

# President's 'greed for power' maintains Lebanese stalemate

Tue, 2021-08-10 21:57

BEIRUT: A year has passed since Prime Minister Hassan Diab's government resigned. On Aug. 10, 2020. Diab addressed the Lebanese five days after the Beirut port explosion, saying that he had decided to quit because "the corruption system is greater than the state."

Since then, Diab has been the caretaker prime minister of a government that cannot make decisions in a country that is sliding further every day into the abyss.

It is the longest caretaker period for a government in Lebanon's political history. Three PMs have in vain been assigned to form a government. No new meeting has been set between President Michel Aoun and Prime Minister-designate Najib Mikati.

The information leaked from their previous six meetings indicates that the two parties are growing farther apart and that Aoun's demands now include the Ministry of the Interior as well as the Ministry of Justice.

Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri and his allies in Hezbollah had nominated a Shiite figure, who is the director of financial operations at the Central Bank, to take over the Ministry of Finance, but Aoun rejected this proposal because he is calling for a criminal investigation into the Central Bank's accounts.

Diab, who is in self-quarantine because he came in contact with a coronavirus positive person, addressed the Lebanese on Tuesday saying: "The new government, whose formation is yet to succeed, is supposed to resume negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which is our only way out of this imminent collapse."

Diab warned that "any existing government will not be able to address the structural crisis without external assistance and a practical plan."

Future Bloc MP Mohammed Hajjar told Arab News: "The failure to form a government so far is caused by a team composed of President Aoun and his son-in-law, MP Gebran Bassil. They want a tailor-made country on their own terms and that serves their personal interests. Aoun wants to control the government, so if there are no parliamentary elections, he wants to stay in power and extend his term with a constitutional fatwa (edict). Aoun does not mind repeating what he did in 1989 when he took over a separatist government."

Hajjar claimed that during the consultations between Mikati and Aoun, the latter requested 12 of the 24 ministers. "I can assure you that this is true. He will keep coming up with excuses until he gets the government he wants."

His criterion is the interest of his son-in-law and himself only; to hell with the country's interests."

He said that Hezbollah is Aoun's ally in what is happening now. "If Hezbollah wanted the government, it would have put pressure on Aoun and his political team, but what we see is the opposite, and no one can convince us that Hezbollah is looking out for Lebanon's interests. It works for Iran's interests and keeps the collapsing Lebanon as a card in Iran's hands."

Regarding the militant group's recent rocket attacks on Israel, he said: "The tension Hezbollah stirred on the southern front in response to the tension in the Arabian Sea is nothing but a service to Iran."

In September 2020, Aoun warned: "We are heading to hell if a government is not formed." At that time, he insisted on getting the Ministry of Finance and refused to give it to the Shiite community.

The Lebanese have been quoting Aoun's "hell" comments as the noose around their necks tightens.

On Tuesday, the head of the General Labor Union, Bechara Al-Asmar, said he was informed many mills have stopped operating due to lack of diesel, while the rest will eventually follow suit once they run out of fuel.

Hospitals announced that they only have enough diesel to run their private generators for a few days.

The International Organization for Migration warned on Tuesday that 120,000 migrant workers "are in dire need of humanitarian assistance in Lebanon due to the accelerating economic collapse that is plaguing the country."

Meanwhile, the gasoline stock in Lebanon is only sufficient for five days. Two ships obtained prior approval from the Central Bank to come to Lebanon, but the date of their arrival has not yet been fixed.



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## [Accepting UN-brokered peace initiative would be surrender, says Houthi leader](#)

Tue, 2021-08-10 20:21

ALEXANDRIA: The leader of the Houthis has strongly rejected the current UN-brokered peace plan and ordered his supporters to keep fighting, striking a blow to efforts to end the war in Yemen.

In a televised speech on Monday, Abdul-Malik Al-Houthi said that accepting

the peace plan would mean surrendering to their opponents. He called for an end to the "blockade" and Arab coalition airstrikes on his forces as preconditions for agreeing to peace talks.

"The American perspective on peace means surrender, occupation and the continuation of aggression and siege," he said, ordering his supporters to continue their recruiting and training and to send reinforcements to the battlefields.

Martin Griffiths, the former UN special envoy to Yemen, had pushed Yemeni parties to accept a peace plan that suggested introducing a nationwide truce, reopening Sanaa airport, and lifting restrictions on Hodeidah seaports before commencing peace talks.

The UN mediator believed that stopping military operations across Yemen, including the deadly offensive by the Iran-backed Houthis on Marib city, would alleviate the dire humanitarian crisis.

But the Houthis rejected the plan, replying that the coalition should first stop airstrikes, reopen Hodeidah seaport and Sanaa airport with no restrictions on flights and destinations.

The Yemeni government said that the new peace initiative addresses Houthi concerns about the airport and the movement of goods and fuel through Hodeidah seaport, accusing the rebels of not being interested in ending the war.

On Monday, Houthi spokesman Mohammed Abdul-Salam told Lebanese channel Al-Mayadeen that they would not cease military operations soon, accusing Washington of standing by their opponents.

"Yes, the field in Marib and in the other areas are not linked to any political discussions we are having," he said, referring to the latest international diplomatic activities by UN and Omani mediators to convince them to accept the UN peace deal.

The Houthi snubbing of peace efforts to end the war came days after the UN named Hans Grundberg, a Swedish diplomat, as a new envoy for Yemen.

Yemen political analysts argue that the Houthis are trying to send messages to the international community and the new UN envoy that they would not relinquish their military gains and no one should expect them to make big concessions to make peace.

"There is a firm belief (among the Houthis) that accepting peaceful solutions, ending the coup or abandoning military the gains is considered surrender," Ali Al-Fakih, editor of Al-Masdar Online, told Arab News, adding that the Houthis are seeking to separate the Marib offensive from other issues, as they consider Marib to be an internal affair.

"They want to tell the international community that they only accept a solution that stops the interference of the Arab coalition in Yemen, opens airports and seaports, and accepts them as a legitimate authority."

On Monday, Yemen's Defense Ministry said many Houthi leaders were thought to be killed when the coalition's warplanes hit their meeting in Rahabah district.

The warplanes also destroyed five military vehicles and killed several Houthis in the same district.

Last week, army troops and allied tribesmen made limited advances in Rahabah after seizing control of two mountains.



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Houthis snub new UN envoy for Yemen, president welcomes appointment

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# Qatar election exclusions spark controversy, arrests: BBC

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Arab News

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1628553688405912400

Tue, 2021-08-10 03:00

Candidacy requirements to take part in Qatar's Shoura Council elections have sparked widespread controversy on social media in the emirate, [the BBC has reported](#).

The Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, recently ratified an electoral law for the first legislative elections in the country, due to be held in October.

Under the new law, "anyone whose original nationality is Qatari and is 18 years of age and above shall have the right to elect members of the Shoura Council. Those who have acquired Qatari nationality, provided that their grandfather is Qatari and was born in Qatar, shall be excluded from the original nationality condition."

The law also stipulates that candidates' "original nationality must be Qatari" and they must also be over 30 years of age.

## **#Shura\_Council\_Elections**

The conditions for candidacy and election sparked controversy on social media in the country, with the requirement that the candidate must "originally be Qatari" provoking widespread anger.

Some members of the Al-Murrah tribe, who do not meet the required conditions, posted several videos in protest at what they described as the "arbitrary law that prevents them from running for the Shoura Council elections."

Activists launched the hashtag

#Al\_Murrah\_Qatari\_People\_Before\_the\_Government, highlighting that the tribe was in Qatar before a government was ever formed.

## **Who are the "original Qataris"?**

According to Article 1 of the Qatari Nationality Law, the original Qataris are:

- Those who settled in Qatar before 1930, maintained their normal residence there and held on to their Qatari citizenship until the effective date of Law No. 2 of 1961.



- Anyone who is proven to be of Qatari origin, even if they do not meet the conditions stipulated in the previous clause and royally decreed as a Qatari.
- Those to whom the Qatari citizenship has been restored in accordance with the provisions of the law.
- Anyone born in Qatar or abroad to a Qatari father under the previous clauses.

The Ministry of Interior later said that seven people had been referred to the Public Prosecution after “using social media as a tool to spread false news and stir up racial and tribal strife.”

The ministry said in a tweet: “The concerned authorities found that the content published in their accounts is connected to the subject of the accusation. They were then referred to the Public Prosecution to fulfil its procedures in this regard.”

However, many rejected “the method of threats, veiled threats and incitement to tribal tension, which was issued by some.”

Lulwa bint Jassim Al-Thani said that “objectors should have resorted to the grievance authority of the Elections Committee before choosing to put their tribe in a confrontation with the state.”

Hamad Mubarak Al-Shafi said that “three years ago, some people repeated the slogan ‘my tribe is Qatar and my emir is Tamim.’ Now, with the #elections of the Shoura Council, the situation has changed among hypocrites who have changed their slogan to ‘my tribe is only mine’.”

Anwar Al-Rasheed said that “the Qatari election law may not meet the ambitions of many and has loopholes, but I am completely with it and if some have other views, please give us an alternative.”

He added: “Qatar and Kuwait are being subjected to an unprecedented smear campaign.”

Some hoped “that everyone would stop for a minute, and review some of the causes of objections and differences to nip sedition in the bud”.

### **Legislative elections**

Elections will be held to select two-thirds of the Shoura Council’s members, or 30 members of the 45 seats. The emir will appoint the remaining members.

The country will be divided into 30 electoral districts, with one candidate elected to represent each.

In a 2003 referendum, Qataris, who make up only 10 percent of the population, approved a new constitution that provided for partial elections to the council, of which all members are currently appointed.



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## [Egypt receives first shipments of Johnson & Johnson vaccine](#)

Mon, 2021-08-09 23:29

CAIRO: Egyptian Health Minister Dr. Hala Zayed has announced the arrival of the first shipments of the Johnson & Johnson (J&J) vaccine against coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

The Ministry of Health stated that 261,600 doses of the J&J vaccine were received at Cairo International Airport, in cooperation with the African Union.

The receipt of the vaccine shipments comes within the ministry's plan to diversify and expand the provision of anti-COVID-19 vaccines. The ministry has confirmed it will continue to receive other shipments of the vaccine during the coming period.



Ministry Spokesman Dr. Khaled Megahed stressed the importance of cooperating with international organizations to address the pandemic and provide vaccines to citizens.

Monday's doses will be distributed to the 126 centers designated to vaccinate people wanting to travel abroad, he said.

## **BACKGROUND**

**The Egyptian government said in June its aim was to vaccinate 40 percent of the population of more than 100 million against COVID-19 by the end of this year.**

The shipment will be subject to analysis in the laboratories of the Egyptian Drug Authority.

The J&J vaccine has proven effective in preventing COVID-19 infection and is a single-dose vaccine that does not require boosters, the spokesman said, adding that Egypt will receive 2.5 million doses of the Pfizer and AstraZeneca vaccines within days, followed by 1.7 million doses from the Covax Alliance.

Megahed stressed the need to obtain two doses of the same vaccine even if the date of the second dose is delayed.

On Aug. 14, a large number of Sinovac vaccines manufactured in Egypt will also be released to the local market and will be distributed to vaccine centers in the country.

Egypt has reported 284,641 infections and 16,566 COVID-19-related deaths since the pandemic began.

The government said in June its aim was to vaccinate 40 percent of the population of more than 100 million against COVID-19 by the end of this year.



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## [Hezbollah under fire as Lebanese political, economic crises continue](#)

Author:

Mon, 2021-08-09 23:08

BEIRUT: Hezbollah drew fresh criticism on Monday from the streets and the political class over the crisis in Lebanon.

Angry residents blocked several roads in protest against the economic crisis. As the Lebanese pound's value plummets, the country is also experiencing a major medicines shortage.

The process of forming a government headed by Prime Minister-designate Najib Mikati is slowly coming to a stalemate.

Meanwhile, Hezbollah launched a broadside against the Maronite Patriarch

Bechara Boutros Al-Rai, accusing him of taking stances that are no different than Israel's.

In his Sunday sermon, Al-Rai stressed that "the decision of war or peace should be in the hands of the state exclusively," calling for "a return to the 1949 Armistice Agreements and Lebanon's neutrality."

Hezbollah's campaign against Al-Rai elicited counter-reactions from various political figures and numerous Christian religious and political entities.

Druze leader Walid Jumblatt tweeted on Monday: "What crime did Al-Rai commit when he mentioned the armistice agreement? It seems that it is forbidden to discuss anything outside of the opposition group's discourse," sarcastically adding: "A democratic atmosphere par excellence."

Resigned MP Marwan Hamade accused Hezbollah of igniting tension on the southern border with Israel and slammed the group for its attack on the judicial investigator in the Beirut port explosion crime Judge Tarek Bitar.

Hamade addressed Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah: "Your graciousness has set us back 50 years."

"The balance of deterrence advocated by Hezbollah is a pretext for controlling Lebanon."

Saydet Al-Jabal Gathering warned that "if this campaign (against Al-Rai) does not stop immediately, we will take action in several cities."

Former MP Ahmed Fatfat told Arab News: "The Lebanese state is collapsing because there is a parallel state – the state of Hezbollah. It seems that we are now experiencing the Iraqi scenario, and even more."

"Hezbollah suggests that it has the ability to replace the state, but in fact, it has so far failed to do so. Its entourage suffers like all the Lebanese, due to Hezbollah's practices that destroyed the state."

He added: "Iran will not allow the formation of the government in Lebanon as long as the Iranian-US negotiations are ongoing."

"Nasrallah has, for the first time, admitted that there is no consensus over the resistance in Lebanon."

"This means that Hezbollah has lost supporters and stature, and its intimidation policy no longer works on people."

"The biggest evidence is that the families of the Beirut port victims carried a banner that read Iran Out on Aug. 4. People have other priorities now."

Fatfat said that Hezbollah's stances regarding medicine and fuel imports from Iran are mere propaganda.

"The Iranians did it once in Venezuela, but they took gold in exchange. Do they want to get their hands on the gold that is in the Lebanese Central

Bank?"

Elsewhere, caretaker Health Minister Hamad Hassan – affiliated with Hezbollah – criticized “financial and political decision-makers.”

Hassan said in an interview on Sunday: “The Central Bank and drug importing companies are responsible for exposing the health system in Lebanon to grave danger.”

Hassan defended medicine imports from Iran.

“The Central Bank and the importing companies are responsible for every missing medicine,” said the minister.

“A decision to urgently import and register missing medicines has been taken; any medicine that meets the conditions and standards will be imported.”

Hezbollah MP Hassan Fadlallah also tried to pressure the Central Bank on Monday, saying that the latter “is insisting on controlling the decision to lift subsidies on oil derivatives and medicines.”

Fadlallah said Hezbollah “is exerting efforts to expedite the import of fuel from Iran.”

Sidon, the third major Lebanese coastal city after Beirut and Tripoli, sank into complete darkness on Monday, amid demands to secure diesel fuel as soon as possible.

Lebanese cities continue to fall into darkness as private generator owners announce that they are running out of fuel in light of strict rationing by the Electricite du Liban.

The Lebanese are being supplied with an average of one hour a day of fuel, as the Central Bank has used up most of the foreign currency it needs to purchase fuel for state electricity.

There are over 3,500 private generators in Lebanon, with monthly bills for subscribers raised to more than 1.5 million Lebanese pounds (\$992).

MP Michel Daher complained on Monday that he “receives hundreds of visits daily from patients who need missing medicines. When importers are asked, they say that the Ministry of Health prices unsubsidized medicines at the rate of 12,000 Lebanese pounds to the dollar, half the actual value of the black market rate, which prompted them to stop importing.”



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Support to Hezbollah dented after rocket attack on Israel  
Hezbollah rocket attack on Israel brings Lebanon to the brink of war