1. Please provide some general background on the Future Movement and its role in the current Lebanese government.

The Future Movement (Tayyar al-Mustaqbal), also referred to as the Future Current, was formed by former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri after he resigned in October 2004.1 The movement’s political manifesto states that it “is based on the principles of freedom, moderation and coexistence”, and aims to “move forward towards building a sovereign, Arab, free and independent Lebanon”.2 The anti-Syrian Future Movement is supported predominantly by Sunni Muslims. Pro-Syrian and Shiite party Hezbollah is its main opposition.3

Rafiq Hariri’s assassination in February 2005 was widely seen as orchestrated by Syria. The International Crisis Group (ICG) reports that Hariri’s death exacerbated “deep, lingering Sunni resentments and anxieties”, resulting in “a massive, overwhelming instinct of communal solidarity among Sunnis…The community joined forces with its historical foes, anti-Syrian Christian parties…And, for the first time in its history, it turned toward the West, partners in a perceived life-or-death battle against Syria, Hizbollah and Iran”. Hariri’s assassination, as well as “subsequent expressions of pro-Syrian sentiment by Hizbollah and Amal”, also intensified Sunni “sectarian feelings and hostility toward Shites”. The ICG argues that “[t]he net effect was to solidify the Future Current’s hegemony over the Sunni community and Hariri’s control over the Future Current. Stunned by Hizbollah’s decision to turn its weapons inwards, Sunnis rallied as one behind the movement”.4

Following Hariri’s assassination, the Future Movement joined a number of anti-Syrian parties to form the March 14 Alliance, named after the date of mass demonstrations sparked by Hariri’s assassination that subsequently led to Syria’s withdrawal from

---

Lebanon. Hezbollah is aligned with other pro-Syrian groups, including Shiite party Amal, in the March 8 Alliance, similarly named after demonstrations in 2005.

The Future Movement is the largest party in the March 14 Alliance, and is currently led by Saad Hariri, the son of Rafiq. Legislative elections held in June 2009 resulted in the March 14 Alliance winning 71 of 128 seats, 26 of which were won by the Future Movement. Saad Hariri was appointed Prime Minister of Lebanon, and in November 2009 was sworn in as the head of a coalition government that consists of 15 ministers from the March 14 Alliance, including five from the Future Movement, 10 ministers from the March 8 Alliance opposition, including two members of Hezbollah, and 5 independents.

The unity government was structured to ensure that the March 14 Alliance does not hold a majority in the cabinet, the opposition is unable to block cabinet decisions on its own, and the independents, selected by Lebanese President Michel Suleiman, hold the balance of power on cabinet decisions.

2. Are any particular groups at risk of harm from pro-Syrian groups currently active in Lebanon, particularly in northern Lebanon?

Pro-Syrian group Hezbollah does not have a significant presence in the north, although it is a dominant force “in the southern suburbs of Beirut, the Bekaa Valley, and southern Lebanon.”

Sectarian clashes between anti-Syrian pro-government forces and pro-Syrian opposition groups erupted across the country in May 2008, resulting in the deaths of more than 80 people. Opposition groups including Hezbollah, Amal, and the Syria Social Nationalist Party (SSNP) militarily occupied areas of Beirut, attacking offices associated with the Future Movement. Conversely, members of pro-government groups such as the Future Movement and the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) captured and killed opposition fighters in northern Lebanon. The violence continued into at least June in Tripoli, where

---

6 UK Home Office 2009, Operational Guidance Note – Lebanon, 10 June, p.9 – Attachment 6
9 UK Home Office 2009, Operational Guidance Note – Lebanon, 10 June, p.11 – Attachment 6
“pro-government Sunnis fought against pro-Syrian, pro-Hezbollah Alawites as the army and police struggled to contain the situation. Gunfire between militants on the two sides, house burnings, and a bomb planted in a Sunni apartment building claimed at least ten lives and wounded dozens”.11

In September 2008, “Sunni and Alawite leaders in northern Lebanon signed a reconciliation agreement calling for an end to the violence between the two groups. In mid-September 2008, fourteen political factions began meeting in reconciliation talks under the direction of the president, Michel Suleiman, as required by the Doha Accord”.12 Nevertheless, the ICG reported in October 2010 the mostly Sunni Bab-Tebbaneh and predominantly Alawite Jabal Mohsen neighborhoods of Tripoli have recently “witnessed both verbal and military escalation, including the firing into the latter neighborhood of a rocket that injured two”.13

The UK Home Office reported in June 2009 that although “[t]he inter-factional fighting which broke out in May 2008 led to many deaths and injuries…there are no known reports of reprisals by Hizballah against individuals for affiliation to a particular Lebanese political group”. The UK Home Office also reports that although Amal, another pro-Syrian Shiite party currently active in Lebanon, “has been involved in violent activity, there are no reports of individual ill-treatment by Amal of those who oppose it”.14

However, there are a number of reports of attacks and killings of anti-Syrian politicians and supporters of anti-Syrian political parties. Some of these reports implicate Hezbollah, although the group has denied any allegations. For example, Research Response LBN34751 of May 2009 cites reports which indicate that members of the March 14 Alliance were attacked in the lead up to the June 2009 elections. For example, a Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) member was stabbed to death in Beirut, allegedly by supporters of Hezbollah, who denied involvement. The Future Movement claims that the Beirut home of one of its members was firebombed.15 Additionally, NOW Lebanon reported in April 2009 that a member of Shia party the Lebanese Option Gathering claimed to have been assaulted by supporters of Amal in Beirut.16

In April 2008 two supporters of the Phalange party, a member of the March 14 Alliance, were shot and killed, allegedly by two supporters of a pro-March 8 Alliance Member of Parliament.17 Clashes between the anti-Syrian Lebanese Forces and the pro-Syrian Marada group in September 2008 killed two people in the northern town of Bsarma. In August and

11 ‘Lebanon Overview’ 2008, Minority Rights Group International website, June
12 ‘New Crisis, Old Demons in Lebanon: The Forgotten Lessons of Bab-Tebbaneh/Jabal Mohsen’ 2010, Middle East Briefing N°29, International Crisis Group website, 14 October
13 ‘Veal Inter-factional Fighting’ 2009, Operational Guidance Note – Lebanon, 10 June, p.10 – Attachment 6
14 ‘Vandals attack Bassem al-Sabaa’s residence’, Future Movement (Lebanon) website, 3 April – Attachment 15
15 ‘LOG accuses Amal supporters of attacking a party member’ 2009, NOW Lebanon, 20 April – Attachment 10
September 2008 bomb attacks on buses in Tripoli killed at least twenty people, including civilians and Lebanese soldiers. On the other hand, a BBC News report from December 2009 states that at least one person was killed and several others injured in a shooting attack on a busload of Syrian workers in the Deir Emar district of Tripoli in northern Lebanon.

The New York Times reported in October 2008 that the string of bombings in northern Lebanon indicates that sectarian tension in the region is increasing. Growing support for hard-line Sunni Islamists in the area led to the Syrian president’s warning that the predominantly Sunni north had become “a real source of extremism and a danger to Syria”. On the other hand, “[m]any Lebanese political leaders say Syria and its allies…are trying to win votes in the coming parliamentary elections by smearing their opponents with the image of Al Qaeda. Some openly accuse Syria of orchestrating the bombings”.

Furthermore, Minority Rights Group International (MRG) states that the assassination of Rafiq Hariri in 2005 was followed by a number of additional killings of anti-Syrian politicians and journalists. In June 2007 an anti-Syrian member of parliament was killed in a bomb blast in Beirut, along with nine other people. In September 2007 another Beirut bomb blast killed seven people, including an anti-Syrian member of parliament, the sixth killing since the assassination of Hariri.

Nevertheless, the US Department of State reported in March 2010 that “[i]t remained difficult to distinguish politically motivated crimes allegedly committed by opposition groups or terrorists from simple criminal acts or disputes, as the government did not exercise control over all its territory and investigations of suspicious killings rarely led to prosecutions.”

The Special Tribunal for Lebanon

An international tribunal, the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL), has been established to investigate and prosecute those responsible for the assassination of Rafiq Hariri. Hezbollah and its pro-Syrian allies have attempted to discredit the STL as a political instrument of the West and Israel, claiming that it is “one more element in an alleged pro-American, pro-Israeli plot to turn Lebanon against the Arab world”.

Hezbollah has intimidated supporters of the STL, and warned that failure of Saad Hariri’s government to denounce the tribunal will result in “firm action” being taken. Nevertheless, some members of the March 14 Alliance believe that Hezbollah’s threats are meaningless as it cannot afford to promote its image as a sectarian militia. The ICG, however, argues that Hezbollah “can ill afford to do nothing”, while Hariri “would pay a heavy price for

---

18 UK Home Office 2009, Operational Guidance Note – Lebanon, 10 June, p.10 – Attachment 6
19 ‘Bus carrying Syrian workers attacked in Lebanon’ 2009, BBC News, 21 December – Attachment 31
turning his back on the murder of the man who was both his father and [the Sunni] community’s pre-eminent leader”, including potential “violent action by Sunni groups angered at the denial of justice”. 24 Saad Hariri has vowed not to give in to threats to denounce the STL, although has withdrawn his accusation of Syria’s implication in his father’s assassination, which he admitted was ‘political’. 25

The STL is expected to issue indictments for Hariri’s assassination in the near future. It is widely speculated that members of Hezbollah will be indicted, which could lead to renewed violence between Shiite and Sunni communities. 26 The US Congressional Research Service reports that “[n]umerous media reports in July and August 2010 speculated that high-ranking members of Hezbollah may be indicted, and expressed concerns that such indictments could trigger sectarian and regional tensions that could lead to conflict”. 27 According to BBC News, expected indictments of Hezbollah members have raised fears of “a new round of sectarian conflict”. 28 Al Jazeera reported in November 2010 that Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah has threatened that the group will “cut off the hand” of anyone attempting to arrest its members over Hariri’s assassination. 29

Tensions between anti-Syrian supporters of the STL, including the Future Movement, and pro-Syrian groups opposed to the STL, are sharply escalating in the lead up to the expected indictments. A September 2010 article in Arabic international daily newspaper Ashraq Al-Awsat argues that “[t]he situation in Lebanon continues to be a source of concern, domestically, regionally, and internationally, particularly in light of the escalation between Hezbollah and some of its allies on one side, and the Future Movement and some of its allies, on the other. Despite efforts to dispel the climate of tension that has

---

existed between the two sides since the events of 7 May 2008…the political discourse from both parties’ remains inflammatory, and a campaign of escalation continues”.

*BBC News* similarly reported in November 2010 that “[t]ensions have been steadily mounting over recent months” and that “[t]he issue is dominating the Lebanese political arena”. The issue is so significant that it is preventing the national unity cabinet from meeting. In October 2010, the ICG indicated that the potential political stalemate resulting from the increasing tensions could create instability in areas divided over current events, including in Tripoli.

3. **Is state protection available for a Sunni Muslim belonging to the Future Movement?**

Security forces in Lebanon include the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), which controls borders, and the police, or Internal Security Forces (ISF), which “enforce laws, conduct searches and arrests, and refer cases to the judiciary”. In addition, the State Security Apparatus reports on groups deemed to be a threat to national security.

Sources referred to in *Research Response LBN33661* dated 9 September 2008 indicate that the ISF is generally perceived as an anti-Syrian, Sunni dominated instrument of the Future Movement led government. In recent years, the ISF has increased in size and capability, although a number of sources indicate that Hezbollah is, to some extent, beyond its control. It is also reported that in areas controlled by the group, Hezbollah is “a law unto itself”. Furthermore, the ISF’s capacity to protect civilians from acts of violence may be limited by the increasing prevalence of the ISF itself being targeted by a range of militant groups.

The UK Home Office argues that “Lebanon has a history of political assassinations across all confessional groups for which the perpetrators have not generally been identified”. Similarly, the US Department of State reported in March 2010 that “investigations of

---


36 UK Home Office 2009, *Operational Guidance Note – Lebanon*, 10 June, pp.11-12 – Attachment 6
suspicious killings rarely led to prosecutions.”\(^{37}\) Human Rights Watch noted in January 2010 that the judicial authorities had failed to prosecute those responsible for attacks on civilians during the May 2008 violence between Hezbollah-led opposition and pro-government groups. In addition, no investigations have taken place into violations committed in the 2006 war between Hezbollah and Israel.\(^{38}\) Nevertheless, in October 2008 charges were issued against 34 people suspected of committing terrorist attacks, including the bus bombings in Tripoli.\(^{39}\)

Foreign government reports also indicate that government security forces and armed groups in Lebanon, including Hezbollah, continue to arbitrarily arrest and detain people. In addition, weak enforcement limits the effectiveness of laws against bribery and extortion by government officials, including police officers. Government efforts to reform law enforcement have been hindered by security issues and a lack of political stability. Government corruption is also a significant problem in Lebanon. Transparency Lebanon reported in September 2009 that types of corruption evident include “systemic clientelism; judicial failures, especially in investigations of politically motivated killings; electoral fraud from the absence of preprinted ballots; and bribery”. Furthermore, the judiciary is subject to political pressure, with influential politicians intervening to protect their supporters from prosecution.\(^ {40}\)

**Relocation**

Hezbollah operates mainly in southern Lebanon and in Beirut. Internal relocation for persons fearing Hezbollah may be possible, although for persons of significant adverse interest to the group, relocation may not necessarily remove the potential for harm.\(^ {41}\)

### Attachments


2. ‘The Future Movement’ (undated), Future Movement Official Website  

3. ‘Future Movement’ (undated), Radio Sawt Beirut International website  


---

\(^{41}\) UK Home Office 2009, *Operational Guidance Note – Lebanon*, 10 June, p.11 – Attachment 6
5. ‘Lebanon finally forms government’ 2009, BBC News, 10 November


7. ‘Lebanon’s national-unity cabinet formed’ 2009, NOW Lebanon, 9 November

8. ‘Hariri reelected as the head of Future Movement’ 2010, Ya Libnan, 25 July


10. ‘LOG accuses Amal supporters of attacking a party member’ 2009, NOW Lebanon, 20 April. (CISNET Lebanon CX224716)

11. ‘Lebanon Overview’ 2008, Minority Rights Group International website, June


14. RRT Research & Information 2009, Research Response LBN34751, 5 May.

15. ‘Lebanese party: member dead after attacks following Hariri rally’ 2009, Deutsche Presse Agentur, 15 February. (CISNET Lebanon CX220759)

16. ‘Vandals attack Bassem al-Sabaa’s residence’, Future Movement (Lebanon) website, 3 April. (CISNET Lebanon CX224094)

17. ‘Trial by Fire: The Politics of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon’ 2010, Middle East Report N°100, International Crisis Group website, 2 December


19. ‘Hariri: Will not give in to threats’ 2010, Al Jazeera, 14 November


