



Saturday September 28, 2024

Lebanon at a Crossroads: A New Beginning or Further Descent into Chaos?

by Paul Elhindi,
ALPI PAC President

The recent assassination of Hassan Nasrallah, Secretary-General of Hezbollah, along with most of his Lieutenants in a series of Israeli attacks on southern Beirut, marks a pivotal moment for Lebanon. For decades, Hezbollah has operated as a state within a state, exerting enormous political, military, and social influence, particularly within Lebanon's Shiite Muslim community. With the sudden and dramatic loss of its leadership, a power vacuum has emerged that could destabilize the country further—or offer a rare opportunity to rebuild and rejuvenate Lebanon's fractured political system.

At this juncture, the role of Speaker of the House Nabih Berri is more crucial than ever. As one of the few remaining figures of the old political guard with widespread respect and influence among Lebanon's Shiite Muslims, Berri is uniquely positioned to step into the void left by Nasrallah's death. This moment offers him the chance to take a leadership role that transcends narrow sectarian interests, uniting Lebanon in a common purpose: stability, governance, and survival.

The immediate need is clear. Lebanon, mired in political paralysis and without a functioning president or government, cannot afford further delay in addressing its deep-seated issues. For over a year, the country has been unable to elect a president, and its Parliament has been virtually frozen. Berri must reopen Parliament and push forward the election of a president. This process, while difficult, is essential for restoring a semblance of governance and legitimacy to a country that has been teetering on the brink of collapse.

However, reopening Parliament and electing a president is just the beginning. The country requires a new government, one that reflects the needs and aspirations of the Lebanese people rather than the narrow interests of sectarian elites or external powers. This government must have the mandate and capability to implement urgently needed reforms to tackle Lebanon's crippling economic crisis, widespread corruption, and failing infrastructure.

For Lebanon's Shiite Muslims, particularly those who have looked to Hezbollah for representation and security, it's time now to accept the sole sovereignty of the Lebanese state and re-engage in the State building project alongside other Lebanese fractions, away from regional projects and allegiance to foreign powers, namely the Iranian Regime.

At its heart, Lebanon's crisis is one of stability. Without a functioning government, the country remains vulnerable to both internal strife and external manipulation. Hezbollah's dominance, while a source of strength for some, has also been a major contributor to Lebanon's instability. The group's entanglement in regional conflicts and its status as a state within a state have long prevented

the country from forming a cohesive national identity or pursuing a consistent policy of neutrality in the region's many conflicts. With Hezbollah's leadership decimated, Lebanon has a rare chance to chart a different course.

But this opportunity will not last forever.

About ALPI PAC: The American Lebanese Policy Institute Political Action Committee (ALPI PAC) is dedicated to fostering strong U.S.-Lebanon relations, advocating for policies that support Lebanon's sovereignty, security, and prosperity. ALPI PAC works to educate and engage U.S. policymakers on the critical issues facing Lebanon and the broader Middle East.

For media inquiries, please contact:

(202) 810-0600

Communication.director@alpipac.org