



Lebanon

Introduction

Official Name: Lebanese Republic

Nationality: Lebanese

Area: 10,400 square kilometers (4015 square miles)

Languages: Arabic (official), French, English, Armenian

Currency: Lebanese pound (LBP)

Location: Middle East, bordered by Israel and Syria with coastline on the Mediterranean Sea

Statistical Information

Population	3.9 million
0-14 years	26.2 percent
15-64 years	66.7 percent
65+ years	7.1 percent
Birth rate	18 births/1,000
Death rate	6 deaths/1,000
Fertility rate	1.9 children/woman
Pop. growth rate	1.198 percent
Life expectancy	73.2 years
Literacy	87.4 percent
HIV/AIDS rate	0.1 percent
Below poverty line	28 percent
Ethnic groups	95 percent Arab
	4 percent Armenian
	1 percent other
Religion	59.7 percent Muslim
	39 percent Christian
	1.3 percent other

Economy

The 1975-90 civil war devastated the economy of Lebanon, which was once an international banking hub, a base for international corporations, and a year-round tourist destination. National output was cut in half and economic infrastructure was severely damaged. Since 1990, Lebanon has attempted to rebuild its physical and financial infrastructure by borrowing heavily, mostly from regional and domestic banks. As a result, national debt has skyrocketed. In an attempt to slow ballooning debt, the government tried to curb spending and privatize

state enterprises, but reform initiatives stalled despite \$2 billion in bilateral aid. The Israeli-Hezbollah conflict in July and August 2006 decimated Lebanon's economy, causing an estimated \$3.6 billion in infrastructure damage, in addition to an incalculable loss to the tourism industry and general economic confidence. Political tensions continue to hamper economic activity.

Government

Capital: Beirut

Lebanon is a republic. The president is elected by the National Assembly for a six-year term. He may not serve consecutive terms. The president appoints the prime minister and deputy prime minister in consultation with the National Assembly, while the prime minister appoints the cabinet in consultation with the president and National Assembly. By agreement, the office of president is filled by a Maronite Christian, the prime minister is a Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of the National Assembly is a Shi'a Muslim. The legislative branch consists of the one-house National Assembly, or Majlis al-Nuwab, whose 128 members are elected by popular vote on the basis of sectarian proportional representation.

Note: Lebanon is considered a confessional state; that is, different religious communities are represented in the government according to their numerical strength.

Climate

With its moderate Mediterranean climate, Lebanon enjoys around 300 days of sunshine per year. Winters are cold and snowy in the mountains and mild along the coast; summers are mild in the mountains and hot along the coast.

Environmental Concerns

Lebanon, famous for its cedars and other valuable trees, has experienced increasing deforestation. This deforestation contributes to soil erosion and eventual

desertification of otherwise arable land. Beirut experiences a large amount of air pollution from vehicular traffic and the burning of industrial wastes, and coastal waters become polluted from raw sewage and oil spills.

History

The earliest settlements in Lebanon date back to around 5000 B.C. The ancient city of Byblos, the main base of Phoenician culture, is believed to be the oldest continuously inhabited city in the world.

The coastal plain of Lebanon was home to the civilization the Greeks called Phoenicia (2700-450 B.C.). The Phoenicians were a Semitic seafaring people with civilized urban centers. Phoenicians were skilled traders and artisans, and roamed the waters of the Mediterranean Sea. They founded many trading colonies, including Cadiz in present-day Spain and Carthage in present-day Tunisia. The Phoenicians were also the creators of the earliest known phonetic alphabet.

Phoenicia had a tenuous tributary relationship with the empires of Assyria and Babylon; it was conquered outright by the Persians, who turned it into a satrapy. Alexander the Great added Phoenicia to his empire. After Alexander's death, the land fell to the Greek Selucid Empire. In the first century B.C. the area was conquered by the Roman Empire. It remained in Roman hands (and subsequently under the Orthodox Christian Byzantine Empire) until the rise of the Islamic Caliphate, soon after the death of Muhammed.

During the Umayyid Dynasty, the capital of the Caliphate was established in Damascus, Syria, increasing Muslim influence in Lebanon. In early 750 A.D., the Umayyids were replaced by the Abbasids. From the 10th century, the Abbasid Empire was plagued by sectarian and ethnic strife, and the mountain strongholds of Lebanon became a sanctuary for several religious sects which constitute major communities in Lebanon today. Ancestors of present-day Maronite Christians settled in Lebanon in the Byzantine era to avoid feuds with other Christian sects in the area. Another group, the Druze, also claims Lebanon as its birthplace. After al-Hakim, the Fatimid caliph of Egypt, proclaimed himself an incarnation of God, one of his followers, ad-Darazi, moved to southern Lebanon and continued to preach Hakim's tenets. Followers of ad-Darazi became known as the Druze.

During the Middle Ages, Lebanon was heavily involved in the Crusades. It was right in the path of

the First Crusade's march on Jerusalem. Later, Frankish nobles occupied Lebanon as part of the Crusader States. The southern half of Lebanon was part of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, while the northern half was right at the heart of the County of Tripoli. Although the Muslim ruler Saladin pushed the Christians out of the Holy Land in 1190, the crusader states in Lebanon were better defended. Muslim control of Lebanon was not reestablished until the 13th century under the Mamluks of Egypt. Various Muslim rulers argued over possession of Lebanon until the Ottoman Empire solidified its control in the 14th century, defeating the Mamluks.

During the conflict between the Mamluks and the Ottomans, the Lebanese emirs allied themselves with Damascus, which supported the Ottoman Empire. After the Ottomans drove the Mamluks out of Lebanon, they granted Lebanon a semi-autonomous status, which was not unusual for the more distant regions of their far-flung empire. Under Ottoman rule, two great feudal families controlled Lebanon.

The Maan family ruled Lebanon after the Ottoman conquest. They rose to power with Fakhr ad Din I, who was permitted by the Ottoman Empire to organize an army. Fakhr ad Din II, the greatest Maan ruler, attempted to merge the country's diverse religious groups into one Lebanese community in a bid for total independence. He built up the army and defeated Damascus in 1623. Fakhr ad Din also modernized the country, bringing in architects and irrigation and agriculture experts from Italy. He expanded Lebanon's territory, building forts as far away as Palmyra in Syria and extending control over Palestine. Worried about Lebanon's increasing power, the Ottoman sultan ordered the governor of Damascus to attack Lebanon. Fakhr ad Din was defeated, and was executed in Constantinople in 1635, ending the Maan family rule.

In 1697, the Shihab family succeeded the Maans. The most prominent Shihab was Bashir II, a Maronite Christian who became emir in 1788. Bashir II reduced taxes and tried to end the feudal system in an attempt to undercut his rival, Bashir Jumblatt, who had the support of the Druze community. The Druze were increasingly shut out from political power due to Bashir II's ties to the Maronite community. A sectarian war broke out with the Druze backing Bashir Jumblatt and the Maronites backing Bashir II. Between 1821 and 1825 there were massacres and battles as the Maronites attempted to gain control of the Mt. Lebanon region and the Druze captured the Biqa Valley. In 1825 Bashir II defeated and killed his rival. He was not forgiving, and harshly repressed

and disarmed the Druze community. The Maronite Christians grew wealthier and the Druze grew more economically isolated, further straining relations. Bashir looked for allies and found France, as Britain supported the Ottoman Empire. Rebellion fed by Ottoman and British money forced Bashir II to flee Lebanon. A new member of the Shihab family was appointed to rule Lebanon, but peace did not last long. In 1841, conflicts between the Maronites and the impoverished Druzes exploded when the Druze massacred Christians at Deir al Qamar. The Ottomans attempted to create peace by dividing the region into Maronite and Druze sections, but this only increased civil conflict.

In 1860, an uneasy peace boiled over into full-scale sectarian warfare when the Maronites began opposing the Ottoman Empire. Druze militias burned Maronite towns and besieged cities with the help of the Ottoman Empire. The Maronites, forced into a few refugee settlements, seemed on the verge of defeat when the Congress of Europe intervened and decided that the Druze had established control over most of Lebanon, and the Maronites would be left with a semi-autonomous region around Mt. Lebanon.

The remainder of the 19th century saw a period of stability, as Islamic, Druze, and Maronite groups focused on cultural and economic development. During the approach to World War I, Beirut became a center of various reform movements, but the outbreak of hostilities plunged the country back into instability.

Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the end of WWI, France was given control of Lebanon. France added territory to Lebanon that had long been administered as a province of Damascus. This dramatically changed the demographics of Lebanon, since the added territory was predominantly Muslim or Druze; Lebanese Christians had been the majority, but now they constituted barely 50 percent of the population. The number of Sunni Muslims increased eightfold, while the number of Shi'a Muslims quadrupled.

France drew up a constitution for Lebanon in 1926 which specified a balance of power between various religious groups. It did provide for a balance of power, but France designed it to guarantee the political dominance of its Lebanese Christian allies.

On November 26, 1941, France announced that Lebanon would be independent under the authority of the Free French government. Lebanon held elections in 1943, and on November 8 the newly elected

Lebanese government abolished the French mandate, declaring Lebanon completely independent. Angered, the French threw the Lebanese government officials in jail, but released them on November 22 in the face of international pressure, agreeing to recognize the independence of Lebanon. The last French soldiers withdrew in 1946.

After its independence, Lebanon experienced a period of prosperity during which it was known as the "Paris of the Middle East." It was a center of finance and trade, attracting many wealthy tourists.

Palestinian refugees poured into the country in the aftermaths of the 1948 and 1967 Arab-Israeli Wars. Along with these refugees came militant Palestinians allied with Yasser Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), who used Lebanon as a base for attacks on Israel starting in 1968. Two of these attacks led directly to the inception of Lebanon's civil war. In July 1968, a militant Palestinian faction hijacked an Israeli El Al civilian plane en route to Algiers. In December, an El Al plane in Athens was attacked, resulting in two deaths. In retaliation, Israel attacked 13 civilian aircraft belonging to Arab carriers at Beirut's international airport. Israel accused Lebanon of encouraging militant Palestinians.

Rather than encouraging a Lebanese crackdown on Palestinian militants, these events polarized Lebanese society, deepening the divide between pro- and anti-Palestinian factions. Sunni Muslims led the pro-Palestinian faction, while Maronites were strongly anti-Palestinian. This disagreement reflected increasing tensions between Muslims and Christians over the distribution of political power, and ultimately sparked a civil war. Heavy PLO presence in southern Lebanon led to Israeli bombing raids on more than 150 Lebanese towns from 1968 to 1974. At the same time, militia groups, loyal to individual leaders and defining themselves by their religious confession, began arming and training for conflict.

Political tension turned into outright military conflict in 1975, and the Maronite Christian leadership of Lebanon called for Syrian intervention in 1976. Military exchanges between Israel and the PLO led Israel to invade Lebanon in 1978. Israel occupied the southern section of Lebanon, forcing the evacuation of 100,000 Lebanese and causing the deaths of another 2,000. After the U.N. Security Council passed a resolution called for the immediate withdrawal of Israeli troops, Israel withdrew in late 1978. A cease-fire agreement between Israel and the PLO was reached on July 24, 1981, in which the two

sides agreed to stop hostilities along the Lebanon border and within Lebanon itself.

Israel again invaded Lebanon on June 6, 1982. Yasser Arafat attempted to negotiate evacuation of the PLO; nearly 15,000 Palestinian militants were evacuated by September 1 under an agreement that brought American, French, and Italian soldiers into the country. On September 14, Lebanese president Bashir Gemayel was assassinated. In retaliation, though there was no Palestinian connection in Gemayel's assassination, soldiers of his personal Phalangist militia killed anywhere from 700 to 3500 Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps while Israeli troops secured the perimeter.

Amine Gemayal succeeded his brother as president, and focused on the withdrawal of Israeli and Syrian troops from Lebanon. Israel agreed, contingent upon Syria's withdrawal, but Syria refused to discuss any withdrawal of its troops, bringing discussions to a stalemate.

Attacks against Western interests, including two truck bombings of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, attacks on the U.S. Marine and French parachute regiment barracks in 1983, and the kidnappings of Westerners by Hezbollah, prompted a U.S. and French withdrawal. Between 1985 and 1989, heavy fighting took place as the Shi'a Amal militia attacked Palestinian refugee camps. Prime Minister Rashid Karami was assassinated in 1987. In 1988 violent confrontation flared up in Beirut between the Shi'a Amal militia and the militant Shi'a Hezbollah group. When President Gemayal's term expired in 1988, he appointed another Maronite Christian, Michal Aoun, as acting prime minister. This move was highly controversial, and Lebanese Muslims backed Selim al-Hoss, a Sunni, instead. Lebanon was divided between a Christian prime minister in East Beirut and a Muslim prime minister in West Beirut with no president.

Aoun launched a war against the Syrian Armed Forces remaining in Lebanon in 1989 in an attempt to drive them out. In October 1990, the Syrian Air Force attacked the presidential palace and forced Aoun to take refuge in the French Embassy in Beirut. It is generally believed that the Syrians were supported by the U.S. in return for Syrian participation in the first Gulf war. Aoun was later sent into exile in Paris.

October 30, 1990, is the official date of the end of the Lebanese Civil War. The Taif Agreement, signed at the end of 1989, also contributed to the end of the war, as it changed the Lebanese constitution to

accommodate the shifting religious demographic and appease underrepresented Muslims. The National Assembly expanded to 128 seats, divided equally between Christians and Muslims. Nearly all Lebanese militias were disbanded and disarmed, with the exception of Hezbollah.

Sporadic violence continued. In 1991 a car bomb exploded in Basta, killing 30 people and wounding 120 more. In the late 1990s, the Lebanese government attacked Sunni extremists in the north. Israel and Syria continued their military presence in Lebanon.

In 2000, Israel withdrew its troops from southern Lebanon, but Syria refused. Lebanese Maronites and Druzes protested, and were later joined by Sunnis. Lebanese Shi'as, however, along with the Hezbollah group, supported the Syrian presence in Lebanon. Hezbollah remained deployed along the Lebanon-Israel border, disputing a 50-kilometer-square Israeli-occupied piece of land they believed should be part of Lebanon.

On February 14, 2005, former prime minister Rafiq Hariri was assassinated in a car-bomb attack. This was the second anti-Syrian Lebanese official killed in a car-bomb attack in a four-month period. On February 21, tens of thousands of Lebanese protesters held a rally at the site of the assassination, calling for the withdrawal of Syrian troops and blaming Syria for the murder. This started what was known as the Cedar Revolution, a series of demonstrations and civic action with the aim of forcing Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon. International pressure mounted to remove Syrian troops, and Lebanese protests grew to massive proportions. Lebanese Christians, Sunnis, and Druze demonstrated together.

On March 7, 2005, at least 70,000 people gathered at Martyr's Square to demand Syrian withdrawal. The next day, Hezbollah sponsored a rally of its own, drawing 400 to 500 thousand pro-Syrian Shi'as from southern and eastern Lebanon. One week after Hezbollah's impressive rally, anti-Syrian protesters again gathered in Martyr's Square. This time, the crowd was estimated to number between 800,000 and 1 million.

On April 26, 2005, the last Syrian troops left Lebanon. Immediately following the Syrian withdrawal a series of car bomb assassinations targeted anti-Syrian politicians and journalists.

Violence broke out in earnest on July 12, 2006, when Hezbollah and the Israeli military clashed in a 34-day

conflict fraught with bombings, blockades, guerilla warfare, and an Israeli ground invasion of Lebanon. The conflict ended on August 14, 2006, with a U.N.-brokered ceasefire, but was not officially over until September 8, when Israel lifted its military blockade of Lebanon.

Since 2006, there has been sporadic violence in Lebanon. In May of 2007, violence erupted in the Nahr al Bared Palestinian refugee camp outside of Tripoli. Militants allied with Al-Qaida began a conflict with government forces located outside the camp. In the wake of the conflict followed a wave of car bombings, including one in Beirut. The situation in Lebanon remains tense.

Ethnic Groups

Most Lebanese consider their communal and religious affiliations to far outweigh their ethnic affiliation. Around 95 percent of the Lebanese population can be considered Arab, although different groups within the Arab ethnic group emphasize different parts of their heritage. Maronite Christians and Druzes tend to emphasize their Phoenician heritage, preferring to refer to themselves as Canaanites or Phoenicians. Other Lebanese, such as Greek Orthodox or Melkite Greek Catholics, tend to emphasize the Greek heritage of Lebanon from the days of the Byzantine Empire. Some Lebanese Christians claim descent from the European Crusaders who ruled Lebanon for a few centuries during the Middle Ages. Lebanese Muslims, however, see themselves as Arabs.

Over 400,000 Palestinians are descendants of refugees of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and live in camps in Lebanon. Palestinian refugee camps are the poverty-stricken, and the Palestinians living there do not get the same rights as the rest of the population. Camps are overcrowded and squalid, and Palestinian refugees are restricted to low-and middle-range jobs such as construction workers and taxi drivers. Some of Lebanon's Christians worry that the primarily Sunni Muslim Palestinians dilute Christian numbers in Lebanon.

Another significant ethnic group in Lebanon is its population of Syrian nationals who are in Lebanon to work. The number fluctuates as seasonal workers come and go, but estimates range anywhere from 300,000 to 1.5 million. They are employed in menial labor and are generally very poor. Some anti-Syrian Lebanese consider their presence a Syrian attempt at colonization, but others believe they have been instrumental in post-war reconstruction.

Other distinct ethnic minorities in Lebanon include Armenians, Assyrians, Jews, and Kurds. These groups all have their own distinct languages and national homelands outside Lebanon. Together, they constitute less than 5 percent of Lebanon's population.

Religion

Lebanon's religious groupings are complicated and extremely sectarian. Political representation is defined on the basis of religious affiliation rather than geographic or ethnic groupings. No official census has been taken since 1932, because religious leaders believe that a census would upset the fragile balance of power in the government. Lebanon has had a long history of religious tension and disagreements. Even the largest religious groups, Muslims and Christians, are subdivided into many splinter groups which are often at odds with one another. The Lebanese constitution currently acknowledges 18 separate religious groups in the country. Lebanon's three majority religious groups are considered to be Shi'a Muslims, Sunni Muslims, and Maronite Christians, according to recent estimates. Each of the three sects claim a majority in the country, but since no recent census has been taken, there is no official data.

Muslims are estimated to comprise around 60 percent of Lebanon's population. Shi'as and Sunnis are the two major Muslim sects. In Lebanon's government, the speaker of the National Assembly is required to be a Shi'a Muslim, while the office of prime minister is always filled by a Sunni Muslim. Other recognized sects considered Muslim are the Alawites and Druzes.

Druzes consider themselves a sect of Shi'a Islam, but many mainstream Muslims regard them as either a separate religion or as heretics. The Druzes were originally a powerful sect in Lebanon, but their numbers today have dwindled to around 5 percent of the total population. Many Muslims reject Druzes because Druzes are believed to address prayers to the Fatimid caliph Al-Hakim, whom they regard as a manifestation of God himself. Druze beliefs are not completely understood due to the practice of *taqiya*, or concealing and disguising their beliefs from outsiders. Druzes and Maronite Christians have a history of bloody conflicts.

Lebanon has the largest Christian population of any country in the Arab world. Once a majority, the Christian population is now estimated to comprise less than 40 percent of the total population of Lebanon. The main Christian group in Lebanon is the Maronite Christians, estimated at about 20 percent of

the total population. Maronites have a long association with the Roman Catholic Church, but have their own patriarch, liturgy, and customs. The president of Lebanon is always a Maronite Christian. Other recognized Christian groups are the Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, Armenian Catholic, Assyrian Church of the East, Chaldean Catholic, Coptic, Evangelical Christian, Greek Catholic, Roman Catholic, Syriac Catholic, and Syriac Orthodox. “Evangelical” in the Lebanese context is equivalent to “Protestant” in an American or Canadian context.

The remaining recognized faith group in Lebanon is the Jewish faith. The sect is small and centered in Beirut. Most Jews left Lebanon after the Six-Day War in 1967.

Culture

Food—Lebanese cuisine is Mediterranean. Pita bread is a staple. Rice and pasta are also very common. Salted yogurt is common in many dishes. Lebanese eat red meat and chicken, usually as part of a dish. Pork is less common, as it is forbidden by Islamic law. Popular dishes include hummus, a chick pea dip, and *fool*, a fava bean dip. Eating is tied to family; people rarely eat alone. Eating out is considered an aesthetic experience as well as a social one, thus many restaurants afford pleasant views.

Social status—There is no caste system in Lebanon. Social status is determined by wealth. The middle class suffered heavily during the war and, as a result, the gap between the rich upper class and the lower classes has widened. This has led to demonstrations and strikes. Differences in wealth and status are often tied to religious affiliation.

Women—Lebanese women are allowed to vote, attend school, work, and participate in public life, but they tend to occupy traditionally female jobs such as secretaries and schoolteachers.

Marriage—Arranged marriages are rare in Lebanon, although they do exist. Today, factors such as money, a secure job, and a house play a big role in marriage contracts. Polygamy is legal in Lebanon, but carries a social stigma. As a result, few people choose this lifestyle. Religious courts preside over matters of marriage and divorce. In Muslim communities, divorce is relatively simple. In Orthodox Christian communities it is harder to obtain a divorce, and it is harder yet in Maronite communities.

Education—The Lebanese place a high importance on education. Many parents choose to send their children to more expensive religious private schools, where they will receive moral guidance. Young children are taught to be respectful and quiet. Parents are usually strict and demand much from their children. Lebanon has some of the best universities in the region, and the pursuit of higher education is encouraged, but there are few jobs awaiting young graduates.

Etiquette—The Lebanese are very friendly people. They enjoy the company of friends and family and tend to sit very close to one another. Shopping downtown and strolling with friends are popular activities among urban Lebanese. Lebanese manners are highly influenced by the French, especially in matters of eating, address, and dress. Hospitality is very important in Lebanon, and travelers are welcomed warmly.

Dress

All Christians and most Muslims who live in the cities of Lebanon wear European-style clothing. In rural Muslim towns and in some Muslim portions of cities, women still wear the *chador*, or Muslim traditional veil. In rural areas, women may wear colorful skirts and men may wear a traditional *serwal*, or baggy trousers.

Travel/Transportation

Lebanese drivers are often very aggressive and pay little or no attention to stop signs and traffic lights. Lanes are generally unmarked and roads outside the capital may be poorly lit at night. Pedestrians should exercise extreme caution when near a road. Road signs are improving throughout the country, but country roads are still often unmarked. Public transportation is safe, and Lebanon’s emergency services are good.

Foreign travelers should consider applying for an international driving permit (IDP) if they intend to drive while in Lebanon. An IDP is a document which allows a motorist to operate a vehicle in another nation when accompanied by a valid driver’s license from their own country.

Travelers can apply for an IDP in the United States or Canada before leaving home. The American Automobile Association (AAA) and the American Automobile Touring Alliance are the only organizations in the U.S. authorized by the State Department to issue IDPs. The Canadian Automobile Association (CAA) is authorized to issue IDPs to

Canadian citizens. The cost of an IDP is under \$20, and the application will need to be accompanied by two passport-sized photos.

Illness/Injury

Lebanon's hospital system in Beirut is very modern, and modern facilities, services, and medicines are widely available. The country has many well-trained doctors, many of whom speak English. Outlying areas of Lebanon may not have adequate medical facilities, but no area in Lebanon is further than three hours from Beirut.

Doctors and hospitals in Lebanon expect cash payment for their services, sometimes even before service is rendered. Without payment, some places may deny care even in emergency cases.

Contact the U.S. Embassy in Beirut for a list of English-speaking doctors and hospitals.

Crime

The crime rate in Lebanon is moderate. The most common types of crime are home robberies or car thefts. In crowded urban areas, travelers should guard against pickpockets.

Safety and Security

In 1997, the U.S. government lifted its 1985 ban on American-citizen travel to Lebanon, replacing it with a travel warning. Travelers should be especially cautious in the southern suburbs of Beirut, parts of the Bekaa Valley, and areas south of the Litani River. Hezbollah retains a strong presence there, and there is the potential for violence by other terrorist groups.

The potential for sporadic violence in Lebanon is extremely high. Prominent anti-Syrian government officials are often targeted by car bombs, which have the potential to kill and injure many innocent bystanders when they explode.

Palestinian refugee camps can be volatile. Palestinian groups hostile to both the Lebanese government and the U.S. operate within refugee camps in different areas of the country. Violence within camps has resulted in casualties due to shootings and explosions. Asbat al-Ansar, a terrorist group with links to Al-Qaida, operates within the Ain al-Hilwah refugee camp and has targeted Lebanese and foreign interests.

The ability of the U.S. government to help American citizens in Lebanon is limited. Some areas of Lebanon are unsafe for U.S. embassy personnel; in case of emergency in one of these areas, embassy

personnel may not be able to provide any assistance to American citizens.

Land mines and unexploded ordnance, such as cluster bombs, pose a danger in remote areas of South Lebanon and in other areas where civil war fighting was intense.

Entry/Exit Requirements

A valid U.S. passport and a Lebanon visa are required to enter Lebanon. Travelers can purchase a short-term tourist visa at the border; for information about other types of visas, contact the Embassy of Lebanon, 2560 28th Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20008, or visit the embassy website at www.lebanonembassyus.org.

Travelers holding passports that contain visas or entry/exit stamps for Israel will most likely be refused entry to Lebanon. Travelers whose passports contain Israeli entry/exit stamps or visas and who hold Arab nationality may be subject to arrest and imprisonment by the Lebanese government.

Immunizations

Although yellow fever is not a disease risk in Lebanon, the government requires proof of vaccination if you have traveled through a country where yellow fever is present.

Other vaccines you may want to consider include hepatitis A and B, both of which are considered high risk in Lebanon, and typhoid, which is recommended for anyone traveling or working in the Middle East.

Electricity

A power converter is necessary to run many American appliances in Lebanon, as the country uses both 110V/50Hz and 220V/50Hz power. A variety of plug types can be found in Lebanon, including types A and B, used in the United States, along with types C, D, and G. A set of adapter plugs may be necessary. Power is sometimes spotty, though blackouts rarely last for more than an hour or two. Most hotels have their own generator systems in case of a power outage.