

**Houston Area
Model United Nations
Standard Committee**



Security Council

Chair | Christina Boufarah

Topic B Background Guide

Houston Area Model United Nations 48

February 2-3, 2023

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Note to Delegates

Delegates,

I am honored to welcome you to the 2022 Houston Area Model United Nations Conference! My name is Christina Boufarah, and I have the privilege of serving as your Chair this year in the Security Council! I am a sophomore at Rice majoring in History with an Arabic certificate and a minor in Jewish Studies. I am originally Lebanese, grew up in Dubai, and moved to The Woodlands, Texas my junior year of high school! Model UN has been a passion of mine since middle school, underscoring my personal, academic, and professional interests as someone whose life has in many ways intersected with the very conflicts addressed in MUN. Having participated in HAMUN as both a delegate and a staffer, I am incredibly excited to return.

Created in the wake of World War II, the Security Council was tasked with upholding international peace and security. As such, the topics chosen for debate this year reflect the urgency, complexity, and importance characteristic of UNSC debates. While they are no doubt difficult, I am certain of your abilities to formulate multifaceted solutions for these multifaceted issues, all through fruitful, respectful, and intellectual debate. I look forward to working with you all this February!

Christina Boufarah

Chair of UNSC

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Topic B: Stabilizing Lebanon in an Effort to Avoid Regional Conflict

Introduction and History

Since its independence in 1943, Lebanon has been riddled with conflict, itself shaped by a multitude of foreign presences. The infamous Lebanese Civil War that broke out in 1975 and lasted until 1990 was indeed largely characterized by foreign presences: American, Syrian, Israeli, Palestinian, and other forces and their respective interests came to play defining roles in a conflict that also had inherently economic and religious contours.

Coming out of World War I, Lebanon was placed under French control, under which the sectarian mode of government that exists to this day was created. Political seats and government positions were divided on religious lines. This fueled religious-social tensions that exploded in the Civil War and differing religious sects were funded and supported by different foreign interests.

For example, the Christian right was supported largely by Israeli forces, while the Muslim left often found support from Palestinian militias. In this way, existing religious-economic tensions were compounded and furthered by other regional conflicts. Lebanon often became the proxy through which these battles were fought or groups attempted to stay enemy influence. The effects of this war can be traced to the present situation in Lebanon that requires urgent action .





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A prime example of this can be found in the existence of Hezbollah, the Shi'ite political party, formed largely in part in response to the Israeli occupation in South Lebanon. The group never disbanded and remains the only militia group in Lebanon with significant military capabilities. In this way, the relics of Civil War politics continue to shape modern day Lebanon. As such, it is clear that any action taken must consider the historical tensions and contours of the conflict.



Present Day

While tensions had been brewing for years prior, October of 2019 saw these explode and triggered the *Thawra*, the movement of unrest that swept the nation for a while. Since then, the country has been swept by COVID-19, a financial and economic crisis, and the devastating August 4 explosion. These compounding crises have roiled a nation that was once the bulwark of the region's banking/financial sector and a generally stable nation often caught in other regional conflicts. The effects have been devastating: Unemployment, poverty, and malnourishment are all on the rise. GDP per capita dropped by almost 40% from 2019-2021 and the World Bank has accordingly reclassified Lebanon as a "lower-middle income country," instead of an "upper middle-income status" in July 2022, a contraction that is "usually associated with conflicts or wars." Indeed, these economic crises are fueling fears of radicalization within the country, as disenfranchised groups grow increasingly frustrated. Additionally there is concern for refugee populations and the inability of the Lebanese government to formulate a response in the face of these crises



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As the Civil War demonstrated, Lebanon's relationship with its refugee populations (like the aforementioned Palestinian refugee groups in the Civil War) is crucial in shaping larger regional conflicts. Furthermore, as Lebanon plunges deeper into a financial crisis, its relationship with regional superpowers has progressed in response. For example, funding from the Iranian regime has been sought after and obtained even as this has furthered tensions with Gulf allies, culminating in the expulsion of the Lebanese ambassador to Saudi in the fall of 2021. Thus, it is crucial that the UNSC take imminent action to stabilize a nation so entrenched in regional conflicts, in an effort to avoid widespread regional instability or conflict.

Questions to consider

1. How do the power politics, proxy conflicts, and complex regional tensions at play in Lebanon shape potential UNSC responses?
2. What role does sectarianism play in this conflict? Does it play a role? Should it be considered in any potential response?
3. What root causes or long term trends can be traced in Lebanon's history beginning with its independence? How can this inform or shape potential action steps?
4. What role does Lebanon play in the region/what role should it play?? How can the UNSC manage, preserve, change, or shape this?

Further Reading

"Lebanon Country Profile." *BBC News*, BBC, 14 Sept. 2021, www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14647308

Mounzer, Lina. "Lebanon as We Once Knew It Is Gone." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 3 Sept. 2021, www.nytimes.com/2021/09/03/opinion/lebanon-economy.html.

"The World Bank In Lebanon." *World Bank*, The World Bank Group, 2 Nov. 2022, www.worldbank.org/en/country/lebanon/overview.

