

Lebanese Upcoming Elections May Hold a Wild-card

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Global Research, January 13, 2022

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [History](#)

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Lebanese parliamentary elections are set for March 27. While the social, political, and economic crisis which has caused the collapse of Lebanon is far from over, the various political factions are jockeying for position and making promises.

One political party leader has emerged and is a very old face on the scene. [Samir Geagea](#), the leader of the [Lebanese Forces](#) (LF) since 1986. The LF is a political party that began as an armed militia, with no connection to the national army, the Lebanese Army. Geagea still makes promises that he has 15,000 armed and trained fighters in the LF, and has suggested to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) that his Christian militia is capable of fighting Hezbollah, which has 100,000 armed members. Geagea, though representing a Christian sect, is, in fact, the agent of the KSA in Lebanon, while his bitter rival is President Michel Aoun and his Free Patriotic Movement, who are the country’s largest representatives of Christians.

In a recent interview, [Geagea defended KSA](#) and tried to distance KSA from connection to ISIS. It was the US administration of President Obama who created the Free Syrian Army, which later evolved into Al Qaeda, and finally ISIS. It wasn’t until 2017 that President Trump cut the funding on the CIA program which supported terrorists following Radical Islam. KSA, UAE, and Qatar all had bankrolled the US program for regime change in Syria, which failed, but succeeded in destroying Syria.

Trump famously stated it was the US who kept the King on his throne in Riyadh. The oil-rich Gulf states were used to following orders dictated by Washington. The US Embassy in Lebanon is similarly seen as issuing orders in Lebanon. For example, the head of the Lebanese Central Bank, Riad Salameh, has been protected from corruption charges by the order of the US Ambassador, who said Salameh is a “red line”.

During the Lebanese civil war, 1975-1990, [Geagea and his fighters all received their training in Israel](#), and with various Arab countries now making relationships with the occupiers of Palestine, this positions Geagea as a conduit between shared interests. The Syrian Social National party called for the dissolution of the LF, originally an Israeli surrogate militia which later transformed into a political party after the 2005 release of Geagea from

prison.

Geagea will be remembered most for his [brutal war crimes](#). He massacred all sects, even going so far as to blow up a church full of Christians. He spent 11 years in jail and was pardoned in 2005.

In the past, it was Rafik Hariri, and then his son Saad Hariri who represented the Saudi interests in Lebanon. Both were Saudi citizens, with Saad having been born and raised in KSA. However, the current de-facto leader of KSA, Muhamed bin Salman (MBS), held Saad Hariri against his will in a shake-down and caused Hariri to announce his resignation while in captivity. MBS was furious that [Hariri had managed to work with Hezbollah](#) in the political arena, even though his party was opposed to the group. It took French President Emmanuel Macron personally to gain the release of Hariri, where he returned to Beirut and rescinded his resignation.

Saad Hariri, like his father, was Prime Minister but was unable to form a government in 2021, and he left Lebanon to take up residence in the UAE. Now, with parliamentary elections on the horizon, Hariri has announced he will return to Beirut in January 2022, and at that time will announce if he will participate in the parliamentary elections for his Future Party.

Some analysts predict Saad Hariri will not participate in the upcoming elections but will defer to his older brother's campaign. [Bahaa Hariri](#), the eldest son of Rafik Hariri, and a successful businessman who has developed a unique style of citizen-activism in Lebanon in response to the Lebanese crisis.

Bahaa has taken a tough stance on Hezbollah, which will be enticing to the US and KSA. His current campaign list "Sawa Li Lubnan" is raising billboards across Beirut, and has 10 offices in Lebanon, with a supporting TV campaign as well. The platform is secular, appealing to all Lebanese, and has a modern reform base ideology, which emphasizes national unity in the face of corruption reforms.

The road back to stability in Lebanon may take years and may hit bumps along the way, but it would appear the March elections may be a starting place to build upon. The age-old political players remain the KSA and USA, each trying to call the shots in a tiny country best known for its geographical position, and it's 18 different religious sects all living side by side in the Middle East.

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This article was originally published on [Mideast Discourse](#).

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