On 21 May 2008, the Lebanese government and opposition signed the Doha Agreement, an accord brokered by the Arab League (BBC 21 May 2008; Keesing’s May 2008, 48606). The Doha Agreement brought to a close an 18-month political stalemate between the government and the Hezbollah-led opposition, and also ended the sectarian violence (VOA 8 Aug. 2008; Keesing’s May 2008, 48606) between the Hezbollah-led opposition and supporters of the government that had resulted in the deaths of at least 67 people (AP 25 May 2008; USA Today 21 May 2008). The crisis had brought the country to the verge of civil war (RFI 26 May 2008; The Economist 24 May 2008).

One of the requirements of the Doha Agreement is the election of a Maronite Christian, General Michel Sleimane, as president (Keesing’s May 2008, 48606; The Economist 24 May 2008). On 25 May 2008, the Lebanese parliament duly elected General Sleimane as president (Keesing’s May 2008, 48606; RFI 26 May 2008; AP 25 May 2008). The country had been without a president for six months (ibid.; RFI 26 May 2008). An RFI article notes that the president has limited powers to effect change (26 May 008). The president is, for example, unable to dissolve Parliament or fire the prime minister, and although he presides over cabinet he does not have a right to vote in its decisions (RFI 26 May 2008).


On 14 October 2008, Syria and Lebanon established formal diplomatic relations for the first time since they gained independence in the 1940’s (CP 14 Oct. 2008; AFP 15 Oct. 2008). Syria had never recognized Lebanon as a legitimate state and had intervened militarily in Lebanon's civil war in the mid-1970s, retaining troops there for three decades (Guardian 15 Oct. 2008). Syria is a backer

Seven individuals, including four generals, remained in custody as of August 2008 as suspects in the assassination of the former Lebanese Prime Minister, Rafic Hariri, on 14 February 2005 (RFI 7 Aug. 2008; AFP 6 Aug. 2008). The four accused generals have not been charged and have been imprisoned since 2005 (RFI 7 Aug. 2008; AFP 6 Aug. 2008).


In early September 2008, Sunni and Alawite leaders in northern Lebanon signed a reconciliation agreement, which calls for an end to the violence between the two groups (Daily Star 9 Sept. 2008; AP 8 Sept. 2008). In mid-September 2008, fourteen political factions began meeting in reconciliation talks under the direction of the president, Michel Sleimane, as required by the Doha Accord (Guardian 16 Sept. 2008; BBC 16 Sept. 2008). A major issue that will be discussed during these meetings is the question of Hezbollah's continued possession of weapons (Guardian 16 Sept. 2008; BBC 16 Sept. 2008).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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