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The Arab Reform Initiative

# Security Sector Reform in Lebanon

Internal Security Forces and General Security

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## **1. Introduction and background**

The security troubles of Lebanon have been in the front news around the World for so long. Since the late 60s, the small coastal tourist haven in the Middle East, attractive for its historical heritage, its entertainment and service industry, and for its eloquent blend between western attire and Arab identity, has been the principle target of wars, violence and crime.

The attempt to reform the security sector was launched rather precariously in the early 1990s when peace was restored and a central government of national reconciliation was formed with Syrian, Saudi, French and American involvement. The main visible operationalisation of this settlement was constitutional reforms. The newly amended constitution known as the Ta'if agreement redistributed parliament seats equally between Muslims and Christians and transferred some of the authorities from the Christian Maronite president to the cabinet headed by the Muslim Sunni prime minister. Another important addition to the Ta'if constitution was the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Right (paragraph B of its preamble).

The Syrian army and intelligence services were providing internal security stability during this phase, and were forcefully involved in policy making in the most intimate governmental matters. The intricate political internal and regional tensions that prevailed were obstructive to adequate reform within the Internal Security Forces and The General Security organizations. Israel's continued occupation of the Southern parts of Lebanon and its aggressions against Lebanese civilians created a popular urge to violently resist occupation and violations. Such popular urge encouraged the rise of organized non-governmental heavy armament.

Since the liberation of most of the Lebanese occupied territories in 2000 and following the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafic Harriri in 2005, and following the withdrawal of the Syrian Army from Lebanon, the Lebanese Internal Security Forces, faced by numerous challenges, underwent once more, an inadequate attempt to reform. The primary security functions in the country during this delicate phase were granted to the Lebanese Army which was able to reunite after the Ta'if constitution was passed in 1990.

This brief conference paper will pinpoint the flaws in the Lebanese security apparatus and will raise broad recommendations on necessary reform.

### **Methodology and limitations**

This paper will present an overview and will avoid details.

The data for this paper, including numbers and figures were collected from the Internal Security Forces and The General Security and the Lebanese Parliament library. Decrees and Laws were reviewed and the researcher conducted a number of interviews with high ranking officers in various security institutions.

As for the presented analysis, it is the result of a thorough review of the ISF and GS performance since 2004, and a careful observation of the dynamics within these two main internal policing forces.

### **Brief chronology**

- 1957 Civil war between pro-Nasser Arab Nationalist Muslims and pro-Western (Baghdad Pact) Christians. Ended with election of reconciliation president but tensions remained.
- 1968 Palestinian begin building guerilla bases in Lebanon  
Israeli military jets bomb Beirut International Airport
- 1971 Palestinian Liberation Organization headquarters in Beirut following massacre in Jordan
- 1973 Cooperation between Israelis and Christian militias.  
Israeli Army commandos assassinate Palestinian leaders in Beirut civilian neighborhood.
- 1975 Start of the Lebanese civil war characterized by violent clashes between Western and Leftist spheres of influence.
- 1976 Syrian army enters Lebanon to assist in restoring order, but fails and remains.
- 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon and occupation of Beirut followed by the Sabra and Shatila massacre of Palestinian refugees
- 1984 Civil conflict erupts following Israeli withdrawal from Beirut and the installment of occupation forces in the Southern part of the country
- 1989 Severe internal clashes leading to a reconciliation conference in Taif, Saudia Arabia, where an agreement was made by Lebanese rival political groups which was made concrete with the adoption of constitutional amendments.
- 1991 The first National reconciliation government. Start of a period of security stability and reconstruction obstructed by repeated Israeli bombings of civilian infrastructures, in search for guerilla fighters according to Israel.
- 2000 Withdrawal of the Israeli occupation forces from most of Southern Lebanon after decades clashes with guerilla fighters.
- 2005 Assassination of former prime minister Rafic Harriri. Withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon. Start of a new phase of internal tensions and clashes between Muslim Sunnis accusing Syria of assassinating Hariri and Muslim Chiites faithful to Syria the source of weapons during Israeli occupation.
- 2008 Election of the reconciliation candidate Michel Sleiman as president.  
Forming of a national reconciliation government.

## **2. Main Challenges facing the security sector in Lebanon**

From 1990 until today several attempts were made to improve the security institutions in Lebanon, and although some progress was noted, especially in the first half of the 1990s,

numerous flaws remain noticeable. 5 main flaws are explained in the following paragraphs.

### **A- Political and financial corruption**

Most government institutions suffered substantial damage during the war and during the post war phase the internal security institutions were not rebuilt adequately especially regarding ethical standards and mechanisms of inspection and accountability.

Corruption was further encouraged by financial difficulties due to the economic crisis in the country. Officers and staff within the ISF, the GS and the ST became involved in innovative deviant methods to collect money from the citizens and from private companies.

The “wasta” phenomenon is well known within the security sector. It functions based on a system of connections and affiliations to high ranking officers or to influential politicians. Religious and sectarian ties and political or ideological relations often persuade the law enforcement personnel to be lenient with violators of Law or to work on a case harder than others or even to release or improve the incarceration conditions of detained persons. Such persuasions may also be reversed.

As for the “iqramia” or the “bakhshish” phenomenon, it is often apparent when there are no political or social ties to the law enforcement representative. In this case financial compensation for bypassing the Law is not uncommon. This is especially the case when ISF officers inspect construction sites or deliver a judiciary notice or a court order.

Corruption is also apparent within the ISF, the GS and the ST as high ranking officers often favor staff over others for religious, sectarian or political reasons. High ranking officers also use their subordinates for personal services to themselves and to their family and friends.

### **B- Inadequate staff development**

ISF officers lack adequate training and are not specialized in their line of work. Officers appointed to specific functions do not have the sufficient knowledge and skills. This is especially the case regarding officers appointed at the prisons and in street patrols and detective tasks. Lack of professionalism is especially noticeable when reading investigative reports which are handwritten in an untailed style.

Investigative methods are primitive and inefficient, thus investigators tend to use violence (or the threat of using violence) during suspect questioning. Polygraph is still used and is considered reliable.

Interactions between security officers and civilians are often informal. In some cases officers tend to act as womanizers, initiating intimate conversations; and in other cases as

bullies, insulting citizens who violate laws and regulations and beating them in extreme cases.

The training police officers endure does not emphasize ethical standards, and assessment prior to graduating from the police institute is not demanding. Overall, police training in Lebanon is mediocre and does not match professional standards.

### **C- Insufficient and unsuitable equipment**

The ISF and the GS are both missing necessary equipment.

Most ISF police stations are missing the basic prerequisites for proper law enforcement headquarters. The questioning room is not equipped and the detention facility within the station does not meet constitutional standards. Most police stations are not equipped with computers or even photocopying machines and the filing system is chaotic at times and confusing at others.

Forensic laboratories are not well equipped and are often missing the necessary chemicals. There are no special quarters for autopsy.

The ISF uses large cars, most of them 4 wheel drive, for patrols in cities and coastal roads. These cars spend a large amount of petrol. The 4 wheelers are not equipped with special seats for detained persons. Hence those are often squeezed in the trunk.

The ISF uses outdated trucks that do not meet constitutional standards, to transport prisoners. Upon their arrival to destination the locked-up passengers often faint from the heat and lack of oxygen.

The ISF, the GS and the ST officers wear military uniform and military boots. The ISF uses large military battalion trucks to transport police officers. The weapons used by the ISF are M16 and AK47 army machine guns. They are also requested to line up as an army battalion and give tribute during formal ceremonies.

### **D- Rivalry and lack of coordination**

The prevailing local security apparatus arrangements prior to Syrian forces withdrawal from Lebanon was characterized by encouraging multiplicity of security organizations. Such multiplicity weakened accountability. Sources of failure were harder to define when so many institutions were considered in charge of security without clear specialization. The multiplicity remains today.

Within the Internal Security Forces, an intelligence service was developed since 2005. Although the new service used several advanced methods in training and staff development, its biased political label led to serious limitations in its efficiency. These limitations were further accentuated as rivalry with the Army intelligence service erupted.

Tensions between other security institutions were also unavoidable especially when they would find themselves investigating the same crimes. This had severe negative outcomes, especially regarding crime scene management, collection, preservation and transportation of physical evidence and intelligence information.

According to Lebanese Law, the chief prosecutor is the main authority in criminal investigations. However, in order to avoid being accused of preferring a security institution over another, the chief prosecutor evaded resolving problems of multiplicity, at least on the crime scene.

It is crucial to note here that security institutions in Lebanon are distinct from a religious sectarian perspective as well as from a political stand. For example it is a matter of agreement since Lebanese independence in 1943 that the ISF chief is Sunni Muslim closely connected to the Sunni Prime Minister; the SG chief is Chiite Muslim or Maronite Christian closely connected to the Maronite President of the Republic; whereas the Army chief and the Army Intelligence services chief are both Maronites also closely connected to the President. As for the State Security, although it is officially under the authority of the Prime Minister, it is supposedly closely connected to the Muslim Chiite Speaker of the Parliament.

This complicated matrix is not permanent and sometimes modified depending on political arrangements.

<b>Religious sectarian and political informal reference*</b>		
Security Institution	Political Reference	Religious/Sectarian Reference
ISF	Prime Minister	Muslim Sunni
GS	President of the Republic	Christian Maronite
ST	Speaker of the Parliament	Muslim Chiite
AR	President of the Republic	Christian Maronite

\* Within every security institution, there are also spheres of influence pertaining to various religious and political groups

### **E-Outdated regulations and organization**

Several modifications to the Lebanese Laws and regulations, related to the security sector, were introduced since 1990. The most pertinent of these modifications was the new Penal Law. The latter grants the chief prosecutor inflated authority over Law enforcement, policing procedures and practices.

Law 17 which concerns the organization and function of the ISF, does not include a clear description of professional non military duties. Promotions are made based on seniority (years in service) rather than merit for special achievements or sacrifices.

Law 17 indicates that the general inspector of the ISF who is supposed to be linked directly to the Minister of Interior is also a member of the ISF management board headed by the ISF Director. Hence the general inspector may be faced with conflicts of interest

and is not independent from the leadership of the institution he is supposed to inspect and report to the Minister of Interior.

Law 17 is not fully respected by the ISF and violations are frequent, especially concerning use of violence.

### **3. Recommendations**

#### **A- Demilitarization**

Police work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century emphasizes bureaucratic follow-up and is, to a large extent, more administrative than military. The paramilitary characteristics and the battalion identity of the Lebanese law enforcement institutions are limitations to successful police work, especially when dealing with citizens' everyday issues such as traffic, misdemeanors and minor infractions.

The police is supposed to be in regular contact with the community and its demilitarization encouraging in that regard.

Developed professional administrative procedures also facilitate criminal investigations. Emphasis is supposed to be placed on archiving information about crimes, suspects, criminal history and electronic data from other service governmental and non-governmental organizations.

It is also recommended that criminal investigators be qualified academically not just in Law and Criminal Justice but also in other related social sciences. Crime analysts may be utilized in the Lebanese security sector to study trends and assess police efficiency.

#### **B- Prioritizing systematic accountability**

Law enforcement agencies inspection should be rigorous and regular. Inspectors are supposed to be independent from the inspected body.

The inspectors of the ISF, GS and the ST should receive reports from citizens and NGOs and investigate each one on a daily basis. However, inspection of police work should also be systematic, unannounced and random.

#### **C- Promoting alternative incentives**

The system should avoid officer promotion when the new post to be held by the promoted officer is unavailable. The maximum number of officers stated in Law 17 should be respected. It is not acceptable to have more than 70 generals in the ISF whereas its current manpower does not exceed 24000. (1 general/343 officers!)

The alternative incentives that may replace promotion when the post is unavailable may be based on rewards.

## D- Field specialization

It is also recommended that the officers appointed to a certain post should remain in that post. Specialization should be essential in law enforcement, especially since the increase of crime varieties with the advance of technologies and telecommunications.

Specific task teams should be created within the ISF and should be given priority in dealing with the situation whenever an occurrence related to their field of specialization arises. No other police force should be involved in a task that is not part of their specialization unless no other force is there.

Specific task teams may include a crime scene management team, riot police team, hostage taking situation team, a violent outrage situation team and others.

## E-Equal opportunities

The number of women involved in Law enforcement is very limited in Lebanon. The GS has a number of officers and although some of them hold high ranking positions, their authority is still largely undermined and their number is still very limited.

The ISF ranks do not include women but because men are not allowed to search women a limited number of women were employed by the ISF based a temporary contract. Involving women in the police force will require modifications to Law 17.

## 4. Tables and figures

### A- Basic references

Basic legal reference		
Internal Security Forces	General Security	State Security
Law 17 (1990) Decree 1157 (1991)	Decree 139 (1959) Decree 2873 (1959) Decree 9610 (1996) Decree 10783 (2005)	Decree 1 (1984) Decree 2661 (1985)

### B- Numbers of law enforcement staff

Number of officers and staff within each of the 3 main security institutions			
Institution	Number by Law	Actual Number	Balance
ISF	29494	23465	- 6029
GS	13308	7065	- 6243
ST	3181	1800	- 1381
TOTAL	45983*	32330**	- 13653

\* One law enforcement officer per 82 citizens

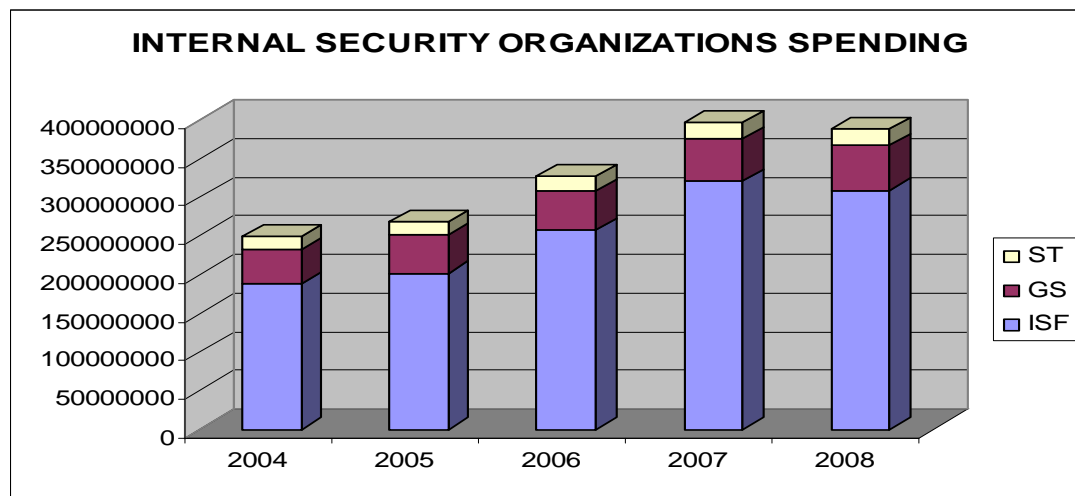
\*\* One law enforcement officer per 117 citizens

### C- Formal hierarchy

Formal hierarchy of security institutions			
Government	Ministry of Interior	Ministry of Defense	Prime Ministry
Institutions	Internal Security Forces (ISF)	Lebanese Army	State Security (ST)
	General Security (GS)	Army Intelligence	

### D- Government spending on security institutions

Government spending on security institutions					
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
ISF	187805242	202085932	257220277	321631299	309374805
GS	45595222	48897146	50877903	54576642	58106171
ST	16290643	17758460	19205043	21143331	21079628
TOTAL	249691107	268741538	327303223	397351272	388560604



### E- Central Security Council

Central Security Council (CSC)	
Presided by the Minister of Interior  (meeting are held on a monthly basis and in special circumstances)	<u>Members of the CSC</u> Chief Prosecutor Army Chief Director of the ISF Director of the GS Head of the Beirut Muhafaza (District) Director of the ST*

\* Not a permanent member according to Law 17 but has been attending regularly