosion on Roueiss Street and that

it was their second operation. The narrator, whose accent was not Lebanese, promised more explosions against Hezbollah and Iranian interests in Lebanon.

» Lebanese intelligence arrested a Syrian national suspected in the first explosion that occurred in Bir el-Abed. Also arrested was a Lebanese from Orsal, Hassan Hussein Rayed, who confessed to having participated with Ahmad al-Atrash (also from Orsal) and others in several terrorist acts, including booby-trapped cars.

17

» Security information indicated that a suspected booby-trapped car was parked a hundred meters away from the home of acting General Director of the Internal Security Forces (ISF) Brigadier Basbous in Shhim (Chouf). A stick of dynamite connected to a manual detonator was ultimately discovered in the car, but Basbous denied that he was being targeted.

» Information about a car parked in a residential area in Sunni Naameh (south of Beirut) led to the discovery of some 250 kilograms of explosives inside the vehicle.

19

» A meeting held in Naameh to discuss the explosive-laden car (referenced above) was attended by the village mayor, municipality members and other notables. A statement issued later indicated, "Everyone present [at this meeting] denounces the presence of the booby-trapped car and considers it a violation of security and a threat to the civil peace. Naameh has always advocated coexistence."

» General Security arrested a terrorist cell

in Naameh, three members of which were suspected of planning to detonate booby-trapped cars. No exact information was available about whether the explosive-laden car found in Naameh arrived at its destination via the Ain al-Helwe refugee camp in Saida. General Security announced that a Lebanese and two Palestinians had been arrested as suspects in planning to detonate the car.

21

» The ISF arrested more suspects in the Naameh car incident, thus bringing the total to seven, including two Palestinians.

23

» Two booby-trapped cars targeted a pair of mosques in Tripoli. Forty people were killed and about 500 were injured.

» An explosion heard in Sanayieh (Beirut) was caused by members of the security forces who used a small detonator to open a car with Syrian tags. The car did not contain any explosives.

24

» The LAF identified a suspected booby-trapped car in Rmaileh (south of Beirut). Although the car proved to be safe, it had been stolen. Another stolen car suspected of having been booby trapped was discovered near (Sunni) Barja cemetery. Investigation disclosed that it contained no explosives.

26

» A pickup truck headed towards Baalbek and loaded with vegetables was detained at an LAF checkpoint. The LAF did not disclose the contents of the boxes. The driver was arrested as was an unidentified individual riding in a van. Security information disclosed that the individual was associated with the detained truck, which was thought to be transporting explosive materials.

30

» The LAF suspected that a booby-trapped car was parked near the main square of Saida. Since the owner had not been identified, they broke the glass to inspect the vehicle but found nothing suspicious.

September

2

» A suspected booby-trapped car was discovered in Bkarzela (Akkar), but further investigation proved that it was free of explosives.

26

» A suspected booby-trapped car parked near one of the orchards in Kaabarin (Akkar) was checked for explosives; however, none were found.

28

» A hand grenade was found inside the engine compartment of a vehicle in Tyr. The vehicle was owned by the leader of a pro-Syrian regime organization.

October

14

» A booby-trapped car discovered in Maamoura (Dahiyeh) contained a huge amount of explosives. The LAF dismantled it safely.

21

» A security report signed by several airport security seniors was leaked to social media networks. It stated that there were four booby-trapped cars driving on Lebanese roads. The document also stated that the cars had been rigged by *An-Nusra Front*. The leak appears to be the result of joint work between the various Lebanese security agencies.

November

14

» A suspected booby-trapped car was discovered in Bekaa north between the two Shia villages of Bazzaliyyeh and Harbata.

19

» A suicide bomber blew himself up near the main gate of the Iranian Embassy in Bir Hassan (Dahiyeh). The explosions killed 23 people and injured more than 150, including an Iranian diplomat.

22

» The LAF claims to have intercepted a booby-trapped car filled with hundreds of kilograms of explosive materials and rockets, thus making it extremely lethal. The car was allegedly en route to Beirut from Syria.

23

» Security forces investigated a suspected booby-trapped car near the governorate of Nabatiyeh, but subsequent investigation proved that it was free of explosives.

25

» The suicide bombers at the Iranian Embassy were identified as Lebanese Moein Abou Daher

(from Saida) and Palestinian Adnan Moussa al-Ahmad (from Baysariyye in Zahrani).

26

» Security forces suspected that a car parked near a gas station at the southern entrance to Baalbek had been booby trapped. Although the vehicle contained no explosives, the driver was arrested for drugs and possession of a weapon.

December

8

» Al-Manar TV news showed the Syrian army allegedly capturing four booby-trapped cars in al-Nabk city (Qalamoun). According to the same source, the vehicles were to be sent to Lebanon via Orsal. One of the cars was an ambulance.

14

» Security forces identified a suspected booby-trapped car that had been parked for two days at a roundabout in Saida. Although the car contained no explosives, it had been described as having been stolen.

18

» A suspected booby-trapped car parked near a graveyard in Saida was investigated, but no explosives were found.

23

» A parked car with an *An-Nusra* flag on the windshield was spotted near the Corniche in Tyr. Several passersby became panicked, but specialists found no explosives. The car was stolen in Saida.

26

» A suspected booby-trapped truck in downtown Beirut proved free of explosives after having been checked.

27

» A booby-trapped car exploded in downtown Beirut. The several people killed included Mohamad Chatah, a former minister and Saad Hariri consultant. Seventy other people were injured.

31

» A suspected booby-trapped car was spotted in Chiyah (Dahiyeh). Two sticks of dynamite connected to a detonator were found inside.

» LAF intelligence released Palestinian senior security officer Talal al-Ordony after taking his statement about the car bomb that killed former minister Mohammad Chatah. al-Ordony had been turned over to intelligence earlier by Fateh Movement.

2014

January

2

» A suicide bomber blew up himself while driving a booby-trapped car in Haret Hreik (Dahiyeh). The explosion killed five people and injured 70.

13

» A suspected booby-trapped car was investigated in Tripoli, but it contained no explosives.

16

» A booby-trapped car exploded outside Hermel's Governorate (Bekaa north). The explosion killed four people and injured dozens of others.

21

» A twentieth suicide bomber blew himself up

in Haret Hreik in a booby-trapped car loaded with 120 mm and 130 mm shells. The explosion killed three people, injured 46 and caused considerable damage to the surrounding buildings.

February

3

» A suicide bomber blew himself up in a van parked near Chouaifat (south Beirut). The belt he was wearing contained five kilograms of explosives, which injured two people.

19

» A twin suicide bombing took place at the Iranian Cultural Chancellery in Bir Hassan killing five people and injuring 128 others. The *Abdullah Azzam Brigades* claimed responsibility for the attack, saying that it was in response to Hezbollah's involvement in Syria.

28

» Security forces noted a suspected booby-trapped car in Tyr, but no explosives were found.

March

7

» The ISF noted a suspected booby-trapped car at an entrance to its central barracks in west Beirut (near the Russian Embassy). No explosives were found.

16

» A suicide bomber driving a booby-trapped car blew himself up in the predominantly Shia Bekaa village of Nabi Sheet as he was being investigated by a Hezbollah security patrol. The explosion caused the deaths of two members of the Hezbollah security patrol, and 14 others were injured.

April

1

» The LAF claimed that one of its EOD technicians disabled a booby-trapped car driven by a suicide bomber in Wadi Humayyed (outside Orsal). The car contained 120 kilograms of highly flammable materials and an artillery shell connected to a detonator.

June

21

» A suspected booby-trapped car in Tripoli was observed, and the LAF blocked the area until an EOD expert arrived.

23

» A suicide bomber blew himself up inside the booby-trapped car he was driving outside the northern entrance to Dahiyeh. The site was close to an army checkpoint. An off-duty member of General Security was killed and 15 people were injured.

25

» LAF EOD experts examined a suspected booby-trapped car in Tripoli.

26

A suicide bomber detonated his vest inside the Duroy Hotel in Rawshe (Beirut beach). The explosion occurred during a raid being conducted by elements of the General Security forces. A General Security forces captain, two other General Security individuals and eight civilians were injured. Lebanese General Security disclosed the identity of a Lebanese partner in the cell who was

responsible for transporting explosives to the two Saudi suicide bombers discovered in the hotel.

July

1

» The LAF suspected that a car with Syrian tags parked near the Navy base in Sayfi (Beirut) had been booby trapped, but no explosives were found.

2

» The ISF suspected that a car with false tags parked in Saida had been booby trapped, and an investigation ensued.

31

» A car suspected of having been booby trapped was observed in Tripoli. The LAF blocked off the area until an EOD expert arrived.

September

11

» The LAF disclosed that soldiers manning a checkpoint near Orsal suspected a car of having been booby trapped. Later examination confirmed that 100 kilograms of explosives were inside the vehicle.

12

» The LAF claims to have dismantled a 250-kilogram bomb discovered in Sahet al-Shohada (Saida).

21

» A suicide bomber blew himself up inside a booby-trapped car at a Hezbollah checkpoint in northern Bekaa on the road between Khraybeh and Ham. Several people were killed and injured.

22

» The LAF noticed a suspicious suitcase in the Sunni Bekaa village of Kobb Elias. Further examination concluded that it contained no explosives.

30

» The LAF blocked a road in Shia Yohmor (western Bekaa) after observing a suspicious car. Examination confirmed that it contained no explosives.

October

3

» The LAF said that one of its patrols discovered a 50-kilogram explosive device

near Orsal. The explosives, which had been placed in a garbage container, were disabled by an EOD expert.

17

» A suspicious suitcase was seen near the Shakdouk cemetery in Akkar. Examination confirmed that it contained no explosives.

26

» The security services reported that they intercepted a booby-trapped car near a warehouse in Tripoli. It was later discovered that the building contained numerous types of explosives and weapons, as well as 50 explosive devices ready for use.

27

» A suspicious suitcase was discovered in Saida's main square, but no explosives were found.

29

» A suspected booby-trapped car adorned with Syrian tags was spotted near the media

school of the Lebanese University in west Beirut.

30

A suspected booby-trapped car was believed to have been spotted east of Saida.

December

7

» A car suspected of having been booby trapped was observed in Tripoli's main square, but subsequent investigation confirmed that it contained no explosives.

8

» The legs of Orsal resident Jihad Ezzeddin were blown off when he started his booby-trapped car. The explosion took place in Orsal, 150 meters away from the municipality offices.

14

» A suspected booby-trapped car was observed in Tripoli's main square. The LAF blocked off the area but found no explosives in the vehicle.

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Assassinations and Attempted Assassinations

If a Lebanese were asked to recall some of those who fell victim to assassins or those targeted unsuccessfully by predators from 2013 – 2014, it is quite likely that only one or two names would come to mind. Topping the list, however, would be former Minister of Finance and pro-Hariri strategist Mohamad Chatah. That immediate recall probably stems from the fact that compared to other assassinations and attempts included in relatively common groupings, Chatah's death seems to have fallen (ostensibly) into an easily recognizable list: the March 14 or pro-March 14 politicians and intellectuals assassinated since 2005.

Before moving forward with this discussion, we need to explain our decision to merge *assassinations* and *attempted assassinations* into a single category. Ultimately, while the outcome of an assassination is certainly quite dissimilar to a mere attempt—especially if the individual being targeted escapes unharmed—the two categories are related from a political perspective. This is because the acts convey the same violent message: the action was taken as a “last resort.” Obviously, we can also assume that a so-called “attempted assassination” is often a good way to attract attention.

At the same time, we cannot deny that all attempts, real or imagined, fall within that category. Our proof is offered in two instances noted in the list below in which the individual targeted survived the first attempt but not the second....

Several explanations can be given for the fame gained posthumously by Mohammad Chatah, such as the offices he held while he was alive and the roles he played (most often discretely) in the inner workings of the country. More importantly, however, Chatah's assassination occurred in the heart of Beirut, not far from where former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri was killed on February 14, 2005. Another peculiarity of Chatah's assassination is the exceptionally high level of professionalism demonstrated by the assailants. For instance, despite the fact that the Beirut area in which the attack took place is flush with surveillance cameras and other devices, no trace of the assailants' identity has been found. In addition, according to some experts, the specific approach used to target Chatah made his assassination (regardless of the human and collateral material damage) seem like a “surgical procedure” as opposed to assassination by car bomb.

Even though Chatah was assassinated

on December 27, 2013, the investigation remains in limbo, and it does not appear that it will gain any momentum in the near future. In a curious coincidence, his assassination occurred just two weeks prior to the official opening of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, which also coincided with the first hints of de-escalation between the Future Movement and Hezbollah. Although intimations of the assassination seem to have been apparent, they remain unproven by investigation, and thus are nothing more than speculation. In contrast to the assassination of Wissam al-Hassan a year earlier, Chatah's brutal death did not produce an outpouring of public emotion, even among the members of the camp to which he belonged.

Where other assassinations and attempts are concerned, it is important to note that almost all of the individuals targeted—or alleged to have been targeted—were (with one notable exception) “Muslims,” overwhelming numbers of which were Sunni Muslims (including several clerics). Despite those observations, it may be an exaggeration to conclude that these statistics demonstrate conclusively that the fight among “Muslims” (Sunni, Shia, Alawi, etc.) is a fight to the death. Moreover, it proves that Lebanon's Christians are no longer viable “players” in “the Lebanese game.” Indeed, based on events that occurred during the period 2013 – 2014, we acknowledge

(albeit cynically) that the Christians were largely absent.

Regardless of the size of the “statistical population” involved, the assassinations that occurred from 2013 to 2014 sometimes paralleled the fault lines that were “active” during that period (in Tripoli, Alawi vs. Sunni, and in the Ain al-Helwe camp, pro-Fatah vs. Islamist). Aside from those easily recognizable fault lines, however, the record of assassinations/assassination attempts helps us identify some of the other, less recognizable fault lines. Consider, for instance, the bloody showdown within the Sunni communities between those who stand with “the resistance” (Hezbollah) and those who identify with the various “Salafi” trends. Although that showdown is easily seen in Tripoli, it seems that in the Ain al-Helwe camp where several “unexplained” assassinations occurred, Hayya Bina's sources indicated that some degree of “internal cleansing” had taken place.

Another less visible fault line lies within the Shia community between Hezbollah and its opponents. And while both cases featured in the list that follows may be attributed to acts of “intimidation” (regardless of the fact that one such case resulted in the death of an individual), they help illustrate the often neglected strife associated with influencing the Shia community's assimilation into Hezbollah—and vice versa.

Chronology of Major Assassinations and Attempted Assassinations

2013

January

19

» Minister Faisal Karamah's convoy was fired on in Tripoli during a sit-in organized by Islamists. One of the cars was burned and a gun was pointed at the minister's head.

March

6

» Abedallatif Saleh, the media officer for the Alawi Democratic Party, confirmed that an assassination attempt had been made on Zulfikar Eid (the brother of political bureau chief Rifaat Eid) in the Sunni quarter of Qobbe (Tripoli).

12

» Islamist Palestinian Bilal Bader was shot at in the Ain Al-Helwe refugee camp (Saida). His brother and four Palestinian civilians were wounded. In a different incident at the same location, a Fatah member was shot dead.

April

2

» As Sheikh Salem Al-Rafii was leaving the Takwa Mosque in Tripoli, an unidentified person fired at him; however, only the mosque's wall was hit. Sheikh Al-Rafii explained that he was shot at due to his support of the Syrian Revolution.

May

30

» Anti-Hezbollah writer Rami Oleik reported that he was ambushed outside the entrance to his home in Yehmour.

June

4

» En route to the Quds Mosque (Saida) in the

early morning, pro-Hezbollah Sunni Sheikh Maher Hammoud and his guards were shot at.

10

» Hachem Salman, president of the student chapter of an anti-Hezbollah group, was killed during a demonstration held outside the Iranian Embassy to protest Hezbollah's involvement in the Syrian war. Salman's family and the group to which he belonged confirmed that the killing was a premeditated assassination.

12

» Ahmad Houjeiri (a brother of Salafi Sheikh Mostafa Houjeiri, who is known to be well connected with the Syrian rebels in the Qalamoun region) was killed in the Shia region of Hermel by unidentified assailants.

18

» Fatah member Ahmad Sheikhan was shot dead at the Ain Al-Helwe refugee camp. Islamist Bilal Bader was accused of the assassination.

19

» Tripoli-based Salafi Movement leader Sheikh Ash-Shahhal claimed that he was the target of an assassination attempt at an LAF checkpoint.

July

16

» Pro-Assad Syrian journalist M. D. Jammo was assassinated. While the assassination was immediately considered a "political crime" (and theories began to emerge quickly based on that assumption), the police soon discovered that Jammo was killed by members of his wife's family.

August

12

» After an exchange of kidnap victims between Sunni notables from Orsal and Shia notables from Mokdad family in the Christian village of Ras Baalbek, the convoy returning to Orsal was shot at in a Shia area. One passenger was killed and three others were injured.

23

» Hezbollah supporters Hussam and Hisham al-Moury were shot at in Tripoli by an unidentified person on a motorcycle. Hussam was killed and Hisham was injured. The family, which maintains a clannish structure, responded by killing a policeman from another anti-Hezbollah Sunni family.

September

9

» More Sunni infighting occurred in Tripoli. Two attempted assassinations were focused on pro-Syrian individuals, the son of a sheikh and the other an actual sheikh. The latter, Saadeddin Ghiyyeh, would ultimately fall victim to an assassin in November of the same year.

29

» A hand grenade was found in the engine compartment of a car that belonged to a member of the pro-Assad Arab Socialist Baath Party in Tyre.

October

12

» The prime suspect in two explosions in Dahiyeh (Rweis and Bir al-Abed), Omar al-Atrash, was killed under ambiguous circumstances. Some information indicated

that an explosive device placed inside a car was responsible; however, another version is that the car in which he was riding was hit by a rocket.

25

» A member of the Ain al-Helwe camp security committee was assassinated.

November

13

» Tripoli-based Sunni pro-Hezbollah Sheikh Saadeddin Ghiyyeh, who escaped assassination in September (see entry, above) was shot dead in Tripoli by two men on a motorcycle.

December

3

» Senior Fatah member Mohammad al-Saadi was assassinated in the Ain al-Helwe refugee camp.

4

» During the funeral for Palestinian Mohammad al-Saadi in the Ain al-Helwe refugee camp, an explosion injured four people and killed the person planting the device.

5

» Hezbollah air defense system commander Hassan Haulo Al-Lakkis was assassinated in the parking lot of his building near Beirut's southern suburb.

28

» Former minister and Saad Hariri consultant Mohammed Chatah was killed along with others when a booby-trapped car exploded in downtown Beirut.

2014

February

3

» A taxi driver, inexplicably murdered in Ain el-Helwe, created significant tension within the camp. He was apparently suspected of being a Hezbollah operative.

21

» Senior Alawi Arab Democratic Party member Abdel-Rahman Youssef Diab was shot and killed in Tripoli. Diab was the father of Youssef Diab, who was arrested on suspicion of bombing the Takwa and Salam Mosques there on August 23, 2013.

24

» Ain al-Helwe experienced more tension following the assassination of Palestinian Abdallah Sariyyah inside the camp. Sariyyah was a cousin of one of the suicide bombers who attacked the Iranian cultural center that same day.

March

11

» Palestinian National Security Advisor Jmail Zaidan was assassinated near his home in Ain Al-Helwe refugee camp.

14

» Walid Barhoum, an Alawi from Jabal Mohsen, was shot to death in a Sunni quarter of Tripoli.

27

» Hassan Mazloum, an Alawi from Jabal Mohsen, was shot dead while driving his car in Tripoli.

April

10

» In the Ain al-Helwe refugee camp, a masked man opened fire on Sheikh Arsan Sleiman, a member of an anti-Salafi Sunni association. The sheikh was seriously injured.

16

» Sheikh Arsan Sleiman died six days after he was shot (see April 10 entry, above).

22

» Ali Khalil, a bodyguard for Islamist figure Oussama Ash-Shehabi, and his nephew were shot dead by an unidentified assailant in the Ain Al-Helwe refugee camp (Saida).

May

9

» The Ain al-Helwe refugee camp experienced more strife following the attempted assassination of pro-Islamist Palestinian Alaa Houjair near his shop at the vegetable market entrance.

20

» Senior Fatah member Talal al-Ordony

survived another assassination attempt when an explosion targeted him in the Ain al-Helwe refugee camp.

Evidently, al-Ordony is not especially well liked by his colleagues or the Islamists in the camp.

August

10

» Nawfal Daou, a March 14 Christian figure, was reportedly ambushed while driving near Baalbek. Other sources mentioned that the situation related to the attempted theft of his car.

October

9

» Ain Al-Helwe Palestinian Walid Yassine, a Fatah member, was assassinated in his shop by masked men.

November

26

» Palestinian Abed Fodda, a member of the Islamist group *Jund esh-Sham*, survived an assassination attempt. A masked individual shot at him in a neighborhood of the Ain al-Helwe refugee camp.

December

1

» Pro-Hezbollah Palestinian Sunni Sheikh Mohammad Mawa'd, a member of the Palestinian Scholars Council, was targeted for assassination in the Ain al-Helwe refugee camp but suffered only a wounded hand.

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Kidnapping: A "Civil War" Legacy Still Being Tolerated

Nothing could provide a better, more cynical introduction to this chapter, Abductions, than to remind readers that the "art and politics of abduction" in Lebanon is indeed still flourishing. At the time of this writing, in fact, five Czech nationals kidnapped on July 18, 2015 have not yet been freed. Curiously—owing most likely to both the political background of the incident and the frequency of abductions in Lebanon—not a lot of "noise" has been made about this latest crime in either the Czech or the Lebanese media.¹ In an effort to downplay the patently criminal nature of the situation, it appears that most of the players involved on the global stage simply prefer to let things move at their own pace in this latest incident. Looking at this from a somewhat different perspective, however, it seems that Lebanon, a country that has never even bothered to produce an accurate tally of the people who went missing during its civil war (which ended officially in 1990 with the Taif Agreement) has finally seized upon a way to deal with this abduction in a relatively "casual" fashion.²

On January 21, 2000, after years of advocacy, the Lebanese government seated a commission to investigate the fate of everyone who disappeared during the civil war. Regardless of the swirling debate over the commission and the criticism it received, the documents related to its work were ultimately released to the prime minister's office. The act, of course, was just one chapter in a much longer story that certainly did not end on April 4, 2014, the day the State council ordered the prime minister's office to release those documents to the two organizations that represent the families of the disappeared. Moreover, despite the families learning through their representatives that the so-called "trophy" was all but meaningless, it demonstrates that this event, celebrated by human rights defenders as veneration of the right to know, says volumes about the offhand method used by Lebanese authorities to handle this sensitive issue.³ Indeed, "the missing" is one of the most persistently painful legacies of the

¹ Czech News Agency. "Police release photos of Czechs missing in Lebanon." Prague Post. July 31, 2015. <http://www.praguepost.com/world-news/49101-police-release-photos-of-czechs-missing-in-lebanon>

² <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2015/Jul-20/307393-mystery-shrouds-case-of-five-abducted-czechs.ashx>

³ "...some 20 years after the end of the civil war, the Lebanese state has generally failed to conduct

civil war, and it just may explain why abduction is not always viewed as a crime that can never happen again.⁴

Having used an analysis of the kidnappings that occurred in Lebanon during 2013 and 2014 as a case study, we eventually produced a taxonomy of the most current instances of abduction. Above all and as referenced above, kidnapping remains one of the most common and economically viable forms of violence in Lebanon. Indeed, the "art" of abduction eventually coalesced into something akin to a business model for certain nefarious groups, most of which have been situated in the predominantly Shia area of the northern Bekaa. Although many Lebanese are quick to condemn this seemingly common practice, the truth is that even the well-worn kidnapping-for-ransom scheme enjoys a fair amount of political protection—or at the very least, passive protection. Yet in the northern Bekaa, the stronghold of the country's two dominant Shia organizations (Hezbollah and Amal), kidnapping for ransom

does not occur in a vacuum; rather, it is "tolerated" (and thus continues) because of certain protections offered to kidnappers, which creates a sense of "political criminality." Importantly, this corruption has spawned an atmosphere in which not merely kidnapping, but a variety of criminal activities prospers, including the theft of cars later used as car bombs.⁵

Three different types of kidnappings accounted for most of the abductions that occurred in Lebanon during 2013 and 2014. Notably, the abduction of Turkish pilots Murat Akpinar and Murat Agca (who were kidnapped in August 2013 under conditions very similar to the ongoing Czech "drama") fits into a rather exclusive category since it is reminiscent of the "political" abductions that were common in Lebanon during the 1980s.^{6,7} A primary characteristic of this style of abduction is that it attempts to meddle in State affairs, and it appears this crime was perpetrated to coerce the Turkish government to pressure a Syrian group linked to the kidnapping of several Lebanese

exhumations at mass graves from the period, even where their presence has been officially acknowledged. The Lebanese authorities must proceed without delay to investigate all mass grave sites in the country so that the ordeal of all families waiting for news about relatives missing since the civil war can finally learn the truth about their fate." Excerpt from a public statement released by Amnesty International on November 24, 2009 following the discovery of the remains of British journalist Alec Collett, who was abducted in Beirut in 1985 (www.amnesty.org).

⁴ The Committee of the Families of Kidnapped and Disappeared in Lebanon held a press conference on September 25, 2014 to express their disappointment. *An-Nahar*, September 26, 2014.

⁵ On February 19, 2014, pro-Future Movement Minister of Interior Nohad Mashnuk made a statement in which he implicitly requested that Hezbollah close the "death passages" between Lebanon and Syria. According to a report in pro-Hezbollah *al-Akhbar*, Minister Machnuk based his statement on a report produced by the intelligence directorate of the Internal Security Forces, which accused a gang led by a Brital resident (a village located east of Lebanon along the Lebanese/Syrian border) of selling stolen cars and counterfeiting Lebanese vehicle license plates for their Syrian peers on the other side of the border. In turn, the Syrians gave them to terrorist groups who eventually send them back to Lebanon. According to that report, most of the cars that had been booby trapped generally followed that route. *Al-Akhbar* added that the Brital gang and its leader "pay no attention to the political membership of the people to whom they sell the cars." *Al-Akhbar*, February 20, 2014.

⁶ "Turkish pilots kidnapped in Lebanon." Al Jazeera. August 9, 2013. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/08/201389624378510.html>

⁷ Aziz, Jean. "International intrigue surrounds missing Czechs in Lebanon." Al Monitor. July 28, 2015. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/07/lebanon-czech-kidnapping-washington.html#>

Shia in northern Syria.⁸ Specifically, the incident occurred after families of the Lebanese detainees held in A'azaz (northern Syria) announced plans to take Turkish hostages, as they believed the Turkish government was responsible for the return of their loved ones. It also marked an uptick in the activities of the families that had routinely demonstrated outside various Turkish offices (Turkish Embassy, cultural office and airlines) and blocked the Airport Road throughout the year, especially since the pilots were abducted as their bus traveled along that very road.⁹ The pilots were ultimately released to Lebanese authorities on October 19, 2013, and the Shia pilgrims held hostage in Aazaz were released that same day after 17 months of detention.¹⁰ Qatar played a very interesting role in the exchange, and some reports asserted that its government paid as much as €100 million for the release of the nine Shia involved.

By far, however, most of the kidnappings that occurred during the reporting period report were sectarian in nature (the most bewildering of which involved competing factions operating in the border areas, which then subjected those abducted to religious trials). At the same time, while sectarian issues are typically highlighted in these crimes, they do not represent the only reason why they are committed. Often, kidnappings are characterized as being inspired by sectarianism simply to cloak

their patently criminal nature. That is particularly true of the kidnappings that occurred among Shia and Sunni clans in northern Bekaa when the Lebanese-Syrian border was still porous enough to facilitate smuggling (of all types) between the two countries. Consequently, the pervasive combat in this region has not only decreased those types of abductions dramatically, but it has also imposed a significant reduction in cross-border smuggling. To gain some perspective on this, Hayya Bina interviewed a Shia gas station owner from Tarayya (North West Bekaa), who offered the following account of these tit-for-tat events:

When it comes to [the] carburant business (i.e., petroleum, oil and gas), things are quite clear. The people of Orsal have a long history [of] smuggling...carburants from Syria, but it is not enough to bring those goods into Lebanon; they must be sold. In these times of extreme sectarian tension, it is not always easy for them, Sunni that they are, to [wander about] on...their mini-tank trucks [searching for buyers]. On the one hand, they are Sunni and [that] is enough [of] a charge against them. On the other hand, they do not enjoy the protection of [either] of the two Shia parties, Amal or Hezbollah. This is [generally] the context [for many] of the fights [that] occurred [without] any political [considerations].

⁸ "Turkish pilots kidnapped in Lebanon." <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/08/201389624378510.html>

⁹ "Gunmen kidnap Turkish pilots in Beirut." Reuters. The Daily Telegraph. 9 August 2013. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/lebanon/10233509/Gunmen-kidnap-Turkish-pilots-in-Beirut.html>

¹⁰ "Turkish pilots handed over to Lebanese authorities: source." The Daily Star. 19 October 2013. <http://dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2013/Oct-19/235120-kidnapped-turkish-pilots-handed-over-to-lebanon-authorities-source.ashx#axzz2o1HeR4CP>

In addition to the distribution, another scenario is connected. When the guys [from] Orsal [cannot] find a way to sell their smuggled goods, they sometimes [try] to prevent Shia from doing their own smuggling business. This...creates tension and leads to fights, which can sometimes turn deadly.

The description given above was confirmed by the testimony of a Bekaa-based Shia notable often required to intervene in inter-clan reconciliations. R. M., known for his anti-Amal and anti-Hezbollah political leanings, gave his own particularly cynical explanation:

Luckily, [it's] not always about Ali and Omar, but about gasoline, fuel and other goods. This makes it easier to intervene and find solutions according to clan and tribal rules, even when human losses are involved. First, you let the blood cool down; then, you intervene and negotiate—in cash or in kind—the cost of the blood that was shed.

While these testimonies certainly include a generous amount of truth but tend to downplay the issue, we cannot ignore completely the ideological impact of Sunni-Shia tensions expressed periodically via kidnappings, particularly when that unrest occurs in northern Bekaa. A. F., a resident of Orsal Municipality who considers himself a secular Arab nationalist, agrees with the previous analysis but adds:

However true it may be that the abductions [involving] Orsal and its neighbors sometimes have a Mafia-like element of competition, we cannot deny that things sometimes [spiral] out of control. [In other words,] that Mafia-like characteristic [becomes] increasingly complex, as it [often] involves [...] funding some [of the] Islamist groups. While these guys show a high level of realism and are ready to comply with the rules of the game, their involvement in such criminal activities is not only money driven, but [it] is [also] ideologically driven.

Of course, the reciprocal kidnappings perpetrated by rival gunmen in the Bekaa Valley during early September 2014 stoked regional sectarian tensions that had already threatened to reach a boiling point following the capture by Islamist militants of 23 Lebanese soldiers and policemen the month before. According to a security expert in the Bekaa valley, “Rogue kidnapping gangs have taken advantage of the rising sectarian tensions and the prevailing chaos in the Bekaa to carry out kidnap-for-ransom operations.”¹¹ One example of such kidnappings is the strange abduction/release that took place on September 13, 2014 near Orsal, but it was unclear if it was related to sectarian strife or allegations of the abductee's (Ahmad Houjeiri) supposed cooperation with Hezbollah.¹² Houjeiri was released a day after being abducted, and his freedom coincided

¹¹ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Sep-09/270031-tit-for-tat-kidnappings-raise-tensions-in-lebanon.ashx>

¹² <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Sep-13/270598-gunmen-kidnap-lebanese-citizen-in-border-town.ashx>

with that of another abductee, Palestinian businessman Mohammad Khaled Ismail, who was kidnapped for unknown reasons just outside his residence in Baalbek.¹³

Against the backdrop of heightened sectarian tensions in Lebanon and the region, several of the kidnapping-for-ransom incidents that occurred during the reporting period turned out to have semi-political orientations—or at least were perceived as having such drivers. The most blatant of these incidents was the abduction of Sunni Saadnayel resident (pharmacist) Wissam Al-Khatib.¹⁴ Although his kidnapping was intended to secure a ransom, the fact that it took place in a Shia area immediately reignited sectarian tensions between Sunni Saadnayel and its Shia neighborhood (the result of which included roadblocks and exchanges of violence). After friends of Wissam Al-Khatib demonstrated for his release, higher-level political intervention was needed. He was ultimately freed during the Adha holidays after 17 days of captivity. Another interesting incident involved Michel Sakr, the son of a Christian, pro-Lebanese Forces (LF) businessman based in Zahle. Similar to the case of al-Khatib, Sakr's abduction for ransom sparked violence and became a political issue (aside from being a pro-LF businessman, Sakr's father

is a generous benefactor of that organization and does not hide his political ambitions).

Beyond that incident, the Syrian crisis introduced yet another "brand" of kidnapping, which involved smuggling Syrian nationals over the border into Lebanon. On November 13, the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) freed Syrian national Raafat Youssef from his would-be kidnapper, Syrian national Abdul-Rahman Issa Hussein, who abducted Youssef to compel his family to pay the smuggling fee.¹⁵ Quite often, smugglers from Lebanese family gangs (particularly those in Wadi Khaled) are convincing Syrian refugees to pay a smuggling fee but then kidnap them to extort a ransom from Syrian authorities.¹⁶

In December 2014, sectarian-related kidnappings occurred in Orsal and Bazzalieh. Bazzalieh resident Hassan Ezzeddin was abducted for a day while attempting to deliver Qatari aid to Syrian refugees. Another man from the same village was also released after a kidnapping ordeal that lasted several hours.¹⁷

The practice became routine by October 2013 after three Syrian nationals had been kidnapped in Lebanon. Following the abduction of Lebanese Shia national Yasser Ali Ismail (allegedly by Syrian military

¹³ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Sep-16/270846-arsal-resident-palestinian-man-released-from-kidnapping-in-bekaa.ashx>

¹⁴ Daa Hadid. "Syrian war spurs rash of kidnappings in Lebanon." AFP. Posted on Gazettenet.com. November 12, 2013. <http://www.gazettenet.com/home/9303769-95/syrian-war-spurs-rash-of-kidnappings-in-lebanon>

¹⁵ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Nov-13/277504-security-forces-foil-kidnapping-in-masnaa.ashx>

¹⁶ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Jul-30/265447-kidnapped-refugees-handed-to-syrian-army.ashx>

¹⁷ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Dec-14/280994-northeast-lebanon-gunmen-release-arsal-resident-after-kidnapping.ashx>

operatives), residents of Sireen al-Tahta (Bekaa) kidnapped three Syrians, an incident that followed the spate of kidnappings perpetrated earlier in the year.¹⁸ In that case, the Mokdad family (renowned for its clan-like attitude and support of Hezbollah) kidnapped 16 people in retaliation for the abduction of family member Mohammad Mokdad.¹⁹ That series of kidnappings was also tied to numerous abductions and death threats by Shia Muslims in response to the June 15 murder of four Shia Muslims by Lebanese and Syrian Sunnis.

But illicit transactions are also cause for periodic abductions. In August 2013, Lebanese businessman Fathallah al-Hayyali was kidnapped from the Bekaa, allegedly because of his involvement with drug trafficking.²⁰ In another strange event, two German nationals were abducted November 2, allegedly following failed negotiations with drug dealers in the Bekaa. The Germans were later released after paying \$3,000 (rather

than the "standard" €5,000 ransom).²¹ Of note, one LAF soldier was killed during the raid conducted on the compound in which the Germans had been held.

Yet another form of kidnapping that occurs periodically in Lebanon is related to women and young girls. In northern and eastern Lebanon, women are frequently abducted for the purpose of forced marriage or rape.^{22, 23, 24, 25, 26} In addition, shepherds are sometimes arrested by Israeli forces in the border regions of south Lebanon. Notably, however, politically correct Lebanese parlance refers to such arrests as "abductions."²⁷ Similarly, a relatively "unique" type of kidnapping involves the abduction of children by a parent. This form of kidnapping is interesting because each occasion highlights the steep social cost the Lebanese must bear by entrusting their personal lives to religious courts that take a number of different approaches to the subject of child custody.

¹⁸ "Three Syrians taken in tit-for-tat e. Lebanon kidnapping." The Daily Star. October 5, 2013. <http://dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2013/Oct-05/233686-three-syrians-taken-in-tit-for-tat-e-lebanon-kidnapping.ashx#axzz2o1HeR4CP>

¹⁹ Rakan al-Fakih. "Weekend of abductions and killings rattles Bekaa Valley, north Lebanon." The Daily Star. August 5, 2013. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2013/Aug-05/226295-weekend-of-abductions-and-killings-rattles-bekaa-valley-north-lebanon.ashx#axzz2b51J4pV5>

²⁰ "Businessman kidnapped in east Lebanon." The Daily Star. August 3, 2013. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2013/Aug-03/226155-businessman-kidnapped-in-east-lebanon.ashx#axzz2b51J4pV5>

²¹ "Germans briefly kidnapped in e. Lebanon released." The Daily Star. November 2, 2013. <http://dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2013/Nov-02/236616-lebanese-soldiers-clash-with-gunmen-2-people-killed.ashx#axzz2o1HeR4CP>

²² <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Nov-24/278739-lebanese-man-arrested-for-kidnapping-raping-ethiopian-woman.ashx>

²³ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Nov-24/278754-family-claims-tripoli-woman-rescued-not-abducted.ashx>, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Nov-25/278824-in-laws-of-abducted-tripoli-woman-demand-her-return-deny-charges.ashx>

²⁴ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Dec-18/281502-abductors-to-free-east-lebanon-school-girl-after-hezbollah-intervention-teacher.ashx>

²⁵ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Dec-24/282163-girls-disappearance-sparks-kidnapping-in-north-lebanon.ashx>

²⁶ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2015/Jan-04/282989-kidnapper-releases-east-lebanon-schoolgirl-abducted-for-marriage.ashx>

²⁷ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Jul-31/265576-israel-releases-kidnapped-shepherd.ashx>

In a December 2013 report published by Control Risks, an international security consulting firm, Lebanon was ranked sixth in the world for risk of kidnapping.²⁸ Neither this ranking nor the ongoing abductions seem to affect the Lebanese public or

State authorities, very few of whom consider that something wrong is taking place. On the contrary, abduction, whether criminal or political in nature, seems to be Lebanon's legacy. As such, it is simply "tolerated."

²⁸ "Report ranks Lebanon sixth in kidnapping risk." The Daily Star. December 14, 2013. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2013/Dec-14/241054-report-ranks-lebanon-sixth-in-kidnapping-risk.ashx#axzz2o1IP9Gp1>

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Chronology of Selected Abductions

2013

January

6

» Dr. M. Sukkariyye was shot in the back as he tried to escape from three men who were trying to kidnap him near Shaath (North Bekaa).

23

» Two children were kidnapped by four armed men as their grandfather was driving them to school in Aramoun (South of Beirut). It appeared the kidnappers had been hired by the mother of the children.

February

1

» Four armed men kidnapped Lebanese citizen F. Metri outside his home in Mansouriyeh (North Mount Lebanon).

» N. Nassar was kidnapped on Terbol-Ferzol (Bekaa) while he was traveling to work.

3

» A ransom of \$70,000 was demanded for F. Metri. He was found later at the southern entrance to Baalbek.

4

» A. Abou Hassan (of Palestinian descent) was kidnapped on the Jalala-Chtora road (Bekaa) by three armed men.

6

» While traveling to the Abou Aswad neighborhood (South) from home, businessman N. Youssef was kidnapped when a car intercepted his vehicle. The kidnappers later demanded a ransom of \$3 million.

» The Riyak-Terbol (Bekaa) road was blocked to protest recent kidnappings.

9

» During raids being conducted near the northern Bekaa village of Dar al-Wasiaa, the LAF freed A. Abu Hassan (see 4 February entry).

» A child was kidnapped by his mother in Mouallaqa (Bekaa) due to a family conflict.

10

» Businessman N. Youssef was freed (see 6 February entry).

20

» Four men kidnapped 13-year-old M. Awada from outside his home in the upscale Beirut neighborhood of Ramlet el-Bayda.

23

» N. Nassar remains captive (see 1 February entry), and his kidnappers continue sending messages threatening to kill him should the \$2 million ransom not be paid on time.

25

» After payment of a \$132,000 ransom, 13-year-old M. Awada is set free.

27

» The ISF announced that it had arrested three people between February 19 and 22 and charged them with kidnapping. The kidnappers of N. Youssef were among those apprehended.

March

4

» A security spokesperson disclosed to *as-Safir* newspaper a list of 87 people suspected of various kidnappings.

10

» In response to the supposed kidnapping of Islamist Sheikh Orfan Maarabouni in the Bekaa (last seen on March 3 as he was leaving for Syria), a group of his supporters blocked the main road to the Masnaa border checkpoint between Lebanon and Syria. Other roads were simultaneously blocked in North Lebanon.

13

» M. Efram, the General Manager of an agricultural research center, was almost kidnapped near his home in Ksara (Bekaa). As the would-be kidnappers broke the windshield of his car and tried to drag him through, Efram shot at his assailants and forced them to flee.

15

» S. Yazbek was arrested in Baalbek for kidnapping F. Mityr.

18

» Another member of the group that kidnapped F. Mityr was arrested.

» Hussein Jaafar, a member of the North Bekaa-based Shia Jaafar clan, was kidnapped outside Orsal. The event sparked reciprocal kidnappings between the Jaafar clan and Sunni families in Orsal.

25

» Kidnappings continued between the Jaafar clan and their Orsal neighbors.

27

» A. Bou Shahin was kidnapped in Baalbek, and the kidnappers sought a \$1 million ransom. Substantial political effort was used to secure his freedom.

30

» According to media information, the ransom for A. Bou Shahin (see 27 March entry) was reduced from \$1 million to \$50,000.

April

1

» Eight Syrians were kidnapped at Wadi Khaled (North).

» Syrian national S. Hamwi, son of the head of the Syrian Red Crescent, was kidnapped in Adonis (east of Beirut).

» J. Nasereddin, a minor, was kidnapped

in Rashayya (South Bekaa). The kidnappers threatened to murder the boy if his father failed to pay the debt he owes the kidnappers. The boy was ultimately released.

3

» Taxi driver J. al-Khawli was kidnapped in Dawra (east of Beirut), and a \$50,000 ransom was demanded for his release.

» S. Hamwi (see 1 April entry) was freed after payment of a large ransom.

» Sunni/Shia tension and the wave of kidnappings in Bekaa north subsided after Hussien Jaafar contacts his parents by phone. The phone call occurred in parallel with a meeting between Future Movement Secretary General Ahmad Hariri and a member of the Jaafar clan.

» Thanks to mediation by Baalbek's Sunni Mufti, several Sunnis who had been abducted were freed by the Jaafar family.

8

» Orsal officials and Jaafar family members met at an LAF intelligence office to discuss the ongoing series of kidnappings between the parties.

10

» After a weeklong kidnapping, J. al-Khawli was freed after a \$12,000 ransom was paid.

11

» In the ongoing kidnappings between the Orsal and the Jaafar clans, the Orsalis abducted three of their Jaafari antagonists. In response, the Jaafar clan kidnapped one of its Orsali foes.

12

» Officials from North Bekaa continued to work toward a "truce" in the kidnapping "war." A delegation from Orsal arrived on the Syrian side to pay the ransom for Hussien Jaafar's freedom.

13

» The Orsal/Jaafar kidnappings stopped when Hussien Jaafar was freed after payment of a ransom. The 12 remaining abductees were set free and turned over to the LAF.

15

» Hussein Jaber's family claimed they were phoned by an unknown individual who told

them that Hussien had been kidnapped at Deir Zahrani (South) and that a ransom was demanded. Later, the LAF arrested Hussein in a Beirut restaurant when it was discovered that he had faked his kidnapping to extort money from his father.

16

» The LAF arrested the head of a kidnapping gang, Lokman Mokdad, who along with others was responsible for the kidnapping of J. al-Khawli.

17

» A Syrian refugee claimed that his 17-year-old daughter had been kidnapped in Abbasiyeh (South) by an unknown Syrian group. She was later found handcuffed and unconscious near an orchard in the same area.

27

» Eight Syrians who were kidnapped April 1 in Wadi Khaled were set free. They explained the abduction as an attempt by the father of an individual imprisoned in Syria to trade them for his son.

May

9

» A Jordanian citizen reported to the police station in Chtaura (Bekaa) that two men and a girl kidnapped him as he was leaving Rafic Hariri Airport. They freed him after stealing his passport. The investigation disclosed a financial dispute between the alleged victim and his kidnappers.

20

» Ahmad Jaafar and his cousin, Mahdi Jaafar were kidnapped in the al-Quseir countryside (Syria). Notably, stories about the incident were quite different. While some sources claim the individuals lost their way while heading to a Lebanese village inside Syrian territory, other sources assert that they were lured into the kidnapping.

23

» Five female bartenders (one Brazilian and four Ukrainians) were kidnapped from a nightclub in Zahle (Bekaa).

» B. Attallah, who was kidnapped from Zahle (Bekaa) early in the day, was freed by LAF intelligence personnel. He was found in an abandoned house in Dar al-Wassiaa—a stronghold of the Jaafar clan.

27

» I. Imad, who was kidnapped May 21 from Deir al-Ahmar-Shlifa (Bekaa north), was freed by members of the LAF's intelligence branch. He was found in neighboring Younif (Bekaa north).

» In Laboue (Bekaa north), an ambulance that was transferring Syrian national A. Idriss from Syria to Lebanon was hijacked and the patient kidnapped.

» Mohamad Loulou was kidnapped from in front of his shop in Saadneyal (Bekaa).

28

» The kidnapping of Syrian citizen M. Radwan Addibas from outside his home in Ksara (Bekaa) was foiled.

June

1

» The ISF forced the release of Mohammad Samir Al-Hamwi, son of the head of the Syrian Red Crescent.

2

» Three Lebanese and two Syrians were arrested in Aley for planning to kidnap a Syrian citizen and trade him for a detainee in al-Quseir.

5

» Retired ISF member H. Bourji and Y. Arayyis were abducted on the Baalbek-Beirut highway. A ransom of \$70,000 was demanded.

6

» Armed men mistakenly kidnapped George Lishaa from Ras Baalbek and took him to Syria. The kidnappers thought he was Kanj Ghannam, a farm owner, and a ransom of \$500,000 was sought from Ghannam's family.

11

» Khaled Fouad Hamou claimed at the Chtaura (Bekaa) police station that his father, Syrian citizen Fouad Hamou had been kidnapped by an unknown group. The kidnappers demanded a \$1 million ransom.

» Retired ISF member H. Bourji and Y. Arayyis were released after a ransom of \$50,000 was paid.

» A minibus owned by an Orsal citizen and filled with Syrian citizens disappeared in (Shia) Maqneh (Bekaa)—a stronghold of

the Mokdad clan. Media sources indicate that members of the Mokdad clan were responsible and that they had already turned over the abductees to Hezbollah.

12

» The driver of the minibus intercepted the day before in Maqneh was released.

13

» Lebanese police foiled the kidnapping of a Kuwaiti citizen in Bhamdoun (South Mount Lebanon) by a three-member gang. One of two Syrian suspects was arrested but the other escaped.

14

» In Ras Baalbek (Bekaa), the LAF foiled the kidnapping of George and Kanj Ghanam by four individuals associated with armed Syrian opposition groups.

15

» After a \$35,000 ransom was paid, Fouad Hamou (see June 11 entry) was released at the Marj crossway (Bekaa).

16

» Three Bengali citizens kidnapped another Bengali (a KSA Embassy employee) from Beirut and took him to Sarafand (south). They telephoned the KSA Embassy and demanded a ransom.

17

» An LAF team raided a house and freed the Bengali kidnap victim (see June 16 entry).

19

» Security sources mentioned that two aid workers en route to Orsal were kidnapped in Laboue (Bekaa).

20

» Pro-Hezbollah MP al-Walid Sukariyyeh hands over to the Houjairy family one of its members who had been kidnapped previously by the Jaafar clan.

26

» Mohammad Tofayli was kidnapped near Zahle. In response, the Tofayli family kidnapped eight Syrians in Nahle (Bekaa).

27

» M. Loulou was released after a month long kidnapping.

July

2

» Mohammad Tofayli, who was kidnapped from Nahle, was reported to be in Rankous (a Syrian village near the Lebanese border). Some rumors hold that his kidnapping is linked to an illegal fuel oil smuggling business. The fate of the eight Syrians kidnapped in retaliation is still unknown.

3

» After escaping two previous kidnapping attempts, Kanj Ghannam escaped a third when the kidnappers misidentified his car.

5

» Mohammad Tofayli was released after his relatives abducted eight herdsmen from the kidnappers' family. Following negotiations, an exchange took place in the Syrian village of Jarajir.

15

» Contact was lost with K. Fosseyan while he was in Orsal.

24

» An 11-year-old girl was kidnapped in Byblos (North of Beirut) for ransom.

25

» An LAF intelligence patrol freed the 11-year-old girl who had been kidnapped from Byblos (see 24 July entry). During the chase, the girl was shot in the back. Her mother and two Syrians were arrested.

» K. al-Atrash (Sunni from Orsal) was kidnapped on the Shia-dominated Bazaliyye-Laboue road.

26

» The LAF arrested two individuals in (Shia) Brital (Bekaa). They were en route to the Syrian border via Orsal along with two Dominican girls they kidnapped earlier from nightclubs. They intended to traffic the women.

» K. al-Atrash was released (see July 25 entry).

30

» Nermin Jamal's family reported in Abi Samra that she has been missing for three days from her home in Bahsa (Tripoli).

August

1

» Syrian B. Ammouri claimed that four armed

men kidnapped his father from a parking lot in Jdita (Bekaa).

» Contact was lost with Youssef Mounif Mokdad, a resident of Maqneh, after his minibus was found empty near Orsal. Reports indicate that he is part of the reciprocal kidnappings that involve the Mokdad and residents of Orsal.

3

» Three residents of Baalbek and one from Brital were kidnapped in Orsal.

» In retaliation for the kidnapping of Youssef Mokdad, members of the Mokdad family kidnap Hussien Al-Houjairy » F. Hiyali's car was found empty and burned along Riyaq Road. Hiyali was kidnapped earlier in Ferzol (Bekaa).

5

» More kidnappings take place between the Mokdad and Orsal families.

» An agreement was reached that stipulates the release of 17 Syrian nationals from Flita (a Syrian village near the Lebanese border) in exchange for Youssef Mokdad—after which 10 Orsal residents would be freed.

6

» K. Fosseyan, who was held in Flita (Syria) after being kidnapped in Orsal (Lebanon), was released and returned to his parents in Zahle.

» Syrian J. Ammouri was released after being kidnapped in Jdita.

9

» The "Imam Rida visitors," a previously unknown group, claims responsibility for the kidnapping of a Turkish pilot and his co-pilot on the airport highway. The kidnapping of these two Turkish nationals is linked to the abduction in May 2012 in North Syria of a group of Lebanese Shia returning from Iraq after a religious pilgrimage.

11

» After an exchange of abductees, Youssef Mokdad was released and turned over to the Ras Baalbek LAF Intelligence station. Concurrently, the Mokdad family released the 10 abductees they were holding.

13

» The (Shia) Brital-based Ismail family

kidnapped three Syrians from the outskirts of Brital. The incident was in response to the abduction of three Ismail family members on August 11 by armed Syrians (Bekaa).

14

» A. Maarouf reported in Zahle that his expatriate Brazilian brother Sh. Maarouf was missing.

16

» Under LAF supervision, abductees from the Ismaeil family were exchanged between Brital and the Syrian village of Asal al-Wared.

20

» Sh. Maarouf was released at the Serein crossroads (Bekaa) after a \$115,000 ransom was paid.

22

» Syrian M. Khafili was kidnapped outside his home in Housh Al-Harimeh (Bekaa).

September

9

» Syrian A. al-Azeb was kidnapped in Taanayel (Bekaa)

12

» Syrian citizen A. Hassoun reported that his brother Ibrahim had been kidnapped in Zahle (Bekaa) by five armed men who dragged him from his car.

17

» LAF intelligence arrested two Syrians and a Lebanese who were involved in kidnapping operations.

18

» A Turkish man was thought to have been kidnapped when his rental car was found in Maamelten (an area in east Beirut renowned for its nightlife). Investigation disclosed that the individual had left Lebanon via Rafic Hariri Airport.

24

» Attorney R. Dalloul was kidnapped in Zahle (Bekaa) by armed men after he was spotted using an ATM. The kidnappers demanded a \$200,000 ransom.

26

» Attorney R. Dalloul was found in a house in the Zahle industrial zone. Security forces raided the location and released him.

29

» Wissam Al-Khatib was kidnapped along the Karak-Moalaqa highway (Bekaa) and held for a \$500,000 ransom.

30

» After a minor was kidnapped for marriage, the roads to Sheikh Ayyash, Telmeiyan and Bourj Al-Arab were cut (Akkar).

October

3

» An armed group from Syria kidnapped Yasser Ismaeil outside Brital (Bekaa).

6

» Six Syrians were kidnapped from Brital in response to the earlier kidnapping of Yasser Ismail.

10

» W. Benham was kidnapped from Mansouriyeh (North Mount Lebanon).

15

» Wafer Jebrail Benham was released without ransom in Naher el mout (east Beirut). The circumstances of his abduction and release were not disclosed.

23

» Two Brital residents were arrested and charged with kidnapping Wissam Al-Khatib.

November

4

» Palestinian businessman Y. Loubani was

kidnapped near the Nahr Bared refugee camp (North).

5

» Palestinian businessman Y. Loubani was released. No information was available about whether a ransom was paid.

10

» R. Labbadi was kidnapped at Mina (Tripoli), and his father received a text demanding a \$200,000 ransom. He was soon freed by the LAF intelligence.

17

» Three Syrians were kidnapped while riding a bus along the Hermel-Qobeyyat road (controlled by the Jaafar clan).

18

» Minor Nidal Idriss was kidnapped from Ayoun es-Samak while riding in a car with his dad. He was later freed by security agencies (North).

20

» Three Syrians who were kidnapped earlier on the Hermel-Qobeyyat were set free.

December

16

» In Brital, the Ismail family released seven abductees they were holding in response to Yasser Ali Ghannam's kidnapping.

» LAF intelligence raided the residences of two individuals in Brital. They were suspected of involvement in kidnapping operations.

2014

January

9

» In a particularly odd situation, a Cadillac crashed into Rafic Hariri International Airport, after which a passenger in the car beat a woman and kidnapped her two children before fleeing the scene.

12

» Two Syrian refugees on a motorcycle attempted to kidnap a 12-year-old Orsal girl.

14

» LAF intelligence foiled the kidnapping of G. Al-

Hawa, a businessman's son, after he was lured to a remote region by a girl. The perpetrators, one of whom worked for the father, were arrested.

28

» Armed elements kidnapped three Syrian citizens outside Ras Baalbek (Bekaa).

29

» Julien Antoun, the son of businessman George Antoun, disappeared. His car was found near Oyoun as-Samak (North), after which his mother received a call demanding a \$3 million ransom.

February

3

- » M. Abdelmajeed kidnapped K. al-Saleh, his wife's niece, 16 days ago in Akkar.
- » Clashes broke out near Sharawneh between armed men and the LAF while soldiers were searching for Julien Antoun in the Jaafar stronghold.

5

- » K. Al-Saleh was released by the ISF from an apartment in Tripoli.

8

- » Julien Antoun was found on a road in Bekaa north after a 15-day kidnapping.

15

- » Security forces foiled the kidnapping of a businessman's son, who was to be ransomed for \$1 million. The Syrian leader of the gang was arrested.

March

1

- » D. Darweshi was arrested for kidnapping minor L. Atiyyeh in order to marry her.

6

- » T. Kaady was kidnapped along the road between the Riyak Air Force Base and the Bekaa Military headquarters. He was released four hours later after mediation by Hezbollah and the Amal Movement.

7

- » M. Sakr, the son of a pro-Lebanese Forces businessman, was kidnapped while en route to school in Zahle (Bekaa). The kidnapping caused a wave of protests which assumed political-sectarian dimensions.

8

- » M. Sakr was released less than 24 hours after being kidnapped.

20

- » While G. Tehmazian was in his car in Shilfa (Bekaa), he was intercepted by three other cars and abducted. George's family is the only Armenian family in Baalbek. His brother announced that they had received a phone call demanding a \$50,000 ransom or Tehmazian would be taken to Syria.

21

- » George Tehmazian was released early in the morning.

April

6

- » S. Abed Al-Hak was released after being kidnapped in Tripoli. A ransom had been demanded from her parents.

13

- » M. Samir Holayhil was released when the LAF raided a house in Orsal.

May

4

- » Kh. Nashar, kidnapped previously in Haour Taala, was released in Baalbek after mediation by regional clans (Bekaa).
- » Iraqi contractor W. Jabbour was kidnapped from Dawhat Aramoun (south of Beirut).

14

- » M. al-Houjairy was kidnapped while en route in his vehicle from Orsal to Baalbek. His parents received a ransom demand of \$100,000.

15

- » Iraqi contractor W. Jabbour was released at Hawsh an-Nabi after a \$50,000 ransom was paid. Surprisingly, family member Majed Al-Nashi was kidnapped during the exchange and a ransom was demanded.

19

- » In Brital, the LAF raided the homes of people suspected of involvement in kidnapping operations.

June

6

- » A Saudi-Egyptian woman reported in Shmustar that her Egyptian husband, M. Haykal had been kidnapped when a car filled with four armed men intercepted their vehicle on the Hosh Bay Road (Bekaa).

9

- » The family of Egyptian M. Haykal received a telephone demand for a \$100,000 ransom.

10

- » An armed group attacked a stone crusher near the border village of Ras Baalbek and kidnapped six Syrians and two Lebanese. One of the Lebanese was held for ransom while the others were freed.

12

- » Armed elements penetrated the Syrian refugee camps outside Orsal and kidnapped

one of the residents. It appears that the reason behind the kidnapping is infighting among rebel groups.

July

2

» After being held for 20 days, M. Murad was released after a \$40,000 ransom—negotiated by Orsal figures—was paid.

» The LAF arrested an individual described as “dangerous outlaw” in Brital after raiding his house. He headed a gang that specialized in kidnapping for ransom.

15

» Palestinian M. Jaber was kidnapped from Khraybeh (East Bekaa)

17

» Architect M. al-Kadi was kidnapped from Laboue and taken to the outskirts of Orsal.
» The LAF arrested a suspect in the kidnapping of Palestinian Mohammad Jaber.

18

» Architect M. al-Kadi's family organized a conference to raise awareness about his kidnapping.

23

» After a ransom of \$100,000 was paid, Palestinian M. Jaber was released a week after his abduction.

27

» Syrian Abed al-Karim Al-Ali was freed during an LAF raid in Hillaniyeh. He was kidnapped earlier from Hillaniyeh (Bekaa north)

28

» Ziad Khadra reported that his father, Muhyedeen Khadra, had been kidnapped from Orsal. A ransom was demanded on pain of the father's death.

August

5

» Syrian M. Mudawwar reported in Bayader al-Adas (South Bekaa) that his uncle, Abed al-Muniem Mudawwar had been kidnapped while en route from Rafic Hariri Airport. His wife later received a phone call from the kidnappers demanding a \$50,000 ransom.

7

» M. Al-Halawani was released after a \$200,000 ransom was paid.

22

» Architect M. Al-Kadi was released a month after being kidnapped.

26

» In Mashghara (Bekaa), the LAF arrested a five-member gang (four Lebanese and a Syrian) that specialized in kidnappings.

30

» A Kuwaiti businessman staying at a hotel in Baalbek was kidnapped, after which the criminals demanded a \$1 million ransom.

September

4

» The body of Lebanese Orsali Kayed Ghadadah was found. The individual was kidnapped several days before by a group of Islamists said to be affiliated to ISIL.

5

» In Rahba (Akkar), an LAF intelligence patrol arrested Ali Mazen Allaw and accused him of being involved in kidnapping for ransom.

6

» Thirty-six days after he was taken prisoner during the Orsal battle, Abbas Medlej became the second military member to be executed. Pictures of his decapitated body were posted to social media sites. Members of the Medlej family and their affiliates blocked the town's roads and kidnapped Orsal residents A. Breidy and H. Fliti.

8

» Armed men kidnapped Saadnayel resident Ayman Sawwan. In response, Saadnayel residents (overwhelmingly Sunni) gathered along the town's road and began inspecting the IDs of passing minibuses. Ultimately, the drivers of four minibuses from Baalbek were kidnapped. A fifth kidnapping was prevented by Lebanese security forces. The two sons of Ayman Sawwan told the media that they would not free the 8 – 13 abductees they continue to hold nor would they remove their roadblocks until their father is released.

9

» Ayman Sawwan was released, and LAF intelligence drove him back to Saadnayel. Interestingly, some reports said that in order to put pressure on the kidnappers, security agencies “arrested” the wives of those suspected of kidnapping Ayman Sawwan.

10

» Syrian citizen Jamil T. Wiesh reported in Tripoli that he, his wife and his daughter were lured to Wadi Khaled (North) on August 31 with an offer of immigration visas for Australia. The family was kidnapped upon their arrival and held until a \$15,000 ransom was paid.

11

» Orsal residents A. Breidy and H. Fiti were released by the (Shia) al-Masri family in Hsour Taala (see September 6 entry).

15

» A group of people in a Nissan 4X4 kidnapped Palestinian businessman Mohammad Khaled Ismail from outside his home in Al-Ansar (Baalbek).

16

» Palestinian businessman M. Ismail was released after political pressure was applied.

17

» An armed group entered the farm of Mohammad Khalil Houjairy in Wadi Humayyed (Orsal) and kidnapped his son, an army first Adjutant Kamal. They also stole several cows. The farm is two kilometers from an army center.

20

» The kidnapping of (Sunni) Orsal resident Abdallah Breidy in Awzai (Dahiyeh) increased local tensions. He was freed a few hours after his kidnapping.

23

» Syrian citizen A. Saleh was kidnapped from outside the Dar al-Amal Hospital in Baalbek. The kidnapers demanded a ransom of \$270,000.

29

» Qatari mediation with Syrian rebels outside Orsal succeeded in freeing First Adjutant Kamal Houjairy.

October

1

» A group of armed men attacked the farm belonging to Kanj Ghannam at Wadi Al-Kheshen (outside Ras Baalbek). A Syrian janitor, Hassan Tlouj was kidnapped, and some of the vehicles were stolen.

» Masked men tried to kidnap an LAF soldier in Beddawi, but the kidnapers fled to the Beddawi camp when an LAF patrol passed nearby.

2

» Syrian citizen A. al-Mostafa reported at the Broumana police station that his son, Yassin had been kidnapped, and that a \$3,000 ransom had been demanded.

» Four armed men kidnapped (Christian) T. Wehbe from outside the Orsal Municipality building.

12

» LF supporters blocked all roads leading to Zahle to demonstrate solidarity with the family of T. Wehbe, who was kidnapped several days ago in Orsal.

14

» T. Wehbe was released following payment of the \$50,000 ransom.

18

» Khaled and Mostafa Houjairy were kidnapped after four vehicles surrounded Houjairy's building in Taalabaya (Bekaa).

20

» The Houjairy family blocked the Taalabaya-Saadneyal road and erected tents to protest the kidnapping of Khaled and Mostafa Houjairy. Concurrently, Ahmad Khaled Houjairy was kidnapped on the Baalbek highway.

25

» T. Nehmeh, a Christian from North Lebanon working at the officer's club in Jounyieh, was kidnapped in Bab Tabbeneh. The kidnapers demanded that measures being taken by the LAF against some Tripoli neighborhoods be lifted in exchange for his freedom.

26

» Several armed individuals tried to kidnap LAF Adjutant Fayez al-Ammoury while he was on leave at his home in Bab Tabbeneh. He escaped the attempt thanks to the intervention of some of his colleagues.

November

13

» LAF intelligence arrested a group of kidnapers during an exchange (kidnapped vs. ransom) in Deir Zannoun (Bekaa).

18

» Armed individuals operating along the Lebanese-Syrian border area abducted an LAF first adjutant, who was en route to his post in Wadi Humayyed (outside Orsal). He was released two hours later.

23

» The ISF commander in Tripoli announced the release of O. and I. Abbous, who had been kidnapped in Tripoli for “family reasons.”

25

» An armed group kidnapped retired first adjutant M. Houjairy from the shop he owns in Ras al-Sarej (Orsal). They took Houjairy and a Syrian toward the outskirts of town.

26

» Retired first adjutant Mohammad Ahmad Houjairy was released.

December

6

» Mohammad and Bassam Houjairy, as well as Mohammad al-Atrach—all of whom had been kidnapped by armed groups operating along the Bazeliyyeh-Laboue road—were freed.

11

» Security services arrest M. Dandach, a rather famous kidnapper (for ransom) in the Bekaa region.

12

» Syrian Wafaa al-A'iky reported in Bayader al-Adas (South Bekaa) that her husband, Syrian Ahmad Namany had been kidnapped by an armed group.

22

» Fatima M., a minor from Fnaydik (Akkar), left school on Monday 15 but did not return home. The family investigated and responded by kidnapping Mashour D. from Shekka, where they believed their daughter was hiding. After family mediation and assistance by security forces, Mashour was released and the girl returned home....

The Contentious Political Football of Lebanese Real Estate Who Owns What...and Where?

Vehement debates over land and its transfer between Lebanese and non-Lebanese—and between Lebanese from different sects—are certainly nothing new. Having been at the heart of the Lebanese experience since 2007 (the year Hezbollah found itself swimming in Iranian-donated cash following its war with Israel), purchases of land by Hezbollah stopped being the focal point of those discussions during the period covered in this report.¹ That outcome may be explained variously. For instance, Druze leader Walid Jumblatt, who championed a campaign to denounce Hezbollah's efforts to establish settlements—touted as residential compounds—intended to expand its physical presence, establish some strategic points and connect the dots between its Beirut, southern and Bekaa strongholds.² In Lebanon, however, the contentious matter of real estate involves more than tensions between the Shia-Sunni-Druze communities. Yet because these "intra-Muslim" debates over real estate were

squelched when they lost political traction, the only discussion on the subject that has persisted centers on sales of "Christian lands." Aside from being easy to convince Christian politicians eager to please their constituents that the matter is disconcerting, a major factor in that debate became evident when the topic evolved into a cause advocated by the Maronite Christian church. The topic became so divisive that by the end of 2010, MP Boutros Harb (Lebanon's Minister of Labor at the time) suggested a bill that would freeze inter-confessional real estate transactions for 15 years, as he believed it would preserve "Lebanon's cohabitation and diversity."

Today, however—owing to the prevailing level of political tension and the fact that Lebanon's Christian community has largely been marginalized politically—when Muslim-Muslim real estate squabbles do surface, they involve Shia and Sunni (Sunni Lebanese have accused their Shia counterparts of

¹ Farrell, Shane. "Hezbollah's controversial land acquisition." Now. January 4, 2012. https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/reportsfeatures/hezbollahs_controversial_land_acquisition

² Even the Sunday Telegraph felt compelled to report on the issue: "Hizbollah buys frontier land to attack Israel." August 12, 2007. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/1560119/Hizbollah-buys-frontier-land-to-attack-Israel.html>

"appropriating" Lebanon's capital, traditionally a Sunni/Greek Orthodox settlement) or Druze and Shia (such as Walid Jumblatt accusing Hezbollah of establishing settlements in the Chouf area of Mount Lebanon). Thus, Lebanon's real estate issue extends beyond inter-sectarian exchanges to encompass a social dimension as well.³ In parallel with the heated debate over the national wage scale, that characteristic propelled the subject of real estate to unprecedented levels of interest during the period covered by this report.

The most intriguing and illustrative development in Lebanese real estate became evident during a press conference coordinated by *Harakat al-Ard* (the Lands Movement) at the Catholic Media Center on July 24, 2013. Even today, the group's stated objective remains "[confronting] the sale of Christian lands to non-Christians," as the organization holds that such transactions are "causing a demographic shift [in the country] and [deepening]...confessional segregation."⁴ Interestingly, the initiative is named after a 1976 Palestinian action that protested the confiscation of their lands by Israeli authorities. This "Palestinian reference" can be considered indicative of the

mounting Christian frustration.⁵ As part of that same campaign, political activist and journalist Pierre Atallah published "The Room of Freedom – The Story behind the Subjugation of the Lands of the Christians in Lebanon," a book which apparently serves as the movement's manifesto. Since then, not only has *Harakat al-Ard* kept the real estate issue alive, but it has also used successive media releases to denounce what it considers questionable transactions, including those undertaken by some churches.

The most visible, yet certainly not the only aspect of this issue relates to public condemnation by various Christian groups of the transfer of "Christian properties" to "other" Lebanese and non-Lebanese—mainly (Sunni) people from the Gulf.⁶ One report stated that as of April 2012, 110 million square meters (m²) of Christian land had been sold to non-Christians, a condition that progressed to something of a "cold war" between those involved. Christians often took the offense against other Christians willing to sell their property. In one instance, the walls in the historically Christian quarter of Ain al-Rummaneh (and other quarters at risk of real estate "sprawl" from neighboring areas)

³ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Feb-15/247440-christian-land-issue-raises-decades-old-anxieties.ashx>

⁴ Pierre Atallah, *an-Nahar*, 23 July 2014.

⁵ While the Palestinian al-Ard Movement (The Land Movement) emerged under completely different circumstances, the linguistic kinship between the Lebanese and the Palestinian reference to the "land" (as a last resort) is particularly interesting vis-à-vis Christian propaganda publicized at the beginning of the civil war which characterized the Palestinians as seeking to "steal" Lebanese land by settling on it. Today, it appears that Lebanese Christians are sharing the same land-oriented ideology as the Palestinians. http://www.yourmiddleeast.com/features/alard-the-seed-of-the-palestinian-struggle_11306 and <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Ard>

⁶ The issue assumed an "existential" dimension when it was discovered in June 2012 that Saudi Prince Muqrin bin abd al-Aziz had acquired 3 million m² in the Kesrwan region—the heart of "Morounistan"—known as "The hill of the Cross!" Several of the prince's Lebanese friends convinced him to sell it back to a Lebanese Christian. See: https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/archive/saudi_prince_to_sell_dlebta_land_to_a_lebanese

were spray-painted with crosses and the slogan "To keep our church bells ringing, do not sell your land."

Yet the tendency to sell land is not confined to individuals. Indeed, some Christian religious orders were "tempted" to put up for sale parcels of land in areas where their parishes have become insignificant or simply no longer exist.⁷ In August 2013, the Lands Movement visited Patriarch Rai to give him a memo that "detailed [the sale of] 6.55 million square meters of land." In response, "Maronite Patriarch Rai stressed the need to restrict the [sale] of lands belonging to Christians."⁸ Since then, the Maronite church has continued to take that position. Interestingly, however, the land issue incited squabbles among the various Christian denominations. In October 2014, the Maronite League (essentially a secular Maronite lobby) organized the "My Land, My Identity" conference.⁹ Lands Movement head Talal Douweihy, also a member of the League, boycotted the conference despite mediation attempts by the Maronite Patriarchate (under whose patronage the conference was held) after he accused the league's leadership of appropriating and marginalizing the efforts of the Lands Movement. This intra-Maronite kerfuffle says a great deal about the importance of land issues within Lebanese Maronite politics. In short,

it enables the Maronites to remain politically correct and appropriately respectful of the political "kings" of the community without being part of their "royal courts."

Beyond changes in land ownership through regular sales, "Christian lands" in Lebanon suffered yet another challenge as land owners (typically Lebanese expats or their relatives) often fail to pay sufficient "attention" to their Lebanese assets. According to *an-Nahar*, hundreds of parcels of land changed ownership through traditional channels by using counterfeit powers of attorney. The *an-Nahar* article focused on a case involving Lebanese-Australian Assaad Touma, who purchased a piece of land on the eve of the civil war but left Lebanon once the violence started. He returned in 2014 intending to sell his parcel but discovered that he was no longer its owner. To recover his land, Touma had to commence legal proceedings!¹⁰

Real estate as a political messenger

While real estate is a source of conflict among various Lebanese sects, it may also serve as means of exchanging political messages. For instance, several days after Patriarch Bechara Rahii returned from a controversial visit to the Holy Lands, a real estate "incident" occurred.¹¹ The issue

⁷ This frequently updated compilation addresses various cases of "land dismissal" from a Christian perspective: <http://www.10452lccc.com/reports/real%20estatereports.htm>

⁸ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2013/Aug-30/229266-patriarch-warns-against-selling-christian-lands.ashx>

⁹ <http://www.memoryatwork.org/public/uploads/files/rei-ap-annahar-20140708-6.pdf>

¹⁰ How Assaad Touma's land was sold while he was in Australia! A counterfeiting mafia stealing land from Lebanese expats." *an-Nahar*. June 11, 2014.

¹¹ "Lebanon in uproar over Maronite patriarch's planned visit to Jerusalem." *Jerusalem Post*. October 5, 2014. <http://www.jpost.com/Diplomacy-and-Politics/Lebanon-in-uproar-over-Maronite-patriarchs-planned-visit-to-Jerusalem-351837>

involved resuming construction on a house situated on land that was the focal point of a dispute between the Maronite Church and Hezbollah-backed Shia residents of Lasa, a village located in the heart of Mount Lebanon's Christian land. Lebanese political pundits soon concluded that the incident had more to do with the issuance of a practical reprobation to the patriarch than with the construction per se. The accuracy of that analysis is a moot point since it illustrates how land can be "toyed with" in Lebanon's tense sectarian environment. In typical Lebanese fashion, the incident was contained, but not before its message had been received successfully. An antithetical example involved Hezbollah and its Christian ally, the Free Patriotic Movement led by General Michel Aoun. When a substantial tract of land (80,000 m²) in Hadath owned by a group of Shia businessmen was "recovered" by the Maronite League, the sellers easily made a profit of \$13 million; however, the incident again demonstrates the underlying political dimensions of the issue.¹² Notably, without Hezbollah's intervention, that recovery would have been impossible. Of course, the details of the matter become clearer when all the facts are examined. Located east of Dahiyeh, Hadath is considered a political stronghold of General Michel Aoun, and returning that land to the "Christians" helped Aoun bolster his credentials as a defender of Lebanese Christian interests. But while some parcels of land may still be recovered, the reality is that Christian presence and influence in Lebanon and elsewhere in the region

is waning rapidly. Accordingly, the best outcome would be a slowdown in this trend.

Real estate and public interest

Beyond the intra- and inter-sectarian factors noted above, and following resurgence of the debate over public wage scale hikes and how they could be funded, most Lebanese became familiar with the issue referred to in the local patois as "seaside properties." The topic centers on the exploitation of public lands that run along coastal or riverfront areas. These areas are prime targets for squatting by influential "private" individuals (who enjoy political "protection") or private companies (who also benefit from similar safeguards) who manage beach resorts—which are sometimes conscripted for use by State institutions for "vital" functions such as impromptu army barracks or municipality "annexes." It is indeed no secret that most of the residences and businesses that have been built along Lebanon's coastline were constructed illegally. More to the point, the practice of developing properties on State-owned land is pervasive, as the "seaside properties" issue represents one of the most flagrant forms of corruption in Lebanon. According to some experts, the income generated illegally by these lands amounts to a paltry \$10 million annually (not including the immense fines the State *could* levy). In contrast, appropriate and legal exploitation of these same areas has the potential to generate annual revenues that approach \$800

¹² <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/archive/536598-maronites-redeem-land-from-shiites-in-hadath>

million! For a State with a public debt approaching US\$75 billion, such an influx of homegrown funding would be nothing short of miraculous....¹³

While small real estate issues continue to provoke altercations (sometimes bloody, particularly in rural areas), complex real estate

problems have not yet prompted disputes on a grand scale. But simply because this issue has not assumed greater dimensions at the sectarian/national level, the matter is far from settled. On the contrary, real estate issues in Lebanon are a remarkably accurate indicator of the things that *might* happen in the country.

¹³ In November 2012, the minister of public works held a press conference to publicize a report that identified individuals squatting on and exploiting those properties. On December 5, 6 and 7, *al-Akhbar* published the full report including detailed tables and maps.

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Nominal Success in Abating Violence against Women

Although domestic violence has long since been a problematic issue in Lebanese society, until recently, even discussions about the matter were generally considered taboo. Within the last several years, however—thanks to the advocacy efforts of several (primarily women-oriented) NGOs—public debate that centers on domestic violence has gained substantial acceptance. An interesting aspect of the public attention being focused on the issue (as expressed in the media) is the position of the family and the micro-social context within which a given incident occurs. While many such incidents garner very little mainstream media coverage because they are typically covered up by the family (or by micro-social pressure), others are indeed publicized.

One of the first incidents to attract widespread media attention was the alleged "honor crime" murder of a girl by her brother in south Lebanon. Actually, when the man learned that his sister was seven months pregnant with *his* child, he stabbed and stoned her to death and then discarded her body in the Wazzani River. Controversy over domestic violence was sparked again following the July 8, 2013 murder of Roula Yaccoub by her husband in Halba, north Lebanon.

Karam al-Bazzi allegedly beat Roula and her five daughters frequently. According to *al-Monitor*, Roula was the 24th woman to have been killed in that manner in Lebanon during the past three years. Accordingly, her death prompted a series of protests and calls for change. Of particular importance, Roula became emblematic of beaten women in Lebanon thanks to efforts by her own family.

The point can also be made that the years-long awareness raising and advocacy work undertaken by several NGOs and other civil society actors culminated with the case of Roula Yaccoub. Although a draft law that aimed to "protect women from domestic violence" was submitted to the parliament in April 2010, it was not until July 22, 2014 that it won approval by joint parliamentary committees under the title "Bill for the Protection of Women and Family Members against Domestic Violence." Obviously, the decision to include "family members" helped make the bill more palatable to those who still resisted such legislation.

When the legislation was finally voted into law on April 1, 2014, it became a landmark event in Lebanese legal

circles. Nevertheless, local organizations such as “Kafa (“Enough”) Violence & Exploitation” and the “National Coalition for Legislating the Protection of Women from Family Violence” expressed disappointment that the bill was amended.

Upon its passage, the bill defined marital rape as “not explicitly criminalized as an assault by itself; rather it is the harm that accompanies it that is penalized.” The likely reason for that change was the vehement opposition to the law expressed by many of the country’s religious leaders—especially those within Muslim circles. As former grand Sunni Mufti Sheikh Mohammad Rashid Qabbani stated as recently as 2011 when the initial drafts of the law were being discussed, “Muslims in Lebanon refuse a draft law that violates Sharia derived from the Quran and Hadith, which protect and safeguard women and families in our society.” Interestingly, while no “official” Shia stand was publicized by the High Shia Council (equivalent to the Sunni Fatwa), its position was certainly no more liberal. Aside from a few Shia clerics who clearly expressed support for a law that would criminalize violence against women, the Shia establishment essentially “hid” behind the Sunni stance on the matter. It should be understood that the issue goes far beyond “violence against women,” as the official Sunni establishment is under far more pressure from its “right wing” than is its Shia counterpart. Indeed, any significant concessions regarding this gender related issue would force

the Sunnis to pay a political price. In contrast, the Shia establishment provides political representation to both mainstream and “right-wing” Shia—under the watchful eyes of Hezbollah and the Amal Movement.¹

It is also interesting to note that the parliamentary session during which the law was passed is among the very few legislative sessions held by the Lebanese parliament in recent years. Approval of the law required representation by a number of parliamentary blocs, especially the Muslim MPs, which gave them an opportunity to demonstrate their openness and liberality in the face of mounting Islamist trends in Lebanon and the region. In that sense, casting a vote in favor of the law was tantamount to casting a political vote “against” rather than “for” the issue.

While the murder of Roula Yaccoub had a somewhat “positive” outcome because it motivated Lebanese society and lawmakers to take action on the subject of violence against women, other incidents reminded citizens that simply protecting women from physical violence was not enough. In effect, other types of violence against women may be advocated or even condoned by legislative rulings regarding marriage (particularly Muslim marriages). According to UNRWA gender protection coordinator Helene Skaardal, “Gender-based violence has become a new hidden dimension of the Syrian conflict” due to the anxieties and increased levels of stress from which the refugees are

¹ For a general overview of the Muslim positions, see Farah Jahmy’s “Representatives of the Muslim communities in Lebanon: For the violence against women” on the Janoubia.com website, July 29, 2011.

suffering. In January 2014, the United Nations disclosed that it had helped 38,000 people deal with sexual assault and gender-based violence in Syria during 2013.² In the ensuing period, the (forced) acceptance by Lebanese society of the need to discuss issues typically considered off limits has expanded beyond women. Today, the topic of child abuse is also being mentioned....

In many ways, 2013 and 2014 seemed like "banner years for women" in Lebanon, but in reality, more incidents of domestic violence occurred during that time. On the positive side, such incidents were being reported more often by women and other witnesses, and more is being heard about violence against women since the topic is no longer taboo. In fact, topical television advertising campaigns were launched during the period covered by this report. An ad sponsored by one of the advocacy organizations

urged Lebanese who witness domestic violence to contact the authorities rather than simply wish the victim well. While posters along roadsides have become common in recent years, the ABAAD initiative marked the first time an anti-abuse campaign had been televised.

The mere presence of the law mentioned above is a successful example of a "foreign-funded" advocacy campaign, and broad advertising campaigns certainly helped the issue gain greater importance among the Lebanese. At the same time, however, the law probably exists today because the issue is not exclusively political in nature. Nevertheless, the negative side effect of the parliament having passed this law—after it had been watered down—is that it will be exceedingly difficult to sustain related advocacy efforts and/or amend the law over time unless more violence is committed!

² <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/archive/536598-maronites-redeem-land-from-shiites-in-hadath>

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Examining Ain al-Helwe and Other Camps Palestinian “Capitals of Exile” in Lebanon

According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), there are currently around 450,000 Palestinian refugees registered in Lebanon.¹ UNRWA estimates that about half the Palestinian population lives in one of Lebanon's 12 recognized Palestinian refugee camps, “all of which suffer from serious problems, including poverty, overcrowding, unemployment, poor housing conditions and lack of infrastructure.” The organization also reports that within its five areas of operation (Gaza Strip, West Bank, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon), Lebanon has the “highest percentage of Palestinian refugees living in abject poverty,” and the recent influx of some 50,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria has exacerbated an already delicate humanitarian situation.² Accompanying this poverty is a long history of violence, and the years 2013 and 2014 were no exception. During that time, a number of violent incidents occurred in and around the

refugee camps, particularly at Ain al-Helwe, a camp adjacent to Saida.

With a population of around 70,000, Ain al-Helwe is the largest of Lebanon's Palestinian camps and is considered by some to be “the capital of Palestinian exile.”³ The moniker refers not only to Ain al-Helwe's size, but also to its unique status among the camps in Lebanon. Following attacks in May 1985 on Beirut's main Palestinian camps (Bourj al-Barajneh and Shatila) by the Amal Movement and the Sixth Brigade of the then-fractured Lebanese Army, mainstream Palestinian political and military power shifted to Ain al-Helwe. The camp came under severe pressure during the ensuing 15-year period of Syrian “tutelage” in Lebanon but has remained uniquely autonomous from external authority. Faced with the prospect of Hamas superseding *Fatah* as the principal Palestinian power, external actors ultimately ensured that *Fatah* would retain that

¹ “Registered” does not mean “resident.” The exact number of Palestinian refugees residing in Lebanon is subject to various estimates, ranging from 275,000 to 350,000 (Haya Binna interviews).

² For the 50,000 refugees from Syria, see: <http://www.unrwa.org/prs-lebanon>. For all other quotations and figures, see: <http://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/lebanon>

³ Haya Binna interviews, see also <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/03/ain-al-helwe-looming-battle.html#>. For Ain al-Helwe's population, see: <http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/2011100224730.pdf>, although some estimates of its size are as high as 100,000 (see: <http://time.com/3829387/ain-al-helwe-lebanon-isis/>)

authority—and independence. Over time, the autonomy of Ain al-Helwe has benefitted several parties, especially Fatah, since it provides the group secure assets in Lebanon and gives its backers the Palestinian faction they preferred. But the camp's exclusion from Lebanese State control has also made Ain al-Helwe attractive to a variety of outsiders, including Islamist groups. For instance, a prominent Salafi leader took refuge there as long ago as the late 1980s, and since the early 2000s, former Islamist sources have referred to it as the “heart of jihadist movements in the Levant.”⁴ Given the historical centrality of Ain al-Helwe, it will be the primary focus of this chapter (although other camps will be mentioned periodically). From a more contemporary perspective, the camp's volatile environment, aggravated further by the radical Salafi-Islamist elements that have sought shelter or originate within its boundaries, has made Ain al-Helwe the epicenter of the most recent wave of camp violence.

Ain al-Helwe and its Factions

In the absence of strong, centralized governance, politics in the Palestinian camps in Lebanon are affected by a number of competing influences and organizations, some of which are camp specific. However, the most universal and significant of these influences is the Popular Committees, which are composed of the most prominent local factions in each camp.⁵ These groups and

their respective militias have no shortage of willing members given the desperately high levels of unemployment and relatively poor job prospects across the camps, even for the highly qualified—potent conditions which stem largely from Lebanese legislation that restricts Palestinians from employment in numerous job sectors.⁶ Thus, the formation and development of factions and their militias is encouraged by the camps' separation from the Lebanese State, which arises not only from a Palestinian desire for effective self-governance, but also from the Lebanese creation of what one source terms a “ghettoized reality” for camp residents, in view of the pervasive and comprehensive restrictions placed upon them.⁷

As mentioned, Ain al-Helwe's “resident factions” now include several radical groups. This phenomenon has recently prompted concern on two fronts: the increased aggressiveness being exhibited by these groups towards their camp rivals, and the pronounced impact of the Syrian crisis on the activities of such groups. This second issue involves not only the responses (that continue to be) made to Hezbollah's involvement in Syria by radical elements, but also Ain al-Helwe's attractiveness as a destination for foreign Islamists, a particularly relevant issue given the surge of Islamist movements and activity that has swept the region since the war in Syria erupted. The camp's appeal to such

⁴ For the Salafi leader of the 1980s, see: <http://www.mei.edu/content/impact-syria-conflict-salafis-and-jihadis-lebanon>. For the latter quote, see <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2013/12/19/212190/concern-grows-in-lebanon-over.html>

⁵ See pp.8-11, <http://burawoy.berkeley.edu/Public%20Sociology,%20Live/Hanafi/Hanafi.Governing%20Refugee%20Camps.pdf>

⁶ See pp.21-22, http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_236502.pdf

⁷ <http://www.mei.edu/content/impact-syria-conflict-salafis-and-jihadis-lebanon>

elements has therefore stoked fear that Lebanon will become increasingly affected by Syrian "spillover."

With regard to the factions present in Ain al-Helwe, *Fatah* has traditionally been the largest faction in the camp, although Hamas and several other Islamist factions now threaten its status. These factions display varying degrees of "moderation"; for example, the less radical among them include *al-Haraka al-Islamiya*, *Ansar Allah* and *al-Jihad al-Islami* (the latter group headed by the "spiritual leader" of Islamists within the camp, Sheikh Jamal Khattab).⁸ The more extreme factions are led by *Osbat al-Ansar*, which is the largest and most powerful of the Islamist factions and has a history of violence against various Lebanese and Western interests (although in recent years this appears to have subsided).⁹ Others include *Jund esh-Sham* (which broke away from *Osbat al-Ansar* in 2002), *Fatah al-Islam* and a branch of the more international *Abdullah Azzam Brigades*.¹⁰ This latter group was led by the late Majed al-Majed, reportedly a camp resident until 2012, who was captured by

the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) in 2014 and died while in captivity, ostensibly because of a pre-existing health condition.¹¹ Another renowned radical group, *Al-Shabab al-Muslim*, refers to an alliance among the more radical Islamist elements listed above, particularly *Fatah al-Islam*.¹²

Rumors also persist about the presence of *Jabhat an-Nusra* in the camp. Of particular note is a project made public in 2013, which intended to establish a Lebanese branch of the group with Ain al-Helwe as its base, but that outcome does not appear to have been achieved.¹³ More recently, reports and rumors indicate that ISIL (Daesh) has tried to establish a foothold in Ain al-Helwe or another camp.¹⁴ Although such rumors cannot be verified without further investigation, they are indicative of the prevailing concern over foreign extremists, a sentiment shared by a security report leaked in February 2014, which warned of an "influx" of extremists (including Syrians, Chechens, Egyptians and Tunisians) into the camp to join the *Abdullah Azzam Brigades* or *Jund esh-Sham*.¹⁵

⁸ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/May-13/256236-ain-al-Helwe-descends-into-further-violence.ashx#axzz3A9n1RwN8>

⁹ For *Osbat al-Ansar*'s power, see <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/03/ain-al-Helwe-looming-battle.html#>. For a list of its activities, see <http://www.refworld.org/docid/536229414.html>. For its latest tendencies, see: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/tr/originals/2013/09/lebanon-ain-Helwe-takfiri-groups-influence.html#>

¹⁰ For *Jund esh-Sham*, see: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6719635.stm. For *Fatah al-Islam* see: <http://www.thenational.ae/world/lebanon-interrogating-head-of-al-qaeda-linked-group-responsible-for-iran-embassy-bombing>. For *Abdullah Azzam Brigades* see: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/03/ain-al-Helwe-looming-battle.html#>

¹¹ For al-Majed's death, see <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-25603499>. For his reported residence in Ain al-Helwe, see: <http://www.thenational.ae/world/lebanon-interrogating-head-of-al-qaeda-linked-group-responsible-for-iran-embassy-bombing>

¹² <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Apr-28/254596-tension-between-rival-islamists-puts-ain-al-Helwe-on-edge.ashx#axzz3A9n1RwN8>, *al-Shabab al-Muslim* referred to in this source by its English translation, "The Muslim Youth."

¹³ <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/03/ain-al-Helwe-looming-battle.html>

¹⁴ <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/leaked-security-documents-show-plots-attack-lebanon-233642723>

¹⁵ <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/blogs/politics/11037-impact-of-syrian-unrest-on-ain-al-Helwe-camp>

Two more observations of some importance should be made regarding the factions in Ain al-Helwe (and in Lebanon's camps in general). The first is that many, if not all of these groups function as clients of local or regional patrons. Fatah and Hamas, of course, are connected to their parent organizations in Palestine, while many of the more radical elements are, or at least aspire to be linked to wider Islamist movements (such as *Jabhat al-Nasra*).¹⁶ Meanwhile, Hezbollah operates a well-known proxy, the *Resistance Brigades*, which is involved in the camp, and Syria's al-Assad regime has well-documented current and historical ties to several Palestinian factions. Patronage is also provided to some factions by various Lebanese security services. The importance of those links to the security conditions in Ain al-Helwe are not only acknowledged by Palestinian sources, but they also illustrate that despite official Lebanese policy that prevents State authorities from having a physical presence in the camps, that constraint does not preclude them from exerting influence.¹⁷ An important consequence of this widespread use of proxies is that when considering the level of "moderation" of a particular faction, it should be noted that this is determined as much by the decisions and policies of their patrons as it is by any intrinsic ideological viewpoint or other factor.

The second observation is that although this document includes a selective list of factions (above), that information should be considered

transient, as "manpower shifts" between such groups occur quickly, easily and frequently. These changes in allegiance are characteristic of the Islamist milieu and contribute to its exceptionally fluid nature. In fact, even some of the more established groups listed could easily be using a *nom de guerre* or have been infiltrated and/or "hijacked" by a wealthier or better-connected faction.

Tension and Violence Within Ain Al-Helwe

As a preliminary remark to this chapter, it should be noted that the more "random" acts of violence that occur within the camp are usually unimportant. Fights over largely insignificant matters are typical and frequently devolve into armed clashes, but that kind of violence can be attributed to the ghetto-like social makeup of the camp. Thus, until those conditions improve, these frequent altercations will likely continue.¹⁸ Accordingly, this text focuses primarily on the politically driven violence the camp experienced in 2013 – 2014. For a timeline of the incidents that occurred, some of which are referred to in this analysis, please consult the accompanying chronology.

As evidenced by the chronology appended to this chapter, many of the clashes during the period covered occurred between *Fatah* and the various Islamist factions. The potential ramifications of that conflict are significant, largely due to the possibility of an escalation

¹⁶ <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/03/ain-al-hilweh-looming-battle.html>

¹⁷ Haya Binna interviews. For more on Hezbollah and LAF proxies within the camps, see the "Radical Factions and Hezbollah" section of this chapter.

¹⁸ Ibid.

in the violence and *Fatah* suffering a comprehensive defeat—in which case the influence of extremist groups in the camp would likely increase tremendously. Such a scenario could have profound effects on the camp—such as by enhancing its reputation as an incubator for fundamentalism—which would likely precipitate forceful intervention by an external party.

In fact, two incidents in recent years serve as a precedent for just such an occurrence should extremist elements gain the upper hand in the camp. The first is the Nahr al-Bared conflict of 2007, in which the LAF conducted an assault against the newly formed *Fatah al-Islam*, which had been attacking the LAF and sheltering in the camp. The Islamists were eventually flushed out, which demonstrated “the LAF’s willingness to confront Palestinian camps within Lebanon should they be overrun by extremists presenting a threat to Lebanese national security.”¹⁹ Unfortunately, the camp was reduced to rubble in the process. The second is the series of clashes in Ain al-Helwe that began on August 22, 2015 and involved intense fighting between *Fatah* and certain radical factions.²⁰ The violence followed the attempted assassination of *Fatah* official Abu Ashraf al-Armoushi and coincided with the arrest a week earlier of Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir, widely believed to have been hiding in the camp

since June 2013.²¹ *Fatah* is reported to have been under such severe pressure during these clashes that Hamas felt it necessary to reinforce its traditional enemy with around 60 of its own fighters in a bid to prevent significant extremist gains.²² This example demonstrates the ability of the Islamist factions to pose a serious military challenge to *Fatah*’s position, a contest that if successful could alter the camp’s environment considerably. However, these examples also show the unwillingness of other parties—even those staunchly opposed to *Fatah*, such as Hamas—to allow the more radical elements to exploit that ability to its fullest potential. Therefore, while Islamist military superiority within the camps is indeed a valid concern, it is unlikely to endure unless it attracts widespread popular support.²³ However, as the LAF’s assault on Nahr al-Bared demonstrated, the collateral and material damage associated with subduing those factions militarily is another matter entirely.

Yet not all Islamist groups in the camp are consistently and violently opposed to *Fatah*, such as the *Osbat al-Ansar* group, which commands a significant presence in the camps.²⁴ This is evidenced by the group’s role in the negotiations surrounding the development and formalization of the March 2014 memorandum of understanding (even if that initiative

¹⁹ <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/lebanons-next-flashpoint-10118>

²⁰ http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2015/Aug-22/312316-1-fatah-member-killed-in-clashes-following-assassination-attempt-in-ain-al-Helwe.ashx?utm_source=Magnet&utm_medium=Entity%20page&utm_campaign=Magnet%20tools

²¹ For more on Assir, see the “External Violence linked to Ain al-Helwe” and “The Future of Ain al-Helwe” sections of this report.

²² Haya Binna interviews.

²³ See “The Future of Ain al-Helwe” section for further discussion of popular support for Salafists.

²⁴ <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/03/ain-al-Helwe-looming-battle.html#>

soon proved ineffective) and by its actions following the death of Sheikh Orsan Suleiman in April 2014, when it stormed the offices of *Fatah al-Islam* and *Jund esh-Sham*.²⁵ While this underscores the potential for inter-factional conflict, it also emphasizes the moderate “peacekeeper” role *al-Ansar* seems to have adopted in this instance. Interestingly, one source notes that in recent years, *Osbat al-Ansar* and *al-Haraka al-Islamiya* have acted as “negotiators in local feuds.”²⁶ Thus, *Osbat al-Ansar* and other Islamist factions like it may have the potential to counterbalance the more radical groups as Hamas reportedly did during the August 2015 clashes between Islamists and *Fatah* (mentioned above).²⁷

The fragile political situation in Ain al-Helwe (as well as other camps) is also manifested by tension within *Fatah*, although this has not erupted into large-scale violence. Tensions in Palestine between Mahmoud Abbas and Mohammad Dahlan over the latter’s alleged leadership ambitions seem to have affected *Fatah* in the Lebanese camps where Dahlan enjoys support and influence.²⁸ Appointments and dismissals of senior *Fatah* members in Lebanon (ultimately controlled by the Palestinian Authority) may have

been linked to allegiances relating to this dispute. In one example, Mahmoud Issa—aka *al-Lino*—was dismissed from his position as a top security official in October 2013 allegedly because of his closeness to Dahlan, a move that angered many in the camp and provoked ire against Abbas.²⁹ Disunity within *Fatah* and its officials inevitably followed. Such discord would likely weaken the organization in the face of its Islamist opponents, particularly as some of those involved appear to command men who show more allegiance to them than to *Fatah*.

The risks posed by the continuing violence and tension in Ain al-Helwe have been recognized by the factional leadership, and efforts have been made to combat it. Perhaps the most significant of these is the Palestinian “elite security force,” which after much negotiation was eventually deployed in Ain al-Helwe on July 8, 2014.³⁰ The apparent goal of that force is to provide an effective and widely endorsed method of maintaining peace in the camp and preventing further infiltration by extremists.³¹ While the exact factional composition of that force is unclear, most reports suggest that all major secular and Islamist factions within the camp are

²⁵ For memorandum of understanding, see: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Mar-28/251507-fatah-to-sign-neutrality-pact-after-islamists-agree-to-end-assassinations.ashx#axzz3A9n1RwN8>. For events following the death of Sheikh Suleiman, see: <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/19589>

²⁶ <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/reportsfeatures/548045-ain-al-Helwes-violent-factionalism>

²⁷ However, for an alternative interpretation of the possible motives behind this “peacekeeper” role, see: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/tr/originals/2013/09/lebanon-ain-Helwe-takfiri-groups-influence.html#>, and <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/tr/originals/2013/09/lebanon-ain-Helwe-takfiri-groups-influence.html#>

²⁸ <http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/2014/04/22/fatah-in-shadow-of-abbas-dahlan-conflict/h8se>

²⁹ <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/4011/abbas-fatah#>

³⁰ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Jul-09/263192-joint-security-force-deployed-in-ain-al-Helwe.ashx#axzz3A9n1RwN8>

³¹ <http://time.com/3829387/ain-al-Helwe-lebanon-isis/>

represented except *Fatah al-Islam* and *Jund esh-Sham*, although both seem initially to have made some concessions to its deployment.³² As of the date of this writing, that force remains deployed; however, its effectiveness at preventing inter-factional violence appears limited at best, as evidenced by the persistent political conflict and numerous assassinations within the camp in 2015.³³ Furthermore, the radical groups apparently resisted deployment of the force in areas where extremist concentrations are strongest. That contention may have prompted one Palestinian source to characterize the force as little more than “traffic police.”³⁴

External Violence Linked to Ain al-Helwe

In the past two years, concern over Ain al-Helwe has begun to expand to areas outside the camp's boundaries. In a 2014 article, Mona Alami cited a *Fatah* source who explained that “dozens” of young Palestinians have been trained for suicide operations throughout Lebanon. The same source indicated that the Syrian crisis has become an incentive for recruitment, and that Palestinian refugees are the “bridge” between radical Syrian and

Lebanese organizations. Ain al-Helwe is reportedly the nerve center of those operations, while “cells” have been established in Burj al-Barajneh and Shatila.³⁵

Such worries have been reflected in reality, as several of the bombings that occurred in 2013 and 2014 were later traced to Ain al-Helwe. Adnan Mohammad, who participated in the Iranian Embassy bombing of November 2013, was a former resident of the camp. Similarly, Nidal Hisham al-Mughayer, a participant in the Iranian Cultural Center bombing of February 2014, has family in the camp, and camp resident Naim Abbas, a man deemed “the most dangerous terrorist in Lebanon,” was arrested in February 2014 after being implicated in the planning of several bombings.³⁶ Abbas was suspected of being a “leading member” of the *Abdullah Azzam Brigades* group that claimed responsibility for both attacks on Iranian institutions.³⁷ Moreover, several additional plots were foiled based on information obtained from Abbas after his arrest, giving further indication of the importance of the man who seems to have used the camp as his base.³⁸ This underscores the very real likelihood that the camp plays some role in facilitating not just

³² See: <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/reportsfeatures/565138-the-dilemma-of-ain-al-Helwe>, and for *Fatah al-Islam/al-Shabab al-Muslim* concessions to deployment see: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Jul-09/263192-joint-security-force-deployed-in-ain-al-Helwe.ashx#axzz3A9n1RwN8>

³³ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/08/refugees-seek-lasting-peace-lebanon-ain-al-Helwe-150830105256501.html>

³⁴ Haya Binna interviews. For extremists' resistance to security force's deployment, see: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2015/Jun-13/301893-palestinian-factions-struggle-to-secure-joint-force-entry-into-ain-al-Helwe-neighborhood.ashx>

³⁵ <http://www.mei.edu/content/impact-syria-conflict-salafis-and-jihadis-lebanon>

³⁶ For all three residents, see <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/lebanons-next-flashpoint-10118?page=show>

³⁷ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/02/19/us-lebanon-blast-idUSBREA110BQ20140219>

³⁸ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/02/12/us-lebanon-qaeda-idUSBREA1B13520140212>

the growth of extremism, but also its manifestation through acts of terror.

Clearly, Ain al-Helwe is gaining broad significance. Following the LAF's assault on Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir's mosque and followers in June 2013, rumors persisted that Assir and his ally Fadl Shaker sought refuge in the camp along with many of his surviving followers.³⁹ Despite Assir's subsequent denial on social media that he was hiding in the camp, his eventual arrest in August 2015 appeared to confirm those widely held suspicions.⁴⁰ Other fugitives said to have hidden in the camp include Tripoli militants Shadi Mawlawi and Osama Mansour, reported by *The Daily Star* to have been hiding in Ain al-Helwe since late November 2014. In response, Palestinian officials would not confirm that Mawlawi (or Assir) were in the camp—despite claims by the LAF that it had strong intelligence to the contrary. Notably, Mansour was eventually shot dead by security forces in Tripoli.⁴¹ In related incidents, youths in the camp on December 2, 2014 protested media claims that Ain al-Helwe had been hosting terrorists, while rumors began spreading on January 3, 2015 that ISIL (Daesh) members were hiding there.⁴² Both incidents provide further evidence

that fugitives and extremists consider the camp a safe haven.

Radical Palestinian Elements and Hezbollah

Much of the discussion surrounding radicalism within Ain al-Helwe has cited the impact it could have on relations with Hezbollah and the Shia community, and the potential confrontation that may ensue from any deterioration in those relations. Such a confrontation could be sparked both by opposing positions on the Syrian crisis, and a more fundamental ideological opposition among Salafi groups to the very existence of organizations such as Hezbollah, which they consider "apostate." Considering the wave of bombings that rocked Lebanon in 2013 and 2014 (some of which have been linked to Ain al-Helwe) and targeted Hezbollah's areas and allies, that concern indeed has merit. Additionally, the camp's location on the highway that links Beirut to Hezbollah's heartlands in the south is likely to intensify the group's anxiety in the event radical elements gain greater power within the camp.⁴³ As noted in this chapter, further Islamist gains are not impossible; indeed, Hezbollah would likely be one of the parties seeking to reverse the effects of such changes if they occur.⁴⁴

³⁹ <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2013/12/19/212190/concern-grows-in-lebanon-over.html>

⁴⁰ Haya Binna interviews. For Assir's denial, see: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Dec-05/280007-assir-im-not-in-ain-al-Helwe.ashx>

⁴¹ For Mawlawi and Mansour's presence since November, see: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Nov-22/278541-mawlawi-mansour-in-ain-al-Helwe-camp-security-sources.ashx>. For LAF reports and Palestinian lack of confirmation, see: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Nov-26/278949-camp-officials-investigating-mawlawis-presence-in-ain-al-Helwe.ashx>. For Mansour's death, see <http://www.ibtimes.com/how-al-qaedas-syrian-affiliate-jabhat-al-nusra-trying-take-northern-lebanon-1901604>

⁴² For protests, see: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Dec-02/279646-ain-al-Helwe-residents-denounce-campaign-to-distort-camps-image.ashx>. For ISIL rumors, see: http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2015/Jan-03/282970-isis-seeking-bases-inside-lebanon-security-chief.ashx?utm_source=Magnet&utm_medium=Related%20Articles%20widget&utm_campaign=Magnet%20tools

⁴³ <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2013/12/02/210311/fleeing-syrian-rebels-accused.html>

⁴⁴ Journalist Mona Alami states that the camps' "power paradigm" has shifted toward the Islamists. See: <http://www.mei.edu/content/impact-syria-conflict-salafis-and-jihadis-lebanon>

From a Palestinian perspective, *al-Jihad al-Islami* leader Sheikh Jamal Khattab stated that Hezbollah provokes and oppresses the local population via its proxy *Resistance Brigades* operating in Saida. Khattab warned that a worst-case scenario in Palestinian-Hezbollah relations could be something akin to the “War of the Camps.”⁴⁵ Furthermore, the same article quotes Lebanese security sources as saying that several of the groups in Ain al-Helwe would be prepared to fight in Saida should Hezbollah take actions similar to those of 2008, when it briefly took control of large swaths of west Beirut.⁴⁶

Khattab’s reference to Hezbollah’s use of proxies touches on what has become an important feature of its relationship with the Palestinian camps. As noted by Al-Jazeera, Hezbollah has maintained its influence in the camps (which would otherwise have been lost following Syria’s departure from Lebanon in 2005) in an effort to counter Sunni elements.⁴⁷ The use of proxies is a considerably less provocative means of accomplishing this outcome compared to direct intervention by Hezbollah. One interesting approach to doing this is through its relationship with the LAF—principally LAF

intelligence—which also maintains influence within the camp. While it is believed that disagreements have occurred between LAF intelligence and Hezbollah over the handling of some situations within the camp, Hezbollah relies on the LAF to some extent for influence in Ain al-Helwe. Notably, the LAF has the advantage of controlling the military court under which many Palestinians are due trial, and which may consequently be used for purposes of coercion or bribery.⁴⁸

Perhaps the most renowned Hezbollah proxy is the aforementioned *Resistance Brigades*, which is composed largely of non-Shia forces loyal to the party.⁴⁹ This group appears to have a generally complex relationship with the factions inside Ain al-Helwe. Some reports indicate that the Brigades have been recruiting significant numbers of personnel from Ain al-Helwe and its Taamir neighborhood (apparently the principal Salafist area in the camp).⁵⁰ However, the group also seems to have provoked substantial ire among the Salafists, as some of its members were targeted for assassination in Ain al-Helwe, the most publicized instance of which was the murder of Marwan Issa in early April 2015.⁵¹

⁴⁵ See the “Ain al-Helwe and its Factions” section of this report for a brief description of the War of the Camps. For Khattab quotes, see: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Jan-09/243527-palestinians-fear-war-with-hezbollah.ashx#axzz3A9n1RwN8>

⁴⁶ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Dec-15/281135-police-arrest-2-over-ain-al-helwe-attack.ashx>

⁴⁷ <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/05/20135791049958517.html>

⁴⁸ Haya Binna interviews

⁴⁹ <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/reports/features/564784-hezbollah-unlikely-to-drop-resistance-brigades> and <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Apr-04/252252-hezbollah-reactivating-resistance-brigades-in-sidon.ashx>

⁵⁰ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Article.aspx?id=227771#axzz3A9n1RwN8>

⁵¹ This article cites five assassination attempts in Ain al-Helwe against Resistance Brigades members in 2015: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2015/May-05/296842-specter-of-assassinations-revived-in-ain-al-helwe.ashx>.

Two other incidents give further insight into tensions possibly related to Hezbollah's allegiances within the camps. On April 7, 2014, eight people were killed in clashes in Mieh Mieh, a small Palestinian camp located east of Saida. The violence reportedly began when members of *Ansar Allah*, a group led by former *Fatah* official Jamal Suleiman attacked the headquarters of Ahmad Rashid Adwan, also a former *Fatah* official and leader of the *Shuhadaa Al-Awdah* group. Adwan, his bodyguard and two of his brothers were killed in the attack.⁵² What makes that attack significant is that *Ansar Allah*, a group with "strong Salafi-jihadi credentials," is considered a close ally of Hezbollah, with *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* quoting a Mieh source as having stated, "Jamal Suleiman is a supporter of Hezbollah since his defection from *Fatah* in 1989 and is close to the Shiite movement. He heads a large armed group in the camp."⁵³ For its part, *Shuhadaa al-Awdah* is a relatively new militia composed largely of former *Fatah* members and financed by Mohammad Dahlan.⁵⁴ *Fatah* sources were quick to say that a "personal

disagreement" rather than political undertones was responsible for the clash.⁵⁵

A second incident, which occurred on June 30, 2014, involved gunfire on the fringes of Beirut's Shatila camp between supporters of *Arab Movement Party* head Shaker Berjawi, and a group of Palestinians who may have been serving as security personnel within the camp. The casualties included two people killed and four injured, and the situation was eventually resolved by the LAF.⁵⁶ Berjawi, seen by some people as a tool of Hezbollah, has been identified as an ideal candidate to lead a Sunni militia proxy under Hezbollah influence.⁵⁷ In 2008, his organization switched allegiances from March 14 to March 8 and has since been involved in at least two other violent incidents (May 2012 and March 2014), both of which took place in Beirut against anti-Assad factions (possibly Salafists in the latter incident).⁵⁸ In recent years, Berjawi has moved his party's headquarters to the fringes of Shatila, which may indicate "the importance of the camp's support."⁵⁹ However, police

⁵² For details of the attack and the belligerents, as well as *Ansar Allah* allegiance to Hezbollah, see: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Apr-08/252650-palestinian-camp-clashes-shake-security-in-south.ashx#axzz385prUx6>.

⁵³ For the "strong Salafi-jihadi credentials" quote, see footnote no.25 on: <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-syrian-spillover-and-salafist-radicalization-in-lebanon>. For *al-Sharq al-Awsat* quote, see: <http://www.aawsat.net/2014/04/article55330961>

⁵⁴ See "Tension and Violence within Ain al-Helwe" in this report for details of strife within *Fatah* involving Dahlan. For *Shuhadaa al-Awdah* details, see: <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/540421-new-palestinian-militant-group-in-ain-al-helwe>

⁵⁵ <http://www.aawsat.net/2014/04/article55330961>

⁵⁶ For details of clashes, see: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Jun-30/262133-one-killed-two-wounded-in-beirut-shootout.ashx#axzz385prUx6>. For Shatila personnel on opposing side see: <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/136967-2-dead-several-hurt-in-clash-at-shatila-palestinian-camp>.

⁵⁷ For the perception of Berjawi as a tool of Hezbollah/Amal, see: <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/7542>. For his suitability to lead a Hezbollah proxy see: http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/NE23Ak02.html

⁵⁸ For Berjawi's switch in allegiance, see: <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/syrias-crisis-reaches-beirut>. For the May 2012 clash, see: http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/NE23Ak02.html, for March 2014, see: <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/123548>

⁵⁹ <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/05/20135791049958517.html>

sources noted that the violence was related to drug trafficking.⁶⁰

Speculation on any specific motives among the belligerents in these two incidents (particularly Berjawi) would probably be unjustifiable given the lack of evidence. However, it may be noted that they demonstrate the existence of tension in refugee camps other than Ain al-Helwe and the capacity and willingness of reputed Hezbollah proxies to act within these camps—even if Hezbollah did not instigate the incidents. Accordingly, such clashes are indicative of the continuing aggression being directed at Hezbollah from certain radical factions, the reason for which seems in part to be motivated by its use of proxies.

Alternatively, while the indications noted above may seem ominous, the likelihood of a conflict developing between Hezbollah and its Palestinian counterparts has been disputed. Writing for *The National Interest*, Nicholas Sidel notes that a number of restraints could prevent such a conflict. For instance, Hezbollah has strong ties (both current and historical) to the Palestinians, as evidenced by the support it gave them in the “War of the Camps.” Sidel also argues that the precedent for Hezbollah’s actions should a radical Sunni uprising take place in the camps was set in 2007 at Nahr al-Bared (when *Fatah al-Islam* rose up in a manner similar to what could occur in Ain al-Helwe). In that situation, Hezbollah was extremely

careful to let the LAF take the lead, particularly since Hassan Nasrallah stated that interference in the camps constituted a “red line” for Hezbollah.⁶¹

Ultimately, this line of argument can refer to the view that Hezbollah’s image and prestige rests with its status as a member of the “Resistance,” of which the Palestinian cause is a crucial component. Thus, Hezbollah’s credentials (and the ideology upon which it was founded) would suffer if it attacked the Palestinians and betrayed their cause. Sidel notes that relations between the two parties have already become strained by the Syrian crisis, as evidenced by the burning of Hezbollah-provided aid in Ain al-Helwe in May 2013. Similarly, during the battle of al-Quseir in spring 2013, Hezbollah and Hamas may have been pitted against each other indirectly due to the support Hamas provided to the opposition. According to Sidel, it is unlikely that Hezbollah would risk aggravating those relations further. The desire for a non-confrontational resolution to this issue by Hezbollah (and other Shia elements) is also somewhat apparent in the March 2014 memorandum of understanding concluded by the Ain al-Helwe factions, Hezbollah and Amal. Sidel notes that while the memorandum would probably prove insignificant in the event of an escalation (as is the case regarding the prevention of inter-factional clashes), it is nonetheless evidentiary of the desire to avoid conflict.

⁶⁰ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Jul-01/262224-beirut-refugee-camp-clashes-kill-3.ashx#axzz385prlUx6>

⁶¹ For all Sidel commentary, see: <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/lebanons-next-flashpoint-10118?page=show>. While there have been strong indications that Hezbollah aided the army in its 2013 battle against al-Assir, the circumstances of that conflict were different; it did not occur in Ain al-Helwe, nor was it focused on the Palestinians (Haya Binna interviews).

The Future of Ain al-Helwe

The issue of radicalism within the camps has received a great deal of coverage during the last several years, and the matter has become increasingly important with developments outside Lebanon, most significantly the Syrian crisis. However, some people argue that the phenomenon remains an issue of relatively limited extent. A July 2013 CTC report notes that despite a recent increase, support for radical Salafists among the general Sunni population does not seem to have taken hold. For example, the conditions that facilitated Ahmad al-Assir's rise to prominence before the June 2013 clashes (such as an absence of strong Sunni leadership, the Syrian crisis and Hezbollah's involvement in that crisis) have not dissipated. Yet the continued lack of support for al-Assir outside his own group indicates the absence of a broad consensus. Thus, when al-Assir called on his fellow Sunnis to join the fight, he received little if any real backing, even from other Salafist groups. While the same report mentions minor attacks on the LAF by the Bilal al-Badr and Jund esh-Sham factions during the siege, it also notes efforts by *Osbat al-Ansar*, *al-Jihad al-Islami*, *Hamas* and *Fatah* to support the LAF and keep the peace. Finally, the report notes that a similar situation arose with the Nahr al-Bared clashes of 2007, when *Fatah al-Islam* was isolated and left to fight on its own due to a lack of external support.⁶² Of course, the possibility remains that any or all of these movements may benefit from increased support sometime in the

future; however, in the two closest precedents to a future extremist uprising in the camps, the extremists did not enjoy the support of the wider population.

In writing this report, Haya Bina asked a Palestinian school director at one of the larger camps to predict what Ain al-Helwe might look like in 2025. He replied:

I don't think there will be a camp anymore! There is a growing feeling among all Palestinians that the "right of return" is just a fantasy. In reality, people are more likely to seek their own way out—whether in Lebanon (though that's no one's first choice) or by escaping on a boat with the dream of reaching a European shore. And regardless of that, just look at the future of Saida. Can you really imagine that with a successful cleanup of the Saida dumpsite, and Saida having its SOLIDERE, that the camp will remain as it is today?⁶³

While the timeline necessary for such a transformation has likely been vastly underestimated by our interviewee, his reference to the growing abandonment of the "right of return" is important, as this concept may be regarded as part of the "glue" that until now has held the camp together and preserved its extraterritorial character.⁶⁴ Furthermore, his reference to the future of Saida should be understood in a broader

⁶² <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-syrian-spillover-and-salafist-radicalization-in-lebanon>

⁶³ Haya Binna interviews. More information about the "Solidere" plan is available at <http://www.solidere.com/>.

⁶⁴ Haya Binna interviews.

context. As in other parts of Lebanon, Saida is experiencing significant urban redistribution, which is being driven by two primary factors: first, sectarian redistribution in the greater Saida area that continues to obscure existing Sunni/Shia demarcation lines, and second, the vast real estate developments that, since the end of the civil war, have proved to be the point at which the often conflicting interests of the country's ruling "mafocracy" are becoming blurred.⁶⁵ As the school director suggested, Ain al-Helwe may not retain its present condition

due to these factors. After all, this would demand its isolation from its broader surroundings (already being threatened by demographic shifts), and future commercial parties would likely not stand for such a volatile area so close to their interests. However, it should also be noted that although this scenario is not beyond the realm of possibility, neither is it something that will occur in the near term. In the meantime, the "capital of Palestinian exile" will likely remain one of the foremost sources of threats to Lebanon's stability.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

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Chronology of Major Events at Palestinian Camps

2013

January

2

» An explosive device was discovered at the entrance to a garage in the Hittin quarter of Ain al-Helwe. The device was composed of 250 grams of explosives placed in a cup along with two wires. It was not rigged to explode.

17

» A hand grenade was thrown toward the premises of the Palestinian pro-Assad regime *as-Saiqa* organization. Although the attack caused no injuries, the organization was later forced to leave the premises so that Palestinian refugees from Syria could be relocated there.

» It was announced through loudspeakers across Ain al-Helwe that Palestinian Mahmoud Kamel Suleiman, a cousin of Ansar Allah leader Jamal Suleiman was killed as a "martyr" in Syria while fighting on the side of some Islamist groups. In a public hall, the individual's family received "congratulations" on his "martyrdom."

31

» An argument between two individuals in the Beddawi refugee camp devolved into a shooting. Both men were injured along with three passersby.

February

4

» A school affiliated with the Fatah Movement in Ain al-Helwe was broken into. The security guards were handcuffed and seven Kalashnikovs were stolen.

11

» An argument over politics between supporters of a Lebanese Sunni pro-Hezbollah organization and others belonging to the *Jamaa Islamiyya* (Lebanese offshoot of the

Muslim Brotherhood) developed into a fight in the Taamir quarter (Ain al-Helwe).

14

» A hand grenade was thrown toward a balcony in al-Manshiyyeh quarter (Ain al-Helwe) but caused only material damage.

18

» In Ain al-Helwe, a hand grenade was thrown toward the home of former Fatah el-Islam member (Palestinian) Mahmoud Ibrahim Mansour. In response, Mansour fired a weapon toward the alley where he assumed the attackers had fled. Following that assault, more grenades were thrown.

26

» A grenade was thrown in the Hittin quarter and another in Hay az-Zeeb (Ain al-Helwe).

March

11

» An assassination attempt against Islamist *Jund esh-Sham* leader Bilal Bader failed. However, he and four others were injured in the attack (Ain al-Helwe).

» The assassination of Fatah Movement member Khaled Ahmad al-Masri triggers clashes in some quarters of Ain al-Helwe. The fights involved the Fatah Movement and supporters of Fatah el-Islam.

13

» A grenade was thrown toward Tiri, the quarter controlled by the Bilal Bader group.

April

22

» More clashes occur between members of

Bilal Bader's group and Fatah, and two people are injured.

24

» A masked man caused panic on Fawkani Street in Ain al-Helwe when he began shooting randomly. A grenade was thrown in the same spot. More clashes took place later that night

» Eleven teachers and students were injured when an explosion occurred near the Jabal Tabor School in Naher al-Bared camp.

26

» A sit-in outside the UNRWA services office in Beddawi staged by Palestinians displaced from Syria turned violent. The refugees threatened to occupy the UNRWA office and its schools and institutions if they failed to receive a rental allowance or a place to stay. Representatives from various Palestinian factions intervened to calm the crowd.

28

» A grenade was thrown in the Ain al-Helwe vegetable market and random shooting followed.

» The removal of an illegal construction project in Wadi al-Nahle (Beddawi) resulted in the deaths of three people (including an ISF member). Nine others were injured in a clash between the security forces and area residents. Some information indicates that the illegal projects were intended to satisfy the "real estate" demand caused by the arrival of steadily more Palestinian refugees from Syria.

29

» Palestinian security forces scoured the area around Ain al-Helwe's vegetable market following the explosion of a grenade and some shooting.

May

2

» A bomb exploded in al-Manshiyyeh quarter (Ain al-Helwe) and injured five people.

19

» A fight occurred in Ain al-Helwe between bodyguards of two competing Fatah Movement leaders. Both were injured.

» Clashes occur between members and supporters of Fatah Movement and Bilal Bader's *Jund esh-Sham*. The violence began when a Fatah building was attacked by the Bilal Bader group. Heavy weapons were used and numerous injuries occurred.

28

» A Hezbollah public relations project in Ain al-Helwe that involved aiding Syrian and Palestinian refugees from Syria backfires. The refugees burned several aid containers to protest Hezbollah's interference in the Syrian war.

June

17

» In Tiri (a quarter in Ain al-Helwe), a member of the Fatah cadre was injured after being shot.

18

» In Jabal Beddawi, a real estate argument developed into an armed fight during which machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades were used.

July

11

» LAF Intelligence stopped a car with Syrian license plates as it was leaving the Ain al-Helwe quarter of Taamir. The car was supposedly heading to the Taware quarter (also in Ain al-Helwe), where it was going to be booby-trapped with explosives for later use.

15

» Leaks by the security sources indicate that two people arrested in connection with a truck filled with explosives seized by the LAF in Orsal came from Ain al-Helwe. Both were Palestinians, and both were previously members of Fatah Movement.

August

9

» The arrest of a drug dealer in Beirut led to accusations of his involvement in assassinations, attempted assassinations and shootings in the Ain al-Helwe camp.

12

» A member of the Fatah cadre was attacked as he was returning to his house in Ain al-Helwe.

September

2

» Palestinian pro-Assad organizations in the Burj Shamali refugee camp (Tyr) organized a demonstration inside the camp to show support for the regime and protest any foreign military action against it.

8

» An argument at a Hezbollah checkpoint at the entrance to the Burj al-Barajneh refugee

camp turns into a shooting. One Palestinian was killed and five others injured.

October

4

» An explosive device hidden in a garbage bin exploded at the west entrance to Ain al-Helwe.

26

» Heavy shooting erupts in some quarters of Ain al-Helwe. The firing was to celebrate the "martyrdom" of a Palestinian from the camp who had been fighting with the Syrian opposition.

November

24

» A suspicious object was spotted in the Taamir quarter of Ain al-Helwe near the home of a member of the pro-Hezbollah "Resistance Brigades." Two Palestinians were later arrested.

26

» *An-Nusa Front* announced the "martyrdom"

of a resident of Ain al-Helwe who had been fighting in Syria.

December

1

» A gunman shot *Jund esh-Sham* member Mohammad al-Saadi on Fawkani Street in Ain al-Helwe as well as a member of another organization. Clashes between Fatah members and *Jund esh-Sham* erupted later and injured two civilians.

3

» During the funeral for Mohammad al-Saadi (mentioned above), a bomb exploded which killed four people (including the bomber).

30

» A number of people gathered near the LAF checkpoint at the southern entrance to Ain al-Helwe to protest tightened LAF security measures.

2014

January

2

» In cooperation with Palestinian factions, the LAF raided a complex in Jabal Beddawi near the Beddawi refugee camp. Nine people were arrested in connection with terrorist activities that occurred in Lebanon.

12

» A Palestinian was arrested in the Rashidiyyeh refugee camp. The individual was allegedly planning to blow himself up at an LAF checkpoint outside the camp.

February

24

» Unknown masked assailants in Ain al-Helwe shot dead a relative of Palestinian Hicham al-Mughayir, one of the two suicide bombers who blew themselves up outside the Iranian Embassy on November 19.

March

31

» Security sources revealed that a body discovered in Jezzine (east of Saida) ten days prior was that of a Palestinian man in his 30s, who was a resident of Ain al-Helwe. The reason behind the man's killing remained unknown.

April

7

» Fierce clashes occurred inside the Mieh Mieh camp east of Saida which killed seven people and injured 10. The clashes involved pro-Hezbollah Ansar Allah and anti-Assad/Hezbollah Katibat Shouhadaa al-Awda. The violence destroyed the nucleus of the latter organization.

9

» A masked assailant opened fire in Ain al-Helwe refugee camp on Sheikh Arsan Sleiman. Sleiman was a representative of an anti-Salafi Islamic group known for its connections with the Assad regime.

15

» Sheikh Arsan Sleiman passes away.

21

» Ali Khalil, nephew and escort of Islamist leader Oussama ash-Shahabi, was shot dead in the Safsaf quarter of Ain al-Helwe.

May

4

» Tension returned to the Mieh Mieh refugee camp in Saida when elements from the Ansar Allah movement took control of the Katibat Shouhadaa al-Awda building.

8

» The attempted assassination of a *Jund esh-Sham* member sparks tension and violence in Ain al-Helwe refugee camp.

12

» Clashes take place between Bilal Bader's supporters and members of the Fatah Movement. Six people were injured.

14

» An argument in Ain al-Helwe's vegetable market erupts into gunfire.

17

» Soldiers manning an LAF checkpoint at the eastern entrance to Ain al-Helwe arrest a man disguised as a woman.

19

» Senior Fatah security officer Talal al-Ordony survived an assassination attempt in the Hittin quarter of Ain al-Helwe; however, Al-Ordony was assassinated in July 2015.

22

» Islamist group Osbat al-Ansar conducted a show of force outside its headquarters in the Ain al-Helwe refugee camp. The event was apparently connected to the negotiations between various Palestinian factions and Lebanese authorities to form a "joint security force" and deploy it in the camp.

June

1

» The Mieh Mieh-based Ansar Allah group releases a Palestinian from Ain al-Helwe. They arrested the individual earlier during an operation they conducted against Katibat Shouhadaa al-Awda.

6

» A family fight in Ain al-Helwe devolved into gunfire, which injured three people.

12

» Tension spikes again in Mieh Mieh.

29

» An unknown individual opened fire on a group of Fatah members in Ain al-Helwe. One individual was injured.

July

2

» Sparks fly in Ain al-Helwe between Fatah

members and elements of the Islamist Osbat al-Ansar (from the large, Shreidy family).

6

» A minor clash occurs in Mieh Mieh following the slaughter of Katibat Shouhadaa al-Awda members.

8

» A Joint Palestinian Security Force is deployed throughout the Ain al-Helwe refugee camp.

August

7

» A grenade was thrown into Fawkani Street in Ain al-Helwe.

16

» Shaker, the wanted former singer and companion to Salafi Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir, appears in Ain al-Helwe. He was accompanied by several bodyguards.

19

» A hand grenade was thrown into an alley leading to the premises of senior Fatah officer Khaled al-Shayeb, the commander of the newly formed Joint Palestinian Security Forces.

20

» An argument in the Braksat quarter of Ain al-Helwe becomes an armed clash.

September

2

» An argument between two neighbors in Ain al-Helwe devolved into armed violence. The altercation began when one of the men tried to frighten birds away from the other's roof.

7

» In response to the burning of an ISIL flag during a Lebanese television show, Islamist Palestinians set fire to a large wooden cross near the vegetable market of Ain al-Helwe.

29

» A masked group carrying black flags took control of the streets near Ain al-Helwe's vegetable market.

30

» A random clash occurred in the Braksat quarter of Ain al-Helwe, and one person was injured.

October

2

» Soldiers manning an LAF checkpoint at the entrance to Ain al-Helwe spotted a balloon floating nearby with ISIL (Daesh) written on it.

4

» A random fight in Beddawi refugee camp injures three people.

8

» A masked gunman kills Fatah member Walid Yassine in his shop on Fawkani Street (Ain al-Helwe). Two other people were injured.

10

» Yassine's murder triggers clashes between his family and the Ansar Allah group.

24

» A Syrian-Palestinian refugee was whipped by unknown individuals in the Taware quarter (Ain al-Helwe) for having allegedly harassed the relative of a female refugee.

27

» A minor fight took place on Fawkani Street (Ain al-Helwe) when a speeding car disturbed residents.

November

3

» Security precautions were increased dramatically near the Beddawi refugee camp and in Tripoli's Mankubin quarter following an LAF operation in Akkar that led to the arrest of a terrorist cell.

19

» The mouthpiece of Osbat al-Ansar stated that Islamist leader Shady el-Mawlawy, who fled Tripoli after clashes with the LAF, could not be in Ain al-Helwe given the LAF's intense security measures in effect outside all Palestinian camps.

21

» Al-Jadeed TV confirms that Shady al-Mawlawy and his family are in Ain al-Helwe.

25

» Abed Fodda, a former *Jund esh-Sham* member, survived an assassination attempt in Safsaf quarter (Ain al-Helwe).

Hezbollah-affiliated Al-Manar TV announced that Shady al-Mawlawy is being sheltered in Ain al-Helwe.

The LAF increased security at all of its checkpoints around Ain al-Helwe.

26

» According to An-Nahar newspaper, the LAF commander in south Lebanon disclosed to Palestinian officials inside Ain al-Helwe that his agency had information that al-Mawlawi was in the camp and urged them to "take appropriate action."

December

2

» The An-Nashra website reports that Salafi Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir and Shady al-Mawlawy are preparing to leave Ain al-Helwe after being pressured by the Palestinian factions.

4

» Gunshots were heard in Taamir (Ain al-Helwe).

12

» A grenade was thrown at Jabal al-Halib near the southeast entrance to Ain al-Helwe.

13

» A grenade was thrown in the Hittin quarter (Ain al-Helwe).

17

» A grenade was thrown at Jabal al-Halib

29

» General Security announces the arrest of a Palestinian in northern Lebanon on suspicion of transporting explosives to Ain al-Helwe.

30

» An explosive device targeted a Fatah premises on Fawkani Street.

» A clash occurred in the Taytaba quarter of Ain al-Helwe between the local committee and members of Fatah.

31

» A bomb in Ain al-Helwe failed to explode. The incident occurred as the Fatah movement was celebrating its 50th anniversary in a march through the camp. A hand grenade thrown on Fawkani Street failed to injure Talal al-Ordoni.

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Chronology of Major Politically Oriented, Security Related Events

2013

January

2

» On May 2012, a group of Lebanese Shia pilgrims returning from a visit to Shia shrines in Iran was abducted in northern Syria. The case dragged on for more than a year until the group was finally released in October 2013. On this date, the families of the kidnapped participated in a sit-in outside the Turkish Airlines office in downtown Beirut. The event was part of the series of activities they were undertaking to secure the release of their family members.

3

» Hezbollah Secretary-General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah asks the government to negotiate directly with those holding the Lebanese Shia pilgrims. He also states that Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia have authority over the fighters in Syria, as they are providing them with weapons and money.

» A cabinet session illustrated the deep chasm within the government between those advocating a positive approach to the refugee issue and those advocating closure of the Lebanese-Syrian border. The minister of interior suggests building camps.

4

» Druze leader Walid Jumblatt visits the Maronite Patriarch and announces his discovery of a solution to the real estate dispute that has impeded full reconciliation between Druze and Christians in Breeh (Chouf/Mount Lebanon). His solution facilitates the return of Christians to Breeh after having been expelled from there some 30 years ago during the civil war.

8

» Lebanese President Michel Suleiman announces his rejection of the electoral law known as the "Greek Orthodox electoral law" (the legislation was suggested by a group called the "Orthodox Gathering"). The law suggests that each religious community should elect its own MPs to the Lebanese parliament.

11

» During a conference, former minister Michel Edde states, "80% of Maronites are living outside Lebanon."

13

» Supporters of Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir stage sit-ins at various locations in Saida to protest Hezbollah's weapons.

17

» Lebanon's first civil marriage is announced. The legality of the marriage is based on Decree number 60/1936, which dates back to the French mandate over Lebanon.

18

» Minister Faisal Karameh's convoy is attacked in Tripoli.

20

» Prison authorities foil the attempted escape of 60 Fatah al-Islam inmates from Roumieh Prison.

24

» Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir and around 300 of his supporters travel from Saida (South) to Farayya (Mount Lebanon) to enjoy the snow. Christian residents of the area object and block the roadway. Security forces resolve the

situation, after which Assir arrives in Farayya and conducts some prayers.

25

» Several Sunni clerics condemn the civil marriage: "[As] long as there is a Muslim alive in Lebanon, it will not pass."

28

» An explosive device composed of 500 grams of TNT explodes under a car in Dahiyeh. The incident occurred near an Ashoura gathering in Hayy es Sollom, which was organized by the Amal Movement. Two people are injured and significant material damage results.

February

1

» An LAF patrol hunting Islamist militant Khaled al-Humeid is ambushed in Orsal. Two soldiers are killed and several others are injured, one of whom is an officer.

» The Military Court's general prosecutor files a lawsuit against Hezbollah member Mahmoud al-Hayek. Al-Hayek is charged with attempting to assassinate MP Boutros Harb in his Badaro office on July 5, 2012.

4

» The LAF strengthens its presence in and around Orsal and arrests several individuals.

» Former Prime Minister Saad Hariri urges Orsal residents to act reasonably and cooperate with the LAF.

5

» The Bulgarian minister of interior accuses Hezbollah of the July 2012 Burgas attack, in which a bus filled with Israeli tourists was bombed.

» Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir organizes a sit-in in Saida to demand that the LAF cease what he calls "the siege of Orsal." He states that any act against Orsal is an act against the Sunnis of Lebanon.

7

» Following a ruling made to expel a Syrian defector, Lebanese President Michel Suleiman vetoes the expulsion of any Syrian to Syria.

» Clerics led by Bekaa Mufti Sheikh Khalil al-Meiss visit Orsal to mediate the crisis.

8

» Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir conducts a communal

prayer in Beirut's Sunni stronghold of Tarik Jdideh. He threatens to halt "the siege of Orsal" by force.

10

» Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir visits Tripoli and meets several of the city's political and clerical figures.

» UNHCR states that the number of registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon is at 265,308.

13

» A group of protesters stops several Syrian fuel trucks at the northern al-Arida pass. They claim the fuel being carried will be used by the regime's military. Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir announces that he will take to the streets to prevent trucks from transporting fuel to the Syrian army.

14

» The eighth anniversary of the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri was held under the slogan, "We will make the dream come true." For alleged security purposes, most of the notable participants were absent. Through a video feed from Riyadh, Saad Hariri attacked Hezbollah and its weapons, and promised to return to Lebanon to participate in the elections.

15

» A dispute arises between the LAF and Orsal residents, who are protesting the military activity there.

» Supporters of Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir set up roadblocks in Saida and declare that they will prevent any truck from transporting fuel to Syria.

18

» A cabinet session planned to examine the rank and salary scales of public sector employees is postponed, allegedly due to inadequate identification of funding sources. Trade union bodies announce an open strike.

19

» A statement attributed to the Free Syrian Army promises to attack Hezbollah in Lebanon if it continues to support the Syrian regime. An FSA spokesperson denies the authenticity of the statement.

20

» A senior military investigative judge indicts former Information Minister Michel Samaha and Syrian General Ali al-Mamlouk for plotting against Lebanon security.

» In a press conference, Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir asks the security forces to clear a number of apartments in Abra (east of Saida), which he claims are being used by Hezbollah militants to observe his movements. He threatens to take action himself if the state fails to do so.

22

» In his Abra (east of Saida) stronghold, Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir appears with a gun alongside armed supporters to confront what he calls armed Hezbollah members.

23

» An armed Islamist group breaks into a hospital in Tripoli and releases a detainee accused of shooting at Minister Karamneh's convoy.

24

» In downtown Beirut, Salafi groups stage a sit-in to demand the release of Islamist detainees. The most prominent speaker is Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir, who launches what he calls the "Uprising for Dignity."

» Druze leader Walid Jumblatt states, "Hezbollah is fighting in Syria upon Iran's request."

» Two people are killed in Wadi Khaled (north Lebanon) when the Syrian army shells the area.

25

» Trade union movements continue to demand that parliament examine the rank and salary scale and stage a sit-in outside the central Bank.

» A kidnapped child is released after his parents pay a US\$132,000 ransom.

26

» Al-Assir calls on his supporters to close a Shia cultural/religious center near Saida run by a pro-Hezbollah cleric.

March

1

» During an uprising in Roumieh Prison, a number of ISF members are taken hostage but are later released.

2

» A senior Salafi figure from north Lebanon, Sheikh ash-Shahhal, threatens to issue a *fatwa* against those he believes are hurting the Sunni people.

5

» Public sector employees demonstrate on the road to Baabda Presidential Palace.

8

» Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir stages a sit-in at Saida's northern entrance.

11

» In an interview, Lebanese President Michel Suleiman states that 25% of Lebanon's population is now composed of refugees. He urges the international community to help.

12

» The LAF stops a car near Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir's mosque in Abra. This prompts rumors of an LAF attempt to arrest Assir. As a result, many of his supporters block roads in Beirut and Tripoli.

13

» Supporters of Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir block the Saida-Jezzine road at Abra to protest LAF actions near Assir's Bilal Bin Rabah Mosque. Assir calls for a sit-in that same day to halt what he terms the "siege" of the mosque.

14

» The eighth anniversary of the Cedar Revolution was marked by figures from the March 14 Alliance visiting tombs of the revolution's martyrs and holding a symbolic gathering at the statue in Sahet al-Horriye. Another March 14 delegation visited Pierre Gmayyel's tomb in Bekfaya.

» Fuel tankers heading to Syria are set on fire in the al-Baddawi (north) area.

15

» Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir holds prayers in his mosque in Abra—without an LAF presence—and calls for calm.

17

» A group of Shiite youths in the Khandak al-Ghameeq neighborhood of Beirut assault two Sunni sheikhs. This prompts roadblocks and protests by Sunni youths. In a separate incident, two more Sunni sheikhs passing by the Shia neighborhood of Cheyyah (Beirut) are also assaulted.

18

» In several Sunni quarters of Beirut and other areas throughout Lebanon, roads are blocked overnight with burning tires to protest the assaults on the Sunni sheikhs.

20

- » Clashes in Tripoli leave one dead and six wounded.
- » Wanted Salafi militant Shadi al-Mawlawi of Tripoli informs *an-Nahar* newspaper, "I will not obey the courts, and politicians owe me a lot."

21

- » Clashes resume in Tripoli.

22

- » A cabinet session ends without agreement on extending the mandate of (Sunni) ISF head Ashraf Rifi. With that incident as justification, Prime Minister Najib Mikati announces the resignation of his government.
- » Armed clashes continue in Tripoli.

24

- » A member of the Bekaa's Shia Jaafar clan is kidnapped near Orsal. The Jaafar clan responds by kidnapping five people from Orsal.
- » The LAF deploys to the neighborhood of Jabal Mohsen in Tripoli in an attempt to halt the clashes between Jabal Mohsen and Bab at Tabbeneh.

27

- » In an interview with *as-Safir* newspaper conducted from France (where he traveled for security reasons), Tripoli Grand Mufti Sheikh Malek as-Shaar says Hezbollah is responsible for the emergence of Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir, and that the organization is manipulating events in Tripoli.

30

- » A dispute in Bekaata (Chouf) between two Druze members of opposing political affiliations assumes dramatic proportions before being categorized as a "random act of violence."

April

1

- » Salafi Sheikh Salem ar-Rafii is targeted with a silenced pistol while leaving his mosque in Tripoli. He escapes unhurt.

6

- » MP Tammam Salam is coopted to form a government after winning 124 votes in parliamentary consultations held by President Michel Suleiman.

9

- » In a major hacking incident, the names of

witnesses in the Special Tribunal for Lebanon are published on the Future Movement's website, *Al-Mustaqbal* newspaper and several other outlets.

10

- » An explosive device inscribed with anti-Hezbollah slogans is supposedly discovered in Hay as-Sellom.

11

- » Syrian warplanes bomb the Orsal countryside injuring 10 people.
- » President Michel Suleiman deems it an unjustified attack and asks the LAF to provide the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the details of the incident.

14

- » Syrian rebels shell the Shia villages of Haouch as-Sayyed Ali and al-Qasr in Hermel. Two people are killed and six injured.

21

- » Shia villages in Hermel are shelled again.
- » A sit-in is staged by families of the Islamist detainees in Roumieh, while the detainees themselves also stage a sit-in in prison.

22

- » In response to Hezbollah's involvement in Syria, Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir announces the formation of "Free Resistance Brigades" that will fight in Syria. Meanwhile, Sheikh Salem ar Rafii announces a general mobilization to support the Sunni residents of al-Quseir.

25

- » Israel announces that it shot down a drone off the coast of Haifa. A spokesperson states the device was launched from Lebanon and that Hezbollah is to blame.
- » The minister of interior approves the civil marriage contract of 10/01/2012 after its approval by the top advisory body in the Ministry of Justice.

28

- » Clashes occur in al-Baddawi Palestinian refugee camp (north) due to an LAF/ISF attempt to halt unregulated construction. Three people are killed (one of whom was a policeman) and 14 are injured. The construction boom in Baddawi stems from multiple factors, such as the influx of refugees from Syria and the strong demand for apartments associated with the persistent housing problem due to the destruction of the Nahr al-Bared camp in 2007.

» UNHCR states that the number of Syrian refugees has reached 440,000.

May

1

» Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir appears in al-Quseir along with other rebels.

6

» Several people are injured in Taanayel due to clashes with the LAF. They were trying to prevent fuel trucks from entering Syria.

9

» Hezbollah Secretary-General Sayyed Nasrallah says Syria will provide his organization with "game-changing" weapons.

» Three Lebanese nationals are said to have been killed in al-Quseir while fighting alongside the Syrian opposition.

12

» The UAE warns its citizens against traveling to Lebanon.

19

» Clashes in Tripoli between Sunni Bab at-Tabbeneh and Alawi Jabal Mohsen kill two people and injure 20.

» Clashes break out in the Ain al-Helwe Palestinian refugee camp in Saida between rival Islamist factions.

» Sunni MP Khaled ad-Daher states in a speech that Iranians and Hezbollah members have infiltrated the ranks of the LAF.

20

» Clashes resume in Tripoli. Two LAF soldiers are killed and others are injured.

21

» Clashes continue in Tripoli, with casualties rising to seven dead and more than 50 injured.

» Three people are killed in Wadi Khaled by a projectile launched from the Syrian side of the border.

23

» Clashes continue in Tripoli, with casualties rising to 21 dead and 200 injured.

» In an address to the media, Major General Ashraf Rifi calls Sunni fighters in Tripoli "the protectors of the city" and states, "we are proud of them."

24

» The LAF reinforces its presence in Tripoli, and the clashes begin to subside.

25

» Hezbollah Secretary-General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah confirms during the 13th anniversary of "Liberation Day" that Hezbollah is fighting in Syria to prevent "Takfiri" from entering Lebanon.

26

» Two explosive projectiles hit Beirut's southern suburbs.

27

» Three projectiles launched by opposition elements from Syria strike Hermel and kill a 17-year-old girl.

28

» Three LAF soldiers are killed at their checkpoint in Wadi Humayed in the Orsal countryside.

» More projectiles strike Hermel.

30

» A casual dispute between youths from the Shia Amal Movement and Palestinian youths escalates after the Palestinians display pro-Al-Qaeda slogans.

31

» A parliament session that lasts just 10 minutes approves extension of the parliament's mandate until November 20, 2014.

June

2

» Heavy clashes erupt between Hezbollah fighters and Syrian rebels at the Lebanese-Syrian border near Baalbek.

» Renewed clashes in Tripoli injure 14.

3

» New sniping attacks in Tripoli kill six people and injure 40 (some of whom are LAF soldiers).

» Pro-Hezbollah, Saida-based Sheikh Maher Hammoud survives an assassination attempt.

4

» A car belonging to pro-Hezbollah Sheikh Ibrahim Breidi (Qebb Elias, Bekaa) is set on fire.

5

» After months of fighting, Hezbollah fighters claim the strategic village of al-Quseir. Located southwest of Homs and 15 kilometers from

the Lebanese border, al-Quseir is important because it straddles the Damascus-Homs highway.

- » The LAF announces its implementation of a new security plan in Tripoli.
- » Salafi, Tripoli-based Sheikh Dae al-Islam as-Shahhal urges Sunnis to take up arms to confront Hezbollah and the "Safavid Iranian" project.

6

- » LAF units clash with armed groups in Tripoli.

9

» A Shia anti-Hezbollah group, The Lebanese Option, stages a sit-in outside the Iranian Embassy in Beirut to protest Iranian/Hezbollah involvement in Syria. The protesters are met by Hezbollah supporters wielding sticks, and a demonstrator is killed.

- » An "Islamic concert" is held in Saida and a rally takes place in Tripoli to condemn Hezbollah's involvement in Syria.

10

» A bomb explodes on the Beirut-Damascus highway near the border town of Masnaa. The target may have been a vehicle transporting Hezbollah members to Syria.

11

- » Nine projectiles hit in and around Hermel.

12

» A Syrian army helicopter attacks Orsal's municipal building. In a rare response, Lebanese President Michel Suleiman condemns the attack.

14

» In a speech to mark Hezbollah's Wounded Day, Hezbollah head Hassan Nasrallah states that Hezbollah's engagement in Syria is a "strategic decision," and that his organization entered Syria after other Lebanese parties did so.

- » In his Friday speech, Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir calls for the arming of poor Sunnis.

16

» Four members of the Shia Jaafar and Amhaz clans who were smuggling fuel between Syria and Lebanon are found dead in the Orsal countryside. The news spreads tension in the region.

18

- » Clashes erupt in Abra between supporters

of Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir and the Hezbollah-affiliated "Resistance brigades." The clashes began after a car accident.

20

» Sunni protesters block several roads in Beirut and the Bekaa in support of what they call the "Siege of Orsal."

21

» A projectile launched overnight from a town northeast of the Lebanese capital hit a high tension electricity cable in Aley, southeast of Beirut. The blast knocked out the cable causing several power outages. The army located two launchers in the Mount Lebanon town of Ballouneh in Kesrouan.

Reports differ as to the attack's target, with Beirut's southern suburbs, Baabda Palace and the Ministry of Defense all being mentioned.

23

» Heavy clashes occur between the LAF and supporters of Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir.

» Roadblocks are set up in various parts of Lebanon in solidarity with Assir.

» In Jjala (the Bekaa), an explosive device is discovered near the headquarters of the pro-Syrian regime Arab Baath Socialist party. The LAF dismantled the device.

» UNCHR announces that the number of registered Syrian refugees has now reached 553,000 and that another 80,000 are waiting to be registered.

24

» The clashes in Abra end when the LAF takes control of Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir's headquarters. Al-Assir and some of his assistants escape.

» A meeting is held between the incumbent prime minister and former Lebanese prime ministers in the Grand Serail. They issue a statement affirming their support for the LAF and denying that it is menacing the Sunni community.

» In a televised interview, former Prime Minister Saad Hariri affirms his support for the LAF and urges that every non-State organization in Lebanon be disarmed. He also calls for the prompt extension of LAF head General Jean Kahwaji's mandate as LAF commander.

25

» The Future Movement bloc holds an exceptional meeting at the residence of

MP Bahiyya Hariri in Majdaloun (Saida). The statement issued after the meeting condemns any attack against the LAF, but urges the LAF to take over all non-State security headquarters and apartments. The army was also called on to limit elements of the pro-Hezbollah "Resistance Brigades" in Saida.

27

» In Abra, Hezbollah gives the LAF control over the apartment used by its members (which prompted Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir's complaints).

» The LAF denies that Hezbollah participated in the battle of Abra.

28

» Two explosive devices are detonated on the Zahleh-Saadnayel highway (Bekaa). Apparently, a Hezbollah convoy had been targeted.

» In Tripoli and Beirut's Tarik el Jdeedeh, demonstrations are held by Islamist groups in support of Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir.

29

» The Sunni "Association of Muslim Clerics" calls for civil disobedience in Sunni areas if demands to stop the "persecution of Sunni Muslims" and to release the detainees in Roumieh are not met.

» Druze leader Walid Jumblatt expresses concern over what he calls the decline of moderate Islam.

July

1

» Tension in Tripoli following the LAF's arrest of a pro-Syrian revolution militant leads to roads being blocked.

» The Future Movement parliamentary bloc holds a meeting after which the statement is made that they are still waiting for answers from the LAF regarding what happened in Abra.

4

» A video featuring Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir shows him calling on supporters to stage a sit-in on Friday (5 July). He also accuses Hezbollah of supporting the LAF during the June clashes in Abra.

5

» Supporters of Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir organize a march in Saida.

7

» An explosive device that targeted a civilian

car detonates at the entrance to Hermel. When an LAF patrol arrives, another bomb detonates, injuring a soldier and an officer. A third device is discovered and dismantled.

9

» A booby-trapped car loaded with 35 kg of explosives detonates in a parking lot in the Bir al-Abed area of Beirut's southern suburbs. Fifty-three people are injured.

» A military investigation judge issues his verdict in the case of Captain Pierre Bashaalani and Sergeant Ibrahim Zahraman, who were ambushed and killed in Orsal on February 1. He requests the death penalty for 37 people, including Ali Houjeiry, the Orsal municipality head.

10

» A Syrian rebel group, "Brigade 313 Special Missions," claims responsibility for the Bir al-Abed blast on 10 July.

» The bodies of two Jaafar clan members are discovered after they disappeared two months earlier in al-Quseir (Syria).

14

» UNHCR states that the number of Syrian refugees registered in Lebanon has now reached 604,000.

16

» An explosive device detonates near Majdal Anjar on the road to al-Masnaa border checkpoint between Lebanon and Syria, injuring two people. Reports indicate that it targeted a Hezbollah convoy.

» Members of a family in Baysour (Chouf) attack their in-laws. Sunni Rabih al-Ahmad from Akkar married Druze Roudaina M. from Baysour on July 2013 without the agreement of her family. Roudaina's brothers lured al-Ahmad to their village under the pretext of reconciliation, and after beating him severely, they chopped off his penis.

» The Union Coordinating Body launches a petition to demand parliamentary approval of a new ranks and salaries scale.

17

» Pro-Assad regime journalist Mohammad Darar Jammo is assassinated. He was killed in his home in Sarafand (south).

18

» Security authorities reveal that Jammo's

assassination was driven by personal reasons. The instigator of the crime is his Lebanese wife.

19

» Hezbollah front man Sayyed Nasrallah affirms that his organization's willingness for dialogue is unconditional. He also affirms Hezbollah's support for the LAF, since without it there would be no State and no authority."

20

» A woman in Beirut's southern suburbs kills her husband with the help of her children and a Syrian accomplice. They cut up the body and discard it in a dump.

22

» Speaker Nabih Berri urges former Prime Minister Saad Hariri to return to Lebanon and run for prime minister.

» The European Union adds what it calls "Hezbollah's Military Wing" to its list of terrorist organizations.

» Joint parliamentary committees approve the domestic violence bill in preparation for its submission to a plenary vote.

23

» In Anjar, LAF intelligence arrests a Syrian citizen accused of detonating the explosive device on July 16. The blast supposedly targeted a Hezbollah convoy.

24

» Hezbollah boss Sayyed Nasrallah states that the EU's decision to list Hezbollah's military wing as a terrorist organization is worthless.

25

» EU Ambassador to Lebanon Angelina Eichhorst visits Hezbollah's Foreign Affairs headquarters and meets the party's foreign affairs officer.

» The Bulgarian Ministry of Interior identifies two suspects in the July 2012 Burgas blast by publishing their photos. Both are Hezbollah members.

26

» MP Bahiyya Hariri, the aunt of Saad Hariri, visits LAF Commander General Jean Kahwaji for the first time since the June Abra clashes. She praises the LAF's performance.

August

1

» Minister of Defense Fayez Ghoson delays

the demobilization of LAF Commander General Kahwaji.

» During a ceremony commemorating the 68th anniversary of the LAF, President Michel Suleiman emphasizes the difficulty involved in ensuring the coexistence of "legal and illegal military authorities" (he means Hezbollah arms) and criticizes Hezbollah's involvement in Syria. In a clear response to the president's speech, three projectiles are launched later that day from the Aramoun hills south of Beirut, and all three strike near the presidential palace in Baabda.

4

» A deadly blast in Sunni Darayya village (Chouf) reveals a militant Islamist cell preparing explosive devices.

» A wave of tit-for-tat kidnappings occurs in northern Bekaa between residents of Shia Makneh and Sunni Orsal.

» Residents of al-Arida assault the General Security border post after shots from Syria kill a defected Syrian soldier.

5

» A tape is broadcast in which Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir calls on his supporters to congregate and stage a sit-in to demand the release of detainees from the June Abra clashes. He also blames the Future Movement for his situation and addresses Hariri directly, saying "Enough, liar."

6

» Armed demonstrations occur in Tripoli to protest the sentencing of Sheikh Tarek Merhi to 15 years in prison. Merhi had been associated with blasts that targeted the LAF, particularly one dating back to 2008.

» A loud explosion was heard near the headquarters of the Palestinian Popular Front's general command in Naameh south of Beirut. Heavy gunfire was also heard after the explosion. No further information was available.

9

» At dawn, an armed group on the airport road stops a bus carrying the crew of a Turkish Airlines flight. They kidnap the pilot and copilot to force the release of Lebanese Shiite pilgrims kidnapped near the Turkish-Syrian border in May 2012.

11

» While a convoy was returning from Ras

Baalbek after a kidnap swap between the Shia Mokdad clan and Orsal notables, it was fired on as it reached Shia Labwe. An individual from the convoy was killed and the head of the Orsal municipality Ali Houjeiri was slightly injured.

14

» During an interview with al-Mayadeen TV, Hezbollah Secretary-General Sayyed Nasrallah reveals that Hezbollah is responsible for detonating an explosive device in Labbouneh the week before. The device targeted IDF soldiers who had crossed the border.

» MP Mohammad Raad, head of Hezbollah's parliamentary bloc, states that the 2012 "Baabda Declaration" was stillborn, and that nothing is left of it other than ink and paper. The declaration called for Lebanon to disassociate itself from regional development.

15

» A car bomb exploded in the Ruweiss quarter of Beirut's southern suburb during the evening rush hour killing 30 people and wounding more than 300. A group calling itself the "Regiment of Aisha, Mother of the Faithful" posted a video on YouTube claiming responsibility.

16

» Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah states in a speech that Hezbollah will confront the "Takfiri," whom he says are targeting not just Beirut's southern suburbs, but all of Lebanon. He also states that in order to defeat them, he is willing to travel to Syria personally to fight for Hezbollah.

19

» In an audio recording, Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir attacks Hezbollah and Nasrallah, whom he accuses of waging war against Sunnis under the pretext of fighting the "Takfiri." He also deems the August 17 Rouweiss blast to be a consequence of Hezbollah's crimes in Syria.

21

» In a speech given at an honorary ceremony for LAF officers, LAF Commander General Kahwaji states that the LAF will fight against terrorism and that he is not with one sect against another.

» Nabih Berri expresses concern that Lebanon is becoming the new Iraq.

22

» Four projectiles are launched toward Israel from an area near Tyr.

» A masked gunman shoots and kills three people in Tripoli, one of whom is a pro-Hezbollah figure.

» The LAF announces that it has dismantled an explosive device in Maarakeh (near Tyre).

23

» Car bombs explode outside the Taqwa Mosque and the Salam Mosque in the northern city of Tripoli. Forty-five people are killed and over 500 are wounded.

» Security forces in Saida prevent a sit-in by supporters of Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir.

24

» The Amal Movement announces that it has postponed the planned August 31 rally in Nabatiyeh to mark the 35th anniversary of the disappearance of Imam Moussa as-Sadr.

27

» Free Patriotic Movement leader Michel Aoun states that each of the Lebanese security services is working alone without coordinating with the other services.

30

» A Military Court prosecutor charges several people, including a pro-Hezbollah Sunni sheikh, with the twin Tripoli bombings of 23 August.

31

» The Syrian navy arrests four Lebanese fishermen off the coast of al-Arida, and then releases them.

September

4

» The minister of interior visits Saida and arranges a reconciliation meeting between the LAF's regional intelligence head and regional head of the ISF. A dispute begun by the ISF had prevented a visitor from meeting with the LAF intelligence official.

8

» At a Hezbollah checkpoint at the entrance of the Burj al-Barajneh Palestinian refugee camp, an armed confrontation between Hezbollah and a wedding convoy kills a Palestinian and injures a number of Palestinians and Hezbollah members.

» An explosive device in Tripoli targets the

car of a pro-Hezbollah Sunni Sheikh. Of note, that sheikh is close to the one involved in the twin bombing of the mosques.

15

» Tensions ratchet up in the Christian town of Zahle (Bekaa) as Hezbollah elements attempt to extend their wired communication network across some parts of the town.

17

» Armed clashes occur in Ain al-Helwe refugee camp between rival Islamist factions.

» A sit-in by residents of the Christian village of Lebbaa (east of Saida) is staged to protest the use of the village to shelter Syrian refugees.

20

» The minister of interior announces preparations to send 2,000 policemen to Beirut's southern suburbs.

» Supporters of Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir organize a sit-in in downtown Beirut outside the Mohammad al-Amin mosque.

23

» The security plan for Beirut's southern suburbs is announced, and the LAF, GS and ISF set up checkpoints.

24

» Lebanese President Michel Suleiman delivers a speech to the UN General Assembly in New York. He affirms Lebanon's neutrality in the Syrian conflict and states that the country cannot afford more Syrian refugees, since they now comprise a quarter of Lebanon's population.

27

» More than 27 Lebanese drown while illegally attempting to enter Australia from Indonesia. They were from villages in Akkar.

» The trials of the Islamists in the Nahr al-Bared case begins in a courtroom created inside Roumieh Prison (to accelerate the process).

» In a press conference, pro-FPM Minister Jubran Bassil requests that Lebanon stop receiving Syrian refugees and turn away those it is hosting. He considers their presence dangerous.

28

» A vocal dispute between a Sunni juice seller and Hezbollah operatives in Baalbek devolves into armed clashes that kill four and injure eight. The incident arouses Shia-Sunni tension.

October

1

» Hezbollah hands over its checkpoints at the entrances to Nabatiyeh (south) to the LAF and ISF.

3

» A new security plan for Tripoli is announced.

6

» The Central Committee of the Fatah Movement in Ramallah, chaired by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbass, expels Mahmoud Issa (also known as "al-Lino") from the movement. Al-Lino is known for his personal ambitions and is very active in southern Lebanon's Palestinian camps.

8

» In an effort to ease Sunni-Shia tensions, Hezbollah announces the dissolution of its Saida branch of the "Resistance Brigades."

9

» Mufti of Tripoli Sheikh Malek as-Shaar returns to Lebanon after spending 10 months in France because of death threats against him. He states that he consented to return only after security assurances were given.

10

» The Special Tribunal for Lebanon accuses a fifth Hezbollah member, Hussein Habib Merhi, of involvement in the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri.

11

» Islamist militant Omar al-Atrash is killed along with some companions in an ambush in the Orsal countryside. In addition to unspecified terrorist acts, al-Atrash was accused of being involved with the booby-trapped car in Beirut's southern suburbs on 10 July and with launching projectiles toward that area.

» A member of the Diab family is arrested in Jabal Mohsen by the intelligence services after emerging as a suspect in the twin Tripoli bombings of August 23. Tension spikes after the arrest and gunfire is exchanged between the residents of Jabal Mohsen and Bab at-Tabbeneh.

14

» A car bomb is dismantled in Dahiyeh.

» The ISF intelligence services announce the names of seven Jabal Mohsen residents

accused of participating in the twin Tripoli bombings of August 23.

» The LAF claims to have discovered and defused a booby-trapped car loaded with some 50 kg of explosives in Beirut's southern suburbs.

17

» It is announced that Syrian military intelligence officer Brigadier General Jamee Jamee has been killed in Deir ez-Zour. Jamee was the Syrian intelligence officer in Beirut during the years of Syrian presence, and his name had been mentioned in investigations into Rafic Hariri's assassination.

19

» The Lebanese Shia kidnapped in northern Syria and the Turkish pilots are released.

21

» Five Syrian projectiles hit Hermel.

» Clashes in Tripoli injure six people. The clashes began when some TV stations broadcast an interview with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

22

» Clashes resume between Jabal Mohsen and Bab at Tabbeneh (Tripoli).

23

» Clashes continue in Tripoli.

25

» Clashes persist in Tripoli.

» ISF General Director Brigadier General Ashraf Rifi holds a press conference at his residence in Tripoli. He blames the Syrian regime and Hezbollah for the conflict in the city and states that he considers those fighting in behalf of Bab at Tabbeneh to be the sons of Tripoli for their defense of that area.

26

» Clashes continue in Tripoli.

» A conference focused on the challenges facing Christians in the Orient is held under the patronage of Lebanese President Michel Suleiman. The concluding statement stresses the need to halt Christian emigration and advance dialogue between Muslims and Christians.

» LAF intelligence apprehends Ahmad Mohammad Ali, a driver for Alawi leader Rifaat Eid. Ali is a suspect in the twin Tripoli bombings of August 23.

28

» Former minister and Future Movement senior Hassan Mneimneh states that LAF-run checkpoints in Dahiyeh are a formality, and that security there is being controlled by Hezbollah.

» An LAF unit deploys to Bab at Tabbeneh (Tripoli) and comes under sniper fire.

29

» Calm returns to Tripoli after the LAF's deployment.

30

» The intelligence services call for an investigation into former MP Ali Eid (father of Rifaat), based on the confession of his driver Ahmad Mohammad Ali.

31

» A large device explodes in Jlala village (the Bekaa) near an LAF intelligence center.

» Former MP Ali Eid refuses to be interrogated. The head of the Alawi Islamic Council Sheikh Assad Assi states that the request to question Eid is a humiliation for the Alawite sect.

November

1

» Two masked gunmen shoot and kill a Lebanese soldier in Tripoli and then escape.

2

» In Bab at Tabbeneh, three militants stop a bus carrying Alawi garbage collectors from Jabal Mohsen. They take the workers to an alley and shoot them in the legs.

5

» Ali Eid, the leader of Lebanon's Alawi community, is accused of involvement in the bombing of two Sunni mosques in Tripoli.

6

» MP Mohammad Raad, the head of Hezbollah's parliamentary bloc, issues a warning to March 14 and others whom he states are "conspiring against the resistance." He also describes Ashraf Rifi as a militia leader who is covering up weapons smuggling to militias in Tripoli and Syria.

7

» A senior military investigative judge issues a subpoena against former MP Ali Eid over the Tripoli bombings of August 23.

10

» A group called the "Blood Guardians," composed of the parents of those killed and injured in the Tripoli bombings of August 23, meets in Tripoli and asks that justice be done. The group threatens to take unilateral action if something is not accomplished.

12

» Two people on a motorcycle kill Sheikh Saadeddin Ghiyyeh in Tripoli. Ghiyyeh was a member of a Hezbollah-affiliated group.

13

» Hezbollah Secretary-General Nasrallah appears in person (as opposed to a televised appearance) to mark Ashoura. He accuses Saudi Arabia of impeding the formation of a new government in Lebanon.

17

» Clashes occur between the LAF and militants in Bab at Tabbeneh.

18

» A new security plan is launched in Tripoli, followed shortly thereafter by the deployment of 500 ISF soldiers to Bab at Tabbeneh and Jabal Mohsen.

19

» One suicide bomber on a motorcycle and another in a car set off explosions in Beirut's southern suburb of Bir Hassan targeting the area outside the Iranian Embassy. The explosion kills some 25 people including the Iranian Cultural attaché to Lebanon; 150 others are wounded. The *Abdullah Azzam Brigades*, a Lebanon-based Al-Qaeda affiliate, claims responsibility.

22

» At dawn, the LAF claims to have intercepted a car loaded with 400 kg of explosives in Makneh near Baalbek.

23

» A car bomb is discovered near Baalbek.

24

» Security forces identify the two bombers involved in the November 19 attacks as Mouin Abu Dahr, a Sidon resident from a mixed Shia-Sunni family, and Adnan Mousa Mohammad, a Palestinian from Bisarieh (outside Sidon). Both were born in 1992 and were said to be supporters of Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir.

25

» Verbal and physical altercations break out in Université Saint-Joseph between students supporting March 8 and others in favor of March 14. The disputes were triggered by graffiti on a wall facing the university. The image was a heart that included the name of Habib Shartouni, who assassinated Maronite President-elect Bashir Gemayel in 1982.

27

» Tension is evident on the St. Joseph campus, and the university administration decides to halt lectures for another day.

28

» A false bomb threat against the Saudi Embassy in Beirut arouses fear and panic at a nearby school. The school's administrators had received a phone call warning them of an explosive device hidden near the embassy, but nothing is found.

29

» Islamist groups block Masnaah Road (which leads to the Lebanese-Syrian border) to conduct Friday prayers and protest the arrest of Salafis by the LAF.

» In Tripoli, residents of Jabal Mohsen demonstrate their support for the Arab Democratic Party and their displeasure with the assaults on their community.

30

» Another round of violence begins in Tripoli.

» Renewed clashes take place between Jabal Mohsen and Bab at Tabbeneh (Tripoli).

December

1

» Clashes continue in Tripoli, and the casualties include 10 people killed and over 60 injured.

» The LAF is given a new mandate to pacify Tripoli.

» An explosion in the Ain al-Helwe Palestinian refugee camp kills one and injures four.

2

» Clashes continue in Tripoli, with casualties rising to 16 killed and 110 injured, among them LAF soldiers.

3

» In a televised interview, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah declares that the *Abdullah Azzam Brigades* are responsible for the November 19 Iranian Embassy bombings. He also claims that the General Directorate of the ISF has been paying and offering logistical aid to fighters in Tripoli for several years.

» Tension persists in the Ain al-Helwe Palestinian refugee camp after a device explodes targeting Fatah senior Mahmoud Issa (aka "al-Lino") while he attends the funeral of another Fatah member killed the day before.

4

» Hezbollah senior officer Hassan Haolo al-Lakkis is assassinated in the parking lot at his house east of Dahiyeh. He was shot with a silenced pistol, which prompts Hezbollah to accuse Israel. In the meantime, the "Ansar al-Omma Brigade" and "Free Sunnis in Baalbek Brigade" both claim responsibility.

» The LAF reinforces its presence in Tripoli.

5

» A number of citizens, including armed Salafi affiliates, gather in front of the LAF barracks in al-Qobba (Tripoli) to protest LAF security procedures in the city. This is followed by gun battles between agitators and the LAF, which kill one soldier and injure another.

6

» Clashes occur in Tripoli between Sunni groups and the LAF.

15

» At 9:15 p.m., a suicide attack hits an LAF checkpoint at the entrance to Saida. Less than an hour later, a second suicide attack strikes an LAF checkpoint in Majdalyoun, also near Saida. The attacks kill one soldier and injure three, and four militants are killed in the ensuing confrontation (one Palestinian, two Lebanese and one of unknown origin). One of those killed was close to Iranian Embassy bomber Moeen Abu Dahr.

» An LAF soldier from Sunni Akkar fires on an Israeli patrol in an-Nakoura near the border killing an Israeli soldier. While no durable link was established between these incidents, they certainly raise numerous questions.

» UNHCR states that the number of registered Syrian refugees is now at 842,000 (in addition to the 52,000 Palestinians in the country who fled from Syria). Since Lebanon was already host to 350,000 Palestinian refugees, refugees now comprise 30% of the overall population.

17

» An explosion rocks a Hezbollah camp in the Bekaa, and an attack against a Hezbollah facility in the Bekaa causes numerous casualties

» A booby-trapped car loaded with around 60 kg of explosives detonates on the outskirts of the village of Laboueh in Baalbek, targeting a Hezbollah site.

» Projectiles fired from Syria strike Hermel, with some hitting an LAF barracks and injuring several soldiers.

19

» *An-Nusra Front* in Syria leader Abu Mohammad al-Joulani appears in a televised interview with Al-Jazeera, which is greeted with celebratory gunfire in Tripoli.

» A video appears to show *an-Nusra Front* affiliate "Marwan Hadid Brigades" and *an-Nusra Front* itself launching projectiles at Hermel on December 17. The groups stated that they were targeting Hezbollah.

22

» A random altercation between two families evolves into Sunni-Shia fighting in the west Bekaa village of Sawire. Five people are killed.

27

» A remotely detonated car bomb exploded at around 9:40 a.m. in the heart of downtown Beirut killing former Lebanese minister Mohamad Chatah, who was en route to a meeting with the March 14 Alliance. Five others were also killed and 70 more were severely wounded in the blast.

29

» President Michel Suleiman announces that Saudi Arabia has offered the LAF \$3 billion worth of equipment from France. Projectiles fired from south Lebanon strike northern Israel, and Israel responds by shelling the supposed source of fire.

30

» For the first time ever, the LAF announces that it has fired on Syrian aircraft over Orsal.

2014

January

1

» LAF intelligence arrests Saudi national Majed al-Majed accused of masterminding the Qaeda-affiliated *Abdullah Azzam Brigades*.

2

» In Haret Hreik, the heart of Beirut's southern suburbs (Dahiyeh), a suicide bomber detonates some 20 kg of explosives that had been placed in a Jeep Grand Cherokee. Five people are killed and 77 injured.

3

» The Haret Hreik suicide bomber is identified as Lebanese citizen Qutaiba as-Satem (aged 20) from Hnaider (Akkar).

» A Tripoli library that belongs to Orthodox Father Ibrahim as-Srouj is set on fire. As-Srouj had been threatened because of an article critical of Islam, which was falsely attributed to him.

» The LAF officially announces the arrest of Majed al-Majed, who was identified through DNA testing.

4

» The LAF announces the death of al-Majed due to health complications.

» Clashes in Tripoli between Alawi Jabal Mohsen and Sunni Bab At Tabbaneh lead to one death and seven people injured.

6

» Two LAF soldiers are injured when a grenade is thrown at an LAF site in Tripoli.

8

» Civil society organizations stage a sit-in near the National Museum in Beirut to protest sedition and reject violence.

10

» In Tripoli, armed elements launch a missile at an LAF site, which injures three soldiers.

12

» Leaflets are distributed and protests take place in Orsal against the presence of Syrians in the town, which has increased competition for employment.

13

» The *Abdullah Azzam Brigades* issues a

statement about its leader Majed al-Majed including the details of his death. It also states that he supervised the trial run of the Iranian Embassy bombing, and that the brigades will resume activities against Iran and Hezbollah to defend the Sunni people.

» Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir tweets an apology for not "communicating" more often due to the security measures being focused against him.

15

» LAF intelligence arrests *Abdullah Azzam Brigades* leader Jamal ad-Daftardar in Kamed al-Laouz (the Bekaa). It also reports that it has killed another individual named Mazen Abu Abbass, who is supposedly affiliated with Fatah al Islam.

16

» Official opening of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon.

» In a Hermel (Bekaa) square, a suicide bomber detonates a Kia car loaded with approximately 35 kg of explosives killing four people and injuring 43. *An-Nusra Front* claims responsibility and states that Hezbollah had been targeted.

» The *Jamaa Islamiyya* (Lebanese offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood) and the Association of Muslim Clerics denounce the LAF's killing of Mazen Abu Abbass two days earlier in Kamed al-Laouz. They hold a sit-in outside an official building near the village where the incident occurred.

17

» Speaking to Reuters, former Prime Minister Saad Hariri affirms his readiness to participate in a coalition government with Hezbollah.

» A bombing in Orsal kills nine people, five of whom are children from a single family. Thirteen others are injured. Orsal municipality head Ali Houjeiry accuses Hezbollah of bombing the town. Hezbollah refutes the accusations, and the LAF states that the attack was launched from the Syrian side of the border.

» Preliminary investigations identify the Hermel suicide bomber of January 16 as Hussein Ghandour, originally from Saida. He is suspected of having been a follower of Ahmad al-Assir.

» Clashes resume in Tripoli between Bab at Tabbeneh and Jabal Mohsen. One person is killed and others are injured.

18

» More injuries are caused by the violence in Tripoli.

» The state of alert continues between the LAF and IDF in the Odayse border region following Israel's emplacement of an electronic device in a border area.

» The LAF announces that the origin of the shelling that has reached Orsal, Ras Baalbek and Fakehe is east of Orsal in an area that straddles the Lebanese-Syrian border.

» The LAF corrects an earlier announcement and states that the identity of the Hermel suicide bomber is not Hussein Ghandour.

19

» Clashes resume in Tripoli.

20

» More clashes in Tripoli.

21

» A suicide bomber detonates a Kia car in Haret Hreik, just 60 meters from the blast that occurred on January 2. *An-Nusra Front* claims responsibility and states that the attack was in response to Hezbollah shelling in Orsal and Syria. *An-Nusra* also urged Sunnis to prepare themselves.

» A meeting in Orsal condemns the blast, and in particular, that it was revenge for the bombing of Orsal.

» Clashes in Tripoli continue.

22

» An Islamist group in Tripoli broadcasts a tape that excoriates former Prime Minister and Future Movement head Saad Hariri for seeking a coalition government with Hezbollah and asking the LAF to strike Tripoli with an "iron fist."

» Security forces arrest rapper Hussein Sharafeddin in Beirut's southern suburbs. He was suspected of being a suicide bomber because of his long, bushy beard and unique attire.

» The LAF intelligence services trap and kill Palestinian Ibrahim Abdul Moati Abu Moailek in the Bekaa. Moailek was affiliated with the *Abdullah Azzam Brigades*.

» Calm returns to Tripoli.

23

» Sami Marroush, a former internal affairs officer in the Progressive Socialist Party is killed

after being shot in the head with a hunting weapon.

24

» *An-Nusra Front* in Lebanon releases a statement threatening Hezbollah, asking Sunnis for their support and advising them to avoid Hezbollah areas.

25

» A recording by an individual in Tripoli calling himself Abu Sayyaf al-Ansari is released. In it, he pledges his allegiance to the Islamic State in Iraq and as-Sham, and calls on Sunnis to lend their support. Tripoli officials condemn the tape.

26

» A group of Sunni clerics hold a sit-in outside the Ministry of Defense to protest the arrest of Sheikh Omar al-Atrash (January 22). Speeches at the event condemn the LAF and accuse it of hostility toward the Sunni sect.

28

» A luncheon is held in Tripoli to commemorate Ahmad Diab, who several days earlier carried out a suicide operation against the pro-Assad army in Syria (January 25).

29

» Lebanese citizen Youssef Medhat as-Saghir, from Menieh (north Lebanon) is killed fighting the pro-Assad army in Syria.

30

» A meeting is held in Tripoli at the residence of Sunni MP Khaled ad-Daher. Attended by another Sunni MP and a number of Sunni clerics from the north and the Bekaa, it concludes with a statement attacking the LAF and accusing it of being a tool of Hezbollah. The meeting was held in response to the arrest of Sheikh Omar al-Atrash.

31

» Syrian regime forces shell Akkari villages killing a Syrian and injuring four other people.

February**1**

» A suicide bomber driving a Jeep Grand Cherokee hits a gas station in Hermel killing four people and injuring 27. *An-Nusra Front* claims responsibility.

3

» A suicide bomber with an explosive belt

blows himself up in a minivan in the Choueifat area (south of Beirut). Although the vehicle was not carrying passengers, the driver and a pedestrian are injured.

10

» Roadblocks and protests occur in Tripoli because of a statement misheard by a Shia cleric. During a sit-in staged by the Shia Msheik clan in Choueifat to protest the proposed release of Sheikh Omar al-Atrash, a cleric attending the meeting cursed "Omar" without specifying whether he meant al-Atrash or the Caliphe Omar bin al-Khattab....

12

» At an LAF checkpoint in Labweh, the LAF stopped a car from Yabroud that was making its way to Beirut. The three female passengers from Orsal intended to deliver the booby-trapped car to would-be suicide bombers.

» The LAF intelligence services arrest Palestinian Naim Abbass, who is accused of cooperating with terrorist groups.

13

» Fear of booby-trapped cars spreads in Beirut, Saida and the Bekaa as numerous vehicles are now being checked.

15

» A new Lebanese government headed by Prime Minister Tammam Salam is formed.

16

» The LAF says that it intercepted and defused an automobile rigged with 250 kg of explosives in the Ham countryside (south Baalbek). It was the second such event within four days (the first was near Orsal on February 12).

19

» Two suicide bombers in two cars blow themselves up simultaneously in front of the Iranian Cultural Center killing eight people and injuring 130. Responsibility is claimed by the *Abdullah Azzam Brigades*.

20

» Abdul Rahman Diab, a senior member of the Alawi Arab Democratic Party in Tripoli and the father of one of the men accused in the twin bombings of the Salam and Takwa mosques in Tripoli on August 23, 2013, is assassinated. Clashes resume as a result.

22

» A suicide bomber detonates a Jeep Grand Cherokee rigged with an estimated 125 kg of explosives at an LAF checkpoint at the entrance to Hermel. Three people are killed (including an officer) and 17 are injured. *An-Nusra Front* claims responsibility.

24

» Reports indicate that IDF warplanes attacked a Hezbollah site along the Syrian-Lebanese border in the Nabi Chit area of the Bekaa. No further details about the attack are available.

» *An-Nusra Front* tweets a message to Lebanese Sunnis urging them to stay away from Hezbollah areas and accusing Hezbollah of putting the LAF on the front lines to enable Hezbollah to battle Syrian Sunnis.

» An investigative judge of the Military Court requests the death sentence for Alawi leader Ali Eid for the role he played in the twin bombings that targeted Sunni mosques in Tripoli in August 2013.

25

» A car belonging to Youssof Mohammad Hamadeh is burned in Bissarieh (south). The son of the car's owner is suspected of having been one of the suicide bombers who blew themselves up outside the Iranian Cultural Center. It was discovered later that the person in question is not one of the two bombers.

» Marwan Dimashkieh is discovered murdered. Dimashkieh was a member of the *Jamaa Islamiyya*, and rumors indicate that he wrote an anti-Hezbollah anthem titled "Dig your grave in Yabroud."

26

» A Hezbollah statement confirms that the Israelis attacked one of their sites in the northern Bekaa near the Syrian borders, but that it caused no casualties. Hezbollah says it will respond at a suitable time and place.

28

» In a speech, Lebanese President Michel Suleiman criticizes Hezbollah's ideological rhetoric regarding the "necessary" partnership between "the Army, the People and the Resistance." Hezbollah had insisted on including that motto in the ministerial statement to be issued by the new cabinet.

» Syrian warplanes attack the outskirts of Orsal killing two people and injuring seven.

- » Explosions rock the Shia village of Britel, an attack later claimed by ISIL (Daesh).
- » A senior military investigative judge requests the death penalty for Ahmad al-Assir and 53 other individuals in relation to the events in Abra.

March

1

- » President Michel Suleiman describes Hezbollah's motto ("Army, People, Resistance") as being a hollow stereotype, which prompts harsh responses from Hezbollah and its affiliates.
- » The "Nuns of Maaloula" (Qalamoun) are freed thanks to Qatari intercession which was assisted by Lebanese General Abbas Ibrahim (director general of the General Security office).
- » Hezbollah responds sarcastically to Lebanese President Michel Suleiman's speech of February 28.

7

- » Michel Sakr, the son of Zahle-based pro-Lebanese Forces businessman Ibrahim Sakr, is abducted. Although the incident is most probably criminal in nature, it spawns a wave of protests, sectarian tensions and street blockades.

8

- » Michel Sakr is released.

10

- » Senior Palestinian Fatah officer Jamil Zeidan is assassinated in the Ain al-Helwe refugee camp.

13

- » Another killing causes tensions to flare up again in Tripoli.

14

- » An IDF patrol operating in the Al-Bastara farm (southern Lebanon) is hit by an explosive device. Israel responds by shelling the area. An unverified and somewhat questionable claim of responsibility for the attack is made by ISIL (Daesh).
- » The 20th round of clashes in Tripoli continues.
- » Folkloric commemoration of March 14 Day. Former Future Movement member Fouad Siniora calls for dialogue and for Hezbollah's withdrawal from Syria.

15

- » Ordnance is launched toward Shia Nabi Osmane and Laboue from the Orsal countryside, and one person is killed. Laboueh residents block the road to Orsal in protest.
- » A suicide bomber detonates a booby-trapped car in Nabi Osmane village (the Bekaa) killing four people and injuring 11. *An-Nusra Front* claims responsibility.
- » Several pro-Hezbollah groups conduct marches in some areas to celebrate the victory in Yabroud, Syria.
- » The 20th round of clashes in Tripoli continues.
- » Information reveals the Orsal arrival of militants and civilians from Yabroud, Syria.
- » The Laboue-Orsal road is blocked by Laboue residents.

16

- » Suicide attack against a Hezbollah patrol in Nabi Sheet (northern Bekaa).

18

- » Protests demanding the reopening of the Laboueh-Orsal road. They include roadblocks in Sunni quarters of Beirut and in Sunni areas along the Beirut-Saida road and in Tripoli. Posters of Nasrallah are burned in Tripoli.

19

- » The LAF enters Orsal, establishing checkpoints and conducting patrols.
- » Following a brief period of calm, clashes resume in Tripoli.

20

- » The government of Tammam Salam wins the vote of confidence.

21

- » Clashes continue in Tripoli.

22

- » An attempt to kidnap Archbishop Semaan Atallah, the Maronite pastor of Baalbek, is foiled.

23

- » Armed clashes take place near the Camille Chamoun Beirut stadium between supporters of a Sunni pro-Hezbollah group and elements of the Future Movement.
- » In a video clip, Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir rips Bahiya Hariri and the LAF, both of which, he says, are controlled by Hezbollah.

25

» An IDF patrol crosses the barbed wire outside Aytaroun in south Lebanon and uses dogs to search the Lebanese side of the border.

27

» Sami al-Atrash is killed during an LAF raid of his hideout outside Orsal. Al-Atrash was accused of killing soldiers and using booby-trapped cars.

» A soldier is killed in Tripoli as the strife continues.

28

» Armed elements in Tripoli kill ISF Warrant Officer Butros al-Bayeh.

29

» A suicide bomber targets an LAF checkpoint outside Orsal killing three soldiers and injuring four others. The "Free Sunni Brigade in Baalbek" claims responsibility and announces that the bomber was Abdul Qader Taan.

30

» A primed explosive device is defused in Tripoli.

31

» The LAF claims that it has defused a booby-trapped car packed with some 200 kg of explosives outside Orsal.

» The National Dialogue Table meets at the presidential palace without Hezbollah participation.

April

1

» The security plan for Tripoli goes into effect, and the residence of Refaat Eid, leader of the Alawi Arab Democratic Party, is raided.

2

» The LAF and other security services continue to implement the security plan for Tripoli.

7

» In an interview published in *as-Safir* newspaper, Hezbollah Secretary-General Nasrallah states, "we planted the explosive device that hit the IDF patrol in Shebaa in the middle of last March, in response to the Israeli raid which targeted Janta."

» A pro-Hezbollah Palestinian group attacks an anti-Hezbollah, pro-Syrian revolution group in the Mieh Mieh Palestinian refugee camp. Eight people are killed and 11 are injured, most of which are members of the anti-Hezbollah group.

8

» An LAF patrol is attacked in Qammoua (Akkar). An officer is killed and a soldier is injured.

9

» An attempt is made to assassinate Sheikh Orsan Suleiman in the Ain al-Helwe refugee camp. Sheikh Suleiman belongs to an anti-Salafi association.

10

» The LAF commences its plan to catch (Shia) criminal outlaws in the northern Bekaa area, and efforts soon expand to include the traditional outlaw strongholds of Britel and Haour Taala. The raids disclose that most of those criminals had left the area several days earlier.

» Isolated violence takes place in Tripoli between the LAF and a number of wanted militants.

» The Military Court issues an arrest warrant for Alawi leader Refaat Eid, head of the Arab Democratic Party. He is charged with involvement in terrorist actions.

14

» The Twitter account of the "Free Sunni Brigade in Baalbek" announces that the group is responsible for launching three rockets toward the (Shia) village of Laboueh in revenge for the actions taken by Hezbollah in Qalamoun. The LAF confirms that the rockets came from the Syrian side of the border.

» The Maronite Patriarchate website is hacked, and visitors to the site are welcomed with Quranic verses.

19

» A meeting is held in the ministry of interior and is attended by Hezbollah senior domestic security officer Wafic Safa. The situation in Tofeil (a Lebanese Sunni enclave in Syria) is discussed, to include the evacuation of its Lebanese citizens.

21

» A report issued by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees states that the

number of registered refugees from Syria in Lebanon now totals 1,024,063.

23

» The Lebanese parliament meets to elect a new president. Although it is attended by 124 MPs, there were 52 blank votes. Samir Geagea, the March 14 candidate, received 48 votes, Pierre Helou, a centrist supported by PSP Druze leader Walid Jumblatt, received 16 and Amin Gemayel gathered 1 vote. Interestingly, 7 votes were for individuals who were presumably killed by Samir Geagea. Notably, one envelope was submitted without a paper. Speaker Nabih Berri announces postponement of the session until May 7.

29

» A large demonstration takes place in the streets of Beirut to request that the parliament examine the rank and wages scale.

» Riots occur in Roumieh Prison.

30

» Nabih Berri postpones the session to elect a president until May 7 due to the lack of a quorum.

» Clashes between the LAF and armed groups outside Orsal injure five soldiers.

May

7

» The session to elect a new president of the republic is postponed until May 15 due to the lack of a quorum.

8

» The LAF announces that several of the leaders of Tripoli's armed factions have surrendered.

9

» Attorney Tarek Shandab sues Hezbollah, Amal Movement and the Syrian Socialist National Party on behalf of 56 families of victims of the May 2008 armed incidents.

12

» The PSP health minister suggests the establishment of 36 sites to house refugees from Syria instead of the 1,600 improvised sites.

» Armed clashes between Islamic groups in the Ain al-Helwe camp injure nine people.

15

» The session to elect a new president of the republic is postponed until May 22 due to the lack of a quorum.

20

» An LAF patrol is attacked in Tripoli, and eight soldiers, including an officer, are injured.

22

» The session to elect a new president of the republic is postponed until June 9 due to the lack of a quorum.

» The ministry of interior asks refugees from Syria to refrain from engaging in any political activity or gatherings due to Lebanon's official decision to remain "disassociated" from the Syrian conflict.

24

» A farewell party is held in the Baabda Presidential Palace for President Michel Suleiman.

27

» Mahmoud al-Hayek, the individual accused of attempting to assassinate MP/ Minister Boutros Harb, is killed during fighting in Syria.

28

» Thousands of Syrians flock to the Syrian Embassy in Yarzeh (east Beirut) to participate in the Syrian presidential election. This causes severe traffic congestion and total closure of the Beirut-Bekaa road. The so-called spontaneity of this massive event is false.

» MP Walid Jumblatt invites former President Suleiman to introduce amendments to the Lebanese constitution.

30

» The council of ministers meets in the Grand Serail for the first time since the presidency becomes vacant.

31

» The minister of interior decides that every displaced Syrian who returns to Syria as of June 1, 2014 and attempts to reenter Lebanon will lose his/her refugee status.

June

4

» U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry visits Lebanon, where he meets Speaker Nabih Berri, Prime Minister Tammam Salam and the Maronite Patriarch. He calls for the election of a new president and states that Russia, Iran and Hezbollah should contribute to ending the war in Syria.

6

» In a speech at the funeral of Sheikh Mustafa Kassir, Hezbollah head Hassan Nasrallah denies that his organization is aiming for a "three thirds" power-sharing solution (one third for the Christians, one third for the Sunni and one third for the Shia). Such an outcome, he stated, would be the opposite of the formal, current 50-50 presence (half for the Christians and half for the Muslims). He adds that the French communicated the idea to the Iranians.

9

» The session to elect a new president of the republic is postponed until June 18 due to the lack of a quorum.

18

» The session to elect a new president of the republic is postponed until July 2 due to the lack of a quorum.

20

» At the ISF's Dahr el-Bidar checkpoint (entrance/exit for the Bekaa), a suicide bomber detonates himself in a car loaded with 35 kg of explosives killing an ISF member and wounding 33 other soldiers and civilians. The Director of General Security, General Abbass Ibrahim, announces that he was the target of the attack.

» The intelligence services and General Security forces raid two hotels in Hamra (Beirut) and arrest a number of non-Lebanese individuals.

23

» At midnight, a suicide bomber blows himself up in his booby-trapped car in Shatila (northern entrance of Dahiyeh). A member of General Security prevented the car from reaching its intended target, an act that kept casualties low (20 wounded in addition to the General Security member).

24

» The *Abdullah Azzam Brigades* claim responsibility for the blasts in Dahr al-Baidar and Shatila.

25

» A Saudi suicide bomber is killed in a Beirut hotel when he detonates his explosives. The blast injures a number of General Security force members who were raiding the hotel to arrest him.

» The LAF announces the arrest of a terrorist cell in al-Qalamoun near Tripoli. The cell was

allegedly planning to assassinate a senior security figure in the north and intended to conduct terrorist acts.

26

» Information is revealed which indicates that Lebanese national al-Monzer Khaldoun al-Hassan provided the Rawshe bomber with explosive belts.

28

» The Amal Movement announces the cancellation of all its Ramadan Iftars due to the security situation.

30

» Armed clashes between anti-Hezbollah Palestinian elements and a pro-Hezbollah Sunni group occur in a neighborhood near the Shatila Palestinian refugee camp.

July

1

» Lebanese Al-Qaeda-linked Sheikh Sirajeddin Zureikat (head of the *Abdullah Azzam Brigades*) threatens Hezbollah with more attacks if it does not withdraw from Syria.

» In the first case related to domestic violence, a court rules in favor of Tamara Harrisi and sentences her husband to nine months in prison and a fine of LBP20 million for having committed a violent act against her.

2

» The session to elect a new president of the republic is postponed until July 23 due to the lack of a quorum.

5

» The Maronite League, the main secular Maronite association, organizes a conference to warn against the negative effects of Christians selling their land.

7

» Families of the Islamists detained in Roumieh Prison stage a sit-in in Tripoli's main square and assign responsibility for the release of their sons to the Future Movement and its MPs.

8

» Israel commences a substantial military operation against the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip.

» A Palestinian Joint Security Force deploys to the Ain al-Helwe refugee camp. Its mission is to guarantee the camp's security by working in conjunction with the Lebanese authorities.

» The Future Movement parliamentary bloc denounces the random arrests being made by the LAF in Tripoli. It also questions the effectiveness and equitability of the security plan in the (Shia) Bekaa north.

10

» A gathering held at the residence of MP Mohammad Kabbara in Tripoli denounces the random arrests being carried out by the security forces in Tripoli. It states that continued persecution of Sunnis will lead to an explosion.

11

» Explosives are launched at dawn from Lebanese territory toward Israel. The LAF arrests those involved, who are Lebanese nationals from Sunni Hibbariyeh.

» Sit-ins continue in Tripoli to demand the release of detainees in Roumieh Prison.

12

» Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir is heard in a recording that decries the Future Movement as a "liberal movement" that does not represent Sunnis.

» Three projectiles are launched overnight toward Israel from a field outside Qleileh (south Lebanon) near Tyre.

» Clashes between Hezbollah and *an-Nusra* take place in the Anti-Lebanon Mountains/al-Qalamoun area.

14

» More projectiles are launched toward Israel from the Qleileh area.

» A Lebanese criminal court releases Abdul Latif Fneish (the brother of Hezbollah Minister Mohammad Fneish) after a bail of LBP 5 million is posted. Abdul Latif was arrested for counterfeiting medications.

16

» A projectile is launched overnight from the al-Arqoub area toward Israel. It falls short of its target in Lebanese Khiyam.

18

» Clashes continue between *an-Nusra Front* and Hezbollah in the Anti-Lebanon Mountains/al-Qalamoun area.

» Bulgarian authorities announce that the Burgas suicide bomber was Mohammad al-Husseini, a Lebanese with French nationality, who is affiliated with Hezbollah.

20

» Al-Monzer al-Hassan, a suspect wanted for terrorist crimes, is killed during a raid on a Tripoli apartment by ISF intelligence.

» Tension builds in Tripoli following the arrest of Salafi leader Houssam as-Sabbagh.

» The IDF enters Shuja'iyya, a populous neighborhood of Gaza City. The action results in heavy fighting and human loss.

22

» A projectile is launched from the Shebaa neighborhood toward Israel but misses its intended target.

23

» LAF soldier Atef Saadeddin defects while serving in Orsal. In a videotape that surfaces later, Saadeddin announces his decision to desert the LAF in order to join *an-Nusra Front*, because he believes the LAF is being directed by Hezbollah to persecute Sunnis in Lebanon.

» The session to elect a new Lebanese president is postponed for the seventh time, until August 12, due to lack of a quorum.

24

» Two projectiles launched from Sunni Kafar Chouba (south Lebanon) toward Israel fail to reach their targets.

25

» Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah appears in person on Jerusalem Day.

31

» In an interview with *as-Safir* newspaper, Druze leader Walid Jumblatt warns of the arrival in Lebanon of ISIL (Daesh) ideology. He announces that Druze and Maronites are on their way to "extinction."

» The "Free Sunnis in Baalbek Brigade" tweets a threat to "clean" the Bekaa of Christians if they fail to leave the area.

» In Mashghara (west Bekaa), Hezbollah buries a senior military leader killed while fighting in Mosul (Iraq).

August

1

» The Army Day national commemoration (during which new officers are commissioned) is cancelled due to the presidential vacuum. It is replaced with an internal function.

» In Ayrouniyeh (Akkar), the LAF arrests a

woman wearing an explosive belt. Her husband had already been detained on terrorism charges.

» The Military Court releases (Sunni) Sheikh Hussein Atwi, who was responsible for launching several rockets toward Israel.

2

» In response to the LAF's arrest of Syrian national (and *an-Nusra* Front leader) Imad Ahmad Jomaa, his supporters attack ISF positions in Orsal and capture 16 ISF members. Clashes followed between the LAF and *an-Nusra* and other Syrian rebel Islamist groups. The LAF suffers heavy losses, including a number of soldiers listed originally as "missing," but who are later disclosed to have been taken prisoner. Tension spreads to Tripoli, and LAF positions there are targeted.

3

» Armed confrontations continue in Orsal, and LAF casualties rise to 25 wounded and 13 missing. LAF Commander General Jean Kahwaji announces in a press conference that the attacks had been prearranged and that Jomaa has confessed to having planned to attack military sites. Kahwaji called on politicians and clerics to pay attention to what is planned for Lebanon, but he also reaffirmed the LAF's readiness to confront the Takfiri. He insisted additionally on the need to address the Syrian refugee situation, so that their camps do not become hotbeds for terrorism.

» Hezbollah announces that it will stand beside the LAF to confront the dangers.

» The Association of Muslim Clerics tries to negotiate a truce in Orsal.

4

» Clashes between rebels and the LAF continue in Orsal.

» A delegation from the Association of Muslim Clerics enters Orsal to mediate, but some of its members are injured by gunfire.

» At the conclusion of the Council of Ministers meeting, Prime Minister Tammam Salam announces that there is no room for dialogue, negotiations or political solutions with the Takfiris.

» *An-Nusra Front* broadcasts a videotape that it claims shows two LAF soldiers announcing their defection.

5

» A ceasefire is announced in Orsal, and three ISF soldiers are released.

6

» An explosive device detonates in Tripoli killing one person and injuring 10. There is conflicting information about the target, with some saying it was the LAF and others that it was Sheikh Malek Jadide, president of the Association of Muslim Clerics.

» Residents of Shia Laboueh village block the road to prevent Qatari aid from being sent to civilians in Orsal, which they believe is intended for the rebels. In response, several roads are blocked in Sunni areas throughout Lebanon (Saadiyat, Saadnayel and Majdel Anjar).

» Former Prime Minister Saad Hariri announces that Saudi Arabia has offered Lebanon US\$1 billion in aid to help fight terror and strengthen the LAF and ISF.

7

» Calm descends on Orsal, and aid shipments arrive. The rebels withdraw to the countryside, and negotiations continue for the release of the soldiers taken prisoner.

» *An-Nusra Front* announces in a statement that it has withdrawn from Orsal. It adds a warning against harming Sunnis.

8

» Former Prime Minister Saad Hariri returns unexpectedly to Beirut from Saudi Arabia after an absence of more than three years. He visits the grave of his father and then the Grand Serail to meet Prime Minister Tammam Salam. He announces that he has returned to implement the Saudi aid plan and that "if Hezbollah starts misbehaving we should not do the same."

» LAF Commander General Jean Kahwaji states that he is convinced that the soldiers taken prisoner in Orsal are still there. It is also revealed that the kidnappers are seeking the release of a number of Islamists imprisoned in Roumieh.

10

» The election of a new Sunni Mufti ends a multi-year crisis within the Sunni clerical establishment.

11

» LAF Commander General Jean Kahwaji discloses in an interview that the terrorists' plan was to expand in the Bekaa toward Akkar and the coast to form their own emirate.

12

» The session to elect a new Lebanese

president is postponed for the tenth time, until September 2, due to lack of a quorum.

» Deputy MP Nicolas Fattoush presents a draft law that aims to extend parliament's mandate for two years and seven months.

14

» In an interview with *al-Akhabar* newspaper, Hezbollah leader Nasrallah confirms that its forces in al-Quseir and Qalamoun have prevented ISIL (Daesh) from reaching Beirut and the coast.

» ISF intelligence arrests a Lebanese national on charges of being behind the Twitter account of the "Free Sunni Brigades in Baalbek." The FM-affiliated newspaper *Al-Mustaqbal* reports, "Hussein Shaman al-Hussein, born in 1995, is a Lebanese citizen from Baalbek's Al-Sharawneh neighborhood and is a member of Hezbollah."

15

Al-Manar TV broadcasts a speech by Hezbollah's Hassan Nasrallah, in which he calls for ISIL (Daesh) to be confronted, and that UN Resolution 1701 is failing to protect Lebanon. Rather, the country's protectors are the LAF, the Lebanese people and the Resistance. He also states that UNIFIL needs to be protected.

17

» *An-Nusra Front* releases two of the policemen it captured in Orsal during the August 2 clashes, and the Association of Muslim Clerics promises that more will be released.

23

» *An-Nusra Front* broadcasts a videotape in which nine of the LAF and ISF members being held prisoner ask Hezbollah to withdraw from Syria.

» Two projectiles are launched from a southern border village toward Israel. The IDF retaliates by shelling the area from which the devices were launched.

» A new videotape shows that seven LAF soldiers are now in the hands of ISIL (Daesh).

25

» A projectile is launched from al-Jarmaq (south Lebanon) toward Israel, and the IDF responds by shelling the area.

26

» ISIL (Daesh), which holds a number of LAF soldiers, threatens to kill one of them within 24 hours unless the Lebanese authorities accept indirect negotiations and the principle of

releasing some prisoners, and respect the dignity of the refugees.

» The Israeli military "Operation Protective Edge" against Gaza concludes.

28

» ISIL (Daesh) broadcasts a video of a beheaded corpse, saying that it is the body of LAF soldier Ali Ahmad as-Sayyid (from Fneidek, Akkar).

» A shipment of U.S. weapons destined for the LAF arrives at the port of Beirut. The official statement published by the U.S. Embassy links the shipment to the developments in Orsal.

29

» The minister of interior states that Orsal is a time bomb.

30

» *An-Nusra Front* announces that it has released five Sunni soldiers.

September

1

» The LAF receives the body of LAF soldier Ali as-Sayyid, who was among the LAF soldiers taken prisoner in Orsal.

» Druze leader Walid Jumblatt calls for the trials of jailed Islamists to be accelerated in order to ease tensions.

» Hisham al-Hajj, a Lebanese national from Tripoli, is killed in an ISIL (Daesh)-led suicide operation in Iraq. Zakaria al-Ahmad, another Lebanese from Tripoli, is also killed while fighting with a rebel group in Syria.

2

» The session to elect a new Lebanese president is postponed for the eleventh time, until September 23, due to lack of a quorum.

5

» Israel detonates an electronic eavesdropping device it planted in the southern village of Adloun following discovery of the device by Hezbollah members who were attempting to dismantle it. The explosion kills a Hezbollah member.

» *An-Nusra Front* broadcasts video of the detained LAF soldiers and assigns responsibility for their safety to Hezbollah. It also asks Sunnis to stop supporting the LAF.

6

» ISIL (Daesh) announces that it has beheaded

Shia LAF soldier Abbass Medlej. Roads are blocked to protest the murder, and refugees from Syria evacuate some areas in fear of reprisals for the killing.

8

» Ayman Sawwan (from Saadnayel) is kidnapped in at Tibeh and a ransom is demanded. The main Saadnayel road is blocked in response, and seven people from Baalbek are abducted but later released.

9

» After conducting raids in the Bekaa, the LAF succeeds in rescuing Ayman Sawwan (see above), which gradually eases tensions.

» The mother and sister of abducted LAF soldier Georges Khoury meet with him in the Orsal countryside.

10

» A sit-in is held and tents are set up in Martyrs' Square by the families of the LAF soldiers taken prisoner. They are demonstrating for the release of their sons.

» Following a Ministerial Committee meeting held to discuss the issue of refugees from Syria, Minister of Social Affairs Rachid Derbas declares that Lebanon will tighten the process associated with seeking refuge. He again advances the idea of creating camps for the refugees.

11

» The LAF claims that it detected a booby-trapped car packed with 75 kg of explosives parked at the entrance to Orsal.

» MP Khaled ad-Daher criticizes the LAF's intelligence services and appeals to the Saudi king to withhold any aid originally intended for the Lebanese army. During the Ministerial meeting, Ministers Nohad al-Machnouk and Ashraf Rifi assert that Daher's words represent only his opinions and not those of the Future Movement.

12

» The LAF discovers a 200-gram explosive device in a Saida square.

» U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon David Hale announces from the Grand Serail that his country will provide the LAF with Cessna aircraft using Saudi aid money.

17

» UN officials warn against the idea of

establishing refugee camps along the Lebanese-Syrian border.

19

» An LAF vehicle in Orsal is hit by a 10 kg explosive device that kills two soldiers and wounds three. *An-Nusra Front* accuses the LAF and Hezbollah of staging the attack.

» A spokesman for *an-Nusra* declares that the group has executed Shia LAF soldier Mohamed Hamieh.

20

» An Israeli reconnaissance aircraft crashes near the Lebanese-Israeli border.

» A Hezbollah checkpoint in al-Khreibeh (near Baalbek) is hit by an explosive device.

21

» Druze leader Walid Jumblatt resumes his tour of villages in the western Bekaa and calls on the Druze to rebuild the mosques destroyed during Druze-Muslim disputes, essentially affirming that the Druze are Muslims as well.

23

» The session to elect a new Lebanese president is postponed for the twelfth time to October 9 due to lack of a quorum.

» An attack on an LAF checkpoint in al-Baddawi kills one soldier.

24

» Gunfire in Tripoli hits a microbus carrying several LAF soldiers.

25

» LAF units raid Syrian refugee camps in Orsal and arrest 450 people.

» LAF Commander General Kahwaji visits the new Grand Mufti and updates him on LAF operations in Orsal. Kahwaji stresses that Orsal is not under siege.

26

» The minister of interior states that the government will construct camps for Syrian refugees even if there is no consensus on the initiative.

» *An-Nusra Front* announces that no negotiations over the Lebanese prisoners of war will take place until the situation in Orsal is resolved.

» An armed group in Tripoli kidnaps two anti-drug policemen and detains them for two hours.

October

5

» Clashes between *an-Nusra Front* and Hezbollah outside Britel kill 11 Hezbollah and 10 *an-Nusra Front* members.

7

» Hezbollah detonates an explosive device near an IDF patrol in the vicinity of Shebaa Farms, which injures two Israeli soldiers. The IDF responds by shelling Shebaa and the hills around Kfar Chouba. UNIFIL considers the events a breach of UNSCR 1701.

9

» A motorcyclist shoots two LAF soldiers in Rihaniyyeh (Akkar), killing one and injuring the other.

» The session to elect a new Lebanese president is postponed until October 29 due to lack of a quorum.

10

» In an interview with the French newspaper *Le Figaro*, LAF Commander General Kahwaji warns of ISIL (Daesh) sleeper cells in Tripoli that benefit from a Sunni support base. He states that the aim of the Syrian extremist opposition is to open a safe passage to the sea through north Lebanon and ignite the rift between Lebanese Shiites and Sunnis.

» According to a video, Mohamad Antar (from Tripoli) becomes the second LAF soldier to announce his desertion from the LAF in order to join *an-Nusra Front*.

11

» LAF soldier Abdullah Shehade announces his desertion in order to join *an-Nusra*.

12

» A security solution is found in Tripoli.

» Two Islamist leaders, Shadi al-Mawlawi and Oussama Mansour, are “allowed” to leave their Abdullah Bin Massoud Mosque in Bab at Tabbeneh and head to an undisclosed location.

14

» After disappearing four months ago, LAF soldier Abdul Menhem Khaled (from an Akkari village) announces his defection in order to join ISIL (Daesh).

16

» LAF deserter Abdallah Shehade appears in a video released by *an-Nusra Front* with the

military vehicle he used to desert—still loaded with LAF weapons.

17

» Gunfire hits an LAF vehicle in al-Beereh (Akkar) killing one soldier.

» The minister of social affairs states that Lebanon has stopped receiving refugees from Syria and that the construction of camps has been cancelled due to a lack of consensus.

18

» A ceremony in the UNESCO palace organized by Minister of Interior Nohad al-Machnouk takes place on the second anniversary of the assassination of General Wissam al-Hassan. In his speech, the minister states that authorities are close to uncovering the identity of the assassin and insinuates that Hezbollah and LAF intelligence are complicit in the failure of the security plan for the northern Bekaa.

» Defense Minister Sami Mekbel begins an official visit to Iran to negotiate military aid for the LAF.

20

» *An-Nusra Front* announces that LAF soldier Omar Khaled Shamita, who deserted on October 18, is now the fifth LAF soldier to defect. Shamita is from Bab at Tabbeneh in Tripoli, and his brother was one of the LAF soldiers killed during the Nahr el Bared clashes in 2007.

» An LAF raid in Aasoun (Dinneyeh) leads to the arrest of a wanted criminal and suspected ISIL (Daesh) commander Ahmad Salim Mikati.

24

» Clashes between the LAF and extremist Islamic groups in Tripoli injure 20 people, five of whom are soldiers.

25

» Armed confrontations between the LAF and extremist Islamists continue in Tripoli and expand to the ad-Dinneyeh and al-Mhammara areas. Casualties rise to six killed and 52 wounded.

26

» The confrontations in Tripoli intensify.

» An expanded meeting at the residence of MP Abdul Latif Kabbara in Tripoli calls for implementation of the Tripoli security plan, for moderation by the LAF in the use of force and for support of the LAF.

» MP Khaled ad-Daher states that events in Tripoli are targeting the Sunnis.

» The Association of Muslim Clerics condemns the LAF blockade of neighborhoods in Tripoli and its use of "excessive force."

27

» After several political intercessions, the LAF enters Bab at Tabbeneh and the clashes in Tripoli stop.

28

» In a speech, Saad Hariri states that calls for a Sunni uprising in Lebanon do not reflect the beliefs of Sunnis. He also condemns the incitement of soldiers to desert from the LAF.

29

» The session to elect a new Lebanese president is postponed until November 19 due to lack of a quorum.

30

» LAF Commander General Kahwaji tours military units in Tripoli and states that as long as the army is united, they should have no fear.

» Saad Hariri announces the allocation of US\$20 million for those affected in Tripoli and the north.

November

5

» A parliamentary session to extend parliament's mandate until June 20, 2017 gains the approval of 95 MPs.

8

» LAF deserter Omar Khaled Shamita surrenders to LAF intelligence.

14

» An LAF unit patrolling the Orsal countryside is hit by an explosive device which injures a soldier and an officer. *An-Nusra Front* claims the explosives were planted by Hezbollah.

» During a security conference, the minister of interior announces that 45% of kidnappings and robberies are perpetrated by refugees from Syria, and that 35% of those who live in Lebanon are not Lebanese.

15

» During an LAF raid of the Shia village of Dar al-Wassiaa (the Bekaa) to search for criminals, a group belonging to the powerful Shia Jaafar

clan escapes. When the criminals reach the neighboring Christian village of Btadii, they break into the home of the Fakhri family and demand the keys to their four-wheel drive vehicle. When the family resists, they shoot and kill the father and mother and injure the son. The incident prompts tremendous grief and raises sectarian tension.

17

» The families of the surviving LAF soldiers being held prisoner establish a roadblock in downtown Beirut after ISIL (Daesh) threatens to execute more of the soldiers. The road is reopened after officials announce that some death sentences against Islamists have been reduced.

19

» The session to elect a new Lebanese president is postponed until December 10 due to lack of a quorum.

21

» Prime Minister Tammam Salam issues a decree cancelling all Independence Day ceremonies due to the presidential vacancy.

24

» General Security arrests pro-Hezbollah singer Ali Barakat after he performed songs that were antagonistic toward Saudi Arabia.

25

» Hezbollah recovers Imad Ayyad, a fighter taken in Syria, by exchanging him for two prisoners it had captured from the Free Syrian Army.

December

1

» British newspaper *The Daily Telegraph* reports that British forces are present at the Lebanese-Syrian border near the (Christian) village of Ras Baalbek. The soldiers are there to help the LAF control the situation and prevent rebels from entering Lebanon.

2

» An LAF patrol is ambushed by a terrorist group outside Ras Baalbek, and six soldiers are killed.

» British Ambassador Tom Fletcher meets with Speaker Nabih Berri and confirms British military aid to the LAF. The assistance includes training and building watchtowers along the Lebanese-Syrian border.

» *As-Safir* newspaper reports that the LAF has arrested a (former) wife of ISIL (Daesh) leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

3

» Outside Orsal, an LAF explosives expert is killed while attempting to dismantle an explosive device that was meant for the LAF.

» Following the arrest of a number of wives of leaders of Syrian rebel groups, Minister of Justice Ashraf Rifi announces that he is against arresting women and children.

5

» *An-Nusra* announces that it executed (Shia) policeman Ali al-Bazzal. The announcement raises tension in the Bekaa, the policeman's home. In response, members of the man's family kidnap several Sunnis from the neighborhood.

» The Orsal countryside is bombed by the LAF during an attack against rebels who were allegedly trying to sneak into Lebanese territories.

» An explosion in Orsal kills Hussein Ezzeddin, an individual wanted in connection with terrorist actions.

10

» Former Prime Minister Saad Hariri tweets that

the "blockade of Orsal" is unacceptable. He urges authorities to suppress activities intended to stoke Sunni-Shia tensions that are occurring throughout the country.

» The session to elect a new Lebanese president is postponed until January 7, 2015 due to lack of a quorum.

23

» A long-awaited dialogue between Hezbollah and Future Movement begins at the residence of Speaker Nabih Berri.

27

» A discreet commemoration is held to mark the first anniversary of the assassination of pro-Hariri former Minister Mohammad Chatah.

29

» The LAF strengthens its security measures to isolate Orsal from the nearby countryside. A number of residents protest the measures.

31

» Separate statements made by the Lebanese Forces party and the Free Patriotic Movement announce that some 100 lawsuits between them have been dropped. The actions are intended to facilitate a dialogue similar to the fledgling Hezbollah-Future Movement meetings.

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The introduction to this report is titled “Stability vs. Instabilities.” When Hayya Bina completed its draft of this report in mid-2015, that title seemed an appropriate way to explain the conditions that affected Lebanon during the period covered (2013 – 2014). As we prepare for the release of that report later in the year, those conditions continue to impact Lebanon....

This report is composed of eight chapters, each of which addresses a topic that falls under the general heading, "Lebanon in Conflict." While these chapters range from border issues to domestic violence, they simply cannot address every detail considered under the heading "Stability vs. Instabilities." Despite that constraint, we hope our analyses of the topics covered, and the context provided by the chronologies associated with most of those subjects, help foster a better understanding of the ongoing dialectic between “Stability” and “Instabilities.” Moreover, we trust this work will contribute to a realistic and informed assessment of the viability of Lebanon's fragile equilibrium within the explosive regional framework.



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