

International Association for Democracy in Africa

UPR of Lebanon

Beginning with its independence on November 22, 1943, Lebanon has been and continues to be an integral player in the Middle East and throughout the international community. As an Arab country, Lebanon's official language is Arabic; however, English and French are widely spoken. Tolerance and the encouragement of diversity, as well as its strong political culture have confirmed Lebanon's world prominence. Lebanon is a founding member of the League of Arab States (LAS) and the United Nations, and it has played a major role in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As a democratic republic, Lebanon enjoys a parliamentary system of government with a President, a Prime Minister, and a cabinet chosen through an electoral process. The structure of the government is based on the constitutional principle of separation between the executive, the legislative, and the judicial branches.

GDP Annual Growth Rate in Lebanon is expected to be 2.10 percent by the end of this quarter, according to Trading Economics global macro models and analysts' expectations. In the long-term, the Lebanon GDP Annual Growth Rate is projected to trend around 3.02 percent in 2020. Despite Lebanon's political impasse and sizable external requirements, foreign-exchange and financial markets have remained resilient. Following recent data revisions, the current account deficit is estimated at around 25 percent of GDP in 2014. The banking system is one of the economy's most critical pillars, and has contributed to growth and prosperity. Access of households and firms to banking services is high compared to the region or with other countries of similar income level.

Syria crisis—now in its fifth year—represents one of the worst humanitarian crises since the Second World War, and is the key determinant of Lebanon's short-term outlook and longer-term prospects. The number of refugees has steadied, partly as a result of tighter border restrictions. The authorities have stepped forward and should be commended for hosting the refugees, but they cannot

shoulder this overwhelming burden alone. International support has helped, but remains insufficient given the sheer scale of Lebanon's humanitarian and development needs.

There is respect for religion freedom in the country. The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and the freedom to practice all religious rites provided that the public order is not disturbed. The Constitution declares equality of rights and duties for all citizens without discrimination or preference but establishes a balance of power among the major religious groups. The Government generally respected these rights. There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious belief or practice. The Government permits recognized religious groups to exercise authority over matters pertaining to personal status, such as marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance. The "Twelve" Shi'a, Sunni, Christian, and Druze confessions have state-appointed, government-subsidized clerical courts that administer family and personal status law. There were no reports of forced religious conversion within Lebanon.

The Constitution provides that Lebanese Christians and Lebanese Muslims be represented equally in Parliament, the Cabinet, and high-level civil service positions, which include the ministry ranks of Secretary General and Director General. It also provides that these posts be distributed proportionally among the recognized religious groups. The constitutional provision for the distribution of political power and positions according to the principle of religious representation is designed to prevent a dominant position being gained by any one confessional group.