

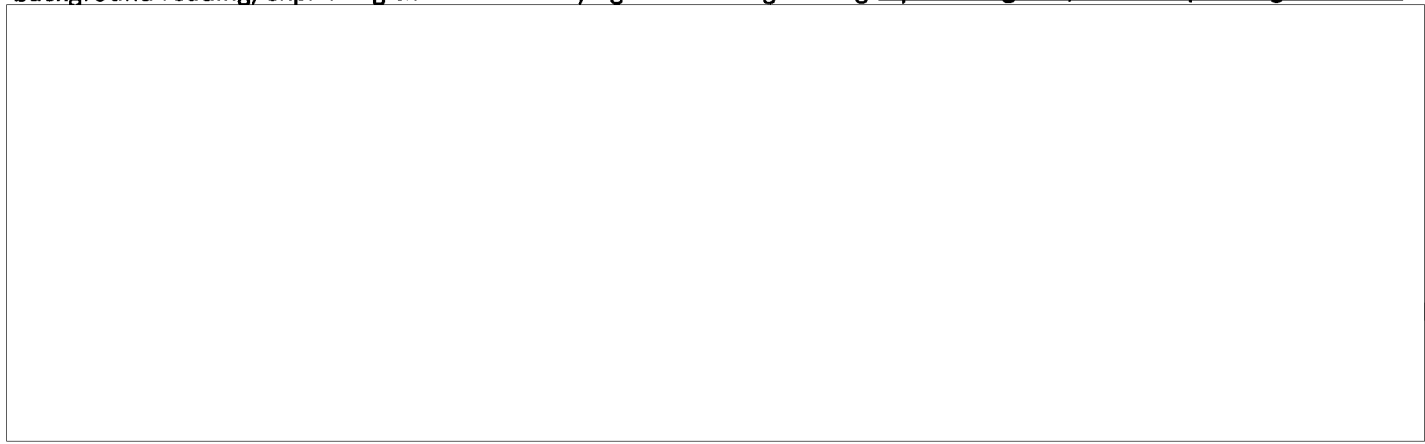
RELEASE IN PART
1.4(B),B1,B5,1.4(D),B6

From: Abedin, Huma <AbedinH@state.gov>
Sent: Friday, September 23, 2011 11:00 AM
To: H
Subject: Fw: Mikati-S

From: Feltman, Jeffrey D
Sent: Friday, September 23, 2011 10:45 AM
To: Abedin, Huma; Sullivan, Jacob J
Subject: Mikati-S

1.4(B)
1.4(D)
B1
B5

Guys: [redacted] If you have time, the article included below is good background reading, explaining that Mikati is trying to do the right thing. [redacted]



From: SLCharles [redacted] [mailto:SLCharles1 [redacted]]
Sent: Friday, September 23, 2011 08:52 AM
To: Feltman, Jeffrey D; Hof, Frederic C; Walles, Jacob; dross [redacted] <dross [redacted]>; ssimon [redacted] <ssimon [redacted]>; hhajjar [redacted] <hhajjar [redacted]>; Ford, Robert S; Connelly, Maura
Subject: interesting reading re lebanon/syr: Note Arab Parliaments suspend Syria

B6

NowLebanon.com
Mikati may not be that dead after all
Michael Young
Classified by DAS, A/GIS, DoS on 12/31/2015 ~ Class: CONFIDENTIAL ~ Reason: 1.4(B), 1.4(D) ~ Declassify on: 09/22/2026

The electricity expansion project remains a substitute battlefield for the factions making up Lebanon's government. On Wednesday, ministers named by Prime Minister Najib Mikati, Nabih Berri and Walid Jumblatt agreed to a demand from March 14 that forced their Aounist ministerial colleagues to swallow a bitter legislative pill.

As you might recall, the cabinet recently passed a draft electricity bill that was approved on Thursday by parliament. That draft included certain oversight measures—the introduction of a regulatory authority to supervise the sector, the naming of a new board for the electricity utility, and the adoption of a revised mechanism to consider bids. However, when the energy minister, Gebran Bassil, sent the draft law to parliament this week, those measures had been removed.

March 14 parliamentarians balked, demanding that the government resend the draft passed earlier by the council of ministers. Bassil and his Aounist partners replied that it was not up to the legislature to impose oversight conditions on the executive. However, they backtracked when Mikati, Jumblatt and Berri sided with March 14, accepting that Bassil should resubmit the original draft.

Some time ago I described Mikati as Lebanon's very own dead man walking. To an extent I still believe that is true. The

prime minister's margin of maneuver on a variety of essential national issues remains very slim, not least Lebanese cooperation with the Special Tribunal for Lebanon. More ominously, Mikati continues to be a hostage to his community's reservations about him. He has had to balance every decision because he is caught between Sunni outrage with Hezbollah and the Syrian repression on the one side, and his own alliance with the party and with President Bashar al-Assad on the other.

Economically, the prime minister is equally constrained. He faces a veritable minefield when it comes to macroeconomic reform. One might observe that the Hariri government didn't greatly progress on that front either. However, Mikati presides over a government of "one color," or so they say, therefore theoretically better apt to endorse a broad reform plan than an unwieldy government of national unity.

But one has to be fair. The shortcomings of Mikati's government are not very different from those demonstrated by the government of Saad Hariri. Bearing in mind that no authority could have arrested the four Hezbollah suspects, the prime minister has sought as best he can to work with the STL, against the predictions of many, present company included, that he would toe Hezbollah's line. Mikati has also refused to sanction retribution against the previous majority through political appointments, rebuffing Aoun's demand that Ashraf Rifi and Wissam al-Hassan be removed at the Internal Security Forces.

Left largely unmentioned amid the discord within the government over the electricity expansion scheme is the core reason for the dispute: Mikati doubts Bassil's integrity. A senior politician currently represented in the government told me months ago that Mikati did not want to return Bassil to the Energy Ministry, on the basis of disturbing information he had in his dossiers. Mikati was compelled to do so when the Syrians demanded that a government be formed quickly. A lack of trust alone explains why the compromise over the electricity plan involved breaking down payment into four installments and improving oversight and bidding methods.

The Aounists would complain that Berri and Jumblatt are hardly entitled to take the moral high ground against Bassil. However, Mikati has no reason to be defensive, and has fought hard when he needed to fight. Even on Lebanon's funding of the STL, the prime minister has shown a readiness to go all the way. He has used Hezbollah's and Aoun's helplessness to bring the cabinet down (since Syria would say no) as leverage to push his agenda forward.

The maneuvering within the Mikati government is more interesting than initially forecast by March 14. It was plain early on that Berri and Jumblatt would work with Mikati to clip Aoun's wings. Interestingly, Hezbollah has responded to this with some restraint. The party avoided leaning too heavily in Aoun's direction on the electricity plan, and has not followed the general's lead on appointments. Instead, Hezbollah is employing its power sparingly to protect its "red lines." The party has embarrassed Mikati when it comes to the STL, but until now has also remained relatively quiet over funding, leading some to believe, perhaps naively, that a compromise will be found.

The calculation of March 14 has been that Mikati is the weakest link in the government, therefore that he is the man the coalition must target. Maybe. The prime minister is indeed vulnerable to decisive shifts in the Sunni mood, and events in Syria remain unpredictable. However, Mikati has one advantage. Efforts to undermine him risk being interpreted by many Lebanese as just another way of undermining the country's wellbeing, therefore their own. Mikati also happens to be in Lebanon and his rival, Hariri, abroad, which could be to the advantage of the prime minister in public opinion.

If Mikati is working to reinforce the authority of the state and to contain Lebanon's economic growing problems, then it would be irresponsible not to support him. That is even more imperative if the situation in Syria deteriorates further. Whether March 14 likes it or not, in a potential struggle between the partisans of a sovereign state and Hezbollah to fill a possible post-Syria Lebanese vacuum, Mikati will be the man representing the state. And if his performance in recent weeks is anything to go by, he will do so with conviction.

Michael Young is opinion editor of the Daily Star newspaper in Beirut and author of *The Ghosts of Martyrs Square: An Eyewitness Account of Lebanon's Life Struggle*. He tweets @BeirutCalling.

Wikileaks quotes Aoun: There are 1000 reasons to believe Syria killed Hariri

Free Patriotic Movement leader Michel Aoun told US Senator Christopher Dodd on April 20, 2006 with US Senator Christopher Dodd that "there are 1,000 reasons to believe Syria was responsible for the assassination of [former PM] Rafik Hariri," according to a US diplomatic cable leaked by WikiLeaks.

However, Aoun advised Dodd "to wait for the results of the United Nations International Independent Investigation Commission (UNIIC) investigation [into the 2005 assassination of Rafik Hariri]."

Aoun also said that "the Memorandum of Understanding signed with Hezbollah's Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah had effectively pinned [Hezbollah] into a corner," according to the cable.

"Hezbollah's rhetoric used to call for the liberation of all occupied territories and for the release of all Palestinian prisoners, but now it is limited to [calling for the liberation of the] Shebaa Farms and [the freeing of] two or three Lebanese in Israeli jails."

When Senator Dodd advised Aoun to keep an eye on Hezbollah, Aoun responded he would be even more prudent and use "both eyes."

Concerning the relationship between Hezbollah and Hamas, Aoun said "it is clear the two terrorist organizations support each other politically."

However, the FPM leader voiced doubt that Hamas and Hezbollah are exchanging military assistance.

Aoun formed an alliance with the Shia group Hezbollah in 2006 and became March 14's fierce political rival after boycotting former Prime Minister Fouad Siniora's government that year.

In August 2011, the STL indicted Hezbollah members for ex-Premier Rafik Hariri's 2005 murder. However, after Hariri was assassinated, spontaneous popular protests erupted in Lebanon accusing Syria of murdering the former premier.

WikiLeaks has unleashed a torrent of more than a quarter million confidential US cables detailing a wide array of potentially explosive diplomatic episodes.

-NOW Lebanon

UN fears activists outside Syria targeted

The office of the UN's human rights chief raised alarm Friday that the Syrian regime's crackdown against protesters also appeared to be targeting activists outside the country.

"We are extremely alarmed by ongoing reports of the increasingly brutal crackdown by Syrian authorities against protesters in Syria," spokesperson of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights Ravina Shamdasani told reporters.

"Prominent human rights defenders, inside and outside the country, are reported to have been targeted," she added.

Although the spokesperson would not give details about the alleged attacks outside Syria, she said that "we've received enough reports for us to warrant us to highlight that this is happening."

"We are also concerned by reports of the targeting and attacking of families and sympathizers of the protesters by security forces," she added.

In one recent case, the mutilated body of Zeinab al-Hosni, an 18-year-old woman from Homs who had been tortured and died in custody was discovered by her family on 13 September, noted the spokesperson.

"We have received unconfirmed reports that she had been abducted by members of the security forces on 27 July, apparently to pressure her activist brother to turn himself in," Shamdasani added.

Over 2,700 people have been killed in Syria's bloody crackdown on protesters, the OHCHR said on Wednesday.

On Monday, Deputy High Commissioner Kyung-wha Kang urged the Security Council to refer the violations in Syria to the International Criminal Court.

-AFP/NOW Lebanon

Aspen Institute Lebanon Weekly Round-up

Lebanon at the UN: Support for Palestinians, Silence on Syria

Lebanese President Michel Suleiman yesterday reiterated Lebanon's commitment to UN resolutions and its international obligations in his address to the UN General Assembly. But while his speech was quite vocal on the question of the

Palestinian statehood, Suleiman failed to make mention of the developments in Syria - or their repercussions on Lebanon. The question of Syria will undoubtedly emerge, however, at the UN Security Council meetings to be held today and next week, when Prime Minister Najib Mikati arrives in New York. Mikati and other Lebanese officials are hoping to dodge the Syria bullet by steering Lebanon away from potential political confrontation with the Syrian regime.

In his address to the General Assembly, Suleiman expressed Lebanon's support for the recognition of the state of the Palestinians and their right to obtaining full membership to the UN. He cautioned, however, that the recognition does not restore the "full rights nor could it be considered as a final solution to the Palestinian question." The final solution, he said, would guarantee the return of the refugees to their homeland - a thorny issue in the historical Lebanese debate on the Palestinian question. The Lebanese categorically reject the naturalization of some 400,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon due to the imbalance it would cause to the country's sectarian make-up.

The Syrian question proves more difficult for international and regional leaders alike. The question of how to deal with the uprising has become a divisive issue, with the U.S. and EU pressing forward with harsher sanctions while Russia is circulating a draft resolution encouraging all parties in Syria to "start dialogue at the negotiations table." Countries that have traditionally taken Assad's side are starting to chart new courses in their regional strategies - most important of which has been Turkey's decision to cut all ties with the Syrian regime.

The question is even more problematic for Lebanese officials - such as Mikati, who has strong international business ties and a close relationship with Syrian President Bashar Assad. The Lebanese government maintains that it should not "interfere" in Syria's affairs, and has taken this stance to the UNSC, where, as temporary president of the Council, it has chosen to act under the slogan "preventive diplomacy."

As Lebanese diplomats try to maneuver in a semblance of a "middle ground" in the Syrian quagmire, Syrian refugees - estimated to have reached 4,000 - continue to cross the border into Lebanon. They now fear for their lives even in Lebanon, after Syrian troops, in an attempt to arrest those who are fleeing the violence, fired into the northern border of Akkar last week, wounding one Lebanese civilian. The Syrian army has threatened to repeat its incursions into Lebanese territories should the Lebanese continue to offer Syrians protection. Residents of the Lebanese village of Akkar demanded the deployment of the Lebanese Army at the borders, but the Army will not be driven into a clash with Syrian troops. Not surprisingly, this violation of Lebanese territorial sovereignty did not make it to the list of violations reported in President Suleiman's speech before the UN General Assembly. The Lebanese officials' caution with the Syrian issue may be understandable given the unequal relations between the two countries. However, they must not ignore the demands of a considerable portion of their population, neither should they act blind to the moral bankruptcy of the Syrian regime. It is a matter of time before Assad's backers realize that investing in a regime which lost the support of its own people is not the wisest judgment.

President Suleiman Commits to International Justice... Can Mikati Deliver?

In his address to the UN General Assembly, Lebanese President Michel Suleiman reaffirmed Lebanon's commitment to respecting resolutions related to international legitimacy such as the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL), investigating the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. Suleiman remarkably stated that the STL is "in accordance with the spirit and ministerial statements of successive cabinets". But he did not allude to the difficulties Lebanon is facing in upholding its commitment to the court - namely, Hezbollah's objection to funding it. This is now pushing Lebanese leaders to bypass both the Hezbollah-controlled cabinet and parliament to secure the STL funds, but changing positions may force Hezbollah to make a compromise or risk losing government control.

Although Suleiman's statement may have paved the way for a smoother Lebanese discussion on funding the STL, the issue is not expected to pass without a confrontation between the March 8-controlled cabinet, in which Hezbollah allies oppose the Tribunal, and the current March 14 opposition that has supported the STL since its institution in 2007. Prime Minister Najib Mikati increasingly finds himself in a tough spot, as he tries on the one hand to secure his cabinet's approval for funding and, on the other, to assure the UN Security Council next week that Lebanon is able to deliver on that goal.

Lebanon is due to pay its annual share of the funding, \$32 million, this month. It is obliged to contribute 49 percent of the STL expenditure, while the rest of the cost is borne by voluntary contributions from UN member states.

On the eve of his trip, Mikati met in Beirut with U.S. Ambassador Maura Connelly, EU Ambassador Angelina Eichhorst, and UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon Michael Williams. After the meeting, Williams expressed his confidence that Lebanon would pay its share of funding - an indication of Mikati's confidence of his ability to gain the support of the cabinet's majority.

However, it is highly unlikely the Hezbollah-dominated government will support an institution that Hezbollah deems an "Israeli-American conspiracy." Hezbollah's Christian ally Michel Aoun this week said that he would oppose such a provision even if Hezbollah adopted it, given that it is "unconstitutional." Disagreement between rival March 14 and March 8 coalitions over this issue resulted in an ambiguous clause in the ministerial policy statement, which stipulated that the Lebanese cabinet supports it "in principle."

Since the adoption of that statement, however, both the President and Druze leader Walid Jumblatt have shifted their support to the Tribunal. The changing positions, in no small measure due to the changes on the ground in Syria, now risk isolating Hezbollah and its Christian ally. With less ministers and parliamentarians willing to cast their vote with

Hezbollah's bloc, the Shiite militant group may find itself in weak position: it will have to either turn a blind eye to the STL funds or face the collapse of the government it now leads.

The deadlock over this issue has pushed Suleiman and Mikati to consider bypassing both cabinet and parliament and issuing a decree signed by the President, PM, and Finance and Justice Ministers to allow funding. Should the Suleiman's and Mikati's MPs join Jumblatt in his support for the STL, however, Hezbollah may have to compromise even before the potential decree is raised again.

Syrian Revolution News Round-up

Day 191: Wednesday, 21 Sep 2011

Iraqi Government Calls On Assad to Step Down and EU Imposes More Sanctions

Today's Top Developments

The Arab Parliament suspended Syria's membership amidst mounting international pressure on Assad.

The EU issued its 8th round of sanctions banning investments in the Syrian oil sector and any transactions with the central bank of Syria.

US president urged the UN to sanction Syria.

Top Videos

Parents of a pro-revolution Syrian-American musician attacked in retaliation for performing "Watani Ana" at a "freedom for Syria" rally in Washington, D.C.

Opening fire at student protesters in the city of Homs.

Torture, harassment and humiliation of Syrian detainees by Assad loyal forces.

Today's Summary of Events

International pressure mounted on Assad with the escalation of his military and security repression of demonstrations. Assad's crimes now comprise mass rape, torture, and systematic body organs theft. The Arab Parliament agreed to suspend Syria's membership and relocate its headquarters from Damascus to a different Arab capital until Assad stops his violence against the people. The Syrian Chairman of the Committee Abdul Aziz Hasan resigned from his post for the deliberations on this matter not to be biased.

The European Union issued its eighth round of sanctions on the Assad regime, banning investments in the Syrian oil sector and any transactions with the central bank of Syria. At the same time, US President Obama called on the UNSC to sanction the regime. Furthermore, Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan announced that Turkey has suspended all talks with the Assad regime and is considering sanctions. Erdogan added that Turkey will officially declare its stance on Syria soon.

Violence continued throughout Syria today, as six civilians were killed, including one woman. A heavy military operation took place today in the suburbs of Damascus as the regime used tanks and artillery to invade Kesweh aided with air cover, while Harasta was undergoing an extensive house-to-house search and arrest campaign along with heavy machinegun fire.

Idlib was not so different, as the city was under constant shelling and gunfire by tanks and artillery aided by air cover. Jabal al-Zawiya, Bansh and Maarat al-Noman were the main targets for the military operations and random arrests today. In Deraa, security forces invaded Kherbet Ghazal and Jasem arresting and wounding many civilians. The target of those campaigns has been to arrest students who demonstrated yesterday.

In Homs, which had been the heart of Assad's military operations for so long, the neighborhoods of Bab Amr, Jorat Arayes, Sultaniya, and Jobar are still under siege for the fourth day. Electricity, water and all means of communications were cut off, while houses are raided one by one, searched, robbed, and sometimes individuals are kidnapped or raped. There aren't many new detainees because there is no more room to house them as most warehouses, sport arenas and schools in Homs have been completely filled with detainees. Security forces still open fire randomly at any passersby in the areas of Waar, Nazhin, and Karm al-Zaytoun. Those injured are arrested immediately and sent to the Military Hospital, where according to many reports, organs are cut out to be sold, then the injured are executed.

Many army units defected in Bab Sbaa and the cities of Rastan and Qasir. Many of the defected soldiers joined the Free Syrian Army (FSA) which is now over 10,000 units strong and is spread over the mountainous and border areas of Homs, Idlib, Deir Azzour, and Damascus suburbs. The FSA is preparing for a massive offensive against the regime, but it is waiting for the Syrian demonstrations to call for armed resistance first.

Demonstrations still broke out all over Homs as well as all over Syria, in the areas of Hamra, Ghouta, Inshaat, Qosur, Qarabis, Deir Baalba, Bayada, Khaldiya, Shammas, and Bab Hood; and the cities of Talbisa, Houle, Qasir, Rastan and

Palmyra. Security forces started a new media coverage tactic in cooperation with Addounia and Syrian TV stations to claim the presence of armed groups. Security officers would plant weapons and ammo in the trunks of vehicles they search at checkpoints then have Addounia and Syrian TV crews waiting at the next checkpoint to search them. It is noted that Imad Sara the general manager of Addounia TV has been drafting many media strategies for the regime, in collaboration with the Lebanese journalist Rafeeq Nasrallah and with Khadr Eqarki.

Day 190: Tuesday, 20 Sep 2011

Security Forces Steal and Sell Protesters' Body Organs, the Regime is Suffering Financially

Today's Top Developments

Assad's forces steal body organs from protesters

Regime operations continue to escalate against many villages and towns around Syria

Syria's economy is suffering as the volume of exports at the two main ports decreased

Today's Top Videos

Children crying in panic after security forces stormed their school

Student removes and steps on a picture of Assad as part of a nationwide campaign to remove his pictures from schools

Today's Summary of Events

Many corpses of demonstrators are found missing vital organs with clear surgical cuts and incisions. According to many examining doctors, the organs have been professionally removed from their locations probably to be sold. Many videos of such incisions stretching from below the chest to the abdomen have been appearing in videos of killed civilians in different localities all over Syria; in the north, west, south, and the middle. This is evidence of a planned and systematic illegal organs trading network starting from the top down to the lowest ranks.

Military operations have commenced early in Damascus today, as more than 30 tanks and 60 buses loaded with militiamen invaded Kesweh in the suburb of Damascus along with heavy gunfire. House-to-house arrests and searches started at night. On the other hand, military operations are still underway in Homs in Bab Sbaa under the cover of warplanes. The regime brought in more reinforcements of tanks and armored units while continuously shelling the residential areas. The security presence intensified as well in al-Qosour area, particularly in front of schools, where security officers opened random fire at students injuring dozens.

In the meantime, the army detail at al-Houla checkpoint defected and opened fire at a security forces' bus, killing and injuring many Assad loyalists. Defections were also reported in Taldo and Kafr Laha, where the mutineers engaged Assad loyalists before escaping and being chased by the regime's units. In spite of that, demonstrations broke out in the areas of Deir Baalba, Bayda, Khaldiya, Waar, Qosour, Jobar, Ghouta, Inshaat, Jab Jandali, Bab Draib, Bab Sbaa, Hamraa, Qarabees, and Nazheen; and the cities of Qasir, Rastan, Talbisa, Palmyra and Houla. Regime forces opened fire at demonstrators in Bayada, Khaldiya, Bab Amr, and Bab Draib, and shelled the city of Rastan.

Regime operations continued throughout the country, especially in the east in Deir Azzour, the south in Deraa, the West in Lattakia and Banyas, the north in Idlib, and in Damascus and suburbs, in reaction to the demonstrations that are going out.

Economically, the volume of exports has been plummeting in Syria because of the revolution, especially in the ports of Lattakia and Tartous. At these two ports, the volumes dropped by around 40% since the beginning of the demonstrations. Some experts believe that the volume has even dropped more, as the empty space in containers is not taken into consideration. Some of this impact might be attributed to the EU oil sanctions, as Mediterranean companies have started avoiding Syrian ports in fear of sanctions.

At the same time, the Assad regime has filed applications to Jordanian establishments to evaluate and assess its investments in Jordan. The regime is starting to consider withdrawing all its regional investments in fear of a UN resolution that might sanction its assets worldwide. It is noted that the Assad and Makhlof family have both stolen what is worth hundreds of billions of US dollars from Syria during their rule, causing poverty to spread in a country that was once amongst the leading regional economic powers.