

Lebanese Political Crisis Mounting: Sixth Minister Quits Cabinet

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A political crisis is forming in post-war (2006) Lebanon as the Lebanese government and the Future Movement that dominates the government have both evidently lost their legitimacy. The legitimacy of the Lebanese government as the representative and governing executive body of Lebanon has been eroded.

Under Lebanese law the Lebanese Cabinet and government must have representation from all of Lebanon's diverse religious communities to be legitimate and constitutional. The composition of the Lebanese Cabinet must have representation from the Christian denominations, Muslim community, and Druze of Lebanon.

Also, legally the President must be a Christian belonging to the Maronite Church (Maronite Catholic Church), the Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim, and the Speaker of Parliament a Shia Muslim.

Elements in the Lebanese government were exposed in political collaboration with the United States and Israel during the Israeli attacks on Lebanon. This has resulted in the dawdling deterioration of the political environment of Lebanon. Demands for the resignation of the Lebanese Prime Minister and his government have been intensifying since the Israeli campaign against Lebanon.

Hassan Sabeh was the first minister to resign from the Lebanese Cabinet. In February 2006, before the Anglo-American sponsored Israeli attacks on Lebanon, Hassan Sabeh as the Lebanese Interior Minister resigned from his post in the Lebanese government.

On November 11, 2006 all five of the Shia Muslim Ministers of the Lebanese Cabinet resigned; one independent, two members of Hezbollah, and two members of the Amal Movement, which is a political ally of Hezbollah.

Foreign Minister Fawzi Sallouk (Independent), Energy and Water Minister Mohammed Fneish (Hezbollah), Labour Minister Trad Hamadeh (Hezbollah), Health Minister Mohammed Jawad Khalifeh (Amal), and Agriculture Minister Talal Sahili (Amal) have all resigned, which means that Lebanon's largest religious denomination or group has no representation in the Lebanese Cabinet. Additionally the largest Christian political party and Christian alliance, the Free Patriotic Movement and the Aoun Alliance are not represented in the composition of the Lebanese government, which is dominated by the Hariri-led Future Movement and its political allies.

More than eight cabinet ministers would need to resign before the Lebanese government is

regarded as dissolved. It is practically improbable that any Shia Muslims within the Lebanese Parliament will be found to fill the vacated cabinet portfolios, because the majority of the Members of Parliament (MPs) that are Shia Muslims in Lebanon belong to either the Amal Movement or Hezbollah, the two political parties that have withdrawn their support for the Lebanese Prime Minister and government.

The resignation of Lebanon's Environment Minister, Yacoub Sarraf, from the Lebanese Cabinet following the resignation of the five other cabinet ministers has only helped further deteriorate the legitimacy of the current government in Lebanon. Yacoub Sarraf is a Christian cabinet minister and one of three Eastern Orthodox Christians in the Lebanese Cabinet. Lebanon's *National News Agency* reported that Yacoub Sarraf resigned on the grounds that the Lebanese government has lost its legitimacy.

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