

Greek-Orthodox

The largest representatives of the Eastern Orthodox Church in Lebanon, and estimated to constitute around 6 per cent of the population. The Deputy Speaker of Parliament and Deputy Prime Minister are traditionally Greek-Orthodox. These indigenous Christian Arabs live mainly in cities where they mix with Sunnis.

Maronites

This Christian group is central to the history of Lebanon, contributing to the shaping of Lebanese national identity. The Maronites played a major political and economic role in nineteenth century Lebanon and in the newly created state of Greater Lebanon after 1920. They constitute around 18 per cent of the population. Maronites belong to the Maronite Syriac Church of Antioch, which is an Eastern Catholic Church that affirmed its communion with Rome in 1180 CE. The Maronite Patriarch is traditionally seated in Bkerke, north of Beirut. He frequently intervenes in national politics in the name of Lebanese Christians. The Maronites are the only sect eligible for the post of President.

Mount Lebanon

A mountainous area of central Lebanon, Mount Lebanon has great symbolic importance. In 1861 an internationally guaranteed autonomous district of Mount Lebanon was established in the Ottoman system in response to Druze-Maronite fighting. It lasted until 1915.

National Pact

The unwritten agreement in 1943 that made Lebanon's independence possible.

Christians essentially agreed to accept Lebanon's Arab identity and Muslims agreed to recognise the legitimacy of the Lebanese state. It reinforced the sectarian system of government established under the French mandate by formalising the confessional distribution of high-level posts in the government. This was based on the 1932 census's six-to-five ratio favoring Christians over Muslims. The Taif Agreement of 1989 amended this to a 50–50 ratio.

Palestinian refugees

The number of Palestinian refugees, who fled the 1948 and 1967 Arab-Israeli wars for Lebanon, are estimated at 280,000 as of 2011 by the UN Works and Relief Agency (UNRWA). They do not have Lebanese citizenship and are barred from owning property or from entering certain employment. 60 per cent live in one of 12 official refugee camps across the country. Lebanese authorities refuse to authorise the settlement of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon (*tawtîn*) and have brought the issue in front of the Arab League and international institutions.

Shia

The second largest branch of Islam, which split from the Sunni majority in the early years of Islam over the issue of religious leadership. Shia Muslims constitute over a quarter of the population in Lebanon. A historically rural and disenfranchised community, they are the fastest growing group in Lebanon and are undergoing rapid modernisation. Shias are the only sect eligible for the position of Speaker of Parliament.

Sunni

Belonging to the largest branch of Islam globally, Sunni Muslims are estimated to constitute just over a quarter of the population in Lebanon. They comprise the majority of the population in coastal cities (Beirut, Tripoli and Sidon) and in the interior Beqaa valley, traditionally networking with Sunnis from the Levant (Syria, Jordan and the Palestinian territories). Sunnis are the only sect eligible for the post of Prime Minister.

Ummah

Meaning 'community' or 'nation', it refers to the Arab world in the context of pan-Arabism, and to the community of all Muslim believers in the context of pan-Islamism. In both senses, it runs counter to the concept of a community of citizens in a nation-state.

Key texts

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17 May 2006 UNSCR 1680 encouraging Syria to respond to Lebanon's request for border delineation and full diplomatic relations

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30 May 2007 UNSCR 1757 authorizing the establishment of an independent tribunal to try those found responsible for the death of Rafiq al-Hariri

[www.un.org/Docs/journal/asp/ws.asp?m=S/RES/1757%20\(2007\)](http://www.un.org/Docs/journal/asp/ws.asp?m=S/RES/1757%20(2007))

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