



# The Republic of Lebanon

MAL FACT SHEET

## SUMMARY

The Republic of Lebanon is located in the Middle East, bordering the Mediterranean Sea, between Israel and Syria. It is rich in cultural and religious diversity due to its location at the crossroads of three continents.

The country's 1975-90 civil war, which resulted in an estimated 120,000 fatalities, was followed by years of social and political instability, and sectarianism remains a key element of Lebanese political life. The Israeli defense forces, which occupied parts of Lebanon during the civil war, did not completely withdraw until 2000. Over 1.5 million Syrian refugees fled to Lebanon after the start of the Syrian conflict in 2011.

Lebanon's prosperity has significantly diminished since the beginning of the country's economic crisis in 2019, which has crippled its economy, shut down its previously lucrative banking sector, reduced the value of its currency, and caused many Lebanese to emigrate in search of better prospects.

Chief of State: The position of the president is currently vacant. The head of government is Caretaker Prime Minister Najib Miqati.

Capital: Beirut

Other notable cities: Tripoli, Jounieh

Gov Type: Parliamentary republic

Population: 5,364,482 (2024 est.)

Colonial History: Following World War I, France acquired a mandate over the northern portion of the former Ottoman Empire province of Syria. From it, the French demarcated the region of Lebanon in 1920, and it gained independence in 1943.

## GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Lebanon is about 10,400 square kilometers in total area and has 170 square kilometers of water but has 225 kilometers of coastline. The climate is Mediterranean; mild to cool, wet winters with hot, dry summers.

The terrain is a narrow coastal plain; El Beqaa (Bekaa Valley) separates Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon Mountains.

Natural resources include limestone, iron ore, salt, water-surplus state in a water-deficit region, arable land.



## DEMOGRAPHICS

Noun: Lebanese

Adjective: Lebanese

Ethnic Groups: Kuwaiti 30.4%, other Arab 27.4%, Asian 40.3%, African 1%, other 0.9% (includes European, North American, South American, and Australian)

Languages: Arabic (Official), French, English, Armenian

Religion: Muslim 67.8% (31.9% Sunni, 31.2% Shia, smaller percentages of Alawites and Ismailis), Christian 32.4% (Maronite Catholics are the largest Christian group), Druze 4.5%, very small numbers of Jews, Baha'is, Buddhists, and Hindus

Literacy: 95.1% (Male 96.9%, 93.3% Female)

Population growth is at 0.61% (2024 est.)

## ECONOMY AND GDP

Upper middle-income Middle Eastern economy; economic activity hurt by economic depression, COVID-19, and port explosion; hyperinflation and sharp poverty increases; banks have ceased lending; new financing facility helping with recovery.

Real GDP (Purchasing Power Parity): \$72.631 billion (2021 est.)

Real GDP Growth Rate: -7% (2021 est.)

Real GDP Per Capita: \$13,000 (2021 est.)

GDP (Official Exchange Rate): \$23.132 billion (2021 est.)

Inflation Rate (Consumer Prices): 171.21% (2022 est.)

GDP - composition, by sector of origin: agriculture: 3.9% (2017 est.), industry: 13.1% (2017 est.), services: 83% (2017 est.)

Unemployment Rate: 11.75% (2022 est.)

Youth Unemployment: 29.6% (2021 est.)

Population below poverty line: 44% (2024 est.)

## MAIN POLITICAL CONTENTIONS

Lebanon's political landscape is a tapestry of complexity and diversity, reflecting the country's unique position as a crossroads of cultures, religions, and historical influences. The nation's political history is punctuated by periods of turmoil and instability, juxtaposed with phases of prosperity and growth, particularly in its role as a regional hub for finance and trade.

At the heart of Lebanon's political life is a deeply entrenched system of sectarianism. The country's constitution mandates a power-sharing arrangement among its officially recognized religious groups. This arrangement ensures that each group's representation in government is proportionate to its share of the population. This system, while aimed at maintaining a delicate balance of power, has also been a source of political tension and division.

The influence of external actors on Lebanon's politics is another significant factor. Syria, in particular, has had a profound impact on Lebanon's domestic and foreign policies. From 1976 to 2005, Syria maintained a military presence in Lebanon, exerting considerable influence over its politics. The withdrawal of Syrian forces in 2005 marked a significant turning point in Lebanon's political history. Post-Syria's withdrawal, the dynamics between Hezbollah, a major Lebanese political party and militia, and Israel have been a defining feature of Lebanon's political landscape.

Hezbollah, which the US has designated as a foreign terrorist organization, and Israel have engaged in ongoing hostilities, including a brief but intense war in 2006. The unresolved borders with Syria and Israel continue to be a source of tension and conflict.

# Lebanon: A Timeline

1945: Lebanon joined the Arab League in its founding year. It was one of the seven original members, along with Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Transjordan (now Jordan), and North Yemen (later becoming Yemen).

1976: Syrian Intervention and Occupation Begins In June 1976, Syria intervened in the Lebanese civil war, sending a force of 25,000 soldiers to Lebanon to prevent the defeat of its Maronite Christian allies. It maintained military presence in Lebanon for the next three decades and exerted significant influence on Lebanese politics.

1982: The 1982 Lebanon War began on 6 June 1982, when Israel invaded southern Lebanon. The invasion followed a series of attacks and counter-attacks between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) operating in southern Lebanon and the Israeli military that had caused civilian casualties on both sides of the border.

1991: In 1991, a Treaty of "Brotherhood, Cooperation, and Coordination", signed between Lebanon and Syria, legitimized the Syrian military presence in Lebanon. It stipulated that Lebanon would not be made a threat to Syria's security and that Syria was responsible for protecting Lebanon from external threats.

2005: End of Syrian Occupation and the Cedar Revolution The Syrian occupation of Lebanon ended on April 30, 2005, after the Cedar Revolution and several demonstrations in which most of the Lebanese people participated. The withdrawal agreement was signed by President Bashar al-Assad and Saad Hariri, son of Rafic Hariri, whose assassination triggered the series of events leading to the withdrawal.

1989: In 1989, the Lebanese Civil War officially ended with the signing of the Taif Agreement. However, the country was divided between two rival administrations: a military one led by Michel Aoun in East Beirut and a civilian one under Selim el-Hoss in West Beirut.

1975-1976: (The Two-Year War) The Lebanese Civil War, a multifaceted conflict that took place from 1975 to 1990, began. This period was marked by a series of cross-sectarian clashes, assassinations, enforced disappearances, and mostly massacres and counter-massacres. The most notable events were Black Saturday, the siege of Christian towns and Palestinian camps, and forced evictions.

1978: In March 1978, Israel invaded southern Lebanon up to the Litani River in response to the Coastal Road massacre near Tel Aviv by Lebanon-based Palestinian militants. The invasion caused an estimated 1,000 Lebanese and Palestinian casualties and prompted UN Security Council Resolution 425, which called for a cease-fire, an Israeli withdrawal, the dispatch of Lebanese army units to the area, and the creation of a United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) peacekeeping force.

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2000: The Israeli defense forces, which occupied parts of Lebanon during the civil war, withdrew completely from Lebanon on May 24, 2000. This withdrawal was in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 425 of 1978.

2011: Over 1.5 million Syrian refugees fled to Lebanon after the start of the Syrian conflict.